



9 November 2020  
Geneva, Switzerland

Dear Teachers for Rural Futures Supporters,

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose unprecedented challenges to the global community, GWI carries on working actively to further this crucial project with your generous support and puts all its efforts in safeguarding and promoting women and girls' access to education in this unprecedented period.

Not since World War II have so many countries around the world seen schools and educational institutions go into lockdown at around the same time and for the same reason. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic is forcing unprecedented school shutdowns worldwide, blocking some 1.6 billion learners at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels from the classroom. Closures of schools and other centres of learning have impacted 94% of the world's student population according to UNESCO. The COVID-19 pandemic has created the greatest disruption of education in modern history and exacerbated pre-existing disparities in education by reducing opportunities for many of the world's most vulnerable populations to continue their education – those living in rural areas, girls, refugees, persons with disabilities and displaced persons.

In this context, and whilst we await more favourable conditions to start the new cycle of the Teachers for Rural Futures programme, GWI is putting all its efforts in calling attention on the urgent need to include women's and girls' higher education as a critical stake in the response to the current crisis. In September 2020, GWI addressed as statement to the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Commission on Social Development (2021), urging, Member States to eliminate the technology gap in education globally such that best distance learning practices reach children and youth, especially girls and young women, who are most at risk.

Without concrete steps toward global, concerted action, words are at risk of falling empty. This is why GWI is currently building up the potential for action and impact of its 14 000 women-strong international network of members through the GWI International Advocacy Webinar Series, "Putting the pieces together and raising women's voices through strategic advocacy in the changing world". The goal of the series is to increase our membership's knowledge of GWI's advocacy work and provide them with the key resources and tools to build their own, grassroot strategic advocacy plan on key, current issues affecting women and girls globally: gender-based violence and the challenges of remote learning.

We are also currently refining our plans to sponsor four new young women while following our five successfully graduated student teachers as they begin their professional careers, education champions and role-models for the younger generations of female students and aspiring teachers in their communities. The current global challenge has only delayed the start of this new cycle of the Teachers for Rural Futures Project and GWI remains united and committed to pursuing our mission, thanks to the generous donations to the GWI Teachers for Rural Futures project.

With appreciation,  
Graduate Women International  
Stacy Dry Lara, Executive Director and Clémence Mathiaud, Programme Officer

