



Graduate Women  
International (GWI)

# Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Stacy Dry Lara, Executive Director  
[sdl@graduatewomen.org](mailto:sdl@graduatewomen.org); Tel: +41 22 731 23 80

## **On International Day of the Girl, Graduate Women International reflects on 25 years of progress for girls**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 11 October 2019**— Today, Graduate Women International (GWI) celebrates girls around the world. In 2011, the United Nations General Assembly declared 11 October International Day of the Girl to recognise girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world. This year's theme "GirlForce – Unscripted and Unstoppable" marks 25 years of progress for girls since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, which constitutes the most progressive blueprint for advancing the rights of girls. Simultaneously, GWI celebrates the Convention on the Rights of the Child turning 30 this year. Since then, girls' movements have stood up against child marriage and gender-based violence; have promoted girls' education and demanded action on climate change.

GWI is encouraged by the progress made towards the rights of girls, particularly in the area of education. Along with [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 4](#) stipulating that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education by 2030 and according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the majority of girls worldwide complete primary school nowadays. Moreover, the global average of school life expectancy for girls rose above 12 years in the last 50 years. Hereby, it is noteworthy that the least developed countries show the greatest progress. There, school life expectancy jumped from 2.8 years in the 1970s to 8.9 years today.

"However, further action is needed to support girls because they continue to face a range of barriers throughout their lives", says Terry Oudraad, GWI President. "These include technical barriers such as a lack of proper facilities in schools to help managing menstruation, economic barriers such as the cost of childcare, and cultural barriers such as denial of education due to gender," she continues.

As a 100-year old organisation committed to improving girls' access to education, GWI has been supporting the aforementioned achievements through its own programmes, such as the [Bina Roy Partners in Development](#) projects that annually provide training to women and girls for literacy eradication, digital literacy training, vocational training, girls in science and gender-based violence workshops, advantages of staying in school workshops, livelihood skills training and courses on transitioning to university. The [Teachers for Rural Futures](#) programme provides young women in Beyunde Uganda the opportunity to earn a teaching degree from Makerere University. GWI also maintains a global partnership with [Girls Not Brides](#) a membership with [Menstrual Hygiene Day](#).

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 GWI intern, Anna Indermaur.*