

**BARRIERS TO EDUCATION GLOBALLY:  
GETTING GIRLS IN THE CLASSROOM**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN  
HEMISPHERE, TRANSNATIONAL CRIME,  
CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY,  
HUMAN RIGHTS, AND WOMEN'S ISSUES

OF THE

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## **BARRIERS TO EDUCATION GLOBALLY: GETTING GIRLS IN THE CLASSROOM**

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 15, 2016**

U.S. SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN  
HEMISPHERE, TRANSNATIONAL CRIME,  
CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY,  
HUMAN RIGHTS, AND  
GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:38 a.m. in Room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Marco Rubio, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Rubio [presiding], Gardner, and Kaine.

### **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO, U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA**

Senator RUBIO. Good morning. This hearing of the subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, Transnational Crime, Civilian Security, Democracy, Human Rights, and Global Women's Issues will come to order.

The title of this hearing is "Barriers to Education Globally: Getting Girls in the Classroom."

We will have two panels today. The first is an official panel, and it will feature the Honorable Catherine Russell, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the U.S. Department of State; and Mrs. Susan Markham, Senior Coordinator for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment at the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The second panel will include Ms. Linda Hiebert, Senior Director of Education and Life Skills for World Vision. Ms. Meighan Stone is the President of The Malala Fund, which as part of her testimony will also be sharing a message from Nobel Peace Laureate Malala Yousafzai. And Ms. Kakenya Ntaiya is the founder and the President of the Kakenya Center for Excellence.

And I want to thank you all for being here with us today. We appreciate your time. We appreciate your dedication.

I also want to thank all those who worked alongside my staff to make this hearing possible.

Senator Boxer cannot be here today. But as we all are well aware, she has been an extraordinary advocate on behalf of women and girls all over the world.

Senator RUBIO. And as kids across America cheer at the end of the school year, an annual ritual for many of us, no doubt, children in other corners of the globe are denied access to education as a result of numerous barriers. And this unfortunately and tragically is especially true for girls.

We are here today to examine some of the most consistent obstacles to education, and they include health barriers, such as early pregnancy, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence at home or in school, and child early and forced marriages; economic barriers that include direct costs such as school tuition, fees, materials, and personal needs, and indirect costs such as the inability to absorb the loss of income or labor contribution; physical barriers, including access to all-girl schools; distance and safety between home and school; and security issues such as conflict, the threat of violence or harassment. These realities result in roughly 31 million girls of primary school age and 32 million girls of lower secondary school age worldwide not attending school.

I am a father of four. I have been blessed with my four children. Two are school age girls and these statistics are particularly sobering as each number represents a child denied the opportunity to live up to their God-given potential. These children demand our attention, which has led us to convene today's hearing.

With the manifold pressing global challenges before us, from ISIS and Boko Haram to a global refugee crisis, an issue like girls education could easily be overshadowed by the tyranny of the urgent. But I will assert and I suspect our witnesses today would agree that prioritizing access to education for girls globally is critical, not simply on its own merits, which are significant, but precisely because of the impact it has on so many issues.

Time and again experts have connected women's education with economic empowerment, growth, and ultimately the development of local and national governments.

In addition, higher levels of education have translated into reduced maternal and infant death rates, lower rates of HIV/AIDS, and superior child nutrition.

On the flip side, there is also research indicating that when children are denied access to education, they are at greater risk of exploitation in its many forms, to include human trafficking and forced labor and even conscription as child soldiers.

It is also worth noting that many of the same countries in the world that are contending with violent Islamic radicalization also have low literacy rates. Consider that in Afghanistan only 17 percent of women are literate. And as Ms. Stone can no doubt attest, the statistics are similarly worrisome in Pakistan.

In these and other countries, access to quality education for girls is often difficult to obtain or is limited to religious education. Experts have asserted that increasing women's access to secular and mainstream religious education is an important way to prevent radicalization and that educated women are better able to intervene and stop the radicalization of their children, thus breaking the cycle of radicalization in marginalized communities. This is a complex but important issue which I hope we will be able to explore further during the course of the hearing.

Another global phenomenon which demands our attention is the impact that various wars and conflicts and violence are having on children's education. As one of our witnesses will testify, in crisis contexts, education systems are three times as likely to be disrupted. A cursory glance at the headlines underscores that there are no shortages of crisis situations around the world. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, nearly half of the 20 million refugees under their care are children below the age of 18. Access to education for this group is limited, with only 50 percent of refugee children enrolled in primary education and a mere 25 percent in secondary school.

Today's hearing is going to allow us to explore both the many challenges I have already outlined, but just as importantly the incredible opportunities that are before us as we chart our path forward in anticipation of a day when every child, no matter where they live, has access to quality education.

I look forward to hearing from our administration witnesses about the scope of the U.S. Government's work in this area. I am also interested to hear from our panel of private witnesses. You have experience in the field that will contribute greatly to what can easily become an abstract policy discussion.

With that, I would like to turn it over to Senator Kaine, who will be filling in for Senator Boxer today, who is also, by the way, an incredible advocate on behalf of the children and girls around the world.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TIM KAINE,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM VIRGINIA**

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Chairman Rubio.

And thanks. What a wonderful thing it is to walk in and see such a full committee room on an important topic, and in my role as sort of designated hitter as the ranking member today, I am going to channel two great women, Senator Boxer, who worked very hard with Chairman Rubio to get this hearing set up and then, unfortunately, at the last minute was not able to be here today. But I am also going to try to channel my wife Anne, who is Secretary of Education in Virginia, and this is an issue that is very, very dear to her heart. And I know she is probably sad that Governor McAuliffe is making her do her day job in Richmond today rather than being here with us.

The chairman did a great job of basically laying out what is at stake. If girls around the world have a meaningful chance at quality education, so many good things happen to them and to their societies. Educated women are more likely to build businesses and hold jobs and create jobs and earn higher wages and help their community and national economies grow. Educated women are more likely to seek leadership roles in government and advocate for policies that benefit their communities and that makes societies more stable. And educated women are more likely to have healthier families as child survival rates increase the longer girls attend school. And that is so important and that results in stronger, more resilient families in societies.

Access to education is more than just a fundamental individual right. It is something that works to the good of the entire society.

Thomas Jefferson, who we revere in Virginia, wrote—and it is still in the Virginia constitution—progress in government and all else depends upon the broadest possible diffusion of knowledge among the general population. Now, he lived at a time when he could not have imagined an Internet or that all knowledge would be digitized, but he was talking about the diffusion of knowledge among everybody. And if that was the case, it would not just be good for individuals, it would also be good for the society by raising standards and also giving people a check against tyranny. The more educated folks are, the more they are likely to spot when somebody is oppressing them and then stand up and advocate against them.

My wife Anne and I—and I know my colleagues enjoy this too. When we do CODELs, we often will meet with our State Department or USAID spectacular public servants abroad and see the kinds of programs that the United States invests in. Anne and I were in northern Africa in the last couple of years, and we spent time with USAID looking at programs that are largely focused on education, education of girls in many communities. And I saw it also in Honduras as I worked there 30 years ago, the work that the U.S. does to advocate for education.

But, look, I have laid out the clear benefits, but we know the benefits; just making that case is not enough because there are over 62 million girls worldwide that are completely denied any opportunity to go to school.

Just a couple of points—and this is not to pick on any part of the world because we could find some challenging statistics anywhere—in South Asia, 60 million girls never make it to secondary school. Only 8 percent of adolescent girls in sub-Saharan Africa complete secondary school. Chairman Rubio mentioned other statistics.

And then we see atrocities that call and pull on our heart strings, the brutal kidnapping of the 300 Nigerian school children by Boko Haram, the near assassination of Malala, and we are going to hear her powerful story today. And then just lesser known day-to-day threats that may not get the headlines about people being blocked and then that puts a ceiling on their aspirations on what they can achieve for themselves in their society.

And we have seen horrible things in recent years, attacks on schools, schools themselves from 2009 to 2013, nearly 10,000 targeted attacks against schools worldwide.

The costs of denying girls an education are enormous. For every extra year a girl stays in school, her projected income increases by 10 percent. For every extra year that a girl stays in secondary school, her chance of getting infected with HIV/AIDS decreases by half. Girls with a primary school education are four times less likely to be child brides than those who do not have a primary school education. And that is just some of the many reasons why we need to champion it.

One final thing. I really commend the President and the First Lady for their Let Girls Learn initiative, and that marks a really important step in ensuring that all girls get access to education that they deserve. And the administration's global strategy to empower adolescent girls is also a really important step to address

that previously underserved area in our efforts to support education.

Again, this is a hearing that is in the best traditions of this committee. You know, the Foreign Relations Committee is often about treaties and diplomatic deals, but the work that we do to both set an example and then invest in education around the globe is one of the most powerful things that we do in terms of who the U.S. is in the world and the positive effect that we can have on the rest of the world. So I am so glad that the chairman and Ranking Member Boxer are scheduling this hearing and look forward to talking to the witnesses.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you very much, Senator Kaine.

So I know, Ambassador, you have a hard stop here in about 40 minutes—35 minutes.

Ambassador RUSSELL. I have a little flexibility.

Senator RUBIO. Well, we will work with you on that, but we wanted to recognize the witnesses. Just know your statement is already in writing and in the record. So if you need to abbreviate it, that works for us too. So welcome to the committee.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CATHERINE M. RUSSELL, AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE, GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Ambassador RUSSELL. I will speak briefly. But first of all, good morning and thank you both, Chairman Rubio and Senator Kaine, and Senator Gardner as well, not just for holding this hearing on barriers to girls' education, but also for your interest in this. We really very much appreciate that.

We see girls' education as critical to U.S. foreign policy. Why? Because the ultimate goal of our efforts is to help countries become more stable, more prosperous, and more secure by increasing the participation of women, whether that is at the peace table, in parliament, or in the economy. It is really quite straightforward, as you said, Senator Rubio. Countries do better when women do better.

As just one example, McKinsey recently released a study showing that world GDP would increase by \$28 trillion by 2025 if women participated fully in economies. I mean, just a staggering number.

Increasing women's meaningful participation will depend on getting girls educated.

Last year, I visited a girls school in Kenya, and as I walked through the grounds with the principal, we came across a sign that said "you are not too young to change your nation." That sign I saw as both a promise and a warning.

Adolescent girls are critical to the future of their countries, but adolescence really is a fork in the road for girls' lives.

On one path, an adolescent girl will stay in school, she is more likely to marry later, have fewer and healthier children. If she graduates, she is more likely to earn an income that she will invest at higher rates back in her family and her community. And I might add that women invest in higher rates back into their family than men do. They get their children educated and immunized. So we see them as a very good development investment.

The other path is just much harder. When an adolescent girl drops out of school, she faces increased risks of gender-based violence, of early and forced marriage, of early pregnancy, of HIV infection and other maternal morbidities. She is more likely to be unskilled, have less earning power, and be less able to meaningfully participate in her society.

Research shows that far too many girls are on that second path. A quarter of a billion girls live in poverty.

More than 700 million girls and women alive today were married as children, and if current trends continue, the total number of women alive that were married in childhood will grow to almost 1 billion by 2030.

Girls account for more than 70 percent of new HIV infections among adolescents in countries hardest hit by HIV/AIDS.

An estimated 200 million women and girls in 30 countries have undergone female genital mutilation and cutting.

Of the 13 million illiterate youth around the world, 63 percent are girls, and 62 million girls, as you both said, are not in school, which means they face diminished economic opportunities and increased risk of discrimination and violence.

As a country that cares deeply about each individual's ability to realize and exercise their rights as human beings, the United States plays a very important leadership role in supporting these girls and their communities.

As I said at the outset, this work advances our strategic interests as well because by investing in adolescent girls, we invest in the future of a country in its peace, its security, and its prosperity.

Keeping girls in a quality education for as long as possible is critical, but as you said, it is not easy. As today's hearing will show, complex barriers stand in the way of girls' education. Many families prioritize education for boys and early marriage for girls. Girls are burdened by crushing work responsibilities at home or in the market, and if they are lucky enough to get to school, they have poor teachers or they have inadequate sanitary facilities or they face sexual harassment in the classroom or on the way to and from school. The barriers vary but the results are tragically the same. Girls are held back from reaching their full potential.

