

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

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GIRLS' EDUCATION RESEARCH AND POLICY SYMPOSIUM:
REACHING THE MOST MARGINALIZED

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Fireside Chat: Working with Maasai Leaders to Promote Girls' Education in Maasailand:

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Presentation: Translating Life Skills to Empowered Action:

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Thinking Beyond the Girl in Life Skills Approaches for Empowerment:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. WINTHROP: Good morning, everybody. Good morning. Thank you so much, all of you, for coming. I am Rebecca Winthrop, I'm a senior fellow here at Brookings, and the director of the Center for Universal Education.

We are very, very pleased to welcome you to our Annual Girls' Education Research and Policy Symposium. This year we are focusing on the most marginalized, taking inspiration from the Global U.N. Sustainable Development Goals which talks quite a bit about leaving no one behind. And that is something we are going to focus deeply on today, in a whole series of deep dives on different countries and different topics. I'm really thinking about what that actually means in communities with girls who don't have a chance to get a good quality education.

You just saw briefly, for those of you who were watching the video, a quick intro to our wonderful cohort of Echidna Scholars this year. We do this symposium every year, around the time that our cohort of Echidna Scholars, who are visiting scholars from developing countries who work on girls' education have finished their projects, and it really is a chance for us to talk about what they've learned, their insights, what their suggestions and recommendations are for, not only their countries, but for all of us in the global education community.

And you'll get a chance to meet all of them shortly. The Echidna Global Scholars work is one piece of our overarching girls' education portfolio here at Brookings. Primarily we do two things, we build evidence around solutions for girls' education, particularly focused on the most marginalized girls, and the second thing we do is build networks and communities of practice to help sustain and spread those solutions. And we do that at the global level as well as at the national and sub-national level.

And this event I need to say some thank yous before I forget. This event is, in

huge part, thanks to our great partnership and ongoing support from Echidna Giving.

And I would also like to thank Christina Kwauk, here she is, who leads our Girls' Education Work, who is due to give birth on Thanksgiving Day. And I have only told her maybe one thousand times, you can give birth tomorrow, but not before today. And so far she's, you know, taking directions very well. So, huge thanks, Christian has put this altogether with Amanda Braga who worked closely with her, and a whole range of other people on the team, so thanks to all of you.

And they wanted me to be sure to tell everyone to tweet out, email, send to your networks, that the application for the next cohort of Echnidna Scholars is due and the deadline has been extended a week till November 27th. So, feel free to send notes to the people who you think might -- who haven't applied who would like to apply.

And the other thing I want to be sure to let people know, is that we are going to be selling books from one of our former Echidna Scholars who is now a nonresident fellow with us, Urvashi Sahni, who has written a book on girls' education in India and will be selling those during the lunch and during the reception at the end of the day. And it's an incredible story, she's done lots of great research on it, and so far, folks in India, in particular are eating it up, it's top of the charts in a lot of the book lists in India.

So, that's it for my sort of opening remarks. My job now is to introduce our featured speaker who is going to kick off the day, and then we will turn it over to Christina who is going to sort of run us through the program of the following panels that will come.

So, huge thanks to Gene Sperling who is our featured speaker, we are really, really honored, Gene, that you could be with us to kick this symposium off. And for those of you who don't know -- his bio is in the program, but for those of you who don't know, Gene has two professional hats. One, he is a thought leader and leading decision-maker on U.S. domestic economic policy, being the former director of the National Economic Council for President

Obama, and President Clinton.

And his other hat is that he's incredibly passionate about global education. And he founded the Center for Universal Education, he is the reason I am here, recruited to this job, and he was very much on the ground floor in helping to get -- kick start and get going some of our big multilateral institutions, including the Global Partnership for Education which he was part of -- sort of the leading thought leaders to get that going initially. It was formerly called the Education for All Fast Track Initiative; I think we've done a little better job now on the branding.

But he has been a stalwart in our global education community, and we are incredibly excited to have him. Girls' education is near and dear to his heart, he has been writing about it for years, and we recently, a couple years ago, did a new update of an initial book he did long ago, called "What Works in Girls Education," and he and I, along with the massive support from Christina, did that a couple years ago and I'm sure you will have seen that and have copies.

So, Gene, thank you so much for being here; over to you. (Applause)

MR. SPERLING: Well, thank you, thank you very much, you know, sometimes people ask when you are involved in girls' education and you are a male, they ask about that. I started the Center for Universal Education when I left the Clinton White House, and I left -- I started it because when I was the chief economic advisor for President Clinton, and we wanted tangible policy advice about the policies we should propose, I felt like I had to call Oxfam offices in other countries, and that there should be a place right here in Washington that can help advise. And that was the inspiration for it, that was the inspiration that let Hewlett Foundation give us our first funding,

And obviously the focus was on for both boys and girls, but ever since we started, we tried to put a special focus, and one of the first things we did, with the help of Barbara Herz, was write a book called "What Works in Girls' Education."

And the inspiration for that, was that as I was asked to lead the U.S. delegation to Dakar, Senegal, in 2000 to be the U.S. representative in the World Education Forum which led to the Millennium Development Goals on universal primary education in girls, and gender equity, we, at the White House, went through and spent countless hours poring through academic places until we could find the evidence that of course existed out there, and why particularly girls' education was a great investment. And one of the things I said after that was that I never wanted a top policymaker to have to do that again.

So the idea of this, and this is the second version, we are really happy to have Malala do the introduction for this, is one-stop shopping, this promotes all that work that so many amazing people have done, puts it in one place, and whether you are looking for the benefits of girls' education for growth, for reducing child marriage, whatever it is, it is there. So, that was the inspiration for this, for starting the Center for Universal Education, and for putting together, in one place, all of the evidence because I do believe it is the case that you can say, what we say here, which is that this is evidence for the world's best investment.

And that's not just a catch phrase, I do work on a large area of policy, there are other areas where there is evidence-based -- there's an evidence-based library of research that shows something works in one area, there is nothing that shows the breadth of investment such as girls' education, nothing has the breadth; meaning, for growth, for wages, for health of the mother, for health of the daughter, for world economic activity.

It's not a silver bullet, but there is no other area I believe where you can show the breadth of investment, the breadth of positive impact, evidence-based. So that was our inspiration for putting that together, and that was the inspiration for Rebecca and I, updating with Christina's help, 10 years later, so that we would put that all in one place.

Now, as I said, if you are going to be -- you know, when you do get the question about being a man who has tried to take leadership in girls' education, people say, what do you

do, first of all remind people, it is of course not a woman's issue, it is a human issue, it is an economic issue, it is a moral issue, it's a spiritual issue, that's the first thing you do.

The second thing you do, is once you get your program up and running, something like the Center of Universal Education up and running the second thing you do is turn it over to a woman to run who is much better than you. And so too many founding men have not understood that, but I was smart enough.

And to be quite honest, you know, my founder said, okay, if this is going to continue without you, you have to find somebody terrific, and that's what I did. I had become interested in education in conflict areas, and sadly learned as many do that everything you learn doesn't quite transfer as easily when you are looking at conflict refugee situations, and Rebecca Winthrop was my tutor on that, taught me everything. And since she has taken over the Center for Universal Education, I think it's safe to say that virtually everything good, from our resources to the output, has probably not doubled but tripled. So, again, I think I succeeded on that.

And then the third thing you do, is whenever she asks you to do anything including travel 2,300 miles to give a keynote for one of our events, you do it. So, that's my general goal. Now, I wanted that intro to start, because I think it's relevant for our discussion today, with the fact that when we were doing this, I would say the one issue that we wrestled with personally quite a lot, was how much in doing the what works in girls' education 10 years later, how we should divide the kind of celebration versus crisis.

And that was very hard, and it was hard, you know, the numbers wise obviously, by 2015 the number of girls out of school had almost been cut in half from 109 to 60 million, enrolment was up 8 percent, the average girl had been in school seven years, close to five years. Now, in the realm of like social intervention, these are very, very positive results.

And so there was a lot of push that we needed to celebrate, and there was a lot of tension about that, now because of course, we also felt that there was a lot of reason to

simply go through what a state of crisis girls' education was, and it was a struggle for us, and it was a struggle for me personally, because it conflicted with, you know, or I should it evoked conflicting views I had on policy and social change.

Now, first of all, one of them is, when I did run the national economic council under President Obama, and President Clinton, people don't always get everything done that they dream about there, but they get things done, and I always would try to tell people who worked with me, I would say, when somebody said, you know, we were hoping that we were going to get 10 million more children and quality after-care pre-care and we only got 400,000.

You know, I would say to them, okay, when you watch the Super Bowl this weekend, I want you to imagine, you are going to see a stadium with, you know, 70,000 people there, and you see this huge amount, and I want you to imagine that football stadium completely filled with young people from disadvantaged background who have an after-school experience because of you, and then I want you to imagine it emptying out and then refilling six times.

Because I think it's so important in that kind of glass half-full or quarter-full, to not think of it as numbers but to actually see that impact, and that vision of imagining stadiums filled with people who are being helped because of what you've done, I think is so powerful, and so that did of course want me to push towards the celebration.

The second view is, I get asked quite a bit, and I got asked quite a bit as I was working on this here more full time, you know, you were a policymaker sitting by a Head of State, what should we do, and would always say that the three-step plan for social progress, for pushing is to one, identify a significant, heart-wrenching problem; but secondly, to show that somebody somewhere was succeeding in solving it.

And that the third part, where you motivate more resources and more action comes from the first two, showing there's a problem, and showing there's success somewhere, and then pushing people, at the conscience level, how can we know there's a solution and not

be solving it.

So, to me, I also felt that my whole vision of showing success meant we had to celebrate, and yet, it still was hard, because one, we know the part of our celebration is that we set the bar awfully low. It didn't take me long after I came back -- after I start something, you know, the other thing I'm very proud of which I think also the people who have continued was founding the U.S. chapter of The Global Campaign For Education, and I remember in one of the early times we were out with kids in classrooms, I was speaking and one of the kids puts their hands up and says, but why only to elementary school.

And I was kind of, like, it's kind of bad when you can't answer a 10-year-old. Why? There wasn't anybody I know, all of this book, let's be honest, the biggest returns are secondary girls' education, we know that, and yet we set the bar low, we said that universal primary education, and even little kids ask you: Why is that the goal?

And secondly, we also know that the big numbers betray failures of completion, failures of quality that do not deserve a degree of celebration. And third, I just felt sometimes that when we talked about numbers like 75, 80, 85 percent, I fear that that would make certain people say, well, that's not so bad. Or, you know, that's pretty good progress, when it did not tell anywhere near the story of the subject today, which is the most marginalized girls.

And I feared that if we did too much celebration, we would make invisible girls that much more invisible, because when you are talking about the girls who have the most serious disadvantages, the most double and triple, and quadruple, and quintuple disadvantages, there are no 70 percent numbers, there is no 60 percent numbers.

We know how it is. And by the way, I don't want to be one of those people who is like a word hawk, but I do think it is really important not to say, triple disadvantaged girls, or quadruple disadvantaged girls. I think there are like, girls with amazing potential who face triple disadvantages. They are not wounded, they are, you know, as one of the books says, you

know, ready with wings to fly.

And so when you look at those numbers you know it's a very different story. You know, if you want one story to show crisis among rural girls in 2010, maybe it's gotten a little better, average degree amount of education for a poor rural girl or woman in 2010 was less than three years. That kind of hits you.

You know, Niger has been in the news recently. UNESCO found, in 2015, that 70 percent of girls in Niger and Guinea have never been to school, and if you are born in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso or Mozambique, and you are a rural girl, you have less than 1 in 10 chance of completing school; 11 percent in Ethiopia.

So think about that, by the accident of your birth, by the accident of your birth, if you are a girl who is also poor, and born in a rural area by the action of your birth, the chances are 90 percent you will not complete primary education. That is really a crisis, and as we are putting in our book, and as you'll discuss today in some of the panels, you know, for example, in Nigeria, Hausa, I'm going to say the language wrong, but the minority language, 95, 97 percent out of school.

And we are not even talking about young people, you know, it doesn't end that quadruple, there's young girls who have disabilities, there's young girls in conflict, and these numbers for them are crisis level. So, we solved, you know, if you get our book, you'll see, we call it progress in crisis, chapter 3 is: real progress but crisis remains, we try to show that. But it is a tension, and it's a tension you are all are dealing with here today at this conference, and in the more serious work that you were doing.

Now, I don't -- I think what's so important about this, I was just saying, what's so great about these particular conferences is, what used to disgust me at times when I was doing this full time, was I would fly all the way to another country, and you would do a panel on some issue you couldn't wait to talk about, and everybody would give a 7-minute presentation, and

basically repeat the same statistics over and over again.

And I think, how could we have flown all the way here, I would rather have had one minister of education go deep into one issue, and the fact that that's what Echidna Scholars, and what this is about, is going deep, really seeing what the solutions are, really learning where there is commonality in the solutions, where the differential for some context, and culture, and region and religion, et cetera, make things different.

But I do think that I want to return, that even with that degree of crisis, it will not do good if we don't show the success. I have seen this too often in my policy life, that no matter how great you are at showing how bad things are, number one, if at number two you cannot show success, the reaction from your neighbors and in top policy circles is: gees, the world's a cruel place, you can't solve every problem. There's nothing you can do, people have tried. Things don't work.

The power of success, the power of showing things aren't working somewhere is still as amazing and important, and it goes back even as we show the crisis, you have to show the success, you have to show the things that are working, that are more specific. And I think that when I look at the different things out there, you know, I look at what you're going to discuss today, or mean motives, paper, you know, "Giving Girls Wings to Fly" which is a wonderful title.

But, you know, I told her, seeing the pictures, seeing the pictures of the bicycle bank, you know, it's one thing to hear it, it's another thing to see it, to feel it, to talk about the key tipping points, the life skills. The Jamaican policy, Dasmine is talking about an issue in detail in Jamaica that we are not very good at in the United States.

So, success there maybe we can bring home to the United States and see. Mario Christina Osorio's paper, you know, just again, very similar themes, you know, on inclusive curriculum, on the importance of teachers, role models, mother's engagement, lessons that we learn here, et cetera, these are very detailed.

But I want to leave with talking about one last thing, which goes to Damaris Paper, and it's that -- because this is a place I had a personal experience in that I wanted to mention, and I think goes right to her paper, and it goes right to everything we do, you know, at the end of the book, as we did all the returns, there was one place where you felt like you couldn't quite capture how great the returns for girls' education were.

That you couldn't quite, with all the studies, capture the enormity of it. And the thing that struck me about that is the inner-generational impact. When I was a teen, I went to hear Alex Haley speak who wrote "Roots" and he goes to speak and he says, ah, I'm not going to talk about my mother's side -- I know you all saw the movie on that -- I'm going to talk my dad's side.

And he tells the story about how his dad comes from a shear cropper community where nobody goes to college and the average man dies by 54 years old. And he tells this incredible story of him trying against all odds to go to school, and it's not going to work. And he finally gets a job as porter on a train, and he is going to drop out after that. He is going to use the money he has there to buy a plough and go back.

And he stays up all night, with a woman who is extremely sick, and she -- and he ends up -- this man ends up writing to his school, and giving him -- paying for the rest of his tuition. And instead of going back there where the average age was 52, and huge numbers of the men went into the criminal justice system; he aced his courses, now not having to work, and he gets a Ph.D. full scholarship to Cornell, and then he sits there and he says, here is what the average life of somebody would have been had my father gone back.

And then he went through, here is what my brother and sister and I are doing, Pulitzer Prize Winner, professional, et cetera, here is what our grandchildren are doing, all of them, here is what their children are doing. And the power of like one effort for one person, the generational impact, how can you even measure that return.

So, with girls education, we know the thing we can't measure is how great that impact is, and as we go into the first panel, and it's so great because this, that Damaris has written, and to have Kakenya here, who I had a chance to help promote when she was just like four years old now; when she was younger, nine years ago, to see her up there.

But so my story was that in 2007 I went with, who was then Head of Fowey, to a school called the AIC School -- I can't pronounce places -- out of Nairobi, it was a boarding school for girls, Fowey, and it was particularly a boarding school for girls who were likely to be married off, et cetera.

And so I got there. And it was amazing. The girls were all out in green uniforms, and they were dancing and singing, performing for me, and we went up and I kept waiting, to now we are going to introduce to people, and we go through and there's this one woman who is very tall, an older woman in Maasai dress, with her daughter who is not in a green uniform, and they never introduced me to her, and I don't really quite get it.

Then they come over, and they tell me, well, they say, that we need to delay the tour for a half hour, because we have to deal with a situation. I said, what's the situation? She said, that woman walked all night with her granddaughter to come here. And we said, really, because her granddaughter was going to be married in two days, and so we said, forget our tour, we want to be part of talking to them.

So, the woman said, basically that her other granddaughter had been married off at 12 or 13, she wasn't going to let it happen to this girl, whose name was Rebecca, and so she had walked through the night there, and it was an interesting moment of which we never forget, because suddenly we are there, and they are trying to decide what to do, because they are full space-wise, and they are sitting there, and we are talking to this girl, and if she maybe had just been reaching puberty.

And we are sitting there, and you are looking, and suddenly you are not a policy

person anymore, you are nothing, you are just sitting there thinking to yourself, if they don't take her at this school this little girl is going to be mauled and raped tomorrow night. That's just how you think. And I turn to the woman who was the director of Mali, and I said, we cannot leave. And she whispers back to me, she goes, it's just what I'm thinking, I don't care if I have to adopt this girl, we are not leaving.

And so of course we made clear whatever was needed, and they took Rebecca and they have a little film of her on there, and you see this little girl who is now getting close to graduating from school, and you wonder in that particular moment, how different her life will be, how different the life of her children will be, because of what a moment of helping a marginalized girl was at a critical moment.

And the thing I want to say, and it goes to Damaris' paper is, this is not a story of how we were there at some time and help save this girl's life, that's not the story. The story was, and what her paper says, is about engaging the key gatekeepers, working, community level, this was a story of that school, and a non-profit over a period of two years working with the tribal elders.

And the key part of the story is when that grandmother went to the person who is essentially the Chief of her village community, he knew about this school, and he said, you go there, and I will protect you from being beaten or retaliated.

That was the story the gatekeepers, the work, and when I read your paper I just thought it just -- I've never told that story before, but it brought to life, it's everything here, the community involvement, the leadership, working at the level, dealing with things, save one marginalized girl's life, not just give her an education, but maybe turned around a generation after generation.

And with that I leave you to this great conference. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MS. KWAUK: Thank you so much, Gene. You've really brought home the point that we need to be highlighting, not only tangible problems, but also tangible solutions to get policymakers and more than just policymakers I think, more gatekeepers, community leaders, men into the room, and on to the table to discuss the important issues around girls' education. So, thank you so much.

My name is Christian Kwauk. I'm a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Universal Education here at Brookings. I'm just going to provide us with a really general overview of what the day is going to look like. We have a long day ahead of us, but with some incredibly inspiring women and men, who will be taking us deeper into different issues around reaching the most marginalized, our key theme for today.

So, as Rebecca mentioned earlier, and as Gene mentioned as well, this symposium is really anchored around the research of our Echidna Global Scholars, so each of the sessions will begin with a brief presentation on their research and their findings, and then we'll go into a more open discussion with other panelists, and moderators.

So, we'll start the day, today with a conversation on engaging new actors, and community leaders in Maasailand, and then we are going to go to a quick coffee break, and two of Echidna Global Scholars will be presenting issues around reaching the most invisible girls, outside of what we in the girls' education field typically would call, girls' education hot spots. So, where the girls are the most marginalized and where they are falling the most behind.

After their presentations we are going to do something different and go into two concurrent panels, for which we hope you will choose which one to attend. And those will explore the intersecting burdens for girls, so what Gene was mentioning in terms of the triple burden, the quadruple burden and beyond, and then the other session will be looking at government approaches to reaching some of the hardest to reach girls as well.

After lunch I'll give a brief presentation on our girl's life skills education

framework, really trying to link life skills education development to smarter social systemic change, and that will hopefully, provide some framing and common concepts and language for us to go into a deeper exploration on thinking beyond the girl in life skills education programming, with our final presentation and panel, really focused on looking at social norms change, engaging communities, and thinking across the girls' lifetime, from early childhood through adolescence, into adulthood.

And then finally, we'll end the day with the networking reception, I hope you all will stay till the end, and enjoy some really great conversation and company during that hour.

So, without further ado, I'm going to go into my framing for our first session today, where we will explore how policymakers, NGOs and other grassroots actors can best work with Maasai community leaders, and embrace these new and emerging local actors advocating for girls.

So, we'll begin with a brief presentation from our Echidna Global Scholar Damaris Parsitau, who is also the Director of the Institute of Women, Gender and Developing Studies at Egerton University in Kenya. Damaris is an amazing woman, she is a Maasai woman, the first woman to get a PhD from her county, and she is the founder of Let Maasai Girls Learn, and which bring local and international actors to promote Maasai girls education in Kenya. She's also the founder of Kenya Women Rising, and Youth and Transformative Leadership Development Programs, all programs that invest in women and youth.

Following Damaris' presentation she'll be joined by another Maasai leader, Kakenya Ntaiya, who is the Founder and President of the Kakenya Center for Excellence, and her international nonprofit, Kakenya's Dream, works to empower girls and uplift rural Kenyan communities through education. And she has been dedicated to transforming communities and changing social norms for years, as Gene mentioned, since the age of 4. She has received multiple awards including the Top 10 CNN Hero Award in 2013, Newsweek's 150 Women Who

Shake the World, Vital Voices Leadership Award, among many, many others.

And moderating that chat will be Kayce Freed Jennings, who is the Co-Founder of the documentary group and the Senior Producer of Girl Rising. If you are not familiar with Girl Rising, Girl Rising is a film and global campaign for girls' education and empowerment, and it has -- the film itself has really -- it has been seen by hundreds and millions of people around the world, in 170 different countries, and it has catalyzed local regional and national efforts to support girls.

It's inspired people to dismantle the barriers holding back girls, and has really worked to bring a lot of these issues that we'll be talking about today to a global, mass awareness. She's also worked as a Producer on ABC News, covering national and international news events, and has worked on the staffs of Nightline and World News Tonight; and we are so pleased to have these three women today join us for our first panel.

And without further ado, I'll turn things over to Damaris. (Applause)

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: Good morning. I'm incredibly honored to speak to you on as girls' education actors, about my research and passion for Maasai girls' education. I'm speaking to you today from this platform as a Maasai woman, as Christina has said, born and bred in Maasailand, but also as a research and as an academic who understands Maasai culture and thought patterns only too well. I have lived it.

And so as I share my research findings with you today, I want you to know that this is more than a policy brief for me, it's more than my research findings, it's deeply personal, because I have lived this life, and I am that Maasai girl that I'm going to speak about today.

So, I welcome you to listen to my presentation, which is really not just the findings, but also my life story, my personal life story and trajectory, you know, growing up in Maasailand through the academia, and how I navigated that complex terrain, you know, running around and trying to escape as many things as possible to get an education. So, in every sense

of the word today, I am that Maasai girl. Thank you. And welcome to my presentation.

So, for those of you who do not know the Maasai, I know many actors in girls' education know the Maasai, the Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania; as you can see on the map there, the nomadic pastoralists where the ghetto and livestock are very central to the livestock economy. The Maasai have a unique culture, and they have refused to give up that culture despite all the pressure from modernity and globalization, they just want to stay with their culture.

More importantly, the Maasai have a unique system of social and political governance which is very different from, you know, the Kenyan leadership political system that we have, and it goes back to generations of Maasai systems of knowing. It's a system that is heavily patriarchal and where men are the rulers. They make all the decisions that affect everybody including women who basically have no voice.

So, patriarchal dominance defines what Maasai leadership is all about. Maasai women have no voice; they do not participate in socio-political -- in the cultural socio-political issues in Maasailand because their voices are muted. In Maasailand a woman is comparable -- her opinion is comparable to that of a girl.

Now, that brings me to my policy brief, and I want to briefly chat with you about Maasai girls' education. Maasai girls are among the most marginalized groups in Kenya. The gross enrolment rate for Maasai -- for girls in arid and semi-arid land where the Maasai are predominantly found, those are the districts of Kajiado and Narok, which are the focus of my study, have less than 50 percent of enrolment compared to the national average which is nearly about 120 percent.

Sixty percent of Maasai children in rural areas are not enrolled in school at all, and the rates of girls transition too, and completing secondary school is very low. In fact, 8 percent of Maasai girls in rural areas do not complete secondary schooling; 2.4 percent in

Transmara West, and 1.0 percent Narok South, which actually the locals of my study.

And we need to ask ourselves, and it should worry all of us: why are Maasai girls not going to school? And, you know, there's all manner of lofty and beautiful policy on paper. We have free primary school education since 2002, and 2003 we have three secondary school education since 2004; we have, you know, an anti FGM Board, we have an act that protects girls from early marriage and female genital mutilation, yet Maasai girls are still not going to school, as you can see from those statistics.

In my research what came out very clearly in my policy brief which I hope that each one of you is going to grab a copy, I identify the biggest obstacle to Maasai girls' education which is their culture. Maasai girls are subjected to female genital mutilation and early marriage which, both are linked to girl's dropout in school.

The Maasai girls, 89 percent of Maasai girls undergo female genital mutilation, which is very sad. So, at the center of Maasai girls' education, and at the center of Maasai culture are the custodians of traditional culture. These are the gatekeepers of traditions, the (inaudible) of the knowledge systems of Maasai culture. They are extremely influential and highly respected, authoritative and are rarely questioned, but they have a big say on whether girls get an education or not.

So, in my study, I try to identify these groups that are very critical for Maasai, to allow Maasai girls to go to school. And these are the elders, the spiritual leaders, the community leaders, and they are not lawmakers, and they are not lawmakers, they are leaders anointed within -- and appointed within the Maasai political social system.

They have the capacity to allow girls to go to school if only we can be able to work with them, and understand their culture with respect and sensitivity. So, I identify the role of elders and how we can go about each one of them, to be able to allow Maasai girls to go to school.

First of all, the elders are very powerful, and Maasai elders are appointed from, you know, when they are young, and they grow up into that leadership and become very influential and have voice, and you cannot get anything done if you don't go through them.

