



GRADUATE WOMEN INTERNATIONAL TOOLKIT

International Day of Rural Women

15 OCTOBER 2019



Empowering women and girls through lifelong education for leadership, decision-making and peace. GWI, formerly IFUW, is in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

Graduate Women International

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CELEBRATING THE LIMITLESS POTENTIAL OF RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS

Observed annually on 15 October since 2008, the International Day of Rural Women recognises "the **critical role and contribution of rural women, including indigenous women, in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty**" (1). On this occasion, GWI, as an organisation committed to the empowerment of all women and girls, celebrates the limitless potential of rural women and girls:

- 1.7 billion women and girls live in rural areas (2) and rural women make up 43 per cent of the agricultural force in developing countries. Around the world, rural women and girls ensure food security for their communities and are major contributors to their economies.
- Rural women play an important role in climate change adaptation and mitigation given their wide-ranging functions in crucial sectors such as agriculture, energy, forestry, water and land management (3).
- Rural, indigenous women around the world are often the guardians of ancient knowledge and traditions relating to traditional medicines, biodiversity and indigenous technologies.
- Rural women and girls produce half of the food at the global level. They are also largely responsible for water and fuel collection in most rural households without access to drinking water or electricity (4).



International Day of
**RURAL
WOMEN**



Rural women and girls, including indigenous women and girls, quite literally carry the world on their shoulders by ensuring the sustainability of rural households and communities, improving rural livelihoods and overall wellbeing as well as performing the bulk of unpaid care and domestic work within families and households in rural areas (5).

Yet, they are also part of the most disadvantaged people on the planet, as rural women and girls suffer disproportionately from multidimensional poverty and a wide variety of discriminations, which too often hinder their ability to reach their full potential. Structural barriers and discriminatory social norms continue to constrain women's decision making power and political participation in rural households and communities. Globally, almost every gender and development indicator clearly points out that rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women and that they disproportionately experience poverty, exclusion and the effects of climate change (6).

GWl is particularly concerned by their lack of safe and equal access to lifelong and quality education, when education is precisely one of the most powerful transformative tools to break the cycle of poverty. Early and forced marriage, gender discrimination, lack of access to water and sanitation, geographical isolation, lack of female teachers and lack of sustainable public services are some of the many issues that keep rural women and girls out of school.



43%

of the agricultural labour force in developing countries is made up of women. (IFAD)



Yet less than

13%

of agricultural landholders are women*. (IFAD)

*based on data from 104 countries



More than half

of all poor rural women lack basic literacy skills. (UN Women)



Rural girls are

2x more

likely to be victims of early and forced marriage than their urban counterparts* (UN Women).

*In some African, Latin American and Caribbean countries





THE TIME IS NOW TO INVEST IN RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS

Despite certain progress, GWI sees the plethora of discriminations and impediments that rural women and girls are faced with as an unjust restriction of their limitless potential as well as a blatant violation of their human rights. This is why, on the occasion of International Day of Rural Women and Girls 2019, GWI renews its commitment to empowering all women and girls around the world, including rural women and girls.

The classic definition of empowerment refers to the process by which those who have previously been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability. This description remains widely accepted. GWI believes that education is a precondition for empowerment and that rural women and girls must have access to quality sustained education to inform their life choices and positively impact the trajectories of their lives.

Additionally, GWI maintains that empowerment includes the knowledge of the full and indivisible complement of human rights particularly the right to freedom of choice that can help women and girls reach their full potential as contributing members of society and leaders in their chosen fields.

Knowledge of their human rights will foster women's and girls' deeper belief in their self-worth that will empower them to move beyond any dominant and repressive structures that hinder their progress. GWI sees the education of rural women and girls through multiple lenses but considers access to agricultural training, equal land rights, access to public services and infrastructures, financial literacy, and a secondary education as indispensable to their empowerment.

Rural Women and Girls need:
secondary education with opportunities for lifelong learning
agricultural training
equal land rights
public services and infrastructures





TIME FOR ACTION!

Even with the many recent achievements towards rural women and girls' empowerment, much more remain to be accomplished at the community, national, regional and international level. GWI therefore encourages all members, partners and friends to celebrate International Day of Rural Women and Girls on 15 October 2019- Beginning 13 October, plan to FOLLOW, PARTICIPATE and SHARE the GWI social media campaign that will offer three daily posts for Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn each aimed to educate, galvanize support and celebrate the potential, rights and leadership of all rural women and girls.

As a means to these goals, GWI offers this comprehensive and impactful campaign materials to facilitate the participation of our members and followers in our multi-channel advocacy campaign for the International Day of Rural Women 2019.



GWI Press Release



Ahead of International Day of Rural Women 2019, GWI has released an exclusive press release calling for rural women and girls' voices to be heard and key leadership role to be recognized. Please read and share widely!