That is why earlier this year, as you said, the Secretary launched our adolescent girls strategy—we will make sure you have copies. This is the first U.S. strategy. As far as we know, the United States is the first country in the world to develop a strategy solely focused on the protection and advancement of adolescent girls. It sets out a framework for the U.S. Government's work that will guide our work for years to come.

I would like to highlight the work we are doing in coordination with Let Girls Learn, as Senator Kaine mentioned. It is the presidential initiative championed by the First Lady. Let Girls Learn is focused on ensuring that adolescent girls can get a quality education that empowers them to reach their full potential.

A key part of our approach is that it is holistic. We are working to include relevant stakeholders across the U.S. Government and beyond to tackle the range of challenges that hold girls back. Through the Let Girls Learn Challenge Fund, which Susan, I am sure, will discuss in more detail, we have selected two focus coun-

tries so far, Malawi and Tanzania, where we are really trying to take a comprehensive approach to the issues facing women and girls, including safety, health, and education.

I just might add this is the first time the U.S. Government is approaching an issue like this. We are very excited about it. We are slightly daunted, but we are committed to making sure this works. And that is what it is really going to take to make sure that adolescent girls like the ones I met in Kenya and the ones I meet all over the world in my travels are getting the education they need to succeed. As that sign said, these girls are not too young to change their nation, and it is really not too late for us to support them in reaching that potential.

So thank you again for doing this hearing. We very much appreciate it.

[Ambassador Russell's prepared statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF CATHY RUSSELL

Good morning, and thank you, Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Boxer, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify today about barriers to girls' education. This topic is critical to our foreign policy goals—and so I'd like to thank you for your important leadership on these issues.

As you know, tens of millions of girls around the globe are not in school. 31 million of these girls are of primary school age, and 32 million are adolescents. The majority of these girls live in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

My colleague, Susan Markham, will speak more about the many investments the U.S. government is making to ensure girls of all ages have access to education, including at the primary level. But what I would like to talk to you about today is a new focus area for our government—the challenges facing adolescent girls.

Thanks to concerted efforts by the United States and the international community, the gender gap in primary education enrollment has narrowed in many countries. But in many societies around the world, puberty triggers a marked divergence in the lives of boys and girls, usually resulting in greater opportunities for boys and greater limitations for girls. That is why disparities appear and widen with successive levels of education. In primary education, 66 percent of countries have achieved gender parity, compared to 50 percent in lower secondary, 29 percent in upper secondary, and only 4 percent in tertiary.

Last year, I visited an all-girls school in Kenya. I can still picture the girls lined up in the courtyard, with big smiles on their faces. As I walked through the grounds with the principal, we came across a sign that said, simply: "You are not too young to change your nation." That sign is both a promise and a warning. Adolescent girls are the future of their countries, and if that future is going to be bright, girls need to reach their full potential.

When women are able to fully participate in society, their communities and economies benefit as well. And yet around the world, there are large gender gaps in women's economic, cultural, and political participation. The State Department has four lines of effort to address these gaps:

- preventing and responding to gender-based violence;
- promoting women's economic empowerment;
- advancing women's roles in peace and security efforts;
- investing in adolescent girls.

In order for women to fully participate in society, we need to support them as adolescents. We've seen how women's potential is often determined during adolescence, which can be a fork in the road for girls. On one path, an adolescent girl will remain in school, which means she is more likely to marry later and have fewer and healthier children. She also is more likely to graduate, ready and able to earn an income that she will invest back into her family and community.

The other path is much harder. When an adolescent girl drops out of school, she faces increased risks of early marriage, trafficking, early pregnancy, HIV infection, susceptibility to violent extremism, and maternal morbidities. She is more likely to be unskilled, have less earning power, and be less able to meaningfully participate in society.

Research shows that far too many girls are on that second path.

- A quarter of a billion girls live in poverty.
- More than 700 million girls and women alive today were married as children—and if current trends continue, the total number of women alive that were married in childhood will grow to almost 1 billion by 2030.
- Girls and young women account for 71 percent of all new HIV infections among adolescents in sub-Saharan Africa.
- An estimated 200 million women and girls in 30 countries have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting.
- Of the 13 million illiterate youth around the world, 63 percent are girls.
- And 62 million girls are not in school—which means they face diminished economic opportunities and increased risk of discrimination and violence.

As a country that cares deeply about all individuals' ability to realize and exercise their rights as human beings, the United States plays an important role in supporting these girls and their communities.

The human rights of these girls matter deeply—that is certain. But we see them through another lens as well: their welfare and empowerment will be critical to achieving our goals for development, as well as global security and stability.

While adolescence is a time of great vulnerability for girls, it is also the ideal point to leverage development and diplomacy efforts. Investments in adolescent girls pay dividends in the peace, security, and prosperity of communities and countries. To break the cycle of poverty, our efforts must reach girls before they arrive at this intersection of adolescence and follow them until they complete their education.

Thanks to research by the World Bank and others, there is a strong evidence-based case to be made that educating girls may be the development investment with the highest return. Girls' education has a demonstrated positive effect on a broad range of priorities, including ending poverty and promoting economic growth; improving the health and survival rates of women and children; preventing the transmission of HIV/AIDS; protecting children from early marriage, forced labor, and sexual exploitation; and promoting gender equality and women's economic, social, and political participation.

Multiple research studies have shown:

- An extra year of education beyond the average boosts girls' eventual wages by 10-20 percent.<sup>1</sup>
- Educated women are more likely to join the formal sector, which broadens a country's tax base and increases its overall productivity.<sup>2</sup>
- If the world closes the gender gap in workforce participation, global GDP would grow by \$28 trillion in 2025.<sup>3</sup>
- When women gain four more years of education, fertility per woman drops by roughly one birth.<sup>4</sup>
- When a girl in the developing world receives seven years of education, she marries four years later and has 2.2 fewer children.<sup>5</sup>
- In Africa, children of mothers who receive 5 years of primary education are 40 percent more likely to live beyond age five.<sup>6</sup>
- Multi-country data show educated mothers are about 50 percent more likely to immunize their children than uneducated mothers.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Psacharopoulos, George. 1994. "Returns to Investment in Education: A Global Update." *World Development* 22 (9): 1325–43.

<sup>2</sup>Malhotra, Anju, Caren Grown, and Rohini Pande. 2003. "Impact of Investments in Female Education on Gender Inequality." Washington, D.C.: International Center for Research on Women.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-09-24/mckinsey-says-gender-equality-would-boost-gdp-by-28-trillion>

<sup>4</sup>Klasen, Stephan. 1999. "Does Gender Inequality Reduce Growth and Development? Evidence from Cross-Country Regressions." Policy Research Report on Gender and Development Working Paper No. 7. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>5</sup>UN Population Fund, *State of World Population*, 1990.

<sup>6</sup>Summers, Lawrence H. 1994. "Investing in All the People: Educating Women in Developing Countries." EDI Seminar Paper No. 45. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>7</sup>Gage, Anastasia, Elisabeth Sommerfelt, and Andrea Piani. 1997. "Household Structure and Childhood Immunization in Niger and Nigeria." *Demography* 34 (2):195–309.

- Women with post-primary education are five times more likely than illiterate women to know the basic facts about HIV/AIDS, according to a 32-country review of demographic and health surveys.<sup>8</sup>
- An Ivory Coast study found that educated girls were only half as likely to experience female genital cutting.<sup>9</sup>
- A review of 113 studies indicates that school-based AIDS education programs are effective in reducing early sexual activity and high-risk behavior.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the wealth of data demonstrating that adolescent girls are a sound and smart investment, the barriers standing in the way of girls' education are varied and complex.

- Attending secondary schools, which are more widely dispersed than primary schools, often requires girls to walk long distances. Parents worry for their daughters' safety traveling to and from school.
- Girls experience sexual harassment from teachers and students in their classes.
- Domestic chores leave girls without time or energy to do homework or make the long journey to school.
- Early and forced marriage typically forces girls to drop out of school because they get pregnant or have more duties at home.
- Schools lack proper sanitary facilities for girls, which means that girls miss a week each month when they menstruate.
- Parents often cannot afford school fees, or choose to pay only for their sons to go to school.
- Communities don't value girls in the way they value boys, and don't see girls as worthy of an education or any role for them outside the home.

In conflict-affected communities and refugee environments, the challenges to educating girls are exacerbated by the violence and displacement around them. Refugee and displaced children are five times less likely to attend school, and the situation is far worse for girls who are 2.5 times more likely than boys not to attend school in crisis situations.

The United States recognizes the need for access to education for the most vulnerable children affected by conflict and crises—whether they are in their own communities, displaced, or in new and longstanding refugee populations—which is why both the State Department and USAID invest in girls' education in emergencies.

While barriers vary by community and country, they all have the same effect: girls are held back from reaching their full potential, and consequently so are their communities and countries.

To address the range of challenges facing adolescent girls, Secretary Kerry launched the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls in March of this year. Not only is this the first U.S. strategy to focus on this age group, the United States is the first country in the world to develop a strategy focused on the protection and advancement of adolescent girls.

The strategy recognizes the need to match our investment in adolescent girls with the pivotal role they play in our development and foreign policy efforts. Its launch signifies our intent to take a strong leadership role in this area.

In addition to the State Department, a number of government agencies are part of this strategy, including USAID, the Peace Corps, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. The Strategy outlines five common objectives:

- enhancing girls access to quality education in safe environments;
- providing economic opportunities and incentives for girls and their families;
- empowering girls with information, skills, services and support;
- mobilizing and educating communities to change harmful norms and practices, such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting;
- and strengthening policy and legal frameworks and accountability.

The strategy also outlines the full range of challenges facing girls at this age and identifies education as the single most important tool to equip them to overcome these barriers and fully participate in their societies.

<sup>8</sup> andemoortele, J., and E. Delamonica. 2000. "Education 'Vaccine' against HIV/AIDS." *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 3 (1).

<sup>9</sup> World Health Organization. 1998. "Female Genital Mutilation." Geneva: World Health Organization.

<sup>10</sup> Kirby, D., et al. 1994. "School-Based Programs to Reduce Risk Behaviors: A Review of Effectiveness." *Public Health Reports* 109 (3): 339–61.

We are proud to highlight the work we are doing in coordination with Let Girls Learn—a presidential initiative championed by the First Lady and a central part of implementing the strategy. Let Girls Learn is focused on making sure that adolescent girls can get a quality education that empowers them to reach their full potential.

This initiative is unique in that it is holistic. We are working to address the range of challenges facing adolescent girls in a comprehensive way, including by tackling cultural biases that place little value on education for girls, as well as the inability of parents to pay school fees. And we are doing everything we can to include the relevant stakeholders—across the U.S. government and beyond—to address the challenges that hold back girls.

I'd like to highlight one particular component of Let Girls Learn that my office is working on with the USAID, and that Susan will speak about as well. Through the Let Girls Learn Challenge Fund, we are undertaking a comprehensive effort to improve education outcomes for adolescent girls in two focus countries—Malawi and Tanzania—that President Obama announced last year. We selected these countries after a careful and extensive vetting process that took into consideration the countries' relative political stability, high number of girls out of school, high rates of early and forced marriage, and political will on the part of the government.

What we ultimately hope to do is to develop a successful model to keep adolescent girls in school. The model could be used by the United States or other interested governments to scale up efforts elsewhere. We recently held a workshop on this initiative with civil society partners in Tanzania, and I was highly encouraged that representatives from the governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, Japan, South Korea, and Norway were in attendance.

I am delighted that the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is a central partner in this effort. The PEPFAR's DREAMS partnership is investing \$385 million in 10 African countries—including Malawi and Tanzania—to reduce HIV infection in adolescents and young women. DREAMS will work far beyond the health sector, by focusing on things like lack of access to education for girls, as well as poverty and sexual violence.

Research has shown that keeping girls in secondary school can have a large protective effect against the transmission of HIV. One study published in the *Lancet* found that one additional year of education for adolescents can reduce HIV acquisition before age 32 by one third. The protective effect of education is even stronger among young women—risk of HIV acquisition was cut nearly in half.

We recognize that advancing girls' education requires taking a comprehensive approach—through diplomacy, programming, and partnerships. That's what it will take to make sure that girls around the world—like the ones I met in Kenya—are getting the education they need to succeed. As the sign said, these girls are not too young to change their nation. And it's not too late for us to support them in reaching their full potential.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you for your service.  
Ms. Markham?

