

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

MOBILIZING FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS, SUPPORTING
LOCAL LEADERS, AND IMPROVING GIRLS' EDUCATION

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MOBILIZING GIRLS' EDUCATION AND ADVANCING EFFORTS TO EDUCATE AND ACT

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. WINTHROP: (in progress) -- three hour conversation with all of you about girls' education, a personal passion of mine. And before I do, I just want to say a huge thanks to Echidna Giving and the Malala Fund, who are wonderful partners and have helped to support this event. What I want to do to get us started is really talk about three things. One: Why do we care about girls' education? Two: What progress has been made to date? And three, where should we go from here? What should be our priorities moving forward?

This is something -- it's sort of a brief overview of some of the research my colleague, Eileen McGivny and I have been doing. You may have picked up a copy of the paper out front, "Raising the Global Ambition for Girls' Education."

So, to get started, you know, why do we care about girls' education? First and foremost, I think all of us would agree it's because it's a girl's right to get educated. It's as much a girl's right to get educated when she lives in Northern Uganda as it is a girl's right to get educated when she lives in New York City. And the reason it's incredibly important to think about rights at this point in time is because when we're going to spend the next three hours, and in all the work we do talking about strategies that are going to help girls in the work we do, we're not talking about charity. We're not talking about girls asking for a handout. We're talking, actually, about all of our collective responsibility to make good on that promise that every girl and boy should get educated.

The other reason we care about girls' education, the royal we, is because it has incredible developmental ripple effects. When girls get educated, their lives are better. They earn more money. Their children are healthier. Their families are stronger. Their communities are stronger. One of the most powerful studies that's come out recently is from "The Lancet," one of the top tier medical journals that talks about how

half of the reduction in child mortalities, so, kids dying before they're five years old, between 1970 and 2009 is directly responsible to girls' education and girls getting educated. So, that's why we care.

So, what have we done about it collectively as a global community? The education for all goals and the millennium development goals, which I'm sure most everybody knows about, has been an incredible driving force for global energy, resource, policy prioritization at country level around girls' education, and it's been basically focused on these two things -- making sure girls and boys get into school, primary school in equal numbers, and that we reduce the gaps in gender disparities.

So, how have we done? Here's 1990. The dark red are where girls are severely disadvantaged, some number of countries -- about 37 countries in 1990 where girls are severely disadvantaged at primary school level. And severely disadvantaged means less than 85 girls per hundred boys are enrolled. And there's a chunk of countries, 86 countries where you have in yellow, where you know, girls and boys are actually enrolled at primary more or less in equal numbers. It's between you know, 97 girls to 103 girls per hundred boys, more or less. You have gender parity. That's the yellow.

So, where are we at now? Here's 2012. Actually, a huge leap. A really big leap forward. You'll see that yellow countries have expanded. Now we have 124 countries around the world where there's gender parity, and only at primary, and only 11 countries disadvantaged -- still a chunk of countries where girls are somewhat disadvantaged.

So, you would think that that is fabulous, and it is fabulous. And I have been in conversations in sort of the global policy discourse where people say, you know, that's great, girls' education, we've done it. You know, we still know we have a little bit of

work to do, but we could probably shift our global focus onto other issues. We can tick that box. We've done it well.

And you know, when you look at the data primary level, you can understand where folks are coming from. But let's take a look at the data at secondary school level. Here's 1990, and actually, it's incredibly profound that there are more countries in the world in 1990 where girls are disadvantaged or boys are disadvantaged; a huge bunch of countries where girls are severely disadvantaged, than when there are equal numbers of girls and boys attending at secondary.

Here we are in 2012. Progress, yes, but not a great picture at secondary level. Not a great picture at all. You have roughly a third of the countries where girls are disadvantaged, a third of the countries where they're more or less enrolled in secondary school in equal numbers, a third of the countries where boys are disadvantaged. And I want to tell just a brief story.

I was at home yesterday, and I told my son, listen, you know, I have to leave early in the morning. I have a conference at work. And he's six years old. And he said, oh, a conference. Yes, a conference. What's your conference on, mom? And I said, it's on girls' education. It's very important. And he said, well, what about the boys (Laughter)? And actually, it's a very good question, and I've had similar conversations with colleagues not in the education space, necessarily, in the global policy arena, who argue, listen, you know, we've made great progress at primary.

And if you look at the data globally, you know, I don't understand why we're having such a focus on girls' education, because actually, there's a lot of boys who are disadvantaged, too. You know? Is it not time to sort of move on from this focus on girls' education and really think about the boys?

And my response, you know, both to my son and to people who make

this argument is the following, which is, absolutely, boys need assistance just as much as girls need assistance in those countries. However, they are very different issues. They are located in different countries. Their root causes are very different. The interventions and solutions to reaching either population are probably going to be very different.

Let's take a look at where in 2012, those red countries are located and those blue countries are located on the world map. You'll see blue countries are -- so, where boys are disadvantaged is largely in Latin American. More middle income countries. It has to do with boys having larger opportunities to enter the workforce than girls, often, and them wanted to exit secondary education because of low quality schooling.

And where girls are disadvantaged is this band of countries across southwest to Asia, some in the Middle East in Sub-Saharan Africa, and it's for very different reasons, which we'll go into in a minute. But child marriage, social norms, a whole range of things. And so, my argument would be that you know, in the global discourse and our global debates, we should really perhaps start focusing in on girls' education hot spots. It might be, and it's quite fair to say that you know, girls' education is no longer a large global -- it's not necessarily a global dialogue, but it's certainly something we should all care about, vis-à-vis where girls are disadvantaged.

And I think in terms of where do we go from here, there are two things. One, as I said, let's focus on girls' education hotspots. And two, what should we do when we focus on those girls' education hotspots? My argument is really that we should hone in, we should try to "finish the job." Let's hone in on second generation issues. We've made huge progress in primary. Let's keep going and lift our sort of global debate up around a range of second generation issues.

And these are all issues that groups around the world have been working

on in their own separate ways -- initiatives have been you know, working on in their own separate ways for many years. But they haven't yet taken, you know, center stage in the global dialogue.

So, let's go through. What are the second generation issues? First of them is getting girls to finish secondary school. And this is a graph. What you're looking at now is in those red countries, in those girls' education hotspots, numbers of girls who have entered in first grade, and how many finish at secondary. And you just see the massive drop-off that happens.

And if we really want to focus on girls getting to the end of secondary school, we absolutely have to be honest with ourselves and realize that we have to lean in on making sure they complete primary education. We cannot -- I've been in some circles who say, well, primary is done. Let's just shift all our funding and focus to secondary. We have to learn in on primary education and make sure we get them through to the end to secondary.

Another thing to take a quick look at, and the only thing I really want you to look at with this slide is that this is a slide of incidence of child marriage. The big bubbles are where half the girls in these countries are married before the age of 18, the really big circles. And you'll see that it just covers right across that band of red countries where there's girls' education hotspots.

A second issue, second generation issue is safety. Violence, harassment, attacks, including to and from, in and around schools are huge problems that girls face around the world. And really, we cannot stand by and continue to let it happen. The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack -- it's a mouthful, but they have documented 15 countries around the world where girls are systematically attacked, because they are trying to go to school.

I mean, there are girls who are in this day and age, 2012, we can -- you know, we can create a self driving car out in California, but we still (Laughs) have girls in the globe who are you know, dying, because they want to go to school. It just does not seem right.

Third issue is quality. You'll see the very top bar here is basically in North America and Europe. Ninety-six percent of kids make to fourth grade and learn basic reading. I'm not talking Shakespeare; just basically how to read. Very few kids, both boys and girls in these girls' education hotspot countries actually make it that far, as you can see from the chart here.

Fourth issue is transitions. So, you get girls to the end of secondary by insuring quality learning, and that they're safe. We have to work on ensuring that girls can transition into higher education and also, into livelihoods that are secure and dignified.

Lastly, and this is the theme of this conference today, local leadership. We argue that you know, in order to really make good on those four other priorities of access, safety, quality and transitions, we need to lean in on something that we've all stated that we know is important, which is putting girls themselves, their parents, community leaders, at the forefront of designing solutions and leading this change.

These second generations are much more complex than just building schools, making them free, making them compulsory, which was a bit of the recipe for getting kids into primary school. We need to attack -- you know, deal with social norms, socio and political nuances. You know, for example, the way to make girls safe in Northern Nigeria is going to look very different, although it is a similar goal, than the way to make girls safe in India.

So with that, in summary, that is our recommendation; something we put

forward to you for discussion of where we should go from here and what we should focus on. And I'm really looking forward to the next set of panels and discussions with all of you, to bring you one voice, though, by video, of a local leader herself, I want to share a little video with you of a recent Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Malala Yousafzai and her father, Ziauddin, were planning to be here, but we're very sorry when the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony is this very week in Oslo (Laughter), so we are -- we told them, really --

SPEAKER: We're sorry.

MS. WINTHROP: -- don't worry. You're doing a much more important thing. And we're very -- as a global education committee, we're incredibly happy that both Kailash, who for our community is incredibly important, because he was the co-founder of the Global Campaign for Education, and has done decades of work on child rights and child labor, as well as Malala, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. So here, let's show the video.

MS. YOUSAFZAI: (From video) Hello. My name is Malala Yousafzai.

MR. YOUSAFZAI: And hello, my name is Ziauddin Yousafzai. And the gal standing beside me, once she was my daughter, but now, I'm her father (Laughter). And I'm a teacher.

MS. YOUSAFZAI: We are really sorry that we can't be there. It was because that the Nobel event and receiving an award at the same time. But we are really thankful to you for your hard work and for starting this campaign, and we are really pleased that the Malala Fund is joining it. And we are going to work together, because we have the same dream. We want children, especially because to get quality education and work for their secondary education, especially.

So, it's going to bring a big change when we work together and when we

see the local leaders doing -- performing from their side and helping us in making sure that those voices are heard. And we think about the future, and we make sure that they get quality education.

MR. YOUSAFZAI: And we are also very pleased and very excited that the Malala Fund is the part of the chart initiative, which is working with the Brookings. We are also very excited, and we feel very proud that the local leaders are here in this very big gathering, and we welcome them and we say a special hello to them. We are also very thankful to the Center for Universal Education of Brookings. So, thank you all.

(Applause)

MS. WINTHROP: Our well wishes are with her, for her big day. So, now we're going to move on to the meat of the discussion. Just as a quick précis, we have two panels with a short break in between. And right afterwards, please do join us across the hall for a reception cosponsored with the Global Partnership for Education. So, that's how the event is going to go.

And now, I want to introduce the first moderator of our panel and invite the panelists in a moment, to join me onstage. Gene Sperling will be known to everyone, I think, but just as a recap, you'll know him from the Clinton Administration as well as the Obama Administration where he served as director of the National Economic Council for both. I think, Gene, you're the only person to do that for both -- for two administrations.

But more importantly, for our gathering here, he's a passionate advocate for global education, and in particular, for girls' education. And he has been someone who I have relied on over the years for strategic guidance and advice. He's incredibly thoughtful and smart and generous, and most importantly, he was the founder of the Center for Universal Education. And I owe him a huge thanks, because he recruited me, and to him and my boss from (Inaudible) hiring me.

So, we're very pleased to both welcome you to the stage, Gene, but also, to welcome him back into the fold of the Center for Universal Education as the chair of our advisory council. So Gene, please join me on stage as well as the panelists. Please do come up at this time. (Applause)

(Recess)

MR. SPERLING: So first of all, new housekeeping rule, which I hope everybody who cares for the Center for Universal Education will abide by, this is the only excuse you have for not speaking on a panel when you're asked is if you win the Nobel Prize (Laughter), and the reception is that day. And on that, there's a huge amount of flexibility and generosity, but that's pretty much it.

I have to say, I had a chance to meet with Malala and her father for 90 minutes, and the idea -- talk about people who are too good to be true, they are too good to be true in every way. And it's just a huge, huge -- her leadership is a huge boost, community leadership. Let me just make a few comments to frame this, and it is so appropriate that we're doing something on community leadership, when the source of the current youngest Nobel Prize winner ever was a girl -- not even a young woman really, or barely young woman playing such a powerful, brave leadership role in fighting for girls to go to school everywhere in the world. So, we couldn't have had more appropriate timing.

Now, one thing I just want to echo that Rebecca said, and yes, the best thing you can do as a founder is find a new head who is way better than you ever were, and I've done that successfully with Rebecca, who has expanded and done so many tremendous things here. But I think one thing I want to echo that she said, is that on these five second generation goals, these are really not second generation for the goals for the people who have worked on these issues. They've always been the goals.

There was never, for the brave people who have fought for education in

developing countries, the goal was never just to have girls have the same access to terrible schooling as boys might have. It was to have access to quality learning. It was never just to go to primary school. The millennium development goal that says that we should have universal primary education is simultaneously the world's most ambitious and pathetic goal ever, because you talk about little kids. I've had to speak to many little kids' groups, and one of the first things they say is, why are you only aiming for primary education.

And of course, you're not. It is the necessary stepping stone. The Center for Universal Education published in 2014 -- I coauthored with Barbara Herz, "What Works in Girls' Education." If you look through the massive literature on what works in girls' education, the dirty secret there or not so much of a secret is the most impressive results usually are studies of young women, girls, who have had secondary education.

So, you have to look at the primary as the necessary stepping stone. So, I think of the second generation goals as really the community of heroes up here basically screaming to the world, as Rebecca was suggesting, we're not even close to being done yet. And it's a reminder -- so it's not them discovering it. It's reminding the world that the existing millennium development goals were first steps. They were down payments. They are not the ultimate goal.

