



Graduate Women  
International (GWI)

# Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Graduate Women International calls for stricter laws to eliminate discrimination against women and girls**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 1 March 2020**— Spawned from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS launched a Zero Discrimination campaign on World AIDS Day in 2013. Now marked annually as Zero Discrimination Day to emphasise that it applies to all issues of discrimination, it is the opportunity for global citizens to celebrate the right to live a full life with dignity for all people, without exception. Interestingly, the butterfly, with its capability to transform, has been designated as the Day's symbol. An organisation dedicated to improving access to lifelong, quality education for all women and girls worldwide, Graduate Women International (GWI) particularly highlights this year's theme, "Zero Discrimination against Women and Girls".

In many countries, discriminatory laws subject women and girls to undue restrictions from accessing essential services, such as healthcare and education. Disturbingly, female teachers are four times more likely than male teachers to experience discrimination in their job due to gender-related issues (Global Campaign for Education). Subsequently, GWI is marking Zero Discrimination Day by calling on all governments to realise their legal and moral obligation to remove and replace discriminatory laws and practices, enact laws protecting teachers from discrimination and effectively tackle underlying social issues triggering bias with the aim of achieving substantive equality; especially noting that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals will not be possible without eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls.

"However, ending discrimination is the responsibility of us all", says GWI President, Terry Oudraad. "A change in law often succeeds in a change in social norms. Hence, we can all play a part in ending discrimination, and we can all try to make a difference", she continues.

GWI has been tackling discrimination through education for over 100 years. Recently, with the adoption of Policy Resolution 2019/6 on the [fair and non-discriminatory treatment of refugees](#) and 2016/4 on [harassment](#). GWI national affiliates with more than 15'000 members worldwide demonstrate solidarity and inclusion by joining efforts to enable women and girls even from remote areas to access lifelong, quality education regardless of their background.

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

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*To this press release contributed GWI intern, Anna Indermaur.*

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