**STATEMENT OF SUSAN MARKHAM, SENIOR COORDINATOR,  
GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT, U.S.  
AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WASH-  
INGTON, D.C.**

Ms. MARKHAM. Good morning, Chairman Rubio, Senator Kaine, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding the critical issue of girls' access to education around the world.

It is an honor to be joined by my colleague, Ambassador Cathy Russell, from the State Department and by others who are working to Let Girls Learn.

On a recent trip, the Chief Director for Basic and Secondary Education in Malawi shared with me a conversation that she had had with a prominent village leader. When the Chief Director asked how many children the village leader had, he responded, I have three kids and two girls. The phrasing of his response under-

scores how girls continue to be marginalized in many homes and societies. In some cases, the extent to which females are valued determines whether newborn girls are allowed to survive in places where female infanticide is practiced or whether a girl is registered at birth to receive the documents she needs to establish her legal identity, enroll in school, register a marriage, own land and property, and assert her rights to make health care decisions.

Gender norms determine the way households allocate resources to sons and daughters by influencing family decisions about boys' or girls' education, where they work, where they eat, and how they spend their time. Girls are often expected to complete chores, collect water and firewood, care for the household, and watch over other children, while boys are often expected to go to school, become breadwinners, and represent the family in public gathers and forums.

In many places, as a girl approaches puberty, her world shrinks as her mobility and opportunities decrease. As a girl grows older, the fight to get an education becomes even harder.

Ambassador Russell shared with you the stark numbers that we hear far too often and the impact that the lack of education has on these girls. Going further, in many places where boys and girls do not have educational opportunities, they are in danger of being exploited, forced to work, conscripted as child soldiers, or become prey to violent extremism.

Education is a crucial aspect of increasing girls' opportunities to participate fully in their societies and the first step is to change values and norms around women and girls. At USAID, we know from our decades of experience that education is central to unlocking human potential on a transformational scale. Yet, societies do not fully benefit from the contributions of women and girls due to their lack of access to education.

I had the opportunity to visit Tanzania last month, and I met with a group of girls in their early teens who were still in school. When I asked them what they wanted to be, I was inspired by these young women who expressed their desires to become chemists, researchers, and pilots. When I followed up with one who said she wanted to be a pilot, I asked her if she had ever been in an airplane. She had not. But her education opened up her world and showed her what was possible and what could be within her grasp.

In every region in the world, women are under-represented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, limiting countries' abilities to harness their talent and skills and address development challenges. Countries that invest in girls' education have lower maternal and infant death rates, lower rates of HIV/AIDS, and better child nutrition.

Simply put, when women are educated, they are a powerful force for change. Women are more likely to reinvest their earnings in their families to improve education, nutrition, and health, helping to break the cycle of poverty. When they play an active role in civil society and politics, governments are more responsive, transparent, and democratic. When women are engaged at the negotiating table, peace agreements are more durable. That is why contributions to peace and security through education, science, and technology are

prerequisites for sustainable development, allowing economies to grow and societies to flourish.

I have also seen this firsthand in Yemen when I was working with a group of women around the peace and reconciliation process. These women were not in the official national dialogue. They were not party officials. But we asked them for their ideas. What did the Yemen they envisioned look like in 10 years? What role did they want to play? And what would they find impactful? Their answer? Literacy programs. Women wanted to be able to read the paper, communicate with each other, and pass those fundamental skills on to their daughters.

USAID recognizes the transformational potential of educated women and girls in Yemen, Tanzania, and elsewhere. Through our education strategy, we focused on primary grade reading, education in conflict and crisis, and workforce development and higher education. And we continually work to increase gender integration and attention across the approximately \$1 billion of annual education investment.

USAID envisions a world where females and males are equally able to access quality education and health care, accumulate and control their own economic assets and resources, exercise their own voice, and live free from intimidation, harassment, and discrimination. And we think education is key to this.

I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

[Ms. Markham's prepared statement follows.]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF SUSAN MARKHAM

Good afternoon, Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Boxer and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding the critical issue of girls' access to education around the world.

USAID is grateful for Congress'—and particularly this Committee's—longstanding bipartisan support for women's empowerment and gender equality and helping all children, everywhere, get the education they deserve. Congress has been a key driver in both improving education around the world, including addressing barriers to girls' education such as gender-based violence in the context of early and forced marriage.

It is an honor to be joined by my colleague, Ambassador Cathy Russell, from the State Department and by others working to improve access to education for all girls as a cornerstone investment that can truly unlock human potential on a transformational scale.

On a recent trip to Malawi, the Chief Director for Basic and Secondary Education shared with me a conversation she had with a prominent village leader. When asked how many children the village leader had, he responded, "I have three kids and two girls." This response underscores how girls continue to be marginalized in many homes and societies. Such marginalization is problematic, because the extent to which females are valued determines whether newborn girls are allowed to survive in places where female infanticide is practiced, or whether girls are registered at birth to receive documents necessary to establish legal identity, enroll in school, register a marriage, own land, and make health care decisions, access income opportunities, and assert democratic rights.

Gender norms often determine the way households allocate resources to sons and daughters, influence family decisions about education, where they work, what they eat, and how they spend their time. While girls are expected to complete chores, collect water and firewood, and watch over other children, boys are expected to attend school, become breadwinners, and represent the family in public gatherings and forums.

In many places, as girls approach puberty, their world shrinks as mobility and opportunities decrease. As a girl grows older the fight to get an education becomes even harder. She risks long, unsafe walks to school. She may be forced to marry, as young as eleven or twelve years old, and her family must be willing to pay school

fees instead of receiving a dowry. In times of insecurity due to poverty, drought, conflict and instability, the pressure for girls to marry becomes even greater due to the strain on family resources. For these reasons, and many more, an estimated 100 million girls will drop out before completing primary school.

To change this dynamic, we must focus on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide, while also engaging men and boys. The United States has put gender equality and the advancement of women and girls at the forefront of the three pillars of our foreign policy—diplomacy, development, and defense. This is embodied in President Obama's National Security Strategy, the Presidential Policy Directive on Global Development, and the 2010 and 2015 U.S. Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Reviews. But more must be done. Women's empowerment is critical to USAID's core mission of ending extreme poverty and promoting resilient, democratic societies while addressing pressing health and education challenges.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND STATISTICS

Globally, 62 million girls under 18 years old are not in school. 250 million girls live in poverty. One in three girls in the developing world is married by the time she is 18, and one in nine is married by the age of 15. Early and unintended pregnancy can be both the cause and a consequence of dropping out of school. In 2015, in 56 USAID-assisted countries, approximately 22 million adolescent girls ages 15 to 19 had begun childbearing and, of these, 4.3 million had had a second or third child. Millions more live in conflict settings that increase the risks of gender-based violence. Adolescent girls and young women are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, where seven in ten new infections in adolescents aged 15-19 are among girls.

Even so, there is reason for optimism. While adolescence is a time of great vulnerability for girls, it is also an ideal point to leverage development efforts. It is an opportunity to disrupt poverty from becoming a permanent condition that is passed from one generation to the next. And a pivotal factor for an adolescent girl during this time of vulnerability is whether she stays in school.

Education is a crucial aspect of increasing girls' opportunities to participate fully in their societies. It is the first step in changing values and norms around women and girls. USAID knows from decades of experience that education is central to unlocking human potential on a transformational scale. Yet, societies do not fully benefit from the contributions of women and girls due to their lack of access to education. In every region in the world, women are underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, limiting countries' abilities to harness their talent and skills and address development challenges.

Based on data from 105 countries, researchers concluded that investments in universal primary and secondary education played a "decisive role" in bringing countries out of poverty and reducing fertility rates. Countries that invest in girls' education have lower maternal and infant deaths, lower rates of HIV/AIDS, and better child nutrition. Among adolescents, greater educational attainment is associated with delayed sexual initiation and increased likelihood of contraceptive use. It is estimated that almost 60 percent fewer girls would become pregnant under the age of 17 years in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia if they all had a secondary education. Girls with secondary schooling are up to six times less likely to marry as children compared to girls who have little or no education.

And in many places, without a quality education, young people are in danger of being exploited, forced to work, conscripted as child soldiers, or become prey to violent extremism. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, women and girls together account for about 70 percent of trafficking victims, with girls representing two out of every three children trafficked. Whether girls are trafficked into forced labor, domestic servitude, or sex slavery, trafficking disrupts a girl's ability to go to school, and puts her at great risk of gender-based violence.

Educated girls can have a positive impact on the next generation. Researchers estimate that over 50 percent of the reduction in child deaths between 1970 and 2009 could be attributed to increased educational attainment in women of reproductive age. Each additional year of a mother's education increases the likelihood that she will use prenatal care. Children of educated mothers are more likely than those of uneducated mothers to have higher birth weights, are less likely to die in infancy, and more likely to be immunized. And the benefits of education to girls go beyond health and nutrition. The proof: an extra year of secondary schooling can increase girls' future earnings by 10-20 percent. And if ten percent more girls attend school, a country's GDP increases by an average of three percent.

Simply put, when women are educated, they are a powerful force for change. They have the tools to better participate in the formal economy and earn an income—and are poised to make a tremendous difference in all areas of their life. Women are more likely to reinvest their earnings back into their families to improve education, nutrition, and health, helping to break the cycle of poverty.

#### USAID'S APPROACH

##### *Education Strategy*

USAID's current education strategy focuses on the following goals: primary grade reading; education in crisis or conflict; and workforce development and higher education. The Agency continually works to increase gender integration and attention across the approximate \$1 billion annual education investment. Through these efforts, USAID's education programs continue to reach girls, including adolescent girls, in programs that provide learning opportunities and prepare girls with the skills they need to succeed.

From 2011 to 2015, USAID reached nearly 38 million individual primary school students—roughly equal numbers of girls and boys—with reading programs to improve instruction and learning outcomes. The Agency improved or established quality education in safe learning environments for nearly 12 million children and youth in conflict and crisis environments, of whom an estimated 47 percent were girls and 2.4 million of whom were previously out-of-school. Our workforce development programs supported approximately 300,000 girls to gain new or better employment. In Somalia, girls and young women represent 79 percent of those whom USAID helped gain access to education; in Afghanistan, where 40 percent of primary school students are female, girls and young women represent 58 percent of those gaining access to education through our programs. USAID places an emphasis on girls in our education programs because of the development dividends of educating girls and because they are more vulnerable, at risk of dropping out at higher rates, and often face more challenges than their male counterparts to stay in school.

##### *Whole-of-Girl Strategy*

USAID's "whole-of-girl" approach addresses the interconnected events that resonate throughout a girl's life from birth to adulthood. For instance, the recently released Implementation Plan of the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls reflects USAID's engagement with adolescent girls, aged 10 to 19, in this holistic manner. This strategy provides a comprehensive framework for the Agency to address the diversity of opportunities, possibilities, and challenges that adolescent girls encounter. The USAID Implementation Plan of this strategy does this by furthering efforts to mainstream and integrate gender throughout programs and interventions; by documenting progress through data, integrating lessons learned, and promoting best practices; and by expanding collaborations and partnerships. Additionally, new programs will be implemented in sectors where the specific needs of adolescent girls and the barriers they face are well understood, such as in child, early, and forced marriage.

Additionally, in March 2015, the President and First Lady launched Let Girls Learn, which employs this holistic approach to change the perception of girls' value at the individual, community and institutional levels; fosters an enabling environment for adolescent girls' education; and engages and equips girls to make life decisions and important contributions to society. One of USAID's key contributions to the Let Girls Learn initiative includes the Let Girls Learn Challenge Fund to help adolescent girls thrive by utilizing a unique mechanism for USAID and public organizations, private sector companies, governments, and international donor organizations to co-create, co-fund, pilot, and implement innovative programs to ensure that adolescent girls enroll and succeed in school, with an initial focus on Malawi and Tanzania. Additional USAID Let Girls Learn commitments include a five-year, \$180 million partnership with the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) which includes accelerated and alternative learning programs for out-of-school girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and addresses sexual and gender based violence issues that prevent girls from attending and completing primary education; \$100 million in Jordan to build 25 new schools, 70 percent of which will be schools for girls, to alleviate overcrowding due to the influx of Syrian refugees; and a \$70 million commitment to advance girls' education through new and ongoing USAID programs benefiting over 200,000 adolescent girls in Pakistan.