The ultimate goal is girls empowered, charged, rising, having opportunity, having empowerment in their families, in their communities, in their governments and ensuring that they are children, and their girls will have the opportunities that perhaps, they struggled to have. I do think in looking at these second generation goals, the issue of safety has taken on a new meaning. There was always safety, but truthfully, it was the safety of people worried about the long distances their daughters might walk. It was a

more type of safety that many parents in the developed countries would worry about; just the safety of your child on the way to school.

The occurrences of girls being targeted, even being killed because they want to go to school or kidnapped -- is really something that has taken on a new meaning, and is new energy to empower them. Now, I have had the ability to travel, and many of you have, to see education developing countries, and I think many of us have gone through the following type of situation. You meet in the minister's office and you see an excellent goal on, for example, education for prevention of AIDS.

And then, you go out and you see some schools in the community. And what do you see? Vast differences. You go to one place, and there's books in the corner, and there hasn't been any teaching. And then you go someplace else, and there's an amazing program. And why? Because there are community leaders who are overcoming local specific obstacles to achieve a national goal.

I traveled with the head of FAWE, the Federation of African Women for Education. She took me to a school outside of Nairobi, and while we were there, the first thing they showed me was how the local community leaders had gotten several Maasai chiefs to sign an agreement over a period of a year or two, to try to encourage their girls to not marry early and to go to school.

And while we were there, a grandmother and her 12 year old were brought to the school. They had walked all night, because her father was about to marry her off at 12 years old. And it was one of the chiefs who had suggested to go to that school and to sit there and look at this little 12 year old girl, and think that if this -- if she wasn't being accepted by this school, if they hadn't walked all night, if there hadn't been community leaders overcoming, well, how can we say it? She would be being raped the next day and her life would be severely set back. The power of that, which only

happened because of the community leaders overcoming a very specific issue there, local, tribal, religious issues there that are different everywhere, was essential.

So, I think this fifth generation and the subject here so perfectly in honor of Malala is perfectly timed, which is, how do we create the community leadership and empower the community leadership that is overcoming the local, the specific barriers to achieving these worthy national and international goals. And that is an area where I think we have underperformed, under spent time on, and why it is so excellent and appropriate that this is being considered one of the next generation issues, and that we have this great panel.

I'm going to briefly introduce the panel, since you have it, and then, I will sit down and start letting them talk exactly about the situation. But we are very happy to have Julia Gillard, who was the former prime minister of Australia, what we used to call a head of state, and more importantly, a distinguished fellow at the Center for Universal Education at Brookings. I hope the head of state stuff doesn't get totally, you know, back you know, in the -- I hope it still makes your Wikipedia page, anyway (Laughter). And she is the chair of the board of the Global Partnership for Education, which is the number one global architecture for dealing with education.

We're also very happy to have with us, His Excellency Lytou Bouapao, who is the vice minister of education and sports at the Lao Ministry of Education. We appreciate you being here. Also, Angeline Murimirwa -- oh, god, did I just butcher that (Laughter). Oh, that was just terrible, and I wrote it out, too. Help me.

MS. MURIMIRWA: Murimirwa.

MR. SPERLING: There you go (Laughter). So beautiful, I won't even try to repeat it. She is the region director of CAMFED, which is really the Campaign for Education for Girls. She is a founding member of CAMA, which was to get -- what she

was, was one of the alumni that have gone through that are giving back. And boy, do you see this more often in why you should support girls' education. The degree of giving back, of paying it forward, CAMFED is a group that I have had the privilege of once helping to fund some support for, and they are an amazing organization in Africa.

And then, Urvashi Sahni is a social entrepreneur focused on girls' education in India. She's been working on this for so long; has done so much good. She is exactly the type of community leader this whole conference is about. She is the founder of the Study Hall Educational Foundation in India, and is the very type of local hero who long before the world decided girls' education was a great global issue, she had decided it would be her life's passion. So, we're really honored to have everyone.

And I'm going to sit down over -- near here, I think. And you know what, I'm not going to sit down, because then I'm off of the microphone. Julia, question for you. You are at the -- this is about community leadership, and yet, you are at kind of the height of the global architecture. As you think about the global architecture for making sure the whole world is working together, to hit the millennium development goals and these next stage goals, how do you, from this global architecture or head of state level, ministry level, donor level, think about how you build into that infrastructure or those goals the empowerment of community leaders, particularly community female leaders to help implement that change.

MS. GILLARD: Well, that's a great question, and I think in many ways, we're still searching for the best avenues to do that, which is why this panel discussion's so important. And also, the CHARGE initiative which I've been involved with in my Brookings iteration, which met this morning and Rebecca's shown so much leadership of, so more than 30 groups coming together under the ambit of the Clinton Global Initiative for Girls' Education.

From the point of view of chairing the Global Partnership for Education, we work globally and locally, and I think that is so important, because it's genuinely a partnership model. It's a partnership around the global board of directors. We have donors, developing country partners, civil society, the private sector, private philanthropy, but within country -- within the developing countries that we work, and there's almost 60 of them, what comes together is the local education group with all the stakeholders to try and work on an education sector plan to strengthen schooling throughout that country.

And we've enjoyed a great deal of success at that, including our girls' enrollment. Right? But there's so much more to do, and we've set ourselves ambitious goals of increasing completion rates of primary school and secondary school by 10 percent over the four year period that we've been replenished for, with the first year of that replenishment period starting next year.

So, it's a model at both levels. One of the things I think we always need to do is strengthen the intersection between our local education groups and local leaders, because the more grounded that can be experiences within country, the better the answers that are going to be generated. And one thing we certainly know at the Global Partnership for Education is it's never a case of one-size-fits-all.

So, it might be in east team or in my region of the world having a food program or an incentive program to get girls to school. In Afghanistan, where we also work, it might be about supporting the education of female teachers, because if you've got female teachers having families will let their daughters go to school. In a country like Nigeria, it might be about strengthening a particular capacity for education in science or technology for girls.

So, we try to be very grounded in place and very responsive to what their vision of the local vision is, of including boys and girls, city and rural, with disabilities,

universal meaning universal in education.

MR. SPERLING: Thank you. And I think that's such an important point, what you said on the different strategies, because I think we've all experienced that. Somebody gets very excited about a particular intervention, and then a group comes together and says, let's fund that everywhere.

And even though you find out, you know, having water close to a school is just a miraculous intervention in one place, you take it to another place, and it's not needed as much. And so these interventions that you put in a book and we talk about, you know, you do find if you don't listen at the regional level, you can end up spending a lot of money and time on an intervention that doesn't make sense in the particular place that you've been.

Angeline, let me just, first of all, just use your first name (Laughter), as I've done so well. But secondly, you have been both a beneficiary of one of the most successful initiatives that focuses on a local level. You're a beneficiary of it. You're now coming back as a leader of that. What do you see when you look -- you know, when you look at CAMFED and what they do, tell us a little bit about explicitly how in particular areas you overcome, whether it's the barriers of culture, family, lack of resources, and what kind of lessons that shows or how CAMFED deals with -- and why there is -- how you deal with those differences, and then, what lessons you would also have for people here who might be dealing at a donor level or a foundation level.

MS. MURIMIRWA: Thank you so much, Gene. Allow me to repeat what Malala's father just said there. He said that I used to be -- Malala used to be my daughter. Now, I'm Malala's father. And I want to say the same thing about CAMFED, and you have rightly said this. There was a time when I benefited from CAMFED's agenda of girls' education. Now, I'm setting the agenda for how CAMFED can assist

thousands of girls and millions of girls in Africa.

Talking about my own life story, I was born in a very poor family in Zimbabwe. A very rough family. My mother knew how important education was. She didn't need anybody to come and sensitize her on why it's important; that much she knew very well. And it was unfortunate that most people confused a lack of means with a lack of understanding the value for education.

And I want to be able to say what was most helpful in the way that CAMFED assisted me and assisted millions of other girls from my community and across Africa is that understanding, that the ease and underlying commitment to education in those communities. And the way that support is provided allows for young women to be able to come through that system and want to be make a difference. The education doesn't alienate you from your community. It allows you to become a celebration point for the community, and then you start shining.

What lessons have I learned from that whole process? Understanding exactly what poverty is and how it's often misunderstood. What happens at the very local level, which is critical for us as global leaders to be able to understand is that poverty manifests itself in multiple different ways, and some of them are very hidden for outsiders. And oftentimes, my mother was accused of not understanding why it was very important to support this bright girl to go to school.

I'll give you just one very quick example. I'll go one when I was told to go and tell my mother to come and be addressed by the school yard on why she needed to pay my school fees, because I was one of the students who was guaranteed to pass. I didn't go and tell her, because every single night, I could hear my mother crying, because she didn't have the resources she needed to keep me in school. So, to go and tell her what I knew that she already knew, to go and tell her somebody should come and tell her

that for me, I wasn't going to allow that to happen to my mother.

I want to tell you what else happened to her and how she was misunderstood by that. But I want to be able to say that there is a road that girls and young women, we have succeeded against all odds in very difficult contexts; girls like Malala, girls that have lived in strict situations that still they have made it. There is a role that we can play in girls' education. It is the most sensible thing to use, to work with, to allow them to lead these science generation issues.

I liked your example, Rebecca, when you said to finish the rest. It's about using this new human and knowledge capital that we didn't have when this whole global discussion around girls' education started. It's about using that experience, that expertise, that subtle understanding of what happens within communities and beyond, and not just looking and boxing it just as that, a community initiative.

But if there are 10 communities that are doing the same thing, a hundred communities that are doing the same thing, a thousand communities, that becomes a movement for girls' education. So, we need to be able to look at this as it is the multiple collection of local initiatives that become the movement for girls' education. If you are going to go to school, if you are going to sustain this, if you are going to have real advanced change beyond access to quality, to relevance, to sustenance, it's not just about giving back. Make sure that the current education system is such that girls and young women's voices, stories, their experiences shape the dialogue and the intervention.

MR. SPERLING: What would you say is the (Applause) -- If you had to pick one barrier that you face, is it in the case of your family it seemed more just the absurdity of poverty in the face of having to pay school fees? Is what you're dealing with at that local level, is it issues that really, you have to deal with national local policy on?

Are there local things you're doing? Give an example of where CAMFED helps overcome what would be a blockage, whether that's something in the community or national policy -- failures of national policy.

MS. MURIMIRWA: The beauty of the CAMFED program is -- and how CAMFED works is that we look at not one specific problem, but we engage with communities on what is it that you can do to get your children in school. It's that -- the nature of the dialogue, the way it is frame that makes the difference. It is not coming into communities and saying you need school fees. No.

It's about okay, what is your vision for your girls? What do you want for your daughters? And oftentimes, you discover they want their children to be doctors. They want them to be nurses. They want them to be engineers. And then they say, where are they at now? Well, most of them are not completing school and all that. And what can you do now with what you have, with what you know to be able to make this transformation?

It is the principle CAMFED never does for a community what they can do for them. And it's never about coming in and rescuing the community. It is never about (Inaudible). It's about coming into the community and personalizing with the community to address what is most important to them. So yes, poverty is always at the center, but poverty manifests itself in multiple ways. The poverty in the family scenario -- at times, communities can get defensive and say, oh, no, no. I don't send my daughter to school, because how can I tell a stranger that every father or every mother, I'm failing to provide for my children, because of its culture?

Why is it that when somebody comes and says, I could pay the school fees or I could provide the decent clothing or I could provide school clothes? Why is it that they allow their girls to go to school? So, it's about digging beyond the superficial

presentation of ignorance or of not interest in education to be able to dig deeper. So, I want to be able to say that usually, the barrier, if you ask me, is at times a lack of understanding at global levels of what exactly is going on. At other times, what it appears to be is really not what it is.

MR. SPERLING: Gotcha. Well, let me thank you so much. Urvashi, you have been engaged for 30 years, and I guess it might be good for you to tell us just a little bit about what you've done, what your program has done, but also, what you see as this same role of community leaders and the leadership factor in helping to achieve you know, many of the remarkable results where so many of their children outperform their peers, even though they're from more difficult circumstances. Tell us a little bit about your specifics, in particular, in this context of this conference on the role of community leadership.

MS. SAHNI: Thank you, Gene, and thank you, everyone, and thank you, Angeline for good leading. I just want to talk about the second generation, go a little and take the lead in. And I really like them. And I agree with you, Gene, that a lot of us have been working at them, because we believed in doing the full job.

And I want to point out the quality learning and the completion of the secondary schools, for example. And I'll just use myself as an example, that I -- my parents came from Pakistan. They had to flee during partition. And my father came from a very patriarchal -- strong patriarchal mindset that believed that girls were meant for domestic, sexual and reproductive labor, and that was their goal. But we were poor when we started, and he went on to become a middle class person, so he sent me to as a status school, a very good school. It was one of the best private schools. It was cheap, but it was good.

And I performed really well. I finished my secondary school education,

and I taught my class. And then next year, I was married at 17. Right? So, this was supposed to be quality learning. It was supposed to be completion. It was completion of secondary school, and yet, I did -- I was married off.

And so what -- that brings me to the point that we need to define quality learning well. Then, what do we mean by quality learning? Does it only mean reading, writing and learning academics? And secondly, does completion of secondary complete the job, too? Right? Which is why the fourth generation is really important.

What my education didn't do was, it didn't teach me that I was an equal person, that I had the right to use my education for myself. It didn't build any aspirations in me, so that when that happened to me, I couldn't resist. It didn't build any resistance in me. It didn't empower me. Right? So, what we've done since then, when I found education to be really important, and it was when I understood that I was an equal person; when I understood that I had the right to do something with my life and to aspire beyond is when I really learned to do what I could, which is why I'm here.

