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WEBINAR

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF ASSESSING
21ST CENTURY SKILLS ACROSS DIVERSE CULTURAL CONTEXTS?

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Closing remarks:

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. WINTHROP: Good morning, good evening, good afternoon, everybody. Thank you so much for joining us. My name is Rebecca Winthrop; I am a Senior Fellow and co-director of the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution.

I am very, very pleased to open, and introduce you to the wonderful speakers we have today. This event, as you know, is called, "What Are the Implications of Assessing 21st Century Skills Across Diverse Cultural Contexts?" It is the second in a series of three events we Allied Engineering doing exploring assessment -- different dimensions of assessment.

In this particular event today, we're really looking at this question of the trend -- or an emerging trend, or a new movement, perhaps -- of large-scale assessments, which traditionally, of course, have focused on subjects -- academic subjects and content -- moving to focus on 21st century skills, and what that means, if you think about doing those in different cultural contexts around the world.

There have been a lot of discussion around assessment coming out of the pandemic as assessments were stopped, what type of assessment, a lot of discussion about learning loss, but also questions of educators and parents in schools about what are all the things that children **did** learn, even if it might not be core academic content; what else have they been able to do? Such as independent learning skills, problem solving skills, etc.

I'm very thrilled to have three wonderful panelists. You will have an opportunity to hear from them in a minute, and please do send in your questions through #21csassessment on Twitter, and we will be monitoring those questions along the way.

The three guests that are joining me today are Esther Care, who's a nonresident Senior Fellow with us at the Center for Universal Education. You have seen from her bio on the website, she has a very long career as a global expert in assessment, particularly out of the University of Melbourne. At the moment, she is working very heavily on assessment of 21st century skills, particular in Africa and Asia, and integrating those into education systems across curriculum and pedagogy and assessment

systems.

Very happy to welcome, also, from based in Kampala, Mauro Giacomazzi, who is the Institutional Development Advisor for the Luigi Giussani Institution of Higher Education. Since 2020, Mauro has served as the Uganda Program Coordinator for the assessment of life skills and values in East Africa ALiVE Project, at the Regional Education and Learning Initiative, which is called RELI, for those who know it.

And good welcome from Nairobi from Kenya, Purity Ngina, who is the Research and Assessment Manager at Zizi Afrique Foundation. She currently is working heavily on generating large scale evidence on values and life skills and linking evidence to inform wider system change in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda.

You will primarily be hearing some really in depth, interesting learnings and insight from two initiatives: the OAA Initiative, which Esther will share Optimizing Assessment Above All, which she led through her work here at Brookings, and then the ALiVE Initiative that works across East Africa, which both Mauro and Purity are deeply engaged in.

So, what we are going to do today is I'm going to hand over to the three speakers. Esther will lead us through a series of three sort of in depth, deep dive presentations, and a conversation across all three, including at the end, of course, answering your thoughts and questions.

So, I am very grateful to all three of you for making the time. This is a really interesting and important topic and please do now put yourselves on video and join me here on the screen. Thank you, all of you, for being with us. Over to you, Esther.

MS. CARE: Thank you very much, Rebecca. Lovely to hear your voice and to your enthusiasm for this work.

So, I'm going to start off with a brief look, as Rebecca said, on the Optimizing Assessment for All Project. And I'll just share my screen here so that you can see it. And here we go.

So, in this project, which as Rebecca mentioned, was undertaken at Brookings a couple of years ago, I wanted to look at what the implications now are, of assessing 21st century skills across, as

you can see there, diverse cultural context, because this is something we very much had to deal with in the OAA Project.

So, first of all though, why we're even talking about 21st century skills. I just want to give a little bit of context here. I know there are many people at the moment who are focusing on foundational literacies, and we discussed that briefly in the last webinar -- or the first webinar of this series. But the fact is that our Brookings study a couple of years ago showed that there is a global shift in learning goals with over 70% of 160 countries that we surveyed, including a vision of learners with highly developed 21st century skills -- skills like collaboration, digital literacy, creative thinking and so on. And our work in the OAA study was very much in response to that information.

I worked extensively with groups of researchers in Asia prior to understand how their different education systems were reflecting what they were calling "transverse" or "competencies", and there was a particular interest in the region -- in the Asia region at that time -- in assessment.

