Old prejudices and social norms still prevent many young women from taking up leadership positions (Plan International / Apon Ahsan)

10 years, 300,000 female students enrolled in secondary education thanks to programmes funded by the European Commission. Our global network of EU Delegations is working with national governments to help them craft specific programmes to promote gender equality in all countries. We know our action can make a real difference. So over the last months and years, we have stepped up our commitment to women empowerment, with the Global Strategy for foreign and security policy, the new European Consensus on Development, and the appointment – for the first time, inside the European External Action Service – of a Principal Advisor on Gender and on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. On my initiative, the EU has also signed the 2016 Joint Statement with UN Women, envisioning mutual development and strengthened collaboration on gender equality and women empowerment worldwide to reach a Planet 50-50 by 2030. These are not only symbolic decisions: they come with consistent and unparalleled financial support. In September, in New York, we have launched together with the United Nations a new initiative – the “Spotlight Initiative” – focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls in partner countries from five regions. This initiative adds up to many others we recently established. For instance, we are providing €21 million support to three main programmes managed by UNFPA and UNICEF to fight child marriage, female genital mutilation, and gender-based sex selection at birth.

UNLOCK THE POWER OF GIRLS – NOW!

Plan International’s latest report into girls’ lives provides yet more evidence that “gender inequality is still very much part of the fabric of our society”.

The evidence gathered in the report, Unlock the Potential of Girls Now, “is fascinating and horrifying in equal measure”, according to Plan International CEO Anne-Birgitte Albrectsen. It uncovers a complex thread of discrimination and violence at all levels of society, and points to a world where adolescent girls work hard to bring about change in their lives yet are constantly thwarted by prejudice, aggression, and poverty.

The report is based on research from Uganda, Colombia and Spain and is the latest in a series of studies undertaken by Plan International that focus on examining the attitudes and perceptions of adolescent girls and boys in many different parts of the world.

Being heard and heeded

Focusing on the testimony of young people themselves, particularly adolescent girls, the report emphasises that girls are almost always denied the opportunity, at home, at school and in their wider communities, to be heard and heeded. This stems from the widespread perception that girls are worth less than boys, as 16-year-old Mercy, from Uganda, knows only too well. “The parents only favour the boys. They even say that a [girl] child is a curse,” she says. Girls’ voices and experiences do not influence or lead change, she says.

“WE HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO TELL OUR DAUGHTERS THAT THEY CAN BE ANYTHING THEY WANT IN LIFE.”

Atitudes and mind-sets are not eternal: in an era when the internet has reached all corners of the world, public discourse is also evolving at an impressive speed. We have seen it with one of our communication campaigns in four African countries, with men standing up for women’s rights under the slogan “Don’t touch my sister”. No doubt that we, in the European Union, will continue to work to create new and better opportunities for girls, to make sure that there is no contradiction between being a mother and an accomplished professional, to open new channels for women to engage in their country’s public life.

But there is a responsibility that belongs to every girl and woman: the responsibility to never lose hope, and never let anyone tell us that we cannot make it. We have the responsibility to tell our daughters that they can be anything they want in life. And there is a responsibility that belongs to men – that is, to share this fight. You can count on the European Union to be your partner and your sponsor, until each and every girl will have gotten the opportunities she deserves.

FEDERICA MOGHERINI
High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission

If we look back just a few decades, or even a few years, it is impressive how much the role of women in our societies and our families has changed. True, this is not always the case, not everywhere, and it is certainly not enough. In my daily work it is not unusual for me to be the only woman in a room filled with old men in dark suits. The number of women in leadership positions – let alone of young women – is incomparable with the number of men. Old prejudices and social norms still stand in the way. All around the world, girls and young women are often denied their right to education. Too often, a woman is paid less than a man for performing the exact same job. And our work is paying off. In

9-13 October 2017 EUROPtAN WEEK OF ACTION FOR GIRLS

RAPE TO DREAM, GIRLS

“We HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO TELL OUR DAUGHTERS THAT THEY CAN BE ANYTHING THEY WANT IN LIFE.”

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**IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

**NEVEN MIMICA**  
European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development

Since its creation 60 years ago, the EU has been a strong supporter of women’s and girls’ rights, both in Europe and throughout the world. Through our international cooperation and development work, I have made it my mission to put women and girls at the forefront of our efforts to achieve sustainable development for all. Because we know that working for women’s and girls’ rights isn’t only the right thing to do – it’s the smart thing to do to end poverty and inequality once and for all.