With our school, we started with that understanding, that access is not enough, of course. And even quality learning means that you look at the conditions in which the girls live their lives. They come from really very poor households where domestic violence, child marriage is rampant. Right?

And so, we said that what they needed to do as part of -- we made it our educational goal, looking at life outcomes and not just at learning outcomes; to see that they would not leave that school until they understood that they were equal people, persons deserving of respect and autonomy; that they didn't leave without aspirations to do something with their life, to beat their challenges; that they didn't leave until they were strong enough to resist all the discrimination that they faced at home. Right?

We've talked about safety in schools. In countries like India, look at the

high rates of domestic violence. Look at the high rates of incestuous sex violence. So, where is the safety at home? So, unless they're strong enough, it is not enough just to get into safety in schools. We would talk. We used critical feminist pedagogy, and we would talk about the patriarchal structure and their place in it.

We would talk about child marriage and how they faced it, and how it happened in their community. We would talk about domestic violence. We would talk about what they wanted to be, and systematically, we would build aspirations in these girls. And as a result of this, our completion rates are 88 percent, and our girls outperform all national averages. And out of that 88, by the way, we have a 98 percent transition to higher education, and many of our girls go on to master's education, and then an MBA, too.

And most importantly, they work with their own communities then, to lead the charge against domestic violence, against child marriage. So the goal here was to build teachers in a leadership role and young girls, to help them understand that they must expand their role to think about becoming advocates for girls' rights, teaching girls how to be self advocates, and then, using their position and their association with the community to advocate for girls' rights to the parents, helping them value their girls, and to be on the girls' side as they advocated for themselves.

Since then, we have expanded our program to a hundred schools, so that they are reaching out to 10,000 girls and 10,000 families. And our students have led large campaigns in their community against child marriage. Just recently, in February, there were 14,000 up there that were engaged.

We believe that when we talk about local leadership, that really is educators. I found it really very useful to develop teachers as local leaders. They're very well positioned to do that, and in turn, they develop girls as local leaders, and together,

they work with the community to help them see girls as equal, autonomous persons deserving of respect.

MR. SPERLING: Thank you. So, 88 percent graduated from secondary school?

MS. SAHNI: Yes, past 12.

MR. SPERLING: So, that's better than the United States' average, for what it's worth (Laughter). Ninety-eight percent going to college way -- or any kind of higher education is significantly better. So, thank you. That is very thought provoking. I'm sure we'll have lots of questions.

Minster, you and have something in common. We've had to sit around making national policy, and then, you have to wonder, as you do it, whether it's going to actually happen; whether the good goals and good policies will actually be implemented in the way that you envision. How do you, listening to you know, the two who just have spoken -- how do you as you're doing this, think about how you combine your strategy for a national policy, your national goals for girls' education with the kind of community leadership or dealing with the, you know, local or more unique issues in making sure those happen?

It must be an enormous challenge, and I think we'd be interested to see how you look at both from a national perspective, understanding that much of the implementation and success is going to be dependent on the amazing people like we've just heard from.

MR. BOUAPAO: Thank you. In the capital Lao PDR complex, we consider that committee leadership is very fundamental to issue the sustainability access to your economic department, and particularly in the education department. In our context here, I would like to inform you that in 1975, the year we established Lao PDR,

across the country, more than 90 percent of Lao citizens were still illiterate.

How to ensure everyone have access to quality education, particularly girls, because we had well known that in the former regime, they do not pay attention to general education. So, now, we highly appreciate that -- how to ensure that every citizen has the right to contribute to socio economic government. We have established that to ensure education (Inaudible), to ensure the leadership of local authorities.

The Lao government established a fibule -- we call it a fibule. (Inaudible). What we have (Inaudible) called province as strategic (Inaudible). District should be strong, comprehensive departments you lead, and villages has the (Inaudible) you need. So, to ensure that for the education sector, we have established what we call the Village Education Department Committee, in charge of particularly, the education department, where to build schools, how to build schools, why we have schools, how to mobilize every child to go to school, to ensure that there are no exceptions. Boys and girls go to school.

And we think the Village Education Committee, we have woman (Inaudible), president as the leader to mobilize mothers to send your child -- your girl to go to school, because culturally, traditionally, in the remote areas, isolated areas, disadvantaged areas and particularly, ethnic areas. Mostly, they want to keep their daughters with them to work on the farm, and they send their boys to go to school. Gender issues.

So, we have to mobilize, to sensitize the Village Education Department committee. They have a meeting every month to have a discussion, which family does not pay attention to their children to go to school. And they know which families, which program you have, how the village committee can help you to (Inaudible) your children to go to school now. So, we consider that.

Committee leadership is very, very fundamental for us. Now we are moving in the process, and we have a lot of progress there. In the past, when we did not have this kind of an organization, many villages did not (Inaudible) now reach more than 50 percent, but now we reach already 98 percent across the country, due to this establishment of Village Education Committee. And they will strengthen. Quantity (Inaudible) they may say that now it's okay.

But our big concern is the quality. It's our big concern. We have to strengthen, to improve quality education in the remote areas, isolated areas and disadvantaged area. Lao PDR has more than 94 -- 49 ethnic groups, so each group has its own dialect and culture, its beliefs. That's the concern, to overcome that.

So, committee leadership is very fundamental and crucial for us, and we continue to strengthen it to make sure that everywhere the committee should be, the ownership and leadership (Inaudible) particularly for education (Inaudible).

MR. SPERLING: Thank you. Thank you very, very much. Well, let me - - because we have a pretty important guest coming after this, it's a pretty good example of local and national leadership coming, we will -- let me try to go and see who has questions for any of the panelists. If not, I am happy to fire questions myself. But who would like to -- would anybody like to start off?

(No response heard)

MR. SPERLING: I've never seen a group this shy. So, let me ask, Urvashi, let me try to make sure I understand. I think what's very important, you're saying is that you're actually trying to ensure that in the education, you are building in the women's empowerment as an actual form of curriculum. That is part. And that to be able to do that at a mass level, you really have to essentially teach the teachers or have the teachers take the leadership role so that you can be doing that.

And I guess the question is, does that -- that must seem to also inspire a desire for higher educational achievement, based on what you've said. Do you want to say a little bit more? And then, I'd be also interested in what is the degree on the curriculum side for CAMFED? How do you look at those type of issues, too? Is that through the classroom, through the community in terms of the kind of leadership capacity?

MS. SAHNI: Yeah. Thank you for that question, Gene. Actually, what we want to do going forward is, of course, we include gender studies, and that's what I'd like to call it, not just girls' empowerment, as part of the curriculum. We're going forward with advocating with the government to include gender studies for both boys and girls as part of the official curriculum.

Because think of it, if all of our students need to know math and they need to know science, because they need to think scientifically and mathematically, why do they not need to think equitably, especially in a country where -- and countries like us, where gender is a life and death issue? Girls are dying. There are two rapes every hour. Right? One million girls killed in the womb. And girls having the lowest rate of survival age one to five compared to boys. So, why do they not need -- And why do boys not to think about -- need to think about it, as well?

So of course, as we are advocating for the inclusion of gender studies, and maybe you can help me think of a better name that is more -- seems a more hospitable wording (Laughter) -- and what it basically means is that he'll understand that as a citizen, your Constitution guarantees you all of these rights. In a democratic constitution, a patriarchal structure has no modern justification whatsoever. Right?

So, let's look at the social structure. Let's look at patriarchy. Let's look at how power plays itself out in our society. And let's look at them both -- boys, girls, let's

all of us look at it and see how we can make it better. A critical pedagogy is what is required. Right? So, we are advocating is that yes, let's get everybody together. Local leaders, academia, policy makers. Let's think and come up with a really strong gender studies curriculum or call it citizenship, something.

And also, then, a very strong teacher training program where teachers learn to think about gender, men and women both, and then, they learn how to play the advocacy role with communities, how they teach, and how we train boys to become advocates for girls, as well, girls to become self advocates, and finally, community; fathers and mothers to become advocates for equality.

I asked one of my students, actually, I said, you know, Sinita, do you think we should have more Praynas. Prayna is the name of our school. It means inspiration. She says, you know, the world would become a different place. I said yay. (Laughter) But the point of the -- that's what you need. Educators are so powerful in what they can do. Right? And we're not using it, because we define quality in such a limited manner.

It's not just about reading, writing, math and science. It's really about citizens of education. It's about teaching equality. Why don't we need to teach equality, freedom, peace, liberty? You know?

MR. SPERLING: Well, I will say that --

(Applause)

MR. SPERLING: Again, in terms of the gender studies or whatever being for both, you don't have to be reading the papers much in the United States about the sexual violence in our college campuses to understand your point; that it has to be for the men, boys and the girls. And for those who haven't seen the beautiful documentary, "Girls Rising," I mean, one of the most just heart melting places in there is the big brother

--

MS. SAHNI: Yeah.

MR. SPERLING: -- who comes and saves his sister from an early marriage and difficulty, and just a very visceral reminder of the role that a boy -- a family member looks at when he, you know, has a different vision of what's possible. Do you want to add?

MS. MURIMIRWA: Yeah. Talking about broadening the curriculum or actually teaching girls and young women what they really want to learn and what would make them more different from their life, I would take you, you know, a bit back -- you know, a bit back in talking to you about the CAMFED Association, which is the young women's network started by the first group of girls, me included, with (Inaudible) CAMFED in 1998. We started with 400 of us at that time. As I speak right now, we're over 24,400 across Africa.

And what we did over the last few years was to look at what is it that we would have wanted to learn when we were at school. What would have made the most difference? Yes, I think some of you would want to call them -- some of them, 21st century skills. And we're at CAMFED -- I want to talk about where our local location can also partner with international NGOs. With CAMFED, the organization came in was yes, support with the resources, but also with linkages to partners who are experts in curriculum development, but not only (Inaudible), not on what was going to be covered.

Thus, the people who contributed what was supposed to be taught, what we wanted to be taught in schools was actually the young women's network that had gone through school who went out as well, in communities and in schools and consulted with students, consulted with teachers and consulted with community members to say, what would you have wanted to learn when you were at school? Because what we are

doing here, we're designing a large school's curriculum, which was going to be administered by the constituency of young women as social activists for education.

And the things that came out were critical thinking skills, the issues that came out were resilience, were issues around empathy, technology, financial literacy training, entrepreneurship. Yes, there was agreement that academic learning and learning literacy and numeracy is critical for foundational skills. But as you go into secondary schools, you want to be able to be prepared for life after school and life as an adult.

So, when you start talking about the broader learning outcomes, talking about the curriculum, yes, we have actually designed one as young women supported through school, as young women who are now activists and in girls' education, and working with our communities to be able to see how do we cover the other areas that are not being covered in the school system. And it's not about creating a parallel system. It's about creating a complementing element. And you know, various ministry officials were involved in that.

But also, besides that initiative which was directly linked and you know, ran and developed by CAMA. CAMA members sit on multiple forums in you know, the national countries that we work in, and one of them -- I'll give an example. In Zimbabwe, where I'm a member of the teacher professional standards setting you know, group, and founded by GPE.

And one of the things that we made sure was included within the professional standards with teachers, was issues around teachers' needs to be trained on issues around dealing with psycho social issues, on dealing with the 21st century challenges that were coming in. So, just to say that it's not just about local small group gatherings, it's about how you can influence government. But also, CAMA members are

members of the learning matrix task force. We have CAMA members that are also, you know, like part of the, you know, Secretary General's chief advisory council.

There are CAMA members who have participated in President Obama -- you know, his Young African Leadership initiative. And these are not you know, small, one, two, three, four girls. It's a whole movement for girls' education talking about what is it that should be taught and what difference did it make and who should be shaping it.

MR. SPERLING: Excellent. Madam Prime Minister, from either that -- your current role or in your former role, do you have follow up thoughts on the issues of the -- either curriculum design or the kind of leadership training specifically that you'd like to draw on?

MS. GILLARD: Well, I think it's been a fantastic insight into something that isn't often apparent from the global level about the curriculum needs, curriculum demands and the real changes that can be brought in people's lives if we broaden our horizons. I mean, inevitably, much of the global debate is around the things we can measure, and can measure numeracy and literacy, and we do need to measure them, because we know that the quality of so much of what is happening in schools is not good enough to give kids those foundational skills. So, we can't let up on that.

But I think we do have to listen to you know, the voices and localized voices that are saying that there is a need for the broader curriculum, particularly, at the secondary level. So, I think one of the challenges for all of us if, as we expect, when the sustainable development goals replace the millennium development goals, that the world lifts ambition from universal access to primary school education to at least universal access to lower secondary education.

What will that mean within countries for what will be taught to those children that then access lower secondary, and particularly to those girls? From the point

of view of JPAM model (sic) isn't to sit at the top and mandate. That's not what we do. But I think we've got to be very sensitive to these voices coming up locally about what people need and want and would be more empowering and fulfilling for them from their education. And one of the great things about the CAMFED model is that it's channeling those voices continuously. It's a sort of replenishing supply (Laughter), because the CAMFED alumni then go on to help the next of generation girls, and the work you're doing, obviously, is bringing people -- both women and girls along, so that what you're doing is sustainable, as well. So, that long-term sustainability is so important, too.

MR. SPERLING: Minister, you've just gone through how great your challenge and how great even the diversity is within your country. How, when you're at ministry, do you think about the issues of curriculum or non-traditional curriculum in helping to overcome these barriers to getting more girls a quality education?

MR. BOUAPAO: For Lao PDR, curriculum is very important. How to ensure gender issues, what really is the grassroots level. It's not how we can mobilize girls to go to school. So, we started to -- capacity building, particularly we start to train female teachers from different ethnic groups, different areas, because in the rural area, as we all know very well, that (Inaudible), our former cantor, the family promote boy model into an (Inaudible).

