Graduate Women International (GWI)

International Day of Rural Women
15 October 2026



What is International Day of Rural Women?

Observed annually on 15 October, the International Day of Rural Women (IDRM) recognizes the **essential role rural women play in efforts to advance food security, increase agricultural development, and eliminate rural poverty** (4). Created by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 2007, this day exists as a global moment to celebrate rural women while acknowledging the unique challenges they endure. The day especially emphasizes Indigenous women, highlighting the critical role they play in global agriculture. This 15 October, Graduate Women International (GWI) echoes the United Nations' call for governments and societies to invest in rural women's economic empowerment, safety, and leadership through policy amendments, assistance programs supporting their equal pay and access to resources, and **quality education centralizing practical entrepreneurial and financial skills.**

Discover Fast Facts on International Day of Rural Women

Rural women comprise over a quarter of the world's total population, and they represent about **43 percent** of the total agricultural labor force in developing countries (1).

Rural women's **unpaid work burden** exceeds that of rural men, often due to time spent collecting water, caring for children, or supporting elderly family members (2).

More rural women **experience domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV)** than urban women, while also having less access to medical and psychosocial services (3).

Only **39 percent of rural girls** attend secondary school compared to **45 percent of rural boys**, 59 percent of urban girls, and 60 percent of urban boys (3).

2026 theme: Rural Women Farmers Caring for Mother Nature



- This year's theme is **Rural Women Farmers Caring for Mother Nature,** highlighting the critical role that women around the globe assume in agrifood systems, including cultivation, production, distribution, and trade.
- The year specifically addresses the roles of **rural, Afrodescendant, Indigenous, and young women farmers,** as they face evolving structural barriers including unequal land rights, insufficient infrastructure, economic and leadership exclusion, and **limited access to quality education.**

In the face of these challenges, GWI acknowledges that **closing the gender gaps** in agrifood systems is essential to empowering rural women farmers with **economic autonomy, social mobility, and the ability to make educated choices about their finances.**

At the same time, decreasing gender inequalities in farming wages and production can reduce food insecurity for 45 million people, while simultaneously increasing global Gross Domestic Product by one trillion United States dollars (5).

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- GWI underscores that **quality secondary education as a central component of closing the gender gap** within agrifood systems, as literacy, numeracy, and practical financial skills prepare rural women to enter successfully into agricultural leadership spaces.

- A comprehensive **education in trade, entrepreneurship, and business** further expands economic opportunities for rural women, equipping them to navigate agricultural markets, develop business plans, and participate effectively in community decision-making.

- Secondary education provides **communication skills** which rural women can leverage to negotiate with suppliers, advocate for their needs, and become public representatives of their communities.

- As this International Day of Rural Women falls within the year of the Rural Farmers Caring for Mother Nature, GWI reafirms its commitment to advancing the safe, quality education and lifelong training at the highest levels for rural women and women farmers globally.



Delve Deeper Into GWI Initiatives Related to Rural Women

Teachers for Rural Futures



GWI's Teachers for Rural Futures program supports rural Ugandan young women in earning university degrees in education to become teachers and female role models for girls in their rural communities. Click HERE to learn more, and HERE to donate!

Bina Roy Partners in Development Projects (BRPID)



The 2024-2025 BRPID initiatives address the sanitary needs of girls in rural Uganda, as well as educating girls in rural Turkey.

Click HERE to explore the 2024-2025 BRPID related to rural women.

GWI Publications

GWI has a long history of advocating for rural women's rights through education, lifelong learning, financial and digital literacy, and equitable access to economic opportunities and resources. Explore GWI's advocacy and publications below.

1. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 62nd Session
2. Data Segregation for the Empowerment of Rural Women
3. 2025 Toolkit
4. 2021 Toolkit
5. 2019 Toolkit

Addressing the Digital Divide



GWI is committed to closing the digital divide between rural and urban girls.

Click HERE to explore GWI's work related to this at the CSW67.

Click HERE to read the CSW67 report.

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Content References

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3. Facts & Figures | UN Women – Headquarters, www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/commission-on-the-status-of-women-2012/facts-and-figures. Accessed 15 Oct. 2026.
4. "Rural Women's Day | Background." United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/en/observances/rural-women-day/background. Accessed 14 Oct. 2026.
5. "Closing the Gender Gap in Agrifood Systems Can Help Reduce Food Insecurity and Boost Global GDP: FAO Gender Experts." Newsroom, 8 Oct. 2026, www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/closing-the-gender-gap-in-agrifood-systems-can-help-reduce-food-insecurity-and-boost-global-gdp--fao-gender-experts/en.





GWI thanks Isabel Colburn, GWI intern, for her valuable contribution to this infographic.

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gwi@graduatewomen.org

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