



The London Eye was a women-only area on 11 October as part of the world-wide celebration of the International Day of the Girl. Famous and inspiring women such as Fiona Phillips (broadcaster), Natasha Jonas (Olympic boxer), Dominique Tipper (actress) and fashion designer Katharine Hamnett talked with girls aged 11-18 during two circulations of the London Eye. In every cabin girls experienced a speed-mentoring session in order to pursue their dreams, while at the same time enjoying the views over the city.

All mentors took part in the event to stress the importance of equal rights for girls around the world. “I’m here to support girls’ education, because if you educate girls you end up educating whole families,” according to Guardian columnist Lucy Mangan. The importance of the day was also recognized by the girls themselves. “International Girls Day is hugely important, because it highlights the fact that there are barriers to education for girls. Many people don’t quite understand that 75 million girls aren’t in school” said Plan UK Youth Advisory Panel member Lauren Eaves.

The ‘cabin-meetings’ were not the only option to get up-close and personal with national and international celebrities. After the sessions in the London Eye the 180 schoolgirls, from all over the UK, enjoyed a brunch together with the celebrities, including international Hollywood stars such as Freida Pinto (“Slumdog Millionaire” and “Planet of the Apes”).

After the brunch, former UK first lady Sarah Brown gave a key note speech about the discrimination girls often face compared to their male peers, leading to poor education and the problem of girl brides. “The first International Day of The Girl Child is a chance for us to focus on the rights of girls and draw attention to two major issues which affect their life chances – the lack of provision of girls’ education and the problem of child brides.” Sarah Brown said. The wife of the former prime minister is, together with Gordon Brown himself heavily involved in

promoting education globally.

The rest of the day the girls could take part in debates, talks, performances and workshops focused on the choices girls face in all areas of their lives, both in this country and abroad. Moreover, there were sessions on education and careers, confidence and positive self-image, relationships, family and friends and empowerment to change the world for girls.

**Source:** [www.plan-uk.org](http://www.plan-uk.org)