



GWI UPDATE – 03 December 2025



— Graduate Women International (GWI) News —

16 Days, 16 Violence Realities That Silence Learning

On 25 November, GWI kicked off its annual 16 Days of Activism (16 Days) against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) campaign, a global call inviting individuals, communities, and institutions to stand together and take action to end all forms of GBV. This year, GWI organized a powerful campaign that spotlights each day from 25 November to 10 December a different form of GBV and its impact on girls' and women's education. From digital violence to harmful norms, from economic abuse to conflict-related GBV, the campaign explores how violence, structural, cultural and in individual/familial setting, restricts rights, safety, wellbeing, and learning opportunities.

For this year's 16 Days campaign, the Marbella University Women's Association (AMUM) also launched an inspiring contribution to the global movement through a video that sheds light on the realities faced by women and girls. All are encouraged to watch, share widely, and help elevate their message throughout the 16 Days. You can access this video on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

GWI invites readers to follow, engage, and share these campaigns to spread awareness and mobilize collective action. **Access the full GWI campaign in English [HERE](#) and in Spanish [HERE](#).** A heartfelt thank you to the Spanish-Speaking Cultural Bridge for their thoughtful and dedicated translation support.

Rise and Lead on Giving Tuesday

On 2 December, GWI joined the Giving Tuesday global movement, an annual reminder of the power of collective generosity. While Giving Tuesday is over, it's never too late to support GWI education programs. Every contribution, no matter the size or timing, helps strengthen GWI's work to advance the rights, education and leadership of women and girls worldwide. To celebrate this year's Giving Tuesday, GWI created the "Rise and Lead" song that can be heard [HERE](#). Every photo in this video represents a life changed through access to education through the GWI Teachers for Rural Futures program. Your generosity supports tuition, books, housing, and training for young women from rural Uganda communities who will become teachers and expand access to education where it is most needed. **If you haven't had the chance to give yet, GWI warmly encourages you to do so, because it never too late to make a difference.**

GWI Co-sponsors House of Lords Event with Widows Rights International

On 1 December, GWI co-sponsored the Widows Human Rights event at the House of Lords, Westminster. The event was organized by Widows Rights International (WRI) and kindly hosted by Baroness Verma. GWI joined fellow cosponsoring organizations Soroptimist International, the National Alliance of Women's Organisations, and ADVANCE, bringing collective attention to an often-overlooked dimension of widows' rights. The event during the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence highlighted the human rights violations faced by widows.

Around the world, an estimated 300 million widows face disproportionate discrimination, social exclusion, property loss, poverty, and violations of their rights. The event explored how widowhood intersects with displacement, armed conflict, migration, COVID-related loss, and legal disenfranchisement, as well as the cultural practices that often silence or isolate widows. A key focus was the role of story-telling as advocacy, enabling widows' voices to inform policy development, social recognition, and rights-based reforms.

Immediate Past President of GWI, Patrice Wellesley-Cole, who attended the event, remarked: *"It was a powerful and moving gathering. Hearing widows stories reminds us that behind every statistic is a life, a family, and a human story. I was proud to represent GWI and stand in solidarity with the women who are courageously demanding recognition, justice, and dignity."*

GWI values collaboration with partner organizations to advance rights-based approaches to justice and dignity for women globally. Our involvement in this event underscores our ongoing commitment to international advocacy and to ensuring that widowhood, an often invisible status affecting millions, is brought into public dialogue, research, and human-rights policy discussions. GWI congratulates WRI for organizing this important event.