**Click HERE to read
and share the full
Press Release**



**Click HERE to access
the GWI member
only NFA Template**





Ready-to-use social media graphics

To download posts individually, click on the post of your choice



**Click HERE to
download the full
GWI International
Day of Rural Women
Social Media Pack**



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF RURAL WOMEN MATERIALS

GWI encourages the download and global sharing, on all platforms, of these ready-to-use social media graphics. A text version of each post is also available below: simply copy and past to all social media platforms and joining GWI in standing up with rural women and girls for the protection of their rights!

Did You Know? In Tanzania, women earn nearly four times more in areas where they have control over lands (UNSAID) .

Did You Know? 1.7 billion of women and girls live in rural areas (IFAD).

Did You Know? 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries is made up of women. Yet less than 13% of agricultural landholders are women (IFAD).

Advocacy Idea: Rural women are far away from the decision-making process on their own rights. Start workshops or seminars to inform them on their rights and let them inform you on their needs.

Advocacy Idea: More than half of all poor rural women lack basic literacy skills. Support GWI's Teachers for Rural Futures Programme which aims to help rural women get educated and become teachers to help other rural women and girls become literate.

Advocacy Idea: We need to include rural women in decision-making on issues that concern them. Their voices need to be heard. They may have solutions to these very problems.



GWI'S COMMITMENT TO RURAL WOMEN'S EDUCATION: THE TEACHERS FOR RURAL FUTURES PROGRAMME

GWI believes that the most efficient way to overcome the challenges rural girls face when trying to gain an education is by increasing the number of female teachers in rural schools.

Research shows that parents are unwilling to let their daughters be taught by male teachers so the presence of female teachers results in more girls accessing and completing their education. Female teachers provide protection against harassment from boys and male staff members, advocate for girls' need for sanitary facilities and are positive role models who demonstrate the positive connection between education and employment prospects. For this reason, GWI continues to work to increase the number of female teachers in rural schools through its Uganda-based project Teachers for Rural Futures, which aims to train 50 young women to become teachers.

In Uganda only 30% of girls are enrolled in secondary school and one third of girls who enrol in primary school are still in school at the age of 18. There are even greater disparities in rural areas where most girls are not enrolled in school or forced to drop out due to early marriage, pregnancy, a lack of value in girls' education, and a lack of women teachers to provide critical role models and support to girls. More women teachers will provide thousands of rural girls with access to school.

"I am so proud to study a Bachelor's degree at Makerere University. Because of your sponsorship, I am also working towards being a role model in my teaching career."

Benadet, GWI Student Teacher

An increase in qualified women teachers in rural Uganda has the potential to create a huge impact on girls' education in the country. The project will enable around 2500 more girls to attend school over ten years. Educated girls and women are better equipped to participate effectively in society, to protect themselves from harm and to care for their children. Children of educated women are healthier and far more likely to go to school, creating long-term positive effects for generations.



The GWI student teachers all come from Buyende District in Eastern Uganda, a rural area where the majority of girls do not complete secondary school. They were amongst the few to complete school. All had dreams of going to university, but without the means, their studies were due to end there. GWI's Teachers for Rural Futures project has set them on the path to fulfilling their dream, as well as the dreams of thousands of other children who will benefit from an education once they qualify as teachers. With your support, more young women in rural Uganda can become qualified secondary school teachers, fulfilling their dreams and those of thousands of children in their future classes.

In September 2019, the GWI five young women students, have finished their successful summer internship in Buyende, Uganda. They are now back in classes at Makerere University in Kampala and are due to graduate in January 2020. This internship has shown their progress towards becoming quality teachers, community role models and leaders for other young girls in this rural area of Uganda.

Donate to support the GWI Teachers for Rural Futures Programme



Benadet is studying a Bachelor of Science with Education. She is proud to be the first person in her family of five children to go to university. She has begun her own advocacy in her district to encourage parents to allow their girls to complete their secondary education. Her aim is to be a successful woman in life and to develop her district.

Winfred is studying a Bachelors of Education in Economics and Geography. She believes in the value of being self reliant in the future through her education. Having spent her own childhood in Buyende she wishes to support other girls in the district to succeed academically through counselling and guidance.



Hasifa is studying a Bachelor of Arts with Education. She waited several years to go to university as with six sisters and four brothers her parents could not fund her studies. Hasifa strongly believes that as a teacher interacting with many others in the community she will have the opportunity to positively influence girls' education in Buyende.

Jane comes originally from Buyende and moved back there after spending a few secondary school years in Kampala. Despite having nine children, her parents managed to send them all to school. As a result of her parents' dedication to their children's education, Jane wants to be an advocate for this right, especially among underprivileged youth in Buyende.



Victoria comes from a large Buyende family. She considers herself lucky since not all of her 16 brothers and sisters were able to complete their secondary education. Victoria wishes to guide those who are not convinced of the benefits of girls education and to inspire more Buyende girls to complete their secondary education and progress to tertiary.



RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

On the occasion of International Day of Rural Women 2019, GWI draws attention to the strength and vitality of rural women and girls and underlines the importance of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with respect to rural women and girls. Investing in rural women and girls is essential for the achievement of the SDGs and the creation of a better future for the global community.

GWI drives particular attention to SDG4 and 5, which together seek to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning (SDG4) and to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (SDG5). It should be noted however that all 17 SDGs are intricately related both to themselves and to the empowerment of rural women and girls, and they may only be fully achieved through the realisation of all of them.

In order to make solid progress towards meeting the targets for the SDGs, GWI and its National Federations and Associations (NFAs) in 55 countries, with Independent Members in 16 additional countries, call all stakeholders - including States, public, private and civil society organisations - to fully invest in the future of rural women and girls and the SDGs. To encourage this effort, GWI produced this awareness building document drawing attention to the intrinsic link between the realisation of the SDGs and the protection of rural women and girls' rights.



The empowerment of rural women and girls is essential to building a prosperous, equitable and peaceful future for all on a healthy planet"

Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General ⁽⁷⁾





RURAL WOMEN AND GIRLS AND THE SDGS IN FOCUS



Globally, 1 in 5 girls are in households living on less than US\$1.90 a day, a sum that leaves them without enough food, housing, health care or education. While extreme poverty has declined at the global level, the world's 1 billion people who continue to live in unacceptable conditions of poverty are heavily concentrated in rural areas (8). **Women farmers may be as productive and enterprising as their male counterparts, but are less able to access land, credit, agricultural inputs and markets** (9).

In nearly two thirds of countries, women are more likely than men to face food insecurity: roughly 60% of chronically hungry people are women and girls, with a majority living in rural areas (11). **The UN has estimated that bringing female farmers' yields to the level of those produced by men could reduce the number of hungry people by 100 million. To fulfill the goal of SDG 2, education is key; girls education contributes 43% to the reduction in child malnutrition over time, while food availability accounted for 26%** (12).



Healthy lives and well-being may be interrupted by a variety of issues. **The health of rural women and girls can be put at risk by lack of access to health services and infrastructures:** in low income countries, rural women are 38% less likely to give birth with a health care worker than an urban women: this puts them at risk of life-threatening complications (13). Because rural girls are more at risk of child and forced marriage, they are at higher risk of intimate partner violence, early pregnancy, maternal complications and STDs.

Around the world, 263 million children are not receiving an education, 130 million of whom are girls. In rural communities, the problem is especially critical where only 39% of rural girls are known to attend school compared to 45% of rural boys (14). **Rural girls are twice as likely to be out of school than urban girls** (15). Every study shows that education leads to better nutrition, improved health, reductions in domestic violence, child and forced marriages and early pregnancies. Irrefutably, education empowers rural women and girls and without education, the combination of all of these threats diminishes their empowerment.



Worldwide, gender inequality remains an issue in dire need of being addressed as it deprives rural women and girls of their basic rights and opportunities. **Globally, rural women and girls are disproportionately affected by multiple forms of gender based violence (GBV) and discrimination, such as child marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** (16). The empowerment of rural women and girls necessitates concerted efforts and a renewed focus on combatting stereotypes, prejudices and GBV to counter deeply rooted discrimination often resulting from patriarchal attitudes and related social norms.

2.1 billion people lacked access to safely managed drinking water services. **When water is not available in the home – as is the case in many rural areas in developing countries – women and girls are most often tasked with collecting it**, travelling long distances and carrying heavy loads that can severely affect their health (17). This takes a significant amount of time and limits their engagement in other activities such as paid work and education.





In many rural households around the world, **lack of access to affordable, reliable and safe sources of energy severely impact women and girls**. In 2012, over four million people died prematurely from indoor air pollution which is caused by cooking with solid fuel or heating with unsafe fuel. 60% of those who died were women and girls (18). Furthermore, many rural girls and women spend hours each day collecting fuel and carrying heavy loads: this substantially reduces their opportunities such as investing in their educational advancement.

Around the world, **one in three employed women works in agriculture, accounting for a substantial proportion of the agricultural labour force** (19). But too often, women are trapped in the informal part of the agricultural sector, in which low or no pay, abuse and exploitation are unfortunately common (20). As a result, rural women and girls suffer disproportionately from multi-dimensional poverty, lack of social protection and are more at risk of exploitation.



Research and innovation drive the knowledge economy, and are the backbone of future jobs, yet women alarmingly hold less than a third of research positions. Similar gaps apply to the construction, manufacturing and energy businesses, which still have too few women employees and decision-makers. Without the inclusion of rural women and girls, who are often the guardians of **invaluable traditional knowledge about biodiversity and indigenous technologies, the whole world is missing out** (21).