So, I think if we engage these elders with cultural sensitivity, trying to understand their thought patterns, understanding their fears about girls' education, I think we'll be able to get somewhere. Spiritual leaders, and we have both spiritual leaders, denominational and non-denominational within the Maasai cultural system they are spiritual leaders who are also very powerful.

But I think they are very critical in getting girls to school, if we can build their capacity support girls, if we can empower them to challenge cultural practices using their religious platform to speak.

Then we have the most exciting thing that is happening in Maasailand, is we have general change, a new group of actors, the anti-cut warriors, who are taking culture head on, and saying they don't want girls subjected to female genital mutilation, which stops girls from continuing with their school. And so they are emerging as powerful voices to allies for girls' education and all focus should be looking at this group.

Then we have the untapped social capital, the mothers, my mother, was very critical in my getting an education, girls I spoke to throughout my research and in the work that I do at Egerton University, told me about the roles their mothers played to help them run away from culture to get an education, and we need to build capacity for girls themselves. Over and over again, girls I spoke to told me that everyone is making decisions for me, and nobody is asking me what I want, what is my perspective about education.

So I think if we work with all these groups, and empower them, and make sure that their capacities are built, that will sensitize them about all the things that are going on, I think we'll be able to win the battle for Maasai girls' education.

Thank you so much for listening to me. I now welcome my colleagues to the panel. Thank you. (Applause)

MS. FREED JENNINGS: Thank you. Well, while these guys getting mic-ed. First of all, thank you all for being here. It's such an honor to be asked to participate, and I'm so thrilled to be on this panel next to Damaris and Kakenya, these truly amazing leaders in girls' education.

I had the privilege of meeting the Damaris earlier this fall in New York City, so I know how dynamic she is. And I feel like I know Kakenya, having heard so much about her through the years, and also having seen her TED Talk, which I'm sure some of you seen it, but for those of you who haven't seen it yet, you should watch it, it's truly inspiring.

So, I want to ask you later, actually, because I see you are wearing red, and I noticed a lot of red in the slides, but I'm not going to ask you now, but I really do want to know, about the role of red in the Maasai culture. But we are going to talk about 20 minutes up here, amongst ourselves, and then we are going to open it up for the floor for another 15, 20 minutes, so these guys can get your questions.

So, let's get started. I just want to ask you first, just for some perspective and sort of what is it like to grow up a girl in Maasai culture? I'll start with you, Kakenya.

MS. NTAIYA: Thank you so much for having me, and good job, Damaris.

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: Thank you.

MS. NTAIYA: Growing up as a Maasai girl, you grow up around your mother, so whatever she's doing you do. So, if she's going to the river to collect water, she's getting the firewood, she's making the food, she is -- so whatever your mother is doing, you are doing, from the time you actually start walking. You are left with your younger siblings to take care of, pretty much the idea is that to train you to become a very good mother when you get married.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: I'm going to get to you with that question too in a

moment, but I want to take this opportunity for those who haven't seen your TED Talk, and if you talk about how you've changed that a bit for yourself. Give a sense of your story, and how it led to you founding the Kakenya Center for Excellence?

MS. NTAIYA: The girl I described was me, and the same with Damaris. What was, I was actually engaged when I was 5-years-old, so I grew up knowing that my husband is from this other family, and my mother-in-law visited my mother all the time, and there was this relationship that was going on, that, you know, made sure that, you know, it continues.

And there is, Damaris talks about the mother, my mother was very hard-working so that family, so that my mother is out working, so they need to book the girl, so that she can also be hardworking. But when I was -- I went to school, as Damaris said, you know, we go to school to socialize, we don't go to school to become, I don't know what, we go to school to socialize.

I went to school, but when I got to school, I found something else, I found women leaders -- women teachers and that really attracted me, they were coming from other communities, and when I looked at that, I was like, wow, I want to be a teacher, and as a young girl, what you aspire at that time, was to dress up nicely, so I thought these teachers were dressed nicely with nice clothes, and so I thought that's what I wanted. But I remember I have been engaged, or I have a husband waiting.

At the age of 13 when I was now considered mature, because you are reaching puberty and people see that you are a big girl, we go through female genital cutting as a transition from childhood to womanhood and, you know, if I go through this, I was going to get married, so I wanted to stay and cut -- without going through FGM.

But it's something that's so deeply valued in the community, it gives status to your parents, your family, I mean it's like the thing that it's also special, so you can't really just say, I can't go through this, I mean I want to remain uncut. I mean that's like unheard of.

And, you know, Damaris talked about the transition, you know, once you go through it, you get married. You are now considered a woman, and you have to get married. But I found a way to negotiate with my dad that I could only go through that if he lets --

MS. FREED JENNINGS: So, your first gatekeeper, so this (crosstalk)?

MS. NTAIYA: Yeah. I could only go through that if he lets me go back to school; otherwise I was going to run away. Most of us who have the education we have, we've been running away from many things, but that was my very first decision that, you know, I wanted to go to school, and so I ran away -- I negotiated to go through the cut, and go back to school.

But what was key after that was my mother bringing a (inaudible), something that you're not supposed to do, to help me heal faster, because it takes months, and infections, you are supposed to heal naturally. Yeah, but I'm here.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: And so to just briefly -- and that led you, you made a commitment to yourself and to your community, right, that if you were able to stay in school, that you were going to play it forward, so to speak?

MS. NTAIYA: I think, you know, when Damaris is talking about -- the issues that we talk about, it's really our life, and when you've gone through female genital cutting, when you have escaped early marriage, and know that others are still going through that, I mean, you know, this makes you not sleep, this makes you want to reach out, this makes you want to change, and there's that disconnect between them, and we'll go into that later, where Damaris is talking.

You know, we have all these entities and laws that are supposed to protect us, but it's not protecting us, you know, FGM is against the law in Kenya, it didn't protect me. So, we feel that, you know, I went through it, but no other girl should go through what I went through, and we want to pave the way to make sure that girls go to school.

So, I started this school, because I know that education is the most important tool

that you can give a woman, give a girl, she unleashes her potential when she can raise her voice, when she has access to school. And I have 300 girls, that I'm supporting in my school, who I know that's the next generation of we are ending FGM, and it starts with those 300 girls that I have.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: So, we are going to get to that point which, I think is the heart of what we are going to talk about that disconnect between policy and what's happening on the ground. But Damaris, you also grew up a Maasai girl, what made your experience different from the average girl? And how has that informed -- how has that experience informed the work that you do?

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: First of all growing up as a Maasai girl was very complex, and very difficult, but I had allies. I was fortunate, I had allies. I grew up in a large family where we had so many men, and my brothers went to school, and they supported me a great deal, but my mom was my greatest ally. And until recently is when I discovered that she was, you know, playing cat and mouse with culture, because my mom never allowed me to stay in the village during school holiday.

I was always in Nairobi with relatives, and I came to realize later that she was making sure that I don't go through the cultural rituals, but my father was very easy. I did face pressure from my father, I was his favorite child, he loved me, and I was so thin, and so small that he felt the need to protect me all the time.

And I was smart in school, so I kept passing my examinations, and when I did that I would negotiate with my mom and my dad, that, you know, I passed this grade, can I go to the next one, and that's how actually, I found myself at the university. I kept passing, and so it was not difficult, because in Kenya, if you failed your examination then your parents will have to pay extra money for you to get to a school.

So, that was not my experience, and so that propelled me to school further. But

when I got myself to the university and rose to become a professor, and I was appointed as Director of Agenda Institute, a women-centered organization, that is when I came face-to-face with all these massive challenges, we are selecting girls for, you know, going to university and I couldn't interest a single Maasai girl, and that pricked me so bad, it caused me sleepless nights.

And I decided to do something about it, and so I used my platform and my voice. Every time I have an opportunity to go to Maasailand I carry boxes upon boxes of brochures from the university and from schools, and I go and tell the elders, look, you know, if your daughter passes, or your son passes he can come to the university and do this degree, and call me.

And every time our national examinations are announced on national television my phone cannot stop ringing, and I cannot keep up the pace of the children that are sent to me with nothing. They just: go to Auntie Damaris, she will fix you in school, she'll fix you in college. Not a single dime is given to those kids, and sometimes I have no room to put them in my house.

So, I have been doing this because it's the right thing to do. I cannot claim to have a PhD, and to be a professor in the university and the Maasai girls are not going to school, I just can't do that.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: But what this indicates, and now I want to get to this disconnect, right, is that there is -- I mean, someone is letting those girls come to your house, or even encouraging them, right?

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: Yes.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: So, there is some support in the community. So, what is the disconnect then between the policies that promote girls' education and some of the interventions, and early the on-the-ground realities for this group of girls, and how do you work with the Maasai leaders? Respecting as you said before, you know, with respect and sensitivity

to the culture? Who are the (inaudible) concerned about the survival of their culture?

You've said that the gatekeepers, Damaris, are the custodians and tradition and culture; and that they may be part of the problem, but they are also very much part of the solution. So, how do you make them part of the solution then?

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: It's about knowing and understanding Maasai culture and the thought patterns, and the fears. Like one professor described it as Maasai is having an education complex, that they are so afraid that when their children are exposed to an education they will lose their children. They will adopt strange manners and speak English, and not know what to do respecting elders, because Maasai value system is founded on deep values of respect of the hierarchy.

And so, just understanding that, and being an insider, knowing how to speak to them, and even how to dress to go to them to speak. Every time I go to the village, I do in my Maasai attire to tell them that it's compatible for me to be educated -- I mean modernity and education are compatible with Maasai culture, I can be a Maasai when I want a Maasai, and I can run away from Maasailand when I want to.

And so when I go home, and my children laugh about it, me looking really like a Maasai, they love that, because they feel that I didn't abandon their culture, and I speak to them and tell them, look, look at my life, you gave me an opportunity to go to school, I'm transforming the lives of Maasai girls, I'm transforming my own families' life.

In my family, my generation FGM and early marriage ended there, and no one has ever spoken to me about -- I have a daughter, most of you at Brookings saw my daughter when she came here, she's training to be a lawyer. I go with them and I tell them, look, look at my daughter, because I went to school, my daughter can become a lawyer to come and fight for your rights when your cows are arrested, because in Kenya they arrest cows when they wander into another person's farm, my daughter will come and protect you.

And that has, you know, made them feel that I'm not selfish, I'm one of them, and I speak from a place very real, and I can understand their fears. So, I speak to them with respect, I know who to go to, because you don't just go directly and speak a father and say, hey, what's wrong with you? Why are you doing this to your children?

As many government officials do, as NGOs do sometimes when they go rescuing girls from female genital mutilation and early marriage. They go with force, and all the men and women are arrested and thrown in jail, and they don't understand why that has happened to them. So, it's important that you come from there, that you understand there, but also how do you -- how do you go to them?

MS. FREED JENNINGS: So, does the change, do you think, have to come from within Maasai culture? I mean you've used tradition in order to achieve your ends, and that did mean you went through the cutting, but presumably others won't as a result, but you USD tradition. Can outsiders -- can you help the interested outsiders help make the change, or does it really have to come just from within, do you think?

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: I think outsiders are very well meaning, when they come into the (crosstalk).

MS. FREED JENNINGS: That can be done in prayers.

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: Yes. Yes, I know, they mean well, but at the same time, sometimes how outsiders have framed the whole issue of Maasai culture, makes Maasai people very defensive. For example, a classic example is using the language or rights. You know, NGOs come: oh, female genital mutilation again is human rights. You have violated the rights of your children.

A Maasai old man doesn't understand what rights are. They have not gone to school, they can't read or write, so what is human rights to a culture that has been passed on from generation to generation, and that's not in any way to say I support FGM, that is simply to

say, you cannot uproot or fight FGM using force or the law. You have to speak to people, you have sensitized them, you have to tell them in your language, in a language they understand that FGM and early marriage is wrong, because it harms a girl, it does this to a girl.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: Kakenya, can you describe your experience promoting girls leadership and empowerment among the custodians of traditions as we've been talking about? Your boarding school is full of girls, right?

MS. NTAIYA: Yes.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: So, I suspect means you've had to convince someone, often the father to allow his daughter to come to your school, so you must be an expert at this, what's your approach?

MS. NTAIYA: I think that when you go back to the question about the disconnect between well-meaning policies, free primary education. So, what that does is that classes are flooded with kids, and in the rural communities there are actually no resources, and in that class where you have 70 kids in first grade, the boys would be the ones asking questions and sitting at the front; the girls will be at the back.

So, from that point the girls is already left out, and in our country, you can't proceed to the next class if you don't do well in the exams so that's the first ticket. So, if you don't go to class 2, you stay in class 1, you continue being older, you go to class 2, you are just pushed behind and by the time you are in fourth grade or fifth grade, your father says, you know I don't see the value of you going to school, because you are really not doing well, so why don't you just get married.

Furthermore, if she gets married, the father will get nine cows, or eight cows, or whatever number of cows, and the cows can actually be used to educate the boy who is smart in class. And the girl's life, when she goes home, she's not going to read, you know, first there's no electricity or lamp, and the little lamp that is there, sometimes they are given to the boys to

use for reading, the girls is busy cooking. So there's a whole lot of areas of life that we don't understand, I mean, maybe we understand in talking, but in actualizing is a whole other thing.

The reason I created a boarding school for girls is because I looked at all that, yes, you can still have a school, and have girls walk, but she will be walking 3, 4 miles, and on that road to school, she's susceptible to violence, rape and -- I mean, there are all these issues that -- and before she woke up in the morning she was milking. By the time she comes to school she's tired.

She had a cup of tea in the morning, no bread, nothing else, and you have to look at where they are starting from. When we open the boarding school, one of the biggest, I think, attractions was that it was free, so, you know, go take this daughter, take her. And when I was doing enrolment what happened is that, Damaris was saying, the father always had a girl that they like the most, from the wife that he likes the most, because we are a polygamous society.

So they always bring the ones that they like the most, and I realize, what about the others. So, I will start asking: How many children do you have? How many wives do you have? Then you realize the wife that was left at home is the one that she's not liked a lot, and her children will not go to school.

So, I'll start saying: can you bring the girl from the other family. And, you know, it was a fight, but you create those -- you tell them, let me help you from there, and then you can take this one that you like, to a boarding school somewhere else. And as Damaris said, when I started I didn't just go and start building the school. I didn't just go and say, now, I'm building a school, just for girls, you know, I don't need to work with the boys.

It took me three years of talking about, asking the parent, you know, go and talk to the men, they will ask for meetings which most of the times the men came and the women didn't come, and then I'll end up saying, but I want the meeting with the mothers now.

It took three years of talking about: what do we need? Because I didn't want it to be like me, where men are always saying: oh, we need a very good school for boys, but the good thing I had knowing the culture as good, I would tell them, but we have many boys who are educated, who are in university, who are leading, you know, head of banks, and I said: why don't we go to them to build a school for boys, and let me build a school for girls?

And, you know, at first they said, but you are a girl, you've never really build and, you know, there was a lot of talking, and then I finally asked them, I needed their blessings, and I needed their stake. And they said, well, we bless you, and we are giving you land to build the school. That's their most valuable thing in Maasai is to own land.

So they gave me land where the school is, it's from the Maasai, it's the elders that give me the land. And every time I needed to do something, I always went to the Chief. Because when you talk about FGM, the Chief is supposed to be one who is going to rescue the girls; who is at the bottom, but realize this Chief is Maasai is mutilating his girls, is marrying his girls.

So, how is it going to support help another girl from another family? So, he is the culture, he is not going to implement what the government is saying, so my first incidence of girls -- one of our girls was supposed to, you know, technically go through the female genital cutting, and I tried to go to the Chief, the Chief refused to help me, because he said, this father, the man from that family, we have families that are known that is so traditional, you don't touch; you know, only boys -- you know, that, you can't touch a kid from that family.

And I told the Chief, and the Chief couldn't help me, and then I go to the upper high, you know, the DC, the DC is the (inaudible) Kenya: we go get the girl where to we take her? And I realize is that he's the one to do it, because at the end it's the Chief who needs to do that, so that's when I had to pull the law from their (inaudible), so I found the, you know, the PS the biggest, you know, law enforcer to get everybody running down to do the work, and that set

precedents, because I kept pushing and pushing and pushing.

Do you know what? The Chief came; he came to the school and said, any girl who comes to this school is not going to be cut. He made every father and every mother to promise not to do that, and that became the law.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: I have so many questions about everything you just said about this, and I hope all of you guys are going to (crosstalk) --

MS. NTAIYA: (Laughter) Yeah, yeah.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: -- because I could go on forever. And I know I am stepping a little out of time, but I really want to make sure we cover one other area, and that's the new actors, and they are boys, and so forgive me for stepping on your Q&A time for a moment. But I just want -- because it seems that there's something emerging, that's exciting, can you speak to that a bit? And then I'll promise you, I'm going to turn it over to you guys.

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: Yes. There is change coming and, you know, sometimes Maasai culture looks like this wall where change would happen, but in 2013, a group of young men, between the ages of 15 and 30, who are trained by an NGO to support girl's education by fighting the FGM and early marriage, and the interesting thing is that these warriors are people who have sworn to protect Maasai culture, but when they went through this training and sensitization, and went to villages, you know, just having married, one of them sees a girl who is bleeding to death, because she had undergone female genital mutilation, and he's not.

I'm saying, oh, my, god, how do we eat and make merry when a girl is dying because of female genital mutilation? And so he started this movement, I call it a movement because I think I want to call it to be a movement, because all my life is pegged on that window of change, and he started mobilizing and coalescing around his age mates.

So, Maasai system is that there is a young leader who is in charge of an age

mate, an age set, of young men who have just graduate from moranhood to junior elders, and they started talking FGM and saying it's wrong, and taking the elders head on and saying: if you subject your daughter to FGM, we will personally take you to the police. We will make sure that the law will deal with you.

And they met a lot of resistance, but also they have had a lot of successes. And so for me, that is like this pack that everyone should be focusing their attention on because if men support FGM, my theory has always been FGM happens because of men, because it's down to improve a girl's marriageability. Maasai men don't marry an uncircumcised girl, but they are comfortable going to other communities and marrying --

MS. NTAIYA: Marrying them.

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: -- a non-Maasai who has not gone through FGM, but not Maasai girls who have not been subjected to the cut. And so if they help vocalize this issue and giving it impetus, and they are young, and they want to marry generations of girls that have not gone through FGM, I think for me, it's so refreshing. Yeah.

MS. NTAIYA: There are also the actors of religious leaders, which are mostly the pastors; they are men that are really taking on the space of really --

MS. FREED JENNINGS: Is it generational or is it --

MS. NTAIYA: It's really even the older generational men. I think what Damaris has talked earlier about is that the education, and not just the formal education, it's that informal education, learning about what is FGM? What are the consequences? I think that discussion when you have it with people, I mean they just kind of understand that, oh, that's why the difficulties in marriage, you know, there are all these issues that affect us daily, so when they start connecting them, people are really reluctant.

I can tell you the parents of my girls now who are in high school, I mean the parents are like: let them stay in school, let them continue. It is a pride when the girl succeed,

and everybody wants to be part of that success, and that is the mind change where it's not just, there's a new generation that's coming up, which is really exciting, because I've always asked, who is going to marry your girls? But there's also that age that now people are starting to realize let our girls go to school, and the only way you can let the girl go to school, if you stop mutilating her.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: Okay. I really want to ask a lot of other questions, but I'm not going to.

MS. SIMPSON: Thank you. I'm Heather Simpson with Room to Read, thank you so much. I'm really interested in recognizing that trusted mentors and leaders such as yourselves are so important in engaging with these local leaders and gatekeepers. Are there data or research that you crave that really resonates with those local leaders that we in this room can help generate? How can we do better to support your efforts in those really local negotiations?

MS. NTAIYA: Are you going to take?

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: Yeah. I can take that. So, I came across data from World Vision, I think, in Senegal and in Guinea-Bissau where NGOs and international -- the international community is working with spiritual leaders and mothers, you know, forming allies of girls' educators, and these are, you know, women who, like my mom, never went to school, but they have been trained to support their daughters to complete school.

And when they formed those allies, especially in Guinea-Bissau, the girls actually finished their primary education. So, there is reset that is, you know, focusing on that, and showing that when these mothers are sensitized, when they are able to allow their daughters not to do the chores in the evening when they get back home, then that translates into girls finishing school.

Also, the same study showed that when people work with spiritual leaders; and in

Africa spirituality is a big deal. If you want to succeed in what you do, always involve religious leaders, they are respected. Many people take their word. In fact, in my country I think spiritual leaders could be more respected than politicians or the media or anything.

So, if you want to get anything done, get the spiritual leaders behind you. So, in this particular study of, I think, Senegal, when they worked with spiritual leaders, and because they perform the rights of, you know, sanctifying the marriage, and you know -- what do you call it -- you know, presiding over the marriage. When they refuse to preside over a marriage of a child, you know, a girl between the ages of 10 and 20, or 18, depending on the country, then that made communities rethink the usefulness of child marriage.

So, there is data, not so much data that specific data in certain communities that shows that when you work with communities the solutions are not just sustainable but, you know, they produce results, you know, immediately. Yeah.

MS. NTAIYA: So there's still deeply -- When you try to do research on, and I think you went through this problem, it's like there's really no data out there.

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: Yeah.

MS. NTAIYA: I mean, there's really no data on, we know what works, and there's really no data that shows depth of, you know, communities, so that we need that depth, because right now we are just kind of like going up, and not really looking at what really works, like deep and really actualizing that, so that's an area that I would really encourage, those who are interested, it's the depth of it. You know, we are working in the field, we have data. Can we make that available for people to really look at it? Yeah.

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: Yes. And just like, for me when I was writing my project here, I grappled with lack of data. When you talk about Maasai girls, you know, in Kenya we could say in some sections we have achieved gender parity, that literature is available, data is available. Go to the Maasai -- the rural areas, there is no data, and when you speak to

policymakers they say, oh, it's the Maasai culture.

You know, so that, because of Maasai culture, and tradition, that is lost. The real issues, the real, real issues why Maasai girls are not going to school, which might not necessarily just be about culture, but there's also issues of poverty, issues of marginalization, issues of, you know, lack of school fees, or even just sanitary pads for girls, that has a huge impact on whether they go to school or not. So, there's lack of data for the most marginalized, but there's a lot of data nationally, for girls' education and that hides those invisible girls.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: Yes?

QUESTIONER: Thank you. Hi, Kakenya and Damaris. It's nice to see you again. I have a quick question about engaging with some of these young men, that are cultural gatekeepers of sorts, but I have to share a short anecdote to explain why. So, we work with an organization called WISER Girls out in Western Kenya in the Lake Region, and we have had significant progress in girls' education outcomes over the past couple of years, 100 percent tertiary enrolment, zero percent drop out due to pregnancy and early marriage.

The consequence is that local men in the region have started expressing sentiments about how this feels like a threat, and sometimes men will want to talk to me, they want to have man to man chats, and so you start getting insight into what they think about girls' education, and I've had men come up to me and say, I'm so worried about these girls that are graduating and being really successful.

And when you ask them why, they say, because the more educated they are, they'll realize they shouldn't be marrying people like me. And that may be true, and I'm wondering if you have experienced any of this sentiment among some of the young men that you are working with and engaging with, because that feels like a very different concern to me, it feels like a self-interested concern rather than a defense of a cultural system. How do you address that concern about self-interest?

MS. FREED JENNINGS: We have a couple of minutes left.

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: Should I go first? Absolutely, I have grappled with that personally -- on a personal level and, you know, no Maasai man could marry me, because I'm educated, and in my study, as I was speaking to men, Maasai men here in America, and there is a large Maasai Diaspora here in Washington, D.C., but back home the stories they told me was, I don't want to marry a Maasai girl who is educated because she will challenge culture, she will challenge authority. She will not take crap from men. (Laughter)

And, yeah, so the tensions are real, but it's not just about Maasai women. In my country we can see that tension already, there's just a proliferation of single parenthood because there seems to be a feeling that women are really getting empowered but men are left behind, and that has, you know, translated into those tensions that men do not want to marry girls that have gone to school. It certainly was if you have a PhD, in my university nearly all my colleagues who have PhDs and are professors, very few of them are married.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: So, Kakenya, are you worried about that for the girls in your school? Should it be a concern? Is it a concern? Is it any relevance?

MS. NTAIYA: No. Because I think you know, that men have really gotten so many opportunities, and I think that the fear is that space of when you have girl present or a woman present, they change the dialog. And I think that's where they are feared, and we could have talked more about how does that feel being a PhD holder in a very rural community. It's threatening because you insert yourself where technically women are not allowed.

You know, when you go to meetings, men sit up on chairs, women sit up on the floor, but you get up and go sit on the chair, and when you go, you go with other women, and now you are interrupting the system, so I think what we are further doing, we are actually working with boys to really learn about, it's not the threat it's really empowerment.

And we realize most of the men, they will always marry a Maasai woman first,

and then they will marry another non-Maasai who is educated, because they can have dialogue. So, we want to make sure that they can start having those dialogues from a younger age. That's why we do trainings for boys and girls, and we really work with them.

It's not a trend, it's really about building a society that all are equal and all have access in having girls that are smart in the classroom, it's okay, you know, I went through that. When I'm smart, the boys were like, this woman, you know, but it's okay for a girl to do well.

So, we really have to change that mindset, that this is just a man discussion, it's men who make the rule, it's the men who are, but we need to change that, and that's where it's about social change and the mindset, and it's to a threat, it's just that they need to accept it's okay. So, yeah, keep doing what you're doing. Educate more girls.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: I could, as I say, go on and I wish I could. I'm told that our time is up, but we are going to have a coffee break now -- No?

MS. NTAIYA: She just gave you one more.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: Oh, I have one more. Okay. This makes it really hard. I haven't gone to the side of the room yet, so it's only fair. So, sorry.

QUESTIONER: Thank you. My name is Alicia Phillips, and I'm World Vision. And I'm just first of all, humbled by your experience, and thank you for sharing. So, I'm glad you mentioned just the importance of involving the spiritual leaders, that's definitely something we do, but I guess -- I heard you kind of mentioned some key things for us to think about as implementers coming from an NGO.