— GWI Member News —

Conversation on gender stereotypes held by the Spanish-Speaking Cultural Bridge

On 11 November, the GWI Spanish-Speaking Cultural Bridge hosted a virtual conversation titled “Stereotypes: How They Are Created and How They Are Passed Across Generations.” The event brought together participants from Spain, Mexico and Paraguay for an engaging, cross-regional discussion on how gender stereotypes emerge in families, schools and the media, and how they continue to shape opportunities for women and girls. Speakers highlighted the role of education, culture and public policy in challenging inherited biases, and emphasized the need to foster creativity, critical thinking and inclusive narratives from early childhood. They also shared national experiences and initiatives addressing gender inequality, from art-based approaches to gender-responsive legislation and community-level strategies. The event offered a rich exchange of perspectives and underscored the importance of collaborative, intergenerational efforts to build more equitable societies. GWI congratulates the Spanish-Speaking Cultural Bridge for organizing such a thoughtful and stimulating exchange, and for strengthening dialogue across regions on issues that affect women and girls worldwide.

Three generations of GWI membership

GWI is proud to celebrate a remarkable story of intergenerational commitment within its global network. This year, Dr Başak Ovacık, newly elected President of University Women of Europe (UWE), stands alongside both her mother and her daughter as active advocates for women’s rights and education. Her mother, Ayşegül Yılmaz, a retired teacher and long-standing member of the Antalya branch of the Turkish Association of University Women (TAUW), has dedicated decades to advancing opportunities for women and girls. Continuing this legacy, Dr Ovacık’s daughter Lâl, a biologist and GWI Young Member from the Istanbul branch, represents the newest generation of leadership and engagement. Together, they embody the spirit of GWI’s advocacy passed from one generation to the next, strengthened by shared values, lifelong learning and a vision for a more equitable future.



A three-generation commitment to GWI’s mission

Pictured: In the front row seated Dr Başak Ovacık (right) alongside her mother, Ayşegül Yılmaz (left) and daughter, Lâl (standing).

AMUM fall workshop: “Osuna, Culture, and Power”

AMUM recently held a fall workshop exploring the rich cultural and historical heritage of Osuna, a city in the province of Seville, Spain. Founded in 1548, Osuna’s university (one of the oldest in the country) was established by the Téllez-Girón family, who recognized and invested in the transformative power of knowledge. During the visit on 22 November, participants had the opportunity to discover remarkable examples of Renaissance and Baroque architecture, painting and sculpture that continue to define the city’s identity. The group also toured the renowned Calle San Pedro, designated by UNESCO as the most beautiful street in Europe, adding an unforgettable highlight to the experience.

— GWI at the United Nations (UN) —

14th annual Business and Human Rights Form side event on digital equality

On 26 November, GWI attended the side event “New Frontiers of Business and Gender Equality: Strengthening Partnerships and Action to Promote Digital Equality and Accountability to CEDAW”(Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women), hosted at the Delegation of the European Union to the UN in Geneva. The session brought together UN entities, states, civil society, and private-sector actors to examine how digital transformation is reshaping the rights and opportunities of women and girls.

Discussions highlighted that technology, while central to innovation and economic progress, is increasingly being weaponized against women and girls through online harassment, biased algorithms, and unequal access. Participants stressed the urgent need to close the gender digital divide, strengthen digital-rights protections, and ensure coordinated, cross-border approaches to technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Panelists emphasized that digital governance frameworks, including CEDAW, remain essential but must be interpreted in light of fast-moving technological challenges. They called for long-term investment in digital and AI safety, meaningful inclusion of women and girls in STEM and AI development, and stronger corporate accountability to ensure technology upholds, rather than undermines, human rights.

GWI’s participation reflects the organization’s engagement in global efforts to ensure that women and girls can safely access, shape, and benefit from digital innovation. GWI thanks intern, Mila Metivier, for her contributions.