Now, my view is that we can't look at assessment in isolation. We've always got to look at it in the context that it occurs, and particularly in the formal education sector, of course, in the context of teaching and learning. And you particularly need to think about that context when you're looking at concepts that are not particularly familiar to people.

So, an opportunity had presented itself to explore how these competencies, 21st century skills, or transverse of competencies, could be assessed across two groups of collaborating countries, and this would have implications for how the competencies could be taught in the classroom.

So, the objectives of OAA, Optimizing Assessment for All, would use the actual process of development assessments as one way to understand more keenly, the actual nature of the skills, and then how we might demonstrate those in everyday classrooms. We needed to resolve how to assess the skills, or the transverse of competencies, in alignment with how they are written into curriculum, if we're talking about mainstream education, and how they're to be taught.

So, the first step was to develop understanding of the nature of the 21st century skills in participating countries. And what you can see on this map is we had three countries in Africa, The

Gambia -- which you can hardly see because it's just a thin, little strip -- the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Zambia. And then over in Asia, we worked with teams from Nepal, Mongolia, and Cambodia.

So, the first step was to understand the nature of these skills in those countries, and then the next step was to develop and pilot assessment tasks that would target those local understandings of the competencies.

So, as Rebecca mentioned, our goal was to not take an international, large-scale assessment, generic, top-down type of approach where more often than not, the definition and descriptions of skills are adopted from Western perspectives, or European perspectives, and typically, where a Western team of assessment experts would develop the tasks and items and then might try to localize some of those for administration in different countries.

The goal for each region under OAA was -- as you can see here -- to develop shared conceptualizations of the transverse of competencies, or 21st century skills, that were valued by the two regions and the countries we were working in, to analyze their common curricula -- in other words, to find out what was common across the curricula in each region, and then to develop assessment items, provide critical feedback to each other, and work out with the teachers -- not only how we might assess those students -- but then, how the results from the assessment could be interpretable for classroom teachers.

And so, this approach that we were taking was a much more participatory, collaborative, decision making group throughout the three teams in Asia and the three teams in Africa, rather than having a top-down approach.

Now, why did we take that approach? Well, just think about it, really? If you look at this slide, we've got, "What is your definition of collaboration, or respect, or creative thinking?" And I'm sure -- knowing that many of you come from many different parts of the world -- but also many of you come from the same area, each of you will have a slightly different definition, perhaps, and a slightly different prescription. And when we go to the second set of questions here about, "what do each of these skills look like", we are likely to find even more differences.

So, we may find some similar responses across nationalities, cultures, religions, and even individuals to some of these 21st century skills, but we're not going to find the same responses to all of them, and we're probably not going to find them ubiquitously, particularly when we look at this issue of interpretation of visible behaviors, "what does something look like?"

So, we do have differences that language impacts. We know, for example, that some languages don't have words for both collaboration and cooperation. So, if you have a language where you don't have a word for each of those, then that implies that there's some different conceptualization about what those words mean, and therefore, what those competencies possibly could be.

It was realization of issues such as that that stimulated the particular direction that OAA took and led us to developing definitions and descriptions of the skills to work with, within each of the two regional clusters.

So, just to make it a little bit more concrete, one, I think, incredibly important point to be aware of when we're development assessments, and that is, you've got to know what the target competency is. You've got to know what it is you're actually wanting to measure. That sounds very simple, but sometimes we lose sight of the things that are most simple and most important.

Now, all too often, we find that people just think they can pick up any assessment tool and use it, and they don't think about the conceptual framework that frames the particular tasks, and they don't think about whether the tool is consistent with the immediate culture or context in which that tool is being used.

And so, here on the left-hand side of the screen, you can see one of the teachers who is from the OAA Nepali Team, and she -- as you can see there from the quote -- was being quite explicit about this realization that you need to understand what the construct is, what the concept is, of the skill, and then when you understand that thoroughly, in terms of how it's understood in your own environment, then she was able to move forward into contributing to developing task ideas, because she had that understanding.

The second point I'd like to make here is -- and I'm going over to the other side of the

screen -- is about the task development itself. So, I think it's reasonably well recognized that assessments need to be localized.

You know, we often -- if we're using an assessment in a different country or culture than where it has been developed, often there are place names that have changed, or names of people, or we are trying to use something familiar, and yes, all of those localization approaches are important, but they are not enough. What we need is assessment tasks or items that are based on the conceptualization of the target competency that is locally applicable, and more often than not, locally developed.

