The International Day of the Girl is celebrated every year on 11 October. The day provides an occasion to celebrate girls—who they are today and the women they will become tomorrow. On this day, we promote girls’ empowerment and the fulfilment of girls’ rights, and highlight persistent needs and challenges that require concerted action.

Under the theme **Girls’ education: A force for gender equality and lasting change**, UNESCO, Plan International and the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs invite you to join us in celebrating girls’ contributions to changing the world!

Education can empower all of us to be a force for gender equality and lasting change. While significant progress has been made towards achieving equal access to education for all children over the last 20 years, there is a much longer road to ensuring that all learners are empowered through education with the knowledge, skills and values they need for life, work and leadership. For education to empower, it must challenge and change unequal power relations and address practices, norms and expectations that prevent all of us from realizing our full potential.

On International Day of the Girl 2019, UNESCO and its partners will showcase how education is building a “GirlForce” around the world, catalyzing generations of girls, adolescents and women who are unscripted, unstoppable, and transforming lives, societies and the world.

The interactive event will include the award ceremony for the UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education, a roundtable discussion and audience engagement activities. A reception hosted by the Permanent Delegation of the People’s Republic of China to UNESCO will conclude the celebrations.

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Girls’ education: A force for gender equality and lasting change

About the UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education

The UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education honors outstanding and innovative practices advancing girls’ and women’s education, and in turn, improving the quality of their lives. Established in 2015, it is funded by the Government of the People’s Republic of China and consists of two US$ 50,000 awards to help further the work of laureates in this field.

Learn more on.unesco.org/gweprize, or email GWEPrize@unesco.org

* Ouleye, a young leader from Senegal standing up for girls’ rights and gender equality, will symbolically take over the role of Mr Cyrille Pierre, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France. This takeover, initiated by Plan International France, aims to amplify girls’ voices and demonstrate the ability of girls and young women to be in positions of power.

** First names only are provided for the young people participating in the roundtable to protect their privacy.
Girls’ education: A force for gender equality and lasting change

Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO

Having worked in the cultural sector since the beginning of her professional career, Audrey Azoulay has, among other things, worked on the financing of the French public audiovisual sector and on the reform and modernisation of French film support systems. She has also carried out missions as an expert to the European Commission on culture and communication issues. According to her, “none of the great challenges of today’s world can be solved by one country alone and without relying on the fundamental pillars of science, education and culture.”

Yvan Savy, Director of Plan International France

An agricultural engineer by training, Yvan Savy began his career helping out in rubber plantations in Côte d’Ivoire. He joined Plan International France in 2007 as Director of Communication and Fundraising before taking up the position of Director of the Foundation in 2015. Very concerned about the cause of children, Yvan Savy is an activist for the rights of girls around the world, particularly their right to education.

Cyrille Pierre, Deputy Director General, Directorate General of Globalization, Culture, Education and International Development, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, France

Before taking up his current position in September 2019, Cyrille Pierre was the Director of Sustainable Development in the same department. Previously, he was Chief of Staff to the Secretaries of State for Foreign Trade, Fleur Pellerin then Matthias Fekl. Graduated from the Ecole Nationale d’Administration, Cyrille Pierre headed France Expertise International, a State operator of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and held various management positions at the Quai d’Orsay, particularly in international economic and financial affairs.

Ouleye, Activist, Senegal

Ouleye, originally from Saint Louis, Senegal fights for girls’ access to school and for their leadership. Born in 2002, she defends the right to an inclusive and quality education for all as key to addressing systemic gender inequality and reducing child and forced marriages, which effect 3 out of 10 girls in Senegal today. Through the project “Act for your city and for your country”, Ouleye raises awareness among girls, empowering them to become active and vocal citizens. Her advocacy is fuelled by the message: “Yes, you can”.

H.E. Mr Yang Shen, Ambassador, Permanent Delegate of the People’s Republic of China to UNESCO

Before taking up his current role as Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the People’s Republic of China to UNESCO, Yang Shen had a rich experience in promoting international education, cooperation and exchanges, having been posted at the Chinese Embassy in the U.K. as Minister Counsellor for Education, and at the Chinese Consulate General in San Francisco, U.S., as Education Counsellor. He has also been involved in policy-making and management work of international education cooperation and exchanges as Deputy Director-General of the Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges, Ministry of Education of China, as well as Deputy Secretary-General of China Scholarship Council.
Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO
A former Senator and Minister of Education, Universities and Research of the Republic of Italy, Stefania Giannini developed and implemented the structural reform of the Italian education system, focusing on social inclusion and cultural awareness. She also chaired the European Union Competitiveness Council during the Italian Presidency, working to promote the importance of creativity, cultural heritage and innovation as tools for dialogue between populations in order to prevent radicalization and extremism.