Through Let Girls Learn and decades of work to lift up adolescent girls, USAID programs work across sectors to ensure that all girls have access to a quality education by addressing the root causes that keep girls out of school and limit their ability to make life decisions. Within these programs, USAID works to engage

women and girls as well as men and boys as advocates to promote gender equality and equal opportunity. The Agency's programs address the differentiated needs of girls in specific stages of adolescence, recognizing that the challenges young adolescents encounter are distinct from those experienced by older adolescents approaching adulthood.

In part to keep girls in school, USAID focuses on addressing a wide range of vulnerabilities for adolescent girls, including early pregnancy, malnutrition, menstrual hygiene, gender-based violence, HIV, and economic barriers, including school fees and the cost of materials to attend school. To address these vulnerabilities, USAID implements programs that promote positive gender norms and behaviors, equitable access to resources, and prevention and response to gender-based violence, including child, early, and forced marriage.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, USAID's basic education programming has empowered 118,963 adolescent girls through scholarships, tutoring and mentoring, training in preventing gender-based violence and improving school environments. This program has improved adolescent girls' transition from primary to lower secondary education. In addition, through the program's mentoring activities, girls are empowered to play leadership roles in their schools and communities.

In Bangladesh, the our girls' education program works with secondary schools to incentivize students, teachers, school administration and parents to ensure girls feel safe and have a place where they can thrive. Currently, the campaign reaches more than 100,000 adolescent students of which 60 percent are girls—and has brought 265 married and divorced girls back to school, led to a 10 percent decrease in child marriage, and achieved a 30 percent decrease in girls' dropout rates compared to 2014 rates. As a result, the campaign model will be scaled nationwide by the Government of Bangladesh.

The inception of USAID's "whole-of-girl" approach begins at birth, a critical period of time where USAID has done important work towards registering all children, particularly girls, in developing countries for decades. Birth registration is essential for accessing critical services and protecting rights such as proving one's identity, owning property, enrolling in educational programs, gaining employment, opening a bank account, conferring citizenship on one's children, and voting. USAID has spearheaded registration as part of work to provide improved access to services for orphans and vulnerable children, strengthen governments' capacities to provide reliable registry services, and assist in family reunification efforts. For example, the PEPFAR-funded Nilinde Orphans and Vulnerable Children program in Kenya works to improve inheritance, birth certificate, and guardianship systems to further protect vulnerable children and their families and to provide access to services such as education and health services. Birth registration also results in improved population data that will be a valuable tool for designing evidence-driven programs and ensuring that adolescent girls have equal access to services and rights.

Following the enactment of the Girls Count Act in 2014, USAID is centralizing documentation of the Agency's efforts to improve civil registries and enable access to birth certificates. We are also working to bolster these efforts through the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls. Additional guidance, currently being developed as part of larger Agency discussions on monitoring and evaluation, will provide further direction to the collection of appropriate and practical data for beneficiary age, marital status, location, and school enrollment status.

#### *Conflict-affected Environments*

The number of displaced populations due to crisis and conflict around the world is on the rise, and USAID and the Department of State are working together to address the unique needs and barriers to education for girls impacted by crisis, conflict, and migration, including a physical space to learn. For example, the influx of Syrian refugees into Jordan has had a profound impact on the education sector, particularly public schools. To help meet this challenge, USAID leads an effort in Jordan in partnership with other donors to make available the necessary funds to finance the Ministry of Education's plan to place an additional 50,000 Syrian children in formal education so that all refugees have access to education in the 2016-2017 school year. This raises the total number of Syrian refugees enrolled in formal schools to 193,000 and includes the provision of an additional 102 schools educating two shifts of students per day, raising the total double-shift schools to 200, as a temporary solution to the educational needs of Syrians in Jordan. Donors also intend to scale up support of the government's "catch up program," which aims to enroll an additional 25,000 previously ineligible students inside formal schools to give them the opportunity to catch up to their peers in their age group, be tested, and when ready join their age cohort.

To continue support for girl refugees, this year USAID pledged a \$10 million contribution to Education Cannot Wait, a fund designed to increase safe and quality education so that all children have the opportunity to learn even amid protracted emergency situations.

#### LOOKING AHEAD

USAID continues to refine tools and interventions to effectively address the unique needs of girls in order to ensure they reach their full potential. The Agency remains resolutely focused on implementing the three objectives of the USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy: (1) Reduce Gender Disparities; (2) Reduce Gender-Based Violence; and (3) Increase Capacity of Women and Girls to Realize their Rights and Influence Decision Making.

Already, USAID is increasing our efforts to coordinate across sectors, including health, food security, conflict and crisis response, economic growth, and more, to address the interlocking barriers that disempower and disadvantage adolescent girls. Sustainable development outcomes depend on engaged collaboration with women and girls themselves, soliciting their knowledge and solutions while deepening their capacity for decision-making and driving social transformation.

USAID envisions a world where females and males are equally able to access quality education and health care; accumulate and control their own economic assets and resources; exercise their own voice; and live free from intimidation, harassment, and discrimination—valued as leaders, innovators, peace-builders, and breadwinners in their communities and societies.

I appreciate the opportunity to share with you what USAID is doing to address barriers to girls' education and look forward to hearing your counsel. I welcome any questions you may have.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you and thank you for your service and all the work you are doing as well.

I am going to begin by deferring to Senator Gardner.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the witnesses for being here today. I appreciate your time and testimony.

I had the opportunity just a couple of months ago to travel to Israel and see some of the great work USAID is doing in education. I traveled to and visited the Hand-in-Hand School, along with Senators Cardin, Markey, and some others that joined us, as they bring together Jews and Arabs in the same school to receive education and opportunity to work together, to grow up together, and to befriend each other.

The recent opportunity I had to visit Myanmar, Burma, also opened my eyes to what has happened around the globe, particularly in Southeast Asia. I had an opportunity to visit with Administrator Smith about her recent visit to Burma as well.

And so to you, Ambassador, and to you, Coordinator Markham, I would ask this. During that visit to Burma, we talked a lot about education reform. We talked with Aung Sang Suu Kyi about the work that she is now doing leading Burma in the transition to what I hope is a full-fledged democracy. Education reform, clearly one of their most important policy pursuits, but also one of their greatest challenges because after 50 years of harsh military rule, their education system in many respects has been decimated. And so the new civilian government has a tremendous amount of work to do to make this transition successful.

And so to the two of you, what programs does the State Department have and USAID currently have in the sphere of Burma? What could be useful for them? What can we help them with? And how can we help that country rebuild its educational system and assure better access for women and girls to educational opportunities? Either one or both.

Ambassador RUSSELL. Senator, I will start and then I will certainly defer to Susan who probably has more information on the programming.

But I did travel to Burma fairly recently too, and I had the same reaction. It was interesting. I went to a girls' school, and the girls were telling me that in some of their classes, they would have to recite things and if they did not recite it exactly right, they would get tossed out of the class. And if the teacher did not get it right and the girls challenged them, they would get in trouble for that. So I came back with the same notion that we really need to do a more thoughtful look at what some of these curricula look like and how we can try to develop them in a way that encourages people to question and to really be analytical in their work.

From our perspective at the State Department, we have done a fair bit of work in Burma on supporting women, small programs to try to get women either involved in the political process, involved in the peace process, and some work on economic empowerment. As I said in my statement, we see all of those as really integrally related to each other. And so we are continuing to look for opportunities to work in Burma. I feel like there is tremendous opportunity there.

And I will defer to Susan on some of the other programming questions.

Ms. MARKHAM. Thank you so much for that.

USAID works in partnership in Burma with various local education and government partners to increase recognition of community and refugee-based education as well. The programs that I think are kind of the key aspects of the work that we do in Burma include non-formal education opportunities for children in communities that have been affected by conflict in southeast Burma and those displaced Burmese in Thailand. We also work with ethnic community-based organization partners to make sure schools in conflict-affected areas continue to have students attend. We have also supported education in refugee camps and migrant learning centers that use the Burmese curriculum for primary level classes for displaced Burmese children in Thailand who seek to return to Burma.

Senator GARDNER. Thank you.

Throughout our visit, we visited in Singapore and Taiwan and Myanmar, and we talked about areas of that part of the world that are improving in terms of opportunities for women and opportunities for more freedom for their people.

Where do you look out, though, in Southeast Asia, in particular? As chair of the East Asia Subcommittee, I would be very interested in this answer. Where do you look at in East Asia and Southeast Asia and see things getting better for women in education opportunities? Where do you see things getting worse or where are you concerned about the most?

Ms. MARKHAM. There are a variety of different barriers, I think, across the countries. As you know, within that region, the countries can be so different, even within a single country.

In Cambodia, I was both in rural areas and in the capital. In the rural areas, so many men had gone away to seek work in other parts of the country or in other countries. And so women were re-

maining there to do a lot of the agricultural work that needed to be done. For them, it was a very fundamental question about whether the schools were good enough that they would take the time and money to send their daughters there when they really needed them helping with rice or other agricultural duties. In the more urban areas, it was more about the threat of violence, HIV, and other health issues that were impacting girls' ability to go to school.

So I think that it is hard to kind of give a broad picture. Certainly in Indonesia, we are worried about issues of child marriage and FGMC and other issues that impact a girl's opportunity to go to school. In places like Bangladesh, we work to prevent child marriage in order to keep girls in school. So it is really varied across countries.

I do think overall with hearings like this and with the Office of the First Lady continuing to talk about the importance of girls' education, it certainly is an easier conversation. We no longer have to make the "why" argument but really the "how," how can we make this happen and keep girls in school.

Senator GARDNER. Very good.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the witnesses.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you very much.

Senator KAINE?

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And to the witnesses, thanks for your testimony.

By 2020, the World Bank Group expects to invest about \$2.5 billion in education projects targeting adolescent girls from age 12 to 17. About 75 percent of these investments are expected to be from the International Development Association's fund, which is the Bank Group's fund for the poorest countries, largely in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, which have the highest numbers of out-of-school girls.

Could you talk a little bit about how State or the U.S. family of agencies working on this will work to help the World Bank fund guide the direction of those sizable investments so they can help maximize the effect that they will have?

Ambassador RUSSELL. Senator, thank you for that.

And we were very excited to see the World Bank's announcement about that.

We are coordinating with them. Our teams have been working together to try to think about how best to do this work. The way they typically do their funding is that these proposals generate up from the countries. And so I think there was an event at the World Bank where it was India, I think Ghana, and Rwanda came forward and they sort of made it clear what they were planning to do. We are working with the bank to try to think about how best to do this in these countries. And I think over the 5-year period, assuming that those investments are done wisely, which I expect that they will be because I think the bank is very thoughtful, we hope to try to do our work in a way that is reinforcing of that work.

I mean, I always think the United States—you know, we do so much important work around the world. We cannot be everywhere doing everything. And so one of the major tasks that I have undertaken is to try to make sure that we are coordinated with the other

players in the field, and that includes the U.N., the World Bank, so the multilateral world, and also our bilateral partners. So when I mentioned what we are doing in Malawi and Tanzania, we are now in this very substantial process of trying to identify who else is there, what they are doing, what NGOs are there so that we can try to do our work in a more coordinated way. And as I said in my remarks, that is not typically the way the U.S. Government approaches these issues because gender is a fairly unusual issue, but I think on this issue it makes the most sense because we really have such a huge task ahead of us. And if we can all do our work in a more efficient way reinforcing each other's work, I think it is just going to be much more productive.

Senator KAINE. Let me ask you about education and refugees. The chairman talked about all the normal challenges of the education of girls, and then we have these situations in the world now where people are displaced from their homes, which makes the provision of educational programs even more difficult. I visited Syrian refugees in Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. 2-plus million in Turkey, some in refugee camps, some in communities near the border, Ghazi and Tep and others. In Jordan, heavily in camps but some living in the community. Lebanon has not really done much on the camp side. So there are more Syrian kids in the Lebanese school systems than there are Lebanese kids because of the 1-plus million numbers.

What are we doing to focus upon the needs of especially, just as an important and powerful example, Syrian refugee kids and making sure that they are receiving education, especially young girls?

Ms. MARKHAM. Thank you so much for that important and timely question.

Just last month at the World Humanitarian Summit, USAID pledged \$10 million as part of a \$20 million package from the U.S. Government to the Education Cannot Wait fund because I think it is an important issue. Oftentimes when we think about humanitarian assistance and providing aid to refugees, we think about the immediate needs of shelter and food and safety. But now longer and longer, refugees are not getting back to their homes, and they are either in camps or urban areas. And so this program is going to move up the education programming so that we are providing it sooner to those who have been displaced from their homes.