So, okay, with support from (Inaudible) government, we call it labor -- labor project, we are focusing on training female teachers faster. And even there, we should look at our curriculum. If the curriculum is related, the real context, the socio economic government in different areas, the culture and so on to make sure that the curriculum responds to a community level.

And based on that, our female teachers, they know how to encourage children to go to school, how to keep children in the school and to complete primary level.

That is very, very fundamental and useful for us.

MR. SPERLING: Very good. Thank you. Do we have time -- I think we have time for a question or two? Yes?

SPEAKER: (Inaudible) -- is quality education. And I think as Angeline was saying, every African mother wakes up every morning, and I believe (Inaudible) see their only hope for their children as being quality education, getting somewhere. Not just getting to school, which seems to have been an obsession for all these years, and maybe understandably so, but now children are going to school. They're not learning and we know that. And I am very impressed by the very high number of children that are 88 percent and then 99 going to higher -- you know, to tertiary education of one for more another (sic).

Could you just tell us how that is done? Because I think from a community level, that is one of the reasons -- the main reason why the mother would be crying at night, wondering where is the child going to get. And yet, we are really not delivering on that promise, and this is -- at least global south, that is a problem. If you could just tell us what you have done to get these high rates. And also, who are the main players?

Because a part of this is technical. It is not just the talking. It is really getting the curriculum to really face issues. So, I would appreciate what you are doing on that to return people from obsession about access to real change that will transform the girls' life and get them involved in economic development. Thank you. (Applause)

MS. SAHNI: In fact, all these girls, many of them are engaged in child labor, so that they work in the morning. A typical girl's life would be that she would get up at six, go to work, come back, go to school, come back, go to work. And when there is no electricity, you don't know how she would do her homework. And then there's 88

percent. Right?

The school is four hours. One of course, the teachers are trained to think of girls' limitations at home, and to make sure that whatever they deliver, they deliver in school. Right? And secondly, a very strong time on task, very strong teacher attendance. And thirdly, very strong tracking of girl's attendance. If they are not coming, why aren't they coming? Are they being married off? What's the matter?

And very strong community relationship -- very strong peer support and a strong universal care in school. Then, building aspirations in girls, which let me tell you, that's 75 percent of the job done. When they feel that they really want to succeed, they are able to beat all of the challenges at home, because a lot of the challenges are at home in India.

It's not that every mother there is waking up in the morning, thinking why won't my daughter -- she's saying, hey, listen, stay at home. I have six kids at home and you'll help me at home. Right? Never mind school. And one of them told me, she said, I have to cook. So whenever I have a test, I've learned how to hide my book like this and cook. And so it got a little burnt. You know? So, do you mind (Laughter)? I said no.

And so, they would come and say that I couldn't study at night. Can I have a little bit more time to study? And so the teacher says, okay, I'll give you one hour. Go back, do this, and then you'll have a test. Right? So, it's a combination of many things. But if I were to think of some key points, one is truly the caring; that the teachers believe they can do it, and the girls begin to believe they can; a very strong relationship with the teacher, building of the aspirations and teaching them how this is going to change their lives.

The environment curriculum where they learn to think of their challenges and are able to strategize together on how to beat them. That is really important, too.

So, I think it's a combination of things, but most importantly, schools need to become centers of care. Caring is really, really important. Care, and they need to become believers in girls' rights, that lives can become better.

And so that talks to teacher training in a very -- so when they talk about quality learning, I think they need to deepen and widen the meaning. That's important. When you talk about teacher training, you need to deepen and widen the meaning of teacher training and what it means.

MR. SPERLING: So, I am so sorry we now -- we need to end. Yes?

SPEAKER: Yes.

MR. SPERLING: We need to end so we can make room for our distinguished guest. Let me just very quickly say, I thought this was, you know, just a terrific panel, and both the diversity of perspectives and yet, very similar and important points. And I think for the prime minister, the now chair of the global partnership, the view that you have these fundamental goals, but the way to reach them are going to be very localized, and how you build that into your assumptions or not to have assumptions of the same policies working everywhere, and how at that global architecture level, to build that in.

I think you heard from the minister his very important issue, which is the degree that parents who love their kids very much are in extreme poverty, and the desire to -- the need to have them deal with that extreme poverty, which is so immediate, can make it very difficult, and that you need the local leadership to help make the case for going to school, and that you have to have --

And we've heard on teacher training; in this case, the idea of having female teachers, the importance of them trained, but also, from the right different ethnic groups in the country who will understand and be able to deal with those issues. I

thought you know, all very interesting and important points. Though, I think that while that is the case, I think it's also important to hear Angeline's side, as well, which is that in many places, that ethic may be there with the mothers and the families, and I think one thing I think you hear from all smart NGOs is go into a community, not with the answer, but with the question.

What's your vision? How do you do it? That's where you learn the most. That's where you help the vision? And I think -- and then, the importance of having an ongoing network, of building a network that is not only for the training, but the empowerment for the advocacy. And then, I think finally, as Urvashi was going through, very interesting on the importance of us not just thinking of curriculum as math and science, as the prime minister said in terms of just with the metrics, but the most important things in motivation, in life outcomes may be this gender education; that it needs to be for boys and girls, and that you aren't going to really have that widespread, unless the teachers are capable.

These are all very specific things. You know, when we talked as a panel, I said this is an educated group. People know the generalities of the goals. But this was just what we hoped for, which was from you know, four or more different countries, very detailed, specific, contextual views that many of us would not get just sitting around reading briefs, and it's extremely helpful. We're extremely grateful, and just as for applause for this great panel. (Applause)

Now, having had to work for two presidents, I am often the one who doesn't have to deal with any of the problems of you know, like motorcade -- of having to wait in traffic for motorcades or having to sit in your seat, because there's security issues and you have to just sit in your seat. But now, I'm just a private citizen.

So, like all of you, we have to just stay seated right now, not leave the

room, so that we can have -- get the set up for our next speaker, the First lady. And I think that there's -- Strobe will come introduce her. But I think that you know, one thing that just really struck me, which I'm sure she will discuss, is just the personal passion that she brings into this as a daughter, who has risen to such amazing academic and professional heights as a dedicated mother, but about just what we as people would ask, one, for our children and the universality of that.

So, I just want to say it is such an amazing thing to have a first lady so dedicated and so willing to come on this particular issue, which is where her passion is, and come speak. So with that, I will turn it over.

(Applause)

MR. TALBOTT: Good afternoon, everybody, and thanks to Gene and Julia and our colleagues for the panel that you've just heard. I'm Strobe Talbott, and it's my great honor and privilege to welcome all of you to an event that as you already know, is dedicated to a critical topic of our time, which is how community drive solutions can advance girls' education around the world.

We at Brookings have long been focused on issues of equality, of opportunity, notably including for that half of humanity that has, much too often and in too many parts of the world, been disadvantaged. A signature example of that focus is our Center for Universal Education, which has been deeply engaged in this issue for more than a year, and in close touch with the office of our special guest of honor and next speaker.

First Lady Michelle Obama has been a leading voice on the need to ensure that adolescent girls everywhere reap the benefits that education can provide. Mrs. Obama, the podium is yours, and so is our gratitude for being with us today, and our admiration for all that you do. Please welcome, the First Lady of the United States.

(Applause)

MR. TALBOTT: Thank you.

MRS. OBAMA: Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you, everyone. Good afternoon. Thank you all. Rest yourselves. You've been doing a lot of wonderful work. I don't want you to get tired giving me a round of applause (Laughter). Let me first begin by apologizing. I have a cold, so if I start to choke before you, don't worry, I'm doing just fine (Laughter).

But it is truly a pleasure to be here with you today at Brookings, and I want to thank you so much for having me. I want to start by, of course, thanking Strobe Talbott for that very kind introduction, but more importantly, for his tremendous service to our country. And I also want to recognize Prime Minister Julia Gillard. It's wonderful to see you. You are a tremendous example of breaking so many barriers for women, not just through your long career, but the work that you're doing on global education. So, thank you so much for being here. And of course, I want to thank Rebecca Winthrop for organizing this amazing group of leaders on behalf of girls around the world. And finally, I want to thank all of you for the outstanding work that you all do on global girls' education.

Now, I know you know that in recent years, this issue has finally come into the national and international spotlight. Celebrities are tweeting about it. Major corporations are funding it. Books about girls' education have become bestsellers, and really, all of that has happened for one simple reason, and it's because of the passionate, relentless leaders' efforts, your efforts, the advocates and all of the young people who are working on this issue across the globe.

Long before I ever became interested in this issue as first lady, you all were out there doing the hard work; running schools in remote villages on shoestring

budgets, taking on maddening bureaucracies, fighting year after year to change policies and laws. And you all were doing the painstaking research to show that educating girls is one of the most powerful things that we can do, not just for girls and their families, but for their communities and for their countries.

And because of the work that you were doing, as of 2012, every developing region in the world had achieved or was close to achieving gender parity in primary education, and in a little over a decade, we saw nearly 56 million more girls going to school. Now, that is a breathtaking amount of progress in a very short period of time. And you all should be incredibly proud of the work that you've been doing.

But as you know, when 62 million girls are still not in school, when in some countries, fewer than 10 percent of girls complete secondary school, then we know that our work is far from finished. In fact, in many ways, it's only just beginning, because the truth is, and you all know this more than anyone, we're now coming to a new, more important and challenging phase of this work. We are beginning to confront those second generation issues, especially as they apply to adolescent girls.

We may have more girls in those classrooms, but now, we're stepping back and asking ourselves, are they truly learning what they need to know? Are we really doing everything we can to keep them safe? How can we ensure that they don't just start school, but they actually stay in school through adolescence, and then transition to the workforce? Because we all know that this critical period, when girls develop from children into women, is when this issue truly starts to get hard, because adolescence is often when a girl is first subject to the cultural values and practices that define what it means to be a woman in her society.

And at that point, we really can't take on the issue of girls' education, unless we are also willing to confront all of the complex issues that keep so many girls

out of school. Issues like early and forced marriage, genital cutting, beliefs about women's sexuality and their proper role in society, and the very real economic disincentives that keep many parents from sending their daughters to school in the first place.

Again, as you all well know, these issues can become even more complicated, make issues that are seemingly straightforward even more complicated for these second generation challenges. Just take the issue of safety. Now, on the surface, the problem seems pretty obvious. Parents are afraid that their daughters will be attacked and sexually assaulted on their way to and from and even at school.

Now, this is an understandable concern, one that any parent can relate to, but in many communities, parents aren't just worried about horrific physical and emotional harm to their daughter. They're also thinking about the harm to her honor. They're worried that she'll be considered damaged goods, unmarriageable with no one to protect or provide for her. And then, her entire future is ruined. Those are the kinds of stakes that we're dealing with on this issue.

And then, there are the issues of quality and value, which are similarly complex. As you know, when deciding whether it's worth sending their girls to school, parents aren't just asking themselves, will this be a good experience for my daughter. They are calculating what those school fees will mean for their family's food budget.

They're contemplating the loss of household help that is critical to the survival of that family. So, they want to see real evidence that their daughter is learning real marketable skills; things like literacy, numeracy, vocational skills that will help her provide for herself and ultimately, her family. That's the kind of bar that we need to clear as we move forward, because in our work to educate girls, especially adolescent girls, we're often asking families to do what seems to be in the exact opposite of their daughter's and

their family's best interests.

Often, we're asking them to change or disregard some of their most strongly held values and traditions. So yes, we need more infrastructure. We need more resources. And yes, we need more good laws and policies. Those are absolutely the necessary building blocks for change. But we also need buy-in from those families and those communities.

We need parents to actually believe that their daughters are as worthy of an education as their sons, and that sending girls to school is a good investment for their future. And that might take some real effort on the ground, to actually understand people's concerns; to gain their trust; to determine what resources they need to make the sacrifice of educating their daughters.

So, what we're talking about the hard things, like countless conversations, community meetings. We're talking about hundreds of hours spent training and empowering local leaders on the ground. And we're also talking about a shift in our own thinking, so that we see families and communities less as a barrier to girls' education and more as the source of the solution.

But if we really are going to be honest with ourselves, and I've heard this from many of you, while we often talk about the importance of community mobilization and local leadership, that's not always the focus of our work. And there are good reasons for this. I mean, when you think about it, the truth is, it's risky. You know? When you're new to a community, it's often hard to know who to work with. And then, once you find the right leaders and the partners, you might not always see eye to eye on how to move forward. And then, you've got donor expectations. They want a certain return on their investment, or you've got a reputation to uphold for your organization. So, all of this makes it not always so easy to go out on a limb and try something new.

Mobilizing communities and empowering local leaders can also be very resource intensive. It requires staff on the ground who are willing to lead from the side and take their cues from local folks. So, you need a lot of patience to work through misunderstandings and miscommunications, and you need even more flexibility, you know, around deadlines and timelines.

Now, this might not always feel like the most efficient approach, but every day across the globe, so many of you are proving that programs that are developed and led by communities themselves can actually, really transform girls' lives. For example, there's a population council program in Ethiopia that convenes community conversations about the impact of child marriage and provides families with financial incentives to delay marriage. And at the end of this program, girls were three times more likely to be in school. They were 90 percent less likely to be married.

Another wonderful example of programs, an organization called Tostan. Tostan brings together communities in Africa to assess barriers to girls' education and other issues, and they work to develop their own plan of action; a plan that meets their needs and is in accordance with their values. As a result of this program, 7,000 communities have publicly announced that they are abandoning child forced marriage and female genital cutting.

