

UNITED NATIONS DAY



24 OCTOBER

United Nations (UN) Day, celebrated on 24 October, marks the anniversary of the UN Charter’s entry into force in 1945. To commemorate this day, GWI highlights its longstanding engagement with the United Nations and its advocacy for the right to safe, equal to quality education for women and girls of all ages. This publication reflects on GWI’s historic relationship with the UN, presents recent advocacy across UN bodies, and introduces GWI’s dedicated UN Representatives worldwide.

GWI AND THE UN: A HISTORICAL PARTNERSHIP

GWI, founded in 1919, has maintained a meaningful and enduring relationship with the UUN for decades. Granted special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1947, GWI was among the first ten international organizations formally recognized within the UN system. This partnership rests on a shared commitment to peace, human rights, and the advancement of women through education. From post-war reconstruction to the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, GWI has aligned its mission with the UN’s evolving priorities.

Over the years, GWI has contributed to key milestones, including advocacy for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and active participation in the World Conferences on Women, particularly the 1995 Fourth Conference in Beijing, where the Beijing Platform for Action became a landmark framework for gender equality. Through its ECOSOC status, GWI has delivered written and oral statements to every session of the Human Rights Council and the Commission on the Status of Women, and has participated in numerous commissions and UN forums. Working closely with UNESCO, UN Women, and UNICEF, GWI remains a trusted civil society partner, ensuring that the voices of women graduates and their communities inform global dialogue and decision-making at the highest levels.

GWI 2025 Advocacy at the UN: A Year of Strong Voices

In 2025, GWI continued its advocacy for women and girls by submitting impactful statements to UN bodies including the Human Rights Council (HRC), the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Commission for Social Development (CSocD), and more. These submissions reflected GWI’s commitment to advancing education, gender equality, and human rights through informed, evidence-based advocacy. Across these engagements, GWI emphasized urgent global challenges from poverty and social exclusion to digital inequality and the protection of education in conflict zones. By addressing these concerns, GWI ensured that the voices of women graduates and grassroots affiliates were represented at the highest international forums. This year of advocacy illustrates what defines GWI at the UN which is persistence, expertise, and a belief that quality education is both a fundamental right and a pathway to peace and equality.



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HRC – Beijing Platform & Education Commitment

At the 58th session of the HRC, GWI marked the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action by urging Member States to modernize their commitments with concrete action. The statement highlighted persistent gaps in girls’ access to education and called for stronger policies to eliminate gender stereotypes, reform curricula and invest in educators. Emphasizing accountability and data, GWI reminded the Council that education must evolve to meet today’s social realities. As affirmed, “Education is not progress if it excludes women and girls. Member States must reaffirm the Beijing Platform with modern tools—digital access, data, and accountability.”

HRC – Girls’ Education in Conflict and Crisis

At the 59th session, GWI addressed the urgent protection of girls’ education in conflict and crisis-affected regions. Drawing attention to the Safe Schools Declaration and the rise of hate speech, GWI called for targeted funding, psychosocial support and community-based programs such as Teachers for Rural Futures. The statement underscored that denying education in times of conflict perpetuates cycles of violence. GWI powerfully stated, “A girl’s classroom should never be a frontline. Protecting her education in conflict is protecting the future of peace.”

HRC – Digital Divide and AI Inclusion

During the 60th session, GWI confronted one of the most critical challenges of the decade: the gender digital divide. The statement argued that digital literacy and AI access are extensions of the right to education. It warned that if women and girls are excluded from technological spaces, inequality will deepen. GWI called on governments to integrate digital skills into national curricula and to protect women from online harms. “Digital rights are human rights. Without women in technology, AI risks becoming the next barrier—not the bridge.”

CSW 69 – Digital Equality & AI Workforce

At CSW69, GWI joined a large coalition of women’s organizations to advocate for inclusive digital transformation. The statement emphasized that women must be prepared not only to use technology but to lead in designing AI systems. Highlighting global disparities in internet access and digital infrastructure, GWI urged Member States to invest in online education, safe digital environments and AI workforce training. As raised in the statement, “AI will shape tomorrow’s equality. Women must not just use these tools—they must build them.”

CSocD – Poverty, Inclusion and Education

At the CSocD, GWI focused on the intersection of gender, poverty and education. Echoing the Copenhagen Declaration, the statement insisted that poverty eradication cannot succeed without investing in women’s education. GWI called for multidimensional social policies, stronger partnerships with NGOs and national poverty benchmarks. As concluded, “Poverty is gendered. Without investing in women’s education, social inclusion remains a promise, not a policy.”

