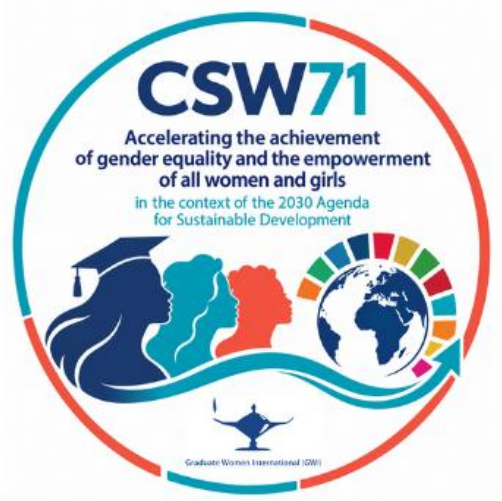
GWI UPDATE – 11 November 2026



GWI Commission on the Status of Women 71st session logo.

— Graduate Women International (GWI) News —

GWI Connects brings members together for first Annual Meeting

Following constitutional changes adopted by the GWI General Assembly in 2025 requiring annual meetings in non-triennial years, on 28 October, GWI hosted its first virtual Annual Meeting. The 8:00 a.m. Central European Time (CET) session welcomed Dr. Vidya Yeravdekar, Chancellor of Symbiosis International University and Principal Director of Symbiosis Society, as its guest speaker. The 5:00 p.m. CET session featured award-winning lawyer, author, and scholar Mubanga Kalimamukwento.

Drawing on her academic research, literary work, and family's legacy of educational advocacy, Kalimamukwento explored how education and storytelling inform her work on gender justice and survivorship. She examined cultural expectations that women endure suffering in silence and discussed how storytelling creates space for women's experiences, particularly those of long-term HIV survivors, to be heard.

Dr. Yeravdekar brought a personal perspective to women's empowerment through education, tracing her family's commitment to girls' learning and the founding of Symbiosis as an institution grounded in diversity and inclusion. Through the story of a scholarship recipient who overcame significant challenges to study nursing, she illustrated how financial support and educational opportunities can change the course of a woman's life.

Each session included an overview of GWI's strategic direction, a guest speaker presentation, a video showcasing the work of National Federations and Associations (NFAs), speed networking, and the launch of initiatives such as the Women and Words book club. Click HERE to watch the 8 a.m. CET session with Dr. Vidya, and click HERE to watch the 5 p.m. CET session and hear from Kalimamukwento.

Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) and Graduate Women New Zealand (GWNZ) Membership Marketplace Peer-to-Peer Webinar on 23 November

Join the GWI Membership Marketplace, Peer-to-Peer webinar sponsored by CFUW GWI Supporters Network and GWNZ on Monday, 23 November 2026, at 8:00 p.m. CET for a Pros and Cons of Digital Education conversation. Featuring Joy Hurst, GWI Vice President Governance and former National President of CFUW, and Andrea Robertson, Senior Practice Fellow at the Dunedin College of Education, the discussion will explore the advantages and disadvantages of digital education. GWI members will be invited to share their perspectives and experiences. Click HERE to register for the session. Please see the flyer at the end of the Update for more details.

— GWI Member News —

Indian Federation of University Women's Associations (IFUWA) quilt workshop

On 9 September, the University Women's Association (UWA) Pune, an affiliate of GWI's Indian Federation of University Women's Associations (IFUWA), held a quilting workshop for members under its Chhandarang (Hobby Hues) Program. Participants learned to layer fabric and sew small pieces into decorative baby quilts. They took home their handmade creations, eager to use their new skills to make full-size bedcovers from sarees and bedsheets, with the goal to share their finished work at the next program.

This ongoing Hobby Hues project was started by Dr Meera Bondre (currently GWI Vice President Membership) as a joint venture with the non-government organization, Arbutus and UWA Pune in 1995. She started this with the purpose of empowering women and girls through teaching them arts and crafts. These are creative income generating skills like sewing, stitching, embroidery, knitting, crochet, painting, macramé, candle and toy making, and more.