The importance of, I think I mean we comment sometimes as outsiders, and like you said, we can't say, you know, stop doing this, or you have our human rights, like the right (inaudible), there's a different speak that you have to have, and just the need to offer alternatives. If you're telling people, you know, if you can't do this, and what's the alternative?

Negotiation, and you talked about -- and having allies and new agents, and

giving back. So, I was wondering what advice could you give us and how we can even work with you better, just having your expertise to kind of get some of these areas right, do better and our programming in promoting those alternatives, if people are not to, you know, have early marriage, but there's a financial implication.

So, how to do some of those things a little better, and helping to negotiate, those are the things that we are sort of -- like you say, help you to run away, but I think those are the real issues of really going down to the ground, we have to really start getting back some of those aspects.

MS. NTAIYA: I think that where you can really make a difference is that, you know, it's very important to partner with local change-makers, I mean there are so many Maasai women who are saying no, who are at the frontline who really want to change, but sometimes they lack access, you know, they lack the capacity of becoming a real NGO, you know, we go there, and we say, you know, your financial -- your systems are not working.

But if you can partner with the local people and finding those role models, but local change-makers, that's where you really, really start making a difference because they need your expertise, they need -- we've been fortunate because we went to higher in education, we can access; I mean we are in D.C., but those are the local, at the very, very bottom, lack access. So, you can look for partners on the ground that are really making the difference.

And you can partner them to amplify their work. I'm always asked this question: So, how are you going to replicate this model? You know, everybody is about replicating and how do we turn the 300 to be, I don't know, thousands and thousands? And I'm thinking, can I just make this right, you know, give me time, you know, give me time to show that it's approved, it works.

So, what the international communities, come in, they have a three-year project, and then they disappear, we've moved on now, I don't know where you are. We need you to

stay because staying does show that you can actually make a difference. That we need to change that mindset, so staying, stay, in order to show you don't need a three-year project, you need (inaudible), you need to show, stay there.

So, those are the very -- you have to be committed. And sometimes, I mean, get out of your comfort zone, because where we work it's -- I mean, you travel from Nairobi, there's no airstrips, sometimes you know you have to take seven, eight hours of drive, that's okay, it's bumpy at the end, but that's where people need help.

We need to get out of our comfort zone, let's go, let's go deep, the last mile, rural communities' leaders, and we need to do that. So, that's my little sense of how and where you need to do it, in fact, get out of your comfort zone.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: Last thoughts about what people can do, recommendations?

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: So, one of the things that I've done myself is to ask: What can I do for you? How can I help? That's how I always speak to the elders. But there's also one big pitfall with NGOs and, you know, people who are working with grassroots. Sometimes we have had very many scenarios where people must parade as Maasais, that they speak for communities, and they even assume a Maasai name, but if you go to those communities they are not known, and how they intervene with communities is very different from how someone from that community, who understands that culture, intervene.

So, it's also important that you do a background check on who are your local agents on the ground have created more tensions with communities than health, however well-meaning the person behind that, you know, mean.

So, it's important that you identify who are the local agents of change, and what is their standing in that society. I, for example, was made an honorary man, so no man can challenge me and tell me, why are you speaking then, you are a woman, you are not supposed

to speak before men. I told them, look, the elders made me a man, so I can speak to men directly. So, be careful who you work with. Yeah.

MS. FREED JENNINGS: Thank you, guys, so much. This has been -- as I said, we could go on forever. (Applause) I think we are taking a coffee break now, so the rest of you - - amongst you can sort of continue asking your questions out in the coffee area. Thank you all. And thank you guys.

MS. SELEINA PARSITAU: Thank you.

(Recess)

MS. KWAUK: Welcome back, everyone. Welcome back. I hope you were able to refresh yourselves with some caffeine. We'll get started.

Here we're going to begin our exploration of the barriers and solutions to accessing the hardest to reach and most invisible girls. Both of our Echidna Global Scholars presentations will be taking place in this room and then we'll be splitting out into our two concurrent panels. I'll give you guys instructions so don't worry. We're all in here. I hope our viewers over in Saul/Zilkha are enjoying this as well.

We'll begin with the presentations and I would like to just quickly introduce our two scholars. Maria Cristina Osorio is a professor at the Universidad Anáhuac Mayab and also at the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán in Mérida city in Southern Mexico. She has authored several research papers focused on the advancement of women's and indigenous peoples' participation in education, business, and politics to create equal opportunity for all in Mexico. Her research while she's been here at Brookings has addressed an important gap in our global discourse in girls' education, and in particular looking at the challenges and barriers to education faced by indigenous, rural, Mayan girls in southern Mexico in the Yucatán Peninsula.

Our second Echidna Global Scholar, Dasmine Kennedy will follow her presentation. Dasmine is the Assistant Chief Education Officer at the Ministry of Education

Youth and Information in Jamaica, and she has worked over 20 years in the field of education and has undertaken research that's focused on improving educational quality across Jamaica. She's been involved in a number of gender-related initiatives including the development of the Jamaican Education Sector Plan, and specifically to get it to reflect more gender inclusion as well as a regional capacity-building workshop on gender analysis and education. Her research while she's been here at Brookings, like Maria Cristina's, has taken us to another location that we don't typically consider a girls' education hotspot but illuminates for us the scope of the challenge of reaching the most marginalized girls.

So, without further ado I will turn it over to Maria Cristina and then we'll have Dasmine as well. Thank you.

MS. OSORIO: Thank you all for coming. I would like to share with you the results of my research that I have been conducted in the Maya region located in southeastern Mexico, in the Yucatán Peninsula.

In the history of Mexico the national policies have turned into more of a simulation. Because of that right now we have an educational gap among indigenous people and non-indigenous people.

In order to identify what works in girls' education in this specific region it is necessary first to identify the main challenges these girls have, and the challenges they have is high rates of poverty and the isolation of the villages, cultural barriers and gender norms. The support they already have are international agreements, the majority of them in the framework of United Nations and also governmental programs, scholarships and also indigenous approaches.

The main recommendation that I have that is related to my research activities is that it is really necessary to include in the curricula the indigenous knowledge so the children, especially the girls, can relate with it. So, it is necessary to have teachers that really engage

with those communities.

Another important aspect of the research is to expand online education. The majority of these girls don't have any money or resources to go to the cities to achieve higher levels of schooling. Because of that we need to bring the school to them.

Also, it is necessary to establish better mechanisms to try to report any kind of abuse. It was really hard for me to hear the injuries of children, especially girls, who face a lot of mistreatment from rural treatment, people who are not engaged with these communities. And when the moms try to talk about it in the school people don't listen to them because they do not speak Spanish, they speak Maya.

Also, it is necessary to enhance positive female role models. These girls imitate what is close to them. I would like to share with you a story about a former student I had that right now she's indigenous. She's a student in Mexico City getting her master's degree. I was talking with her about why she has been right now a student in very harsh conditions. And she explained to me, you know something? It is very important to me to achieve my master's degree because I know my little sisters are looking up to me, so I have to do this not only for me but also for my little sisters. Because of that I understand now how important it is to have these positive female role models.

Lastly, it is very important to enhance and recognize that these girls need extra emotional support from their moms. If their moms are not available to do that an aunt, a godmother, a grandmother should be involved with those girls. They face major challenges for being indigenous.

Finally, I would like to say that it's very important to understand that if a girl is educated she is going to be more respected. Thank you. (Applause)

MS. KENNEDY: Good morning. My work focuses very much on the policy that we have in Jamaica that facilitates the return of pregnant girls to the formal school system after

they would have given birth to their babies.

Jamaica is often not seen as very interesting or important when it comes to girls' education. For one, we have already attained gender parity and there is universal enrollment from the primary to the secondary level. But there have been high incidences of teenage pregnancy which by virtue of that being the case prevents educational participation for some of our girls.

In 2008 Jamaica had one of the fourth highest teenage pregnancy rates in the Caribbean. The rate has trended down nicely which is very interesting, but it still remains pretty high when compared to regional and global averages.

So, teenage pregnancy has implications for the girl herself and also for the country at large. For the girl, well, we know that there can be education disruption and there can be attendant health issues for both herself and also for her child. If she doesn't benefit from a second chance education there is scope for a limited human capacity development and there can be high dependence on welfare services. If this continues then there is a scope of intergenerational poverty.

For the country, Jamaica is a middle-income country and as such we depend highly on the technical capacity of our people. We aim to develop (inaudible) development status by 2030, and as such we need all hands on deck to make a difference and to ensure that we achieve our goal.

So, in 2013 the Education Ministry implemented a policy which now provides scope for the girls to return to school to continue their education. So there is continuing education that takes place at our women's centers. To date we have 18 such centers distributed throughout the parishes and the provinces of Jamaica and the girls are continue their education during pregnancy and are provided with services such as counseling, mentorship, parental education, and childcare. After they would have given birth then there is also

introduction to contraceptives before they return to the formal school system. These services tend to follow the girls right through the school system until they finish secondary level education.

The policy has not undergone any formal rigorous evaluation to date, but my tenure at Brookings has allowed me the opportunity to interrogate the policy somewhat to get a greater understanding of how well we are doing and what are the potential gaps that we need to close at this moment. Already some of the findings are very interesting. It is important to state that the target group is being reached but not everyone is benefitting from the policy in the manner they would have liked. When I make reference here to the target group I'm talking about girls who are from low socioeconomic status.

The reach also has improved but this too is due to the increased level of teen pregnancy. There is greater awareness and there is greater capacity in the school system as well as in our women's centers.

Let me direct your attention here to this bar graph. The bars to my extreme left give an indication as to the number of girls who have gotten pregnant over time. And we're looking at a five-year, six-year projection from 2011 to now. Those in the middle give an indication of girls who would have sought reattachment at our women's centers. Those to my extreme right represent girls who would have returned to the formal school system.

Now the girls are getting pregnant at a later age and by the time they would have finished their tenure at the women's centers some of them would have become too old already to return to the school system, so they have the scope or the option of continuing their education at the women's center where they can write exit examination and then they can now transition into post-secondary level education or tertiary-level education as they see fit.

So, there are a number of success stories which we'll talk about when we get into the panel. But one of the things that is arresting my attention very much is the level of mixed

stakeholder buy-in which has resulted in inconsistent implementation and compliance across schools. This becomes very important because many of our critical actors who should be assisting us as individuals to ensure that the girls benefit from a second chance of education tend to have their own level of discrimination and their own way of preventing some of the girls from returning to school. When you hear guidance counselors and social workers say to you that in the school system sometimes they are not allowed to interface with the girls, they don't know who they are, some of them don't know the provisions under the policy, then you wonder who is assisting with the change at the implementation level. This is very important to me.

Also, some of the girls they've not fully been attended to because at this stage I've come to realize the mere fact of providing a second chance to education for some girls is not going to be enough. Some of them need more critical support such as financial backing to ensure that they remain in school. Due to the absence of this some of them have dropped out and there have been reported incidents as well of frequent absenteeism.

Again, the academic success is unclear for a number of the girls and especially those who have returned to the formal school system because the data is not disaggregated in a manner that can help us to make sense at this time as to how well they are doing which now requires further work to drill down and make sense of the data.

But for those who remain at the women's centers and complete their secondary level education they are doing extremely well. A number of them have returned to the continuing education in tertiary sectors and are improving the life circumstances for themselves and also for their child. As a result, I have made some very critical recommendations which will help us to make better opportunities for these girls.

So, at this stage we need to develop a comprehensive database which will follow the girl from pregnancy right until she completes secondary level education and moves on to tertiary level studies. Also, for the girls who are experiencing challenges with financial lacking

the country needs to make a move to ensure that these girls benefit from our social protection initiative that is earmarked for low-income families. And there needs to be a robust communication strategy to ensure that all our critical actors speak from the same platform. We all understand what it means to educate a girl and what it means for her and also for the country as a whole. I am also proposing that the fathers be involved because the mothers alone don't make babies.

So, to conclude, the provisions under the policy are well-intended but all hands are needed on deck to help us close the gaps identified and to further improve life circumstances for all our girls. I thank you. (Applause)

MS. KWAUK: Thank you, Maria Cristina and Dasmine. Now we're going to break out into our concurrent panels. Here in the Falk Auditorium Maria Cristina's research and work will anchor a panel on a discussion on the theme of supporting girls facing the quadruple burdens of poverty, rurality, indigeneity or minoritization, and gender. Over in Zilkha Dasmine's research will anchor a discussion on government approaches to reintegrating adolescent mothers back into the formal school system.

We've invited panelists from very diverse country contexts that will help us connect the dots and connect the cases of Mexico and Jamaica to the broader global discussions on each of their themes. So, I'll just take a brief moment to introduce both panels since we'll all be splitting up here.

Here in Falk moderating the panel with Maria Cristina on the topic of addressing girls facing the quadruple burden will be Lyric Thompson who is the Director of Policy and Advocacy at the International Center for Research on Women. She was instrumental in developing the U.S. global strategy to empower adolescent girls, the first ever government strategy here that includes implementation plans from USAID, the Department of State, Peace Corps, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

Joining their panel will be Smriti Sharma who is a research fellow at UNU-WIDER. She has conducted research on caste and gender-based discrimination in India and Bangladesh, and specifically analyzing women's roles in household decision-making, caste-based crimes, and employment gaps and gender wage gaps.

Finally, Sofiya Zahova is a researcher at Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute of Foreign Languages at University of Iceland. She has been involved in a number of Romani community oriented projects and initiatives that have focused on access to education and culture, reading and writing skills, and Romani book publishing. She's authored the UNICEF Commission Report on research on the social norms which prevent Roma girls from access to education focusing specifically in Bulgaria.

Over in Saul/Zilkha moderating the panel with Dasmine on the topic of government approaches to the school reintegration of girl-child mothers is Mr. Chernor Bah who is a cofounder and Executive Director of Purposeful Productions. Chernor is a global advocate for education, a champion of girls, and a development expert and cofounder of a movement-building hub for adolescent girls in the global south. As a former refugee he founded and led Sierra Leone's Children's Parliament as well.

Joining them is Theresa Kaka Effa, the Nigerian Country Representative of Rise Up. She is a policy and advocacy expert on reproduction and maternal newborn, child, and adolescent health. Her policy formation and advocacy efforts have led to the increase funding of health services. She played a significant role in supporting civil society efforts that led to the passage of the National Health Act in 2014 in Nigeria.

Finally, Ms. Chi-Chi Undie, the Senior Associate in the Reproductive Health Program at the Population Council. Her work in girls' education in Kenya has focused both on developing and testing interventions that are geared towards changing social norms, that have facilitated both the reentry and the re-attention of teenage mothers in and to school. She directs

and provides strategic and technical oversight for the Population Council's Africa Regional Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Network that designs, implements, and tests innovative response models to sexual and gender-based violence in low resource settings.

So, at the end of those two concurrent panels we will break for lunch and we've asked the moderators to remind the audience to allow our speakers and panelists to grab lunch first because they will be sitting at designated tables in Saul/Zilkha for those of you who would like to reach out to them and continue the conversation from the morning panels as well as the afternoon. So, I hope you'll take advantage of that time to be able to seek them out right after those concurrent panels during the lunch hour. Please let them grab their food first.

This room will also be available for lunch, and hopefully it's not too cold for those of you who would enjoy some time outside in the somewhat fresh air. There are some benches outside as well.

So, without further ado I would like for you all to choose which panel you would like to go to and we'll meet back up in just a few minutes with our moderators beginning those panels. Thank you.

(Recess)

MS. THOMPSON: Thanks first of all, Cristina, for organizing this and also for taking off the duty that I had of reading all of your very impressive bios to everyone. Thanks for saving us some time there.

I'm Lyric Thompson with the International Center for Research on Women, as was discussed earlier. I also do some work in various advocacy coalitions on girls, the Coalition for Adolescent Girls, Girls Not Brides USA, and the FGM Network. So, it's been such a pleasure for me to hear the presentations and speakers this morning because it's always useful to have new data points, new stories to tell policymakers about the who and the why and most importantly the how of how do we help girls overcome barriers by meeting them where they are.

We're learning a lot today in this session on the quadruple burden of how complicated that gets.

At ICRW we have done quite a bit of research and advocacy talking about the sort of dual burden that girls face between gender as females and between age, so how they are disempowered in various communities and networks to advocate for themselves, to learn to reach opportunities because of those two factors.

Well, today we're going to go a lot deeper than that. You shared with us, Maria Cristina, thank you, a very helpful -- I wish we could put it back up behind us -- overlapping Venn diagram of your quadruple burden of the challenges not only of gender but also of girls who are from indigenous communities, in your research the Maya girls, the rural-urban issue, the challenges that we face going that last mile meeting rural girls where they are, and then also poverty, of course, which is I think ever present in many of our discussions.

So, we're going to dig deeper. We're using your presentation, Maria Cristina, as sort of the starting point. We're going to hear a little bit from Smriti and Sofiya about their research, and then we'll come back to you and dig a little bit deeper because there was so much that I wanted to ask you and happily I have that opportunity.

So, let's get going. Maria Cristina, there was something very powerful that I think got glossed over for time at the end of your presentation where you were mentioning some of the barriers that the Maya girls face. You specifically called out abuse, teacher abuse, because girls are seen as less than human in the Maya community. They're not one of us so it doesn't matter what happens to them; there is some sort of impunity that we have. It's interesting because, Smriti, your research is focused on the Dalit communities in India, which of course are the untouchables, the lowest caste.

ICRW does a lot of work in India. We have an office in Delhi, we have a number of researchers there who do work throughout south Asia, but specifically in India. One of my colleagues was in town I guess pretty quickly following the 2012 terrible and public outcry

around the rape of the 23-year-old woman on the bus in Delhi. He said something that I hadn't heard in any of the news that was covering that rape and the subsequent judicial process that happened. He said the same thing happened to a Dalit girl a couple weeks beforehand and nobody said anything. He attributes the outcry which was very, very, very useful in moving forward a number of legal and judicial reforms, not all of them, unfortunately. But a number of reforms that came out of that episode were a result of the national and international outcry about this. He says she was an upper-caste girl, she was educated, and that's why there was the outcry.

So, I've been working on these issues for ten years. I found that to be a moment to stop and reflect about what are we missing when we're not getting into issues of caste, of ethnicity, et cetera? Tell us a little bit about your research on the Dalit girls in particular and help us understand not only barriers but hopefully solutions.

MS. SHARMA: In some of the research that I've done I looked at more caste-based violence in general and the broad takeaway of that is that a lot of these crimes that are committed by the upper caste, or the forward caste, against the Dalits -- and also there's another marginalized group called the Adivasis who are the tribal groups, but traditionally they're not a part of the caste system so we can take that later in the Q&A but I'm going to talk more about Dalits at this point. A lot of the crimes by the upper caste against the lower caste are basically in response to sort of perceived transgressions. I'm measuring that when there is a sort of reduction or convergence in the economic status between the groups. So you basically have the upper caste committing crimes against the lower caste as a way to sort of put them back in their place.

That is something that we see getting reflected also in crimes against Dalit women. There is a lot of work that's come out of NGOs but also just social observers who say that crimes against Dalit women are basically as a way to punish the entire community. So it's

very different from crimes against non-Dalit women and that's basically because traditionally women tend to wear the badge of honor for the family and violating the rights of a woman is a way to sort of attack the family or the community honor.

One of the other things that makes this phenomenon particularly striking is that a lot of the crimes against Dalit women are public crimes. So they will be gang raped, attacked in the fields, in public toilets and public spaces, and then there are specific crimes like they'll be paraded naked through the villages.

These are not crimes that you see against non-Dalit women. Most crimes against non-Dalit women tend to be in private spaces which while bad in itself is not as bad as a public crime which you know further adds to the humiliation and the vulnerability that these groups face.

And then there are other sorts of institutionalized things like religious prostitution, part of the Devadasi System, where a Dalit woman, even though she's untouchable, she basically is recognized as sort of a local goddess and then it's okay for upper caste men to have sexual relations with her but then she's pretty much branded a prostitute by the entire community.

Although untouchability and the Devadasi System have been outlawed in India it is still practiced in varying forms. I was reading a recent report that there are still almost probably 25,000 Devadasis in India, and this is predominantly in the southern states. But there are all these barriers that women face and the violence that they face spills over into various domains. I think we can come back to that later, but it makes it extremely risky for these girls to go to school, to participate in broader society.

Even though there are laws that prohibit these sorts of crimes, special laws prohibiting crimes against these marginalized groups, they barely have any bite. I mean, there are supposed to be special courts that handle cases that are filed under the Prevention of

Atrocities Act and the Protection of Civil Rights Act, but conviction numbers are really low. A lot of times the local police are sort of hand-in-glove with the local community leaders who tend to be mostly upper caste and so these cases never sort of come to the news and what gets reported to the police is only like the tip of the iceberg.

MS. THOMPSON: So, it's institutionalized. It's in the justice system, it's in the education system.

MS. SHARMA: Yes, yes.

MS. THOMPSON: These girls are set up to fail from the very beginning essentially.

MS. SHARMA: Yes.

MS. THOMPSON: We'll come back and dig in a bit deeper on that. Sofiya, I wanted to ask you, I read one of your articles about some of the work that you've been doing on the Roma community, which of course is Europe's largest ethnic minority. You've been focused on it, a topic that's very close to my own heart recently through work with UNICEF on child marriage.

I thought it was interesting because in addition to sort of exploring the who and the why behind the numbers and trends -- and I'll let you tell us about what those are -- you also mentioned some frustration about the media just honing in on this narrative of Roma girls all being child brides and kind of reinforcing the stigma and the prejudice that we have around this. That is interesting because just as -- you all are very educated and with it so this may not work as an experiment here, but who all is generally familiar with the Roma community? A show of hands? Okay. Pretty much everybody. Not representative of Americans, I don't think.

Who has seen My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding? Yeah, okay. So, I think we have an inverse population in this room. I would wager to say that in the broader America outside of Brookings you may not have folks who know who the Roma are or any of these

patterns of exclusion that they're facing, but they may have tuned in to My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding, which I think reinforces a lot of the stereotypes that you're about to tell us about.

So, tell us a little bit about your research, what's going on with the Roma girls, and importantly what's the good news? Where do we go from here?

MS. ZAHOVA: I'm aware that some of you know about Roma, however it's always good to start with some basic things that we researchers know, and that is that when we say Roma these are not people from the storybooks or from literature characters but we are talking about a community that is often referred as an intergroup ethnic community, that means that it's comprised of different groups that have their own Romani language or another language, who have different religious backgrounds, have different nationalities.

However, they have awareness that they belong to a big Roma community which is the most important for the Roma to which group do they belong? Belonging to a group is a main determinate of the level of education and marriage pattern that are usually interrelated. As for most communities for Roma discoloration between the marriage pattern and educational level are interrelated.

The good news here is that the majority of Roma girls have their right to education guaranteed so they graduate compulsory education, they even go to high school. They are university graduates a lot in Eastern Europe and a few years ago we had the first PhD candidate of Roma ethnicity, a colleague of ours acknowledges her Romani background, a female. Therefore, the trend among the Romani majority in Eastern Europe is that they have their rights guaranteed in terms of education.

However, among some groups and some communities we still have this problem existing in developed east and west European states, so members of European Union and so on. The question that I was asked was why, and what are the factors? I'm thankful to Jean Sperling to talking about successes in contrast to issues. That was very important for the

research that I've done.

I was showing national trends, I was going to communities in which girls go to higher school, to university, and I also went to neighboring communities that might be even in the same city that were practicing early marriages and the girls dropped out even before graduating primary school, to compare these trends and to see where the troubles are.

When we turn back to the issue of poverty, of course the general national trend showed that from 2001 to 2011 we have a decrease of the number of girls who drop out of school with more than 30 percent. We have increase at the educational level. We have more than 30 percent decrease in the girls who are in early marriages before the age of 18, and even the percentage is bigger before the age of 16. So, therefore, many Roma themselves and many Roma groups express the opinion that in 10 years or in 15 years there would be no early marriages.

However, we discovered that in groups that are not practicing early marriage girls dropped out of school. Then the question was why. So, one of the reasons for dropping out of school and for early marriage that is pointed out by both researchers and Roma themselves is that there is a virginity requirement, so the Roma girl has to enter a marriage as a virgin. This is important for the family, for the honor of the family, and for the whole community. Therefore, this was pointed out as a reason. However, in the groups that don't practice early marriages the virginity requirement was kept so this practicality could work.

But the question was were there any first walkers, were there any role models, were there any pioneers among the girls who graduated higher education? So, first thing is if this a practice at all that is known to this group or community, question number one. And if there was someone who started 10 years ago or 15 years ago then it was more easier for the model to become common for the group and to become mainstream.

Then we come back to the issue of poverty. It appeared that groups and girls

among which the early marriage is not practiced the girls stopped going to school because of economic reasons, so their parents could not provide for them to go from the village where there is only primary school to continue their education in a higher school in the nearby town because of economic reasons in the first place. But sometimes it was a combination between economic reasons or prevailing of the concerns that the girls going there would be out of the community and for the mainstream society, for the majority of society, it's common that teenagers have sex so this will threaten their virginity and so on. So, the parents are concerned about where their daughters are going every day.

So, we have this in a way interrelated reasons, but also an interesting thing was that the communities and groups living in villages were more open to change because they were anyway living among the majority of society and communicating, open to change, when compared for example to neighborhoods that were densely populated with Roma where they had like segregated parts with very poor people. So, among them the pattern of early marriage and getting a high level of education was changing very slowly because of the isolation.

And finally, of course, we have the economic transition. So, after the crash of the socialist Europe we have the economic transition and then we have a higher level of unemployment that among the Roma are even higher than the majority. So, the Roma themselves were also not seeing this as education for their daughters and sons alike, seeing this as a social capital that would help them to find a job afterwards. So, it was also the majority, like the social context of high rates of unemployment and of course of discrimination on an ethnic basis when you apply for jobs. So, even though if you are educated you go to an interview and of course you're not preferred because of your Roma background.

MS. THOMPSON: Interesting. You've all kind of hinted at this, and Dasmine also did in her presentation, of the measure of equity isn't a useful measure in this case. It's a useful measure in terms of are we on track to correcting levels, are we progressing towards

equal access for girls and boys, but there is so much more to say about who is in those seats and what's going on, and this is what you're teasing out here.