But I should say a majority of the Syrian refugees are not in camps. They are in urban areas in Lebanon and Jordan, and we have been very thankful for the good government partners there where USAID has been working with the governments. Specifically in Jordan, we have been working to build new schools as quickly as we can so that they can run multiple shifts so that boys and girls can continue their education as they move forward.

Senator KAINE. That is excellent.

Ambassador RUSSELL. Can I make one point on that?

Senator KAINE. Yes. Please, Ambassador Russell.

Ambassador RUSSELL. I would say I think the international system is straining under the burden of these refugees and trying to figure out how to address these challenges more effectively. Obviously, the resources are critical to that.

But what we are seeing, in particular when you look at the girls, is we are seeing a higher rate of early marriage among girls. And it is families who are looking around and they see their girls are in danger, so they decide it is easier and better and safer for the girls to get married than it is to be out in the community and vulnerable. We are trying to do some programming on that front.

We are also looking at economic opportunities so that women—a lot of times these are women-headed households. They do not have a way to support their families. So we are taking a look at the range of issue.

But I would just sort of echo your point that all of the challenges that you see in a regular circumstance are magnified and exacerbated by conflict. And I think the whole world is struggling to try to do a better job to address those problems.

Senator Kaine. One last question. I am a proud uncle. My niece was a Peace Corps volunteer in Cameroon and worked on girls' education issues there. She came back a couple of years ago. But I know the Peace Corps has really embraced the Let Girls Learn initiative. I do not have a Peace Corps witness here, but I know you guys work closely with the Peace Corps. I wonder if you just might offer some thoughts about what the Peace Corps is doing to make sure that our volunteers in communities around the world are really advancing this important goal.

Ambassador Russell. One thing I would say is that the Peace Corps is an important partner with us in this effort overall, and they were a part of the strategy. We are very closely linked with them and with MCC, as a matter of fact. We are really trying to organize ourselves very effectively.

But the Peace Corps does bring a really unique perspective to this which is that, as you say, they have these volunteers who are living in these communities and understand what the communities need. And that to us is very valuable. You know, we sit in Washington, we try to design programs, try to come up with things. But to have people who are actually out there and understand exactly what is going on, as USAID certainly does, but I think Peace Corps in a different way really brings a valuable perspective to this. And so we are very much grateful to them. The head of the Peace Corps is devoted to getting more girls into education settings, and she personally is very involved with us in trying to do this in a more organized way.

Senator Kaine. Excellent.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Senator Rubio. Thank you.

Let me just begin with a couple of quick questions, and then I want to get into the guts of everything else we have talked about.

I am curious. As we go abroad and are beyond simply in all of our contracting that we do overseas, everything from the people we hire to work at our embassies and consulates—I am talking about nationals—all the way to projects of any scope that we are doing in other countries that are being funded through USAID, do we have a program that actively seeks to hire firms and companies that are run by or owned by women in these countries as we try to empower an entrepreneurial class in some of these places?

In essence, let us say we have any sort of project in a foreign country and we are leveraging U.S. funds to do it, is there any program or incentive system in place to try to affirmatively hire, if possible, women who run businesses in some key countries around the world?

Ms. MARKHAM. Senator, I am not aware that we have that sort of program on the procurement office side. I do know that there are USAID efforts to empower more local organizations, and quite frankly a lot of the civil society organizations that we work with provide opportunities for women to step forward and show a lot of leadership. So when we look to empower local organizations and invest our development funds in them, they are oftentimes through women-owned or women-directed organizations. But I do not know of any specific procurement program.

Senator RUBIO. It was just a suggestion. But my point—and maybe it is something we need to work on. But my point on that front is the next step after the education is to empower women to have a place in both the business and civic life of a country, and if we are spending millions of dollars in a country to do everything from build roads and bridges to build schools, to run systems and there are in fact companies that are either run or started by women who may perhaps have benefited from the education that we have funded, I think that would be the next logical step in leveraging our aid and empowering and getting experience and work for companies. It is just a thought, and maybe that is something we need to develop on our end.

Ms. MARKHAM. If I could just follow up on that. I should say that one of the main points or one of the main strategies of the USAID education strategy is workforce development. So we are working with companies that operate in the countries where USAID works to create a pipeline so that education is not the end all. We are creating a pipeline so that they can join the formal workforces that are needed.

And one of the largest programs USAID has ever created is called the Promote Program in Afghanistan, which is specifically focused on girls who are graduating from secondary education and then pairing them with civil society, government, or private firms so that they can gain the skills to enter the formal workforce. It is exactly what you are saying. We have made this investment. The girls that we invested in during primary school are now in secondary school and looking ahead, and we are trying to help build a path for them.

Senator RUBIO. And I know every country possesses different challenges. My view is we are doing the education. We are doing the workforce empowerment. I think the next logical step at some point is to help leverage our aid to create an entrepreneurial class of women business owners. If you want to talk about ultimately completing the cycle, maybe that is something we should talk about further.

I am also interested in what we are doing, if anything—and I am just kind of taking you to a different part of the world for a moment—in Central and Latin America and particularly the migrant crisis that we now see emanating out of Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, the Northern Triangle. And as we have all read the hor-

rific tales of what is happening to women in particular, young women in particular, who are being trafficked in the hands of these horrifying cartels and so forth, what efforts do we have, number one, to prevent the migration, and second, to provide services, empowerment services, if in fact they are returned to their country of origin?

I visited one site in Honduras where I saw some work being done, and World Vision was involved in that as well. And it was going to lead into the next question that I have. It was providing what I would call character education. And that is important, but education has to be the right education, the curriculum, what we are teaching. You know, given the limited resources we have, access is important, but programming on the quality of that education is important. So how are we balancing that between—I went from the migrant thing to this because it is the experience I just came from. How are we balancing programming and access? They are both important, but the access should lead to quality programming not just, you know, we got you in a classroom, we are going to teach you a few basic things?

Ambassador RUSSELL. Well, let me say first, if I can, about that region, which is an interesting region for women. In some ways you see women leadership, political leadership, and that is pretty impressive. And the girls' education numbers—and this is a broad—

Senator RUBIO. I am sorry. You see women leadership in South America. You do not see it nearly as often in Central.

Ambassador RUSSELL. Yes, absolutely. In Latin America, yes. I am sorry.

Senator RUBIO. Often you have heads of state, but somehow it stops when you get into Central America.

Ambassador RUSSELL. Yes.

And we see the girls' education numbers are pretty good across the region. Again in Central America, we see in some indigenous populations that there are problems of early marriage in these populations, and so we are taking a closer look at that.

But where you have very serious problems is we have very serious problems of gender-based violence in that region, and we need more economic opportunities for women. And those two things I think are driving our thinking at least on the State Department side about how we should think about women's issues as we move forward with addressing the issues in the three countries. I know that there have been lots of conversations with Congress about the funding for that, and we are taking a look at how we can do more effective and better programming on that issue.

On your second point about—I cannot remember what it was. What was it?

Ms. MARKHAM. Quality.

Ambassador RUSSELL. Quality. Oh, yes. I am sorry. Of course, quality.

I 100 percent agree with that. It does not do any good to just put these kids into a school. They need to be getting a quality education.

Having said that, that is very challenging in many places. I was in Malawi not too long ago, and there were literally 60 kids sitting under a tree with nothing, no piece of paper, nothing, and just lis-

tening to that teacher for an hour talk about things. And I think even the best teacher is going to struggle with that. And so across the board, we really have to think about how we can help train teachers, support teachers, and make it clear to countries that that is an important part of what they are supposed to be doing.

Senator RUBIO. So another thing that is interesting—I mean, one of the things that I think begins to change the dynamic is when you can get more women into senior government leadership positions.

So here is something, and I know Senator Kaine noticed this as well. When I read the bios of heads of state and foreign ministers, it almost invariably includes at some point study in the United States, which in many of these countries is largely reserved to those who come from wealthy families.

What efforts have we undertaken or are we undertaking to close the cycle so if a young girl has been exposed anywhere in the world to education in primary and secondary education, they have now finished? Do we have efforts to help more young women around the world travel to the U.S. and attend colleges or universities here that will, in fact, position them to return and play a role in some of the senior leadership positions in government around the world or in business for that matter?

Ambassador RUSSELL. I am sure you have been briefed on some of the work that our ECA Bureau does. We bring millions of people to the United States over periods of time. And we have had many conversations with them thinking about—it is not enough just to make sure that there is some sort of gender parity in their work, but also thinking about things like sometimes they will bring a group of women entrepreneurs, for example.

I met with a group that came from the Middle East, and the women said, you know, it is great that we come as a group of women and we can talk amongst ourselves, learn from each other, learn from American business leaders and things. But it is also important for us to be in groups with men so that the men in our region see us as equals. And so we are taking a careful look at that.

These issues are always so complicated and it does, in a way, depend on sort of the mores in a country. But there is no question that from our perspective, the United States stands for something. We have values here. We have principles. We are trying to share those with others, not trying to force others to do things as we do them, but to learn from what we have done in the U.S.

I think the power of the United States to bring people here to show them how we live, to show them how women and girls have opportunities here, I am always very careful to be humble about that and say we still have challenges in the United States. It is not like we have solved every problem. We have problems with gender-based violence and other issues. We do not pretend to know everything, but we have a lot of experience that we would be happy to show. And I think both by example and by sort of spending time and teaching them, we go a long way.

Now, I will say one of the things I hear about constantly is the United States only has 20 percent women in Congress. I do not know if you hear that when you travel, but they say to me what is going on in the U.S. Why do you not have more women?

Senator RUBIO. Well, we were just talking about that ourselves.

Ambassador RUSSELL. It is complicated. Right? I mean, women have opportunities here, but there are reasons—and everyone is trying to understand why do more women not run. Is it that they do not like to raise money? Is it that they take failure personally? Who knows? But there is a lot of research being done on that front. I think, again, the United States really has a lot of ability to share our experience.

Senator RUBIO. Obviously, it is deeper issue about the representation in Congress. I will add this as the father of a 16- and 14-year-old and watching my daughters and their contemporaries grow up and talk and express themselves, those numbers are going to change. They are coming.

Ambassador RUSSELL. I agree.

Senator RUBIO. And that is great.

Did you want to add something?

Senator KAINE. Just on that one, I think even the fact that we acknowledge that as a weakness can sometimes help us in dialogue with other nations because if it is all like we know everything and we want to teach you, well, that is not too appealing. We are 19 percent in Congress. That is the most it has ever been. That ranks us 75th in the world. Iraq is 26 percent. Afghanistan is 28 percent. Rwanda, number one, is 64 percent. Our 19 percent is significantly below the global average. And part of being a great nation is feeling good about the things you do well but also being confident enough to look in the mirror and say, but here are some areas where we do not do well. So to enter into a dialogue—some of the nations we are talking about where the education stats are so poor, nevertheless have significantly higher representation of women in their national legislative bodies than we do. So to have a dialogue about, hey, share with us what you are doing on the election issue, and then we are going to share with you things we are doing on the education issue, I think that probably can lead to a more productive dialogue and progress because we do have some things to learn.

Senator RUBIO. I am just curious. Would you happen to know off the top of your head what representation is in the Foreign Service? It is probably higher than 20.

Ambassador RUSSELL. It is higher than 20. But there are issues in the Foreign Service. And it is interesting because in my job people think that I do gender issues at the State Department. Well, first of all, they think I am the women's minister in the United States. Other countries do. And then people in our posts think that I do gender issues in the State Department, which I do not. Deputy Secretary Higginbottom does that.

But I do pick up a lot of this, and I think there is a commitment on the part of the State Department to do better. I am sure you know not too long ago in the 1970's, if you got married or pregnant, you were kicked out of the Foreign Service. So we have come a long way.

But there are challenges for families in the Foreign Service. And honestly, I think that is something that may bear some looking at from your perspective because I think we lose a lot of talent. It is hard for families to pick up and go, and sometimes if you have both

men and women who are in the service, it can be challenging when one starts—

Senator RUBIO. I think in some cases you cannot bring dependents—

Ambassador RUSSELL. Exactly.

Senator RUBIO [continuing]. In some of our more challenging environments.

Ambassador RUSSELL. Exactly. And I think it is important because the Foreign Service—I mean, I am not a Foreign Service officer. I am a political appointee. But they are really amazing people. They dedicated their lives to the country. I am just profoundly impressed always by just their patriotism, their commitment, their love for the United States, and how they represent us overseas. And I do think it is important for us to try to be as supportive of them as we can.