"[The] Hobby Hues program is very dear to my heart as I started it in 1995, and it continues till date successfully. I feel some creative members in other NFAs may feel like starting something similar after getting to read about this," said Dr Bondre. "This is an important activity as many women coming from modest financial backgrounds, on our recommendation,

get orders to work from home or get jobs and become self-reliant. From time to time we organize exhibitions when articles made by them are kept for display and sale. The program is a small step towards poverty reduction, visible, repeatable and sustainable," she continued.



Attendees of the quilt making workshop posing for a photo with the quilts they created.

— GWI at the United Nations (UN) —

GWI prepares for the 71st session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW71) as UN Women outlines civil society opportunities

Preparations for CSW71 offer GWI and its NFAs opportunities to advocate for education as a measurable contributor to gender equality. GWI United Nations Representative in New York, Dr. Maureen E. Byrne, reported on a UN Women briefing held on 19 October outlining participation opportunities and proposed changes to the Commission's work.

Scheduled for 8–19 March 2027, CSW71 will focus on accelerating gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Regional and global multi-stakeholder hearings are being organized to bring civil society priorities into the Agreed Conclusions, including contributions from organizations facing barriers to attending in New York.

UN Women encouraged civil society to engage Member States, submit proposed language, and contribute evidence on implementation gaps. Proposed changes to the Commission's working methods include more systematic reviews of national commitments and progress. These arrangements remain subject to Member State agreement. A proposal to begin the ministerial week on 15 March also awaited confirmation at the time of the briefing.

The accompanying Expert Group Meeting report identifies inadequate financing, weak accountability, and gaps in gender data as persistent barriers to progress. It calls for sustained investment in public services and women's rights organizations, with assessment focused on measurable improvements in women's and girls' lives.

For GWI, these discussions provide an opportunity to connect access to quality education and lifelong learning with financing, national policy, and accountability. Dr. Byrne recommended preparing advocacy talking points for selected delegates to support their engagement with Member States. Read the full report HERE.

— Give the Gift of Education —

The 2026 giving season is approaching, with Giving Tuesday on 1 December offering an opportunity to support GWI's education programs for women and girls. Contributions from GWI members and friends are critical to sustaining Teachers for Rural Futures, Bina Roy Partners in Development projects, Hegg Hoffet grants to help refugee women resume their studies or professional careers, and international advocacy programs. Watch for an invitation to a GWI donor appreciation event and details of our Giving Tuesday campaign, including ways to contribute and encourage others to participate.

— Did you know? —

GWI's CSW71 logo reflects the session's theme of accelerating gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The graduation cap emphasizes quality education (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4) as a foundation for gender equality (SDG 5), while the globe and SDG color wheel recognize that progress for women and girls advances all 17 goals. The women's profiles and connecting pathways represent the shared contribution of women across generations and borders, anchored by GWI's lamp of knowledge and commitment to lifelong learning.

— Dates and Events —

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

Follow us on social media!

2026 Copyright. All Rights Reserved.

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.

Graduate Women International

7-9, Chemin de Balexert, CH-1219, Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland

E-Mail: gwi@graduatewomen.org Website: www.graduatewomen.org

Graduate Women International

Empowering women & girls through lifelong education

Pros and Cons of Digital Education

On Monday, November 23rd at 8:00 PM CET, join us for a conversation co-hosted by CFUW GWI Supporters Network and the Graduate Women of New Zealand on the pros and cons of digital education.



Joy Hurst

Former National President of CFUW, Joy has held several positions in the organization. She holds a MSW with a specialization in Planning Administration and Management.



Andrea Robertson

Andrea is a Senior Practice Fellow at the Dunedin College of Education working as an Information and Communication Technologies Professional Development facilitator, College lecturer and an e-learning assessment advisor.

Register Here

CFUW GWI Supporters Network

GRADUATE WOMEN EST. 1921 NEW ZEALAND