



CENTER FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

Presents

***Too Young to Wed: Childhood Marriage
and Its Implications for Development***

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[TRANSCRIPT PREPARED FROM AUDIO RECORDING]

Lawrence MacDonald: Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us today. My name is Lawrence McDonald, Director of Communications at the Center for Global Development. And it's really our great privilege and honor to co-host this event with our friends from the International Center for Research on Women. As you all know child marriage is a problem that has been with us for a very long time. It's also a problem that is suddenly very much in the news with this remarkable *New York Times* feature on Sunday and the film *Water* which I understand is still playing up at DuPont Circle and this has increased my determination to go see it. I imagine a number of you have seen it already.

What we'll be hearing about today are some of the aspects of this problem and ways that it can be addressed and something that is of particular interest to the Center for Global Development, the ways in which the U.S. and other rich countries can support efforts to overcome this problem in the developing world. I have a special qualification to making the introductions today because I have a 15-year-old daughter. And I was thinking last night in talking to her and telling her I was going to do this today, how terrible it is for girls to be married at an age that is as young as she or younger and also the difficulties that those, the parents of those daughters face and that no parent given a full range of options – or I imagine very few parents would choose to make that kind of choice for their daughter. So I'll be listening with great interest today to the panel and hoping to learn what more might be done to reduce the incidence of child marriage.

It's my real pleasure to introduce Geeta Rao Gupta, the president of the International Center for Research on Women. As many of you no doubt know, she is a renowned expert on women's rights and particularly on HIV which no doubt is a part of the complex of problems that come up with child marriage and Geeta will kick us off today and introduce the rest of our panels. Geeta, thank you very much for bringing us this distinguished panel today.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Thank you. Thank you, Lawrence. It's a pleasure to join Lawrence in welcoming all of you to this forum. We have been calling organizations for a long time and it's a pleasure to be able to finally co-sponsor an event together. For the last three decades ICRW has worked to improve the social economic and health status of women in the developing world and for several of the past years we have focused in particular on this issue of child marriage because marriage, when it occurs too early affects the future trajectory of girls' lives.

It, as you will hear today, has devastating impacts, negative impacts, on education, on their health and on their future economic opportunities. And, as we do with all of the issues that we focus on, we have done the analysis to highlight the extent of this problem and then have translated the insights that we have gained into recommendations for action, specifically, policy action by the U.S. government. And the purpose of today's forum is to share with all of you what we have learned and to increase awareness within the Washington D.C. policy community about the progress that we have made and what more can be done.

But first I want to share with you some good news because our efforts in policy education and advocacy have paid off. There is a push from Congress now for greater attention to this issue and we just heard this morning that the International Child Marriage Prevention and Assistance Act of 2006 that is being co-sponsored by Senators Richard Durbin and Chuck Hagel will be dropped tomorrow as I understand. So, I just wanted to share that good news with you. Thank you. Because it is legislation that will instruct the relevant U.S. agencies, PEPFAR, USAID, MCC, to ensure that they develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing

this issue through the education programs and health programs, etc. So, we are thrilled with this.

Just one other comment I want to make before I move on to the introductions is I want you to recognize, even after you see *Water*, that this is not an exotic problem that happened once upon a time in far away distant lands, this is true for millions of girls today as you will hear today. And it's a problem that existed for example in my family just a decade ago. My mother-in-law who now lives with me in Virginia was pulled out of school even though she was a bright student when her father suddenly died. Because her family suddenly had to put up with the burden, what they perceived to be the economic burden and security burden of having an unmarried daughter in the house with no man to lead the household.

And so at the age of 16 she was pulled out of eighth grade and married to a man seven years her senior, a man who she had never met before and she tells the story vividly of the day of her wedding and all she could see was his feet. And they were big and she thought, "I'm marrying a very tall man." And she's 4 feet 11, he was 6 feet 2. He was a wonderful man, my father-in-law and looked after her well so she was blessed. But I do want to share with you that she never did go back to school and she is an incredibly intelligent woman who, when her father was alive, her father was convinced that if all of his children, and she was his only daughter, was the one child who would actually go to law school and be a lawyer like he was. But she never fulfilled that potential.

So I share that with you just to tell you that this is a very real problem and today in many families, not just in India, in Bangladesh and West Africa, East Africa, many countries around the world, this is a problem that persists. So we have the privilege today of having guests with us from Ethiopia and Senegal who are going to share with us the on-the-ground experiences of how you tackle this issue, how you address this at the community level because in part it does involve nominative change. That's what it requires in addition to policy change. And so we get to hear from them.

It's a great line of speakers and how we're going to do this is the following. We're going to first have Dr. Anju Malhotra, who is group director for the Social and Economic Development Group for the International Center for Research on Women. She also directs the population and social transitions team there. She's going to provide an overview of the issue, just what's the extent of the problem and then when she's done we will have first, Mahdere Paulos who is the executive director of the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association in Addis Ababa and she will share with us the success that she has had in Ethiopia in bringing about legal and legislative change.

Followed by Molly Melching who is the founder and executive director of an organization that I've heard so much about for so many years and I only just recently met her, so I'm thrilled to have gotten to know Molly. The organization is Tostan, it's a non-governmental organization headquartered in Senegal that has done some incredible work in bringing about social change. So, following those two presentations which are our main presentations, we will then have Marlaine Lockheed serving as a discussant, commenting on all of the presentations. Marlaine is a visiting fellow at the Center for Global Development having retired from the World Bank in 2004 where she directed major studies on primary education in the developing world, primary education particularly in India that I was most interested in and in education decentralization. So, that's the ordering and we'll just go straight one after

the other and at the end we hope we will have engaged all of you in an active discussion. So over to you, Anju.

Anju Malhotra: Thank you Geeta. Welcome all. I'm so pleased to be part of this illustrious panel. I have a few slides that I wanted to present but technology is not cooperative so if you have a handout and could possibly follow as I talk that would be really helpful. As Geeta has said, child marriage is not an issue that is just exotic in exotic lands and existed far away. It's very much with us today. At best estimates currently we think about 50 million girls in the developing world are married and that's actually a snapshot because over the next decade we expect that 100 million more will be married and it's the future of all of those girls that's at stake.

Child marriage is a critical development issue in the poorest countries of the world although it's not recognized necessarily as such. And it often tends to exist in those countries despite national and international laws to the contrary. Many countries have laws on the books saying that child marriage is illegal and a number of international covenants also think that child marriage is a human rights violation but it exists despite that. And, as I will illustrate and I'm sure our panelists will illustrate today that it has a number of very negative outcomes not just for girls and their families but for the development outcomes and those societies more generally.

Some of the countries where child marriage is most prevalent tend to be concentrated in South Asia and West Africa although Nicaragua for example and Latin American also has fairly high rates of child marriage. And we don't really know what the situation is in some of the Middle Eastern countries because data along these lines for example is missing for some of them and in a country like Afghanistan which we know child marriage is very high, collecting data on this issue has not been feasible. But Niger is a country that ranks highest with 77 percent of the girls under 18 being married under age 18 and then Bangladesh, Uganda, Nicaragua, India – some of the countries with very large populations fall in the category of almost half or more of their girls being married below age 18.

One of the features of child marriage tends to be that young girls marry much older men. So across the board, if you analyze data from the demographic and health surveys we find that when girls marry at younger than 15 for example, they tend to marry men who are 9, 10, 12 years old than them whereas when girls marry in their 20s they tend to marry men who are only 3 to 5 years older than them. And that as you can imagine creates a dynamic for power relations within the conjugal relationship that can be very problematic.

Just to see which countries child marriage is most prevalent and how they rank in terms of development outcomes, if you do just a simple correlation between the Human Development Index which looks at life expectancy, education, and GDP in countries and rank countries according to that, there's a pretty strong relationship and this is the slide on Page 6 of your handout. There's a pretty strong relationship between the Human Development Index and rates of child marriage in different countries and if you look at that and then you look at just developing countries alone, you in fact see a very strong relationship between rates of child marriage and development outcomes.