And finally, back in 1995, there was a group of Peace Corps volunteers in Romania who came together with Romanian teachers to create GLOW camps for girls. GLOW stands for Girls Leading Our World, and the camp focused on leadership and career and life planning. And today, just 20 years later, there are GLOW camps in more than 60 countries, and last year alone, they reached 30,000 young people.

Now, we're fortunate that in a few minutes, we're going to be hearing more about the Peace Corps' work on this issue from a panel moderated by "Glamour

Magazine's" Cindi Leive. But these are just some of the wonderful examples of what works. But of course, for all of the successes like these, there are plenty of failures, as well.

But here's the thing. As I tell many young people, that's okay. Failure is good. In fact, failure is necessary, because we're all in new territory here, especially when it comes to adolescent girls. And we're still figuring out what works and what doesn't work. So, we need leaders like all of you out there experimenting and innovating. We need you out there conducting rigorous evaluations and learning not just from your triumphs, but from your mistakes.

Now isn't the time to be hesitant or risk averse, because as you know, so many girls across the globe are counting on us to be bold and creative and to give them all of the opportunities they deserve to fulfill their promise. And right now, I'm thinking about one of those girls in particular who I met a few months ago, a young woman named Meeray Muhegwa from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

When Meeray was just around nine years old, rebel forces entered her community and attacked her neighbors, murdering seven children and their father. Meeray's family was spared, but on that day, she vowed that she would do everything in her power to finish school and fight for human rights for girls' education.

Over the years, Meeray watched many of her friends and classmates attacked, gunned down, raped. But she kept on studying and she finished college last year, the only woman in her class to graduate with honors. Now, Meeray came to Washington earlier this year as part of our Young African Leaders initiative, and she addressed the spouses of the Africa Leaders Summit.

In her remarks she said simply, and this is a quote from her. She said, "Today, I ask you to join me without any fear, because," she said, "fear is the little death."

She said, "This day, I ask the girls all over the world to take out the fear and to take up the pens and books." So, here is what I think. If Meeray could sustain her dreams amidst unspeakable violence, you know, then surely, we can sustain our focus on the fight for girls like her across the globe.

If girls like Meeray can walk miles each day to reach their classrooms and stay up for hours each night studying like their lives depended on it; if they can risk their lives just to go to school, like Malala did; if they can stand strong against all the voices that tell them they are undeserving of an education, then surely, we can find a way to provide that education. We must. Surely, we can give them a future worthy of their promise, because in the end, when it's all said and done, our challenges in doing that are nothing compared to the challenges these girls face.

And if we can show just a fraction of their passion and courage and determination, then I'm confident that we can give all of our girls the education they deserve. That's why I'm here, because all of you are already well on your way in this work, and it's wonderful. And I have learned so much from all of you, and I hope to learn more. I am inspired by you. Because of you, I am here. And I want you all to know that I am committed to this issue. I'm in (Laughter). So, in the coming (Applause) -- yeah, thank you.

So clearly, we have a lot of work to do, but in the coming months and years, I'm going to be rolling up my sleeves. I'm going to be using my voice, my platform as first lady to support your work and lift up this issue however I can; however many of you find fit for me to fit in. So, this is just the beginning of our conversation. This is just the beginning of our work together, and I truly look forward to continued collaboration, continued inspiration and continued action in the next months and years ahead. So, thank you all so much and good luck with the rest of today, and I look forward to seeing

you soon. (Applause)

SPEAKER: Thank you.

MS. WINTHROP: She's in. Woo. (Laughter) (Applause) If those of you who might possibly be tempted to sneak out, if you could just stay in your -- don't sneak out, at least for the next minute and a half. But actually, don't sneak out at all, because we have an amazing panel coming right up. I am really pleased to introduce the moderator, and then we'll invite the panelists up on stage.

Cindi Leive is the editor in chief of "Glamour Magazine" and glamour.com, and one out of every eight American women she talks to, way more than -- I'll speak for myself -- any of us (Laughter). So, she is not only you know, an impressive businesswoman, journalist and thinker, she has also been acknowledged numerous times over and won numerous awards for her interest in social change and social justice, particularly around women's issues, violence against women, and we are thrilled that she has recently founded The Girl Project, focused on girls' education and is also getting into this issue.

So, welcome, Cindi, as the moderator, and we'll have the rest of the panelists, wherever you are, scattered in -- please, come. Yes, take the stage. There you are. Yeah. Oh, and I'm a panelist so I have to seat myself (Laughter). Yeah.

MS. LEIVE: Thank you for that lovely introduction and thanks, all of you, for being here to participate in such an important discussion. I know I feel incredibly motivated by what I've heard so far today, and I know you must feel the same. I loved that speech from the first lady. It's wonderful to hear her speak so forcefully about an issue of such incredible importance.

You know, I loved it when she said girls are counting on us to be bold and creative. I mean, that is such a great call to arms, and I know certainly at "Glamour

Magazine," we will take that to heart. Last month, when "Glamour" honored as women of the year, 10 young women fighting for their education, Mrs. Obama acknowledged them and wrote them the most impassioned letter that I know they all took home with them to their homes around the world and that I know will sustain them, as they do what all of you know to be this very difficult work.

This issue really needs champions, and it's a privilege to have been in the presence of such a dedicated one, Mrs. Obama. In case you're wondering what "Glamour Magazine" is doing here on this panel, I will tell you. We have an audience of 19 million women, most of them in this country, and we always try to cheer them on and show them ways that they can achieve their dreams. And lately, we've been covering the issue of girls' education, as it has risen to international importance, and as our readers have started to pay attention to it.

We've interviewed Malala and even traveled with her. My colleagues, Genevieve Brach who is here today, traveled with her to Nigeria, as she was advocating - - as Malala was advocating on behalf of the kidnapped school girls there last year. And we've covered what Rebecca talked about earlier, the fact that there are 15 countries at least, in which girls are systematically attacked for going to school.

And we've found that our incredibly interested, and they come back to us with one question, which is, how can I help. So last month, along with our partners at CARE, Plan International, USA, Girls, Inc. and communities and schools, "Glamour Magazine" launched something called The Girl Project, which is a multi-year initiative to send girls all over the world to school. We know that girls who want an education won't let threats of violence or community disregard or poverty or global indifference stand in their way, and we want to help them get what they want.

The Girl Project is focused on secondary education and also supports

the kind of so-called second generation issues that we've been discussing today; issues like safety for students and quality in education, and helping girls not just enter school, but graduate and then go farther.

So, you've heard about these issues, I know, throughout this conference, and we're delighted to have with us on this panel both activists focused on community based solutions and two young women who have lived these issues personally. So, please welcome here on the end, Namunyana Mwajuna is a 17 year old student in Uganda and the youngest of eight siblings. After her father disappeared mysteriously in June, 2013, her family was no longer able to afford school fees, and Namunyana was forced to drop out.

The organization, CARE, was able to assist with programs and support that enabled Namunyana to go back to school and to change her life. And she'll tell us more about that later. We're pleased to have her here on her first visit to the United States and as the first student ambassador for The Girl Project. Welcome. (Applause)

Next, Madalo. Madalo Samati has 20 years of experience with government and grassroots organizations, as well as advocacy, action research and project monitoring in Malawi, where she is the director of programs for the Creative Centre for Community Mobilization. And this NGO is part of the CHARGE network and was recognized as the most innovative in girls' education programming in 2013 by its country's government. So, nicely done. Madalo. (Applause)

Charlene Espinoza, to my left, is co-founder of the NGO Bosh Bosh, which trains African women to make handbags. As the editor of "Glamour Magazine," I can vouch that they are fantastic (Laughter). It also offers a range of programs in after school education, vocational training and more. Charlene grew up in California but moved to Mexico at age 10 with her family.

After college, she worked as a commercial designer, but then joined the Peace Corps and was deployed to Liberia. Her experience there, trying to improve the dropout rate for Liberian girls, showed her what was working and what wasn't. And we'll hear about that later. It helped lead to the creation of Bosh Bosh. Welcome, Charlene (Laughter).

Our final panelist you have already met is your host today, Dr. Rebecca Winthrop, a senior fellow and director of The Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution. Rebecca, as you know, is an international expert on global education and a source that we all are indebted to. Before joining Brookings in 2009, she spent 15 years working in the field of education for displaced and migrant communities, most recently as the head of education for the International Rescue Committee.

She serves on the World Economic Forum's New Vision for Education project steering committee, the United Nations Secretary General's technical advisory committee for his global education initiative, and is track advisor for the Education and Work Force Development Track at the Clinton Global Initiative. Most important, if you want to stay up to date on what's going on in the field of global education, I highly recommend you follow her on Twitter (Laughter). (Applause)

MS. WINTHROP: I didn't ask her to say that. (Laughter)

MS. LEIVE: So let's get started. We'll have time for Q&A at the end of the panel, and for those of you who are watching on the webcast, please join our conversation by submitting questions on Twitter using the hash tag #girlsedu. Namunyana, let's start with you, because you are living these issues. Can you tell us a little bit about what your life is like now?

NAMUNYANA: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

GROUP: Good morning.

NAMUNYANA: My name is Namunyana Madama. I come from Uganda in Africa. I'm 17 years old. I have three brothers and four sisters. I'm the last born. I go to Cassara Hillside College, Ballard Community District in Uganda. My father disappeared last year. When he disappeared, we as a family, suffered. I personally, I dropped out of school.

But my mother did not give up on me. She looked for ways to see that I got back to school. Through cultivation, I'm (Inaudible). Later, she joined a saving group. When I went back to school, became happy and excited. I gained the confidence, knowledge, life skills and I still feel that that has made me who I am today. Thank you for this. (Applause)

MS. LEIVE: Namunyana, you were telling us earlier what you would like to do once you complete your education.

NAMUNYANA: Sorry?

MS. LEIVE: What you would like to do after you finish secondary school, once you finish school.

NAMUNYANA: I want to be a nurse when I complete my studies.

MS. LEIVE: And what will it take for you to finish school, to complete your studies?

NAMUNYANA: Sorry?

MS. LEIVE: What do you need to complete your studies?

NAMUNYANA: Money (Laughter). (Applause)

MS. LEIVE: A one word answer that says it all. Madalo, let's hear from you. When you were in school, what was your education like, and how did you obtain your education?

MS. SAMATI: I'm from Malawi, and I did my primary school in the '80s

and secondary school in the early '90s. Life in an African country is not easy for a girl, because number one, there's a lot of harmful gender scripting, because all we are taught is that you are weak, and they groom us to become good mothers, good wives and good little caretakers for our homes.

And I remember many, many sources as a young girl growing up, and my mother is a nurse, on average, I was better blessed than the average girl, though my mother worked in rural areas. But it was very clear to me that as a girl, I must be a very good woman in terms of being a good wife, good mother in the future, and a good caretaker. And I remember one day telling her that -- you know what? She was telling me to do some household chores.

And I said, no, because I wanted to do something else. Then, she tells me that you know what? You are going to have problems in your household in the future, because you are lazy and you don't want to work. But I told her that you know what? I'm going to be educated and I'm going to have house maids in the house to work for me (Laughter). I was naturally a different child, but that helped me big time, because my elder sisters and my cousins -- there are eight of us in our family.

And I went to our tribal initiation ceremony that graduates us into adulthood. And in two years after that, they all got pregnant. And when it was my turn to go there, I told my mom that I'm not going, and because of some (Inaudible) naturally, that's how I was. But two years later, my mother -- I think it dawned on her that there's something wrong with our cultural institution, and all of them dropped out of school, and I was the only one that went through with my education and was selected to go to the university.

So, gender scripting is a big issue. We live that life in Africa, and we cannot deny that. I've gone through that and I know what I'm talking about. Going to

school, there was a lot of gender based violence in our schools, and being a girl and a hard worker, if I do well in class, I faced a lot of harassment from the boys. And this is what most girls are going through right now.

When I went to college, I was privileged to be an (Inaudible) for one of our major girls' educational programs that was funded by USAID. So, I went in two different parts of Malawi, and it was so shocking to see the same experiences and the plight of the girls in different parts of the country and different tribes. But one thing that I saw in myself, which I saw that so many girls did not have, was the power that was within me; the intrinsic motivation to pursue education and to get out of the plight that I saw, the intimidation that I saw around me, coming from my household, done of course, in good favor to them, and coming from the community through our cultural institutions and coming from the school.

And I remember at one point, the teacher propositioned me. And I was really scared, but I was able to stand up as a young girl to say no. So, all of this is what girls in an African set up go through. But it really -- we have to do a lot of -- imbue self efficacy in our girls to be able to stand up and defy some of the harmful social, cultural practices that are out there.

MS. LEIVE: Thank you. Charlene, I know these two stories are probably somewhat familiar to you --

MS. ESPINOZA: Yes.

MS. LEIVE: And I know you saw similar things when you worked in Liberia with the Peace Corps.

MS. ESPINOZA: Mm-hmm.

MS. LEIVE: So, tell us a little bit about what your experiences there were like and what you did about them.

MS. ESPINOZA: So, yes, thank you, Cindi. First of all, I just want to say thank you so much. This is really an honor to be a part of this wonderful panel. I'm really excited. And you know, it's an honor to also share my experience as a return Peace Corps volunteer with all of you and to represent my organization back in Liberia. I know that they can't watch it right now, but they are going to watch it at some point, so they're all like super excited that I'm here representing them. So, thank you very much for having me.

And you know, listening to their stories, it really -- god, it just hits him. You know? It reminds me of when I was in Liberia. I was a Peace Corps volunteer, which wasn't that long ago. I just recently got back this August, and I lived there for three years. And as a Peace Corps volunteer, that really gave me insight as to what challenges -- of what the challenges were for Liberian females on a day-to-day basis.