An example here is we've got this -- and it was part of a problem-solving stimulus in the Asian group -- and the problems phrased in terms of asking, "what does a farmer need to know when he has to fill a new fishpond with water?" and the important point is the conceptual structure which the Asia teams put together for problem solving because that structure -- which you can see above the fishpond -- that directed the design of the problem such that a series of other prompt questions in the task for the scenario targeted each of the skill strands that are provided here.

So, the framework -- the understanding of a skill -- is absolutely seminal to us developing tasks and understanding assessment results. So, locally relevant understandings of competencies, and consequent well designed assessment tasks, must reflect those understandings.

I'm hoping that this provides a context from which you can understand some of the work that you'll hear Mauro and then Purity describing over the next little while, that we always need to think about where we are sitting, and where what we are developing is going to be used.

So, at this point, I'm going to hand over to Mauro. Mauro, you're working within a collaboration, a big collaborative team across Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya, and I know that, in particular, you're collaborative really started working on, and completed, what you termed a "contextualization study." And so, what I'd really like is if you can take us through why you did that? What it was? And your findings? Thank you, and over to you.

MR. GIACOMAZZI: Thank you so much, thanks very much Professor, I believe that you made my task much easier with your interactive report about the wonderful OAA Project.

And I want to just start with a personal note. I started taking much interest about the 21st century skills, or life skills, or soft skills, as you have named them, and around 2014/2015 I had been living in Uganda by then for quite a number of years. I have been here since 2007. And I carried out a market survey to try to understand how the local entrepreneurs, so the local employers, and what did they want to see with allocating the people that they were about to employee, so the people that were coming out from the secondary school, from the university, or from the additional training. And I was expecting a lot of technical skill, but as a matter of fact, what did they highlight? Some was the fact that these students were lacking some skills.

And since then, I started working a lot and concentrating my attention more and more on some, specifically, competency skills like problem solving and critical thinking. And while I was doing this, I wanted to find a way of measuring -- I was focusing on critical thinking by then and I wanted to find a way of measuring critical thinking in the context.

And I was at a conference, and I met a professor, and this professor, she asked me, "What do you know about what Ugandans understand by critical thinking?" Already, the phrase "critical thinking" is something that is typical Western. And the way the concept has been developed over time, it's all influenced by the Western or European mentality.

And even myself, I realized by then that I was looking at the Uganda world to challenging everything from my perspective and European perspective. And even if you know very well the context, it does not mean that you really take all the efforts that Professor Esther was explaining about the importance of understanding the concept in the context.

And this somehow the starting point of our Assessment of Life Skills and Values in East Africa Project, the ALIVE Project, that I'm going to introduce you about. We wanted to assess these life skills because these are important, of course, for Africa, also for understanding if our interventions on the ground are having an effect.

And we wanted to have something that was really localized, really borne out of the context. And of course, the first step, let's look at the to the (inaudible) but then we ask ourselves, but

how sure are we better? Ugandans, Kenyans, and Tanzanians, understand that these are skills the way that they understand them. And so we have an initiative, let's say our problem, with a demographic (phonetic) study, highly participatory where there was sort of in-depth interviews as structure for quite a wide sample, for a big qualitative study.

We interviewed between 68 to 95 participants in each country, with the participants distributed in five different regions, especially for trying to understand if there would be differences between the urban and rural area, or for example, the (inaudible) of these areas, and we interviewed in each district adolescents age from 13 - 17, and parents, and key persons. And we can identify the key persons as educators, teachers, local leaders, and religious leaders, whoever has somehow, for the kind of work that they are doing, the kind of educative role.

We use the -- okay, in a lot of the interviews, some exaggerated views, asking them especially what they thought it was the meaning of the three life skills. And the one value that we were assessing, we assessed problem solving, collaboration, self-awareness, and respect as a value.

And we asked them what it means for them? How they would translate it, or how they would explain the meaning that skill to, for example, their grandmother, so in their local language in their (inaudible) time.

And also, we ask them what they felt that it was important to see in the person that was having problem solving skills or collaboration skills and so on and so forth. We wanted to really understand their perspective and define these skills from their perspective.