But as long as we continue to live in a world where the life of one in every three women is threatened by physical or sexual violence — often at the hands of an intimate partner — women and girls will never truly be able to participate fully in the public and private lives that they deserve.

Gender-based violence is one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations across the globe. It has lasting personal, social, and economic consequences, for those affected, their families, and entire communities. This is why in September, at this year’s UN General Assembly, I launched a major EU-UN “Spotlight Initiative”, together with HRVP Federica Mogherini and the UN Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General, to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. This Initiative – with initial investment to

the tune of €500 million – aims to address the most prevalent forms of violence, harmful practices and exclusion that women and girls suffer in their public and private lives. This includes physical, psychological, sexual and any other type of violence, discrimination and exploitation. We will concentrate our efforts in Asia, the Pacific region, Africa (particularly Sub-Saharan Africa), Latin America and the Caribbean.

Violence against women and girls is not something that just happens. It’s something that can – and must – be stopped. We must break this vicious circle of silence and violence by changing legal frameworks, and cultural and societal norms and prejudices, as well as by empowering women and girls in all aspects of social, political and economic life.

In this and many other ways, the advocates for women’s and girls’ rights are bringing about real changes – both in mindsets and in people’s lives. In my work I have had the opportunity to see the amazing things that happen when girls and women have a voice, a choice, and the power to control their own lives and bodies. All over the world, women and girls are courageously stepping up to the challenge.

Take for example Samia, who I met earlier this year. Samia is just 14 years old and comes from Bangladesh, one of the seven countries of the world where there are more men than women, where girls tend to drop out of school much earlier than boys, and which has one of the highest rates of child marriage globally. Together with 150,000 other young activists, she is fighting to protect her friends and neighbours from this kind of exploitation. “Girls can change attitudes and we can change the world, but we need the freedom to think, the freedom to speak up, and the freedom to act,” she says. In other words, the freedom to ‘thrive, inspire, succeed’!

As reader of the Girls’ Rights Gazette you can also be part of this change. With our EU-UN “Spotlight Initiative” we want to sow the seeds of a truly global movement, which touches every corner of every community all around the world.

The European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) are embarking on a new, global, multi-year initiative focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls - the Spotlight Initiative. The Initiative is intended to provide renewed investment in and commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment as a pre-condition and driver for the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals.

An initial investment of €500 million will be made, with the EU as the main contributor. Other donors and partners will be invited to join the Initiative to broaden its reach and scope. The modality for the delivery will be a UN multi-stakeholder trust fund, administered by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, with the support of core agencies UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women, and overseen by the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General.

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**“I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE THE AMAZING THINGS THAT HAPPEN WHEN GIRLS AND WOMEN HAVE A VOICE, A CHOICE, AND THE POWER TO CONTROL THEIR OWN LIVES AND BODIES.”**

By advancing women’s equality, US$12 TRILLION could be added to global GDP by 2050

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#GIRLSTAKEOVER

**“WE WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SPACES OF DECISION-MAKING WHERE OUR RIGHTS ARE BEING TALKED ABOUT. WE ARE CAPABLE OF DEFENDING OUR RIGHTS IF YOU GIVE US THE OPPORTUNITY.”**

BRISA, 16, NICARAGUA

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**GIRLS’ RIGHTS GAZETTE**

Girls’ lives and lived realities deserve to be front page news, but too often they are invisible and unheard. The Girls’ Rights Gazette is dedicated to highlighting the realities girls around the world face in the pursuit of their rights, as well as demonstrating the transformative power of girls and women as drivers of change and development. It is produced by Plan International EU Office for the European Week of Action for Girls 2017. If you would like further information about this publication, please contact the editor.

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There are nearly 600 million girls in the world today. Equipped with the right resources and opportunities, they can become the largest generation of female leaders, entrepreneurs and change-makers the world has ever seen. We are increasingly learning that empowering girls and supporting them to reach their full potential is not only the right thing to do, but it is also critical to peace and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. If girls are not educated, accorded their rights, and able to move and speak freely, not only will they continue to suffer injustice and discrimination, but the world will fail to achieve the economic growth, mortality decline, and levels of development, health care and innovation needed for current and future generations to thrive. We must change the course for the hundreds of millions of girls around the globe who suffer indignities and deprivations that diminish their well-being and thwart their tremendous potential. Not by girls working alone does not start with a single person, it starts with everyone.”