And you know, I was a teacher there. So, I taught English at the secondary public school in my community. And I remember every time I would arrive to school, I would witness morning devotion, which consisted of -- I'm not sure if you girls had morning devotion -- yes, okay. It consisted of saluting the flag and you know, singing the National Anthem. And you could see all the students in front of you line up in different rows.

We had the younger generation, all the preschoolers and kindergarteners to your right, and then we had all the high-schoolers to your left. So, right there in front of me, you know, the teacher -- I could see the problem literally right there. And you had around 200 students in preschool, and they're all 50 percent -- you know, 50 percent were girls, 50 percent were boys. And then once you climbed, you know, to the high school, there was 20 students. And out of those 20 students, four were girls.

And you know, that's really when it hit me, when I saw that. I was in awe. I was like, well this can't be. What's going on? Like we need to address this. You know, like the female -- like this really hit home. So, this was the issue that we really want to address and really want to focus on.

My counterpart, who is Sissyama, she's a third grade teacher at the school where I taught at, came to me, and she said that -- you know what, Charlene? We need to do something about this. Let's try to encourage girls to go to school and to keep them in school. So what we did is, we did after school girls' club, and it was a lot of fun. We had like 40 girls attend, and what we really wanted to focus on was just giving them the support and the guidance so they can graduate high school. That was our main goal.

But soon, I quickly realized that you know, just like Namunyana said, they needed money. You know, you need money to go to school. We can't just you know, be like, yes, let's have a girls' club and we're going to support you. They need you know, to pay their school fees. They need to pay their uniforms, their copy books, and they don't have money to do this.

So, it wasn't until I went to neighbor country, Sierra Leone, where I came across this really beautiful bag, and it hit me right there, that this is something that we can teach our girls. This is a trade that would be you know, self sustaining and they can live off, and also, this could be a great way to inspire them and encourage them so they can keep going to school, and eventually, find a way that we can provide scholarships for them. So, that's really how it began with that idea.

I purchased the bag. I brought it back to Liberia with me, and I showed me counterpart, Sissyama. She loved the idea. We talked to our local tailor. He agreed to help us, you know, teach our girls how to make bags. And initially, we didn't have any

funding to purchase bags. Again, money issues. So, what I went ahead and told the tailor was to bring all of his leftover pieces of scraps of fabric.

From then, we started making bags in a patchwork design, like a quilted design, and that's called Bosh Bosh of country. That's why our organization is called Bosh Bosh. So through Bosh Bosh and through the revenue that we were getting from our bags, because we started selling them to Peace Corps volunteers, who were our first clientele. They were like yes, bags (Laughter). You know, let's take these as gifts, and it was great. The Peace Corps was definitely a huge supporter. (Laughter)

And from then, all the NGOs, all the expats came to us and started purchasing our bags, and like we started a small business, out of nowhere, really. And through the revenue, we were able to provide scholarships for all our girls. And right now, Bosh Bosh -- you know, our main focus is to provide vocational training to all of them, to provide them access to extracurricular educational opportunities, such as tutoring advising. We really focus on their literacy. We give them computer training, so they all have a Facebook account now pretty much.

And we also have check-ins, which is a very important component of our program. Our education staff goes around twice a month, and they go to each of our scholars, which our students' families, and they go and they check up on them. You know, they check to see what's going on at home, how are they responding. You know, we give them a report on what they're doing with their computer classes and you know, how they're evolving. And we also check in with their professors to make sure that you know, they're doing well in their lessons.

So, Bosh Bosh has been very successful and has really created all of our -- you know, has really created a volunteerism spirit in all our girls, too, because we have this very special program that's called the Star Program, which I wish I had a star with

me, but -- which what they do is, they make these beautiful color stars made out of the fabrics that are left over from our bags, and they use cardboard diamond shaped pieces, and they just throw it all together with pieces of rice bag, and they make these beautiful, you know, different sizes stars.

And what's so special about these stars is that all of the funds are used for community service projects. So, 60 percent of the revenue that comes in goes into Bosh Bosh, and 60 percent goes to a community service project that they implement themselves. So for example, our girls went to their maternity health clinic, and they went and purchased trash cans, and they installed it all over their clinic, and they cleaned around the area.

And they also raised enough funds so they could purchase paints and paint their entire school. So I mean, that was such a huge thing for them.

MS. LEIVE: And they're running it.

MS. ESPINOZA: And they're running it. Yeah, that was their idea to go to the community health clinic and do this. It was their idea to you know, paint the school, and it's just amazing.

MS. LEIVE: Well, I want to ask you -- and Rebecca, I think this is a question for you. You know, we're hearing these great examples of things that community activation can accomplish. You know, it's helped Namunyana. Madalo is currently working with community organizations helping tons of young women. You know, you have your experience.

It sounds like such common sense. Right? Of course, community activation should be part of this. We can't get anywhere with girls' education without it. So, how is that not business as usual? You know, help us understand. Mrs. Obama talked about some of the reasons that donors are sometimes hesitant to fund community

based organizations. Talk a little bit more about that.

MS. WINTHROP: Yeah, it's a really good question. So I mean, I -- first off, a couple of points. I think all of the examples here up on stage, if you went to probably everyone in the audience, they could give you 10 more, as well. There lots of amazing work being done at the community level. And I've traveled quite a bit and worked on this topic for 20 years, and been in some very difficult circumstances.

So, even in Afghanistan or South Sudan or a whole range of places, I never was in an area where I didn't -- it might not have been in every community, where I didn't find some advocates for girls' education. It could have been a father. It could be a woman. It could be students themselves. So, I think that there is incredible interest, no matter how difficult the context for girls' themselves, parents' communities for this.

And I think in many ways, it is business as usual as much as people can who are incredibly busy, have to work very hard just to put food on the table, don't have a lot of great supply often in terms of education services. Communities all over the world are really trying to figure out how to support girls in different ways and shapes. But I do find that once you start moving up the food chain, whether it's at a national ministry level or a state government in a developing country, and then perhaps, up at the global level, where you have lots of big external resources going to girls' education, big important programs -- and I want to make it clear that I think policy is incredibly important. And getting the sort of national policy environment is incredibly important.

So it's not that it's not important, but there seems to be a breakdown between the types of interventions and connections and activities that are happening at the community level with the funding streams and the policy priorities. Not always a breakdown, but that little chain between the two is often very limited and can be very weak. And from a global perspective -- you asked about funding and donors.

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm.

MS. WINTHROP: You know, if I had my dream, it's that we would have one big fund somewhere that doesn't replace the fund that's at the Global Partnership for Education, which focuses on building systems, education systems, but a big fund sitting somewhere, somebody, one of you could do it (Laughter) -- I'm looking at the various people in the world who I'm thinking about for this. But anyway, I won't name them. I'm restraining myself (Laughter).

That basically could be used to fund community groups to try to scale up their work. It's very hard. We have this incredible program that Madalo is part of -- wherever she is, part of -- and many in the room are part of called the Echidna Scholars Program, which basically asks for people to apply who are community leaders and have scaled their work somewhere around the world in girls' education. They've tested their work. They have a good model they can scale.

And you know, one of the hardest things, they say, is that you know, you can get a little bit, a little ways, but it's hard to go bigger. So, how do we help do community you know, do community activation that just is at one community at a time? Do it at a bigger scale and have a bigger impact? And I've noticed this, that there's some funding sources from sort of the global arena that focus on very small scale inputs, which is good to get someone you know, a certain step of the way.

And then there's other funding sources which are really for big projects. You know, to go to the government for national scale programs. And there's like nothing in the middle for people -- community leaders who want to start scaling their work. You know? Maybe you want to take Bosh Bosh to other places.

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm.

MS. WINTHROP: Madalo was -- you know, I don't know how long you've

worked. Now the government has finally picked it up. But that was a long, hard process. So, I would love to have a fund out there to sort of support what seems promising but isn't a hundred percent proven, and donors can be a little bit risky to have some pieces fall. And that is very difficult with their environment.

MS. LEIVE: Well, I loved it when Mrs. Obama earlier said, you know, failure --

(Applause)

MS. LEIVE: Failure is necessary. Failure is good.

MS. WINTHROP: Mm-hmm.

MS. LEIVE: And I thought that must be a very difficult message to take out to a donor.

MS. WINTHROP: Yeah. I mean, it's very -- I mean, in fairness to the donors to the room and who aren't in the room, you know, people making decisions about funding for girls' education, particularly large donors, you know, it's usually not the person who's making the grant whose money it is. In cases of governments, it's taxpayer's money. It's incredibly hard for governments to be super risky.

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm.

MS. WINTHROP: Because they're going to look bad in the taxpayer's eyes. I mean, if we could socialize anything, if you could help socialize anything, Cindi, in the U.S., it's that you know, folks should try to take risks. And it's okay. And if we aren't seeing some things that don't work, then we're not really trying innovative stuff. I mean, if we could change that culture in both the American culture and other constituencies where there's big donor bases, that would be huge.

MS. WINTHROP: Got it. Risk. (Laughter) We're talking a lot here today about how girls themselves change when they can obtain an education. And

Namunyana, you talked so vividly about what this has meant in your own life. I also want to hear a bit about how the communities themselves change when girls are educated. Madalo, can you talk a bit about that? How does the community change once we start seeing more girls obtain a secondary school education, actually graduate and then go on? What happens in a town?

MS. SAMATI: Well, I don't know if I understood your question very well. But I'll try to answer it and you let me know (Laughter). I think first of all, I will talk from both ends. For us to change the systemic issues, and in this case, I will talk about the cultural institutions like in my country -- we value our culture and we have institutions that our custodians of our values and practices.

There is (Inaudible) to actually engage them, and together, enable them to go through a process of identifying the issues in their culture. But it's positive and that is negative. Let them come up with solutions to those problems and to do action planning, on and on.

And this is practical and possible when it comes from themselves. So, what we have done as an organization is to train village change agents in each and -- our vision is that Malawi should have a village change agent in every village in the country. That will facilitate dialogue among its members in that village; come together and look at the issues and how they can promote development in their own society.

We have worked previously where we had government extension workers, or we as officers coming from somewhere external to work with the people. We realized that we cannot do it, because the people are the ones that can change themselves. They can cheat us when we get there. Oh, we have changed this and that. But when you get out, they do business as usual. But when it's they themselves, they have changed it and they have formed bylaws on the change, they are able to monitor

their own work.

And we have seen this to be very powerful. And because of that, some of the harmful practices that nobody could change, because to them, they said this was what our forefathers were doing, and nobody can change this. But because they are going through this process themselves and making the changes themselves and monitoring themselves, a lot of harmful practices have been eliminated in the areas we are working in.

MS. LEIVE: Can you give an example of one of those?

MS. SAMATI: Well, an example would be -- we have what we call hyenas. In our local language, we call it feecee. Feecee is a translation of hyena. So, hyenas come at night in our villages. And in this case, the hyena is the person, a man that comes at night when the girls are supposed to graduate into adulthood, so that they can break their virginity as a sign of entry into adulthood.

No, these are the issues that on the surface, you cannot know them. And most of them, when we sit in the ministry headquarters and talk about these issues, most people say we are not true -- it's not happening. But this is right happening on our doorstep in this century. And these are the issues that we are dealing with and we are breaking that silence. People should come out and talk about it. But that's a slow process, because it's a secret society.

So, this is a job that men would have in a particular village or society to do; to graduate girls into adulthood. But it is this process that enables the people to start to talk about it in the context of which I (Inaudible), because that's the training we give to the village agents. Look at the contest we are in right now. There's HIV AIDS. There are rights of these girls to go to school to -- for rights for sexual reproductive birth rights, and so on and so forth.

How can we help our girls so we can improve our societies? So, it's because of this -- that kind of dialogue, honest dialogue amongst themselves that unravels such kind of secretive things that you wouldn't even know. But they around happening in our own society.

But then, when -- now, they have done this. Girls are going back to school and they are seeing the importance of educating girls. I mean, we all know as a society, we are a communal society. That is, we live in extended families. And what we have seen is that there is so much dependent on the girl child. So, when you ask -- research has shown when we ask an adult, a father or mother, what's your vision for the future, who will take care of you, they always talk about the girl child.

And yet, they don't invest in that girl child in terms of education. But they have seen that when they educate the girl child, the benefits of education, they're extended to the whole extended family and clan. So, that is also another inspiring thing that we share with the communities; examples of what it means to educate a girl child, and the benefits that come with the society when you're educating a girl child. Sure.

MS. LEIVE: Thank you. You just told the harrowing story about hyenas. I'm thinking about men and boys and what their role is in all of this, Namunyana, we were talking about this before. What do you see the role of men being here and boys?

NAMUNYANA: Men and boys are decision makers at the home and school. So, they should support us.

MS. LEIVE: And you had a friend recently who had to leave school, or was told by her father to leave school. Yes?

NAMUNYANA: I have a friend, but she left because she conceived. Yet her father got her to (Inaudible) marry. She didn't support her. Yeah.

MS. LEIVE: Rebecca, you mentioned before, that you know, fathers can

become advocates.

MS. WINTHROP: Mm-hmm.

MS. LEIVE: And I think many people in this room have probably seen that. Can you talk about the power of that?

MS. WINTHROP: Yeah. It's actually the theme that we've been talking about for the last couple of days here in this conference. We've had some sessions before this one. It's incredibly powerful when brothers and fathers, uncles, whomever, stand up for girls' education. And we were talking amongst ourselves, because most of the communities, when we sit down and start talking about girls' education -- I don't mean communities on the ground, I mean, you know, sort of of advocates, it's women who are advocates.

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm.