I'm interested in how do you correct for that? What are some of the solutions here? You mentioned, Maria Cristina, I think three levels in your presentation of how we can attack each of these issues and make sure that it's not just equal numbers of boys and girls butts in seats, which we've achieved in Mexico, close, and in Jamaica, but how are we making sure that it's equal within all these other pockets of inequality.

So, you mentioned I think at the international level, at the sort of government level, and at the indigenous level -- correct me if I've got my levels wrong. I have them in my notes but I'm not looking at them. Tell us a little bit more about some of those because I think that's what the folks in this room are going to want to take home and say this is a recommendation we can rally behind.

MS. OSORIO: This is really working, these indigenous approaches. The reason is because they talk and they understand because they faced the same challenges. For example, one of the purposes of is the Canadian government through the University of Lethbridge and Lakehead University, they received large groups of indigenous girls so they can learn how to talk in English. So, that is an important asset because they opened the world to them. They can communicate. They are going to have more possibilities to have scholarships. The Mexican government is really supporting indigenous people giving a lot of scholarships.

The situation we have with that is that some of the population expressed that they don't know how to apply for this support. So, we have the support but maybe we need to improve the channels of communication.

MS. THOMPSON: So, to follow up, how do we do that? What is a tool? Both actually in your article I think that's on the Brookings platform and what you just mentioned, you both mentioned role models and the importance of that. We see that in the United States as

well, the importance of getting girls into STEM careers, you know, they've got to see a female engineer, et cetera. Are there programs that are facilitating these sorts of things? How do we kind of accelerate what we know works? And that's open for everybody. We'll start with you if you want to expand.

MS. OSORIO: One of the things I said about the scholarships is that we know we have this problem, that we have all these funds available, so we need to try to implement campaigns so people can apply for the support because they could represent the difference between a girl who can be educated or not educated. So, one of the suggestions I have in the policy brief.

MS. THOMPSON: Excellent. Anybody else want to chime in on that?

MS. ZAHOVA: Well, actually with just a historical perspective from socialist Europe, so to say, from Bulgaria particularly, in the early '50s when the government was reinforcing gender equality for all the women in the country Roma women were included in the programs like for training emancipated women how to get educated and how to get integrated into the labor market. This is very positively assessed by the Romani communities because the women first went to training, they first went to a group talking to other Roma and non-Roma women so they self-esteem so that afterwards they were provided the jobs and so on.

But it was, again, not particularly target to Roma. Roma were just included as part of the gender support policies for equality of genders in the country. Now there are programs that are supporting Roma students to prepare the application, for example, for the university. So, they are targeted to Roma, not particularly to girls, but because in the recent years this issue of the girls staying behind is brought. I think now it's on a governmental level but also in some programs NGOs are thinking about supporting girls. But, of course, not only scholarship, any kind of measures that are very localized makes sense because things are very individual. Sometimes it's girl that dropped out of school because of an early marriage but one

year later she's maybe divorced. So, what you do when the programs for scholarship at the university are not working, you have to support her in a different way to integrate her. So, the issue is brought more or less from the bottom, so to say.

On the level of government I think it's important to know institution is just -- the thing is that all that is on paper has to work. So, we have the roles, that's clear, but it's often the institutions turn a blind eye on what is happening, thinking stereotypically that this is like a Roma tradition. Okay, girls drop out. We don't care. They have to go to school until the age of 16, yeah, and their parents have to be like punished for not sending their girls to school, but it's Roma. So, it's a question of ensuring that everything works equally for all.

MS. THOMPSON: Absolutely. What I don't want us to take from this discussion is that it's not gender that matters, it's only -- I don't think we should be playing disability Olympics here in terms of which thrust -- we're going to take all of our money out of gender programming and we're going to put it all into understanding ethnic minorities and castes and those sorts of things.

So, if you could each give me a sense, maybe starting with you, Smriti, of the importance of gender here. What is the kind of ideal scenario where we are pulling apart some of these underpinning power dynamics? We're still concentrating on patriarchy but we're doing that with a lens that says, okay, here is how these different factors interplay. Tell us a little bit more about the importance of gender specifically within these communities.

MS. SHARMA: I'm going to talk first in the context of gender which sort of spans across all caste groups. It's a stylized fact that women or girls are less likely to go to school, parents are less likely to spend on their education, devote less attention to them and a lot of this is explained by a preference for sons. That's basically because sons are meant to be providers for their parents in their old age. They will continue staying with the parents even after they get married. This sort of deters investment into girls because investing in a girl is like watering

somebody else's garden, so to say, because she is going to get married and go into somebody else's house and you have to pay a dowry for her. So, having a girl is maybe perceived to be a financial burden which then deters investment from an early age.

Now, obviously these kinds of problems, and there is some sort of anecdotal evidence, that in Dalit communities there may be more egalitarian gender relations, but this relationship has been changing over time. So, M.N. Srinivas, who is a very well-known caste scholar, coined this word called Sanskritization, which basically means that as all caste groups are improving economically the lower caste wants to emulate the upper caste in order to sort of become upwardly mobile and to fit in. This basically means that they're going to adopt a lot of the practices which are pretty harmful to women.

So, earlier a dowry was not such a big deal among the low caste communities also because they are much poorer, so it wasn't really a trend or a pattern in the Dalit communities but are something that's catching on. Domestic violence is also as bad. In fact, there are reports that maybe it's worse.

So, I don't want to say that for every particular aspect the situation is worse in the Dalit community than in the non-Dalit community but we have to be mindful here that the Dalit women are much poorer. And a lot of them in rural areas particularly have a lower voice so they don't know how to address their concerns.

So, basically in the realm of education there was a recent UNICEF report in 2014 which showed that exclusion from primary education levels is actually the greatest for Dalit girls as compared to any other gender caste grouping. A lot of that is explained by either they're not enrolling or then they end up enrolling much later because their brothers get preference in being sent to school, and then basically they're too old for their class and that leads to them sort of lagging behind and dropping out. Then once you drop out you're pretty much not going to join back because then you're a teenager so then you're helping out your mom, you're talking care

of your siblings.

So, I think maybe when we come back to solutions we can talk about how there is a need to not only bridge these sorts of gaps at the higher education level, which is what the current affirmative action policy in India does, but I think we need to look a lot more at the primary education level to be able to stem drop out and exclusion at that stage of the education process.

MS. THOMPSON: So, that's interesting. You just kind of added a fifth layer of our sort of burden here which is age within girls, and that that particular intervention that's done, some say good job, some have criticisms of targeting educational opportunities for the Dalit girls is coming in too late, it's happening at the tertiary level but those girls have already married, their lives are already kind of --

MS. SHARMA: Taken a different trajectory, yes. So, for those of you who may not be aware I can take a minute to just tell you what the affirmative action policy in India is. So, India became independent in 1947 and then in 1950 we came up with a Constitution, and the person who drafted the Constitution, B. R. Ambedkar himself, was a Dalit individual. One of the things that was decided at that point in order to bring the Dalit groups up apparently was that there would be mandated representation in the realm of political representation in higher education and in government jobs.

So, political representation has been fairly successful in improving the outcomes of the lower caste groups in terms of sort of getting them to be able to allocate resources to the needs of their community, but of course somewhere within that the gender angle is sort of lost because a lot of those seats that are reserved for the scheduled castes, or the Dalits, are usually taken up by men. So, I think by some recent estimate in the current Lower House in the Parliament I think only 10 percent of the Dalit seats are held by Dalit women.

MS. THOMPSON: Interesting.

MS. SHARMA: Which means that their needs are not really getting represented.

In the domain of education the benefits only kick in at the higher education level, so you pretty much have to work your way through all of your school life in order to actually reach up to the age of 18 when you can compete for a seat in a college, in which case like 16 percent of seats are reserved for these individuals. But then we have like this whole long tail of people who never actually even made it to that level.

Here or there, there have been a couple of government policies but we know very little about how they're actually doing in terms of large-scale meaningful evaluations. In 2004 there was a large government program called Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya which was a system of upper primary residential schools. I think currently there are about 3,700 of those across the country and they were meant to be set up in educationally backward areas where female literacy is quite low and also the gender gap in literacy is particularly low. And 75 percent of the spots in these schools are reserved for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other minority girls, and the other 25 percent are for other below poverty line families. There has been a recent study, but it's a working paper, and they basically found that there was some improvement in female literacy rates on account of this program.

But, you know, this also only gets in at the upper primary levels. We're talking like grade 7, and you really need to be able to push through until that age. So, here there is a lot of non-state actors who are coming in. So, recently there was this Netflix documentary called Daughters of Destiny and it was talking about this privately funded residential school which only takes in 24 students in every (inaudible), like right from the previous school age. And they support them through their entire schooling. So, it's a free education and then they support most of the costs through college.

It seems like it's a model that's working but it's pretty small. I think they're trying to scale up. I came across some other initiatives but I think that there is much more that can be

done.

MS. THOMPSON: Absolutely. I think it's important that you're pulling out the importance of policy evaluation, or program evaluation in the case of the subsequent examples that you gave which we also heard in Dasmine's presentation of like we think this is going well but nobody has really actually looked under the hood in a robust way. So, I think that's something that this community who is a community who knows a lot about asking good questions and measuring things can take back as making sure that we're interrogating these approaches and then scaling them where they work and then of course correcting where they don't.

I wanted to give Sofiya and Maria Cristina an opportunity to come back to the first question that was set out in that round, which was something you'd like the audience to know about the importance of gender specifically within these communities. I'd love that to be solutions-oriented. We've just heard a little bit about where we've lost ground on gender, where we've tried to target only looking at in the India case the caste system. Any corollaries that you'd like to share or help us think about the importance of gender in your own work?

MS. OSORIO: May I?

MS. THOMPSON: Yes, please.

MS. OSORIO: I think that indigenous education is advancing in Mexico, however, the gender approach needs to be included. So, I think this is the important issue with us in Mexico.

MS. ZAHOVA: Well, with the gender I think another stereotype, so to say, is that the Romani women are completely powerless or undecisive or under the head of the patriarch which is not actually true. But the woman in the family gets her power with age, so to say. So, I would say the elders, men and women equally, in the Roma community are completely equals when making decisions and it's the woman who keeps the traditions, the values, raises the

children, how do they have to behave, what to do, but because of this women became the changers, so to say, those who brought changes. That's why it's very important to know that Roma women are those who communicate with schools, go to parents' meetings, go to institutions like municipalities, so this is very important. A curious fact is actually that this is also something that is valid for the majority of societies in our country, more Roma girls get enrolled to school than Roma boys, for example. So, the university graduates of Roma females are bigger than the males. On the other hand, of course, when we have the problem with the early marriage it's a problem only for the girl. So, then in these communities their husbands even may go to school, to high school, and so on while they have to stay at home. So, we have different examples but we have to look at the Romani women as a change-bringer.

MS. THOMPSON: Absolutely. The importance of that.

MS. ZHOVA: And also in the community there are examples of successful women as teachers, workers in municipalities, lawyers, and doctors, that of course also brings a lot of change.

MS. THOMPSON: Absolutely. Hold girls and women up as the change-makers that they are.

So, we're going to transition now to the audience Q&A because we'd love to hear from you. Please introduce yourself, let us know who you are briefly, and then please come to a question with haste so that we can get as many questions in before we all go off to our networking lunch.

We've got someone in the front row here. Please, welcome.

QUESTIONER: Hello, my name is Chris Murray. I'm a high school history teacher. (Audio interruption) -- kids in Mexico, do they get a chance to learn who the Maya, the Dalit, and the Roma are? Is that part of the curriculum?

MS. THOMPSON: Thanks.

MS. OSORIO: Things are improving in Mexico. Since last year we have this new educational model that is trying to implement indigenous knowledge in the curricula. So, yes, we're addressing that issue.

MS. SHARMA: To the best of my knowledge that is not true for Indian school curriculum. So, for instance, I did not know about the construct of caste until I came to college.

MS. ZAHOVA: In the case of Europe the short answer is yes; it depends in which countries but it's more and more included in the curricula for the Roma students so they can have faculty classes on Romani culture and even language, and in some countries like Romania they can have their full course of education until high school in Romani language for their textbooks and so on. And even their efforts for including the Roma related history programs in the mainstream programs for schools.

MS. THOMPSON: Wonderful. Another question. Yes, up in front?

QUESTIONER: Hi, Jill Gaye, What Works Association. Would you talk in the three difference contexts starting in early education, what are the gender norms that are provided within the education system? So, for example, in Senegal some of the textbooks only show the mother serving the son and they're very gender stereotypical. So, I wanted to know what the context was for each of you.

MS. OSORIO: Are you talking about in the household or in the educational system?

QUESTIONER: In the educational system.

MS. OSORIO: Well, maybe in the past but right now it's more advanced so it's not in the textbook. However, in the household it is expected that the girls they need to do everything for the boys. So, it is changing in the cities but if you travel a little bit far away from Merida city, from Cancun city, then you're going to find these stereotypes where girls are doing almost everything. We're trying to implement some actions and try to change things inside the

households as well. Thank you.

MS. SHARMA: I think it's pretty much the same in India. I don't think you would see educational materials sort of reinforcing gender stereotypes, at least deliberately. But yes, again, within the household and in broader society there are these very gendered expectations about how girls should behave and how their needs probably should come after that of the boys and the men in their family.

MS. ZHOVA: Yes, pretty similar in the Romani context. The mainstream education that Roma girls attend, you know, just general education not reinforcing such gender roles, and the same, yeah, it's a different context in the community but it's not only for the Roma but for also, say, the Balkan communities or other ethnicities in the Balkans. This is how the gender roles are, at least traditionally. Yes, the notion is within the family and of course you get it through everyday discourse, actions, and so on.

MS. THOMPSON: It's interesting that you mention that. At ICRW we have a curriculum that we've done in thousands of schools, started with 2,500 schools in Maharashtra and has been scaled throughout several states in India and other countries in the region. And to your point, Smriti, it's very focused on gender transformative images. Exactly what you're saying of who is cooking the meals at home versus who is getting paid to cook meals at the restaurant. Is the girl, when she comes home from school, able to play and do homework or is she doing chores? What about my brother and those sorts of things. And being a research institute we have the study to demonstrate how that course of attitude and behavior change happens once girls and boys at a young age are starting to sort of interrogate some of these roles and attitudes.

But to your point, I don't think that there is anything on caste in that. And it's very interesting to me that you didn't hear about caste in India until you got to college. I think that that's something that I can take home today, is what are we doing in our work there because I

think even the private sector has been engaged in some of this. How do we get images of girls in commercials playing sports, being powerful? Actually, Always feminine hygiene brand has done some really great stuff in that area. It's like we're all consuming these messages everywhere. It's not just textbooks, it's also every media overstimulated environment that we live in.

Yes, down in front. We've got two questions. If we could take both these questions and maybe one more; there was a third behind. And then we'll give it to the panelists to answer in a group.

QUESTIONER: Hi, I'm Samira Daniels. I'm interested in education generally. I was fascinated that you -- if I could just extend this question about why is it that you learned about the caste system in college when the discussion in the political sphere at least, from what I understand there is this emphasis on getting lower castes into -- so I'm just curious. I mean, what did you not know? Maybe that's what I would ask.

MS. THOMPSON: And we'll go to two more questions here and then we'll come to the panelists.

QUESTIONER: Hi, I'm Catherine Begley, I work at CARE. I'm interested in learning a little bit more about your experience in promoting girls' leadership competencies and its relationship to improvements in learning and retention in school or other learning opportunities.

MS. THOMPSON: And in the red jacket here?

QUESTIONER: Hi, I'm Zenobia Pantecki from the World Bank. I just had a question for Smriti regarding affirmative action. I think, and I may be wrong, unless you have statistics to prove otherwise, I want to see what improvement we've made in India by this affirmative action because as far as I see it is highly politicized, it keeps expanding. Every political party counts it as a hot potato, cannot pull it back, and it's almost coming to the point of

reverse discrimination.

MS. THOMPSON: So, two questions for you, Smriti. We'll let you start with those. Then anyone who would like to reflect on our question about school-based learning and also non-school based opportunities.

MS. SHARMA: I'll answer your question first. So, when I was growing up it's not that I did not know what caste was. So you knew that your domestic help was different from your social group, but we weren't so aware, at least as children, of the sort of hierarchical ordering and how rigid that is in terms of you have to marry within your own caste, the domestic help eat from different utensils, they have to -- like the people who come to sweep your house are different from ones who cook. So, those sorts of things were just observations. But I didn't sort of know the theory or the mechanisms behind what sustains this.

Then once we came to college there was some discussion about like, okay, this is the caste system, this is what it means. But to actually know about the history of the caste system, that's not something that we were exposed to in school. In fact, I think that a lot of historians have been arguing with the education boards that this is something that we need to talk about at the school level. But I think this is a very politicized topic where the Indian government does not want to talk about minority groups, at the school level at least.

To come to your question, I'm an economist by training and there are a lot of rigorous evaluations of this policy. So, if we were to think of a counterfactual world where these reservations or this affirmative action policy was not there, a lot of the children, a lot of the students, who do make it to college would not have been there in the absence of these programs. Of course at the individual level you can say that every low caste student who gets in displaces a high caste and maybe a more higher-scoring student, but I think we have to look at it more as a societal good and what that means in terms of upliftment of the whole community. Even in terms of political reservations there's a lot more evidence

that in -- so, you know villages tend to be highly segregated and the low caste live in different pockets within the village, but their access to water wells, and to roads, et cetera, has improved because politicians from their groups have been able to divert resources towards the needs of their communities.

And, of course, currently the reservation scheme is highly politicized because we now have another new group called the other backward classes who don't suffer the stigma of untouchability but then they are economically and socially backward and so there are reservations for them, and now that's taken it up to 50 percent of seats in colleges are reserved for individuals from one or the other of these groups. So, that has now become a very politicized debate and I think we've seen some of that even in the context of U.S. universities, for instance.

MS. THOMPSON: Oh, absolutely. My other panelists, would you care to respond?

MS. ZAHOVA: Well, I think to my knowledge at least, I'm not aware of any programs for leadership skill development and so on. However, there is something that is for both girls and boys that is considered very successful, these are like programs that are extracurricular programs developing projects, group working, initiatives development, and group organizing and group management within the school or within the class or even working younger generations of the same school. So, these are kind of -- that simultaneously lead to development of leadership skills without being probably being the objective of this initiatives and projects and activities in schools.

MS. OSORIO: One of the programs in Mexico, the name is CONAFE. So, it's very successful for this reason. These Maya girls who want to attend university, they engage with this program for like one year or two years and they go to various isolated communities and they teach the girls in Maya, like primary level. At the end of this program, because of their

participation in the CONAFE program, they are available to have all the university already paid because of this program. So, it's a very successful program that I would like to recognize in this forum.

MS. THOMPSON: That's fabulous. We're going to do another round. I'm coming back to the woman in the fabulous lipstick since we missed her last time. Then can you give me a show of hands again? I know there were more in the back and on this side. Okay, in the front. We're going to go one, and then two, three, and then I'll come back.

QUESTIONER: Hi, Satage Korf from the Global Partnership for Education. Just a quick question, I wanted to piggyback on the gender norms question and think about how this institutional form of oppression we know sort of takes away from dignity and agency of young girls and how those are very important aspects in realizing any sort of legal rights as well.

So, my question is what in your experience have been effective interventions? So, is it interventions that target other issues that we assume will change gender norms, or is it interventions that specifically target gender norms? I'm just sort of thinking of examples that you may have come across in your work.

MS. THOMPSON: We've got two already lined up perfectly.

QUESTIONER: Hi, I'm Laura Henderson, independent consultant. I was interested in asking whether any of you could comment on your home contexts whether there are opportunities for girls to learn advocacy so that they can really kind of have their voices be heard on the variety of issues that you've covered today. I'd be very interested in opportunities for that in your countries.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you for that great question. I promise it wasn't a plant. Number three?

QUESTIONER: (off mic) -- try to reach Mayan girls in remote locations. I just wanted you to comment a little more about that and its promise because I certainly agree it has

a lot of promise and there's data to support that as you know. But it also seems like it needs almost its own infrastructure along with it which is to say that in these communities where technology is already not known well and problematic -- I've seen in rural Honduras where it's really tough when -- I mean, I'm the parent of a middle schooler and you can't stick a bunch of 12, 13, 14, 15-year-olds in a room by themselves and have it go well. So, what is the government really need to do to make this work better? I just wanted to hear your comments on that and really the reality check, I guess, on whether the government will come through and even do that for these communities. Thanks.

MS. THOMPSON: Thank you, Kathy. I'm going to do one final question because I'm looking at the clock and we're not going to have time for another round. This woman -- exactly, perfect.

QUESTIONER: Good morning. I'm Shar Haruna from Hamsa Girls Education Center in Niger. I'd kind of like to lift the hood a little bit on some of the funding disparities on gender. For example, I always hear the statistics on women in Niger, however, there is a great disparity of funding programs for a lot of countries like Niger. We use the statistics to scaffold the issue but never really discuss the disparity in funding of gender issues. So, I'd like to kind of discuss that a little bit and hear your input on where your different organizations -- global organizations will actually start discussing that as a challenge. Thank you.

MS. THOMPSON: Excellent final question. Panel, respond at will. We'll start with Sofiya and come down the line.

MS. ZAHOVA: Well, I somehow try to connect the questions about how we introduce gender and with which approaches and legislation. I think at least for the Roma communities the most natural and logical development goals like this it's first some girls go to school, and depending on the level of education they are the first who get this education, is it primary, is it secondary, or is it university, and then become -- so there is not much of an

intervention needed, and actually I don't think they are quite workable. Maybe supportive measures but from the top it's certainly not very much workable.

So, for example, if we talk about implementation of (inaudible), when an early marriage occurs that's of course -- especially when it's below the age of 14 and it's also below the age of 16 -- the prosecutors have to take measures. Some of these girls, for example, are put in shelters, shelter organizations, to protect them. But the girls are themselves very unhappy with being there, you know, put in an institution instead of being happily married according to their perception. It's what they wanted; they would like to marry.

Therefore, I don't think that any intervention and any like clichés or slogans about gender equality would work but just being on the ground and supporting things that anyway are happening naturally or if not happening maybe stimulate through supporting of the levels that are higher of education for the girls. So, that would be my opinion because many Roma and also many social workers express will to have more sanctions and more sanctions but actually sanctions doesn't work because they've been there for like 70 years. So, therefore, I think everything has to be really very individualized and related to the community. And, of course, it's not that much related to gender but seeing as education as a social capital for your daughter or your son or your children in general.

MS. SHARMA: To come to the first question, so the political representation for women at local governance levels, this was true in an act in India in 1993, a lot of studies have found a pretty meaningful impact of exposure to female role models in terms of improving aspirations for daughters' education, for wanting daughters to work, delaying the age of marriage. Having said that, I don't think that there have been any sort of meaningful evaluations or even just sort of anecdotal studies looking at how this works, particularly in the context of Dalit women, because the way that this reservation works is that one-third of the female leaders are supposed to be from the Dalit communities but I don't think we know much about how it

actually translates into better outcomes or if it does for Dalit women.

On the point of advocacy, I think for the longest time -- so, there have been these feminists, India has had a long tradition of feminist movements and also Dalit empowerment movements, but I think Dalit women were feeling that there's a need to fill this vacuum where their own needs were not being met because either they were sort of getting covered under this umbrella of women or Dalit but then their specific needs like I highlighted earlier, particularly the kinds of violence that they face, it's very specific to that particular subgroup.

So, in the last probably 10 to 15 years there have been Dalit women's movements and I think now they are starting to find some traction in India. But they've been increasingly doing international outreach and working, for example, with Black Lives Matter and with other similar movements in different countries in order to be able to mobilize and get recognition from politicians back at home.

MS. OSORIO: About online education I would like to say that we are working with very isolated communities with high rates of poverty. So, having online education is the only option they have because they don't have any money for transportation. So, it is the future and the Mexican government is investing in it. They recognize that it's important to do that.

I would also like to highlight the importance of the mothers in this process. During the interviews when I was talking them they said to me, you know, life is too hard for a woman in Mexico. You have to work several hours and you only earn a little bit. I don't want my daughter. I want something better for her. So, I would really like to emphasize that if you support a girl in an emotional way, if you talk to her, if you ask her how was your day, she's going to be successful. So, I would like to end with that note.

MS. THOMPSON: Excellent. I want to come back and ask if anybody wants to pick up the question on technology and is it a panacea? Is this like our cheapest way to reach particularly excluded girls or is there more infrastructure that needs to be built? Just any

thoughts that you have on this. Have you seen the technology piece at play?

MS. OSORIO: Yes, we're advancing the rural zones. Talking with the parents they said we have newer schools. They recognize that new investment is made in their villages. So, it's happening with us.

MS. THOMPSON: Okay, great. So, we're hearing definitely we need to intervene at the community level, we need to look super micro at what are the challenges, what are the barriers, and how are we addressing them for different kinds of girls in different places. As an advocate I have to insist that I think you also have to intervene at the policy level and that girls can be amazing advocates in that regard.

If those of you who are here with us didn't get to hear from Rise Up, which is an organization that does exactly that, positioning girls to be advocates for themselves, have done pretty incredible advocacy here in Washington and at the UN with girl advocates who are learning about their rights and forming girls' clubs. And not to say that we need to put it all on girls themselves to fix systemic issues when the cards are stacked against them as we've heard in so many different intersecting strands of marginalization, but the power of an educated, mobilized and slightly pissed off girl is not to be underestimated at the policy level or at the community level. (Laughter)

We're also hearing the importance of both private sector as well as -- and by private I'm including civil society here -- as well as some of our policy and government interventions.

I'd like to leave you with closing words actually from Smriti, from one of her articles, which I think is something that I'm going to be noodling on for a while and I'd like us to maybe noodle on together over lunch, which is how can we work to ensure that the accident of birth doesn't dictate the course of a person's life? I think that's an excellent framing to take us into lunchtime and to think about how was our own birth accidental and how have we benefitted

from that, and what are we doing to understand the accidents that are continuing to impede progress for girls around the world.