The final word
The report concludes with a clarion call. “For transformative change to take place, gender equality must become a key social and political issue and power holders must use their authority to challenge the deeply held personal attitudes that perpetuate misogyny. The Spotlight Initiative will focus on a limited number of countries, demonstrating that, through comprehensive investment in gender equality, we can make a significant difference in the lives of women and girls and, through that, achieve success on all other Sustainable Development Goals – eradicating poverty, establishing food security and ensuring more inclusive and peaceful communities. It is time that we all come together to make sure that successful solutions reach millions of girls and women so they can lead lives of opportunity, free of violence.

Continued from p1
and they are largely invisible in public spaces. Often, girls are not even given a say in the decisions that have a massive impact on their lives, like leaving school and getting married. Challenging power dynamics According to Albrechtsen, power is the real issue preventing girls from fulfilling their potential – something identified by both girls and boys participating in the research. “Empowerment is not enough. It is time too for the entrenched power dynamics which underpin the whole of our society to be challenged and changed,” she says. “Not by girls working alone but by everyone re-acting to the injustices they live with and acting to put them right. We must form powerful partnerships; not least with girls themselves, whose ideas and opinions matter most. Only by acting collectively, can we build a social movement for real change.” Her words are echoed by 15-year-old Sofia, from Colombia, who says, “Change does not start with a single person, it starts with everyone.” Realising the Global Goals Two years ago, world leaders adopted the Sustainable Development Goals - a promise to transform our world by 2030, reducing poverty and inequality, ending injustice and protecting the planet. Goal five promises demonstrating that, through widespread human rights violations, and a major obstacle to ending gender inequality and discrimination globally, the EU and the UN have launched a new joint initiative – the Spotlight Initiative: To Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls. The initiative brings a human rights approach and the power of existing evidence to scale up the most effective solutions to address the various forms of violence and injustice girls and women experience across the globe. The new initiative is an example of leadership and a new model of partnership between the EU and the UN. The Spotlight Initiative will capitalise on the strength and experience of the UN system, leveraging the expertise of a wide range of Agencies, Funds and Programmes and their partners, to tackle the challenges of gender inequality at the country level. It will commit dedicated resources to intensify and focus action in strengthening legislation and policies, institutions, prevention, services and data, to stop violence and advance gender equality.

Recommendations
The report makes three key recommendations to unlock the power of girls:
1. Gender equality desperately needs a political and social revolution
2. Girls must become visible in places of power and influence.
3. Greater efforts are needed to understand how adolescents actually live their lives.

The key to equality is to challenge the widespread perception that girls are worth less than boys.

Plan International CEO Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen

VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS: THE FACTS

- Violence is the second leading cause of death among adolescent girls globally.
- Around 120 million girls worldwide (more than one in every 10 girls), have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point in their lives.
- One in three girls between the ages of 13 and 15 worldwide experience bullying on a regular basis.
- Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married before their 18th birthday.


“We must change the course for hundreds of millions of girls around the globe.”

Globally, 120 million girls like Amatou* have experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives (name changed to protect identity).

1 in 4 girls aged 15-19 worldwide have been the victim of some form of physical violence since the age of 15.

One in four girls is married before she reaches her 18th birthday, and almost one in five is pregnant before that age, facing risks of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Millions of girls lack access to supplies and facilities to manage their monthly menstrual cycle with dignity, safety and privacy. While primary school enrolment has increased, 29 million girls are out of school at lower secondary level and many more are not acquiring the skills needed for success in the workforce. Young girls represent almost three quarters of identified child trafficking victims. And nearly a quarter of girls aged 15-19 report having been victims of violence. Every 10 minutes, somewhere in the world, an adolescent girl dies as a result of violence. Recognising that violence against women and girls is one of the most systematic and widespread human rights violations, and a major obstacle to ending gender inequality and discrimination globally, the EU and the UN have launched a new joint initiative – the Spotlight Initiative: To Eliminate Violence against Women and Girls. The initiative brings a human rights approach and the power of existing evidence to scale up the most effective solutions to address the various forms of violence and injustice girls and women experience across the globe. The new initiative is an example of leadership and a new model of partnership between the EU and the UN. The Spotlight Initiative will capitalise on the strength and experience of the UN system, leveraging the expertise of a wide range of Agencies, Funds and Programmes and their partners, to tackle the challenges of gender inequality at the country level. It will commit dedicated resources to intensify and focus action in strengthening

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Girls who are seen and heard and who become active citizens will themselves bring about significant and sustainable change, of that I have no doubt. But they need allies. It is the rise of active grassroots movements in communities, led by women and girls – but supported by those who hold power over people’s lives and influence their behaviour – that will help us reach the tipping point for gender equality.”

