



In 2011 the United Nations designated 11 October the international day of the girl. Despite the efforts of the international community and civil society for gender equality and primary education for all, girls often have less rights and opportunities than boys. With the establishment of this day, the UN acknowledges that there is a long way to go to achieve gender equality in all corners of the world. UNICEF Secretariat Head Cheryl Gregory Faye stated "This day acknowledges that despite progress achieved, discrimination and violence against girls and violations of their human rights still persist. We must continue to raise awareness of the challenges that millions of girls face every day simply trying to claim their right to an education and other rights."

In order to celebrate the first international day of the girl, Plan UK and the Southbank centre will organize the 'WOW Girls' festival. During the festival, the London Eye will be 'taken over' by schoolgirls between 12 and 18. The schoolgirls will be able to talk to inspiring women from politics, television, the arts, science, business and sport in one of the 32 London Eye cabins. For two full circuits of the London Eye, which for the occasion will be lit in pink and white, mentors such as Paralympic champion Sarah Storey, will be sharing their experiences and helping inspire girls to pursue their goals.

The theme of the first international day of the girl will be child marriage. "Child marriage is probably the greatest single challenge to empowering girls worldwide" wrote Graça Machel, who is a member of the Elders. In almost all cases, child marriage results in violations of the human right to health, education, non-discrimination and freedom from physical, psychological

and sexual violence. Moreover, it violates all the rights of a child. Every year an estimated 10 million girls are married before they reach 18. In the most appalling of these cases, little girls as young as eight years old are being married off to men who may be three or four times their age. Those girls often face a life of violence and suffer from inhuman and degrading treatment and ultimately slavery.

Additional links:

- [International Day of the Girl Child](#)
- United Nations Girls' Education Initiative ([UNGEI](#))
- [More information on the festival](#)
- [The Elders](#)