Senator RUBIO. And by the way, I am not here to pick on the State Department, as you know.

Ambassador RUSSELL. No, no.

Senator RUBIO. But in any embassy in the world, the majority of the people working in the embassy do not even work for State. They work for Commerce. They work for whomever. So it is across the board.

And I too have always been impressed with the level of professionalism of our people that serve abroad. I always wonder, you guys realize you could be making four times as much if you did the exact same thing on behalf of Coca-Cola or somebody else, but their willingness to serve our country.

I wanted to go back just because I am fresh off the trip from Honduras, and I am a big supporter for the Alliance for Prosperity. But one of the big investments we are making is in law enforcement and security. I should know the answer to this. But is part of our metrics for the success of that program the prosecution of gender-based violence, domestic violence? It was a recurring issue in my travels as well and numerous meetings that in many cases, depending on where you are in the country, men, both fathers but primarily spouses, act with impunity when it comes to gender-based violence because they know that the local judges or police officers do not view that as inappropriate, that in essence, that is what you do.

Is that one of the metrics that we are looking at? You may not even know. Maybe we need to get the answer more in detail. But is that one of the metrics we are looking at, as we calculate how much money to continue to give, performance and improvement in gender-based violence, which I think is directly related to the other issues that they are confronting?

Ambassador RUSSELL. Senator, I actually do not know the answer to your specific question. I will get it for you.

We work closely with INL on two fronts. One is—and other countries as well—trying to make sure that countries understand the importance of prosecuting these cases and how to do that. Guatemala, for example, has done a lot of work on one-stop centers that are pretty effective, and we are trying to share that information with others.

But we are also working to try to encourage these countries to have more women in their police force and in their militaries, and that is a constant prodding that we are doing on our side because I think it makes them more effective. Obviously, it gives women job opportunities, but it also shows the community that women can be in these positions of authority. And I think it is very important.

Ms. MARKHAM. If I could also circle back and connect the two questions you asked about Honduras. A good part of the work that USAID does in Honduras is for at-risk youth, and we have a model program there where we tackle the issue of school-based gender-based violence and preventing it. So if we can talk about the gender norms when boys and girls are younger and what is appropriate and what is not when they are making decisions and coming together as partners and growing up as adults, we can hopefully prevent some of the gender-based violence as well. So it is part of our broader curriculum there to address gender-based violence.

Senator RUBIO. Well, that is what I visited at Colonia Estados Unidos is one of the areas where we are involved in that curriculum. And a lot of it is about the school-based bullying and smoking is bad and drug use and things of this nature. And by the way, it is run by the Honduran police. It was women police officers that were conducting the majority of the program. Now, that is what they showed us. I do not know if that program extends beyond.

I did want to ask you about a more difficult question. You know, a large portion of our overseas education aid over the last 15 years has been spent in Afghanistan, and \$40 million of the \$75 million requested for the Let Girls Learn initiative for 2017 is for Afghanistan. And yet, there was a recent SIGAR that found problems with evaluation methods and data used by U.S. agencies implementing education aid, and the ministry of education estimates that about 3.3 million Afghan children are still out of school.

So I was hoping, Ambassador Russell, you could discuss the impact of U.S. investment in girls' education in Afghanistan, the data that supports these conclusions, and the sustainability of any gains that we have made there so far.

Ambassador RUSSELL. Thank you, Senator.

You know, it is interesting. Afghanistan from the beginning of my tenure, which has not been that long, about 3 years, has been something that has really preoccupied a lot of our attention in our office. And I think it is because the situation was so horrible for women and girls. And we have made substantial progress. I mean, there is no question about that. We went from zero girls in school under the Taliban to now 3 million to 4 million girls in school. We have seen a lot of progress on maternal life expectancy. So we see clear progress.

Susan, most of the money that goes into Afghanistan is USAID money, but I can speak to some of the money that we have going in there, which I think is really important.

Just out of my office, which is such a small office at the State Department, but we support shelters for women who are suffering from gender-based violence. You know, you see it in the paper all the time. I mean, the stories are very difficult. It is the same there as it is in many places. I think the root of these problems is that

women and girls are not always valued, and it is seen as completely fine to abuse them and to do that, as I said, in many parts of the world.

There is a real commitment I think on the part of the government to try to do a better job on the education front, and we are definitely working with them on that.

We are also doing some work out of my office again on the problem of early enforced marriage because these girls are getting married so young. And you will see actually in this adolescent girls strategy there is a really famous photo—if I can find it, I will show it to you. But it is of two girls who get married and the men who marry are them are like in their 40's. I mean, it is just a horrific picture. But I think that is not uncommon there. Oh, here it is. It is a really famous photo. And honestly, when you look at that, it really does—page 18 and 19. But when you look at that, it really shows you what we are struggling with here.

From our perspective, as hard as it is to keep these girls in an education setting, particularly in the provinces, the rural areas, it is very difficult. We are trying to get more women teachers there. We do not have enough there. It is difficult. Families make a decision that it is too dangerous to send their kids to school. There are lots of problems there, but we are trying to address those.

And Susan can speak more broadly to—

Senator RUBIO. I am going to just add—and you may have seen this. So the Vice has this like Frontline series. I think it is a 30-minute. And they did one on Afghan women. I believe it was Vice. And it showed groups of women that are now banding together to defend and protect themselves, in essence, standing together.

But what was stunning to me is in one of the interviews—and I forget who the local official was they were interviewing—was being interviewed by a woman. And at some point in the interview, he got so annoyed with her questions that he basically said to her, you know what needs to happen? I should marry you off to an Afghan man who will cut your nose off or something, so he can cut your nose off or something like that. So you are dealing with very deeply embedded cultural norms that we need to continue to expose.

Ambassador RUSSELL. It is not unusual there for girls to be sold into marriage to pay off a debt. I mean, there are very serious problems in that culture. There is no easy answer. There is no one thing we can do. But I do believe that educating girls and trying to empower women will really ultimately have the greatest significance there.

And I will say this. There are great Afghan men who believe in this, who are getting their girls educated, who see the value in that, who support their wives. But there are challenges every day for teachers, for girls, for women, and I think we have to keep at it. I personally feel as an official of the United States Government that we cannot walk away from them. We have made progress and as hard as it is, we have to stick with it.

Senator KAINE. Just a data point. The life expectancy in Afghanistan in 2001 was about in the 40- to 45-year-old age range, and it is now over 60. And if you think 30 million Afghans times a 17-year increase in life expectancy, that is like 500 million years of

human life. And that has largely been because of reduction in infant mortality and better health care for women and for young children. So one of the things I know we grapple with and we sometimes have to answer questions like what has this investment of American treasure and blood been worth. Well, it is like it has made a huge advance. It has made a huge advance.

And I am on the Armed Services Committee, and I think there is a pretty stark contrast if we look at Afghanistan and we look at Iraq. It got to the end of our allotted time in Iraq, and they really sort of wanted us to go. In Afghanistan, they deeply, deeply, deeply want us to stay. And so we have to grapple with the accountability on dollars and making sure it is being spent the right way.

But I am completely with you. The partnership that we have struck, whether it is our military or whether it is our USAID workers or our public health officials—having a functioning public health system for women and children has been part of a hugely transformative success story. I am not sure you are going to find a place in the world where life expectancy changed by 50 years within a decade. I am just not sure that has ever happened.

Senator RUBIO. Part of this is the holistic approach because I see included in this is the health care aspect of it. Maternal mortality has been one of the leading causes of death for a long time in many places. I do not know what the numbers are today. I am sure they are still relatively high in many parts of the world. But I suspect that that figure is among others that are included in the overall statistics—both the prenatal care, infant and maternal mortality—and then the follow-up if a child is born with disabilities in particular. I imagine if it is a child born with disabilities and female in some of these cultures, it is probably as close to a death sentence as you get in many cases with infanticide and things of this nature.

Ms. MARKHAM. I do think that is an important point. Do you know why we have an adolescent girls strategy now? I think the reason is because the development community has understood what we have both alluded to, this idea that when a girl enters puberty, her life can either expand and she can imagine all the great things that she can do, or it can really shrink, as she is not allowed to travel, and she is pulled out of school in order to do work.

So at USAID, we really look at this point as if we can keep her healthy and in school, not HIV-positive or pregnant or married. For every year that we can continue that education and keep her on an upward trajectory, it has implications for her life, for her family's, her earning potential, but also now we are seeing for her children. For every year that she stays in school, her children are more likely to be born healthy and to be educated as well. So for USAID, it is a good investment. It is great for our development dollars, and it can show impact very quickly.

Senator RUBIO. I appreciate you both being here. I know, Ambassador, you are on a tight time frame. I thank you for the work that you are doing, and this is an important topic. I think the one thing that is most startling is the more challenging the environment, the likelier there are all sorts of other problems coming out of there as well.

We have not even gotten a chance to talk about some of the more difficult places where you may not be as involved: the situation in Saudi Arabia, the situation for women in many other parts of the world. But there is a direct correlation between the treatment of women and young girls in adolescence, and with the characteristics those nations are exhibiting on the international stage and the problems that are emanating from there, I do not think it is a stretch to say that how a society treats its women and girls in many ways reflects the general health of that society at large.

And so the work you are doing is very important, and I look forward to continuing to be supportive. I thank you for coming in today and taking the time to share with us. Thank you so much.

Ambassador RUSSELL. Thank you. We agree totally and would be happy to answer any other questions or come back and talk to you or your staff and fill you in on anything that we are doing. And we really appreciate it. As I said when we talked earlier, the fact that you mention and ask about women and girls when you travel, really for both of you, that is hugely helpful to us because it shows what America cares about.

Senator RUBIO. And I just want you to know sometimes you do not have to ask. It is one of the first topics that comes up when you meet with civil society and rights groups. Almost invariably it comes up as a big challenge in these countries. Sometimes the government leaders deny they have a problem. They will show you a picture of someone. Oh, I have an employee that happens to be a woman. There is progress.

Ambassador RUSSELL. That is it.

Senator RUBIO. But the disconnect between how society feels about it and some of these government leaders is pretty stark. And we are spending a lot of money in these countries—a lot of money—on things unrelated to this. And I do believe it gives us standing to say a lot of your problems that ultimately are impacting us as well emanate from your treatment of women and young girls in your country.

So I thank you both for being here. I appreciate it. We are going to get our next panel seated, and I thank you. [Pause.]

Senator RUBIO. We are going to get our next panel seated. Please join me in welcoming Ms. Linda Hiebert, the Senior Director of Education and Life Skills for World Vision; Ms. Meighan Stone who is the President of The Malala Fund; and Ms. Kakenya Ntaiya, who is Founder and President of the Kakenya Center for Excellence.

So just in the interest of time, your statements have been submitted for the record, and I know, Ms. Ntaiya, you have a written statement you want to share with us as well. But I know that Senator Kaine has an engagement in a few minutes. So I want to make sure we get to everybody. And I apologize. The first panel ran over by a few minutes. But, Ms. Hiebert, thank you for coming.

**STATEMENT OF LINDA HIEBERT, SENIOR DIRECTOR, EDUCATION AND LIFE SKILLS, WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Ms. HIEBERT. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for inviting World Vision to testify about the barriers to girls' education and the vulnerability of children to violence.

In the interest of time, as you suggested, I have submitted my written testimony for the record.

Mr. Chairman, I speak before your subcommittee this morning to underscore a very urgent issue. One out of every 11 children is out of school around the world. There are 62 million adolescents out of school globally and half of these are girls.

And the trend is worse in conflict zones. One in four children in conflict situations do not attend school. That number is growing as more and more children's lives are disrupted by war. Girls living in conflict-affected contexts are twice as likely to be out of school, and 90 percent of girls are more likely to be out of secondary school than girls living in countries not affected by conflict.

Compounding these staggering trends global aid for education fell by 10 percent between 2010 and 2012. Less than 2 percent—that is, 2 percent—of all humanitarian assistance is spent on addressing education.

It is appalling how under-resourced and poorly understood the root causes of gender inequality are. We must address these critical issues in a holistic way and ensure they are appropriately resourced.

World Vision believes every child should be educated, healthy, cared for, and protected. But our hope for children is still far from reality. Today I would like to highlight why families struggle to send their daughters to school, whether that is due to a lack of access to safe, quality, and affordable education, social attitudes that do not value education for girls, sending girls into the labor market to help support the family, or limited livelihood opportunities for their caregivers and parents.