Amina J. Mohammed
United Nations Deputy Secretary-General

There are nearly 600 million girls in the world today. Equipped with the right resources and opportunities, they can become the largest generation of female leaders, entrepreneurs and change-makers the world has ever seen. We are increasingly learning that empowering girls and supporting them to reach their full potential is not only the right thing to do, but it is also critical to peace and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. If girls are not educated, accorded their rights, and able to move and speak freely, not only will they continue to suffer injustice and discrimination, but the world will fail to achieve the economic growth, mortality decline, and levels of development, health care and innovation needed for current and future generations to thrive. We must change the course for the hundreds of millions of girls around the globe who suffer indignities and deprivations that diminish their well-being and thwart their tremendous potential.

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Girls’ Rights Gazette 9-13 October 2017
ANNE-BRIGITTE ALBRECTSEN
CEO of Plan International

I read recently about Elon Musk building the world's biggest battery in Australia. Apparently these lithium ion batteries can store 189 megawatts – enough electricity to power 30,000 homes. Something of that magnitude is pretty difficult to comprehend, particularly when, as most people do these days, you're reading this on a smartphone whose battery barely lasts a day.

The advances we're making in technology are incredible; the pace of change is impressive and, at times, it's downright frightening what the brightest among us can achieve. As a species we are capable of making huge advances when it suits us. And yet when it comes to gender equality we're still operating as if we're living in the Stone Age.

In our new report, Unlock the Power of Girls Now, a 15 year old boy talks about how soap operas in Colombia routinely normalise violence against women and girls. "Boys see men beating women on the TV and want to do the same thing," he says. It's when you read this you realise the gulf between where we are today and where we want to be.

This is but one example of many throughout the report, illustrating that progress and actions to bring about change are still painfully slow across the globe. And in many countries, as a result of the roll back in women's and girls' rights, we're actually going backwards. I believe we've reached a point where gender equality desperately needs a political and social revolution – giving girls the authority and permission to be thought of as equals is not, and will never be, enough. Action will always speak louder than words.

That's why the global #GirlsTakeover action, taking place to mark the International Day of the Girl, is so important. The action gives girls a platform to shout, stamp and scream about what it's really like to be a girl in 2017. We help girls take over positions of power to highlight the casual inequalities that curtail their education, the barriers that limit their freedom of expression, and the violence that for many of them is frighteningly routine. But the #GirlsTakeover of Prime Ministers, Chief Executives and TV stations, to mention just a few, is also an opportunity to showcase the power of girls. It's a chance for girls to share their hopes for the future, and to wake people up to what we're missing through our collective failure to engage with girls on topics that affect them. I've said it before and I'll say it again: girls have the power to change the world. Plan International's #GirlsTakeover shows that when girls get the same opportunities and choices in life as their male peers, they can transform their lives and communities.

The gender equality revolution continues to stumble around in the gloom. It's up to all of us to turn on the light.

Girls participate in a rally in Brazil to mark the International Day of the Girl (Plan International / Afonso Barros)

Ritah, 22, from Uganda, is working to change mindsets about what women and girls can do.

I hope to inspire other girls in my community by being a voice for the voiceless, encouraging other girls like me to stand firm and achieve what they deserve in life. As a youth mentor with Plan International Uganda, I work with young people to develop their life skills such as leadership and communication, and inform them about girls' rights.

Girls in Uganda face many challenges. We live in a male dominated society that dictates women’s subordination and economic reliance on men for their survival, making it even harder for them to escape the cycle of extreme poverty. Girls also experience high rates of gender-based violence and sexual harassment, whether it's at school, in the workplace or at home. These challenges are not just in Uganda – girls may live in different countries, but they often face similar issues.

Girls must be given the opportunity help solve the problems that affect them, because they are the people who know their lives best. They know what they go through, and are in the best position to devise solutions. But their opinions are not always listened to, because many people consider girls to be inferior to boys.

We need to change this, and change the mindset about what women and girls can do. If somebody told me I couldn't do something because I am a girl, I’d respond by telling them to give me the chance to act. It is not our gender that acts and performs, it is the ability and strength of our mind.