So, thank you all for sharing your exciting research, your compelling stories, and your time with us. I hope that you've also enjoyed being here and hearing from some of the other folks in the room as much as we've heard from you and enjoyed that. We're going to be moving into the lunch segment now and I'm told that we will have little conversation cards that we can pick up to sort of start the conversation. A reminder that the speakers are going to be anchored at different tables and available to you, but let them let us get lunch first, please.

Thank you very much, everyone, for being here. I'm sorry to those who didn't get to ask their questions. We look forward to hearing from you at lunch. (Applause)

(Recess)

MS. THOMPSON: Over in Saul/Zilkha, moderating the panel with Dasmine on the topic of government approaches to the school reintegration of girl-child mothers is Mr. Chernor Bah, who is the co-founder and executive director of Purposeful Productions. Chernor is a global advocate for education, a champion of girls, and a development expert and co-founder of a movement building hub for adolescent girls in the global south. And as a former refugee, he founded and led Sierra Leone's Children's Parliament as well.

Joining them is Theresa Kaka Effa, the Nigerian county representative of Rise Up. She is a policy and advocacy expert on reproduction and maternal newborn child and adolescent health, and her policy formation and advocacy efforts have led to the increased funding of health services. She played a significant role in supporting Civil Society efforts that led to the passage of the National Health Act in 2014 in Nigeria.

And finally, Ms. Chi-Chi Undie, the senior associate, the Reproductive Health Program at Population Council. Her work in girls' education in Kenya has focused on both developing and testing interventions that are geared towards changing social norms. I have

facilitated both the reentry and the retention of teenage mothers into school. And she directs and provides strategic and technical oversight for the Population Council's African Regional Sexual and Gender-based Violence Network that designs, implements, and tests innovative response models to sexual and gender-based violence in low resource settings.

So at the end of those two concurrent panels, we will break for lunch, and we've asked the moderators to remind the audience to allow our speakers and panelists to grab lunch first because they will be sitting at designated tables in Saul/Zilkha for those of you who would like to reach out to them and continue the conversation from the panels, from the morning panels, as well as the afternoon. So I hope you will take advantage of that time to be able to seek them out right after those concurrent panels during the lunch hour. Please let them grab their food first.

So this room will also be available for lunch, and hopefully it's not too cold for those of you who would enjoy some time outside in the somewhat fresh air. There are some benches outside as well.

So without further ado, I would like for you all to choose which panel you would like to go to. And we will meet back up in just a few minutes with our moderators beginning those panels. Thank you.

MS. THOMPSON: So thanks first of all Christina for organizing this and also for taking off the duty that I had of reading all of your very impressive bios to everyone. So thanks for saving us some time there.

I'm Lara Thompson with the International Center for Research on Women.

MR. BAH: Hi, everybody. Thank you all for joining us. I don't know if the people at the end of the room, at the back can hear me. If you can hear me can you just indicate, ah, good. Brilliance. My son there just put his hand up, I think. I think he's saying that he can hear me.

Thanks for joining us for this panel. My name is Chernor Bah. I think we've already had the introductions in the other room, so we're going to try not to spend so much time on that.

On this panel we will be discussing government approaches to school reintegration of girl-child mothers, and we're going to base our discussion off the excellent work that Dasmine here has just done and she's just presented for us. But we have experts as well from different contexts, from Kenya, Nigeria, and it's an issue that I have also worked on a little bit from the Sierra Leone context. So throughout the discussion we will all be drawing from our experiences on this issue.

I just wanted to say as a framing that when you think about girls' education and exclusion of girls, Jamaica doesn't really often feature in these conversations. I see a lot of familiar faces in this room. We've all been through a number of these conversations and it's not often the case that Jamaica is the case study. And yet when you read, and I recommend that you do that, by the way, the work that Dasmine has done here at Brookings, you will see that this is exactly the kind of context that we should all be paying attention to. And for me, one of the things that's motivated my work in this field, and I see it especially when it comes to girls' education, it's that the big numbers can lie. And as Dasmine was saying, when you take Jamaica, you'll see that they've achieved -- it's actually a very positive example overall if you're taking the big numbers at face value. Yet, when you deconstruct those numbers, when you question those numbers, you begin to see again pockets of exclusion, pockets of marginalization, and I think at the heart of it it's part of the bigger problem that we face in our work, especially working around girls' issues.

We also see specifically on this issue of pregnancy and girls and schools, when I look at it there seems to be different categories of approaches from governments. There are some governments that are trying to do something about it. There are some governments that

agree that education is a right and it's a right that doesn't change because a girl is pregnant and they are doing everything to make sure that girls continue to have access to education. And then there are some governments that their attitude is that, well, girls have rights to education, but when they are pregnant it is a problem and so we have to deal with -- we have to punish them and yet find a way for them to come back to school. And then there are some that we've all -- some of you will have read Magufuli, who is the president of Tanzania, who says, well, if you're pregnant, that's it. You can't come back to school. We faced a similar situation as well in Sierra Leone.

So we're going to try to think about all these things and look at them from different layers.

But let me start with you, Dasmine. Thank you again. I'm sorry, I just think that the introductions we just did in the rooms there was enough so, and you all have the bios there so I'm not going to take your time again in going through who these excellent panelists are.

But Dasmine, the first question I want to ask is, as I just said, Jamaica is not really what's on top of our minds often, but how is your work in drawing attention to these issues helping us all from a global perspective to understand this issue better and to deal with girls' marginalization in general?

MS. KENNEDY: Thank you very much. And you're right, (inaudible) because we pride ourselves so much on doing well, but many times we fail to look at what is not working for us. And so my work is opening up awareness, but yes, Jamaica is not Africa and it's not India. But we have our own level of uniqueness. And if we don't take the time out to get a better understanding, even my own country folks, many of us have yet to understand the implication of teenage pregnancy. Many of us still don't know that it exists because of our high status in life. And we are not acquainted with the girls who are being disenfranchised. So my work is opening up awareness and inviting the attention of all critical actors, both locally and globally to say, yes,

here is a situation that needs some level of attention and we all should be partnering to ensure that we improve the life circumstances for these girls.

MR. BAH: Thank you so much.

Chi-Chi, I want to come to you. At the Population Council where I used to work just a year ago, whenever we talk about reintegration of girls in school, I think everybody turns to the work that you have done, the research that you have done and your work particularly in this world. Maybe help us to understand a little bit about what you're doing specifically in the Kenyan context to facilitate reintegration of girls-mothers into the school system.

MS. UNDIE: Sure. Thank you.

The Kenyan context is interesting because on paper it is really an enabling environment. So we have a school reentry policy which is really supposed to facilitate girls returning to school after they've dropped out due to pregnancy. We also have the National School Health Policy, which is supposed to ensure that school personnel remain supportive of pregnant girls so that they remain in school for as long as they are willing and able to. So between those two policies you would think that things would work better on the ground. But the policy hasn't really been well implemented or operationalized. So what we've been doing with the government is to just introduce simple interventions, simple in quotes, such as policy dialogues. We've been working with the government to hold policy dialogues with school principals. We've tried this in one county. There are 47 counties in Kenya. And in Homa Bay County where we've done this, it's just been a matter of convening all the school principals. We convened all principals of public secondary schools that were either girls only or mixed, just to talk about the policy.

During the very first policy dialogue that we held, there were about 200 principals in the room at least, and the first question I asked them was, how many of you have ever seen the school reentry policy for girls? And you could have heard a pin drop and no one raised their

hand. And they simply said, we've never seen it. And 20 percent had never heard of it. A third, based on our survey, had never heard of the National School Health Policy. So as you can imagine, these are the people that are supposed to be helping to implement the policy, school principals, and they've never seen the key policy on paper. The Ministry of Education has also run out of copies, so even I couldn't find one. So these are some of the issues.

And for many, this was the first time that they had a chance to understand what the contents of this policy were, what their role was, what their role is as school principals in helping ensure that girls remain in school or return to school, and the policy dialogues are designed to be just a day long. And also to give principals a chance to sort of give their own opinion and sort of take ownership. You know, what are the barriers? What would make it difficult to implement this? What are you already doing that, you know, we may not know about because you haven't been well supported? So on and so forth.

And we found that creating the awareness through the dialogues, in addition to sort of community media campaigns, has really made a difference in Homa Bay County, and what we're trying to do is sort of extend those methods to the rest of the country.

MR. BAH: Wonderful. We're going to come back and try to understand that better, and also talk about I think some parallels between what you experienced in terms of just knowledge of a policy and I think Dasmine's work.

Madam Tessie, in the Nigerian context, I know you're the country representative of Rise Up. What do you do on this specific issue?

MS. EFFA: Okay. (Inaudible) Rise Up is actually to advance education and health and gender equity for girls, women, and youth. And we work specifically with the Civil Society organization and also identifying girls' leaders to help them amplify their voice and begin to talk more about girls' education and support interventions around that area. We build their capacity in terms of strengthening them to understand policies and engage in dialogue to

discuss policy implementation.

In Nigeria, we are not short of policies. We are not short of programs or ELOs that suggest girls or support girls to be in school or support young people to be in school, especially in basic education. But the bigger the challenge that we have is implementing and translating those policies into actual actions at that level. And so we support Civil Society leaders. We support girls to begin to advocate and amplify and draw attention of the government to such policies and the reasons why they should implement those policies.

MR. BAH: Can I just ask, how big is this problem in Nigeria?

MS. EFFA: It is big. I'm shamefully sitting here to say shamefully that Nigeria contributes to about 10.5 million children out of the basic school system and if we look at that number, that was like in 2008. With the insurgency we have added to that number. So roughly, especially because there's no accurate data, roughly a consistent .5 million, and we equate that number to the population of Liberia, for instance. So the population of Liberia is like 4.7 as we speak in 2007 (sic). And so if -- this is like double the population of Liberia for children age six to 11 who are out of the basic system. So the problem is enormous.

And then if you begin to talk about the reintegration of school-aged mothers, school mothers and all that, it is even hidden within the problem because already the number of children who are, you know, out of school are really enormous. And then I think at this point we need to understand how the system of government in Nigeria, at the federal level, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Women Office are responsible for policy, for turning out policies, coordinating interventions and all of that. But implementation of those policies are at the subnational level and the local levels. And those are the levels that are weak in terms of funding, you know, education and all of that. So that really is the big and major problem that we face in Nigeria.

Now, Nigeria also has what we call the Universal Basic Act, which stipulates that

children, I mean, suppose the 6-3-3-4 system, which is the six years basic education, six years of primary education, three years junior education, and three years secondary education. But it is compulsory from primary to the junior secondary. And the junior secondary act age, 11 or 12, you're out of the system where it is free. It's supposed to be free, qualitative, and compulsory. However, there are hidden costs to that. So at the school level you see the principal charging for textbooks, sometimes uniforms, and all of those hidden costs also present a lot of barriers for children to even be in school.

MR. BAH: Wow, okay.

One of the things I found fascinating about your work, Dasmine, is around invisibility of some of the proposed beneficiaries of this policy. I think you have a progressive policy and yet you were saying that a good number of potentially intended beneficiaries get lost in the system. And I think one of your recommendations is to keep a better record of girls who get pregnant. And I was also looking at the way the policy (inaudible) in Jamaica. Apparently, so the girls to into the program and then for reintegration they can get reintegrated into different schools. So not necessarily into the school that they used to go to before. And in all of that some of the girls will get lost in the system.

I want you to speak a little bit on this particular issue of the invisibility both in terms of counting, but also keeping data, but also just how pregnancy basically makes girls invisible and how that contributes to the marginalization of girls specifically in relation to continuing regulation.

MS. KENNEDY: Okay, thank you.

When a girl gets pregnant while in school, and you'll imagine it will take some time before it starts showing. When that becomes public knowledge, then that girls knows that her place is no longer there. So she leaves the school system. This girl can become invisible if the system does not pick her up and refer her to the women's center where she can continue

her education. And luckily for that girl, sometimes because of heightened awareness in the community, then some of the referrals may be done by even community personnel. Now, if this girl doesn't have the interest to return to school, then she can get lost. And further, you made reference to the fact that it's not necessary that the girl has to return to the former system that she was already enrolled in. This tool creates another challenge. Even though it makes leverage for a choice, it creates another problem because yes, everybody understands the fact that education is important for these girls, but you can have educational administrators who may decide that, oh, I don't want to take any of these girls. And she could -- or you could confuse the situation by delaying the process of the girl returning to school, or if they don't do that, they would prefer to take another girl who was once enrolled in another context and let's say the girl would come to their perspective very fresh. No one would know their status and the level of discrimination would be reduced.

MR. BAH: So they're actually entrusted in ensuring that nobody that the girl -- this particular girl has ever been pregnant before --

MS. KENNEDY: Very much correct. Very much correct.

MR. BAH: -- or has had a child.

MS. KENNEDY: Right.

MR. BAH: Their preference is to get a girl that nobody knows about.

MS. KENNEDY: Exactly. And for those who don't take back their own student, if the school operates a shift system -- so let's say the girl was enrolled in the morning shift, then the girl is now on the evening shift. So nobody knows that girl. And what becomes disheartening, too, is the fact, this whole protection around the girl also hides that girl from accessing services because in order to support the system and to ensure that the girl benefits from all the social services that are in place for her, we have guidance counselors and social workers employed in our school system. And this is their role to support the girls, to helping

them succeed.

So I was very amazed and distressed when I entered a number of girls and I speak with the guidance counselors and they say they don't know who the girls are. They have never been introduced to them. And some of them said they don't even know the provision under the policy. And I said, really? So these are the persons we are paying to take care of these girls and they're not equipped and armed enough to provide the services. And where you don't have the support following the girl in the way that she needs to get it, then a girl can drop out of school or she can decide to just go whenever she likes because there's no one looking out for her interests. And when you speak to other persons, when you ask about special services that are in place for the girls, they would say every girl in their institution receives the same treatment, so there's no special services for them in some institutions. And already you know that they are already from a disadvantaged situation. They have their own challenges and would need additional and special support. So these are some of the things that are contributing to the invisibility of the girl.

And one other thing that I found most starting is having visited one of these institutions and the administrator happens to be a male principal, and he related a story about a twin that was enrolled at the institution and both of them became pregnant. And when I asked to see if I could speak with the girls, then I was told that they no longer attend the institution. And then I asked why. And he relayed this long story to say that they are always getting in trouble, they are disrupting the school, and even when he tries to have dialogue with the father, now these girls were in the care and custody of their father. And when he tries to talk to him, he takes it to mean that the school is bringing attention to his daughters unfairly. And those two girls were no longer attending school. And if you don't actually get down to the implementation, you don't know that this situation exists. And we, at the policy level, we are there thinking that yes, this wonderful service is in place and everybody's benefitting, but if you don't drill down,

you don't know what is actually happening, the implementation. So this is contributing to a lot of invisibility of a number of our girls who really need to benefit from the service that is place for them.

MR. BAH: Chi-Chi, this must sound familiar to you as well in terms of in your Kenyan context. And I know earlier today we talked about, we had this morning about the invisibility and modernization of Maasai girls, but how does being a girl-mother also kind of (inaudible) with this invisibility and marginalization in the Kenyan context? And you can kind of see what reflects on the parallels as well with the Jamaican context.

MS. UNDIS: Yes. Some of the things Dasmine has talked about are actually similar to what we find in Kenya. But first of all, I think the invisibility starts from the level of policy because the school reentry policy, the way in which it's written, it implies that as soon as a girl gets pregnant she needs to leave school. Now, this clashes with the National School Health Policy, which indicates that a girl can remain in school -- a pregnant girl can remain in school for as long as she's willing or able. So when you bring the two together, and that's one of the things we did during our policy dialogue, you can see how it's a source of confusion for principals. They don't understand when a girl -- should she be sent away? If she's sent away, when does she come back? So there's no -- the policies were clearly put together without -- they don't speak to one another. So that's one of the ways in which we see the invisibility in the school reentry policy. It indicates that, you know, she basically should leave school. But she should be supported over time so that she eventually does come back. But, of course, we know in low resource settings that's not really going to happen. So when she leaves, she's pretty much gone.

But in addition, the school reentry policy indicates that school principals should provide support for girls to gain entry into other schools. So not the schools in which they got pregnant. Perhaps it was due to a concern about stigma or whatnot, you know, we don't really

know. But what we do find among the girls that we've worked with is that many actually do choose to go back to the same school. So these are some of the little ways -- the little ways in which they're sort of made to seem invisible.

MR. BAH: I was just going to point out, Dasmine, in your work, I really like that section where you were saying when you talked to the girls, none of them reported this discomfort in the school; right? Like, pretty much none of the girls would tell you that, oh, we're undergoing this extreme discomfort and shame, yet 67 percent of the principals say that our concern is that the girls are uncomfortable in the school. So there's, you know, the sense of the principals and the authorities say one thing but the girls in their own experience, they're like, you know, I'm happy to be in school. I have my friends. I'm just trying to take it one day at a time. What's the experience in Nigeria for you, Tessie?

MS. EFFA: I think for the purpose of this I would like to just present a little background about how Nigeria is run. I would look at the southern part of Nigeria, which is predominantly Christian. And of course, teenage pregnancy, being an adolescent mother is still considered a stigma. So if a girl, you know, was pregnant or delivered and all of that, the reintegration into school is more only personal business or individual or family business I would say and she would always want to go to a different school. They just leave the community entirely and go to a different school. And that is if the parents have value for education. They have the resources to support her, to provide care for the child she leaves behind and all of that. So that is what I mean by all of that.

But in the northern part where early marriage is (inaudible) union, so to speak, which we are still fighting, the girl-child is still considered -- I mean, the adolescent-mother does not suffer that level of stigma, so to speak. But there is really no conscious effort from the government to reintegrate the children. So whatever we see at that level is basically interventions from Civil Society organizations from donor agencies. UNFBA is doing a lot.

There was also the United States Ambassador Initiative which was also initiated to bring back girls to school, but those centers are actually carved out specifically for those girls who are married and have children, and they provide credits and some level of support.

And then within the community, they engage also traditionally the husbands so that they can provide some level of care for the children. For those children who are big enough to stay at home, they could provide care for them until the mothers go back to school. But usually that is not sustained. Sometimes because it's a project and it's time driven, it has a lifespan, when the initiative is done it just fizzles out. So that really is not sustained. And then most times the government is not ready to begin to implement or take that initiative or expand the skill of that.

MR. BAH: Speaking of governments, I want us to transition a little bit to what the specific responsibilities of governments are and how governments are balancing these priorities. And I maybe just want to start by talking about the experience we have in Sierra Leone.

So before now, before the outbreak of Ebola a few years ago, it was -- the policy was mostly unspoken. So it depended on the school. So if you went to a school where the principal was progressive, you could get pregnant and stay in class and you could come back and take your exams. And afterwards, as long as, you know, you're able to come back to school, you're welcome to come back to school. And I know that Chi-Chi, with your research you know that irrespective of that the majority of girls who get pregnant don't come back to school anyway. But the policy was much more liberal and independent.

Some principals, of course, in the more conservative schools would say, you're pregnant and you are out. Yet, after the Ebola outbreak when schools were closed for a year, a number of girls were pregnant to the extent that it became like a visible phenomenon. You could tell that most of the girls who had been sitting out for the whole year had gotten pregnant and girls of particularly school-going age. And so the government decided at that time that they

were then going to pass a policy and said if you are pregnant, you're not welcome to come back to school. So you couldn't find a worse time for the introduction of a policy that had a blanket ban on pregnant girls from school. So even schools where girls were able to go back before now banned girls.

So we started this whole, you know, international campaign, trying to put pressure on the government to change the policy. Obviously, the reasons that they gave are similar to what you've talked about, this notion that there will be stigma, that pregnancy is somehow infectious. If you're sitting next to one pregnant girl you're also going to catch the pregnancy. The other girls will get, you know. So it was -- I think I wrote at the time that it was not really based on any sound research or any sound facts at all, but that was the policy that we had to deal with. But what we ended up kind of working with the government on was the creation of an alternative system. Our fare, obviously, was that, I mean, for those of you who know, Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world and the school system itself, the standard system itself is so badly run you don't even have female teachers, you don't have the right facilities. So here they're creating an education system for people that they think are morally inferior. Now, you can figure out what type of education that is going to be and how easy it was going to be for those girls who are in this school system.

So they have just now done the evaluation of the first secondary evaluation of this program in Sierra Leone and there are some interesting findings about the number of girls who are now reconsidering going back to school. Again, we don't have figures yet about how many of them have been successful in getting back into the school system, but I think the government is trumpeting some success with this scheme in terms of how they've been able to balance what they claim were the consents of the public and they are afraid the pregnant girls will sit in the same school or pregnant girls wearing uniforms.

So from the government's perspective in Jamaica, what's the position and how

are they balancing their stated goal of trying to provide education for everyone and this issue of girls who get pregnant and the consents you point to in your study about school administrators or the public saying, oh, yes, but we don't want them to be sitting in class with our students.

MS. KENNEDY: Okay. So let me address that in two tranches. The government is very much in support of the girls benefitting from a second chance education, and we have pumped a lot of resources behind that. And we have also partnered with our women's center, which is a limited liability company. In former years it was totally owned by the government, so we provide subvention to ensure that the girls, when they're excluded, they can continue their education. So the support is there.

And the mere fact that we have made provisions for guidance counselors and social workers is also acknowledging the fact that these girls need support. The principals, for the most part, most of them are in support of the girls getting a second chance education, but the challenge with some of them is that they would prefer not to have those girls return to them. Send them somewhere else. And they have not indicated where we should send them which is again opening up the platform for further discussion. Send them somewhere. But where should we send them? So we're going to have that dialogue to see what is it that they're proposing.

But then you have other administrators who are with open arms they take them because what a number of them say is that when they come to them, the mere fact that they have undergone all this counseling and mentoring, then they come to their setting with a fresh perspective. Others see them as potential troublemakers. And some principals even punish them by not allowing them to graduate even though they would have done very well. And we're talking about some of these traditional high stake --

MR. BAH: You mean not allowed to attend the graduation ceremony?

MS. KENNEDY: Right. Right. You're not worthy of wearing the noble institution's graduation garb because you short-circuited the process. That is how you have

some persons leaving.

But we, in Jamaica, value very much our human capital. (Inaudible) already in the presentation. We need everybody to succeed. We need all our persons to participate in the development of the country. So this is something that know that awareness has been created. I am certain that we are going to become more visible in the space and also seek to see how well we can garner resources to ensure that the policy is evaluated. (Inaudible) that needs to be closed.

MR. BAH: Tessie, how different is that posture from the posture of the government of Nigeria and what are the opportunities there for NGOs, community organizations to influence the attitude of governments?

MS. EFFA: I will start with the opportunities now. Currently, the Universal Basic Education Act is undergoing review and the Civil Society is very much involved in the review. And we are asking for specific provisions to be inserted in that review. One, to increase the free compulsory education up to secondary school level. So you would how now the 13 to 17 girls still in school, which also when implemented in the north will be able to address early marriage and all of that. And then we are also including, you know, this aspect to be written specifically that special attention must be given, you know, to reintegrate pregnant girls in school.

And then one of the things that didn't really go well with implementation of the act was the fact that the federal level was supposed to provide 50 percent of funding for education, and at the subnational level it was supposed to do a counterpart funding to be able to implement education services at the subnational and local level. And that was not happening because the subnational government and the local government said they didn't have that kind of money to match what was coming from the federal level. And so what we are also asking in that review is to increase what the federal government will give, perhaps to 70 percent, and then maybe the states either give 30 percent or lower, depending on how we will push the argument or the

negotiations. But we are asking the federal government to give more from the consolidated revenue and funds from the federal government.

MR. BAH: Tessie, I'm just going to follow up quickly. You just said that the problem in Nigeria is not the presence of policies. You said it's the implementation. How hopeful are you that this is going to --

MS. EFFA: Yeah, but now implementation. And it goes back to even what Chi-Chi was saying earlier. Sometimes this is not disseminated at the local -- most of the times the policies are done at the federal level and the states are supposed to understand, be part of it, and implement at that level. And there is a disconnect sometimes understanding when the policy is not disseminated at the local level. And so the Civil Society intervenes by taking that policy and opening dialogue for the subnational governments to understand that there is a provision for this and begin to work, you know, to advocate for the implementation. So we are hoping first of all, there must be an enabling environment. There must be something that would support, you know, your argument of support. You know, the fact that you're calling attention, you know, for the government to implement this. If there's no fallback, no legal provisions so to speak, you won't, you know, a basis for argument.

MR. BAH: All right. There's so much we can go into on this but I want to give you a chance, Chi-Chi, as well, to speak about I know you've been working on as well analyzing the government's approach in Kenya you've spoken about. I want to give you a chance to maybe speak a little bit about that in terms of the government's approach and attitude to the reentry policy in Kenya. And if you can speak about what happens throughout that process when a girl gets pregnant, immediately afterwards and when she delivers the baby with respect to the policy and the governments in Kenya.

MS. UNDIE: Sure. Thanks. What typically happens is a girl gets pregnant. In some schools, some schools actually do mandatory pregnancy testing, you know, every term.

And so when that's discovered then the girl is expelled. Actually, the National School Health Policy, although it's quite progressive compared to the other educational policies around this subject, it also recommends voluntary pregnancy testing for girls. Now, how voluntary those tests are is very questionable because if a principal says you have to get tested, no girl is going to say I would rather not and I know my rights and you can't make me do it. So there's a lot of controversy contained even within the more progressive policies.

And so typically, what typically happens is it's really just expulsion or at the most, the girl's parents are called in. The situation is explained to them and they're asked to take their child home. But I will say, with the policy dialogues that we've been doing with the government, we are seeing some interesting changes at the county level. For example, after we had done this policy dialogue a couple of times, the Homa Bay County Department of Education decided on their own that they were going to start tracking the number of girls that reenter school after getting pregnant. And they decided to do it with their own funds, and they did that throughout the life of our project.

In addition to that, at the end of last year, on their own, of their own volition, they instituted a prize for the top two primary schools and top two secondary schools that had shown the most support for reentering girls. In other words, had the highest numbers or something like that, and they asked us if we wouldn't mind buying the trophies, that this is a prize that they would like to institute, and we were delighted to do so.

