



Graduate Women  
International (GWI)

# Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **On Menstrual Hygiene Day, Graduate Women International (GWI) draws attention to Menstrual Hygiene Insecurity (MHI) as a needless barrier to girls' and women's education worldwide**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 28 May 2018** - In collaboration with [Menstrual Hygiene Day](#), GWI is raising awareness about Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) and calling for the global community to recognise MHI as a needless barrier to girls' and women's access to education. Since 2014, Menstrual Hygiene Day (MHDAY) provides the opportunity to raise global awareness of the challenges women and girls worldwide face due to their menstruation and catalyzes a growing movement for MHM.

Concerningly, over 1.2 billion young women across the world are unable to manage their menstruation with dignity due to a lack of access to the basic and affordable sanitation. As a consequence, periods become a monthly matter of embarrassment for millions of young women and a major impediment to their education and professional advancement. One example of concern to GWI, is that of girls in Kenya who miss an average of four days of school each month – totaling about 20% of the school year. For making hygiene affordable, GWI draws attention to the efforts of Swati Bedekar and her dedicated team at the Vastala Foundation who have introduced affordable napkins for women in India and Asian countries. They are educating the women in personal hygiene and teaching them how to make the sanitary napkins themselves with organic indigenous materials which is providing economic advancement for women and improving adolescent girls' school attendance. GWI welcomes the various initiatives taken by individuals and other NGOs to assist in overcoming this serious situation.

"MHI can lead to lower performance, increased absenteeism and a higher drop-out rate on the part of girls and women worldwide", says Geeta Desai, GWI President. "GWI, through its global network of National Federations and Associations, is working towards the elimination of MHI as a severe barrier to girls' and women's access to education", she adds.

On the occasion of the 37<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council, GWI addressed MHI through a [written statement](#), that underscored the intolerable and far reaching impact that MHI can have on women's and girls' right to education. The statement also emphasized that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not be achieved without a global recognition of the right for all women and girls to manage their menstruation hygienically, safely, in privacy and with dignity. This includes SDG 3 - ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages and SDG6 - ensuring access to clean water and sanitation for all.

Education is a prevailing means of empowerment for women and girls around the world and a fundamental enabler to achieve peace, stability and human development. GWI is resolute to eliminate MHI as a barrier to women's and girls' ability to fulfill their right to education and we hold that nothing, and especially not a normal and natural physiological process such as menstruation, should bar women and girls from knowledge, empowerment and leadership.

Graduate Women International (GWI) is a membership-based international NGO based in Geneva, Switzerland, with presence in over 80 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 is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

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*Contributing to this press release is GWI intern, Clémence Mathiaud, Sciences Po, Lyon.*