There are many things which must change so that all girls can learn, lead, decide and thrive. Girls and young women need training in life skills and economic empowerment, so they can rise above their challenges and develop into economically independent, confident and successful women leaders. Girls need to be reached through mentorship, because society has subjected them to certain norms for so long that most have accepted them without questioning. And we need more spaces, such as youth advisory panels and champions of change programmes, to help build confidence, participation and leadership.

When a girl is as put at the forefront of development interventions, she will understand the importance of gaining control over her life and body, she will develop her confidence as an empowered girl and begin to speak up against violence. The EU and others should channel more support towards empowering young girls to be who they want to be.

As I look to the future, I imagine a world where girls can learn, lead, decide and thrive in every community all over the world; a world where the mindset of people about what girls can do is totally positive; a world where girls are directly involved in decision-making on matters that affect them, where their inclusion is a high priority and their voices are given ears.

(Photographer: Plan International / Wendy Huyshe)
18-year-old Maria is a talented multi-tasker and tireless campaigner for girls’ rights and gender equality.

Maria Fernanda is no stranger to the spotlight. A creative, dynamic and talented actress, she uses theatre to reach different audiences and share her knowledge about girls’ rights and gender equality. Still only 18-years-old, Maria already has many strings to her bow—a graduate of Plan International Brazil’s Healthy Youth Programme and the first Girls’ Leadership School, she is currently studying at Brasilia’s Social Service School and plans to go on to complete her Masters and PhD, before continuing her community work. Oh, she was also a delegate at the first Girls’ Free Conference of Maranhão, took over the position of Secretary of State for Women for a day, is part of the Platform Girls in Power project, and is one of the girl ambassadors for the 2017 European Week of Action for Girls and #GirlsTakeover in Brussels. We’re exhausted just reading about it! Girls’ Rights Gazette caught up with Maria to find out more about life in her community work. Oh, she uses theatre to reach different audiences and share her knowledge about girls’ rights and gender equality. Still only 18-years-old, Maria is a talented multi-tasker and tireless campaigner for girls’ rights and gender equality.

Girls’ Rights Gazette: What is the biggest challenge girls in Brazil face?

MF: Education. Without a good education and people helping us, girls in Brazil face?

is the biggest challenge girls in Brazil face?

Girls’ Rights Gazette: What would you say to someone who told you you couldn’t do something because you are a girl?

MF: If someone says that, it is obvious that they haven’t gone through a process of learning rights and empowerment. I got empowered, I learnt my rights and I simply tried to build myself. This person still does not have this access. I’d try to open up a discussion on gender equality, explaining that the lack of equality is a reality in our country and that we would have a much better world if we were all equal. I try to open people’s mind in order to hear other ideas and learn more.

GRG: What does your family think about your work to promote girls’ rights and leadership?

MF: They always supported me. They are proud of my travels and interests. My mum understands the importance of what I am doing, and supports me in my life decisions. She wanted me to become an architect, but I decided to work for the social services and now, she says that my dreams are hers.

GRG: What kind of world do you imagine for the girl in 2030?

MF: A world with gender equality and better education.

A better world to be a girl.

A: It’s important because we still have so far to go. Nowhere in the world has gender equality been fully achieved yet. In some places, girls and women don’t have the right to influence decisions that directly affect them. In Finland, the situation is not as bad, but even here gender equality is still a long way off. The problems and the status of girls and women differ from one country or region to the next, but I hope that through the #GirlsTakeover we can join forces to promote the rights and opportunities of girls and women everywhere.

GRG: What is your message to leaders about what girls can do?

MF: They always supported me. They are proud of my travels and interests. My mum understands the importance of what I am doing, and supports me in my life decisions. She wanted me to become an architect, but I decided to work for the social services and now, she says that my dreams are hers.

GRG: What kind of world do you imagine for the girl in 2030?

MF: A world with gender equality and better education. A better world to be a girl.

#GIRLS TAKEOVER: TAKING A STAND

24-year-old Saira is working to ensure girls in Pakistan get the education they deserve.

I have suffered a lot in my life. I was a victim of forced marriage and I was a domestic worker earning minimal pay, but I didn’t quit or look down on my profession. Instead, I studied all along the way, and today I’m in a position where people look up to me.

My life motivated me to work for others, and not let the same thing happen to any girl around me or in my community. I often tell the girls I meet the hardships I experienced being married young, and how I took a stand and came out of it. This really inspires them.

