



Graduate Women  
International (GWI)

# Press Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Stacy Dry Lara, Executive Director  
sdl@graduatewomen.org  
Tel: +41 22 731 23 80

**On the 16<sup>th</sup> International Day of Persons with Disabilities, GWI calls for the establishment of barrier-free learning environments for all disabled women and girls**

**Geneva, Switzerland, 3 December 2018**— Since 1992, International Day of Persons with Disabilities aims to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society. This year's theme focuses on empowering disabled persons for a more equitable future as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Today, GWI recognizes disabled women and girls as both beneficiaries and agents of change able to fast track the process towards the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) when given the opportunity to reach their full potential through education at the highest level.

An estimated one billion people around the world today live with a form of disability, of which half are women and girls. Due to their disability, gender and various identities, disabled women and girls often experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and gender-based violence (GBV). Furthermore, it is estimated that children with disabilities constitute one third of children out of school around the world, due to a lack of inclusive education measures, such as inclusive teaching methods and environments, provision of mobility aids, accessible transportation, and more. GWI is deeply concerned that 65 million girls are denied basic education and that girls with disabilities are even less likely to attend school, making them among the most discriminated groups in terms of education and school GBV.

“Barriers faced by persons with disabilities are harmful to entire societies and accessibility in all its appearances are necessary to achieve progress and development for all persons with disabilities”, says Geeta Desai, GWI President. “Evidence and experience show that when barriers to education are removed, persons with disabilities are empowered to participate fully in societal life benefitting their entire community”, she adds.

In support of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which explicitly mentions disability 11 times, and as an organization committed to improving the educational space for all women and girls, GWI is resolved to Leave No One Behind by raising awareness about the importance of full accessibility and barrier-free environments for persons with disabilities, especially in the sphere of education. In 2016, the GWI General Assembly reinforced this commitment through the passing of [Resolution 2](#), calling for the establishment, implementation and monitoring of national standards to promote and protect the full enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities, in particular their right to education.

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 is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

-ends-

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter \(@GradWomen\)](#).