Then we had even some focus group discussions to validate somehow the results that we found.

I want now to present briefly on problem solving, because we don't have the time to go into depth of all the conceptualization studies. But I want just to drive into the definition of problem solving and the kind of process that the people have identified as being the steps that a person that has problem solving skills should take in order to solve a problem.

One thing that I noticed, for example, is the fact that most of the problems that the people

who we're speaking about were social problems. I was struck by even the fact that adolescents most of the time relate to problems linked to the relationship with their peers, or with their community, or somehow with the parents.

And then another thing that was quite striking about problem solving is the fact that in the local language, when you try to translate local problem solving, often there are some kinds of references that lead into a definition that sounds more like getting rid of the problem, eliminating the problem, which is something that puts the problem itself as something that is always negative. That as much as possible, you have to get rid of it, instead that sometimes the problem are opportunities, even, for growth.

But let's have a look, for example, at active process, according to how they describe. You have the identification of the problem, you need to face the problem, you need to draw an understand that is the problem, and then there is this part: asking for advice, which is something that in the literature it is absolutely unseen. You don't find anything like that in the normal literature.

But in the context, it was coming out so clearly that the problem is not my own problem, but it is a problem of myself, my family, and the community and beyond. So, there is this kind of social understanding of the problem that requires the people who are the problem solvers, not to just look at the problem for what they understand about it, but to be pushed and urged to compare their understanding of the problem with somebody else.

For our Western culture this might seem a point of weakness, but instead -- I am Italian, as you can hear from my accent -- and if I look at my own experience, if I have the problem, there's no way I can face this problem without asking a suggestion, for example, to have my parents, or to the people I live (audio skip) the same for them. But they have an understanding of closeness with other people that is their whole community, not just themselves.

And as we can see also in the kind of characteristics that they would like to see envisioned in a problem solver; you have a preponderance of social skills against the self-skills. The individualistic Western culture usually highlights the self-skills, so the self-confidence, like it is presented here, the self-awareness.

But instead in our context of what was most important were the relationship skills, the ability to express themselves and be receptive at the same time, to listen to the other one, to (inaudible), but also for character, guidance, and counseling.

You might say, what has got this to do with problem solving? If you believe that problem solving is not a matter of the person, but it is a matter of the community, the problem solver is available to the community to help them in solving that problem.

And as this quotation is saying, you can also find that they are great partners in their community. There is a problem or something that needs to be done in the community, they work together to try to solve the challenges they face. Second, if there is a problem, the community, they are at the forefront, but you also find the same young people solving the problem.

So, it is very clear how the local understanding of this skill is embedded in their traditional way of living their relationship with the closest people in their communities. Thank you.

MS. CARE: Thank you very much, Mauro. I think that you're highlighting their community perspective is an issue, obviously, that's particularly important and as we all see, I think, when Purity talks, we'll hear a little bit about what the consequences of that is.

So, I'd like to pass over to Purity now. Purity you've been coordinating a large and diverse set of chains across the three countries to develop these assessments of life skills and values. So, could you talk to us about what is this for? And of course, how has this contextualization been impacting on the work? I look forward to hearing you, over to you.

MS. NGINA: Thanks so much, and thanks so much Professor, and Mauro, for such a nice presentation. I'll just talk briefly about the assessment of life skills and values initiative in East Africa, which is a collaborative of over 70 individuals and organizations, and our objectives are to develop contextualized missions that can assess adolescents between the age of 13 to 17 and use the data in getting public (inaudible) funds, but more importantly, to strengthen local capacity.

So, our work mainly has everything about learning. And, of course, learning has to take long time before completing any task, but I think it is worth it because one of the challenges we face in

East Africa, or in Africa, is lack of capacity, especially when you talk about this new concept about social emotional learning.

But I think we were very direct (phonetic) by it in our context to call it values and life skills. A life skill is what people understand. So, when you introduce social and emotional learning, it becomes again an alien concept. So, also then contextualizing the name, I think, is very important.

And this, first we are assessing problem solving, which Mauro has taken us through, some awareness of collaboration and one value, which is respect. And for us to do this we brought in a team of 48 members drawn from various ministries, civil actors (phonetic), and researchers within the academia.