MS. WINTHROP: We had a meeting here yesterday, which there was three men in the room, and it was about a hundred people (Laughter), and it was on girls' education. We thought what is going on? You know? And some of our colleagues saying -- a colleague of mine, Mary Ocheno from Kenya was saying, you know, what we really should focus on is he for she. You know?

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm.

MS. WINTHROP: How can men and boys stand up for the girls and women in their lives. And I'm not exactly sure that there's one way to do that. I think it would be very different depending on context how you would bring those in. I would say that we probably need to be much more conscious about it in our program design. We probably need to be much more conscious about it in our funding.

There's a great example of an organization -- Kadem who is here from Pakistan and rural Pakistan, who got polio when he was a young child and was not able

to go to school, and his friends, six friends -- this is in very rural Pakistan, said, we'll take you to school in a wheelbarrow. And when they went to pick him up, they said, well, why is your sister not going to school? And then all of the sudden, in a village, you had six boys -- I think they were eight, nine, ten, who started a little NGO in rural Pakistan going from house to house trying to get all -- convince the fathers to let the daughters go to school.

And in fact, they did. And now, he has this you know, really large NGO in rural Pakistan doing the exact same thing. So, it was a lot easier for the boys who are mobile (Applause). Yeah. Yeah. (Laughter) Grace education in Pakistan. But it was a lot easier for the boys to actually get out and argue, rather than -- in that context for the girls. So, anything we can do to try to instigate that type of engagement.

MS. LEIVE: Right. Rebecca, you were saying before, and I know this has been a theme throughout the conference, that it's so important that we figure out how to take all these little innovations and scale them up, so that -- you know, as you mentioned before, we're not just educating one girl or even just one community at a time.

There's a room full of people here and more who are watching who have the power to help with that; thought leaders and politicians and donors. What should they know about what they can do to help make this issue big? I mean, I'd love to hear from any of you on this, but Rebecca, do you want to take it first?

MS. WINTHROP: Yeah, sure. I mean, I think that most of the people in this room care about girls' education. And there are a lot of donors who care about girls' education. So, it's not so much the subject. It's more the how.

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm.

MS. WINTHROP: And I think it would -- I hear a lot. We work with a lot of different groups from civil society and governments and the philanthropic community,

and I hear a lot from particularly donors -- different types of donors, philanthropists, foundations, government donors, that it's very hard to find the innovative ideas, and it's very hard to know who is doing the good work on the ground. You know? Where are the Grace -- you know, Grace Education in Pakistan or the CRECCOM in Malawi, et cetera?

And I think what I would urge people is to, you know, do a better job of reaching out to your networks and finding those folks. Because they are there.

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm.

MS. WINTHROP: Just because you do not know about them does not mean they are not there. I carry around a little list with me now of you know, 15 great organizations that are sort of -- you know, have scaled a bit; could be great sort of partners and give it to anyone who wants to know. And these are groups that you know, we've sort of done due diligence on.

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm.

MS. WINTHROP: So, that would be one thing. Absolutely -- you know, absolutely do some more homework. And then the second thing would be, try new mechanisms for funding. A lot of times, the way funding proposals and requirements are made, most groups can't even apply. Even translating. Translate your grant requests.

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

MS. WINTHROP: You know, just that is going to get you, you know, a different group if people coming in.

MS. LEIVE: Madalo, you look like you have something to add there
(Laughter).

MS. SAMATI: Yes, I will talk programmatically.

MS. LEIVE: Yeah.

MS. SAMATI: But I think it's also important -- there's so much stress,

sometimes on the other things, the processes, instead of going out and looking at the systemic issues at the grassroots level and seeing how we can engage the grassroots and make sure that they have ownership to the issues. I think that's what I would really emphasize, that we need to get to get to the grassroots.

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm.

MS. SAMATI: Or our energy must get to the grassroots. Then the change -- that means it's going to be quick.

MS. LEIVE: Yeah. I love that (Laughter). Great optimism. Charlene, is there something that people here should --

MS. ESPINOZA: Yeah. I mean, just to add onto what Madalo said, you really need a support grassroots organization, because they're really the ones who know their community, you know, very well. And I mean, you know, as a former Peace Corps volunteer, I would say, you know, reach out to Peace Corps, as well. We're really the ones out on the field. We're at the field. We know exactly what's happening. We know, you know, community leaders. We work with counterparts. We're there on a daily basis.

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm.

MS. ESPINOZA: So I mean, if you ask perhaps, any of the volunteers if they know of any other organizations in their community or around, I mean, that would be a great way to also --

MS. LEIVE: I have another question that I want to ask you, which is that we hear that being an activist on this issue of girls' education can be really lonely, and so many people are working with so many different you know, medium and small sized organizations all over the world. How do we create a network that is helpful in sustaining and keeps people going on? Gives them that sense of camaraderie.

MS. ESPINOZA: Mm-hmm. So, just an example, for my counterpart,

Sissyama, she was a third grade teacher at the school where I taught. And as soon as I arrived as a Peace Corps volunteer, she came up to me and she asked me, you know I'm really interest in starting a girls' club. I really want to empower our young leaders here. Can you help me?

So you know, from that collaboration, this idea came about. And through her guidance, I was able to really learn more about my community and what my community needs were. And through her, I met -- yeah, through Sissyama, I met with other, you know, organizations in my community that needed support, as well. So you know, as a Peace Corps volunteer, I was there, like I said, every day and I was immersed in my community, and I knew what their needs were.

MS. LEIVE: Madalo, how do you keep yourself going when your work is difficult? I know it must be, frequently.

MS. SAMATI: I call development work to be more of a calling than a job, because you have to have a heart for the work you are doing. And this is, I think, an area that possibly -- in development, we don't look at it critically, because for change transformation to take place, especially in development and then in the work we do, there's a lot of sacrifice that we make -- we have to make as the practitioners, development practitioners.

And you can only sacrifice when you have the heart for it. And that's why even the powerful grassroots organizations, those that are powerful, it's because they're intrinsically motivated with a social calling. And that's how you get commitment. And in my organization, we ensure that as we are growing -- but once we started small -- but as we are growing, when staff come in, we have to orient them not just -- just to come for a job, but to be motivated with the social cause. And the moment we do that, things go on very well. So to me, it's more of having the heart for the job that we do.

MS. LEIVE: And helping other people --

MS. SAMATI: Yes.

MS. LEIVE: -- have the heart, as well.

MS. SAMATI: Yes. And helping other people.

MS. LEIVE: I want to pause our conversation for a moment to take questions from the room, if there are any. Yes, back there.

MS. DAVIS: Hi. I'm Susan Davis. I lead BRAC USA, formerly the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee, for those who have never heard about it. And I really want to say I'm completely inspired by the wonderful panel and presentations today and earlier, and the phenomena that you're talking about of local leaders. I connect a name as part of this global, social, entrepreneurship movement that I've been witnessing since I first met Bill Drayton sitting in Bangladesh, and said oh, you mean more people like Eunice and Abed, the founders of Gremene and BRAC.

And now, we see this incredible rise. So, the idea that the hypothesis that you're saying, let's fund and scale up local leaders, the change maker in every community is, I think, part of the awakening that gave rise to micro finance and others, and certainly, with girls' education, it seems now is our moment.

So, the question I have for all of you is, how do you define quality education in the 21st century? What are the ingredients for boys and girls that we need to think about when we talk about education?

MS. LEIVE: That's a great question. Rebecca, do you want to take that one?

MS. WINTHROP: Yes, I do (Laughter). And I'll not launch on to a lecture (Laughter).

MS. LEIVE: Please, define quality education. Go.

MS. WINTHROP: I do. And I'm smiling, because I'm looking at a number of colleagues in this room who, over the last two and a half years, we've been working together to think about what are the competencies that young kids, girls and boys, need to have to be successful in their work and lives in this century.

And through this initiative called the Learning Metrics Task Force, a number of us have literally sat around saying what are the core competencies, and can that be an orienting framework for what we mean by quality? And I think quality can mean many things. I think you can talk about having you know, a roof that doesn't leak so rain doesn't drop on people's heads. It can mean having safe routes to and from school.

It could be so big that you could include everything under it, possibly, but one of the things that I like about this initiative and the colleagues -- the many, many colleagues who have been involved in this, is that it focuses the mind on what I think Susan was asking, which was what do we need kids to learn. And that initiative came up with -- let's see. I'm going to be put to the test here, I think seven big areas where they thought, you know, an education in a country is really -- should cover these core things.

And one -- some of them are quite obvious. Literacy and communication. So, you should be able to both you know, receive, synthesize and communicate back out in -- you know, there's a debate now. Should digital literacy be part of that? I personally argue yes. You talk to people and this is a -- this is a group that has people in the conversation from a hundred different countries, so there's a lot of debate (Laughter).

People are more -- regions where you don't have a lot of Internet, so let's say, listen, not put the cart before the horse. But I do think you do need to have digital literacy. And you know, in the next 10 years, if you don't have to have it today, you're

going to have to have it in 10 years, and we may as well equip everybody with it.

So, literacy and communication, numeracy -- so knowing how to use sort of math in everyday life, learning approaches and cognition, which is a very technical term, which means knowing -- loving learning. Instill in children an ability to learn new things over their lives. Folks at Google call this learning agility, and they think it's like the number one thing that makes for a successful employee.

So, we don't exactly know how to do that or even measure it, but it's incredibly important.

MS. LEIVE: Especially if you want a job at Google, apparently.

(Laughter)

MS. WINTHROP: Yes. But not just. But not just. You know, so many kids who are in school today are going to have multiple, multiple different jobs. And they are going -- and things they're going to have to face in our world -- climate change and global insecurity. All these new issues. They're going to have to be very agile in their ability to consume new and learn new things across their lives.

Social and emotional skills was another piece that was incredibly important, and we heard a lot about it on the previous panel. So, perseverance and grit and determination and learning to work with other people. And then, there was culture in the arts, which is incredibly important. And there's one more which I've forgotten, but I think you -- physical. Physical health and well-being. Someone just shouted it out. Yeah (Laughter).

MS. LEIVE: And this definition of quality education is something that really is universal, presumably. You're saying that even though we've been talking so much about community differences and --

MS. WINTHROP: Yeah, exactly.

MS. LEIVE: -- as one panel said earlier, families in one community might want a particular kind of future for their children --

MS. WINTHROP: Yeah, exactly.

MS. LEIVE: -- families, and another community, a totally different one. These things are universal.

MS. WINTHROP: Thank you, Cindi, for pointing that out. I didn't say that. This was an effort to say -- it actually started with a very large consultation around the world with -- the first question was, are there sort of things kids could learn or competencies they should have that every kid in the world should have, no matter where they live? And the answer was yes, and here's some of the core areas.

MS. LEIVE: Got it. Got it. Another question right here. Here's a microphone if you'd like one.

SPEAKER: Yes. I'm Maynaz from Pakistan. So, we live in a reality of paradoxes. We had the first Muslim prime minister, Benazir Bhutto, and then we have Malala who got shot as she stood up for girls' education. And still, in Pakistan, 33 percent of all -- only the girls are going to primary schools of all the students enrolled.

While we are working at pockets of championship, pockets of women's leadership and all, but we are not able to push through the agenda very, very strongly. Some natural champions that we have are our national, you know, political leadership and local political leadership, as we see that you know, we can continue to say what we have to say. But when the first lady of the U.S. comes into a room and says something very simple in terms of a commitment, it really, really makes a difference.

So, I would urge the group, and my question is that how would we fold the local political leadership? Who are the bastions of legislature? They are extremely important for us, because for the past so, so many years, we have been working with the

local champions, and we do believe in that -- you know, harnessing that kind of energy. But unless it is put into a system of change, the state is responsible -- our respective states are responsible. And how are those voices going to be heard by the states to be able to make a change? And then, to you know, be able to influence the global change, as well?

MS. LEIVE: Is there anybody who wants to take it? I mean, I think one interesting thing you're bringing up is that we've been mostly talking about local NGOs. But the local political leadership is incredibly important, too, as you point out. Madalo, is that something that you've seen in your work? Do you want to talk about the influence or lack of influence that the local political leaders have?

MS. SAMATI: Yes. I think that's a very, very important area that we always must take into account as we are working at the grassroots -- getting the political leaders involved and the member sort of parliaments in the district. It's very, very critical, because they are the ones that do legislation. And if they are not aware of the issues or they neglect or they are denied, because mostly, these issues, gender issues are often you know, really not -- the policy makers don't want to talk about them.

MS. LEIVE: They're not popular.

MS. SAMATI: Yes, they are not popular, in other words. Yes. Because they conflict with our male dominated cultural society. So, when we get them involved, get them to the ground, let them see the impact that is taking place, negative as well as positive, that changes them and gets them into the media to speak about the issues, it helps quite a lot.

And even the ministerial level, it's also very important to have champions at that level that will talk about these issues aggressively, so that we can make headway. In our case, for example, we just established an adolescent girls' learning task force that

has brought together the private sector, the donors, the civil society, including chiefs and the villagers with the policy makers, the government.

So, we are in this together to provide leadership in the region for girl child programming and policy implementation in the country. So, we are talking about all of these issues, that some of them, they were running away from or saying, this is an issue. We must address it. And how do we do it? So, we are confronting the issues head on, which in the natural sense, they would have just shied away. Yeah.

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm. And Charlene, you worked in the -- work in a country with a female head of state. Does that make any difference in terms of how people view the importance of girls' education?

MS. ESPINOZA: Yes, definitely. I would say that Liberia is actually pretty progressive when it comes to girls' education. I mean, nonetheless, you still have people -- or mostly men that aren't very supportive. But I would say that I was pretty impressed with Liberia, especially in my community. And we had, I think, around 10 female teachers in my school, so that really meant -- that's a pretty big deal, versus other schools that were all males.