Within countries also as the next slide shows you, the data show that it's the poorest households within which girls tend to be married at younger ages. So the wealthier families within countries tend to not marry their daughters early and that relationship holds at that

level as well. If you look at historical transformation in terms of development progress in the last 30 decades it's interesting to actually note that many of the countries that have succeeded in developing well – for example, many of the East Asian Tiger countries that have shown exceptional performance on economic growth are also the ones that used to have child marriage as a prevalent practice in their societies but no longer do. And so those are the countries that have had the demographic, the social and the economic changes that have led to pretty much the eradication of child marriage in those countries and it's pretty clear that the countries that are lagging behind are lagging behind both on this social practice as well as economic outcomes.

And there is some very key features that we think that are holding these countries behind. One of the major reasons that child marriage seems to persist in the countries that it does is the definition of gender roles. How women are and particularly girls are seen by families, so Geeta's example that girls, that her mother-in-law was seen as an economic burden to the family if she stayed in the family is one very important factor in why parents in certain countries continue to marry their daughters early. And the fact that there are alternatives lacking for those girls that are socially acceptable. That it is not okay to send them to school or not okay for them to go outside the home or not okay for them to work. Those are important factors that are limiting those countries from changing that practice.

Family and community honor is often very seriously tied to early marriage. Marriage tends to reinforce ties between families and the desire to protect girls from sexual violation is a major factor in marrying them early. And as Geeta said, cultural and social norms often don't make it okay for parents to marry their daughters at older ages even if they personally would like to. And then in some countries there is a lack of political will to enforce or create the legal environment that's necessary to really push change in this issue.

I quickly just want to talk a little bit about the negative consequences of child marriage. There are a range of now well documented negative health consequences of child marriage. Girls who marry young begin sex, sexual activity early, they begin child-bearing early and as a result they face a lot of problems in terms of disease and death. So child marriage means high maternal fatality rates, high reproductive morbidity, in/on RTIs, on obstetric fistula, one of the problems you may have heard about. There is some emerging evidence that child marriage is also a tie to HIV infection. There's huge unmet need for contraception among girls who marry young and high rates of unsafe abortion. And of course, girls who marry young have children young often their children don't survive because they've had them at early ages.

So heightened mortality rates are also tied to child marriage. The maternal mortality rates for young mothers below age 18 tend to be anywhere from 3 to 5 times higher than they are for women who are giving birth at older ages. In terms of life consequences you can imagine that for girls who marry young, this is a lost childhood. As Lawrence has said, he can't imagine his 15-year-old daughter getting married and most of us can't think of our children who are playing soccer or going to school or socializing with their friends taking the responsibility of a household, having babies and cooking and cleaning and having sex to perpetuate their families.

So that loss is massive and what's interesting is we did a study in Nepal that was very very telling, that it isn't just we who are realizing that loss, it's girls in those countries who are realizing that loss. So we asked girls in Nepal to tell us about what, what is the lifeline of

girls in their society and it was very interesting. The lifeline they listed was, you know, we go to school till about 12 or 13 then we start menstruating, we start going to high school, sometimes around 18 or 19 we fall in love, we get a job, we get married in our 20s, we establish our families, we have children in our mid-20s and we support our families economically. If you look at the data in Nepal, that's not the lifeline of a girl. The lifeline of the girls was articulated to us by a mother who said, well, they go to school at about 9 or 10, they start menstruating at about 12, they get married at about 15 or 16, done.

And that's the real change that we're looking for. We want the girls in those countries to be living the lifeline that they're aspiring to rather than the lifeline that they're currently living. I'm going to now turn this over to our two panelists who can really tell us a little bit more about what we can be doing to support efforts in countries to really make that happen.

Mahdere Paulos: Thank you very much. I'm really honored to be here with you. The organization I'm working with is Ethiopian Lawyers Women's Association. It was just founded in 1996. It's a non-profit women's advocacy group. It has six branch offices throughout the country and has about 60 voluntary countries that work some voluntary work at the grassroots level. The organization has three core programs, namely legal aid, public education and research and advocacy. Most of the time we advocate or we lobby for any change by passing on the findings of the research. So the findings are the key source for law reform and advocacy for public education purposes.

We've been conducting different research in the last 10 years but just to make it very short and to relate with the issues that we are talking about day, the first research that we have conducted was on the discrimination, discriminatory [inaudible] applications against women and [inaudible] family law, nationality, pension, employment and land. So what the research or the findings of the research has proven is that we've had a law, we've had a constitution that doesn't allow for any person beyond the age of eight to get married but rather to have full consent to get married.

The previous law we have that was in place for over 46 years have made the minimum marriage level age to be 15 for girls and 18 for boys and they can even get married beyond that for 15 and 15 if they have the permission of the king at the time. But the new thought, basing on this we've had a constitution that was in place for 14 years that clearly puts there will not be any discrimination between men and women and girls and boys in terms of marriage, in terms of divorce and while they're entering into marriage.

So we've conducted this research in the area where we think it was prevalent. We've had, we have a branch office in the northern part of the country and we do have about 12 voluntary committees. We've made this assessment in two areas where the pre-violence rate is very high and it has proven that it is almost 90 percent of the area, I mean, the girls are married under this age. We found four types of marriage in that area. The first one the promissory marriage where the marriage is arranged before the child is birthed. We found the marriage where it was arranged between under 10 years age and what we've called early adolescent, that is a range between 10 to 14 and the late adolescent marriage is between 15 and 18.

What we found so many reasons for these people to go on practice on child marriage and there are of course material benefits that is related with economic reasons and social reasons. Just to give you a brief point why they are still practicing is that they do have, whenever there is a ceremony they will get contributions from their relatives, claim of dowry is also another

reason that they will give you for having this kind of practice, prestige of course plays a great role in preserving this kind of tradition.

Well, there are also other social reasons like fear of abduction, because even though there is a law in the place where abduction is a criminal act it was like, it was criminal act even for over 40 years, but it is still considered as one form of marriage in the country. So that doesn't help them, people from fearing that they would escape abduction. So they would rather offer their girls to be married while they're at the early stage. Where they have a fear for their female children that they might not do well in school. They have fear of ostracization and stigmatization by their relatives and communities. Where there is a high, a high place for preserving virginity and they need, they have to preserve this tradition, premarital sex and unwanted pregnancy is also a shame for their girls while they're in their early stage. And they need to conform to the tradition.

These are the social reasons we have identified in the areas and there are also economic reasons like they, the fear of obligations, secure child's future, before they get weak or die. And they expect future reciprocal from their own children by marrying off at the early stage. Well, they also consider as reduction of financial dependency from their own children to and they need this traditional linkage to a well-off families or well-off standing families in their areas.

Well, while they're doing this there have some problems encountered and just to say some of the problems encountered is that we've seen in the assessment there are as many forced sexual relations, well of course denial of freedom to play and enjoy one's childhood is also another problem, distress, domestic violence, reproductive health problems, denial of education, childhood pregnancy, childbirth trauma, fistula, prenatal and postnatal mortality and morbidity, incidents of HIV and aids, prostitution, crime, street begging, migration from urban to rural for escaping this child marriage, suicide, population, pressure, health costs and human development.

When it comes to poverty women are like, if they are, if we assume that they're 50/50 but they're not in a productive way. They're not contributing to their country so in terms of poverty reduction, they're not doing anything because of this practice. Early widowhood and wife inheritance is also another problem because if her husband dies it is a tradition that her brother-in-law will take care of herself and might get married just to preserve the lines and the ties between the families.

Well, when it comes to the legislative responses we have, we've been in the last advocating the government to have a new laws that will be in line with the constitution and international conventions which Ethiopia has ratified. We have the constitution of course before we even have a family law that makes a girl and a boy to be married when they're attaining a marriage of an age which is 18. So we've been advocating for this law reforms in the past and it is in 2000 that we have a new revised family law that places a girl and a boy to be a marriage age 18 but still it allows for them to get married less than 2 years, I mean with 16, with the permission of the minister of justice.

We don't understand why there's always an exception to that, we're still lobbying for that exception to be removed from the civil court, from the family law itself. Well, there is a criminal court in which we have contributed a lot by educating people basing on the findings

of the research for the criminalization of those who solemnize, contract, or be a witness for this kind of child marriage.