So, it is a very diverse group, and this was very intentional because if you talk about contextualizing, then I don't think you can take East Africa as a whole and assume that the assessment of framework you're developing can fit in. You also need to localize. And for us that idea was to bring people who have very vast characteristics, they are teachers they come from different religions, they come from different tribes, and so it made the group very rich, and of course, it has taken us -- or it is going to take us four weeks to complete this journey of developing contextualized assessment.

Even when we have this genetic flow that we are following identifying these competencies, the (inaudible) structure, and this is what we cover in the workshop, and we really align on the contextualizing study that Mauro has just presented. We went onto really describe these skills, and to identify the most accessible aspect.

Even when we had the skill structure, it was not everything that was coming out very clearly and openly, and so we had to drop some for the assessment because, again, we want something that is observable, and that's something that aligns well with the curriculum, also with adolescents who are not going to school, because our assessment is household based.

Of course, this is a longer route -- to assess students, or children, or adolescents, at home -- but we appreciate that we should not leave anyone behind. In East Africa, just to quote a statistic, we have a lot of adolescents aren't going to school. Either they are not going to school at all, or

they are just absent for many reasons.

And so, we felt this also gives us a level and a (inaudible) crowd, an ability to start the conversations with teachers, with parents, and even with government, without any commotion, because we know there are many assessments happening in classrooms.

I also wanted to make the story richer. We wanted to see how can home environment contribute to these values and life skills. And of course, do they work? We have conducted Think Aloud (phonetic) -- and just to mention, this was also very complex because having made a deliberate decision to go at home, we also had a challenge because most of these children, or these adolescents, cannot speak either English or one of the other national languages, they can never use English, only Swahili. And so, we had to fast translate their local language and also use an oral Think Aloud, which I think is a bit very complex, but I think is also very important.

But, as we talk about bringing 48 members from different diversity, and we try to contextualize and localize everybody comes with their strength. And just allow me to mention, if I take one of the competents [sic] we are (inaudible), which is respect, this value is very -- I would say, very complex, and it is really affected by our culture, and our cultural understanding of what respect should be.

And so, when we started in April, our first workshop, members in that committee were able to come up with a skill structure. But by the time we are coming back in May, it was already changed because many people felt this is not addressing this, this is not contextualized, this is not aligning to my community expectation, this is not aligning to my culture.

And so, then we had another skill structure -- let me just use the skill, the value structure - - and then, again, people went home after that workshop too, they had enough time to think through, to read more, and when they came back, they said, this structure that was developed in May, it is very characterized (phonetic) by asitency (phonetic) issues to be social norms, social interaction, like they are really coming out very strongly.

And if you read more about respect, of course, there's a bit of cultural inclination, but it should not be purely about culture. And so, we had to change again.

We said, okay, if we are looking at respecting other people, let's say you have high regard for others, you have regard for others, you're considerate and all that, but also these issues of appreciating those diversities, which was really to now bring the aspect of how you need to respect other people's norms and cultures, but that was in June.

And in July -- unfortunately, or fortunately -- the team started again. And so, I just wanted to show how long the process has been, first of contextualizing, localizing, and allowing everybody to have a voice because it is a learning process.

And as we try to grow the capacity of people in the Global South, I think we also have to really factor in that there's a lot of time that will be spent, but I think it was worth it, because I think by July, we just settled on these, and I think these are the three main aspects that we have to look into when we are talking about respect: for self, for others, and for environment.

But this was just one process, and we brought our task and everything we are going to create, of such a lengthy process will not have some biasness but let me present two of our tasks that we shall be assessing. We have piloted them, we took them through the Think Aloud, but still we can see some (inaudible) coming out.

We have this sick boy called Kaga (phonetic), who is at home, and they visited by our friends, and this friend decided to take some photographs and went out to show them to friends, and of course, this person who was sick got angry.

So, this question is contextual somehow, but it still has some biasness. First is that, in different cultures, I know if I have to visit you when you are sick, I have to call you and tell you, "Hey, I'll be visiting you because you're unwell." But in our context, it is rude to actually call someone and say, "I'm going to visit you, I'm coming to visit you."

Actually, during COVID we have had a draft (phonetic), even doctors, limiting the number of people who can visit a person because for us, "let's go visit this person," if a person is sick, you visit them.