But in my community, everyone was very supportive towards you know, girl empowerment and welcomed even our girls' club with open arms. So, I think that has a lot to do with -- yeah, Ma Ellen.

MS. LEIVE: Mm-hmm. Ma Ellen.

MS. ESPINOZA: Ma Ellen.

MS. LEIVE: Yes? Would you like a microphone?

SPEAKER: Thank you. My really -- what I have done is to work with a community, and especially with men. I don't do anything without their consent. In each step, you know, in Iranstan, things were very different 40 years ago. I went to a private

school, Catholic school. I could wear a skirt. I could ride a bike. But things have changed.

And with the -- I think the war and civil war and invasion and Taliban, I think things have changed so much that we have to go from the root to really make them understand. I think these men that are older men, they did have education. They didn't have much, but they had position. To work in a community, that's what I'm doing. Like I'm really working with the man and the mullick. So, each step that we work -- and it's a success.

There are seven religions, and they would have never, never allowed me to have a school. For a year, I fought with them in a way -- not fighting, really, but determined that you are going to have a girls' school, no matter what. And so, they kind of thought that when I have a school, I won't succeed and they will take over and make it into a boys' school. But now it's seven years, and we have over 500 girls.

And the first graduating class is going to be next year. And the parents and the grandparents, they are amazingly proud of these girls. So, I think it's just grassroots or going -- really working with the community is very, very important and such an area that -- I mean, safety is -- there is no safety at all.

MS. LEIVE: So you --

SPEAKER: So, they have to be our protectors.

MS. LEIVE: So you brought men into the organization, and that has enabled its success.

SPEAKER: Absolutely. Yes.

MS. LEIVE: Yeah. Anybody want to speak to that? It echoes, really, what we were saying before, and Rebecca, what you were saying about "he for she."

MS. WINTHROP: Yes, definitely.

MS. ESPINOZA: I would say that for example, in Bosh Bosh case, we have men in our organization. The head tailor is a male, and he's a great role model for all of our scholars, as well as we try to you know, incorporate all the boys that are in our school in our workshops, because we don't want to leave them out. And we've had those comments, like what about us. What about, you know, the males?

So, we do try to bring them in and educate them why girls' education is so important. I mean, what is the big deal about it? Because they don't understand. And you don't want to create that negative perspective, so we try to educate them, as well.

MS. LEIVE: Right here.

SPEAKER: In terms of -- just continuing with the "he for she." So, one of the things we did was -- we also run schools which are co-ed. So we got the boys this time -- it's their task to design a campaign with the community, with the boys leading against violence against women. You know? And then, shared it with the girls later and included them, but just the boys must lead it. Right?

One more point I wanted to make was that in terms of community mobilization, when you're talking to parents and when you're talking to them about things that are very much against traditions -- child marriage, for example, and even the fact that the man has the power of life and death over his family. And often, the answer is that there's a tension between -- are you working for the community or against them? Is it an attack on them?

I think some of these things need to be attacked. You know? And the way we do it is, we talk about yes, okay, so this is our culture and these are the cultural roots. But you know what? You belong now. You're a citizen of a country that has a Constitution that has laws, and what do you know? They define you differently. These are some rules that now define you.

And they might be against traditional rules, but they override traditional rules. And let's discuss them, which is better. There's a reason why those rules and those laws came into being. So, can we discuss them? Can we work on them? And how do you -- and so helping them redefine certain traditional mores, and by bringing them into the purview of a constitutional existence. I was wondering that -- you know, the hyenas --

MS. LEIVE: Yeah.

SPEAKER: -- that you talked about. So, are there laws against it, and do you approach it from a constitutional perspective? What do you do?

MS. SAMATI: We have a gender equality law that incriminates (Inaudible) practices. When somebody -- when such kind of harmful practices, it's against the law in the country. But you know what? Because culturally, it's acceptable.

MS. LEIVE: Yeah.

MS. SAMATI: Even though the laws are there, you know. Even though the policies are there. But they're not being implemented on the ground. But we can use them.

The other challenge we have is that the people in the judicial system, they are also gender objects. So, if they are not oriented on this -- on gender issues, the importance of implementing these laws, nothing happens. I remember when we went into one of the districts, we had the prevention of domestic violence law in our country. But the judicial in that district were not handling these cases (Inaudible).

We had to you know, bring them together and do re-orientation on issues of gender, so that they should you know, implement these laws that we have on the ground. So, it's a process that even those of us that call ourselves educated, we are gender beings, and we are also suffering from the same issues. It's not a rural issue. It's

the issue of everybody.

And secondly, we do a lot of bringing the men to redefine masculinity, because our girls' envision -- institution is alongside boys' institution. So, here, they define what masculinity is. If we just do it with this side and leave this side as -- we haven't done anything. So it is indeed, very important to engage the men to redefine masculinity.

MS. LEIVE: But how do you do that? Is that through talking about it? What works?

MS. SAMATI: We target the custodians, first of all. So in this case, it would be the male (Inaudible). We bring them together. And this is a secret society. So, the task -- the first task we have is to make them talk. And it takes a lot of energy (Laughter).

MS. LEIVE: And are you in the room? Are you, as a woman, in the room?

MS. SAMATI: If you are not initiated, you can't be in that room. So they facilitated -- that facilitated this dialogue -- it has to be somebody that knows the language, and they know it when you don't know, because we are (Inaudible). We ask you a question. And if you can't answer it, we know we are not initiated and we chase you out. So, you have to be somebody that knows the secret society for you to be able to work with them to break the ice, then to start to talk about the issues. And then to see how best to redefine masculinity.

MS. LEIVE: I think we have time for probably two more quick questions. One right here.

SPEAKER: I want to say two very quick questions, but I also just want to make a very important comment in terms of girls within an environment like Madalo is

speaking about, for example, in Malawi. And I want to say it's not, I think, unique to Malawi. There are various contexts where those challenges are faced.

And I think we need to think quite critically about girls within that context, because one of the most important things that ever girl wants, that we all want as human beings is to belong. We want to fit in, to be part of a community. How do we engage with that negative cultural practice in such a way that girls are not alienated or ostracized, because they want to be able to continue to be celebrated within that community?

And a second thing around defining success, what is it that community sees as the success? Because if an initiated girl is more -- seems to be more valuable and celebrated, that's what will happen. And my question particularly is to you, Madalo, because there was the radical Madalo, girl, who will say to the man, you know what? I am not going to get initiated. That was -- you declared war on the family. Right?

But I know quite common, the work that you do now -- because what you are talking now about is engaging with the powers that be, making sure that you are attacking the behaviors, not the people, and ensuring that you are harnessing the power that they've got, so that they use it more powerfully. So, I just wanted to be able to for you -- if you could speak to that, to how you're using -- because they already have got traditional power. But you are not making enemies of them. You are helping them to change how they interact and engage and how they use that power, particularly as leaders. Thank you.

MS. SAMATI: Well, I think you answered the question (Laughter). Not everything that is cultural is bad. I want to emphasize this. There are lots of positive cultural values and practices that we have. And what we do when we are working with the people is to look at both. And I think I stated this much earlier on, that they look at the positive issues and see how they can strengthen that.

They look at what is not right and see how they can modify or even eliminate, because some of them have to be totally eliminated. So for example, in the central part of the country we have a cultural group -- an institution of what we call (Inaudible). It's a big dance. So, what we have done is to mobilize this group to use the power that they have of pulling people -- it's a crowd puller. And we use to sensitize the people as well as to raise funds, resources for their schools, to support their schools.

So, it's very, very important, because -- I mean, without you know, our cultural institutions, we can't make any headway in Malawi. So, we use both positive and negative components.

MS. LEIVE: I love the phrase that you used, by the way, of making an educated girl a celebrity. That's a great way of looking at it. Rebecca?

MS. WINTHROP: I just wanted make a comment, because there's a theme on the last two questions, and I think it's really important that this emphasis on sort of community mobilization and community leaders is -- it's incredibly important to connect them to national policy, and that that is really how you're going to have big impact at scale, and that so often, you can -- and it was a theme talked about, you know, earlier, as well.

So often, you can have national policy that doesn't actually do what Madalo just described. It just sort of rests, you know, on the books, you know, online, and people might even know it, but they don't own it or incorporate it. And I think civil society has an incredibly important role to play. And it's less -- educating people about their rights is one piece. But I really think it's about -- you know, you do have folks who want to go from town to town saying here's your rights. Did you know you have rights?

And that's useful, but that's really not game changing. What's game-changing is the types of strategies that Madalo was talking about. And the more we can

do to ensure that national governments, civil society coalitions are connecting the two, holding governments accountable for doing the type of sort of grassroots work and making it real in practice is really important. So, civil society can also own it, but they can also act as -- then turn around and be -- make governments accountable for you know, delivering on their promise.

MS. LEIVE: We have one more question right here. Mm-hmm. There's a mike right there.

SPEAKER: Thank you very much. I would like to say thank you to all of the panelists, and thank you to all of the organizations which work on girls' education and international organizations, NGOs, communities, even the government in our country. All the governments now in our country have a program on girls' education.

In my country, Ivory Coast, we focus on the education in primary school which is free. As soon as we said the education is free, we have a lot of girls who go to school. And as my sister in Zimbabwe said, all of the families understand now the importance of schooling the girls in our country. But don't forget the problem of access. And I would like to talk about that.

We have a lot of strategies to encourage parents to send their children to school, but the main problem in our country in Africa is the issue -- the economic and financial issues, because how can you talk about schooling if we don't have any schools? How can we talk about quality if we have one hundred children or students in a classroom? So that means that we have to work about on some civilization of population, but also, we have to make the government and the partners also, to help the program such as we can have a lot of schools in our countries as primary schools, but also, what's very important, secondary schools.

Because when you say -- and she said in Liberia, at the primary school,

you have a lot of children. But when you go far in similar schools, you don't have enough children, because we don't have many secondary schools in our countries, and we don't have schools for girls. You know that when you have a school for girls, that improves the number of girls who go far in their studies and also, they are protected. And many of them can end their studies without being pregnant, because pregnancy is a big issue, also, in our country. Thank you.

MS. LEIVE: To your question about -- your point about making sure that quality education involves some sort of insurance that there's actually going to be enough education available for the children who want it, Rebecca, did your -- your definition of quality education earlier touch on that at all?

MS. WINTHROP: Very good question (Laughter). I think yes, it assumes that you would want this type of an education for every kid. So, yeah. This should not just be for the lucky ones who get to go to school. We should you know, work on strategies for bringing kids to school, or maybe we should start to think about bringing learning to kids in different ways, different you know, approaches, if it's really hard to bring them to school. This would work with kids with disabilities. It would work with, you know, marginalized communities that are very hard to reach, et cetera.

MS. LEIVE: I want to ask each of our panelists one last question. We've heard so many things here today. I know I've been madly jotting them down sometimes. We heard from Namunyana that sometimes the answer to the question is as simple as one word, money (Laughter). We heard from Madalo the importance of having that power of -- the power of the change agent in the community.

And Rebecca, you talked about how powerful it is when brothers and fathers and men stand up, and I think that's something that's threaded through our conversation, the power of that "he for she" factor. Madalo, I loved what you said about

how it's not a sacrifice when you have heart for it. It's just a wonderful way of looking at the incredible work that all of you in this room do. And Charlene, you pointed out that communities really do know best; that when you're trying to answer a question, you cannot find the answer without looking at the community itself.

So, I want to just ask our panelists each one quick final question, which is, what is the one thing that you want the audience and everybody watching on the webcast to remember about supporting girls' education? Namunyana, we were talking before about the power of an education.

What to you, is the power of an education for a girl?

NAMUNYANA: Slow down a bit (Laughter).

MS. LEIVE: Sorry?

SPEAKER: Slow.

SPEAKER: A little slower.

MS. LEIVE: What is the power of education for a girl?

SPEAKER: The importance.

MS. WINTHROP: The importance of education.

MS. LEIVE: You were talking before for you, what the power -- the power of education is. The importance of education.

NAMUNYANA: Okay. Education is a pattern of knowledge received. Okay. I'm appealing to the parents out there, never give up on girls. And to the leaders, support the girls' education.

MS. LEIVE: Don't give up on girls is in and of itself a fantastic and powerful (Laughter) --

SPEAKER: Yeah.

MS. LEIVE: We can all get behind that. (Applause) Madalo, what for you is the one thing you want this audience to take away?

MS. SAMATI: Communities are very, very powerful, and they are powerfully working behind the policies and the laws. And that it's very, very important that there should not be disconnect between the two. That's my message.

MS. LEIVE: Rebecca?

MS. WINTHROP: Probably less for the audience in the room and more perhaps, for the audience on the webcast, that I think it's really important that everybody who cares about girls' education becomes an advocate for girls' education. And to me, that means more than just tweeting about it when you hear it in the news, but staying with the issue.

Just because Malala has won the Nobel Peace Prize and Kailash, who's been a decades-long advocate of girls' education has won the Nobel Peace Prize does not mean this issue is solved. And it means that we need everybody's voices, you know, when it becomes popular and not popular. And people should stick with it. Share their passion about it, share their ideas about what they can do that they find out with their friends, their communities, their schools, their families.

MS. LEIVE: Keep it going. Charlene?

MS. ESPINOZA: So, really, when you educate a girl, you not only are educating her, you're educating her brother, her sister, her mother, her father. And you know, eventually when this girls becomes a mother herself, then her child is more likely to be literate you know, if she knows how to read. So, it's just the trickle effect -- a ripple effect, really. Like if you educate girls, you're educating their communities, and eventually, everyone's future.

MS. LEIVE: Wonderful. Thank you so much, and thank you to the

audience (Applause).

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