



Canada 



#IDG2017



Message from the **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

October 11 has been a key global moment to celebrate the power of girls and highlight the barriers they face since the United Nations adopted it as International Day of the Girl in December 2011.

Working with girls across the world, Plan International led a global effort to build a coalition of support behind the Day of the Girl, securing support from the Canadian Government which took our call all the way to the United Nations. Through this international observance day, we have sought to ensure that girls everywhere can learn, lead, decide and thrive.

Last year, as part of this movement, Plan India led 27 national 'girls' takeovers', contributing to a global 300, during which girls from Plan communities stepped into the shoes of influential leaders of countries, cities, corporations, print media, radio, border security, police, schools and even village panchayats. Girls convened high level meetings, passed girl-friendly policies and resolutions and demonstrated their sheer power and potential.

This year, together with multi-sectoral partners including and especially intergovernmental organisations and diplomatic missions, the takeovers will make girls more visible and drive new opportunities for action and investment in them.

We are thankful to the Delegation of the European Union to India, High Commission of Canada, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, High Commission of New Zealand, Embassy of the Czech Republic, Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia, South African High Commission, Embassy of Sweden, Embassy of Spain, Embassy of France, Embassy of the United States of America and the British High Commission, for making room for girls from Plan communities as well as the larger universe, across Delhi to act as their leaders for the day.

This booklet contains the profiles of 23 Girl Ambassadors and Advocates who will lead takeovers for 12 diplomatic missions. This is a historic first that we are thrilled to present. This would not have been possible without the integral support and partnership of the visionary leaders of these missions. It has been an honour and privilege to come together for girls and support them in their critical movement towards gender empowerment and transformation. I would also like to extend my gratitude towards Mr Madhukar Kamath for his support and for moderating the interactive session with the girls and delegates.

This International Day of the Girl, Plan India is reinvigorated in its efforts to transform the lives of 10 million girls. We will strive to scale our work and partner with change makers to further the movement for girls' rights.

On behalf of the Plan family, the girls and communities we work with, I invite you to join our movement, which is strengthened by the hopes and dreams contained in this booklet.

Sincerely,

Bhagyashri Dengle
Executive Director
Plan India



TOMASZ KOZŁOWSKI
Ambassador of the European Union to India



GIRLS TAKEOVER DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO INDIA



22 years, Post-graduation with Specialisation in Human Rights, Jamia Milia Islamia University

NEHA - GIRL AMBASSADOR

Neha feels an overwhelming need to fight against stereotypical behaviours that plague households across the country. Discrimination against girls is one of the biggest barriers preventing them from achieving their goals.

“Discrimination is a big challenge for girls. This problem must be taken seriously to affect change in our society. As a girl, I will take this initiative. I will be independent. I will study. I will prove my worth and one day, make my parents proud,” she says.

She sees the ‘Girls’ Takeovers’ as a path towards change where a day dedicated to girls can bring global attention to the realities they endure. In her opinion, the takeovers give her a chance to address issues faced by girls and at some level, help create or improve existing policies.



14 years, Government Senior Secondary School, New Delhi

EKTA - ADVOCATE

Ekta says that societal biases hamper the development of girls. While educating a girl leads to educating two families, hers and her husbands, not educating a girl leads to stagnation. She also believes that an educated mother can help curb crime by keeping an informed eye on her child.

International Day of the Girl is a means to reach out to and create a society where girls are inspired to work for themselves rather than living life on other people’s terms, restricted to four walls. “We have a patriarchal society but women too are doing well now.” ‘Girls’ Takeovers’ inspire Ekta who sees herself in a position of authority. “I will respect the workplace and try to do justice to the office. I will seek advice before taking any decisions and rather than inactivity or misuse of the opportunity, I will try and make the best of my time there,” she says.



18 years, Bachelor of Political Science, University of Delhi

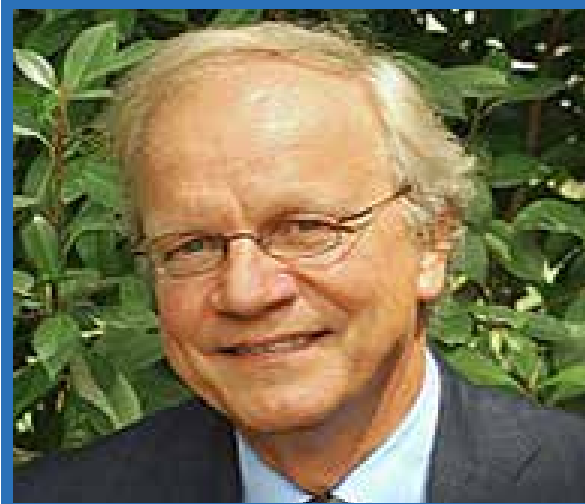
DIVYA - ADVOCATE

Divya believes that patriarchy is widespread. Parents of girls are compelled to give dowry illegally, even if they can’t afford it whereas boys are treated with respect and receive dowry no matter their circumstances. Education is stopped on the pretext of marriage or at best, limited to schooling and graduation after which the girl is forced to marry.