So we do have a new criminal code that has just been adopted a year ago and it is really a good thing and the next step might be, how are we going to implement these laws. Because it is a deep-rooted culture, people have been practicing this for a long time so implementation is the next problem and for that we even have conducted a mini-assessment problems with regards to implementation. So we've been strategizing to intervene in child marriage issues first by educating boys and girls communities, religious leaders, government officials and of course media people and police officers because without their contribution, without their involvement eradicating or eliminating or reducing this [inaudible] culture is very difficult even though the law is there.

Lobbying the government to make primary education mandatory is also another important issue that we have identified with because if that is not a mandatory, their parents would opt always marriage as a first option, so this is one of the strategies we have identified and we have started revising even the education policy because there is this policy which sometimes hamper girls from going to school because of fearing of not passing certain classes. So we have start, because there are certain classes where people are not, well – children or students are not allowed to repeat. So that could also be a problem for girls to continue or to have a hope to continue with their education.

Building schools closer to their community is also another important so we can't leave this to the government so, encouraging the people themselves to bid community schools is also very important. Introduction of birth and marriage registration is also another issue because the government had a law, even the civic court of the 1960 had a provision which makes it mandatory that there has to be a registration both for marriage and birth. But it's not still in place. Without that it's very difficult to tell what age that girl is because there are areas where they will tell you she's 18 just to be fit to the law, or sometimes they will bring the elder daughter so that you'll think it's the elder daughter that's going to be married but the truth is different. It's maybe the ninth year girl that will be, that's arranged for her marriage.

So we're encouraging because our constitution introduced affirmative action so we are encouraging girls to go to school so that they will have access to education and maybe empower themselves to stand for their rights. Introduction of non-formal education is also very important because it's not, you know, it's not only the formal education that will empower girls for farther in her career. Community involvement in running schools as mentioned earlier is also very important and emergency support to run [inaudible] also another important. We have this kind of temporary shelter centers at the center, I mean at the head office and we are planning to have more of those kind of self-house services for those who would escape the [inaudible] their parents so that at least they will have a place to stay until the problem is resolved.

So maybe what should be done to eliminate, to reduce this practice and for the law to be applicable. Well, we expect the collaboration of different groups, angels, international community and the people themselves should collaborate in eliminating this kind of tradition. We've had so many examples in eradicating other harmful traditional practices like abduction for marriage, female genital mutilation and others like wife inheritance and other harmful traditional practices. There are about 80 harmful traditional practices that are identified in the country but just to be specific to this issue, as child marriage and abduction for marriage

sometimes are interrelated. We've had examples in certain areas where people have come in condemning this kind of act. So we're planning to replicate what other areas have done in reducing and in eliminating these kind of practices. So we think that we're helping the people by contributing our share. That doesn't mean that we have done a lot but we've had a good track record so people think we're very influential and because of that we've, we have always considered ourselves as human right defenders by having more branch officers and more voluntary staff would work at the grassroots level to be more near to the local people. Thank you.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Thank you very much. Let's now hear from Molly Melching who will tell us about her work in Senegal.

Molly Melching: Thank you very much. Hello to everyone. It is really a pleasure to be here with you today and I am here from Senegal with Malick Diagne who is sitting there and can also answer questions after the presentations. I have lived in Senegal for 30 years, a little bit more than 30 years actually and founded Tostan in 1991. And it's very interesting that our mission actually has nothing to do with specifically ending child marriage or female genital cutting although Tostan is often best known for that. But our mission really is to empower African communities through a non-formal participatory and human rights based education program that really leads to sustainable development by the people themselves in the community.

And this program was developed over a long period of time with much participation from the community members themselves based on their goals, their priorities, their needs and it includes seven basic modules, the basis of which is the democracy and human rights module. Followed by problem-solving and then hygiene and health followed by literacy, math and management skills as well as how to do a feasibility study and how to start small projects so that our program really addresses both social empowerment and economic empowerments.

The methods that we use are based on African traditions, lots of songs, lots of movement, lots of stories and personal experiences. It is based on Proverbs and traditional knowledge we use a lot. So that people feel very comfortable when they come into the classroom. The atmosphere is very warm and inviting. Especially for women who come in from the fields after a long day's work. They come into a classroom where people are seated in a circle and they can really discuss very important issues that are critical to them and to their survival actually and they can discuss this in confidence in a nurturing atmosphere.

It is also fun. I think that's important. We do – every session is written out. Every session in the program, such that there are pictures in one session, a theatre in another session or a game to learn about human rights. You move forward if you're respecting human rights and if you forget to vaccinate your child you move back. It's like a Monopoly game for example and people get very involved and engaged in these type of activities and love coming to class and so we have a very low abandonment rate for the classes.

Again, I think it's important to remember that the foundation of all sessions is the human rights and democracy. We discovered this to be a very powerful tool for getting people to understand these very sensitive issues related to such things as child marriage and female genital cutting because when you just deal with the health issues which they do, and the development of the body and how the body develops best, the best health practices. But if you do not relate this to the human right to health and the responsibility that every parent has

to protect their daughters for the best health practices then you can eventually go to medicalizing for example, female genital cutting, but when you're discussing the health, the human rights issues, that is no longer an option.

And also, it allows people to really themselves critically analyze what is going on in the community. Why are young girls dying earlier than other women and what are the factors that lead to these problems, these health problems? And when we allow the participants themselves to do this research and they come back and they say, my gosh, we've realized that more than 10 girls have died who are under the age of 14 in the community or in the surrounding communities. Then they start realizing that they need to do something about this problem.

And so because of this empowering education program where the participants learn and then we have another strategy of their adopting other learners in the community, and then they also adopt other communities to teach them what they have learned, we call this the organized diffusion model, this has led to actually the practice of child marriage and female genital cutting being abandoned by 1,748 communities in Senegal to date. This is from 1997 when the first community stood up and decided to do this which surprised us all. We did not ask them to do this. This was something that the women in the class decided was important to do. To make a declaration to abandon these practices and since then this has been an accelerating movement.

As more and more communities have started to abandon the practice, more and more communities want to join in this movement and also abandon these practices. So, what I'm here to say is that we strongly believe there is a way to abandon these practices that is very respectful of the culture that allows the people to lead this movement themselves. And I would like to share with you some of the most important lessons we have learned. I don't have much time but I've taken three of, or three or four of what I think are most important lessons.

And I have to come back again to the human rights aspect of this program. That having this human rights based education program really has allowed people to defend the actions they have taken in order to abandon these practices. I can give you the example of two or three months ago in the village of Simi and Northern Senegal where it is prevalent for families to marry their daughters at age 9, 10, 11 years old.

In Simi, a man who lives in the Congo who is an immigrant worker, called the village and said he wanted to marry his 13-year-old daughter, he had her taken out of school that day. Immediately the community management committee of the class met with the school director and all the students got together, they made banners, it was very funny because they said the next day when they marched across the village to protest this marriage they all knew it was Tostan because they had flip chart paper and red markers all over saying, "Protect our daughters, protect human rights."

But they also called in the media and they – it was a peaceful march and they marched to the house of the man who was supposed to marry the girl and they said to them, "This is not done in our community anymore. We have made this decision that child marriage is no longer acceptable." They called the father, they negotiated and they succeeded in this marriage not taking place, and the girl is now back in school. And so this was an example, they used their human rights, we have – girls have the right to education, they have the right to health, they

have the right to be free from all forms of violence, to be free from all forms of discrimination. They used their rights very actively and they spoke out on the radio and other communities heard this and we think this is very important.

And the fact that the program is holistic is also extremely important. It not only includes the social empowerment but the economic empowerment aspect is important also because if these girls aren't married then what are they going to do? Well you have to have small projects, you have to have them be able to continue with their schooling and be able to go on to other economic activities until they do get married, which of course, everyone wants to get married. If the girls do want to get married at 18 or, and most communities set that as the minimum now is 18.

The other lesson learned, the second lesson learned that was very important is of course the participation of men in this program. In the beginning we were focusing on women and we even did women's rights and we soon learned that this was not the best way to go. It was creating actually tension and conflict within the community. And so we soon learned that it was best to talk about people's rights and to include as much as possible the men, particularly the leaders, the religious leaders, the traditional leaders and by telling them how important it is to us to have them on board.

We want to create a society where everyone's rights are respect by teaching them their rights and talking about children's rights, women's rights and men's rights, we really got them on board in this and some of our most vocal leaders of this movement are Muslim imams, religious leaders of the communities who are going from community to community explaining why they want people to come on board with this new convention which is a convention of human rights and better health for girls and women.