Again, we have seen this happening a lot that in social media, because of our -- we are in

low-income country, and many times there are people who don't go to hospital because -- they want to go to hospital, they don't have resources. So, it is nice for someone to turn, to come take photos, and they go show them out, and when they show these people, these people are likely to come visit you, or even make a contribution towards the money, or your hospital bill, or what you are lacking while you are lying at home sick.

So, you can see when we presented this task to the adolescent between 13 to 17, they had so many things to respond to. They were like, this -- I don't mind my friends taking a photo of me when I'm sick, if they are taking them to help. I don't think it is wrong for someone to visit. I don't think -- you know, there were so many issues coming out and I think this also brings out the issue of why it is really good, not to just contextualize, but also to localize and understand a country as it is, or the people, and how they appreciate who they are and their own diversity.

The other problem on problem solving, we had a task on leaders in your country are concerned about charcoal burning in the various communities. So, you can see that our expectations were -- these adolescents are going to identify this as a problem because we have been talking about climate change and all these issues, and we were expecting they would really understand that this is a problem.

But when we asked them, is this a problem? They said, "No, this is not a problem because if someone," and they could even give us examples, because we went to the farthest, really behind, they were telling us, "We don't use gas cooker to make our meals, so if they are not burning charcoal, then I'm not going to have food by the end of the day."

Those people burning charcoal, they are going to use that money, they are going to sell, get the money, pay school fees, provide food, and all those sorts of things. Therefore, you can see for them it is totally different.

I'm sure if I ask this question to even my colleagues, whether it is Professor Care, she would probably point out this is a real problem because for her she's already looking at climate change. But adolescents have other problems, and these problems are because of our context again.

So, I think for me these two tasks really bring out why it is really, really important for us to always contextualize measures, and also, of course -- the whole presentation also -- bringing out the capacity, growing the capacity, even if it is expensive in terms of time, and expensive in terms of cost. Thank you so much, I'll take it back to Professor Care. Thank you.

MS. CARE: Thank you very much, Purity. It's fascinating stuff. You know, one of the fascinating things is this issue of how we interpret behaviors that we might develop a task that we think is going to be aligned with the particular life skill value that we are interested in, and then when you look at the responses from their lessons, you're getting responses from out of left field.

And I mean, this is, I guess, a very well-known problem in assessment: how do you target so that you do actually pick up behaviors or perspectives that are true to the construct?

And, of course, as we move more and more into life skills and values, and when we are relying more and more on what we are calling, I think, in ALIVE, visible behaviors, then we need to be very, very careful that we do attribute of behavior appropriately to whatever the underlying construct or skill is that actually is responsible for stimulating that response.

So, it's incredibly complex, and I think that these sorts of examples bring it out in ways that make it a lot more clear to many people, than when we are talking in abstract, sort of psychometric terms.

So, I'd like to move into a little bit more of the discussion, but before I do, for participants, or for audience out there, if you'd like to send in any questions, you can do that via Twitter with #21csassessment, and we do have a few that we can have a look at. But if any of this conversation has already raised some other questions and issues for you, we'd very much like to hear those.

So, I will pass over to you for a second, Mauro, those sorts of examples that Purity just gave, and this incredibly long period of time that it's taken to sort of finesse the descriptions of skills and so on.

I know, Mauro, that you've also been involved a great deal in the task development, and that you've experienced some of this sort of back and forth quite a bit. Could you talk a little bit about

that?

MR. GIACOMAZZI: Of course, I believe that it's much longer than what we expected. We wanted to continue this process of localization, as people are saying, by having a pretty wide group of people that would develop these tasks. And, of course, each one of us comes in with their own perspective.

And some of these skills, and some of these values, are extremely context sensitive, which means that you have the problem that in one village these tasks mean one thing, and in the next village it means something different. In one village it can be appropriate, in another village it is not appropriate.

If you think about the fact that we are trying to have common tasks across the three countries, this element of having a refined task of scenarios that can work in the three countries, it becomes much heavier work.

And one of the things that help us a lot was to try to understand what were the main factors that could influence the bias or not of a specific task. For example, having in mind of the issue of gender, if the task is gender free or not gender free. The issue of religion; the issue of whether that task is appropriate for an urban setting environment, or for a village setting environment in such a way that this task does not somehow favor a group of adolescents versus another group of adolescents.