Divya says that as Mother’s Day and Father’s Day is celebrated, so should be the International Day of the Girl. On the day of the ‘Girls’ Takeovers’, Divya would like to be exposed to roles in which she can learn. She wishes to experience the life she dreams of – i.e. working for an organisation that supports girls’ rights and is striving to make a difference in society. “I am the eldest among my siblings and need to prove myself so that I can set an example for them. I want to motivate them into becoming independent individuals who stand on their own feet,” she says.

GIRLS TAKEOVER

NETHERLANDS EMBASSY



ALPHONSUS STOELINGA
Ambassador of the Netherlands to India



SONIA - GIRL AMBASSADOR

Sonia feels that along with the many challenges faced by girls, a lack of equality and proper facilities stunt their growth. Boys in the family restrict what their sisters can do with the excuse of being protective, while society tries to contain their expression and talent. Girls cannot be expected to grow if these obstacles are in their way.

"International Day of the Girl will help bring about discussions on the challenges faced by girls that are seen as part of their life. The 'Girls' Takeovers' will help in breaking the shackles by revealing new opportunities to many who do not believe they exist," she says.

22 years, Bachelor of
Commerce, University of
Delhi



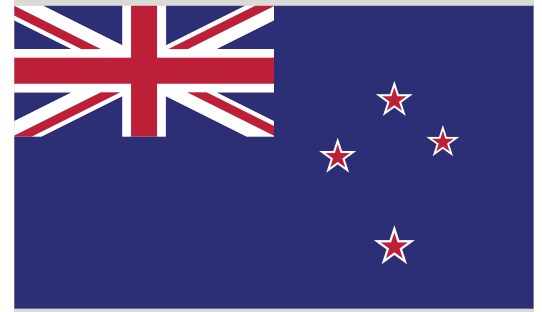
ASHU - ADVOCATE

"Society discriminates against girls, making them weak," says Ashu. The lack of support from family and society compels girls to compromise on their dreams. Once married, they are confined to the household. She states that if a girl is bold and courageous enough to live her life on her terms, society taints her reputation and discourages her family from giving her the freedom that is her right. Ashu feels these are the reasons why India is still considered backward.

International Day of the Girl will help increase awareness on girls' rights and how these rights can be gained. The takeovers will introduce girls to new avenues, enlightening their minds and enriching their experiences.

20 years, Bachelor
of Political Science,
University of Delhi





GIRLS TAKEOVER

NEW ZEALAND HIGH COMMISSION



22 years, Works at
Concentrix, New Delhi

MADHUJA - GIRL AMBASSADOR

For Madhuja, issues like discrimination in girls' education, their early marriage and the idea that they are meant to only manage a household are major barriers in their development. She says that many households do not allow their girls to work. They believe that education isn't necessary for girls as they will be married into another home in the end.

"International Day of the Girl will help sensitise society towards these problems. Every girl has the right to live her dream and she must be given an opportunity to learn and earn." Madhuja wants to be part of the 'Girls' Takeovers' and create awareness on how by teaching a girl, one educates a family. She believes these takeovers will help her learn a lot and in turn, allow her to share her ideas and experiences with the organisation she is associated with and also help them shape their policies.



18 years, Nursery
Teachers' Training,
University of Delhi

SHIVANI - ADVOCATE

Shivani is of the opinion that in this day and age, it is very important for girls to stand on their own feet, be self-reliant and play the role of a leader at home. "While society is still partial, girls are making a name for themselves, reaching powerful positions. We must take inspiration from such girls and fight against social ills. Many of us have been subjected to gender discrimination. We must break stereotypes and prove that we can and we will do well for ourselves and our families."

She believes that International Day of the Girl is a day to ponder upon and address the problems faced by girls and also be inspired by women leaders to work towards a better future. She adds, "The 'Girls' Takeovers' will give us a sneak-peek into what life can be, and help us learn how once can reach there."





GIRLS TAKEOVER

HIGH COMMISSION OF SOUTH AFRICA



FRANCE K. MORULE
High Commissioner of South Africa to India



19 years, Works at Caretel Pvt. India Ltd., New Delhi

REEYA - GIRL AMBASSADOR

Reeya believes that a major hindrance to the development of girls is that they are not allowed to make their own decisions. When it comes to education, they do not receive monetary support, hence proving that even today, girls are not treated equally to boys.