And then the other aspect too is we were not including adolescents in the beginning. And guess what? They, parents were abandoning female genital cutting and the adolescents were coming along saying, oh my goodness, we want to go through the same celebrations as our sisters, we don't get any gifts anymore, no more signing and celebration of our – and we actually had girls in some of our communities asking to be cut. Therefore we quickly decided that we needed to open classes for the adolescents and so this is what we are now doing systematically is opening a class for both adolescents and adults when we go into communities. We realize it has to be the whole community involved in this process – understanding human rights, getting them on board for a very peaceful movement for change which includes everybody.

The third lesson that I want to emphasize – and this is one of the most important – is that no individual, family or no individual community can really make this decision alone. What we have discovered throughout the years and through listening to people and how decisions are made, especially in Africa is that people intermarry in other communities and therefore if you do not reach out to all of the intermarrying communities, people really cannot make this decision to abandon female genital cutting or child marriage because it has become a norm among those intermarrying villages.

Therefore when Tostan goes into an area if there are 50 villages in a rural community we will look at maybe taking 15 of those communities that intermarry, are locally connected in someway but whose influence is very important to the other communities and then they reach out to the other 35 communities to make sure that everyone is included and involved in this

new paradigm that's coming around, new change and behavior and make sure that everyone has been consulted in the decision making process. So we have intervillage meetings where they're all invited and the people who are the leaders who have the human rights education can stand up and say why they want to abandon these practices, the harm that it causes, the health consequences and the human rights violation and the others then are brought on board.

And this has been very important, this is what has led to these public declarations. Why we think that public declarations are so important. Again, these public declarations are not to blame or humiliate or shame people. It's just the opposite. They are positive declarations made and organized by the people themselves, very positive so that people feel they are involved in something positive moving forward and it is not about saying, oh, we've been awful and you know, making – feeling humiliated about what they'd been doing but rather looking forward towards a better future for all through this human rights education and through this new, the new convention that is coming about through the public declaration.

So, again, the last point is that it is critical that the movement be led by the people themselves. That is our biggest lesson and in Senegal when you go there today you will see that there are teams of people who have come from the communities who have been education over a 2 to 3-year period who can explain to their friends and relatives in the neighboring communities and even go to other countries such as Guinea where there is now a public declaration plan for December 3 for 120 communities.

And in all of this I have to emphasize the role that the women – I've talked about men and adolescents – but the brave women who stood up in 1997 and courageously decided to abandon these practices in the face of – it was very controversial and in the face of much opposition, much criticism. I think that it shows that once women are education and they really have the space to learn and exchange and look at what is important, they can really have a very powerful voice and one that can bring about this positive and permanent change as we have seen in Senegal and now we are seeing in Guinea and the other countries where we have started working, in Gambia and Somalia, Sudan and Burkina Faso. Thank you very much.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Thank you very much Molly. Okay, let's go ahead and hear from Marlaine Lockheed and then we'll open it up for discussion on all of these very important points that have been made.

Marlaine Lockheed: Well, that was a really exciting story to hear about, the work you've been doing in both of these countries. And I was asked to comment on the issue of child marriage from two perspectives. First of all, how education and childhood marriage are related and what donors can do to help. From a personal point of view I am no stranger to childhood marriage. I first encountered it when I was a school teacher in Afghanistan in the mid-1960s and during the final exams my students would come to me and beg me not to fail them because failure would mean their fathers would marry them off as we've heard today, this practice continues in many countries.

So, how are education and childhood marriage related? The empirical and anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that education is the key to eliminating childhood marriage. I think we've heard a very exciting process of education described in Senegal but in a major multi-varied analysis of household data from 50 countries, UNICEF researchers found that girls with at least some primary education, that is a minimal amount of education, are

significantly less likely to enter into childhood marriage than those with no education. And in fact, this relationship was found in 48 out of 50 countries studied. So it's a very powerful effect.

My view is that ensuring the girls marry when they are women means ensuring that they get to school while they are children. Now the speakers today noted several reasons why children don't go to school and I'm not going to repeat those, but I'd like to add another one. A large share of groups that practice child marriage can be considered socially excluded, isolated by language, geography and culture. And their social exclusion results in fewer educational opportunities for their children, particularly girls. In the handout I've given you we have some numbers about that. Examples of socially excluded girls include Roma in Europe, Hill Tribes in Laos, indigenous peoples in Latin America, scheduled casts and tribes in India, and some ethnic minorities in Africa.

In our forthcoming book, *Inexcusable Absence, Why 60 Million Girls are Still Not in School and What to Do about It*, Maureen Lewis and I have estimated that over 70 percent of girls now out of school come from excluded groups. And in a few cases we have data that is desegregated both by gender and language culture ethnicity. It's very difficult to find these data. I've given you five slides actually that show how girls from excluded groups typically fall well below, fall well behind in school participation, enrollment and years of schooling attained as compared with the majority groups in their countries. And these again deal with the Roma, Laos, Guatemala, Malawi and India which, all of which would've been very interesting overheads to project but our technology was not with us today.

Not only is it just these countries, what we find is that the greater number of excluded groups in a country the lower the female primary completion rate is. So, there is an impossible to look at or to read slide in your handout, which shows a scatter plot of countries organized by heterogeneity and school completion. What it basically shows is that there is a strong negative correlation cross-nationally. Heterogeneous countries, the result is that you have low female completion rate. So this tends to, tends to confirm this notion that heterogeneity is associated with lower schooling for girls.

Now what's interesting is it appears that the number of excluded groups in the country, that is the heterogeneity in the country is also related to higher rates of childhood marriage. Among 50 countries for which UNICEF reports data on the prevalence of child marriage are 12 countries where between 10 to 30 percent of girls ages 15 to 19, that is to say a fairly young cohort now, were married by the age of 15. All but three of these countries are both ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous and only one, Bangladesh, is homogeneous.

So my first conclusion is that to eliminate child marriage, it's essential to overcome the barriers that keep girls from socially excluded groups out of school. In our book we argue that both school supply factors and household demand factors are barriers to these girls. On the supply side, we discuss issues of laws and administrative regulations that create barriers for girls from excluded groups. We note that the quality of their schools is poor. The education programs that they experience are not tailored to the specific needs of these children. And the children often experience discrimination in the classroom which lessens their motivations.

On the demand side, there are few incentives for households to school girls, these have been mentioned. And the labor market returns are consistently lower for children from excluded

groups thus making a very dangerous set of reinforcing cycles of poverty. However, what we interestingly we were able to find some evidence that if these girls get to school, if they have the opportunity, then they do equally well as their male peers and in some cases better and of course, they don't get married off. So what can get these last 60 million girls in school?

Well, the experience of both developed and developing countries in promoting education for socially excluded groups suggests that a few well-tailored and well-targeted interventions can be effective. The first is eliminating legal and administrative barriers. And that has been discussed a bit about some general, under the title or the rubric of human rights. There are a few educational rules and administrative rules that are also necessary to change in some countries. And let's just mention a couple of these. Language of instruction is frequently an administrative rule that is set by national policy.

When the language of instruction is different from that of a child from an excluded group, interestingly enough, the disadvantage accrues differentially to girls compared to boys. Boys have more opportunity to experience a national language or a common language than girls who are secluded in their homes do. And so a language of instruction policy differentially effects the opportunities for those girls. Another thing that's an administrative rule is frequently ability tracking at the earliest grades. Girls and boys are differentially slotted into the fast class or the slow class or within class into the faster, slow groups. This works against girls in excluded groups in particular.

Pregnancy is another issue. Certainly this panel knows much more about this than I and I was surprised to discover that there were still many countries in which pregnant girls are excluded, the fathers are not excluded, and pregnant girls are not allowed to return back to their own school after the child is born, but rather are put into a different kind of school. All of that mitigates, promotes early dropout for these girls.

The second area where we have found some evidence is just the expanding options for schooling. Now, one of the lessons from high income OECD countries is that targeted tailored programs are essential to complement overall schooling investments of excluded populations are to be reached. Like Ethiopia, community schools are essential for reaching the excluded girls where the curriculum can be adapted to local conditions including variations in language of instruction, school location, maybe even closer, more easily accessible to girls, better hours of operation, non-formal schools, the discussion in Senegal is a good case in point particularly focusing on compensating for limitations of the existing schools for children who've never started school or have dropped out early and now are beyond primary school age.