María Chivite Navascués, President of Navarre
A former Senator and spokesperson for Health and for the Socialist Group of the Senate, Ms Navascués began her political career as a City Counsellor and county Parliamentarian. In the 2015-2019 legislature, she has returned to the Parliament of Navarre. In addition to her political career, she has worked on European employment projects and as an employment technician. She has won numerous prizes in her political career, and will receive the 2019 UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education on behalf of the Government of Navarre.

Kemly Camacho, President and General Coordinator for Sulá Batsú
As President and General Coordinator for Sulá Batsú, the awarded project for the 2019 edition of the UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education, Kemly Camacho coordinates the ICT Project and develops other research, including on the role of ICT in the innovation processes of organizations and social enterprises in Central America. She also teaches undergraduate and graduate anthropology and graduate evaluation of development programs and projects at the University of Costa Rica.

Lindsey Nefesh-Clarke, Founder of W4 Women’s WorldWide Web
Lindsey Nefesh-Clarke is founded W4, an international, non-profit organization and Europe’s first crowdfunding platform dedicated to girls’ and women’s empowerment with a focus on promoting girls’ and women’s equal access to and participation in information and communication technologies. She has also worked in human rights and development in West Africa and South-East Asia with various groups including Human Rights Watch, UNICEF and Enfants d’Asie. She was nominated as a G20 Young Entrepreneur in 2016.

Wahabou, Activist, Burkina Faso
Wahabou is 18 years old, and a Young Leader associated with Plan International’s programme in Burkina Faso. He is a fervent advocate for expanded access to quality secondary education, particularly in rural areas. This future journalist, who dreams of being a political leader wants to empower all girls to participate in the development of his country. A student in communication, activist, actor, and director of a theatre troupe calling for an end to child marriage, Wahabou never misses an occasion to pass on a message of hope for girls’ rights, though he recognises there is much more to be done.
Amelie Fernández de Monje Arregui, Advisor, Department of Education, Government of Navarre

Amelia Fernández de Monje Arregui has worked as a French teacher in secondary education in Navarre, Spain for around 20 years. She was appointed as the coordinator of the Coeducando Team from 2010 by the Department of Education, working on the design of teacher training courses on Co-education. In 2017, she joined the SKOLAE team, the awarded project for the 2019 edition of the UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education, in the Equity Section of the Department of Education and works mainly on the management and coordination of the programme’s teacher training courses.

Delphine O, Ambassador and Secretary General of the Generation Equality Forum (Beijing+25)

Delphine O is in charge of organizing the Generation Equality Forum, the largest international summit for women’s rights in 25 years. She was previously a member of the French Parliament for La République en Marche, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and chair of the France-Iran friendship group of the National Assembly. She was rapporteur for the mission on "Strategic Issues in the South China Sea" and a mission on the opening of the National Assembly to civil society, and has worked at the French Embassy in Seoul, the French Consulate General in New York and the Stimson Center in Washington. A specialist in Iran - where she lived - and Afghanistan, she co-founded the news website Lettres Persanes.

Hayat Sindhi, Chief Scientific Advisor to the President of the Islamic Development Bank

Dr Hayat Sindhi is a medical scientist. She founded the i2 Institute for Imagination and Ingenuity to foster innovation among youth in STEM fields, and co-founded Diagnostics for All, a social enterprise serving the developing world. She became the first woman from the Gulf States to earn a Ph.D. in the field of biotechnology, and the first woman appointed to the Shura Council, Saudi Arabia’s highest consultative body. Dr Sindi is also a UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, and a member of the UN Scientific Advisory Board and the 10-Member Group to support the Technology Facilitation Mechanism.

Binitia, Activist, Nepal

At 26, Binitia is a Young Leader associated with Plan International Nepal’s programme. She won Nepal’s Top 7 Debaters in 2013, and has since been engaged as a founder of 2030 Youth Force, supporting child and youth rights. As a journalist, is in charge of communication for the NGO Federation of Nepal, where she is fighting against inequality and discrimination, including in education. She is a role model for her community, and an outspoken advocate for girls’ education.