We have also an extra element, the fact that we wanted to in-house all assessment to be sure that it is as inclusive as possible, these tasks. And it means that we have to rely on that today's children, the youth, can read the task. So, it means that the task must be extremely brief. It must be -- I would say, it must awaken the teacher in the mind of the children who need it.

So, it's not only a problem of language, it's a problem of the amount of information that the children can grasp and memorize in a very short amount of time where you are in front of a person that you have never met before -- because the assessor, usually, you have never met before. And maybe is not even your age, and in our culture, a young person has to be very careful in asking questions to an elder person.

So, all of these elements are the elements that are -- how can I say -- to cause to make us take all this time in order to be sure that what we are doing is really accessible to everyone in more or less the same way.

MS. CARE: Yeah, thank you. I'm particularly aware of that issue around, I guess -- the ability for short term memory for captured information, retention, holding it, as well as responding to a task at the same time and it's one of those great examples of, if the adolescent is focusing all their energies on just trying to comprehend the question, store a whole lot of information, and respond to it, the problem, of course, will be that you're not in the end really assessing the life skill value, you're interested in because you've got contamination coming in from the fact that they are trying to deal with a comprehension problem.

And so, one of the fascinating things about ALiVE, because it is household based, rather than in a formal education setting, is, how do you provide information to the adolescent to set up a task in order to get the response you want because, basically, they are unlike the child in the classroom who at least theoretically can read the text, has it in front of them all the time, and then can respond. And so, it's contaminated to some extent by literacy, but not to the same extent by these sorts of cognitive load that is distracting the adolescent from what you're really most interested in getting at.

Going back a little again, though, to this issue of localization, and Purity, you really highlighted how localization had made an impact as your moved through the conceptualization of the life skills and values, I just wonder what the implications of this need to localize is for longer term use of what you're developing, or whether you take the approach that, basically, everybody needs to develop their own if they are going to reflect their local context. Could you talk about that a little bit?

MS. NGINA: Thank you, Professor. Of course, localization -- contextualization, localization -- is very important, but again, as I say, is a very expensive affair. And I think, first, what researchers and people working on this matrix need to do is to first open the tools so that other people can also have a look at what is happening. And that means they are not really good to this long process of really what we have taken that in four weeks, because I am sure there are items or tasks that other

countries could use, especially in low-income countries.

But what we face again in low-income countries, is when you look at our capacity to assessment, it is not fair. I think it is now the time we are slowly building ourselves up to have the capacity needed to assess, not just to mention also that even the assessment items that exist, have actually been developed in high-income countries.

So, if we have many other countries in low-income, whether it is like the OAA, I think our context, and that of The Gambia, maybe could be the same, we can open those tools and for people to look at and that would actually help a big deal.

But, having said that, I think there are so many other complexities of localizing because, as Mauro has mentioned, you're using different languages, you are giving them a task, they are going to respond, so this will be a qualitative kind of assessment, which it is not possible to move to skill because of the demand, and of the money that is going to be involved, and the amount of data you're going to get, and how to analyze and all that. So, there's so much complexity.

But then if you don't move -- if you don't do in scale -- the government is not going to listen to you because they want large data. Many governments will not listen to a data of that adolescent; they want dozens of adolescents; they want a huge amount of data.

That means as much as qualitative aspect is good, I think also we need to figure out how do we bring in the qualitative aspect so that it will be easier to move this to scale as we also try to localize. Thank you.

MS. CARE: Yeah, thank you Purity. I mean, it raises that question -- I know we had a question from the audience about how can you assess 21st century skills in low-income countries? And to some extent, you're answering that question, which is, well, it's expensive if we're going to go to scale. There is a possibility that you can share across cultures, but you're going to have to have people -- you know, if we talk about sharing between Kenya and The Gambia, for example, then you need to have people in both places who understand this issue. Because if you don't understand that issue, and you just take the task that's been delivered in Kenya, then it's possible that the results you get from that would

be meaningless because you haven't shaped against that localization.

And so, you know, we get to that other question here, which is, how do you handle some of these concepts -- the life skills or values -- where you don't necessarily have a direct translation across different countries, or into different languages. So, Mauro, perhaps you could pick up on that?

MR. GIACOMAZZI: That's a very interesting question. The contextualization started that we did at the start of our program was exactly aimed at unearthing this kind of lack of directed translation. In, for example, self-awareness, it's a term, a terminology that does not exist in our local language.