At the primary level, technology can be used to supplement classrooms, USAID has provided radio and television that has supplemented teachers for many years. At the secondary level distance education can provide opportunities to girls who are sequestered for social and cultural reasons. What we find is that separate schools is a really bad idea. Experience with Maoris in New Zealand, with Native Americans in North America and with girls, often finds that the quality of the education provided in segregated schools, separate schools, is lower and so it is not a policy that is worthwhile pursuing.

Even in countries where the requirement as in Pakistan, it requires single-sex schools for boys and for girls, the consequences are that fewer schools are actually available for girls. A third area has to do with improving just the quality and relevance of schools and classrooms

for girls. The quality of these schools I can't emphasize enough tends to be terrible. Teachers are absent. The physical plant is falling apart. The timing of the school day interferes with household chores and then all of these things lead to irregular attendance and early dropout.

So what we find in the empirical literature is that improving the quality of education has an interesting consequence for the excluded children. For example, in Chile, ten years of programs providing additional support to improve the quality of the lowest performing schools significantly reduced the gaps and learning achievement between indigenous and non-indigenous students including girls. So focusing resources on the poor performing schools had a beneficial effect on the excluded children.

Bilingual education programs in some cases are absolutely essential. As I mentioned this huge study by UNICEF looks at that and concludes that girls are differentially affected by the absence of language, by language of instruction. Supporting compensatory preschool and in school programs. Actually supporting programs that differentially provide benefits to these children. And those are all on the supply side. On the demand side what we have is some evidence that direct incentives to households can help, conditional cash transfers have been mentioned by many. We see evidence that helps them. Scholarships for girls have been very effective, particularly in Bangladesh for example, the secondary level. Stipends to cover the cost of school inputs and school feeding programs.

But my, basically my second point is that getting girls from excluded groups into school and keeping them there is quite possible but is very expensive. And that's where the donors come in. So the, what we have recommended and I think this would apply relatively well to the issue of the child marriage, is that the donors can do specific things. A trust fund for multilateral programs for expanding opportunities and targeting excluded girls that could support more experimentation and innovative programs like we've described today and financing schooling options would be valuable. Africa obviously has a desperate need for such funding. We need more knowledge base. Really what we have good evidence about gender, very little evidence about gender and ethnicity, linguistic differences, exclusion. And so it would be very, and we have very little evidence about what works well.

And so a girl's education evaluation fund is something that could finance a range of evaluations of initiatives to build a knowledge base for policy. The donors could also help with creating demand by financing compensatory costs associated with excluded children and financing some of these conditional cash transfer scholarships and they do, and they do that already. And, finally, just treating the major source, the major rationale for why schools are not attracting and keeping girls from excluded groups is just to improve the quality and relevance of those schools. So these expenditures boost the cost of education for this particular targeted group but as we've noted, they're really only about 60 million girls who are not in school and so therefore, it's a very manageable kind of challenge to put forward to the donors.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Thank you. Thank you very much Marlaine. So – those were great presentations. I certainly learned a lot. And I think that what we saw from all of these presentations is yes, we need the laws to be in place first. But that even when laws exist it's difficult to be a pioneer. It's difficult to buck the norm that exists and that in order to do that there is a need for community support and for community learning to occur from within that Molly presented so brilliantly through their program.

The other thing that I just wanted to underscore because I think we sometimes tend to forget is that, parents everywhere of all socioeconomic groups want the best for their children. So this isn't happening because parents in some way want to sort of undermine their girls but because they need a guarantee of safety, they need a guarantee of educational and economic options and opportunities for their girls. They don't want their girls to be idle just as you and I as parents don't want their girls to be idle.

So, it's important to understand that in order to understand what I think Marlaine presented so brilliantly which is that education could be the answer. If you had the right kind of educational opportunities the girls could actually access and she pointed out the need to within that to [inaudible] resources specifically to socially excluded girls – girls who live in poverty, who are marginalized either due to their ethnicity or race or because of their poverty. The socially excluded groups might be the place to begin to invest in order to bring about the changes that we're seeking.

I would love to hear from all of you as I'm sure our speakers would. In particular, if we can focus our remarks on what we think we can do as a community here in D.C. to influence foreign assistance programs that exist. There's a lot of money that USAID spends on education for example, on health. You know we have the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief, they're spending money and are incredibly concerned about the high rates of HIV among young girls. What should we be saying to them needs to be done?

Is a little bit what you heard from the speakers, both programmatically and in terms of policy investments. But, I'd love us to focus our comments on experiences you may have had with successes or efforts that you yourself have sort of undertaken or questions you may have for the panelists to help you sharpen your own thinking in that regard. Let's start with Lawrence. If you can introduce yourselves when you ask the question and say where you're from.

Lawrence MacDonald: I have actually scolded my colleagues at CGD for being the first to ask the question.

Geeta Rao Gupta: You can get the ball rolling here.

Lawrence MacDonald: I hope you'll excuse me for doing that. I want to thank the panel for these really terrific presentations and I took away first of all the incredible damage the individual girls involved and the society by early marriage and also that there are many interventions that can work. Both from these wonderful country stories and from what Marlaine said. And to come back Geeta to your question about how we might influence.

I don't want to throw it back to more research, but I want to pose a question that, and Marlaine touched a little bit. Marlaine's answer is, education is the answer. And I was wondering, Anju presented this correspondence, the correlation between low human development outcomes and high rates of child marriage but she did not say which is the cause and which is the effect and in particular this raises the question of whether child marriage might in fact be a distressing symptom rather than a cause of underdevelopment. What is the appropriate place given limited resources to intervene?

And, I suspect, my priors are that child marriage is probably a good place to intervene and that education is an important part of the answer but maybe not the whole thing. But I suspect that having good impact evaluation evidence that included controlled sample studies

and baseline surveys could provide a couple of answers that I think would be very useful in mobilizing additional resources. One is if we could untangle the causality question through controlled studies to demonstrate the interventions directly to address child marriage. In fact it can break the cycle. That would be very very powerful evidence. And I'm saying this because you may in fact be doing it already in which case I ask you to tell me about it. But if you aren't then I think it's the sort of thing that ICRW might play a very useful role in leading that.

And the second is if we were to look at cross communities with a series of controlled studies, which sort of interventions work? We've heard these wonderful stories about particular things working. Marlaine looks at the education piece of it and says this is the key but you know, how important is education relative to having birth registrations? How important is human rights orientation and empowerment of girls relative to other things that we might do? And I think a series of controlled studies that provided answers to those questions could also be very helpful and then in turn in addition to what we learn from the audience today and other advocacy that could help to answer the questions for things like the Millennium Challenge Account will want to see as evidence of really what's the most effective way to use those resources.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Let's take a couple of other comments and then get the panelists to respond.

Next Speaker: I'm Paige Shevlin and I work at the Congressional Budget Office. My question is, is there a link at all between the countries that still have school fees for primary schooling and is that an issue of people not being able to afford schooling and for their daughters and therefore marrying them. Has there been any work done on that and especially since that relates to one of the Millennium development goals.

Geeta Rao Gupta: And one more from the back, the gentleman there.

Next Speaker: Hi. Ed Allen with World Learning. First a comment for Molly. My experience in Yemen is that men also are concerned about early marriage because very often boys have been forced into marriage. I think that thinking about early marriage is a concern only for girls is limited.

Second, uh, you had asked specifically about things we could advocate for in Washington. One thing that would be very helpful would be if PEPFAR funds could be freed more readily to provide for physical infrastructure improvements to schools. A very major problem with Ethiopia for example is that PEPFAR funds cannot be used to construct latrines or water plains, which are differentially, which have a significantly greater impact on improving the quality of life, the possibility of learning for girls and also for children affected by HIV/AIDS than for boys.

Our experience in Ethiopia has been very often as girls get older their physical needs are such that they feel compelled to drop out of school for a week at a time which means that their chances of academic success drop very significantly, and even during the time that they are in school – well – there aren't latrines, which, you know, people prefer not to – well, it's self-explanatory. So, this is something that effectively could be done in Washington. Pushing for at least the possibility of using PEPFAR funds for infrastructure improvements.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Thank you. We'll take one more question in this lot. Steve at the back.