International Day of the Girls will spread awareness, empower girls and motivate their parents to support their daughters. Reeya says that the opportunity of 'Girls' Takeovers' will teach her a lot and give her the chance to put forth and speak up about the myriad problems girls face.

"Growing up, we've all faced inequality and discrimination in some form or another, especially us girls. Breaking through these barriers and getting involved in decision making helps make our voices are heard," she says.



19 years, Bachelor of Arts, University of Delhi

KHUSHBOO - ADVOCATE

Khushboo is determined to be independent in life. "Early marriage of girls, restriction on life choices, dowry systems and seeing girls as a burden – society needs to change. These practices come in the way of progress and stagnate the growth of girls," she says.

She feels that International Day of the Girl will help emphasise the need to help girls grow. Initiatives like 'Girls' Takeovers' will help change how parents and society view them. "Girls from various walks of life have successfully achieved their dreams and this International Day of the Girl is a dedication to them as well. The takeovers will help us to be heard, our opinion understood and will also expose us to opportunities we are not aware of yet."

She adds, "Every girl should be independent and this initiative can change society by giving girls like me a stepping stone towards independence."





ANTARA - GIRL AMBASSADOR

“Gender identities are formed by society so much so that they have a performative value attached to them. The stereotypes, in a way, force girls to prove that they are physically, emotionally and mentally equal to or even stronger than boys,” says Antara.

Even the formulation of laws in our constitution, somehow even while trying to be progressive, see girls as docile beings who need to be protected from the evils of society. With the rise of violence against women, it is time to take a stand and take away the authority and power that entitles men to be perpetrators of crime. International Day of the Girl seeks to empower girls and motivate their parents to support them in their struggle to break free from the shackles of society.

22 years, Bachelor of
Social Science and
Humanities, New Delhi



DEEKSHA - ADVOCATE

Deeksha feels that youth participation, especially that of girls, is key to designing and implementing sustainable programmes for girls and their communities.

“Growing up, I have faced inequality and discrimination within the entire family, especially compared to male siblings and cousins. Girls always have to adjust and accept the wishes of the elders, be it education, going out with friends or the important decisions in one’s own life, even when it comes to choosing a life partner, it is the elders who take the call,” she says.

Deeksha wants to represent girls and youth from her community, and increase awareness about the issues women face right from childhood. Being an avid advocate for girls’ rights, she wants to help create a gender sensitive society in which girls receive fair treatment and their share of opportunities and encouragement to pursue their dreams. The ‘Girls’ Takeovers’ give her the opportunity she seeks to make a difference.

20 years, Works at Insight
Customer Call Solutions
Ltd., New Delhi





GIRLS TAKEOVER EMBASSY OF SPAIN



JOSÉ RAMÓN BARAÑANO
Ambassador of Spain to India



NEHA - GIRL AMBASSADOR

A confident young girl from a young age, Neha has always been enthusiastic to participate in activities that involve girls' rights. She says, "A girl is responsible for her own future and generations to come." She believes that girls today have access to rights they did not have a decade ago. These rights allow them to see equality in various fields. "Girls should not be treated as inferior. International Day of the Girl is perfect for bringing change as many girls don't receive an education due to biases. These days, women are ahead of men in many ways and all that is needed is exposure," she adds. Neha feels that initiatives like the 'Girls' Takeovers' will help increase her confidence and inspire her to do well in life. It will be a stepping stone to a better tomorrow, one that she can be proud of and one that is entirely hers.

18 years, President
of Plan India's Youth
Advisory Panel in Delhi



VAISHALI - ADVOCATE

Vaishali believes that in this day and age, there can be no excuses for discrimination against girls. It is an issue that deeply disturbs her and she wishes to be the biggest supporter of girls' rights when she's older. Girls, especially those living in marginalised communities, are accustomed to harassment on the street whenever they step out of their homes. Ensuring their safety should be a top priority for community members and those in charge. She feels that the International Day of the Girl is a good initiative to eradicate such social ills. She hopes to learn a lot from the exposure she receives from the the 'Girls' Takeovers.' "Taking care of the responsibilities of a family is not only a boy's duty, we are equally responsible. If one is capable of sharing this responsibility, then one must take an initiative, just as I did," she affirms.

19 years, Bachelor of Arts
Programme, University of
Delhi





GIRLS TAKEOVER EMBASSY OF SWEDEN



VIDHI - GIRL AMBASSADOR

Having been actively involved in various social projects ranging from raising awareness on leprosy to distributing medical kits to people in villages, Vidhi has always been a supporter of social change, particularly involving girls.

