

GWI calls for additional female law enforcement officers and specialized courts/tribunals in efforts to eliminate violence against women

Geneva, Switzerland, 25 November 2017 – Recognized on 25 November every year, the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#) offers the international community a forum to acknowledge and address the widespread prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV). Today also launches the beginning of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign, running until Human Rights Day on 10 December. Since 1991, the 16 Days Campaign has united the voices of millions of girls and women, raising awareness, imploring governments to commit to the protection of girls and women against gender-based violence and fighting for equal rights for all. This year, the theme of the campaign is “Together We Can End GBV in Education!”

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is one of the most widespread human rights violations. Affecting all societies, VAWG cuts across generational, socio-economic, educational and geographic boundaries. It is estimated that 35% of women have experienced violence at some point in their lives. This figure is as high as 70% in some countries. Often emerging from power disparities between genders, GBV is officially defined by the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as “violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately.”

GWI is encouraged by the launch on 20 September 2017 of the Spotlight Initiative, a rights-based approach European Union (EU) and United Nations global initiative to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. The Spotlight Initiative is an extended expression of the political will demonstrated by the international community in adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). With an EU investment of 500 million Euro over the next few years, comprehensive programmes will be implemented to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, such as sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices; trafficking and economic exploitation; femicide; and domestic and family violence with particular attention on the most marginalized women and girls.

“Let’s make no mistake, GBV is a direct barrier to girls’ education. GBV causes girls emotional distress and feelings of insecurity and danger in their educational settings and, consequentially, forces loss of focus on their academics and increases attrition. Access to quality education is a fundamental human right, and eliminating all forms GBV will contribute to the promotion of women’s human rights and enjoyment of life,” says Geeta Desai, GWI President.

Worldwide, a staggering [one in three women](#) have experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. However, less than 40% of these women will ever seek assistance and less than 10% of those that do seek help do so by appealing to the police. On this International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, GWI calls on governments and law enforcement agencies around the world to effusively support women who experience GBV, offering avenues to report instances of violence and receive assistance in response.

Policing remains one of the most male-dominated professions in the world and GWI advocates for the inclusion of more women in law enforcement and specialized courts/tribunals, not only to improve safety for women and girls but also as a direct way to address the issue of under-reporting. Currently, in countries reporting such data, women make up less than 35% of police personnel. GWI encourages the inclusion of women in law enforcement as a means to improve reporting of cases and increase prosecution of perpetrators of GBV. GWI remains optimistic that political will improves with the newly adopted United Nations Security Council resolution 2382 that recognizes the important role that United Nations police components could play in the protection of civilians, including in preventing and addressing sexual and gender-based violence, and violations and abuses

against children. On 6 November 2017 the Council stressed that deploying female police officers was particularly important and urged police-contributing countries to increase the numbers of women officers, doubling their numbers by 2020.

Similarly, GWI calls for the strictest enforcement of existing laws regarding GBV. In some countries, elements of GBV such as early marriage, wife-beating, and female-genital mutilation are still accepted aspects of the culture and community. In many countries there is a trend in attitudes shifting away from acceptance of these practices; however, GWI calls on local and national governments to accelerate these changes through educational programs focused on girls' and women's rights and the importance of addressing the dangers of gender-based violence.

About GWI

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 60 countries. Founded in 1919, GWI is the leading girls' and women's global organisation advocating for women's rights, equality, and empowerment through access to quality education and training up to the highest levels. GWI is in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and in an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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