Next Speaker: Thank you, Geeta. Steve Hoffman. I'm a member of the ICRW Board and independent consultant. Without discounting the value of education and economic development, looking at the demand side in a different way, I wonder if the panelists could comment as to the efficacy or whether this actually has occurred in the past which is basically take the husbands of these child brides and basically tax them more for, if they in fact do take a child bride.

In other words, you know, we make all kinds, both in the United States and in developing countries and developed countries around the world, make all kinds of policy judgments. And in my mind if you charge people more for something then they're going to buy less of it. And it just seems to me that, that that also strikes a normative question as well. It's not just the public policy choice but it is a normative choice at that point and so I'm just wondering if that's ever been thought about or what you do think about of it as a suggestion.

Lawrence MacDonald: Would you call that a sin tax?

Next Speaker: Well, I'm not quite sure I'd call it a sin tax but we'll leave it to the smart public policy people to give it the right acronym.

Geeta Rao Gupta: And I just, before we hear the responses from the panelists, just wanted to say we don't have to restrict ourselves to the investments from Washington D.C., we now have to look at Seattle and Omaha as well. Given the large amounts of dollars now that are going to be flowing from those two sites, so I'd say to you let's think more broadly and Steve in answer to your question, you know there is something called bride price is many Islamic countries that men pay for marrying daughters and I'm curious to know is it higher for girls younger or the other way around?

So with that let's get some answers from the panelists. The first was about a question about research, the need for impact evaluation studies, a need to untangle the causality, to prove that this could break the cycle of poverty, community interventions that have worked, the issue of school fees as a barrier – I know there's a lot of data on that and I'm sure Marlaine will answer that. And is it early marriage only for girls or also for boys – that's just a sampling of all of the questions asked. So, who wants to go first? Do you want to start at that end, Marlaine?

Marlaine Lockheed: Oh, gosh. The least qualified person on the panel to discuss anything here. The causality question of education and child marriage which direction does it go? Well, it would be hard to randomly assign people to be married and then follow up on whether they were educated but there's a lot of evidence that suggests when they do get married they do dropout. So it certainly is a, the direction is favorable for that hypothesis, but – I think it comes back to what Geeta had mentioned.

Parents do what they think is best for their children and so having children stay in schools that are poor and having them have and having the labor market returns to educating them be minimal means that there's no rationale for investing in whatever the investment is necessary to keep them in school. They might as well be married. At least they'll be fed. And so I think it's a question of fixing the schools and fixing the labor market. And then you don't

have to be – then marriage isn't the only option for girls. School fees and child marriage I don't know. Costs are an issue when school fees are an issue, when they're an issue.

Next Speaker: Well, school fees are certainly a barrier to girls' education.

Next Speaker: It's a barrier to education period.

Next Speaker: Period. For poor families, so that has been established.

Next Speaker: You know, I mean we have some evidence about conditional cash transfers to families and it does seem to affect that money goes to families for keeping their children in school does in fact keep their children in school.

Next Speaker: Scholarships.

Next Speaker: It could be more efficiently used by targeting better.

Anju Malhotra: Okay. To address the question of the relationship between HDI and child marriage and which way the causation may be. It's clearly both ways. Child marriage is one of the things that's depressing HDI and the low Human Development Index and the fact that there's no social and economic development is contributing to early marriages. If we look at the countries where change did happen along with social and economic growth we see that a lot of indicators move simultaneously.

So if you take a country like Taiwan and you look at the shifts in birth rates, shifts in migration patterns, shifts in women's educational opportunities, shifts in women's access to employment, those changes, the indicators for those change simultaneously with shifts in marriage patterns. And so we know that the two are feeding off of each other and to the extent that for example the girl started having an education and had an opportunity to be employed in factories in the 70s in Taiwan it became feasible not to marry them later and to the extent that it started becoming more acceptable not to marry your daughters so early became important that they start contributing to the household by going and getting jobs and not just contributing to their husband's households but to contributing to their parents' household. So that, you know, that change has happened you know, simultaneously.

I think the issue for a lot of the countries that we're looking at today is that even if that level of social and economic development cannot happen let's say for the next 20 to 25 years, that overall shift does not happen. Can we accelerate certain social and economic changes? Can we accelerate this one by direct interventions that we actually put into place by such as education or the type of community level change or the legislative change that our panel has talked about. And you talked about impact evaluation studies and actually you're right, we have done some. And they're two that I can bring to the table. One is a study we did in India and one in Nepal.

We are in the process of documenting in India, uh, a number of different initiatives both at the policy level and at the program level that different groups have been undertaking to try to delay, uh, age at marriage and to see how many, many of them can actually show any kind of an evaluation to see whether they're working or, or not and how they can be constructed in the future to actually show impact. Um, I think that's it.

Oh, on the taxing the husbands, Steve. I just wanted to say it's definitely an option to consider. The problem with any single type of intervention is that it's often subject to abuse so one of the interesting things in this consultation we recently had in India was that somebody was advocating enforcing the-- India has a law that says girls should not be married below 18 but it, it's frequently flaunted and nobody pays heed to it and there was a human rights group that wanted to imprison the priests who perform early marriages and they also wanted to have the marriages be annulled if they were taking place below age 18.

The NGOs in that group thought whoa, we are facing a serious backlash from our communities if the priests are going to be imprisoned we're never gonna get anywhere and what kind of a life are those girls going to face once they have been married and their marriage is annulled? Nobody's going to take them. So I, uh, I'm thinking about the taxation issue if it creates a system in which the groom's family then just exhorts the money, extorts the money from the bride because they're gonna be taxed more, we, you know, we could, if the gender system doesn't change you can tax the groom more but he'll just get it out of the bride's family in any case so I can think of a lot of problems with any signal but yeah, it, it's a thought.

Molly Melching: Uh, I don't -- they talked a lot and answered many of the questions. I just would say that I, I think it's a very dangerous idea about the taxing more, uh, and mainly because I think we're -- when, when, when you're talking about a behavior change I really believe that education is the answer. I mean, people being informed and making this decision themselves. If you tax it it's like you're saying it's okay. It's like you can beat your wife, you just have to pay a little fine or something for doing it, um, and this is giving, I think, the wrong message to people that it's okay to do it but you just have to pay more to do it and I think what you want to get people to, to, to move to a more towards let's respect the human rights of these girls. This is a, this is a violation of her human rights, um, and, and this is just not done. You don't, we don't do it at all. It's even like the female genital cutting people saying oh, you can cut a little bit, it's okay and that you're, I think you're getting across totally the wrong message, um --

Geeta Rao Gupta: Mm hm. Do you want to comment, Mahdere, about bride price or is that an issue?

Mahdere Paulos: I don't know but actually it's too soon to tell anything about the behavior or change or this kind of things as the new law has been revised just earlier but regarding the bride, uh, the bride price I think it's a kind of commitment that the community has made so, uh, most of the time the younger the girl is I think the bride price is really higher so that's why most of the time in, in some areas parents tend to marry off their children while they are at the earlier stage but maybe even before the birth of the child.

Sometimes they make promises if the child is a girl that they will marry off their children so that they will get more bride price but our studies, you know, now more focus on this kinds of issues but rather the -- when, when, when it comes to sources -- when it comes to causes this kinds of things were actually happen to be the reasons that there are others which the people would say about this things because they don't want to say about this things because it is something in their heart what they think it -- they wouldn't say that they would get more money in exchange of their own daughters so they just want to disregard, to disregard this kind of phrases so --

Geeta Rao Gupta: So to say that it's an economic reason when it involves your child is, is a difficult thing to highlight. Let's take some more comments. Let's start at the back this time. Pauline?

Next Speaker: Thank you very much for your very fascinating and also informative presentations and I want to go back to the issue of human rights. Uh, for most of the communities that practice child marriage the focus is on the welfare of the community and not the welfare of the individual and, uh, and therefore highlighting the human rights of the girl doesn't really strike a chord with most of those communities and so presenting it as it's for the benefit of the whole community or the benefit of the whole family would be more meaningful for those communities and, and especially we've seen with genital mutilation it's been, you know, when men feel that this is for their own benefit too then, you know, they support, they, they, they go against it but when it doesn't, you know, then they think these women are going to become [inaudible], you know we don't want that for our women.