I also managed to get girls who were out of school enrolled, ensuring them a better future. Getting a quality education is one of the biggest challenges girls in Pakistan face, but it’s so important girls have the education and skills they need to live an independent life. If girls are given opportunities, we can do wonders!
Life is a Conversation

Kim Chakanetsa
Broadcast journalist, presenter of The Conversation on BBC World Service

Why did you become a professional boxer? A rocket scientist? A ballet dancer? I ask these questions to my guests over and again on my show. Was it a stunning performance you saw on stage that set your heart alight and made you want to dance? Was it an inspiring science teacher that led you to become an engineer?

For me, it was a magazine article. A brief, single column story sandwiched between much longer pieces. A more casual reader might have missed it, but in the Zimbabwe of my childhood foreign magazines were a rare treasure and I would read them cover to cover. It was a profile of the British-Iranian journalist Christiane Amanpour, a seemingly tireless war correspondent moving from conflict to conflict yet somehow still managing to tell the stories of those affected with authority and compassion.

By the time I left my school library that afternoon I was completely sold. I was going to be a journalist. 20 years on, I present a radio programme called The Conversation on the BBC World Service. Each week I talk to two women from different parts of the world who are linked by a common interest, profession or experience. In the three years the programme has been running I have spoken to hundreds of fascinating women. Mathematicians! Beatboxers! Snake Catchers! The aim is to celebrate the lives of women around the world while recognising the challenges they face.

I love hearing women tell their stories in their own words. I love tracing the journeys people have taken to get to where they are. I remember an episode where I spoke to Sister Hildegarde, an Australian nun and self-described ‘chatterbox’, who had chosen to join a silent religious order at the age of 35.

She was in conversation with Sister Tracey Kemme, a young American nun who had just taken her first vows. It was not a straightforward decision for her because in choosing to take her vows she was eschewing the ‘traditional’ expectations of marriage, children and a career.

We try to make the programme reflect the full spectrum of women’s experiences. The good, the bad, and everything in between. And there have been some exceptionally difficult programmes. Hearing Ingrid Betancourt, who was held in captivity in Colombia for seven years, talk about her experiences with Amanda Lindholt, who was captured by insurgents in Somalia, was heart-breaking but also surprisingly hopeful.

There is a story that has long stayed with me. It was told by one of my guests, Justice Mandisa Maya. She was the first black African woman to be appointed to the Supreme Court of Appeal in South Africa. On her first day at work Mandisa was turned away from the court’s judges’ entrance because staff there found it inconceivable that she could hold such a position.

I asked her if she was outraged. She said no, she wasn’t at all – it wasn’t the staff’s fault that they had never seen a black female justice. But thanks to her bravery, now they have, as has the whole of South Africa. By her presence alone she has changed people’s understanding of what a black female in South Africa can be. This is how progress is made. I think of it as a lesson: head up, foot forward. Often my favourite moments are when my guests are brutally honest about how they have struggled and when they have failed. I think it is important to be able to talk as candidly about your failures as you do successes because women still struggle. There remain barriers to girls getting education, to girls choosing whether or not to get married, to certain jobs remaining overwhelmingly male.

But having seen the humour, strength and tenacity of the women who have come on the show, I am filled with great optimism. My greatest hope is that young girls listening to my show will find the same inspiration in my guests that I found in Christiane Amanpour.

#GirlsCan… Thrive, Inspire, Succeed

Imagine a world in which girls can pursue their own goals, and achieve their own dreams; a world in which girls can actively participate in the decisions which affect them; a world in which girls can be free from violence and live the life they choose. A world in which girls can thrive, inspire and succeed. That is the world we are striving to create.

Yet that world remains far from the reality many girls face. Detrimental gender norms and power relations mean girls are often subjected to specific types of violence, and are denied the ability to make free and informed choices about their lives and bodies. Girls and young women are less likely to be in education, employment or training, and are systematically denied the opportunity to fully participate and engage in political, economic, social, and family life – from every day, individual decisions concerning their own lives through to the highest level decision-making roles.

The European Week of Action for Girls 2017 puts the spotlight on what needs to be done to overcome these barriers, and to ensure girls’ rights are respected, protected and enforced.