She has an inclination towards breaking gender stereotypes, thus, the concept of 'Girls' Takeovers' is one that interests her immensely. Takeovers are an effective way of promoting girls to take on positions of leadership. Not only do they boost their morale and give them experience, they also open several new career paths for them.

These takeovers would also bring about a number of ideas to enhance and improve the perception of both genders of one another.

17 years, Sri Ram School,
New Delhi



PRATIBHA - ADVOCATE

Girls in India face prejudice at many levels. While their parents prioritise a son's education, that of girls is overlooked. Sons wear whatever they please, while what is appropriate for a girl to wear is dictated by dated beliefs. Their freedom of choice is rarely allowed to be exercised. Younger sisters are married off before elder brothers under the garb of tradition and duty. A girl cannot even step out of her home to meet friends without her intentions being mistaken. These are just some of the issues Pratibha feels a strong need to speak out about.

She wants to learn how leaders work and how they overcome problems they face. She feels that everybody criticises administrative structures for not working but nobody acknowledges the challenges they work against. A firm believer in action, she says, "Rather than thinking and planning, we must take steps to be independent. I did this! Today, I am very happy with my decisions and my parents are proud of me."

19 years, Bachelor of
Hindi, University of Delhi





GIRLS TAKEOVER

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



MARYKAY CARLSON
Charge d' Affaires



24 years, Bachelor of Education, University of Delhi

HEENA - GIRL AMBASSADOR

Girls are treated harshly in India – their hopes, opportunities and freedoms curtailed. Gender discrimination is ever prevalent. Girls are married at an early age and bound to the four walls of their homes, denied education and the space to express themselves. These are just some of the issues Heena feels need to be urgently addressed.

"I believe gender discrimination needs to stop. It's every girls' right to have good quality education and opportunities to grow. International Day of the Girl helps deal with these problems by showing that "girls can do". It increases the self-confidence of girls which helps them advocate not only for themselves but others as well," she says.

Heena adds that 'Girls' Takeovers' provide them with meaningful insights for the future, promotes aspirations and helps fulfil dreams. It gives girls a glance into what their future can be and encourages others to take a step forward for change.



21 years, Bachelor of Arts Programme, University of Delhi

SMRITI - ADVOCATE

There is a clear difference in the way girls and boys are treated. This treatment starts in their homes and spills out into the streets. Even walking around alone is considered dangerous for girls. Issues like this are what play on Smriti's mind.

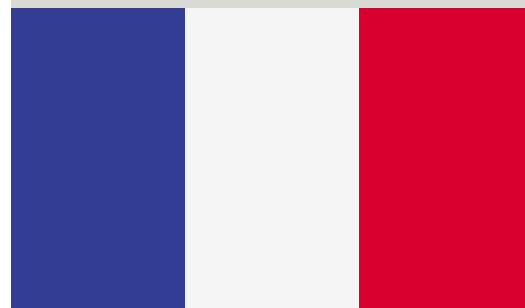
"Growing up as a girl in India brings harsh realities most of us have to endure. It is time to put an end to this; it is time to pave the way for a better tomorrow for girls," she says. On an occasion like International Day of the Girl, it is imperative that they are made to feel important and that their lives matter.

She adds, "Being part of the 'Girls' Takeovers' is a once in a lifetime opportunity for us to show just what we are capable of when given a chance. I am certainly ready to show my potential."





ALEXANDRE ZIEGLER
Ambassador of France to India



GIRLS TAKEOVER EMBASSY OF FRANCE



BABITA - GIRL AMBASSADOR

"I want to send the message that girls have the confidence to take up big positions in big organisations," says Babita. For her, it is one of the ways in which girls can really influence society and bring about necessary changes to enable and allow girls to build a better future for themselves. While everything else seems to be moving forward, gender discrimination persists as it has through the ages. International Day of the Girl is more than just a symbolic day. "Yes, I believe girls can do everything, but they need the support of everyone around to break down barriers that stop them from achieving," she says. "The 'Girls' Takeover' initiative will help build the confidence of girls like me to chase their dreams and aspire to change the world around them."

18 years, Bachelor of Arts Programme, Indira Gandhi National Open University




KIRAN - ADVOCATE

Living in a city is often considered too dangerous for young girls. In an era when the world is moving at break neck speed, it is disheartening to see that girls still fear for their safety and lives. These are the challenges Kiran wants society to do away with. She wants the world to be a safe place for girls to grow and live a happy and fulfilled life.

