

## **GWI calls for policy that improves indigenous women's and girls' access to quality education**

**Geneva, Switzerland**, 09 August 2017 – Graduate Women International (GWI) promotes indigenous women and girls' rights by drawing attention to the widespread problem of their discrimination. We join the global community in marking [International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples](#) and the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration is the most comprehensive international instrument on the rights of indigenous peoples that establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for their survival, dignity and well-being.

On this day, GWI recognises [Article 14](#) of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that says, "indigenous people have the right to establish and control their education system;" meaning that they have the right to implement non-traditional cultural methods and teach in their own language. Too often, this right is overlooked. GWI is concerned that State's suppress and snub any facet of culture and traditional teachings in pedagogies for indigenous communities thereby preserving an environment of discrimination and racism for indigenous students. Accordingly, GWI advocates for legislation and policy initiatives that enable indigenous girls and women access to quality, lifelong education through non-traditional means adapted to their cultures and we duly call on States and non-state actors to support indigenous women's and girls' education rights.

Scarce schooling for indigenous girls perpetuates violence and bullying against them. Thus, recalling the commitment by the 2014 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples to empower indigenous women and girls through education as a measure to reduce violence, GWI asks States to renew this commitment. Equally, perpetuating violence against indigenous women and girls is State's sluggishness to uphold the conventions they so vehemently accepted that prioritize education such as [the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women](#), the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) and [Goal 4](#) of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Each July, the United Nations holds the [Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous People](#) (EMRIP) that upholds the importance of prioritising the education of indigenous women and girls. GWI is an active EMRIP participant and invites other NGOs to join us this education space. Together we can improve the lives of indigenous women and girls.

"In the tenth year since the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, it is important to recognize the challenges still faced by indigenous girls and women. Without access to quality, lifelong education, indigenous girls and women remain marginalized and vulnerable to violence. GWI believes that, if the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development truly aims to Leave No One Behind, States must make a greater effort to guarantee that indigenous girls and women have full enjoyment of their right to quality, culturally sensitive education," said GWI President Geeta Desai.

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 60 countries. Founded in 1919, GWI is the leading girls' and women's global organisation advocating for women's rights, equality and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. GWI is in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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