In addition, within our policy dialogues, we try to engage local politicians and bring them into the dialogue to see the data that we were collecting, listen to the findings, and also, listen to the concerns and challenges of school principals. And out of that, early this year the women's representative of this particular county, she set up a bursary scheme specifically for girls that are reentering school and for children with disabilities.

So there are a number of changes that are occurring as a result of school

principals feeling like they've been included, they matter, they're being respected, and their concerns, even if we may not be able to address all of them, at least they feel like they're being heard. So we found, you know, and school principals doing things of their own volition. For example, some would report to us about how, oh, I've created a nursing zone for my student mothers. You know, things that they didn't have to do, didn't have the money to do. Another principal told us about how, well, what I do is with my married girls who have had children, they come to me and I give them special days to go to the clinic, to go out and get their family planning method. So these are all the stories that we use the policy dialogue to sort of give voice to, to encourage other principals to become more supportive. So it's not all bad news. Good things are happening.

MR. BAH: Wonderful. Well, thank you. I think that's a really good note for us to transition to inviting questions from the audience. It's not all bad news. Good things are happening.

As somebody who considers myself a champion fighter for girls' rights, you know, I like to take that as a positive but it's such a discomfoting positive; right? That, oh, yeah, it's not all bad. Some good things are happening; right? It's not the fault of us on the panel. Of course, you have to take what you can get and start building, but it tells you as well from everything we've had from our panelists here that the issues we're dealing with are so complex and the forces are -- the structures are designed in most cases to limit access of girls, and especially the poorest and the most marginalized.

And by the way, those are the girls that get pregnant the most at the youngest ages. I think we've not talked about that directly here but I know that for this audience you guys will know that.

Anyway, you can indicate if you have a question. Put up your hand. So we will take a few together.

MS. GAMBLE: Hi, Jenny Gamble from Discovery Learning Alliance. And thank you all for the great presentations and for your insights.

I have two question comments. First, for Dasmine. One of your recommendations was to develop a database to capture this information. And so I'm curious if you've had different discussions with EMIS, Education Management Information System administrators around different flags or indicators that could be included to indicate and designate different dropout reasons. So first question to that.

The other is more general for all the panelists. And Chi-Chi, you kind of hit on this slightly when you talked about clinics. I've had different conversations about this reentry issue over the past couple of years and it's always kind of come up that, you know, we keep focusing on the education systems, which of course, it's very important to, you know, activate those policies that are in place. But it's also come up that perhaps more of a cross-sectoral approach could be helpful and kind of more incentivized by going the direction, starting perhaps with more infant care. So thinking about clinics as potential platforms or places where, you know, knowing that a girl has a right to return to school, kind of educating those clinic workers, of course, knowing that the child is likely to be more healthy and to have better health outcomes if the mother is educated, if that is a potential relationship to promote and to expand on. So kind of thinking about health clinics and early childcare as potential points of intervention to encourage girls to return to school and education around their rights and different ways in which they can do that. So kind of what are those pathways.

So kind of a question for all of you around have you seen that happening anywhere? Has that been brought up in any way? I'm just kind of curious as to see if that cross-sectoral approach might be another strategy to kind of come at this not so directly through education but kind of through the side door.

MR. BAH: Thank you.

We're going to take a couple more and then we'll get the responses. The lady over there.

MS. GOULD: Meredith Gould, consultant.

So picking up on the multisector and across ministry approach, this past spring I worked with UNICEF and the government of Liberia, and one of the things that they wanted to do was look at an adolescent empowerment strategy versus a sector-specific strategy. And my challenging charge was to look at the education strategy, the girls' strategy, the health strategy. And what UNICEF did that was really great was develop a steering committee, although it was requested by Youth and Sports, across five ministries. And when we were intentional about being thematic and population focused, Liberia has more than 50 percent adolescents, and one of the highest rates of teen pregnancy and out of school youth, particularly girls. What I found just from the person developing it but from a sort of nonministry perspective was that when we designed the strategy and then were looking at implementation afterwards, we went and intentionally earmarked each existing strategy in each ministry which was basically very sector specific and used the language that was already there, and then really decided that adolescence and the empowerment of it, and what we were intentional about was pregnant girls and teen parents, because Liberia doesn't have a policy on it. And we were intentional even across the thematic areas in the strategy which were not ministry specific, to tie education to health, also to justice.

So my question is to piggyback on that. I'm now working in Tanzania. Really challenged around even a girls' education program and pregnancy. I'm curious, to piggyback, would a multi-ministry or a multisector intervention that puts girls or adolescents at the center versus education or health or psychosocial perhaps be a creative and negotiated tricky good tool to particularly look at this most vulnerable group of teen moms and parents?

MR. BAH: Thank you. If we could take the final question here.

MS. DONAHUE: Hi, I'm Meghan Donahue, a consultant, but I just returned from Africa where I was gender advisor for Peace Corps. And one thing that I experienced, and I'm just wondering if you have any best practices about, what happens in the teacher education training where -- maybe where this kind of enabling environment might be discussed or ways to work with parents or other students or teachers and principals? And I wondered if any of you have examples of that in your countries. Okay, thank you.

MR. BAH: Can you say where you were in Africa? I'm sorry.

MS. DONAHUE: I'm sorry?

MR. BAH: Can you say where you were in Africa?

MS. DONAHUE: Well, I was based in Ghana.

MR. BAH: In Ghana, okay.

MS. DONAHUE: And I worked in all 25 countries.

MR. BAH: Oh, okay.

MS. KENNEDY: Do you mind if I ask her to repeat that?

MR. BAH: Sorry, Dasmine wants you to repeat the question.

MS. DONAHUE: The question is do you have any examples in the teacher training colleges where future teachers maybe would find out the information about how to deal with reintegration of girls and working with parents and other students and principals.

MR. BAH: Great. All right. So I think we have some solid questions and great perspectives as well from all of you. I know we have a lot of experience in the room. So I'm going to start with you, Dasmine. There were some specific questions specifically around the database that you were referring to, whether you've looked into that. And then if you have any perspective on the last question around whether this can be incorporated as well into -- or whether you know this exists already in teacher training. And then two specific questions around the multisectoral approach to this issue.

MS. KENNEDY: I think I'm going to tie the multisectoral approach and the database together because that's critical. Yes, we have a multisectoral approach in Jamaica because they are the agents that track the numbers at the Register General's Department, so they know who the girls are and then we'll make reference to the system for support. Plus, we have -- you made reference, Jenny, to the causes of the problem in the first place. And we are finding out that a number of these girls have been molested, and that's why they get pregnant in the first place. And there are other challenges that they encounter.

So we have an agency which we call CISOCA that takes care of those girls who would have been molested and reports those to the system. And then we have Warwiman Center, too, who collect their own level of data. And then in the Ministry of Education we collect our own data. So what is not happening is that the data, they are not merging together. So there are things happening in pockets but it is not linked. We have a national census platform in the Ministry of Education which provides information on our students from performance to enrollment and matriculation or whatever. But what is missing at this point is drilling down to that granular level where we can make sense of what actually is happening. So bringing all the data from our different partners together will help the system. It will help all of us because we'll have an understanding of what is happening and where we need to step up our effort more.

In terms of exposing the information at the teacher training level, I don't think we have that but what we do have, because in the Ministry of Education there is a unit which is called the guidance counseling unit and that department does sensitization from time to time in our schools, and that is how many of our teachers would learn about the provision under the policy. And more specific, the guidance counselors who are charged with monitoring the welfare of the girls. So that is how the dissemination takes place. But you will understand that from time to time then you will have new teachers coming into the system, and if the process is not repeated, then some persons may not know what is happening.

It is different for us because our policy, while it may not have everybody having a printed version of the policy, it is on the Ministry of Education website. But how many persons are aware of that is another issue. But the information is there. I guess we just need to start talking to other different persons to let them know that the provision is there. They just need to get familiar with it so that all of us need to understand what our rules are because we all have rules, including me, at the ministerial level.

MR. BAH: Okay, thank you.

Chi-Chi, there is a lot of energy around dealing with this, not only as an education issue but from multiple fronts and using that as entry points to support. How is that -- how do you -- what do you think about that approach in the Kenyan context and with the work that you are doing specifically on this issue?

MS. UNDIE: I mean, I'm glad the comment came up. I think that there's a lot of room to apply a multisectoral approach, and we do realize, recognize the need for that. And so this is why over the next two and a half years, our approach to working with the government is actually now about getting the sectors to talk to one another because through our interventions we have proven that we can get girls to return to school. But we're not sure that we can retain them once they return because we know that repeat pregnancies are a problem. And the principals know this, and so on and so forth. So we are now trying to figure out how to get at least Health and Education, perhaps maybe Gender, to begin talking together, working with one another. I mean, the National School Health Policy was supposedly developed by both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, has both locals, both names. But what happens along the way when it comes to implementation, you know, more support is needed. So that's one direction in which we want to go.

Can I also speak to the other question --

MR. BAH: Of course. Yes.

MS. UNDIE: -- about the teachers' training and so on and so forth. That does not exist at this time in Kenya but we really recognize the need for it, and that's one of our recommendations actually in our report, you know, around this study that it really is needed because if you think about it, we're talking about principals and teachers whose teachers' training has been very much focused on discipline, morality, so on and so forth. And then they get into the school system and they're expected to implement a policy that's built on rights which is something that they have not understood at all. As far as they're concerned, children don't really have rights. So there really is a need to start it right from the teachers' training colleges so that we have, you know, a more prepared group of -- so that we don't have to do policy dialogues with principals because they already would have known about them.

MR. BAH: How different is the Nigerian context? Do you have that already in your teacher training program?

MS. EFFA: No, we do not have that. But in terms of multisectoral approach we have policies, especially we have situations where we are driving adolescent youth for any health services even at the school level. And then we are also setting up platforms or encouraging platforms where Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health are working together and discussing, especially looking at access to contraceptives for young people at that level, education in terms of teenage pregnancy, in terms of HIV infection and all of that so that the students at whatever level have information that would also protect them from early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and all of that.

MR. BAH: Brilliant. Well, I was just going to say also on the multisectoral approach that in Sierra Leone the alternative school system that they created is run by both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, and Social Welfare Ministry is also involved in that. Now, again, I cannot speak about how well that one is working out but the idea is that there are integrated services. And in fact, in the next iteration of the program now -- I'm

probably the biggest critic of this program in Sierra Leone. I don't think that girls getting pregnant should keep them out of school at all. I don't think they should create inferior systems for that but I'm an advocate so I can do that. But I know that one of the things that they're looking at now is that system is going to now include all girls who have been out of school for more than two years. So whether you are a pregnant girl or you just had a baby or not, but if you've been out of the school system for more than two years, you're going to be welcome into this alternative school system and then all of them, they're going to try to work towards a way to get them to go back into the school system.

Of course, my question to that is while they were afraid of these pregnant girls kind of influencing the school girls anyway, I was asking the other day whether that (inaudible) doesn't exist with these other girls who have been out of school.

But anyway, I think we might have time for one more question. And if there's any other question in the room? Anybody else wanted to ask a question?

Okay. If not, I will ask -- I had one last -- oh, okay, good. Yeah.

MS. NELSON: Janella Nelson with Child Fund International. My question --

MR. BAH: Can you use the microphone?

MS. NELSON: Sorry, yeah. Hi, I'm Janella Nelson with Child Fund International. I just wanted to ask because -- this is for Chi-Chi -- specifically, I see that you lead a network on SGBV. And I wanted to ask on how your work is related to working with teen moms and how you see that that is allowing girls to go back to school for retaining them in school and also not to get pregnant.

MS. UNDIE: Good question.

MR. BAH: Thank you.

MS. UNDIE: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Well, the work on SGBV and the work on Girls Return to School, they're sort of

separate programs. The SGBV work has been in existence for around 11 years now and the school reentry work is about three years old. But there are definitely connections.

So under the SGBV network we actually have interventions that are running in schools, and so are focusing on school-related gender-based violence, and we also know from our teenage mother work that, you know, some of the pregnancies that we are seeing are actually as a result of sexual violence and so on and so forth. But I think, you know, we need to look more into how we can connect those two projects. So far they have sort of been running kind of like on their own but I definitely do see the connections. The work that we're doing under the SGBV network is really around children who are already in school and we've not looked at retention issues. We've rather just looked at, how do we respond to the violence that is happening to those children who are already survivors? Yeah.

MR. BAH: All right. Thank you.

Well, I think before we go I just want to give each of you a chance quickly. If there's one thing that you think needs -- one big thing that you -- I know you have just written recommendations for what you think will make a difference, but is there one thing from this conversation that you want the audience to think about that can make the most difference for reintegrating girls in schools, pregnant girls or girl-mothers into the school system?

I'll start with you, Dasmine.

MS. KENNEDY: Generally, I think we all have to get to the point where we really understand the value of education for all for personal development and also for international development. So let me move it from my context. International development. Because this is the way we are going. We need our human capacities to make our difference, and if this is truncated, then it means that some of us are going to be stymied, our economies are going to suffer, or there is going to be a perpetuation of poverty. And it will prevent us from achieving the thought of development or making the thought of difference that we need to make

internationally. And it will also allow a number of persons to live into a disadvantaged situation that none of us wants to ever happen. So education is the way forward. We have acknowledged that and wherever we can, whatever we can do to support education in any context then it is important that we all seek to embrace it as much as possible.

MR. BAH: Thank you.

Tessie?

MS. EFFA: I will say Nigeria is a (inaudible) of society just like most African contexts. We must make sure all our interventions to include the fed-based organization or leaders, the traditional leaders, because whether you are a politician or a policymaker, somehow you are being influenced by that group of people. And so we must include them in our interventions. We must explain to them in the context in which they understand the value of education. We must also count data. I think what is missing is data, not influencing our policy formulation, our policy implementation and decision-making. So that for me is very important. Because if we don't count it, we may not even know the number of people who we are supposed to integrate.

MR. BAH: You're going to like that point; right? I know that we talk a lot about counting. Yes.

MS. UNDIE: What I'd like to say though is let's be patient with schools and school personnel. At my first policy dialogue I went in there thinking that, you know, this was the day that I was going to teach school principals about what the policies say. And that was a very humbling day for me. I learned a lot. I learned a lot about the realty of a principal implementing something in a low resource context, and that was very humbling for me. And I came out of there learning that principals are not my enemies. Schools are our allies. And it's been a wonderful relationship for the last -- it's been over three years now, and out of that work has come a book chapter called, "Are school principals the bad guys?" Because when you read

the literature that's the impression you come away with, but when you're really there on the ground you realize that they are really champions -- or they can be. They have the potential for really being champions. And that's what we've been trying to tap into.

(Recess) MS. KWAUK: Welcome back everyone. I hope you had a nice lunch chatting with each other. Sounded like there were a lot of conversations going on. It makes me really happy.

All right, so as we now enter into our afternoon session, I want us to start thinking about the challenges of reaching the most marginalized girls. One approach that's been extremely popular and has been at the center of many global education discussions is that of life skills education. At an aspirational level, life skills are believed to help girls achieve a wide range of empowering cognitive, health, social, economic, and political outcomes. But does this happen in reality? Here at Brookings within our larger work on skills for our changing world, we have been working with research partners and with the Girls Charge life skills working group to think through life skills development for girls.

What are life skills? How do they develop? How can they be taught effectively and how do they actually transform girls' lives? While the field has made great strides in promoting life skills programming for adolescent girls over the last decade, we risk leaving girls hanging when they, empowered by their new skills, are met with sometimes violent backlash by family, community members, and others when they attempt to apply these skills outside of a space, safe spaces, created by NGO's and other programs. The burden of change often falls on the shoulders of girls, of young adolescent girls, who have learned life skills and now I think we should look at how the onus is now on us to figure out how to simultaneously create more receptive and enabling environments. The problem is there is a lack of clarity and alignment in the field.

Through our research and consultations what became increasingly clear was that

there are as many definitions of life skills as there are girls' education actors in the space. There's a lack of attention to the processes of empowerment. Programs are not often reaching the most marginalized and vulnerable girls. And cross country and in-country variations in the actual skills targeted suggests that programming might be, in many cases, driven more by program and donor priorities than by what the girls need and desire themselves. So in short, programs risk missing the goal of social change for girls. But rather than get us into a terminology debate, here at Brookings we focused on identifying key components and core principles for practitioners to consider when designing and implementing a transformative life skills program.

So this afternoon we're going to focus our attention on life skills approaches to empowerment. Particularly thinking beyond approaches that focus on the girls themselves and how we can engage community in the broader social and political context in their empowerment. So in the remainder of this half hour, I will introduce our framework for transformative life skills education that we hope will help girls' education practitioners and policymakers better design and implement and make policy decisions that support life skills programming. And the strategic goal here is to provide all of us here today in the audience and Salsilka and also watching online with a common language and concepts for thinking about our final session this afternoon. So I'll start here with a short animation that introduces our work.

(Video played)

So the first thing we suggest is that life skills is not necessarily a specific set of skills for life, but rather a composition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes or what one knows, what one has, and what one believes and values. And together these networks of what I'll call here, from here on out call KSA's, form a dynamic set of competencies or what we can do or what one can do. So in developmental psychology, maybe think back to - - if any of you have taken classes in developmental psychology, think back to sort of an image of a brain and all the

complicated networks of neurons in it, and how over the course of a girl or a boy's lifetime, their brains are developing neurons and neural networks. Neural networks get connected with old ones and over time you can have a sophisticated network of neural networks. So similarly, imagine KSA's connecting together to form competencies. As new KSA's are learned, they are connected to existing KSA's and network together into different competencies themselves. Different networks of KSA's can be activated, deactivated, reassembled depending on the competencies required over the girl's lifetime and different life situations.

For example, if we think about building girls' competency so she can negotiate delaying marriage, we might focus specifically on knowledge about negative consequences of early marriage, gender empower, anti-child marriage laws, her rights, and the importance of returns to education and particularly secondary education. We'll also need to think about skills like risk assessment, listening, understanding another person's point of view, self-control, positive self-concept, and goal orientation. And then finally we also need to consider pro-equality attitudes like a healthy intolerance of gender injustice and beliefs like girls' rights and human rights. But as we suggested in the animation earlier, going from building competencies to girls taking action that allows them to pursue choices previously denied to them, or what we call empowered action, isn't so straightforward.

How do we actually go from competencies to empowered action? Closely tied to this question, how do we ensure life skills development is linked with improved life outcomes and social change? If we think that the rationale for a focus on girls' life skills education is rooted to the goal to combat the effects of gender discrimination and gender inequality, then life skills programming must be closely tied to a theory of change, a theory of wider systemic change.

So this is where we introduce the concept of translation; what we think is perhaps more important than the concept of skills being transferrable from context to context.

Translation is the process of activating KSA networks through action. It actually precedes the process of transferability. Without attending to this translation, or if you think about just applying KSA's in action and in real world context, we actually risk her knowledge, skills, and attitudes remaining stuck in the safe spaces in which they're learned.

So second is the process of mediation in which opportunity structures and the girls' own level of agency influences the degree to which she can translate competencies into action and also the degree to which her actions are empowering. So let's take maybe a closer look at these two particular mediating factors.

So first we had to think about the opportunity structures that enable or limit the degree to which the girl can translate competencies into choices and into action. Opportunity structures can include the social and political context as well as the historical experiences and opportunities the girls' may or may not have encountered or have had access to across her life course. So if you think back to the animation and the importance for Alyeah to have had available to her information on birth control, the availability of health and family planning services and resources like contraceptives in order to make a decision at that particular moment in time with her boyfriend. Opportunity structures can also include the enabling or limiting structures within the labor market, within the marriage market, and even the quality of her social relationships as well as behaviors and attitudes towards girls held by teachers or community leaders.

So second we have to think about agency or the girls' ability to see and to make choices. The thing is that her individual agency is achieved in multiple ways. One is sort of an internal development determined by the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that she possesses and develops over time. These can become stronger. They can make her a stronger agent of her own life by really being strengthened, diversified, and becoming more complex over time. But then another way is relational determined by whether others recognize her agency. Again, think

back to the animation with Alyeah and her boyfriend. If her boyfriend does not recognize that she is an agent of her own life, possessing a plethora of KSA's will have little effect on her ability to actually choose her destiny and choose her actions.

So together these mediating factors of agency and opportunity structures have a significant role in the process of translation, and we don't pretend that this isn't abstract stuff. And we really think that if we don't attend to these factors, then we really risk developing girls' life skills to navigate life skills programs and not necessarily their real world context. Not paying attention to the girls' ability to translate competencies into empowered action and not viewing mediating factors like opportunity structures and agency as equally important as developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes really risks life skills programming leaving girls behind, leaving them hanging, and keeping the onus of change on their shoulders. So this means that our programming misses a critical step in achieving the goal of transforming and empowering girls' lives.

So to sum up our frame work, we identify four core principles for transformative life skills programming for girls. The first one is that programs really need to consider five critical touch points or phases in life skills development and social change. 1. Building competencies. 2. The process of translation and mediation. 3. The actual empowered action that we're hoping that she's able to take on and choose and exhibit. 4. The actual improved life outcome or set of life outcomes. And the 5th: The wider systemic social change. So this means that programs really need to think beyond the short-term intervention phase and really think long-term across the girls' lifetime.

The second core principle is that we really need to keep in mind that life skills are competencies constituted by dynamic KSA networks; so knowledge, skills, and attitudes. This means that we need to really think broader in terms of what the "life skills" and really be more specific about the KSA's, the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that constitute these actual

competencies.

The third core principle is that we need to be more intentional about development and change in our programming. Life skills development is a continuous non-linear process of cognitive, emotional, psychological, social, as well as behavioral change that is not confined to adolescents but rather dependent on experiences, learning, and opportunity starting from early childhood, through childhood, through adolescence and into young adulthood, and adulthood actually. I'm still learning. This development at the individual level interacts with change that's happening in her community and in the broader environment as well. So we really need to think more broadly about development and change, intentionally about it in our programming, and then also how the individual girl's development is interacting with the change that's happening in her environments.

And then the final principle is that life skills programs must support girls to "read her context"; read gender, read power. These are key opportunity structures that really influence her capacity to translate KSA's into empowered action. So the abstract mission of providing girls with skills they need to be successful in life is really easy to get behind but challenging to define and, even let alone, measure actual progress.

What I've presented right now isn't straightforward. And it's really - - its non-linear progression suggests a very difficult practical application. But then again, we all know that triggering social change was not meant to be, and is not, easy. So I hope that this framework at least provides some concepts and language that will allow us to ensure that life skills programming helps push the needle forward for girls like Alyeah around the world rather than leaving the onus of change on them themselves.

So all right, we are definitely going to go a little bit early, since our panelists are all here, we'll transition to our final session and I'll start by saying if there is one key takeaway point from this presentation as we enter into our final session for the day, it's that in order to

develop empowering and transformative life skills among the most marginalized girls around the world, we have to look beyond the girl herself and to truly connect program outcomes to life outcomes.

Our panelists in our next session have enormous insights to share on how they and their organizations have thought beyond the girl and across the girl's lifetime to tackle the life skills development of the individual girl for wider social and systemic change.

We'll start our final session with a presentation by our final Echidna Global Scholar, Armene Modi. Armene is the founder Ashta No Kai and just to give you a little context on her story. Back in the 1990's she read this amazing book that really disturbed her in terms of bringing to light the very low literacy rate for women in the 1990's. And so Armene actually left a twenty-five year teaching career to establish Ashta No Kai, a non-profit that works in ten villages near Pune, India in Shirur County of Maharashtra State to educate and empower rural adolescent girls and women. And her research here at Brookings evaluates the impact of Ashta No Kai's interventions over the last fifteen years to improve the educational outcomes of adolescent girls and to prevent early child marriages. So we will allow her to do a brief presentation and then I'll come back up and moderate the panel on this particular topic of going beyond the girl in life skills approaches to empowerment.

Joining us for that panel will be Yukiko Sakurai, Chief of Adolescent Development and Participation in UNICEF Nepal. Through Yuki's work there she's aimed to really provide opportunities to empower adolescent boys and girls and to fulfill their rights by providing social and financial skills training and creating an enabling environment for adolescents. She's also contributed to setting the skills development and adolescent girls' participation agenda and has worked with different stakeholders to support holistic adolescent girls' development in Nepal.

We'll also have Aissatou Diallo who is a Program Manager of Girls' Initiatives at

BRAC USA where she leads their global adolescent girls' portfolio and manages resilient space projects targeting women entrepreneurs in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Aissa also promotes BRAC's financial inclusion and adolescent development work in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

And then last but not least, Abigail Bucuvalas who is a Senior Director of Educational Programs for International Social Impact at Sesame Workshop. There Abi leads the department's education team which is responsible for designing curricula and programs around planning and executing teacher and facilitator trainings as well as collaborating on monitoring evaluation activities. She leads multi-country initiatives focused on shifting parental perceptions of play and building parental capacity to engage in meaningful play in India, Mexico, and South Africa. So we'll get started with Armene's presentation.

MS. MODI: Thank you Christina. Good afternoon, everyone. I thought everyone's going to say good afternoon back to me. I'd like to begin by expressing my deep appreciation to Echidna Giving and to the Center for Universal Education at Brookings for giving me this very valuable opportunity to reflect on my work at the grassroots on adolescent girls' education and to research its impact with some interventions that we launched in rural areas of India. That's our aim and you can see the geographical context that we're in.

When we started working on girls' education in the initial years the barriers were similar to barriers in many, many areas particularly rural areas in the developing world which were child marriage and distant schools that kept adolescent girls from accessing their right to an education. A recent U.N. study has indicated that 47 percent of girls in India marry before the age of 18. I hope you're shocked. In Maharashtra State, the statistics are close to around 35 percent for child brides.

In the early years we noticed that many of our girls as young as 12 and 13 were married and, of course, one of the reasons was that schools were distant but that did not prevent barons from buying bicycles for their sons because they considered their sons, as you

all well know, assets. Unfortunately for girls, they felt buying a bicycle was an unnecessary expense because the girl would eventually get married and they also would have to pay a dowry. This led us to launch a bicycle bank which has enabled 1000 girls in our areas to access school. And when we discontinued the intervention, barons realizing the value of educating their daughters began to buy bicycles to send their daughters to school.

