

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **On Universal Children's Day, Graduate Women International (GWI) recalls Declaration of the Rights of the Child Principle 7 entitling all children the right to free and compulsory education**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 20 November 2019**—Universal Children's Day, introduced by the United Nations (UN), aims to raise awareness about the compound challenges children face around the world and to improve the welfare of all children. The date, purposefully designated, is the same day the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Declaration) was adopted, 20 November (1959). As century-long advocates for women and girls' safe access to lifelong, quality education, GWI takes Universal Children's Day as an opportunity to recall the [Declaration's Principle 7](#) that entitles every child the right to receive free and compulsory education, at least in the elementary stages. At the same time, GWI remains hugely concerned by the continued barriers children face to education, especially girls.

Gender discrimination, conflict and child labour, overwhelming stress and school fees are among the most prevalent barriers children face to education with girls suffering disproportionately because of cultural norms such as child marriage and lacking access to proper sanitation facilities. According to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 130 million girls between the age of 6 and 17 are out of school and 15 million girls of primary school age will never enter a classroom.

GWI tackles education barriers for girls in various ways on the policy level and the ground. Policy-wise, in recent years, the GWI General Assembly adopted [resolutions](#) on child marriage, female genital mutilation, violence at school and bullying. The [Bina Roy Partners in Development Programme](#) supports GWI National Federations and Associations to organise local projects designed to advance the status of women and girls through education and leadership development. One such project, hosted by the Sierra Leone Association of University Women, addressed school, gender-based violence by [raising awareness in rural schools about the detrimental effects of gender-based violence on girls' education](#). Furthermore, GWI is part of the networks [Girls Not Brides](#) and [Menstrual Hygiene Day](#), which both aim to create a platform of exchange between different organisations advocating for the rights of girls.

GWI is a membership-based international non-governmental organisation 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 the UN Economic and Social Council since 1947 and maintains official relations with UNESCO as well as the International Labour Organisation.

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