So, the real problem is that maybe, before even asking ourselves or deciding somehow that we want to assess self-awareness, we should even ask ourselves what really the local context tells us that a self-aware person is, or that the same concept of self-awareness -- how it is translated in the local context, what are the real skills -- interpersonal skills or dispositions -- that are so important for a person to function well, to keep on learning, to keep on interacting with the rest of the society. Whether they call it self-confidence -- which is the closest terminology that they use, and it is different from self-awareness, of course. But maybe we should start understanding exactly what it really means, this kind of term in the local context.

And I strongly believe that, sometimes, the globalization community we're part of imposes onto the local community terminologies and concepts that are foreign to the local community. I don't want to say that in Uganda, or Tanzania, or Kenya, people do not have self-awareness. But maybe for the local community, the self-confidence is even more important and more relevant than the self-awareness. So, before starting assessing the self-awareness, we should try to understand that.

I'm making an example that is extreme, but what I'm trying to say is that we really needed to be careful about the fact that the local context sometimes, and the local language, does not have the direct translation of some of these skills because it means that locally, most probably, they have not developed the concept even closely to what we are mentioning.

And since there's this direct (inaudible) established across the rea (phonetic), for example -- I'm going back 50, 60 years -- but the status of the connection between language and

cognition and how language shapes the cognitive development, are important studies that we should go back and read again, because somehow, they are telling us, not only that there's a problem of translation, but that there is a problem of conceptualization. I hope that I have not too much of what it takes to get at it (laughter).

MS. CARE: Not at all. It's fascinating and I just know that since you and your teams have been through so much time and vigor and frustration, but stayed at it, I'm wondering, once you move past that initial, "let's define and describe the life skills and values," and reeling onto the task development process, has working on the task development process made you rethink those theoretical descriptions of the skills? Have you, in other words, by virtue of trying to put tasks together that sample the skills, have they made you rethink the work that you did before? Perhaps, Purity, you could come in on that.

MS. NGINA: Thanks, Professor. I think we have really thought. Of course, we appreciate where we are, we can't go back, but as Mauro is mentioning, even issues to the way we define, the way we see them, the way we think adolescents understand, is totally different.

I will share with my colleagues that, if you look at what Mauro presented in the contextualization study about problem solving, our context, people understand collaborative problem solving, because there's an element of working together, doing things together. And even the task, when you present to them, they are not able to think independently about problem solving without bringing the collaborative nature of our society.

So, yes, it is always work in progress. I think we have made many strides. We are far from where we were when we started, but of course, we are now having those very deep conversations with ourselves, and asking ourselves, "Is this where we want to go next?"

Do we want to go back and also ask questions to the adolescents for the next phase? Because I think this is just a drop in the ocean. I think we have really many things to think through.

MS. CARE: Yeah. I think one of the other aspects of the work that ALiVE has been doing that's phenomenal, is drawing together people from different areas. And that's somewhat similar to the OAA experience, too, where we're not making an assumption that you must use a small-type band of

assessment experts. You're making an assumption, as we did, that you need to draw on people from different areas of the community.

In OAA, of course, they were all educators, but they were maybe curriculum people, there were teachers, there were pedagogical experts, and so on. Whereas, also, in your situation, as we saw from your slides before, you're drawing from lots of different areas of the community, and that can only make the actual tasks more real, more authentic -- I don't that's something, we don't like the word authentic -- but lots more authentic to the community you're operating in.

Just for the audience, if any of you would be interested in finding out more about the ALiVE Initiative, if you just put into a search engine and RELI, R-E-L-I, I found that's one of the quickest ways of getting to the appropriate websites or on Twitter. So, do have a look at that and find out what's happening because it's a monumentally inspiring initiative. And it's ground based, and its people who are passionately caring about what they are doing and learning along the way.

So, anyway, I want to thank you both, Mauro and Purity, so very, very much. You're an inspiration. And I'd also like to thank our Chair and Hostess, Rebecca Winthrop, for giving us the opportunity to talk about OAA and ALiVE, and how some of their interests intersect.

And to the audience, thank you for participating or listening. And to everybody out there, thank you for the questions that you sent in to keep us alert to what is at the core of your concerns and makes us more tuned in to what we need to be aware of.

So, with that, I'll say good night, good morning, and goodbye. Thank you.

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