Merely enabling a girl to access school, we felt, was not enough. As Christina has just mentioned, life skills education are such a critical core component to promote girls' voice and girls' agency. So we added a life skills education program that would promote girls' future wellbeing in tandem with the bicycle bank. After three years of cycling to school and completing high school, some of our girls came to us and said can we keep the bicycles, we would like to go on to junior college. We were delighted and launched a scholarship program, and I'm very proud to tell you that more than 1000, 1100 girls have received scholarships, and our village girls have become dentists, engineers, pharmacists, agricultural researchers. They have blown us away.

With increasing incidents of sexual violence we felt that we needed another add on intervention and so we started a karate program. Once again, an unintended consequence of this program was that girls started winning silver and gold medals at not just regional but national and international meets.

How did we do this? What seemed to be an effectiveness of our interventions?

One of the key strategies was engaging the village community; making mothers our allies in this mission to promote girls' education. Please read more about it in my report. Anecdotal evidence after 15 years had indicated that our various holistic need-based interventions to promote adolescent girls' education had been effective in arresting child marriages and promoting educational outcomes. However, in all these 15 years, we had not conducted any research. The Echidna Fellowship gave me an opportunity to fill this evidence

gap for which I am extremely grateful.

We conducted a survey in six villages, three Ashta No Kai villages and three controlled villages. Two target groups were interviewed; unmarried girls age 13 to 19 and the other, girls 20 and above who had been married in the last five years. Since they were in very different villages, we interviewed their mothers to get the information. These were the findings. For married girls the mean age of marriage for Ashta No Kai girls was 19 as compared to when we started 15 years ago, around 12 or 13. Another finding was that Ashta No Kai married girls had one point seven times greater high school completion rates compared to their peers in the control group. Moreover, 45 percent of Ashta No Kai married girls had completed their desired level of education as compared to 16 percent in the control group. And significantly larger numbers of married girls in Ashta No Kai villages were engaged in income generating activities.

The findings for the married girls: The most important finding was that the longer the girl experienced the bicycle bank intervention and the life skills, the greater was impact. The earlier she experienced these two interventions, again the greater was the impact. Also Ashta No Kai girls were four times likely to complete high school when exposed to both interventions. They also completed a much higher of - - our girls in our villages completed grade 12 as compared to those in the control group. It was very clear that these simple low cost interventions that we had initiated to promote adolescent girls' education had made a difference in many girls' lives, had given them opportunities that their mothers and grandmothers could never have dreamed of.

We also conducted case studies and unfortunately I don't have time to give you a much greater overview of what we found, but we did find that the life skills education component was very critical in giving girls voice and agency. One of the girls we interviewed, a very simple village girl who is now 23, she describes herself as, the trajectory of her life as from zero to hero. What made a simple village girl get a degree in instrumentation engineering? I didn't

even know what instrumentation engineering was until she enrolled in it. What has made her become a sales executive in a Dutch company? How did this happen we will perhaps discuss later in the panel. We interviewed four girls but here I'd just like to present two cases. The other girl Baropi, she is aiming for the sky, where she's book reaching for the sky. She's literally doing that. She wants to become a district collector which is like the C.E.O. of an entire district, someone who takes care of the entire administration and revenue of an entire district. Where do village girls get these high aspirations? What is it that makes them reach for the sky? Please read my book or maybe the working paper.

So in conclusion from our small scale, modest experiment in promoting girls' education at the grassroots, it is very clear that giving girls wings to fly unlocks their potential and they literally reach for the sky. My appeal to everyone in this room who has the same mission is give girls a chance. Help them achieve their aspirations. Make education a reality for all; for every last girl in every village, in every city, in every country of the world. Our future, yours and mine, depends on it. Thank you very much.

I'm sorry; I'm supposed to call all panelists to the stage.

MS. KWAUK: Armene, thank you so much for your presentation. It is so clear that there have been impressive outcomes of your interventions. I think your program has really illustrated for us, the importance of thinking both beyond the girl as well as how to engage her mother as allies and really helps frame our discussion today. As we're getting mic'd up, I was thinking maybe our three other panelists can also introduce a little bit of their work and maybe talk a little bit about the skills that you all are targeting. The population of girls and young women that you're targeting and how they work and then we can launch into a deeper discussion. Maybe I'll start with you, Aissatou:

MS. DIALLO: Thank you, Christina and thank you Armene, for a wonderful presentation. And to the Brookings Institution for having us. I am Aissatou Diallo. I work for

BRAC USA. I'm the lead on our everything adolescent development related. I work with girls around the world. BRAC itself is an NGO that started out of Bangladesh in the 70s right after the civil war and then the cyclone that followed. It is by many measures, probably the largest organization NGO in the world. We do a lot of innovation around poverty eradication and a also a lot of work with social enterprise. I think we are most known for our community engagement, our community based work but also our programs that we launch at scale.

So far, we've reached over 120 million people, most of them women. Our work with adolescent development revolves around girls and the starting point for us is that adolescents are the most powerful agents of change in all the communities that we work. We work primarily with girls between the ages of 13 to 22. It fluctuates, depending on the context we're in. In humanitarian context, we tend to go a little bit younger. We do so, we work with them by providing a safe space where we provide access to mentors, we provide life skills training. But key to all of that is we help build on social capital for girls and also financial capital.

MS. BUCUVALAS: All right, thank you all for the opportunity to speak here. My name is Abby Bucuvalas. I'm here from Sesame Workshop which is the non-profit organization behind Sesame Street. I assume many of you are familiar with Sesame Street or some of our international work. I work in the part of the company that really focuses on work that is likely to require philosophic support in order to be sustained. So, most of our work is concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Currently, there is quite a bit of work going on in the Middle East region and we work a bit in Latin America as well. Really, what we're doing beyond the broadcast television that folks are most familiar with is developing programming for children who are, they tend to be ages 3 to 7 years although in certain context we do skew older than that up to 9, 10 years old and basically their network. We're looking at their educators whether those are educators in a formal school setting or in community settings as well as their parents and other caregivers.

In terms of what that means for girls is even when we do programming that we consider to be girls education or girls empowerment programming, we're really thinking about what do boys mean in order to meaningfully engage in girl's education. At least as importantly, what do parents and caregivers and teachers need in order to support girls as they learn to aspire to have big dreams and to take the very first steps towards achieving those dreams.

So, just generally a little bit of background of what that means when we're thinking about children who are so young, we're generally looking at an integrated curriculum that considers lot of what we would call foundational skills. We're thinking about early academic skills, early literacy, early numeracy skills that help children to succeed in formal school settings. We're thinking about health education. So, what is some of the health knowledge and what are some of the health behaviors that can help to keep children and families healthy and ready to learn. Also, the social, emotional wellness of girls and boys and their communities. In terms of concrete skills that fall into the area of social, emotional wellness, we're thinking about resilience, we're thinking about positive proactive conflict resolution and how from a very early age, we can help children to have the agency to stand up for themselves and to negotiate and to navigate some of the daily challenges of their lives together. I look forward to talking a bit more about some of the programs that we do in particular but that's a starting point.

MS. SAKURAI: Thank you very much. I'm so honored to be a panelist among my (inaudible). Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity. My name is Yukiko Sakurai. I'm the Chief of Adolescent Development and Participation section in UNICEF Nepal. I'm currently based in UNICEF headquarters in New York so that's why I didn't travel all the way from Katmandu. As you probably know, UNICEF has been working for children normally 0 to 18. We sense much more now on adolescent age group which we target at 10 to 19. We do have different approaches, as you probably know, like health, education, (inaudible) many different ages for supporting adolescent children.

Specifically, in UNICEF, we do have three big pillars. One is supporting and enabling the environment, especially setting the policies or guidelines or national framework for adolescent girls and boys. The second one is (inaudible). This is more like working with other sectoral colleagues. As I said, education sectors, health sectors or child protections or communications. So adolescent boys and girls can receive age appropriate and also gender responsive services. The third pillar is about social (inaudible). It is more like community work. How we want to do some of the social norms, gender norms or something like (inaudible) practices which is surrounded by adolescent girls and boys.

When we started the program in Nepal, we did have a (inaudible) index survey or we did have like some research in order to reach the most marginalized adolescent populations. In Nepal currently, we do have about 75 districts. It is narrowed down to 15. Out of 15, we did a little more research and then we targeted for 6 districts. So, that is the dialect intervention. At the same time, most of our work as UNICEF, we work adolescent developments system strengthening approaches. So, we work with the partners, we work with the government of Nepal and to make more adolescent friendly environment.

What is interesting because we do have some social and financial skills training developed by UNICEF. At the same time, it was the partners in the government, partner included. I was talking to, I saw and then we realized that like yeah, I had the discussion with Bellack like probably a year ago. Bellack is now starting that implementation of the training program. This is what I mean for system strengthening. Out of 75 districts, UNICEF, my section is only working for 6 districts. This program is made through the consultations with the partners. So, now like many partners taking that program and it includes Save the Children and Care Ops Fund and other NGOs or community based NGOs. It is going to be expanded the program so much.

Our program is aiming at the strengthening adolescent social financial skills. I'd

like to talk a little bit more about the in-depths of the project. Just to mention the inclusion of boys. When we developed the program, we had like over 100 consultations with adolescent boys and girls, both included and then adult stakeholders. The boys strongly showed interest saying that they wanted to be involved as well, we are also the future of the country. We are also responsible for the girls and then also women in the society. And the girls say the same, we want to have the boys because if we don't have the boys understanding or approval, we can't make agenda forward. So, can we make it both like boys and girls program. That's why we don't target just only girls but also we target for boys.

MS. KWAUK: Thank you, Yukiko. Armene, in terms of continuing this line of thought of actual specific interventions and approaches, can you tell us a little bit about how you came to those specific programs and what knowledge skills and attitudes you were trying to target in your approaches.

MS. MODI: Thank you for the question, Christina. The base where we started from was, what do girls need. If they need to wheels of change, let's give it to them. Adolescents is a very vulnerable, a very critical stage in a girl's life. I think if we don't catch girls at this very pivotal stage to help them transition, particularly from primary to secondary school. You've read all these numbers of these huge enrollments. In India I think it is 98 to 99 percent of girls are enrolled in primary school. But what happens after 7th grade when primary school ends, they tend to drop out. That's where we need to lift them up and make sure they transition on.

Our interventions were basically very simple, no brainer type of intervention. A girl in our villages got pregnant, a very young girl. She didn't know how until it was too late and that's when we realized what we need to do is to introduce life skills education to give girls information on sexuality and reproductive health et cetera. For example, the scholarship program, if girls finished high school, that would have been the end because parents would not

pay for them to continue on to further education. Here girls had these aspirations. So, we felt it was our responsibility to help support these aspirations.

Sexual violence in India is a huge problem. So, if we could implement a very simple intervention like a karate program, it would help girls not only to learn self-defense skills, it would help in their empowerment process. To feel, they can take care of themselves, they can take control of their lives to some degree.

On the knowledge skills and attitudes, what were the kinds of things that we wanted girls to learn. I must confess that I have no background in international development or social work et cetera. We were just working from, what did the girls need. The girls need to know the laws. The girls need to know that all these stereotypical images, roles that they're told to play as wives and mothers. They can sort of transform that. We needed to change gender norms. We needed to give girls information on not just the daily things that they needed that were relevant to their lives but also skills in decision making, skills in negotiation and how did we do that.

We built women's centers which is something I learned from Japan where I spent many years. The Japanese, in many places, built women's centers where women could just be who they wanted to be. So, we felt well, we need to build these women's centers not just for women but also for the girls. So, the girls would come in and in the life skills education classes, the facilitator would have topics that were taboo. Like, for example, menstruation or sexuality or dowry or sexual violence that nobody would talk about in school or at home. But these were issues they needed to confront, they needed to think about, they needed to question, they needed to form opinions about them. So, we had these discussions where girls were given a chance to give voice to their feelings. Where they could learn that women were as equal as men and women could do anything that men could do, et cetera. I hope I'm not going over my time.

Basically, we wanted girls to be who they wanted to be. Give them that feeling that they're valued. Their opinions are important to raise their self-esteem, et cetera. That's what we tried to do in the life skills education. I'm hoping to learn a lot from Christina's paper today.

MS. KWAUK: Thank you, Armene. So, each of your programs and organizations are focusing on distinct and often times overlapping knowledge skills and attitudes. I think as I mentioned earlier today as well, our focus isn't really necessarily on the skills themselves but on how girls are enabled to translate those skills into more empowered action. How those skills can help lead to and catalyze wider social change. I'm really curious to hear from each of you, how are all thinking about going beyond the girl, how are you really achieving some of these wider goals even though you're focusing on the girls specifically. Many of you are talking about community engagement and other actors that you're engaging with. Maybe Aissatou, let's start with you and with BRAC.

MS. DIALLO: Right, so to start off, our flagship adolescent development program that focuses primarily if not exclusively in some areas on girls is empowerment and livelihood for adolescent program. That's short for ELA. At BRAC, we think of girl's empowerment as the expansion of girl's ability to make strategic choices in her own life. Right now, the decision making ability is shrunk, it's very limited for girls globally due to factors like high unemployment rate, child marriage, young child bearing. All of these things restrict their options and increase their dependence on men, in some instances, and other harmful societal structures.

So, what we do in ELA is we try to expand their options. We do so by providing them with safe spaces for them to coexist and interact and build social capital. We try to provide life skills training, we provide tools for financial empowerment. But to a large extent, we also work with the larger community. Whether it is the power structures within the village that the girl lives or the business structure within which the girl lives. And then she's then able to access these

power structures through the clubs, through the safe spaces, through the group that she is now a part of that is a powerful group. I guess, as an individual, you're less powerful but with a group you can find your voice, that sort of thing.

Throughout our work, what we've really found with the ELA program is that not only does it give positive impacts on the girls themselves on various levels by increasing their likelihood of earning income, by decreasing rates of pregnancy where we work, by decreasing early entry into marriage and cohabitation and very importantly, the number of girls reporting having sex against their will. Also, as the girls start their own businesses, prove themselves to be credit worthy in their communities, we find that they also change the communities in which they live. Because they are empowered, they are able to show in an actionable way, the different power brokers in the communities that they live. They have a voice and they can take care of themselves.

MS. KWAUK: Thank you. I like how you mentioned a lot about power. I hope we can get into that a little bit later. Yukiko, can I ask you to talk a little bit about repenteron and the ecological model that you all use.

MS. SAKURAI: Yes, definitely. It is interesting like Aissatou was mentioning, groups of adolescents getting together. Before we started the program, we did have the baseline side which was 15 districts in Nepal. What was interesting and striking was that when the boys are getting older they do have more friends. We did ask questions like if you have very sensitive topics which you can't discuss with your parents, how many friends can you discuss about this. Or if you really need money, if you (inaudible) how many friends can you ask. Very simple questions. They have more friends when they get older. Obviously, interestingly, girls said they have fewer friends when they get older. We asked the question of the age group of 10 to 14 first and then 15 to 19 so all of them are in the adolescent age. This was something where we said okay, we need to do something for the girls. They need to have a space, they

need to meet together and then see how they can improve the friendship or some activities outside of house or school.

So, this is something coming up and then among other various data that we collected, we just came up with ecological model. I didn't realize the room was so big and then I didn't have a means of printing a bigger one. We also wanted to put the adolescent at the center and then we wanted to see what are the immediate surrounding environment which they have or they are in. So, mothers and fathers, they are always very influential to adolescent life. And then also Nepal is like a very religious country by different divisions, Hinduism and also Muslims as well and indigenous religion. So, religious leaders are very powerful in the community to make some of the decisions and also having 2000 years of social norms.

Also, we do have teachers. The service providers, who is providing health services, for example, we do have a lot of local media because they don't have many TVs but they do have community radios. Radio isn't national like the States or Japan but it is more like a local radio surrounded by communities. So, the immediate surroundings which influenced adolescent life. And then the Euro is a little bigger, it's more like a policy level. What is the nation doing for adolescent?

So, as I mentioned at the beginning, UNICEF works for different dimensions. So, when it comes to the environment, what the nation is doing for adolescents, like to we have legislation and then is it like real. For example, the Nepal government recently changed their age of marriage from 16 to 20. We said is that really -- even at 16 they get married at the age 12 or 10. Does it make any changes? But this is something that we need to bring to the government as well. What kind of legislation do we need, what kind of policy do we need and how do we want to activate that policy into the real life into the community.

At the same time, the services, do we have enough capacity for health workers who can provide age appropriate gender services? We want to build the capacity. Also, we do

have a parenting programs. Nobody when it comes to (inaudible) development, parenting is very important. At the same time, in the second decade of life, we really think parent's orientation and training is important. This is the time adolescent boys and girls change dramatically their bodies and also their mind as well. Are the parents ready to accept all the changes and then also they have skills as well as adolescent to negotiate or to talk or to have a discussion with adolescent kids. We think this is something to build the capacity as well as adolescent girls and boys' capacity. So, this is how we work.

We do have other components like working with local media, working with religious leaders and they are really powerful. Then one voice said, no I'm not going accept any child marriage in my community, it stopped. In a sense we need to work with different surroundings and in different stakeholders in the community at the same time national or local Nepal.

MS. KWAUK: Thank you, Yukiko. Your point about really thinking about how as girls go into adolescents and their social networks decrease. And just the ability to have spaces where they can voice their issues or voice their concerns, just decreases dramatically, I think, is really key for us to think about the beyond the individual girl issue. And your ecological model, hopefully others can look at it at some point in time, really points to those key multiple layers that surround the girl that we try to also talk about in terms of context. What are those enabling environments and those enabling contexts that need to be considered, so thank you. Abby, can you tell us a little bit about how Sesame Workshop is tending to this larger social systemic change while simultaneously focusing on the individual's skill development.

MS. BUCUVALAS: Sure. So, I think what I'll speak about first a little bit is our mass media content. I'm going to qualify it a little bit because I think most of the people in this room are probably most familiar with the broadcast television that Sesame Street does. We recognize that we're reaching a subset of people and we're thinking about broadcast television who has access to broadcasts in many of the places where we're working. So, I'm just going to

give a couple of other ways that we try to produce content for mass media and then reach people who don't necessarily have a television at home.

One thing that we do are mobile community viewings where basically we take an episode or multiple episodes of television that were intended for broadcast. They will be hooked up to a rickshaw or a motorbike or a repurposed vegetable cart and actually moved from community to community. So, that folks who don't necessarily have electricity or a television in the home can come out and have a facilitated viewing experience. Obviously, that has limited reach as well but it goes beyond the reach of broadcast television and it really does help to bring the content to young children and caregivers who might not otherwise have access.

The other thing that we do that we don't do in the U.S. is radio programming. So, in India and South Africa and Afghanistan in particular, we have pretty extensive radio programs that feature the same characters, the same Sesame characters that you might see on broadcast television but instead, it is done for radio. I think as you Yukiko mentioned, that many of these radio stations are local stations. It is the station that a community or a couple of communities tune into. But through the networks that our media partners have, we are able to get incredible coverage. Particularly in Afghanistan, it has been pretty incredible. There are very remote communities that do have access to our local version of Sesame Street's programming through local radio stations. So, that's very exciting.

And then just speaking a little bit more about the capacity of broadcast to aim to influence social norms, I wrote down three main things that I think we try to do when we're thinking about what's going to actually go out in mass media. This tends to be one direction, it is not an interactive experience so we're really trying to get it right. Everything is done quite intentionally. The first thing I want to mention is our Muppet character development and how critical the character development is for our programs. When we're thinking about who are the characters that are going to represent the hopes and the realities of children in a given country

and what do we want them to look like, it is very much a collaborative process with Sesame teams that are based in country with producers, with educators with researchers. We're really trying to create characters that are trying to resonate and that stand for the sorts of values that we're hoping we'll be able to communicate.

The values that are represented by our curriculum and our educational objectives. I can definitely speak a little bit more about that. But what we're able to then do is to take those characters and I'll use one particular example is a little six year old girl character named, Zari, who is on our show in Afghanistan. We're able to take Zari and ultimately a year later, who new little brother who is around 3 or 4 years old and his name is Zirak and we're able to incorporate them into story lines that reflect and challenge some of the gender norms. And we're able to use these characters, in some cases, to address topics that might be quite sensitive to address with humans. We have a little bit more flexibility and they feel a little less threatening when they are challenging the norms. So, what we do with Zari and Zirak, for example, is Zari is older so she goes to school and Zirak can't wait till he's a big kid like Zari is so he can go to school as well. But just showing and modeling this idea that little boys can look up to girls and that girls can be the role model who is attending school. That's something that we're really trying to do in all our story lines.

And when it's possible, when it is maybe a little bit less sensitive or when it is sometimes a little bit more of a complicated message, we also do live action films which feature children from the target countries, the target communities challenging norms in similar ways. That might be showing a boy who is helping to clean a classroom even though that tends to be a girl's role or something like that. We create all of these story lines in a way where we're trying to challenge some of the norms that kids might be exposed to in their regular lives whether at home or in the community or at school.

And then the final thing that I wanted to mention about our broadcast

programming is that we really always try to keep coviewing in mind. That is ultimately our goal is that parents are going to watch these shows or listen to these shows with their children. So, I'm sure if any of you ever see U.S. Sesame Street, there are all sorts of spoofs from movies that your kids haven't watched but that you've watched. There are celebrities that kids don't recognize but that you recognize and all of that is a very conscious attempt to get parents to engage with the program as their children are watching it.

We do know from research and specifically from research in Afghanistan, that when coviewing happens, when parents are sitting down and watching the program with their kids, we actually see a greater educational impact. We see more significant learning outcomes among children who get to watch the program with their parents compared to those who are watching alone. That is definitely something that we're really trying to do and that gives us nice anecdotal evidence in many areas but specifically in girl's education where we have heard from fathers and uncles who have started to shift their perceptions around the values of sending young girls to preschool or to early primary school.

MS. KWAUK: Thank you, Abby. What is really interesting is that each of our panelists have approached this wider systemic social change component of girl's empowerment in very, very diverse ways. Especially thinking about how do you target these wider changes in a more holistic way. Whether it is through coviewing or in some way involving thinking about government policy and other media and other religious leaders and so on.

What it sounds like, and just trying to pull out the threads, what it sounds like is that we're really talking about the interplay between opportunity structures and the girl's agency and particularly, that relational agency piece. The part that is dependent on whether others in the community recognize that she has agency and that she can control and choose her own actions and choices. So, maybe we'll go back to Armene. Ashta No Kai, really aims to develop girl's agency at their voice, their ability to aspire. In your qualitative evidence, you found that

your interventions made huge strides in expanding girl's possibilities or aspirations, their dreams. Can you tell us a little bit of what you think might have been some of those key ingredients that really activated some of those internal development of agency?

MS. MODI: I'll start with the external because without the support of mothers, in all the case studies we did, mothers played a very key role. So, however much we could develop the girl's voice in agency, self-esteem, et cetera, without the mothers support I don't think the girl could have gone very far. I just wanted to mention that. What we tried to do was create a supportive enabling environment for the girl. As I mentioned earlier in all the various interventions, we tried to captures the girls at tipping points when they might fall through the cracks. In terms of giving voice in agency, for example, many of the girls had so many misconceptions and misinformation about adolescents and menstruation, all these social taboos. So, helping to demystify some of this, helped girls a lot. It helped girls to feel they were not strange or they were not, I'm not quite articulating what I want to say. It helped girls to feel that they are like all other girls, they are no different.

Also, the one other thing in our qualitative study was the importance of role models. For example, in the case of Ty, a zero to hero girl, she had these role models that she aspired to be like. One of her zenias was studying instrumentation engineering so she thought if she can do it so can it. I hate to bring this, yes I can, Obama's phrase but that's what we wanted to give the girls the ability to feel. The role model it certainly helped girls to feel that way.

MS. KWAUK: The other key ingredients.

MS. MODI: I'm trying to think. I think they all mentioned that in the life skills education program sessions, they just felt that they learned so much and that they could particularly reflect on this. We had facilitators who were our community workers who were trained to run these programs. They felt very comfortable, not only in thinking about this and

learning about how to negotiate and all this but they actually would perform skits where they would take these to the village community to help the village community change gender norms. For example, they would do skits on dowry and child marriage and to portray the negative effects of these terrible cultural practices.

Girls had a space, they had a feeling that we were helping to build their capacity so that they could control their lives in the future. We tried to expand their world. We had overnight camps, we had exposure trips. We took them to the police station. We told them about rape laws. This kind of opening the world of a village girl who generally in an average village in India in a rural setting, once she has reached puberty she does not leave the four walls of her home. Once she gets married, also she rarely does that.

Again, I want to come back to our interventions with the village community. Once we made mothers our allies, the ripple effect extended to the fathers. One strategy, this is not about empowering but I want to share this. One strategy we used was to make mothers financially not quite independent but to give them livelihood interventions. Once their income increased, they were our allies because they believed in us that we were trying to improve the quality of their lives. So, they were very instrumental in helping us to transform the lives for girls. We also brought in micro credit and so on and so on. Ours is a kind of, I would like to again use that word, holistic. We're targeting not just the girl but the mother primarily because she holds the key to supporting and promoting the girl's aspirations, the girl's education, et cetera. We did this through financial upliftment for the mothers, we also supported the girl. It was not quite as holistic as Yukiko suggested. We tried in our own way to kind of give the girl an enabling and supportive environment in every way we could.

MS. KWAUK: Thank you. Yukiko, I'll be returning to you. UNICEF Nepal's Pantran program also aims to enhance the skills that girls have to influence decisions that are critical in their life trajectories including ways in which they might be meeting moments of early

marriage. Can you discuss a little bit about how Pantran is thinking about and actually addressing the development of her agents of girl's agency.

MS. SAKURAI: Sure. I think it's a very interesting point. Just before going to what's the program about, I just wanted to mention about agent versus agency. In Nepal, a quarter of adolescent girls get married before the age of 18, so 24 percent. So, it is quite high. The girl's child marriage program is getting lots of attention and then it is multisectoral approaches. Are we aiming to have a program which stops the marriage at the age of 18 or do we want to increase the agency of adolescent girls who make the decision saying I don't want to get married at the age of 18.

