GWI UPDATE – 28 October 2026



GWI releases International Day of Rural Women infographic. Click to access.

— Graduate Women International (GWI) News —

GWI participates in Geneva Peace Forum High-Level Opening

On 12 October, GWI participated in the 2026 Geneva Peace Forum (GPF) High-Level Opening, held at the International Conference Centre Geneva (CICG). Developed from Geneva Peace Week, the first GPF brought together United Nations officials, academics, human rights advocates, civil-society leaders, and government officials from around the globe to collaborate in discussions of sustainable peacebuilding and effective conflict resolution. The High-Level Opening emphasized the GPF 2026 theme, "Choose Peace," urging listeners to consider peacebuilding as both an active decision and strategic necessity at every level.

The five speakers highlighted how creating enduring peace requires the inclusion of women and young people. GWI took particular interest in sentiments expressed by United Nations Geneva Director-General Tatiana Valovaya, who stated "Young people, women, and local leaders are not merely the beneficiaries of peace. They are among its most important architects." His Excellency Julius Maada, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, echoed this by identifying women and young people as essential actors in peacebuilding. He also outlined Sierra Leone's Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Act of 2022, which mandates that women hold at least 30 percent of public office positions in Sierra Leone.

GWI recognizes secondary education as a significant factor in increasing girls' and women's participation in creating sustainable peace at both local and international levels. With access to education, girls and women gain the practical knowledge and skills necessary to contribute to peacebuilding work, including policy analysis, research strategy, effective communication, negotiation, and mediation. Furthermore, education provides girls and women with access to networks outside of their homes, creating pathways to organize in local advocacy initiatives, assume leadership positions, or even expand their work to international levels.

GWI participates in GPF Panel on Financing Women's Economic Empowerment

On 15 October, GWI continued its GPF presence with active participation in the 2026 GPF panel, "Financing Women's Economic Empowerment as a Peace Dividend: From National Budgets to Community Recovery" at the CIGC. The event consisted of two separate panels which spoke to each other across varying dimensions. The first panel focused mainly on structural and institutional policies increasing women's global economic participation, and the second discussed the consequences of such policies on women's lived realities.

The second panel spoke about valuing rural women in global economic conversations. Sofia Burtak, President of the Rural Women Business Network in Ukraine, described the innovation-driven business networks between rural women, noting their reciprocal exchange of both entrepreneurial knowledge and internal power. She stated how governments and civil societies must invest in rural women's business developments, as this supports both rural women's livelihoods and economic stimulation at the national level.

GWI consistently recognizes the necessity of investing in rural women globally, including rural women producers, entrepreneurs, and business owners. Equipping rural women with safe, quality education and lifelong training to the highest level increases their practical entrepreneurial skills and widens the scope of their network. These priorities remain central to GWI's advocacy, and GWI thanks intern Isabel Colburn for her participation at the GPF. Click HERE to access the GWI International Day of Rural Women infographic.

— GWI Member News —

Spanish-Speaking Culture Bridge virtual dialogue on care systems

On 13 October, the Spanish-Speaking Culture Bridge (SSCB) met virtually for its session centering the theme, "Care Systems as a Pathway to Equality." The SSCB, created through GWI's Membership Marketplace, allows National Federations and Associations (NFAs) to connect

through cross-regional initiatives. NFAs in Argentina, Bolivia, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, and Spain organized this SSBC session, which discussed care work as an invisible labor undertaken by women globally.

Dr. Alicia Girón, economist and previous president of the International Association for Feminist Economics, opened this conversation by emphasizing how care work is the backbone of functioning social structures and family systems around the world. These roles, largely unpaid and performed by women, exist in a sector of the informal economy which denies its workers retirement pension, disregards labor rights, and reinforces gender inequality between men and women. Scholar and researcher Dr. Patricio Dobrée continued this conversation, analyzing social policies related to care work in different countries. He expressed the need for a cultural shift in attitudes related to care work, as the structures that normalize this labor as unpaid, largely women's labor also perpetuate gender inequality.

The meeting concluded with questions from listeners. GWI thanks Isabel Usobiaga and Isabel Colburn for their participation in this meeting.

— GWI at the United Nations (UN) —

GWI Contributes to Beijing+35 Discussions

On 13-14 October GWI participated in discussions at the "Moving Forwards Linking Beijing+30 and Beijing+35," organized by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, Geneva (NGO CSW Geneva). The event brought together United Nations and its agency leadership with civil society representatives to examine progress, gaps, and priorities in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. Discussions addressed education and training for women, human rights, and emerging issues including artificial intelligence and technology.

The event forms part of NGO CSW Geneva's consultation process leading toward the Beijing+35 review in 2030. Working groups, expert roundtables, and dialogue with Member States will contribute to civil society recommendations ahead of the planned United Nations Economic Commission for Europe regional consultation in October 2029. This process provides opportunities to advance education priorities and connect the Beijing commitments with the 2030 Agenda. NGO CSW Geneva will issue a final report and summary of the October event. GWI is monitoring their release and will share them with members when available. GWI congratulates NGO CSW Geneva on organizing this successful and informative event.

— Give the Gift of Education —

GWI's Teachers for Rural Futures program has connected girls and women in rural Northern and Eastern Uganda with secondary education and teacher training since 2015. Donations, including monthly gifts, support these students in their goal of becoming certified educators in their communities. This initiative will provide 2000 children per year with access to quality education. Click HERE to donate today.

— Did you know? —

Did you know that on 15 October, GWI celebrated the International Day of Rural Women with the creation of a new infographic? This infographic, published in Women's United Nations Report Network, outlines the disproportionate barriers rural women face globally. For example, according to UN Women data, 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. The infographic also celebrates rural women, specifically acknowledging their vast contributions to advancing food security and increasing agricultural development. The GWI remains committed to supporting rural women around the globe through its Teachers for Rural Futures program, Bina Roy projects, and United Nations advocacy. Click HERE to access the infographic and learn more about rural women internationally.

— Dates and Events —

28 October	GWI Annual Meeting, virtual
23-25 November	United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights, Geneva
25 Nov-10 Dec	16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, Global

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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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