

GWI Centenary Conference 2019

Geneva, Switzerland

25-28 July, 2019

100 Years
of IFUW / GWI



Graduate Women International (GWI),
formerly known as the
International Federation of University Women (IFUW),
will turn 100 in 2019 and will celebrate this important milestone
at the General Assembly and Conference
to be held in Geneva from 25 - 28 July, 2019.

Peace through Education

Fostering the culture of peace by empowering women through education

Vision

The 100th Anniversary celebration conference to be held in July 2019 will be the launch pad for GWI's second century of support for equality for the women and girls of the world.

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BACKGROUND

As we look back with gratitude and appreciation at the commitment of our early members and celebrate their achievements we must also look boldly to the future and the role that GWI can play on the national and international stage. Our organisational strength is our membership who are educated, increasingly taking top leadership positions in all spheres and who have much to give to those women who are less fortunate than themselves.

Many of the world's women and girls are still struggling for the right to education to liberate themselves and their families from poverty and repression. They are unable to reach their full potential because of conflict and economic disruption and many are locked into cultural practices and traditions which take away their ability to choose their own paths. Other women and girls are facing issues of gender inequality, environmental and economic disparity and access to justice. A peaceful society and access to education enables women and girls to empower themselves and reach their full potential.

Today, only eleven countries in the world are free of wars and internecine conflicts and the UNHRC estimates that there are 22 million refugees, 65.6 million forcibly displaced persons and 10 million stateless people. Even in countries that are relatively stable, the threat of war and conflict are never far away. Violence against women and girls in all situations including in conflicts and when displaced by war is a violation of human rights preventing women from participating fully in society.

Wars and conflicts arise for many reasons but are chiefly due to abject poverty, human rights abuses, scarcity of natural resources, religious, ethnic and cultural differences and practices of patriarchy. The right to education is the first to suffer in times of conflict and its aftermath, however we know that education has far-reaching and positive impacts on peace and nation building and on the amelioration of conflicts.

GWI can and will mobilise its membership to champion the right of women and girls to a quality education, the right of women to live in a peaceful society and the right of women to take their places in leadership roles in their local, national and international communities.

With this conference, GWI will provide greater clarity on:

1. The essential relationship between education and the culture of peace;
2. The aspects of education that have a positive influence on the dynamics of conflict or contribute to peacebuilding;
3. The role of graduate women in advocating for policy development and implementation to ensure a stronger relationship between education, peace and human rights.



THEME

In 2019, the organisation will turn one hundred years old and while it has changed over the years, what has not changed is the founders' vision and for this reason the theme chosen for our 100th Anniversary celebrations is ***"Peace through Education"***.

Our founding mothers, Virginia Gildersleeve, Caroline Spurgeon and Rose Sidgwick met in New York in 1918 to discuss the idea of an association of university trained women who might contribute to better understanding between nations and so help to prevent another catastrophe such as the World War which had just ended. A key aim was to encourage women to play a greater part in education and international affairs.

The first conference of the association was held in London in 1920 and eight national associations were affiliated to the new international movement called the **International Federation of University Women (IFUW)**. Ninety years later, with the proliferation of other degree awarding tertiary institutions, the name was changed to Graduate Women International (GWI).



CONFERENCE SUB-THEMES

Workshops and seminars will respond to one or more of the five sub- themes:

1. How can education advance the status of women and girls world-wide and work towards preventing conflicts, protect the most vulnerable populations and transform societies?
2. How can curricula grow and change to support human rights and deconstruct patriarchal and other societal paradigms to bring about a culture of peace and non-violence?
3. What does it mean to live in a connected world, two-thirds of which are in conflict and how does this impact on our daily lives?
4. How can young professionals be empowered to understand and make connections between education, gender equality issues, culture change and environmental issues and what effects do these have on their careers, family lives and the planet?
5. What can graduate women do to influence a global society, working at the intersection of education, peace, advocacy and action in local, national and global policies?

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PEACE through EDUCATION

*Fostering the culture of peace by
empowering women through education*

AIMS

Graduate women delegates should leave the conference informed, enthused and with a commitment:

- to look beyond short-term projects and become involved in policy and legislative agenda concerning education and peace and the empowerment of women and girls.
- to promote actions which support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, SDGs 4 and 5 which relate specifically to Quality Education and Gender Equality. These integrate and balance the 3 dimensions of sustainable development economically, socially and environmentally.

Venue

University of Geneva
Uni Mail Ground Floor
Boulevard du Pont-d'Arve, 40
1205 Geneva, Switzerland

Geneva (which was the venue for the 5th conference in 1929) has been chosen because it is home to the second largest United Nations Headquarters and the International office of GWI.

Number of participants

It is anticipated that there will be 300 to 400 GWI participants and members of the public interested in women and girl's education, peace, gender equality and women's empowerment.

Programme

Key note speakers at the conference will be world leaders in the fields of peace, education and human rights who will speak in support of the conference theme.

A challenging and interactive programme of seminars and workshops led by delegates and experts in their fields will be a key activity of the conference. All delegates will be invited to participate actively in this programme which will have the aim of developing a 21st century peace and education policy for our organisation to take us forward into our second 100 years.

Profile of public participants

A range of public figures particularly those involved at the policy and project level of peace and education agendas will be invited to attend. For example: Key UN figures, representatives from education organisations, politicians, social leaders, human rights advocates and relevant NGOs.

Outcomes

- Delegates who are totally committed to taking an active and leadership role in implementing the policies developed at the conference.
- Members with a clear vision for the future of GWI as a leading advocate for peace through education in the world.

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