THE IMPACT OF GWI ADVOCACY AT THE UN

Over the years, GWI has transformed its consultative status within the UN system into meaningful influence bridging voices of women graduates and grassroots organisations with the world’s highest policy-making forums. By speaking out in key bodies such as the HRC, the CSW and the CSocD, GWI ensures that education, gender equality and human rights are not merely discussed but acted upon. GWI advocacy work with the UN, its agencies and collaboration with other international organizations, plays critical role in supporting our National Federations and Associations with in-country governments action plans to develop and implement policies. We invite you to read our reports and join us to remove the barriers to girls gaining education.



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Bringing grassroots perspectives to global policy:

GWI's international membership and network of graduate women mean that its interventions reflect lived realities from rural classrooms to city campuses, from developing countries to conflict-affected zones. This grounded presence strengthens GWI's credibility and impact.

Shaping the agenda on education and gender equality:

GWI's advocacy emphasises that education is a right, not a privilege, and that the education of women and girls is foundational for sustainable development, peace and human dignity. The 2025 statements on conflict-zone education, digital rights and poverty inclusion demonstrate how GWI adapts its policy lens to evolving global challenges.

Driving accountability and monitoring mechanisms

Through written statements, oral interventions and advocacy at UN sessions, GWI holds Member States and UN bodies accountable to commitments such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These activities enhance transparency and reinforce the link between global policy and local change.

Fostering partnerships within the UN system

With regular participation and collaboration alongside agencies such as Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), UN Women, and UNICEF, GWI builds coalitions, contributes to side-events and strengthens civil society-government dialogue

The influence of GWI's advocacy extends beyond mere presence and voice; it has the ability to transform frameworks, shape policy, and elevate perspectives that are often overlooked at the core of the UN.



GW I UN REPRESENTATIVES AROUND THE WORLD

To complement its global advocacy footprint, GWI maintains dedicated UN Representatives at the three main UN campuses. Their roles ensure continuity, responsiveness, and a vital link between local realities and global policy on education, gender equality, and human rights. Together, these regional offices enable GWI to act globally and locally, shaping policy, advocating for the education of women and girls, and building lasting partnerships within the UN system.

GENEVA

In Geneva, GWI's Representatives actively engage with the HRC, the Social Forum of the HRC and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). They cooperate with prominent NGO coalitions (such as the NGO for Human Rights Geneva, of which GWI has been president since 2022 and the Committee on the Status of Women Geneva). The Geneva team ensures that human rights-based education and women's rights concerns stay visible in UN-human rights deliberations.

Representatives: Elena Bauchiero; Stacy Dry Lara (Executive Director & UN-Rep)



NEW YORK

Based at the UN headquarters in New York, GWI’s delegation covers major bodies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the CSW, the CSoD, UNICEF and the High-Level Political Forum, and more. The New York team serves as GWI’s frontline for global advocacy, engagement with Member States and the UN General Assembly.

Representatives: Dr. Maureen Byrne; Maryella Hannum



PARIS

In Paris, GWI is one of the few women’s NGOs that maintains Special Partnership with UNESCO. Here, focus areas include adult education, literacy, higher education, STEM for women, and poverty-education linkages. The Paris team connects global education policy with university-level advocacy and local initiatives.

Representatives: Dominique Ciavatti; Eliane Didier



VIENNA

The Vienna office handles UN bodies related to crime prevention and narcotics (such as the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs). Its special emphasis lies at the intersection of education, women and adolescent girls within security, crime and justice frameworks.

Representatives: Elisabeth Francis; Reinhild Strauss



LOOKING AHEAD: GWI’S VISION WITHIN THE UN SYSTEM

As GWI looks to the future, its commitment to the UN remains rooted in a single, enduring conviction: educated women shape peaceful, equitable and sustainable societies. Building on over seven decades of presence within the UN system, GWI will continue advancing policy change through advocacy, partnership and accountability.

In the coming years, GWI will prioritise some strategic areas:

- Promoting education in emerging global agendas
From artificial intelligence to crisis response and climate resilience, GWI will ensure that debates shaping the future include the rights, leadership and safety of women and girls.
- Strengthening youth and intergenerational advocacy
GWI seeks to empower the next generation of women graduates by expanding engagement with young voices within UN mechanisms, mentoring future delegates and nurturing leadership in global governance.
- Deepening global partnerships
Collaboration with UN agencies, NGOs and academic institutions will remain essential to building cross-sector action on SDG 4 (Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

GWI’s vision is to remain a bridge between grassroots realities and international diplomacy, ensuring that policies shaped in New York, Geneva, Paris, and Vienna reflect the lived experiences of women and girls everywhere.

On UN Day, GWI reaffirms its commitment to the UN Charter, advocating for education as a human right and a means for global progress. GWI’s mission is to empower every woman and girl to learn and lead toward a just world. As global challenges change, GWI remains determined to advocate for women's education, believing that educated women lead to the transformation of nations.

GWI thanks intern Mila METIVIER, for her contribution to this publication.