So, that, I think we need to be conscious about that and what we can do here I think, you know, the most important thing to push for that we can from this side is – I don't think we can change people's cultures and customs but to empower communities and organizations in those communities that are actually working within communities. Most of them don't have access to funding, external funding because they are regarded as local organizations and yet those organizations are quite effective so finding ways of getting resources here to those local communities is very significant and also in terms of, you know, pushing the current administration to give more for education purposes.

In countries where, you know primary, free primary education has been established you find that millions of girls have gone back to school and they are staying in school so if we can get that ramped up that'll be really great. Thank you very much.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Thank you. Yes. Go ahead.

Next Speaker: It's Linda Sussman, and just to reinforce what you just said, um, you had asked Geeta about possibility, possible suggestions for funding, for example, from the U.S. Well, being able to identify mechanisms to actually get funding down to the communities where the communities like the communities like Molly's talking about can figure out what it is that would be best done within those communities.

There was a study by Save the Children U.K. looking at some of the HIV/AIDS funding that showed that very little funding actually gets to the communities. Then the second question though is, and especially from Molly when you get the money back down to the communities and you have decision making by communities I know there's also been recent research showing that communities don't necessarily speak out or identify ways of enhancing, for example, education among the most marginalized. So once you do get funding down to the communities how do you reinforce the importance of actually making sure that the funds contribute to the wellbeing of the marginally, the socially marginalized as well as the major groups?

Next Speaker: Tom?

Geeta Rao Gupta: You should introduce yourself.

Next Speaker: Tom Merrick. I'm a retiree but associated with the World Bank Institute. I wanted to respond to your question about what can be done with donors and I think one of the important efforts could be to use both your research and policy advocacy to get donors to think and invest across this traditional sectoral boundaries so we, you know, we think about education, we think about health, taking the traditional cash transfers, you know, they, they belong to the social protection people but if you look at some of the experiences and I'm, I, I'll take Mexico which is a good example of a well-documented social traditional cash transfer program, in the kind of the baseline in Mexico, 1997, 1999, early childbearers who are very much like early, early marriage their kids are, do much less well in progression to secondary schools than the later married or later childbearing mothers and, and five years later, in 2003, uh, the kids have caught up. The mothers haven't. Now it's, it may be, it's still gonna be difficult to attribute that to the traditional cash transfers but it looks like that's an impact of a demand site intervention.

And yet when you look at the way the progressive [inaudible] was evaluated it's all down the sectoral tower lines so I think our, you know, the research that ICRW and others are doing and then the translation of that search into policy advocacy should push donors to reach out and, and kind of look at the things that they don't traditionally look at, particularly in realms like, you know, that kind of cut across and don't fall neatly into any of the, the towers like early marriage, early childbearing.

Geeta Rao Gupta: One more and then we'll take some responses.

Next Speaker: Syd Schuler from AED. I'd like to add to what Tom and others have said about impact evaluation, that I agree it's extremely important, but I think we need to get away from the thought of isolating one intervention, um, and saying this works more than another one. I think everything we know from experience of organizations like Tostan and also research I've studied, qualitatively decision-making about age at marriage. This is in Bangladesh, but you see that it's really a combination of factors related to gender and poverty that make parents marry off their daughters early and it stands to reason that you'd need a combination of interventions so I'd like to see more studies that take into account the variety of things that are going on in countries and, and not try so hard to isolate one. If I could add a question I'd love to.

This is for Molly. I'm struck by when you describe how Tostan works, you talk about having to involve different actors in the community because these communities traditionally are kind of based on consensus. That's how they work. I'm wondering how that would work in societies that are less consensus based, for example in South Beija it's more hierarchical, I would say and I don't get the sense that decisions are made so much based on a consensus within the community so I'd like to hear your thoughts on that.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Thank you, Syd. Okay, Molly maybe you want to answer that first and then we'll –

Molly Melching: So I'd just quickly like to address those because I think it was Colleen who asked first about, she felt like maybe we were doing human rights individually focused whereas when we do human rights it's based first upon what, uh, the people decide they want for their community. It's a – looking at what our, where our community is now and where we want to go for the future and when they say, for example, we want health they

look at what they need to do to get health for the community, to get better well-being, for the community and decide that anything that can hurt the health of the girls should be eliminated and this is a decision they make in, in relation to these, this, this, this discussion, this conversation in the community that takes place so that it really is related not just to individual but to the whole community. I think that's really important that it is not just focused on, on individual human rights but that these, that it's an interdependence and relationship with the rest of the community.

And then there was a question about funding to the communities and decision making by communities and that's where, I don't know your name but, where human rights education does come in because you look at discrimination and people do look at the marginalized groups in the community. They look at how certain groups have been isolated, marginalized. One thing that we found, again, is that this goes far beyond results just in child marriage and female genital cutting but it goes into this, this discrimination issue. People have started intermarrying through, in ethnic groups.

The caste system in Senegal which is so strong, now people are saying we've been discriminating against other castes and often they are marginalized and not included in a lot of the decision making process so that when the money does come we do micro credit ourselves and now we are, we have a new project where we are partnering with other organizations who are more specialized in micro credit and health services or reproductive services or agricultural services because of course, Tostan wants to focus on what we're best at which is non-formal education but we also want to connect people with these communities so they can fund them directly once they have these management skills and the human rights education and have come to a consensus about being, including everyone in the community in these projects which makes it more attractive to the donor to say we know that when we give out money at the community level it will get to the people and it will get to everyone.

The women are included now and they have a voice and the other marginalized groups, the people who are caste, who are, who are the poor ethnic groups, the Basaree for example in Senegal were really considered, you know, they were always in the back and, and now they're part of the whole group so I think that's really important. And then, the last question was the consensus and where they're less consensus based. However, you know, it, when we first go into the communities they were very excited.

I'll give you an example of Guinea. When we went there, you know, after years of dictatorship, people were not – it was like we're going back to something that used to exist but we haven't done this. This is the first time we've really gotten together as a group and discussed these issues. They were very excited and we talk about how you come to consensus and what kind of decision making do we want to make and people deciding and committing to this. It's not like they just do it and like it was going on all the time in all these communities and that people were regularly meeting. Suddenly the class brings people together so that they can do this and it can lead to more engagement and more decision making and more consistent coming to consensus so I think it could work in other countries too, definitely.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Okay, anybody else want to respond to the other issues raised?

Anju Malhotra: Yeah, just two points. One, I wanted to come back to the issue of the boys and girls. Data really show that, uh, generally boys who are married in their teens

tend to be very small proportioned in most societies in the single digits or in the low teens, whereas girls who are married below 18 can be, you know, 50, 60, 70 percent so we're talking about a problem that's fundamentally relevant to girls and even though it can be relevant to boys if the, the numbers and the percentages are not even anywhere close.

About the sectoral, going across sectoral boundaries, Tom and Syd's point, I think that I agree with you that they're very, very important. People's problems in their lives are not sectorally defined and so often the solutions to them are not sectorally defined either. We're doing a program in India right now where we are trying this approach where child, delaying early marriage is one of the key goals and we're, we're looking at health services, we're looking at, form, non-formal education and we're looking at livelihood opportunities for girls so we're addressing the economic, social and health sectors and we're hoping that that will be one of the models to really show, you know, that this, this – to address this problem you're going to have to really go across all of these sectors and, which is one of the reasons why this legislation becomes so important because that's what it's really asking development assistance to do.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Anybody else want to respond or make a comment? All right. We'll take last set of questions here. Yes. Please introduce yourself.

Next Speaker: Thank you. I'm Paulette Lee. I'm a communications specialist. I'm going with USAID to Rwanda next month and I have the privilege of working with Mahdere in Ethiopia, January through March where I did some volunteer work. There seems to be an elephant in the room here that nobody's talking about which is not unusual because in Ethiopia they didn't talk about it either, which is sexuality.

