

February 11, 2022

## Celebrating International Day of Women and Girls in Science

*Max Planck Institutes jointly host a film viewing and discussion night featuring "Girl Rising", a documentary that aims to change the way the world values girls and their education*

**On the occasion of *International Day of Women and Girls in Science*, the gender equality officers and their colleagues of the Max Planck Institutes for Brain Research and of Biophysics organized an emotion-packed night featuring *Girl Rising*, a documentary that tells the stories of nine girls, striving beyond circumstance and overcoming nearly insurmountable odds to achieve their dreams.**

Over sixty participants from the two organizing institutes, in addition to guests from other Max Planck Institutes, and the Ernst Strüngmann Institute (Frankfurt am Main) as well as a group of female high school students from the St. Angela School (Königstein) viewed the film "*Girl Rising*" from the organization "*girlrising.org*". The viewing was followed by online-moderated discussion groups in German and English to engage in conversations on gender inequality and potential solutions to the global poverty problem, acknowledging Girls' education as a powerful first step. While not strictly about women in science, the movie conveyed powerful messages about girls' education, a pre-requisite for a career in science and solution to many of the worlds' most pressing problems. The participants were captivated both on an emotional and rational level – they expressed strong emotions such as "sadness and hope, empathy, empowerment, frustration, inspiration, respect" and even "rage".

"We are proud to have started a thought process today," says Jenny Sachweh, doctoral student and deputy equal opportunity officer at the Max Planck Institute of Biophysics.



The Girl Rising event organizing team at MPI for Brain Research and MPI of Biophysics. The entire event was held online. (Top left to right: Ashley Bourke, Irina Epstein, Alison Barker; middle: Claudia Fusco, Jenny Sachweh, Yagmur Yener; bottom: Teresa Spanò).

While the conversation will definitely continue, some of take-home messages shared by the participants included “education brings positive change”, “small steps are meaningful”, “we need to question existing patterns”, and “support local volunteers”.

„It was a really wonderful opportunity for all of us to stop and reflect and also realize how privileged we are”, shares Prof. Erin Schuman, director at the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research.

The organizers agree: “Let's keep engaging with this topic, to make the world a better place step by step!”

### **About Girl Rising**

*Girl Rising* is a nonprofit organization focused on girls' education and empowerment. The organization works with local partners by providing customized tools and curricula to build confidence and agency in girls and to change attitudes and social norms so that entire communities stand up for girls and against gender discrimination.

### **About the International Day of Women and Girls in Science**

*The International Day of Women and Girls in Science* was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. It is celebrated annually on February 11 and aims to commemorate the crucial role that girls and women play in science and technology.

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