

Written Testimony of Kana Walsh

House Committee on Culture, Arts, & International Affairs

House Committee on Education

Kana Walsh
Youth Outreach Officer
American Red Cross

Testimony of Kana Walsh

My name is Kana Walsh and I'm in the 8th grade. I am also a member of the Girl Scouts, a volunteer at the American Red Cross, and the co-founder of Girls Can Map.

According to the United Nations, millions of girls are denied access to basic education around the world. It is no wonder that the majority of illiterate people in this world are female. For centuries, girls have been denied the same opportunities as boys in education, employment and healthcare.

According to the [UN Site about International Day of the Girl](#), "Progress for adolescent girls has not kept pace with the realities they face today, and COVID-19 has reinforced many of these gaps."

Research shows that girls are not given the same opportunities as boys to get ahead in life. We need to do more to recognize these disadvantages and find solutions to fix them.

The International Day of the Girl Child can help. It not only creates awareness of the many inequities faced by girls around the world. It also creates awareness for the many solutions to these problems.

I feel that there are too many girls who do not have a fair chance in this world. As a consequence, they give-up on their opportunities to do amazing things.

If more people celebrated the International Day of the Girl Child, I believe that more people would feel empowered to find solutions to the disadvantages that girls face in life. And, they would see that being a girl is a positive not a negative.

We have a moral responsibility to make sure that every human being is treated with kindness, respect, and tolerance. If more Americans celebrated this important day, then more girls would be empowered to realize their full potential.

Members of the Committee, I would like to thank you for your time and your consideration of my opinions.

Appendix – International Day of the Girl Child OpEd

Kana Walsh
Center on Public Diplomacy Blog
University of Southern California
29 November 2018

Realizing the Full Potential of the International Day of the Girl Child

This October 11, people around the world again had the opportunity to celebrate the United Nation's International Day of the Girl Child. This year's theme was to prepare girls to enter a world of innovative and automated work. The purpose of this theme was to engage individuals and organizations to close the gender gap in STEM employment.

This year, a lot of famous women spoke out on gender equality. In the United States, Michelle Obama, Jennifer Hudson, Meghan Trainor and Kelly Clarkson celebrated the day with over 1,000 girls and women on national television. They shared a message of hope. That no matter who we are, we should be treated the same. Around the world, girls celebrated the day in many different ways. Some even took over the roles of important people for day.

Personally, I celebrated the day by shadowing an amazing woman at a major geospatial company. Through the shadowing experience, I was able to experience what she did to promote women in STEM and the impact of her work on her team. Unfortunately, other girls at my school did not get to have such experiences. And, almost no one at my school had even heard of the day until they read an article that I wrote about my experience, or saw a tweet about it.

To take advantage of this opportunity, public diplomacy officers need to create programs that create awareness of the event. And, they need to start creating those programs now.

If not many kids at my school knew about the International Day of the Girl Child, then I imagine that many kids at other schools don't either.

In New Delhi, India, diplomatic missions are committed to promoting equal rights for girls and women and celebrating International Day of the Girl Child. Among the many sponsored activities are distribution of activity guides to schools, interaction with students at various academic institutions and even the organization of "Girls Takeovers."

Plan International India is a child rights organization concerned about children's rights and equality for girls. Through this program, girls and women are able to interact with Ambassadors and High Commissioners. Afterwards, they can share their experiences with others and talk about girls' empowerment at a large gathering.

Next year, we need a lot more people to celebrate the International Day of the Girl around the world. For this to happen, I think that we need to start creating more awareness about the event farther ahead of time.

At a local level, we need school principals to list the event on their school calendars, host assemblies on the day for students, put news of the event in their school newsletters, and encourage discussions about the year's theme in classrooms. These actions will create more awareness for the event. And, that will hopefully get more people to celebrate the event next year.

The next International Day of the Girl therefore represents a great opportunity for embassies that are located in countries where girls have no chance of entering a world of innovative and automated work. To take advantage of this opportunity, public diplomacy officers need to create programs that create awareness of the event. And, they need to start creating those programs now.

Appendix B – Reducing Global Poverty through Universal Primary and Secondary Education (UNESCO)

<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000250392>

Appendix C – Literacy Rates Continue to Rise from One Generation to the Next (UNESCO)

http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/fs45-literacy-rates-continue-rise-generation-to-next-en-2017_0.pdf

Appendix D – Study: Patterns of Gender Inequality Start with Childhood Chores (WJZ)

<https://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2018/08/10/study-gender-inequality-childhood-chores/>