



Graduate Women  
International (GWI)

# Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **On International Day of Rural Women, Graduate Women International calls for the voices of rural women and girls' voices to be heard and key leadership role to be recognised**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 15 October 2019**— Today, on International Day of Rural Women, Graduate Women International (GWI) voices appreciation for the limitless potential of rural women and girls around the world. According to [UN Women](#), 1.7 billion women and girls live in rural areas worldwide and 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries comprises women. Through their invaluable diversity, millennial know-how, contributions to food security and economic development, rural women and girls are ensuring every day a better future for their communities. Following this year's theme, "Rural women and girls building climate resilience", GWI draws specific attention to rural women and girls' central role in climate change adaptation.

Despite their critical contributions to rural communities, rural women and girls are part of the most disadvantaged people on the planet. They disproportionately suffer from multidimensional poverty and a wide variety of discriminations reducing their life opportunities, hindering their rights and constraining their decision-making power.

The time is now to recognise that building the capacities of rural women and girls to lead their communities towards social justice and climate resilience is an integral step for the achievement of the [2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). Given their wide-ranging functions in sectors such as agriculture, energy, water, land and resource management, the efforts and needs of rural women and girls amalgamate in all 17 SDGs.

"Rural women and girls need to feel that they have a voice in decision-making. In addition, climate action will only be effective if policymakers consider the contributions of rural women and girls as key to sustaining the world's resources for future generations. A sustainable future is no longer possible without rural women and girls", says GWI President, Terry Oudraad.

Unless greater attention and care are given to the needs and rights of the world's rural women and girls, GWI warns that States are at risk of falling short of their commitments to achieve the SDGs targets by 2030. Investing in rural women and girls' lives through educational, economic and social empowerment is investing in all our lives.

As an organisation committed to the empowerment of all women and girls, GWI contributes to the elimination of systemic barriers and inequalities faced by rural women and girls through capacity building and lifelong education. As part of the 2018 [Bina Roy Partners for Development Programme](#), GWI provided more than 50 rural Kenyan women and girls with a holistic programme of livelihood skills training, opportunities for income generation and support for girls' education. In less than a year, this programme led to a measurable increase in girls' school enrolment as well as a reduction of poverty, food insecurity and climate vulnerability in the target community.

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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*Contributing to this press release is Ciara Rainsby, GWI 2019 Fall Intern.*