We need to carefully consider the needs and barriers girls experience in order to more effectively meet their evolving education, psychosocial, and life skill needs.

I would like to focus on two key issues where barriers to girls' education require critical attention: children in conflict, as you have already mentioned, affected in those contexts, and adolescent girls in secondary education.

I would like to tell you about Mellisa, who is a 13-year-old and from Zimbabwe. Mellisa dreams of becoming a nurse, and a holistic approach to her education is helping her make this dream reality. Mellisa is in the 7th grade and participates in a project run by World Vision with eight partner organizations called Improving Girls' Access through Transforming Education, or IGATE. Two years ago, she joined the IGATE girls' club intended to help girls like Mellisa learn about their own potential as individuals and as members of their society. Her grandmother is a member of the IGATE Village Savings and Lending Group to help increase the family's access to livelihoods and assets. Mellisa said, "Before I never thought I would manage to proceed to a grade 7 because my grandmother was struggling to pay my school fees and also pay for

other basic education necessities. I no longer lack anything that is needed for school.”

Mellisa is now confident that she will pass the 7th grade and proceed to secondary school because her grandmother is able to pay for school fees, provide necessary school materials, and buy food for the family. Mellisa can now dream about her future and is even inspiring other girls in her community with the following. “After completing my studies, I want to be a nurse and the encouragement that I am giving to other girls within the community is that they should value education and never drop out of school.” Unquote.

Addressing the barriers to education for girls requires a multi-sectoral response and the involvement of influential relationships in girls’ lives, including local governments, school officials, teachers, religious and community leaders, community members, peers, and the girl’s family.

I would also like to tell you a story of 15-year-old Fatmeh, a Syrian refugee who fled to Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley with her family. World Vision collaborated with NPR, the radio program, to profile this intelligent young woman whose only hope is to someday go back to school again. Fatmeh used to be a top student at her school in Syria before her family was forced to leave their home. “Bombs and fighting were everywhere,” Fatmeh said. “So we left to survive. Now she and her four siblings work 14-hour days in agricultural work to help pay their family’s debt to a Lebanese landowner who gave them a loan to help them escape from Syria.

I had a dream that when I came here to Lebanon I would study here and go to school and become an Arabic language teacher,” Fatmeh said. “And then when I go back to Syria, my dream would have been achieved. But it did not work out for me that way.”

Now her days are spent in the field of Bekaa Valley picking vegetables and weeding. When the foreman thinks children are not working hard enough, he will beat them with a hard plastic pipe.

Despite these many hardships living as a refugee, Fatmeh still holds onto a very small hope of returning to school someday. Her mother wants the children to go back to school, but the family does not have the option. How can we do it? We are forced to work.

In Lebanon, 60 percent of Syrian refugee children are involved in child labor, and 50 percent of Syrian refugee children are now out of school.

As barriers to adult work are exacerbated and families fall more into debt, children carry the weight of providing for their families, sacrificing their education and often their safety. Indeed, we would witness a lost generation of Syria’s children if these trends continue.

I would like to speak today on behalf of these girls. There is more we can and must do for vulnerable children. And I would like to make the following recommendations.

First, funding for education should be robust in our foreign assistance, including funding that focuses on the barriers to education for vulnerable children, especially girls, in all settings. In particular, we recommend funding the development assistance basic education account at the current level of \$800 million. Congress should work with USAID as it develops its next strategy. In particular, we recommend a holistic approach that places specific

emphasis on the most vulnerable, especially girls, ethnic minorities, and children with disabilities.

And then we strongly recommend that introducing a companion bill to H.R. 4481, the Education for All Act.

And then finally, since the average length of displacement is now 17 years, the U.S. Government must not solely rely on short-term humanitarian assistance to support displaced populations, especially with critical education programming. In protracted crises, the education for displaced children should be integrated into the national development assistance plan to strengthen resilience and lessen dependence on humanitarian relief.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I really appreciate the invitation to speak today.

[Ms. Hiebert's prepared statement follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MS. LINDA HIEBERT

Thank you, Chairman Rubio and Ranking Member Boxer, for inviting World Vision to share our experiences addressing girls' barriers to education and the vulnerability of children to violence. With more than 62 million girls currently not in school, this discussion is timely and important to our foreign assistance objectives and for the future of countries around the world.

World Vision is a Christian relief, development, and advocacy organization that serves millions of children and families in nearly 100 countries. Our 45,000 employees are dedicated to working with children, families, and their communities to tackle the root causes of poverty and injustice. This work includes emergency relief and preparedness for people impacted by natural disasters and armed conflict; long-term economic development; prevention and response to all forms of violence against children; mobilizing children, youth, and local communities to hold their governments accountable; and advocating for effective systems and laws that provide a safety net and protection for vulnerable populations.

More than one million private donors, in every state and congressional district, support World Vision. We partner with over 10,000 U.S. churches, as well as corporations and foundations. Last year, World Vision implemented more than \$2 billion in programming for children and communities. This included our response to 132 major disasters and humanitarian emergencies worldwide that reached nearly 11 million people impacted by these crises.

World Vision believes that every child should be able to experience life in all its fullness. We believe every child should be healthy, protected, and able to receive an education. But our hope for children is still far from reality. One in 11 children are out of school around the world today. Of the 62 million adolescents between the ages of 12-15 who are out of school around the world, half are girls. Moreover, global aid for education fell by ten percent between 2010 and 2012.

In conflict zones, one in four children do not attend school. Girls living in conflict-affected contexts are more than twice as likely to be out of school and 90 percent more likely to be out of secondary school than girls living in countries not affected by conflict. Despite these staggering trends, less than two percent of all humanitarian assistance is spent on education.

Children are unable to attend school due to lack of access to safe, quality, and affordable education, poverty, and social norms that do not value education for all children. Often, girls bear the primary burden of these barriers. Today, I would like to highlight two key issues where barriers to girls' education require critical attention: children in conflict-affected contexts and adolescent girls in secondary education.

The barriers to girls' education are context specific and can be multidimensional: socio-economic conditions, lack of appropriate hygiene facilities in schools, violence against girls in school, lack of female teachers and other role models, social norms and attitudes, long distances to school, unequal distribution of household chores, limited livelihood opportunities for caregivers, discrimination, and conflict. I will argue that addressing the barriers to education for girls requires a multi-sectoral response and the involvement of influential relationships in a girl's life, including governments, schools, religious and community leaders, community members, and the girl's family.

My testimony today will highlight why families struggle to send their daughters to school, whether that is due to being unable to afford education costs, sending girls into the labor market to help support the family, social norms that do not value education for girls, inaccessibility of schools, or that girls are not prepared to effectively transition to host country curriculum after they have been displaced. Tragically, tackling the root causes of gender inequality in a holistic way continues to be poorly understood and under resourced. We need to carefully consider the needs and barriers girls experience in order to more effectively meet their evolving educational, psychosocial, and life skills needs. By incorporating more of a multi-sectoral, gender-sensitive response to address the needs of girls, we can see more effective results that provide girls with supportive environments to learn, dream, and live up to their full potential.

Mellisa is thirteen years old and lives in Zimbabwe. She is in the seventh grade and participates in a project run by World Vision with eight partner organizations called Improving Girls Access through Transforming Education (IGATE). In 2014, she joined a girl's club called Power Within, run by a partner of World Vision. Through the girl's club, Mellisa participated in various art and sport activities at school. She is also able to sew sanitary pads and learn about personal and menstrual hygiene. Her grandmother is member of IGATE's Village Savings and Lending Group to help increase the family's access to livelihoods and assets. Mellisa said, "Before the introduction of the IGATE project in our school and community, I never thought I would manage to proceed to grade seven because my grandmother was struggling to pay my school fees and also secure other basic education necessities—I no longer lack anything that is needed at school."

Mellisa is now confident that she will pass the seventh grade and proceed to secondary school because her grandmother is able to pay school fees, provide necessary school materials, and buy food for the family. Mellisa has plans for her future studies: "After completing my studies," she told World Vision, "I want to be a nurse and the encouragement that I am giving to other girls within the community is that they should value education and never drop out from school."

Fifteen-year-old Fatmeh, a Syrian refugee who fled to Lebanon's Bekaa Valley with her family, now works instead of continuing her education. World Vision collaborated with NPR to tell her story. Fatmeh used to be a top student at her school in Syria before her family was forced to leave their home. "Bombs and fighting were everywhere," Fatmeh told us. "So we left to survive." Now, she and her four siblings work 14-hour days in agricultural fields to help pay their family's debt to a Lebanese landowner who gave them a loan to help them escape.

"I had a dream that when I came here to Lebanon I would study here and go to school here and become an Arabic language teacher here," Fatmeh said. "And then [I hoped] when I go back to Syria, my dream would have been achieved. But it did not work at all with me here." Now, her days are spent in the fields of Bekaa Valley. Despite these many hardships of living as a refugee, Fatmeh still holds onto a "very small hope" of returning to school someday.

#### IN TIMES OF CRISIS: CHILDREN WANT TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL

In crisis contexts, education systems are three times as likely to be disrupted. When World Vision talks to children in emergencies about their needs, education consistently is one of their main responses. Children tell us they are out of school because of military use of schools, violence in schools, food insecurity, and discrimination, particularly because of ethnicity or disability. When children talk to us about how important education is to them, they closely link their future livelihood opportunities to their education.

After Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, a girl told World Vision, "We should study hard to finish school in order to get a better job with better salary to have a good future and be able to provide for our family. I can't be like my parents without a stable source of livelihoods." Girls, in particular, may not go to school due to child marriage, increased work, or child care responsibilities in the home. While barriers to girls' education exist before a crisis, children tell us these barriers continue or are exacerbated by a crisis.

#### IRAQ: TRANSITIONING TO SCHOOL AFTER DISPLACEMENT

Since the current humanitarian crisis started in Iraq in 2014, more than three million children and adolescents have been identified as in need of education in emergency interventions. One million school-aged children are out of school in Iraq. Some communities experienced numerous shocks prior to the current humanitarian crisis and have now been displaced several times. World Vision's education programming provides students displaced from conflict in Iraq with language classes, skills

training, and preparation to transition into the formal education system. We found that the absence of these programs form barriers for displaced children attending school.

World Vision's Let Us Learn project in the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) was designed to meet the needs of over 12,000 displaced children in emergency contexts with an intense back-to-school campaign. Let Us Learn delivers education and child protection interventions that contribute to learning continuity, psychosocial well-being, and increased resilience of children affected by conflict.

Our work in the KRI required extensive consultations with those who had been displaced to ensure that their children were prepared to begin formal schooling and were properly supported as they adjusted to a new environment. After consulting with students, families, and local government authorities, World Vision found that our education programming needed to focus on supporting children and parents to overcome existing challenges to school enrollment, including fear of once again being displaced, loss of hope for their future, and insufficient information about registering as Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs). Education programming in conflict-affected contexts have a unique set of challenges. Our program in the KRI was particularly impacted by lack of teachers because of an overburdened education system due to high numbers of IDPs, insufficient space in schools and classrooms to accommodate additional students, and lack of education materials, including textbooks, book bags, and even winter and spring clothing.

Children in crisis-affected contexts need specialized support through the education system to more safely and confidently navigate their changed environments and circumstances. Their recent experiences of displacement and violence reinforced the need for resilience and life skills training to effectively adjust to a challenging new context. The displaced children we work with in KRI needed to learn everything from simple actions to prevent diseases (such as washing their hands), to understanding their circle of family and community support, to an awareness of their rights and responsibilities. We also found that psychosocial programming provides a framework for children to rebuild support structures, learn coping mechanisms, and integrate more successfully into the education system.

Girls, in particular, need specialized care in conflict-affected contexts. We have found success in designing separate classes for girls so they can share their experiences, dreams, and make friendships in a comfortable, safe environment. We have also found that sports can be an effective way to address gender stereotypes, and our female students are playing on football and volleyball teams.

Sadly, displaced girls in the KRI are especially susceptible to child marriage. In fact, child marriage is one of the most common forms of gender-based violence in Iraq. Displaced children from the Mosul area, for instance, are about twice as likely to experience child marriage as other displaced children. We are engaging with parents about the importance of education for girls and provide cautionary messages about child marriage.