"I believe that International Day of the Girl is a truly inspiring day that showcases the injustice girls face and just how they are overcoming them. The 'Girls' Takeovers' will be a platform for us to launch our futures in the right direction of our choosing. Such an exciting and unique opportunity does not come along every day and I will be sure to make the most of it," she says.

19 years, Bachelor of Arts Programme, Indira Gandhi National Open University





GIRLS TAKEOVER

THE EMBASSY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC



MILAN HOVORKA
Ambassador of the Czech Republic to India



18 years, Bachelor of
Commerce, University of
Delhi

SHIKHA - GIRL AMBASSADOR

Shikha has always been an advocate for girls' rights and equality. "Girls suffer discrimination in every form. We see girls being stopped from attending school or getting a decent education. We see girls not being treated with respect, girls confined to the household. If they don't learn and have new experience, then how will they feel worthy?" she asks.

She believes that International Day of the Girl is a day to discuss all these issues with family and friends. "It is a day to celebrate girls, and the opportunity arising from the 'Girls Takeovers' will help us dream bigger. New paths will be revealed and we will also be part of a larger mechanism of change, encouraging us to reach out and aim higher."



18 years, Bachelor of
Arts, University of Delhi

ARCHITA - ADVOCATE

Archita says that the challenges put forth by society hinders a girl's growth and stagnates her future. She is either made to believe that her destiny is marriage and household chores, or made to feel inferior to boys and men. "If her family tries to give her freedom, the neighbours make it their business to question every move that she makes. How will one grow if one is stopped at every curve?" she asks. International Day of the Girl is a step towards empowering, encouraging and enlightening girls. She feels the 'Girls' Takeovers' will be a great learning experience which will open doors to new avenues and paths.

She adds, "I am a girl and I believe nothing is impossible for me. I will do my best to prove myself."

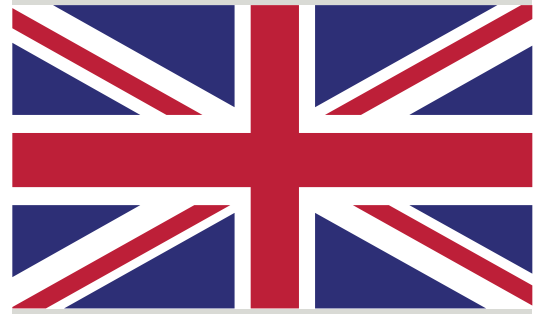


#GIRLS
TAKEOVER

#IDG2017



SIR DOMINIC ASQUITH KCMG
British High Commissioner to India



GIRLS TAKEOVER

BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION



RUDRALI - GIRL AMBASSADOR

Rudrali Patil is a student of law in her fifth year at Amity Law School, Noida, Amity University. She hails from Latur, Maharashtra. Apart from her passion for law she has long been an avid debater and enjoys reading books.

She aims to pursue her higher studies in law and then return to her hometown, Latur, to become a social entrepreneur. In the past two years, she has taken up numerous causes for girls including the rights of adolescent girls in rural India, and efforts to save the girl child through gender sensitisation camps in rural areas. She aims to take the initiative to a larger scale so she can benefit even more girls.

22 years, Student of Law,
Amity University Noida



**#GIRLS
TAKEOVER**



GIRLS TAKEOVER

CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSION



NADIR PATEL
High Commissioner of Canada to India



22 years, Student of Law,
University of Delhi

DEBOLEENA - GIRL AMBASSADOR

Growing up, Deboleena has always been an active member of society, supporting multiple causes and volunteering with numerous organisations including in Chile where she taught English in public schools. She has always been one to make the most of any opportunity presented to her and never shies away from challenges. Having been brought up in a feminist, middle-class household, she has always seen her mother breaking gender stereotypes which has had a strong influence on her. As a feminist, a traveller and an avid reader, you will always find her trying new things, embarking on new adventures or taking up new challenges. Deboleena calls herself a 'dreamer'. She says, "I dream and I work to make it happen." She dreams of a non-binary and gender-equal world, and hopes to make this dream come true.





MADHUKAR KAMATH
Plan India Governing Board Member

Madhukar Kamath is a member of the Governing Board of Plan India and has been the Group CEO and Managing Director of DDB Worldwide Network for 14 years.

About Plan India

Plan India, a member of Plan International Federation, is a nationally registered independent child development organisation committed to creating a lasting impact in the lives of vulnerable and excluded children, their families and communities.

For over 35 years, Plan India and its partners have improved the lives of millions of children by providing them access to protection, basic education, proper healthcare, a healthy environment, livelihood opportunities and participation in decisions which affect their lives.



PLAN INDIA

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