It will show that:

- #GirlsCan Thrive: With the right protection systems and access to health services, commodities and information, girls can be safe from violence and make informed decisions about their lives and bodies.
- #GirlsCan Inspire: When girls are empowered and given equal opportunities, they can act as a force for positive change – for themselves and their family, for their community and country.
- #GirlsCan Succeed: Through quality formal and non-formal education and vocational training, girls can access decent, fulfilling employment and be economically empowered.

The EU’s Role: Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future

The EU can and does play a leading role in creating a just world which helps all girls realise their rights, through its policies, programmes and actions. Through the new European Consensus on Development, “Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future”, the EU has recognised the positive role that girls and young women can play as agents of change and development.

The Consensus sets out an ambitious vision to translate the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into tangible, equitable progress for all. Empowering girls and women is at the heart of this vision. It commits the EU and its Member States to “promote women’s and girls’ rights, gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and their protection as a priority across all areas of action”.

The European Week of Action for Girls 2017 will provide concrete, implementable recommendations on how to translate this commitment from words to action, and ensure that gender equality is systematically mainstreamed across all EU policies as a key contribution to the successful achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The European Week of Action for Girls 2017 is organised under the high patronage of the European Parliament and the European Commission.

Join the conversation online
@PlanEU @GirlsCan #EUGirlsWeek

Organised by
The European Week of Action for Girls 2017 is organised under the high patronage of the European Parliament and the European Commission.
WORD SEARCH

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EMPOWERMENT
GIRLSCAN
EQUALITY
GOALS
INFLUENCE
INSPIRE

GIRLS' RIGHTS GAZETTE

There are five differences in the pictures below. Can you find them?

WORDSCAN WORDOKU

Place the letters from this year’s European Week of Action theme, #GirlsCan, in the grid, such that each row, column and 3x3 box contains each letter or symbol only once.

#GIRLSCAN WORDOKU

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SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

There are five differences in the pictures below. Can you find them?

PUZZLE ANSWERS

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HOROSCOPE:

IT’S A GIRLS’ WORLD

The Girls’ Rights Gazette horoscope forecasts girls’ future – when their rights are realised.

Libra | Sep 23 - Oct 22
You will inspire a grassroots movement for girls’ rights and gender equality, raising awareness among your peers, family and wider community about what girls can achieve when their rights are protected and promoted.

Scorpio | Oct 23 - Nov 21
Your parents will listen to your wishes and will not force you into an early marriage. Instead, you will be allowed to stay in school and continue your studies.

Sagittarius | Nov 22 - Dec 21
Because your ideas and experiences are valued, you will be invited to participate as one of the key speakers at a consultation on girls’ safety in your community.

Capricorn | Dec 22 - Jan 19
After completing your training course, you will become a successful entrepreneur employing other young people in your community.

Aquarius | Jan 20 - Feb 18
Thanks to your parents’ openness to discuss sex and relationships with you, you will use contraceptives and avoid an unplanned pregnancy that would most likely have ended your education.

Pisces | Feb 19 - Mar 20
Thanks to your advocacy, your male peers will join in the movement to promote girls’ rights because they understand that gender equality benefits everybody, including men and boys.

Aries | Mar 21 - Apr 19
The implementation of a new school policy to provide free sanitary pads to students mean you will no longer have to miss out on your education because of your period.

Taurus | Apr 20 - May 20
You will find an exciting new job with a local company, and you will receive a salary which is equal to your male co-workers. You will be the first female in your family to find decent work. You will feel proud to be able to support your family financially, and your parents will value your ideas and input in family decision-making.

Gemini | May 21 - Jun 21
After participating in a girls’ leadership programme, you will be a leading voice in your community, and working together with your peers you will successfully petition your government to outlaw child marriage.

Cancer | Jun 22 - Jul 22
A digital learning centre will open in your neighbourhood providing extra courses in English, mathematics and science, allowing you to pursue your dream of becoming a world-renowned physicist.

Leo | Jul 23 - Aug 22
Your active participation in developing a comprehensive disaster risk reduction and preparedness plan will help mitigate the impact of a natural disaster and ensure girls’ specific needs are addressed.

Virgo | Aug 23 - Sep 22
You will stand up with other girls in your community to say no to violence against women and girls. Your tireless campaigning will help change harmful attitudes and behaviours of those around you – from your family to classmates, teachers and community leaders.

* The content of this horoscope is intended to demonstrate what is possible for girls when their rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. It is not based on astrology and should not be read as a true prediction of any individual’s future.
Girls are stepping into the shoes of leaders to demonstrate their strength, power and ability to change the world.

plan-international.org/takeover