With less income and fewer assets than men and the majority of their urban counterparts, **rural women and girls are more likely to live below 50% of median income and experience extreme forms of poverty and exclusion** (22). In order to reduce all inequalities, eliminating gender inequality is in urgent need of being fulfilled. GWI appeals to the international community to promote the active combatting of all forms of unjust inequality within and between communities.



By 2030, a historic 60% of people worldwide will likely live in cities (23). But to ensure sustainable cities and communities, there is a **vital need to ensure the sustainability of rural communities first**. When rural communities are crippled by poverty, rural women and girls are too often forced to move to urban slums, for lack of income, where they continue to face multiple challenges, including exclusion, discrimination, violence and lack of sanitation facilities.

The global material footprint is rapidly growing, outpacing population and economic growth: if the global population reaches 9.6 billion by 2050, the equivalent of almost three planets will be required to sustain current lifestyles (24). Unsustainable consumption drives climate change and the **destruction of the environment, which disproportionately affects the lives and opportunities of rural women and girls**. GWI calls for the immediate adoption of gender-responsive climate policies promoting rural women's leadership.



As the world faces an increasingly critical need to act against climate change, **the important role that rural women and girls play in building resilience is unquestionable**: they are at the front of the battle lines when natural resources and agriculture is threatened. They also suffer disproportionately from climate disasters, as they are more likely to die during those disasters (25). Furthermore, climate change exacerbates existing inequalities, potentially leaving rural women and girls further behind.



The world's oceans - spreading over 70% of the planet - are in crisis from decimated fish stocks, pollution and acidification. **Women face the risks of ocean degradation with fewer assets and alternatives for income, and less resilience against mounting losses** (26). The contamination of the world's oceans affects women's livelihoods, but also their health and the health of their children. GWI urges collective mindfulness that conservation and sustainable development with regard to marine resources is necessary in order to preserve our oceans and the rights of rural women and girls.

Women and girls, particularly those who are poor and living in rural areas, often depend on forests for fuel, fodder and food. Yet, their **limited ownership of land reduces their capacity to adapt to losses or to make decisions about how land is used** (27). While most have extensive knowledge of traditions that are inherently sustainable, they are all **too often excluded from decisions about sustainable ecosystems**. GWI urges the global community to recognise women and girls' dependence on lands such as forests and to engage in protecting terrestrial ecosystems.



Disproportionately, women and girls, and even more predominantly rural and indigenous women and girls, remain poorly represented in formal mechanisms for negotiating and sustaining peace (28). This is discriminatory, entrenching gender disparities, as rural women and girls' voices are muted in decision-making processes. GWI persistently promotes the achievement of SDG16 of achieving peaceful, inclusive and sustainable societies, through the eradication of gender inequality.

Success of the SDGs depends on sufficient means to implement them, underpinned by a strong commitment to solidarity and cooperation. GWI advocates for the recognition that the SDGs will not be achieved without international solidarity and collaboration, calling on the global community to foster strategic partnerships with governments, private companies and institutions which can act as thought leaders and financiers, helping to provide lifelong learning opportunities and a place at the decision table for rural women and girls.





CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is clear that insufficient investment has been made in addressing the challenges faced by rural women and girls, including but not limited to, obtaining quality secondary and higher education; access to agricultural training; adequate promotion and protection of their land rights; access to drinking water and sanitation; access to adequate public services and infrastructures; access to information and services related to health care and family planning; protection from all forms of GBV and discrimination such as early and forced marriage and FGM; access to digital technology and financial literacy opportunities; equal representation in decision making at the local, regional, national and international level; adequate protection and promotion of rural indigenous knowledge and skills; and placing value on unpaid care and domestic work.

To allow all rural women and girls to invest their limitless potential in the realisation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development for a more equal, sustainable and just future for all, it is vital to tackle gender stereotypes, harmful social norms and systemic barriers to rural women's and girls' empowerment at the social, economic and political level.

Unless greater attention and care are provided for the world's rural women and girls, States risk falling short of their commitments to reach the sustainable development targets by 2030. GWI calls on governments, policy makers and communities to put rural women and girls on the front line of sustainable development efforts. Investing in rural women and girls' safety, economic and financial empowerment, education and rights - in time of both peace and crisis-empowers them to reach their full potential, build better lives and futures for themselves, their families and communities and allow them to participate as global leaders in the building of a climate resilient global community.





About GWI

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) located in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in some 60 countries with our National Federation and Associations (NFAs) and Independent Members. 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 maintains official relations with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

GWI operates with a small yet dedicated staff consisting of an Executive Director, a Junior Office Administrator, and a host of committed interns and volunteers. Additionally, our work is possible with the support of our tireless Board of Directors.



Stacy Dry Lara
Executive Director



Ciara Rainsby
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2019 GWI Fall Interns



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