And it's been touched on briefly, and we're talking about, I guess we've established now the young girls are married off to older men but we're not talking about why the older men want to be married to younger girls and I think that if we don't talk about that the belief, for example, in some circles that by marrying a, a virgin or a young girl you protect yourself against HIV/AIDS – if we don't talk about the sexual aspect of child marriage I think we're doing a tremendous disservice to those involved in it so I would appreciate the panel addressing that a little bit more in depth. Thank you.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Any other comments or questions? Yes, please.

Next Speaker: My name is Gannon Gillespie. I work for Tostan. I just wanted to thank those of you that talked about the cross sectoral and the need for a cross sectoral approach to this because we're finding more and more that like you said people's lives aren't compartmentalized and yet if you are approaching someone for funding or if someone's looking at a program they're thinking in a compartment, compartment, reproductive health or agriculture or whatever it is and they don't want results in the other areas, which is often fascinating or if you get them they say that's fine but, you know, where's that, where's that result, and then I also wanted to say that I think it's important.

I mean, if you look at economics you can – it'd be impossible to overstate the importance of economics in relation to child marriage or sexuality or any number of these issues but it's also easy to undervalue the fact that often in, in our culture and in a lot of cultures people do what other people do for that reason, because it's a cultural norm and a lot of times there can be kind of a fallacy that occurs that we think we have to address all of these underlying issues

and we ask people well, why are you doing this and they give us ten different reasons and we think well, we have to address all ten of those. A lot of times someone wants to marry a younger girl because he grew up thinking that that's what the normal thing to do is and if you work on changing the norm rather than addressing each of those issues below it, it can change without having to go through all ten of them.

Geeta Rao Gupta: You make a good point. Was there one other question here? Yeah, in back.

Next Speaker: Hi, I'm Ariel Rodman. I'm an undergraduate and I do part-time research on child labor through the National Bureau of Economic Research. I guess one thing that especially just, from my background is of interest is sort of the other economic opportunities, whether in the labor market or through [inaudible] of microcredit or other things that these young women would have if they didn't enter into child labor and sort of a discussion of some of the opportunity costs of not pursuing education more from a human capital accumulation sort of perspective that I don't think has been touched upon entirely.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Okay, and then one last one there.

Next Speaker: Hello, Christina Rolley with Equate, a USAID program and I would just like to make one comment about how the donor community can help out. One of the things I think that comes across in all of these examples we've heard to day is that setting the groundwork is a very important part and very essential part of achieving success and very often, and most often, the donor community asks for very quick changes to happen in a very short period of time but when we're looking at, uh, the groundwork, setting the groundwork it takes more time than two years or three years or five years and somehow we have to take that into effect.

One of the points about those scholarships, although they are, they're very helpful, in the long run we can't just keep giving scholarships so it is a holistic view that we have to take but one of the reasons the scholarships are easy to give is that you can count them easily and you can say this one and that one and the other one but we don't have any really long-term longitudinal studies that show the effectiveness of one or two years of scholarships. So those are the points that I would like to address in the panel.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Okay, so, would the panelists like to respond? It was the issue of sexuality, the issue of whether it's just normative change and just need to show that it can be done and it may not be as complicated as we make it out to be sometimes.

Mahdere Paulos: Well, the problems of sexuality, well I thought I've touched it in, briefly because it's always related with other problems because, but, especially in our country where we have witnessed so many of their, this children waited at their early stage being victims of fistula and when we talk about, when we deal with this issue in light of reproduction health problems we have seen so many of them, you know, have, didn't have access to family planning or using contraceptives is also another problem but it's not only the children themselves but I think when we deal with this issues it's their matters themselves. They're not used to this kinds of access to family planning or productive health and rights issues so it is much more related with the parents, I mean, with the mothers themselves and, we've, we have this program in our public education department where we can educate people to have, to know actually about their reproductive health and their productive rights

and about using this contraceptives or choices of contraceptives and family planning but it is actually a close relationship in terms of sexuality when we talk about this children married while they are at their earliest stage, not knowing anything about themselves. Sometimes they are even given even before their first menstruation comes and, I don't know, but this is one of the aspects that, of course, as Paulette Lee said, you shouldn't disregard.

Geeta Rao Gupta: Marlane, do you want to respond to the, to the scholarships and how long?

Marlane Lockheed: I would come back to my original observation that focusing attention on the excluded girl is much more cost, cost effective than sort of having a broad based policy of – I probably won't get this quite right but an evaluation of the Progressa study in Mexico showed that the conditional cash transfers were very effective but that there was a large group who received the transfers that would have participated in secondary schooling in any case and that by focusing the resources on those who were most vulnerable to dropping out, the scholarships could have continued longer because they would have been spread over fewer children. So I think again it comes back to greater focusing, greater targeting and I certainly agree with Tom about the cross sectoral kinds of efforts that could improve those, those efforts as well, I think.

Geeta Rao Gupta: If I can just make a few comments, um, as chair in response to some of the issues raised, um, the cross sectoral, Tom, you know, the interesting thing is it's not just about thinking about a problem as having cross sectoral response but it's not even understood often to have cross sectoral roots so you take HIV/AIDS and you take the mechanism that we have, which is the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, and what's thought to be the appropriate response to the epidemic sits, in their minds, firmly within the health sector and its response and no larger than that so that even when a case is made for the root cause for women's vulnerability being beyond, um, the way in which [inaudible] is currently spending its dollars it's somehow part of the mandate being that it has to restrict its response within the health sector.

So it's not as if they don't understand that it's women's economic environment that leads to their vulnerability epidemic or that lack of education is a factor. Yes it is but even though it causes AIDS I cannot use AIDS dollars for that and that's an argument – that's not even a, it's not a cross sectoral problem. It's about AIDS and the data shows you the link and yet somehow the mentality is that it's a health problem so you need a health response. That's what the AIDS dollars have to be used for and so if you go a little beyond that and say violence against women can increase women's risk, that has to be done somewhere else, and that, that's the mentality that I hope this new bill from Senator Durbin and Chuck Hagel will, be the one that will force the entire development assistance response from the U.S. to think more broadly about this issue is what we are hoping this will do and then sexuality – you're absolutely right.

What all of this is about is trying to protect and control women's sexuality and the point is that it's perceived as being the symbol of the honor of her family and being at risk of being, used to dishonor families so it's sort of an instrument in society that stands for much more than sex. It's a symbol of so many other things and in many societies that's how it is perceived which is why child marriage exists in the first place and this notion that somehow, um, you know, the virgin as being, um, somehow erotic, exotic, you know, all of those things contribute to those norms which brings me to your point about the normative. You're

absolutely right that once change begins the momentum is, rapidly occurs and you can begin to see it.

I mean, the example that Andrew cited of the projects, project in India where we looked at, you know, what, what would happen if you provided girls some life skills education and an opportunity for parents to be able to talk to each other about it. What was amazing to me about that was it's not just the girls in that program who changed but that the whole community changes so it's that – I don't want to be the pioneer but if I can see somebody else do it and do it safely I'm happy to go along because as Andrew said in most cases the ideal among both adolescents and parents is for girls to get married later so when you ask both adolescents and parents they want to get married later. They want their life trajectory to be quite different from what the reality is.

But somehow they perceive circumstances as going against them so that they cannot act upon the ideal so the issue is to be able to bridge the reality with the ideal by showing them that in fact the ideal is possible without too much social censure and cost and that's the critical part I think that, that then through the through community programs that we heard about today you can see can be done with community participation, ownership, mobilization, education and that's going to be key.

So there is no one solution to this problem. You're going to need the legislative change. You're going to need all of the inputs that we know can trigger more girls going into school, with particularly socially excluded girls and you're gonna need the [inaudible] and mechanisms to make that happen while you are provide resources to community based organizations to do the good work that they're doing, while you continue to undertake the research to be able to prove that they work so that organizations that give large amounts of money such as the Gates Foundation can be convinced that this is an intervention that works and therefore we want to invest in scaling it up.

So there's no one solution is the lesson that we have learned at ICRW over the years and there is much that needs to be done and we look to all of you to remain engaged in this issue and at the levels at which you work and through the mechanisms that you work with that you will find a way to think of how this issue can be addressed because it really is, um, a, a barrier to women's, women, young girls being able to fully, fully realize their potential.

So thank you very much for joining us. It was an interesting discussion and I hope there'll be many more Center for Global Development and ICRW forums from now on. Thank you.