Key Highlights from the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Pre-Session 51

Submitted by Elena Bauchiero, GWI United Nations Representative, Geneva

GWI attended the UPR Pre-Session 51 held from 26–28 November 2025, where National Human Rights Institutions and civil society organisations presented their analyses of the human rights situations in the countries under review. GWI summarises below the key concerns and recommendations raised for Australia, Austria, and Nepal, where its National Federations and Associations (NFAs) are actively engaged. **Click [HERE](#) to view all country statements and presentations on UPR Info's Country Pages.**

Australia

The Australian Centre for Disability Law highlighted ongoing challenges for people with disabilities, including unequal access to education, employment, housing, and health services. Of particular concern, students with disabilities face exclusion and discriminatory discipline, while women and girls with disabilities experience disproportionately high levels of violence. Youth Law Australia raised concerns about youth justice, noting the minimum age of criminal responsibility and its non-compliance with international standards, alongside ongoing violence against children and mental health issues, and recommended fully incorporating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into domestic legislation. The Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA) called attention to the rights of Indigenous Peoples, urging measures to strengthen self-determination, ensure equal representation, eliminate discriminatory laws, improve national human rights infrastructure, and engage fully with Indigenous communities and civil society.

Austria

Dreikönigsaktion (DKA Austria), reporting on children's rights, raised concerns about the impact of environmental harm on youth and children, calling for their participation in climate and environmental decision-making. It also pointed out the risk of poverty and social exclusion, particularly affecting migrant children and children with disabilities. The Austrian League for Human Rights further noted a return to policies supporting segregated schools for children with disabilities, resulting in discrimination, and urged the development of inclusive school systems. It also highlighted the need for corporate accountability in upholding human rights. Both organisations recommended addressing the absence of a national independent body to monitor children's rights and the lack of a National Action Plan, which should be developed as a strategic coordination tool.

Nepal

Dalit Welfare Association highlighted that Dalits continue to face caste-based discrimination, social exclusion, and violence in Nepal, particularly through practices of untouchability and caste

persecution, despite legal protections. Recommendations included ensuring Dalit representation in Parliament, raising public awareness on harmful traditional ideologies, and promoting their rights, dignity, and empowerment. The Lawyers' Association for Human Rights of Nepalese Indigenous Peoples drew attention to issues related to customary lands, development projects, and business activities that cause land dispossession, forced evictions, cultural erosion, militarization, and criminalization of Indigenous defenders. Of particular concern is the lack of formal recognition of rights for Indigenous women, girls, and persons with disabilities. Recommendations emphasized the need to respect self-determination, protect ancestral lands, address forms of modern colonization, and ensure the inclusion of vulnerable groups in legal and social frameworks.

— Give the Gift of Education —

Girls Education for Brighter Futures is a GWI program that funds global education, gender equality and women's empowerment projects. Donations to this program, impact women and girls' lives by offering education and income-generating education. One of the latest initiatives, "Training Adolescents, Teachers, and Parents in Luuka District in Making Reusable Sanitary Pads", funded by the Bina Roy Partners in Development project, is helping to improve the personal health of women and girls, teaching them skills that provide new sources of income, and increasing school retention rates for girls in the Luuka District, in Eastern Uganda. GWI invites readers to click [HERE](#) to learn more about this project and is grateful to all the generous support of the Girls Education for Brighter Futures program. GWI appreciates all contributions towards these projects. Please click [HERE](#). **Thank you for making such a difference!**

— Did you know? —

GWI's global advocacy at the UN

In 2025, GWI actively advanced the rights of women and girls by submitting a series of statements to key UN bodies, including the Human Rights Council, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Commission for Social Development. These contributions addressed urgent issues such as digital inequality, poverty, education in conflict zones, and the persistent impact of gender stereotypes. Through evidence-based advocacy, GWI ensures that the perspectives of women graduates and grassroots members were heard at the highest international levels. This sustained engagement reflects GWI's hallmark qualities at the UN, expertise, persistence, and a firm belief that education is both a human right and a pathway to peace. To learn more about GWI's historic

relationship with the UN, recent advocacy, and the work of GWI's UN Representatives worldwide, you can read our UN Day publication [HERE](#).

— Dates and Events —

24 Nov-10 Dec	16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence
9 December	Anti-Corruption Day
10 December	Human Rights Day
24 January	International Day of Education

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Empowering women and girls through lifelong education for leadership, decision-making and peace.

GWI, formerly IFUW, is in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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