



For millions of girls worldwide, their dreams, ambitions and plans are shattered simply because they are girls. Poverty, discrimination and violence combine to deny millions of girls around the world their basic rights, including to education, healthcare, adequate and nutritious food, and protection. Gender-based discrimination is often deeply rooted in social and cultural attitudes and norms, compounded by religion and reinforced through discriminatory national legislation or policies, social structures and education curricula.

### **Unleashing girls' potential**

Girls' rights are often dealt with as a sub-group of women's or children's rights, but experience shows that when girls are not explicitly mentioned as a unique cohort, interventions do not reach them. Girls face particular and acute challenges which are different to those of women, men, and boys and, at the same time, girls' experiences differ according to their age, with adolescent girls facing different challenges to younger girls. However, if girls are empowered to participate in decision-making, in the life of their communities and in economic, civic and political life, everyone stands to benefit.

The European Week of Action for Girls 2013, which takes place from 11-18 October under the official patronage of the European Parliament, will highlight girls' potential as powerful drivers of change, calling on the EU to promote and protect girls' rights worldwide by ensuring they are visible in EU policies and programming.

## **From commitments to concrete actions**

European Parliament President Martin Schulz says, "It is now time to move to concrete actions targeted at ensuring every girl's rights are realised. Frankly, it is unacceptable that, in 2013, being born as a girl still means a lifetime of disadvantage for millions around the world."

He adds, "It is clear that persisting stereotypes are the underlying cause for a number of obstacles faced by girls. Stereotypes limit their access to high-quality or secondary education, influence their professional choices and often place them in occupations which are less valued and remunerated. A lasting change in society can only become reality if these stereotypes are eliminated. The European Parliament is fully committed to making this happen."

His comments are echoed by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton, who highlights the work EU Delegations around the world are carrying out with the aim of protecting and empowering women and girls. "Protecting the rights of women and girls is a long-standing commitment of the European Union," she says. "We are playing an important role by funding programmes around the world to promote gender equality and children's rights."

By including girls in programming and measures of success, including increased data collection, disaggregated by sex and age, the EU and partner countries will be better placed to identify and respond to the particular needs of girls across the different age groups, helping them to unleash their potential as powerful drivers of change.

The European Week of Action for Girls is organised by Plan EU Office under the patronage of the European Parliament and in partnership with United Nations Brussels, supported by partner civil society organisations.

### **Additional links :**

[European Week of Action for Girls 2013](#)

[Videos](#)