



Graduate Women  
International (GWI)

# Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **On International Students' Day, Graduate Women International calls for safe access to school for all students**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 17 November 2019**— International Students' Day is observed by many universities around the world to celebrate the multiculturalism and diversity of their students. However, the origin of this day goes back to 1939, when Nazi Germany closed all Czechoslovakia higher education institutions, executed eight students and one professor and sent more than 1200 students to concentration camps after they had protested for the creation of an independent Czechoslovak Republic. On International Students' Day 2019, Graduate Women International (GWI) emphasises the critical need for students of all ages around the world to have safe access to school. To that effect, GWI supports the 87 countries who endorsed the [Safe Schools Declaration](#), which vows commitment to protect students, teachers, schools and universities from the worst effects of war.

However, a safe school environment is not only essential in times of war. As an organisation advocating for over 100 years for the safe access to quality education for all women and girls worldwide, GWI today emphasises that for students to thrive, schools and universities must be safe and welcoming places in order to improve student motivation to learn. In the absence of safe schools, an estimated 617 million children and adolescent students will be unable to reach minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics, although two-thirds of them are in school (UNICEF).

“Students are essential to the future of our world. Improving school safety reduces the stressful environments that many students, especially girls, all over the world often learn in”, says GWI President, Terry Oudraad. “Safe learning environments motivate both teachers and students, thereby improving the quality of education all around”, she adds. GWI has considered this in several of its General Assembly [resolutions](#) addressing for example violence at school or bullying.

Furthermore, GWI commits to safe access to quality education through its different projects. One example is the [Teachers for Rural Futures](#) programme, through which GWI is supporting the university education of five young female students from a rural district in Uganda, to obtain their Bachelor of Teaching degrees. The five students recently completed a successful [summer internship](#), which showed the excellent progress the young ladies are making towards becoming quality teachers, safety leaders and community role models for other young girls in this rural area of Uganda. They are expected to graduate in January 2020.

GWI is a membership-based international non-governmental organisation headquartered 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 the United Nations (UN) Economic and Social Council since 1947 and maintains official relations with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation as well as the International Labour Organisation.

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*Contributing to this press release is GWI intern, Anna Indermaur.*