When the child marriage program like UNICEF Nepal and then personally myself said, no we don't want to fight for the age. We want to fight for the agencies. We want to increase the agency of adolescent girls who can make the decision. As I mentioned, based on the baseline surveys, we came up with the Pantran program. Pantran in Nepali means transformation in English. We wanted to make the girls and boys transformed throughout this program. So, how it works is we do have 15 models in the social and financial skills. I can't list them all but it started with my world or self-awareness, light and responsibility. We wanted to make sure that the girls know who they are, where are their surroundings and then it goes to some of the topics. We talk about nutrition, first aid, civic engagement. And then some of the things are financial literacy like savings and spending.

We do have very comprehensive 15 models mostly conducted through (inaudible) methodologies. I just wanted to lead Mysel's story. This is the quotation from one of the participants in our program. She says, if my father can no longer assist me, my education, I will use my money from my savings account and continue my education and my goals in life. I was quite impressed for this and the translation might be giving a little bit more. Still, I feel like this is really powerful. The reason why I say it is powerful is it has a lot of different

competencies and skills and knowledge that she used in this sentence. So, what it means is she knows who she is, where she is or what surroundings she is having. Also, she knows what she wants to be, how she wants to be in the future. At the same time, she mentions that she wants to continue her study from her savings. It is coming from the topics of savings and spending. Then finally, she is negotiating with her father. Meaning that she needs to have some kind of empowerment herself plus she is confident in the negotiation of communication with the father.

In one sentence, this is something we are trying to do. We are trying to increase the agency of adolescent girls in different dimensions and probably one is not enough. Giving different competencies all together, she might be able to fight or negotiate with the surroundings she has. Again, I think it is very interesting to see gender aspect as well especially in Nepal context. So, when we go to the field, asking the girls, even like the participating the girls through our program, I asked the questions, do you think that there are any differences between boys and girls. Do you think you are treated differently? Most of the time at the beginning, the girls said well, I don't think so, I'm treated quite well. And then I was asking the questions more. To hear from them like what it means to be treated equally or the same because I don't have the sense of that. And then what they say is that I go to school like my brother. And then I ask another question, your brother is going to private school and you're going to public school. And then she was like yeah and then she started thinking okay, this might be something different. And then I asked them, what do you do when you go back home? They said, well I help my mother or grandmother. I asked them, so what does your brother do and they say well they play football or cricket. And then I'm challenging them again. Do you think girls and boys are treated the same and they are like, maybe not.

So, in a sense, gender norms or social cultural structure is so deep in their mind. So, even if we don't provoke, they don't realize it. This is something that we need to break

through. We just don't want to give the skills and knowledge but also we challenge the society and it might be difficult for them to start thinking first. They might challenge themselves a little bit in a different ways or difficult ways at home or school. So, again I come back to the comprehensiveness. We need to have a support mechanism and if they face something difficult like where they can go, who can they talk to. So, we need to create the supporting system together otherwise they might feel like they are so empowered but nobody listens to them and they might hurt themselves or they stop learning because this is not giving them meaningful life. In terms of agency, I think it is very important to have two dichotomies, as you mentioned, opportunity plus agency, what does it mean, agencies, and what are the competencies they need in the cultural context.

MS. KWAUK: Yeah. Great example about the need to support girls to be able to read their context, read their gender and their power. Thank you so much for bringing that to light. Another component of the framework that we really try to promote here is the importance of addressing life skills across the girl's lifetime. Armene, your paper really talked about thinking about interventions across key tipping points, across adolescents and how support needs to be targeted at those particular points in time. I think maybe we can use that point to get to Sesame Workshop with Abby. Sesame Workshop is focused on the early childhood years. So, can you speak a little bit more about how you see your work on building girl's skills and girl's life skills at a young age, builds the foundations for empowerment across a girl's lifetime. In particular, what are the consequences of not addressing those skills, those sense of knowledge and attitude in her life?

MS. BUCUVALAS: Yeah definitely. I'll think I'll start with the last part of that and say that I think in general, we believe in and research tells us it is much easier to establish a behavior then it is to change a behavior. So, we sort of have this luxury of when we're working with young children, that if we can effectively establish the knowledge skills and attitudes, I keep

wanting to say, knowledge attitudes and practices. But the knowledge skills and attitudes that we think will set children on a positive trajectory that then you don't have to worry about undoing something later on. Obviously, at the same time, you're hoping that you can influence some of the broader societal factors in a way that creates a conducive environment for these positive trajectories. So, it is certainly complicated but I do think in some ways, it is a bit easier to work with the youngest kids. They are just eager to learn and to try something new that they've learned and you don't necessarily have to convince them that the way they've been doing something for the last 10 or 20 years is not the best way. So, we have that advantage a bit.

Then on the other hand, you have these young children who don't necessarily have control over many aspects of their life. So, now going back to the earlier part of your question, I think what is really important for us is that we're thinking about what are the KSAs that young children can control. Where do they have agency and where don't they and how can they make strategic decisions to build on what they can control and to empower them in those spaces without being unrealistic about the fact that we're talking about a six year old child here and what can we really expect them to be able to control and change in their daily lives.

I'm going to give an example of one of our health education programs. Before I begin, I'll say one of the topics where personally in many of the contexts where we work where I feel less comfortable is in nutrition. When we're talking about the importance of eating a diverse diet or drinking plenty of clean water or having your colorful fruits and vegetables that young kids don't necessarily have control over the food that they can access. So, you need a really effective partner or you need to know that the kids are in a context and that they're daily reality allows them to access these diverse food sources before you start really spending a lot of time and energy and funds on that sort of education.

A place where we have been able to do this work, and again it is going to be in the health space, is in our water sanitation and hygiene education program. A couple of reasons that that

has worked so well. Our program is called wash up and it is really focused on all of the KSAs. What we really want to see at the end of the day is positive behavior change. And the way that we made a decision to really invest a lot of energy in this space is that a lot of the behaviors that can help to save lives and prevent disease, children can, with access to the appropriate resources, they can practice them themselves. That's around making good decisions about what water you drink and what water you don't drink. Knowing how to properly wash your hands with soap. Wearing shoes or sandals when you go outside to use the latrine, that kind of thing. We have a great partner in World Vision because they're actually working on the infrastructure side of things. So, when we partner with World Vision and we're working in public schools where World Vision is working, we know that there are improved latrines, we know that there is access to safe drinking water, we know that there are handwashing stations at these schools. And then we know that these kids can be empowered to practice these behaviors. They have the opportunity to practice what they are learning. I think it is really important to keep that in mind that you are empowering children with knowledge that they're able to use for whatever age they're at. It is something that we definitely try to do.

Another thing that we're trying to do with the wash program is to empower children to be educators themselves. So, we actually have a whole chunk of the curriculum is dedicated to this idea that you can go home and you can teach your siblings about something. In some countries, you can go home and you can teach your parents about some things. We make those decisions on a country by country basis working with local stakeholders to make sure we're not encouraging any sort of empowered practices that would be seen as disrespectful from such young kids. But that we're really trying to give these children a voice and let them see through our characters as well that young children can teach one another and they can inspire behavior change that can have a positive impact for their communities and for actual health outcomes.

I think I'll probably stop there but just really briefly I'll mention that while we do work with quite young children, the wash program is just beginning to expand. Just this week, we have a curriculum seminar that is running in Zimbabwe to figure out how to figure out how we can create a curriculum that integrates wash education with girl's empowerment and menstrual hygiene management. That will be targeting girls who are ages 10 to 12 as well as their peers who are boys and their educators. It will be a school based program. We're again, sort of trying to empower kids with this knowledge before they necessarily need it. We do know that the 10 to 12 year old girls in these rural contexts where we're working, typically have not started to menstruate so we're actually trying to prepare them up front, before they begin to practice or begin to hear things that aren't necessarily true or aren't necessarily the healthiest way to deal with menstruation at school. We'll see how that one goes and hopefully in a year or so we'll have some very positive news to share about that.

MS. KWAUK: That's a really exciting case of being able to see how the early childhood focus on skills beyond just the specific wash skills but even just the negotiation and the communication with parents and other peers about what they've learned. Get connected to a really critical point and I think what we all are familiar with around puberty and adolescents for girls. When we talk about the menstrual hygiene management programs that are trying to address puberty related issues for girls, at adolescents there is potentially a link from early childhood to that point. Aissatou, over to you. How does the focus at BRAC on livelihoods help us to think about ensuring continuity from adolescences into adulthood and those life outcomes that we're really trying to see happen after girls leave programs?

MS. DIALLO: So, the country in the context in which we work, they face many challenges related to population growth and the increasing number of young people who are to enter the labor market. For women and girls, where we work, these challenges are harder to address because they also occur alongside a relative lack of economic empowerment and also

control over their bodies. There is poverty and then there is relative poverty, for us I guess, that's how we keep them coming.

To improve life outcomes for girls into their adulthood, we sort of address the ways in which their economic empowerment converges with reproductive rights and empowerment. When adolescent girls don't believe that they will eventually be able to have access to employment opportunities they don't really invest or compel the investments into their education or other skill based programs. The outcome it leads to is child marriage again, transactional sex, in some instances, young child bearing and vice versa. When they do enter into early marriage and they have children young then they are less likely to be able to take advantage of opportunities that present themselves. This, we find, creates the cycle of economic and social disempowerment that follows adolescences into adulthood. So, disadvantaged girls, poor women.

So, working back for us the other approach then is to focus on livelihood skills for adolescent girls. Alongside sexual and reproductive health training, confidence building, mentorship, access to microcredit will appropriate. We think by doing so, by wrapping those two things together, doing the work they need to do in life skills, doing they work they need to do building social capital for the girls and wrapping it up with financial empowerment, tends to break that cycle. It carries on with them, it follows them from their adolescents into adulthood.

MS. KWAUK: Thank you so much. I think the piece about breaking the cycles, it really gets back to the point about at what point do we break the cycle. Do we focus on it in early childhood, do we focus on it in adolescents and how do we do that to ensure that those life outcomes when they are women, the cycles have already been broken.

I want to make sure we have time for audience questions as well. Before we do that, I want to just get your thoughts on this. Your discussion points have all really helped to make more practical and tangible, some of the abstract concepts I had presented earlier. I

wanted to get a sense from you all in thinking about moving forward and we have a lot of practitioners and policy makers and researchers in the field here in our audience. What would be your one recommendation to help programs really think beyond the girl in our efforts to achieve wider social change for girls? Armene, we can start with you and come down.

MS. MODI: Okay we have a whole room full of people who are advocates for promoting adolescent girl's education. I would say, we need to promote adolescent boy's behavior change. That's what we are also planning to do. We can't leave the boys out of this conversation. Boys need to feel a sense of responsibility also in changing gender norms. Also, to feel that both boys and girls are partners in making a better world. A lot of the funding and the energy, I think, in today's world is so focused on adolescent girls. We keep on reading about the crisis. I've also written about the learning crisis and it is all focused on girls. But I think we critically need to bring boys into this conversation. We need to change their ideas of masculinity. We really need to target them so that's my one great recommendation and I hope many of you will agree with me.

MS. KWAUK: Yeah and I think as Jean Spurling, Rebecca and I have mentioned in the past, it really requires a special focus on the girls without forgetting the boys. Thank you for that one. Yukiko.

MS. SAKURAI: I prepared something and what I prepared is multisectoral interventions or creating an enabling environment including the boys or engagement of the boys and men or partnership or engagement of adolescent not as beneficiaries but as a partner. That is what I was thinking but I will shift that a little bit. I think we need just need to hear the voices of adolescents echoing what they were saying. How many of you working with adolescents go to the field and then talk to them and then hearing their voices. Good to see many hands. I'm working with UNICEF and UNICEF says the country office is like the field office. Our work is stuck with the ministries or partners or some others work in the office. How

often do I have the opportunity to go and see the girls and the boys and (inaudible) where we are working for. And then that is giving me the power. I think all the practitioners just see, what are the challenges they are facing. Hearing their voices, what support do they need, what challenges are they facing in the house or community of schools. And probably this is giving us something more based on whatever else we have, data or network or partnership. Like I said, we have all the means but I think we really need to see what is their thinking and then just lifting up some voices and then giving the opportunity for adolescents to be an agent of the society. I think this is something I wanted to take one recommendation.

MS. KWAUK: Abby.

MS. BUCUVALES: It actually fits really well with what both of you just said. I would definitely emphasize the importance of involving parents in programs and, of course, mothers are critically important but fathers are very important too. What I would say that we need to keep in mind as many of us are working in global or multi country organizations that what appropriate messaging and parental participation looks like. It might vary a little bit from country to country and it's important for us to create programing that respects and reflects the voices of the parents who are supporting these girls as they grow up.

So, I think just being a bit flexible in terms of what right kind of parenting engagement or the right kind of parental involvement looks like is very important. But making sure we are open minded enough that we can adapt some initial intentions in order to keep parents involved and to not maybe fall back into something that is a bit easier which would be focusing solely on the girls themselves.

MS. KWAUK: Aissatou, last word to you.

MS. DIALO: So, for me, from what I've seen with my work, I would just echo and increased focus really on the girl. The numbers are not panning out. I think for me, the question always is, what about the girl. In many of the places that we work, girls are most

disempowered, girls have no voice. It is because of that, this question of, in many of the communities and we do get those questions as well from community leaders from boys and men in the communities where we work. Really the question is, what about the girls. So, for me it's doubling down on our work with girls but, of course, because we're working with girls creating and focusing on our programs more and creating enabling environments where the girls will live. And, of course, an enabling environment for the girl it involves the boy, it involves her brother, it involves her parents, it involves her teachers and other powerbrokers in society. I think many of our programs can have stronger focus on creating an enabling environment.

MS. KWAUK: Thank you so much. So, let's go over to the audience. We'll do a couple of rounds. I'll do one in the purple and then one right there and two in the back.

SPEAKER: Hi. This hadn't been talked about until your comment, Abigail touched on it a little bit, but it is quite obvious, I think. It's intuitive to everybody to know that mothers are really important influences. I'm a practitioner so I don't really know about how this fits in the world of research but maybe different researchers here could address what President Joyce Banda, a former President of Malawi and the second only African woman president has found and has been advocating for, she has found that in studying female leaders in Africa, the most important common ingredient was them having fathers and fathers who supported them.

SPEAKER: I, I work for CARE. One of the series we have at CARE is failing forward, trying to learn from the mistakes or unintended consequences of our interventions. So, I'm very interested in hearing a bit more of what have you learned from some of the unintended consequences of some of your programming. Because I can anticipate with each of you that some of things were well intentioned and some of the assumptions that you base your interventions on, actually resulted in some not so positive things. Thank you.

SPEAKER: Hi, I'm Angela (inaudible), principle advisor gender at UNICEF. It's great to see Yukiko on the panel. My statement is a little bit more of a comment than a question

but there is a question at the end. I'm thrilled about the passion that you all bring to your work. There are some very important investments that you have made in moving the girl agenda forward which is obviously delightful. But I can think of, in the 25 years in which I have been working with life skills programs and adolescent girl programs, probably maybe 80 percent of life skills programs have not worked, have not been sustainable, have been left aside, not to be scaled up. It not even implemented effectively, the ones that are implemented effectively are usually channeled by dedicated NGOs and committed people like yourselves who put their heart and soul into it. Because to do a good life skills program requires people who are going to do the teaching and the training and the systems and the setup and good resources. If you're going to have a holistic program, you also need to work with the communities and the boys and the men and it requires a lot of money and infrastructure.

So, we have been reconsidering and to the point of unintended consequences that maybe in our passion, we're creating too much of a divide between what the NGOs are bringing and the committed people are bringing to the table and what our systems are delivering, what social protection systems are delivering. And in some ways, perhaps, it's time to think about having your passion actually influence those systems and to the point that she was asking, beyond the girl, what can we do. How can we have girls actually have serious access to good teachers, good schools, schools that are not too far away. Schools that actually teach life skills as part of what they're supposed to teach. Where to we channel our energies instead of being the delivery point. But rather than the voice that really changes it for millions of girls because at the end of the day, the number of girls that you're able to serve, is not very large. And in that sense, I think that also answers a question of resources in boys. Because a lot of people talk about influencing boys, but if you look at the amount of resources that are going to boys versus girls, not through NGO programs but through larger government and other investments, it is disproportionately more for boys. Why are we not using those resources to actually get boys to

be better influenced. Because the worry about the comment that you're making is that we need to work with boys is that those small resources that we're currently spending on little programs for girls will then get diverted to channeling boys. Her point, girls have to be front and center.

It would be interesting to hear your thoughts about that. Are we really serving girls by taking our passion and directly working with them or are we really satisfying our own sense of having to do something and having that touch point that Yukiko mentioned. Is it for our own satisfaction or for the welfare of the girls.

MS. KWAUK: Thank you so much, Angela. Thank you for getting us straight into that critical question. I think the question of sustainability and scalability is definitely something that I think we should maybe address here as well. But that point about the division between what NGOs are doing and the small pool of resources that are channeled into NGOs are doing versus the large set of resources that are going to large systems. How can we better merge these two. I think that's a very critical question for all of our panelists.

So, we've got one on mothers versus fathers, how do we reconcile the need to engage both. We also have the question on unintended consequences of what you all have learned and then that critical question of resources and where are efforts are with NGOs versus systems. Anyone want to tackle those?

MS. BUCUVALAS: I can take this one. So, I'm going to try to cohesively address all of those points. For us, what I would say in terms of cost effectiveness and scalability is that certainly our broadcast programming allows us to reach literally millions of girls and children and parents. It certainly is an advantage and it definitely has a much lower cost per child or per recipient or beneficiary or whatever term we want to use than many other programs. There are a couple of challenges that come with that. One of the challenges is that not everyone wants to fund that. And certainly, as a non-profit organization, it is difficult to convince someone that the best thing that they can do over the next several years is pay for a

new season of television or a few new seasons of television programming. So, that is certainly scalable and does have some impact. I think it is a big hard from the funding side of things. I would also say it links a bit to the question of where are we not as successful as we might hope we would be. There are some limitations with broadcast. A broadcast program, even if you make sure a child watches three times a week and doing that has costs, of course, that are added costs. It is not like broadcasting something guarantees that it will be watched. You are less likely to achieve behavior change. You need to have a program that appeals to kids over the course of 15 minutes to 30 minutes, depending on how long the program is going to be. That means it's not going to focus on only one topic the entire time. Like no child wants to sit down and watch a 30 minute segment on the alphabet. So, you end up diluting the curriculum and then while you might see some knowledge gains, you're much less likely to see attitudinal shifts or actual behavior change or skills building that you can get when you're working with smaller numbers in a more interactive environment.

So, for us at Sesame, I think that's a really important question. What are we trying to achieve and really asking ourselves, when does it make sense to try to achieve through broadcast. And know that even if all we do is move the needle on some of the knowledge skills or the knowledge levels, that that in and of itself is a worthwhile achievement because we're doing that among a very large population. Versus when is that shift in knowledge not actually going to positively impact child outcomes? And then maybe it does make more sense to spend more per child on in school or a community based program.

I would link some of that to the parenting question about mothers and fathers. I'd say that we have had much better luck engaging fathers through anything that involves media like TV or radio. When we have really nice anecdotes or we have some focus group evidence that fathers are influenced by our programming, it tends to involve video. When we need a parent to come to a community center, to engage in meaningful play with their child for two

hours at a time once a week for four weeks or once a week for twelve weeks, it is almost always the mother or an aunt that shows up with a child. So, I think that that is another thing just to have in mind that there are certain types of programs that might be more conducive to the involvement of fathers versus mothers. And that that's likely to vary a bit from country to country. We're working in three countries right now with the program I just referenced and I think we've seen when we have a couple hundred families show up or a couple hundred parent child pairs show up, maybe across the three countries, maybe six or seven of them will be fathers.

MS. KWUAK: Thank you. Do others want to respond to some of those questions?

MS. DIALLO: Sure, I was going to speak to the fail forward question because I do have a perfect example from our adolescent development work. So, our work sort of started in Bangladesh in 1993. In Bangladesh, we mainly do life skills. We implement our programs like we do most of our other programs. We implement them at cost and scale and it is large enough that the dollar amount per girl is usually something around \$30 to 40 over a two year period. In Bangladesh, it is mainly life skills. The way we do it, it is a trainer of trainer's thing. We train our mentors, we recruit mentors and we train them and then the mentors work with the girls.

When we moved into international operations, specifically to sub-Saharan Africa, specifically to Uganda, which is where our first Africa operation was, when we started our adolescent program there we changed it a bit. We added the financial and farming component. That worked extremely well in the Uganda context and then we did Tanzania, South Sudan, Liberia and Sierra Leon. We tried to back track that iteration into Bangladesh and it failed. It fell flat on its face. While we could work very easily with girls delivering life skills and it worked for the family, it worked for them in their communities, we found out that added the livelihood

training and the micro credit portion did not work. At least it did not translate into actionable empowerment for the girls. We found out that in the Bangladesh context, perhaps maybe because (inaudible) is stronger or maybe family structures are stronger, I'm not sure what it is. The money ended up in the hands of fathers or other family members so it didn't work at all.

MS. MODI: I tend to disagree with the last comment in terms of that we only need to focus on the girl. The terrific incidents, the horrible incidence of sexual violence in India clearly indicate that we need to have a mind shift change in men. We need to educate men. If there are huge amounts of funds I would love to know where they are so we can tap those resources. I feel that just, okay we're all trying to empower the girl and we keep the girl the main central focus but then what is happening in real life and everyday life in our country. I'm talking from the Indian context. We definitely need to target boys, definitely. I feel very strongly that changing boy's mindsets, changing boys' gender perceptions, changing their ideas of what masculinity is trying to change very deeply embedded patriarchal norms is very important.

In terms of, somebody asked about unintended consequences. I'm not sure that I'm going to answer this. Whenever we gave the scholarships, we always insisted that mothers came. But we started to see fathers coming. The way we worked to engage the fathers was through the mothers. So, when we gave the mothers micro credit loans, the fathers would ask for loans for motorcycles. So, there are different ways you can engage them. And in terms of unintended consequences, Ashta No Kai's initial focus was only literacy for adult women. So, we struggled. Now that was again, a very top down approach. I read a book, only 39 percent of women are literate so let's get 100 percent literacy, let's start this campaign. Of course, it failed miserably. After two years, the women said what are we going to do with your literacy. Maybe we can read a bus board. We need income, we need to improve our financial situation. Very quickly we learned that you need a bottom up approach. What is it that the people that you are serving, what are their needs. You need to start from there. That was a very valuable lesson

for us.

MS. SAKURAI: Just quickly, I was checking the data I have. So far, UNICEF reached out to 15,000 parents, called the parenting orientation. Nobody (inaudible) but either of them comes like father or mother because they need to do their own work. I don't have the exact number but it is more like half and half. So, the father's also come to participate if they see other fathers are coming. They need to show like they are participating. So, it is kind of like social norms again. And then if the mothers are more, normally the father doesn't come. We need to create some environment, how we need to engage different gender parents to be supported for this program, that's one answer.

And then for the failing one, it is interesting. I can't think of anything failing but still when it comes to adolescent empowerment program, especially in the country or geographic area where we don't have much employment at the end of the program. I feel it's not very easy to have so many expectations. A lot of girls are asking us what's next and we might not have some answers. At the same time, I think this is where the partnership works better. So, in UN, for example, we do have other partners who is working for employment like ILO. There are some other partners who are working other initiatives or civil society organizations. I think the partnership is key to linking whatever program we do and the next stage. That is not failure but still something we learn from the program.

I think scalability and then sustainability, it's a really, really good question. This is something to challenge. As I mentioned, UNICEF tried to work through the system strengthening with the partners. How we do it, as I said, we made the 15 models curriculum in consultation with the adolescent partners in the government. And then once they're involved, it can be vying. That project itself or the training materials itself is endorsed by two ministries. Ministry of Women and Children and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. But the total budget of these two ministries is like 0.09 or something out of hundred total budget. So, who has the

money? 26 percent goes to ministry (inaudible). A lot of girls are dropping out but still quite a few of them, boys and girls, are still in the school system. So, now we are trying to make sure the education sector is taking some of the component within the educational system so that we can catch more adolescent girls and boys in the educational setting. How we want to work with various ministries to catch adolescents at different variety of platforms or ways. So, again a multisectoral approach so we can catch adolescent girls and boys in the community at school or the health center where they come and maybe mass media also catches them so it is not only one approach making the scale sustainable.

MS. KWAUK: Thank you. So, we are unfortunately now behind schedule again. What wonderful conversation and I think we should definitely pick up that question about the boys versus the girls, where the resource is, how can we really think about attending to the wider opportunity structures that are affecting the ability for girls to be able to translate their skills into empowered action? That question of boys, is it that we focus the limited resources that are within the NGO non-formal sector to boys or do we really just focus on the boys and we think about how do we make the education systems more compatible with thinking about masculinities, thinking about gender relations and those other social structures and policy structures that are inhibiting girls from translating their skills into action. We don't have time today so I want to thank you all for your attention. We are just going to wrap up this panel and turn to some closing remarks by our director, Rebecca Winthrop.

MS. WINTHROP: Thank you. You guys can leave but my closing remarks are very brief because we have 60 seconds left before our reception. So, basically I just wanted to give a huge, huge thank you to all our panelists. It has been an incredibly rich discussion. From the morning right through to today, so many thanks to all our panelists. I want to give a particular thank you to our four wonderful Echidna Scholars. Maria Cristina, Dasmine and Damaris and Armene, huge thank you to all four of you. We have loved having you hear. You

have enriched our understanding of girl's education across our team and certainly with a much broader audience who you have interfaced with. And sadly, this is the sad part, they will leave us and go back to their families which they will be happy to do, I'm sure, but we will be sad. So, please do stay in close, close contact and certainly you will have made many new friends who are here with you and will continue to stay in touch. I'm sure they will corner you when we have coffee, tea, cookies. We thought it would be a little too early to have wine, it's 3:30. So, just a big huge thanks to everyone and please join us out here for the reception.

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