#### LEBANON: CHILD LABOR AND LACK OF ACCESS TO SCHOOL

In Lebanon, child labor is a deeply concerning trend among Syrian refugee children that limits school enrollment. 60 percent of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon are involved in child labor.

This is approximately 82,000 refugee children between the ages of 12-17. 50 percent of Syrian refugee children aged 3-18 in Lebanon are now out of school. Only 5 percent of Syrian refugee 15-17 year olds attend secondary school or higher. Now, a total of 482,608 refugee Syrian children are in need of education. Indeed, we could witness a lost generation of Syria's children if such significant portions of Syrian refugee children continue to not attend school.

Lebanon, in fact, has one of the highest proportions of working children in the world. Many refugees in Lebanon face ongoing displacement and other incredible hardships, such as high rent for inadequate shelter, that pressure refugee parents to send their children into the labor market. Rent can amount to the largest household expenditure for refugee families that leaves few remaining resources for food, hygiene, education, or health services.

The majority of Syrian refugees are not permitted to legally work in Lebanon. Refugees must sign pledges that prohibit work for those over the age of 15 as part of the permit renewal process in Lebanon. As the Syria crisis enters its sixth year, refugees are increasingly vulnerable: they have depleted their lifesavings and are now going into debt. Consequently, refugee parents are sending their children to work and children are becoming the primary breadwinners. As a result, younger and younger children now support their families through entering the labor market.

Relief organizations have found that cash assistance increases access to education. When correlations between cash assistance and child labor were studied, we found decreases in child labor, dangerous work, and selling productive assets when cash assistance was received by refugee families. World Vision is helping support families through cash assistance programming. Through partnering with other NGOs on this program, we provide \$174 monthly to 16,500 vulnerable Syrian refugee households in Lebanon. Over 90 percent of our recipients use cash assistance for its intended purpose, including rent, repairs to existing household structures, food, winter clothing and fuel for winter, education expenses, and health care.

Syrian refugees in Lebanon need effective, ongoing access to education and support to transition into the local Lebanese education system. Simply addressing enrollment will not sufficiently meet the needs of refugee children. World Vision has found an increasing need for Non-Formal Education (NFE) that can help with preparation for the formal school system. This non-formal approach targets the numerous barriers that impede success for Syrian children in Lebanese schools: insufficient capacity in some formal schools to host refugee children; language instruction in formal schools that is in French or English (Syrian children have been taught in Arabic); lack of familiarity with the Lebanese curriculum; lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills to successfully integrate into the formal education system; and the need for psychosocial support. The absence of school preparation through NFE can lead to learning difficulties and dropouts.

World Vision offers this necessary school preparation through our early childhood education programming. We serve over 800 children aged 3-6 in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon. 55 percent of these children are girls. Our programming ensures that children who have never attended school are provided with the necessary education and life skills to be able to transition into the Lebanese school system. Furthermore, our program reaches the parents of our students with awareness around early childhood development, health, positive parenting, and child protection.

#### ZIMBABWE: TRANSFORMATION THROUGH HOLISTIC PROGRAMMING FOR GIRLS

In Zimbabwe, World Vision leads a consortium of nine organizations with funding from the UK Department of Foreign Investment and Development to improve access and quality of education for 60,000 girls aged 10-18 years old. Before the project began, World Vision conducted a baseline to understand the reasons girls are not in school. The baseline cited poverty, distance, traditional family norms, and issues around menstruation and burden of household activities on girls as the key barriers preventing girls from accessing education. Girls were dropping out in the last two to three years of primary school at the age of 12-14. 84 percent of the households indicated that it was difficult to send a girl to school. 75 percent of in-school girls were over-age for their grade. During menstruation, 20 percent of rural primary school girls do not attend school and 54 percent of girls reported being teased due to menstruation. Of the girls interviewed, 25 percent said that there are things that they "are not good at" in school and 17 percent reported being afraid some of the time in school. Moreover, 68 percent of household heads did not have a job, leaving families food insecure.

To address these barriers, World Vision and our partners focus on nine key areas of transformation through a project called Improving Girls Access through Transforming Education. The nine key areas work to transform the top influencers in girls' access to education. The project starts with the girls themselves so that they understand their own potential, power, capacity, and knowledge. Mothers and other caregivers join mother's groups to understand girls' potential, the need for education, and the benefits of education to their daughters, granddaughters, and the rest of their family. This is coupled with financial support to the family to support girls' education. To address the distances students have to travel to school, the project provides bikes to both girls and boys. Long distances can present risks and leave students physically tired by the time they make it to school.

The project works to build school capacity to ensure schools are girl-friendly places of learning. World Vision is working with religious leaders to address issues such as child marriage and other harmful practices that have negative consequences on girls' sexual, social, and educational health and well-being.

Cultural norms in the target communities place a lower value on girls and leave decision-making rights with males. In response, one of our partners is building male champions for girls' education. To help boost literacy and numeracy, the project is training skilled teachers. Lastly, we work with communities on social accountability with the government. Partnership is key to ensure girls have access to education. Therefore, these activities are done in concert with the relevant government ministries to promote sustainability. While this four-year project is still ongoing, we are

already seeing changes in parental approaches, application of religious practices, and girls returning to school.

Through our experience in addressing the barriers to education for girls, World Vision has learned that we must seek to understand the complex reasons children, especially girls, are out of school and address these barriers through multi-sectoral approaches that involve those in a girl's life: governments, schools, traditional and religious leaders, parents and caregivers, communities, and children themselves. If we are to sustainably reduce barriers to education for girls, we must work in partnership with that girl's community and family to create quality, accessible education, address social norms, establish safe school environments, and promote the participation of children and youth.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

The U.S. government has several opportunities to strengthen its investments in education around the world. The current USAID strategy highlights the educational needs of girls and challenges of children affected by conflict. Education for girls and gender equality is a cross cutting theme in the strategy. Let Girls Learn, which was launched this year, takes this a step further for adolescent girls. It looks specifically at barriers that keep adolescent girls from secondary education, including physical, cultural, and financial obstacles. The U.S. can lead in addressing the barriers to education for vulnerable children. World Vision recommends the following:

- As USAID develops its next education strategy, it should consider a holistic approach that takes into account the complex barriers to education and places specific emphasis on the most vulnerable, especially girls, ethnic minorities, and children with disabilities.
- Funding for education should be robust in our foreign assistance, including funding that focuses on the barriers to education for vulnerable children in all settings. In particular, we recommend funding the Development Assistance Basic Education Account at \$800 million.
- The Senate should strongly consider introducing a companion to H.R. 4481, the Education for All Act. We understand that such efforts are underway and would welcome a bipartisan effort to strengthen the U.S. commitment to basic education.
- Since the average length of displacement is now 17 years, the U.S. government must not solely rely on short-term humanitarian financing to support displaced populations, especially with critical education programming. In protracted crises, education for displaced people should be integrated into national development assistance plans to strengthen their resilience and lessen dependence on humanitarian relief. More than half of the world's 60 million displaced people are children under the age of 18.
- World Vision welcomes the U.S. initial commitment of \$20 million towards Education Cannot Wait: A Fund for Education in Emergencies, launched at the World Humanitarian Summit. As the fund continues to grow and meet the needs of children out of school because of conflict and disasters, we urge the U.S. to continue support for the fund.

Thank you, Chairman Rubio and Ranking Member Boxer, for your commitment to girls' education and for your steadfast dedication to remove barriers that inhibit girls from receiving or completing their schooling. World Vision looks forward to further working with the subcommittee to address these critical concerns.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you very much.  
Dr. Ntaiya?

**STATEMENT OF KAKENYA NTAIYA, PH.D., FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, KAKENYA CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE, NAROK COUNTY, KENYA**

Dr. NTAIYA. Good morning, Chairman Rubio and Senator Kaine. My name is Kakenya Ntaiya and I am the Founder and the President of the Kakenya Center for Excellence. Thank you for inviting me to testify on the barriers of girls' education.

The Kakenya Center for Excellence is an NGO based in my village in Kenya that educates and empowers vulnerable girls in rural Kenya. I am here to tell you two stories about the opportunities we

create when we educate girls. One is my personal story that inspired the creation of the Kakenya Center for Excellence, and the other is the story of Faith, one of our 4th grade girls.

I was engaged at the age of 5, was supposed to be married as I reached puberty. The traditional path for me was to undergo female genital cutting and to be married while I was a teenager, but I really wanted to go to school and be a teacher. Girls in my village are prepared from a young age to be mothers. Just like all the girls in my village, I was required to gather firewood, fetch water from the river, take care of my siblings, cook, and keep the house clean. After all that, we could go to school until we were cut.

I wanted something different. I negotiated with my father that I would undergo female genital cutting if he allowed me to continue with school. He took the deal.

After I finished high school, which is very unusual for many girls in my village, I negotiated with the men in my village to allow me to come to school in America. I promised that I would come back and use what I learned to help my village. Many boys had come to school in America, but they had never come back to the village. I was allowed by the elders in my community to leave my village and study in America.

In 2009, while a graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh, I worked to open the first primary school for girls in my village with the help of many friends and supporters. I was tired of hearing about young girls being forced into early marriages or subjected to female genital cutting or left at home to care for their siblings and not given an opportunity to continue with school.

We started a boarding school for 4th through 8th girls that has helped 277 girls get a good education while also teaching them about their health and their rights. We started a health and leadership training program that serves 3,000 girls and boys each year. We have expanded beyond our boarding school because the demand for our program is so great. We do not have the capacity to serve the hundreds of girls who show up for the 40 slots we have in our boarding school each year. I am also pleased to share that we have continued to support our graduates to continue into high school. Today we are supporting 95 girls in high school with scholarships, mentoring, and training so that they can continue their progress.

Faith's story is one that inspires me and frightens me because of all the girls living in extreme poverty and hopelessness that we are not able to enroll in our school. Faith is 9 years old. She has five siblings and 10 stepbrothers and sisters. Her father is married to three wives, and Faith's mother is the third wife.

Last year in December, Faith got up very early in the morning and asked several members of her family to bring her to enroll in our school. Her father said no. Her mother said no because she needed to earn money to feed the family that day.

Faith took an egg and sold it in the market to buy a pencil. She walked 4 miles to our school over very rough roads. We have hundreds of girls and their families on our campus on enrollment day. I did not realize that Faith was all alone or no family member had come with her until she broke down during the family interview. After we got her calmed down, she said that her father did not have any money but she had done all she could to come to get into

school. I told her that she would be able to come to our school and start in 4th grade.

The next day, she brought her mother because her mother told her she would not be able to go to school because they did not have money for school. I told her mother to bring her to school because we will take care of the rest.

I think of the determination and the potential of a girl like Faith who does what it takes to get into school. I think a willpower like that will create new female leaders in Kenya that can help us face all the challenges in our country and around the world. How many talents are we wasting when we do not put resources into girls' education?

One of my favorite things to watch is the pride of the fathers as they watch their daughters learn, as they watch them get the highest marks on the national exam, as they watch them stand up for themselves and plan their futures as doctors and lawyers. Fathers are the ones out front saying our girls will not be subjected to female genital cutting. Our fathers are the ones convincing other fathers that there is a better future for the girls.

The Kakenya Center for Excellence is changing fathers, changing mothers, changing some of the deeply rooted cultural practices that hinder girls from continuing with school in rural Kenya. We have an effective model to share with other rural communities who have high rates of early forced marriages and female genital cutting.

Chairman Rubio and Kaine, plus all other Senators, you have an important role in the success of the Kakenya Center for Excellence and other NGOs like ours who are eradicating destructive cultural practices. We have been able to assemble private donors to educate future leaders in Africa. It will take many more resources, including the support of the U.S. Government, to scale our model and share our strategies with other rural communities in Africa and beyond. A girl who is educated has impact beyond her village. She has an impact on the world.

Thank you very much.

[Dr. Ntaiya's prepared statement follows:]

THE PREPARED STATEMENT OF KAKENYA NTAIYA

Good morning Foreign Relations Subcommittee members. My name is Kakenya Ntaiya and I am the Founder and President of the Kakenya Center for Excellence.

The Kakenya Center for Excellence is an international NGO based in my village in Kenya that educates and empowers vulnerable girls in rural Kenya. I am here to tell you two stories about the opportunities we create when we educate girls. One is my personal story that inspired the creation of the Kakenya Center for Excellence. The other is the story of Faith one of our fourth grade girls.

I was engaged at 5 years old to a boy in my village. The traditional path for me was to undergo Female Genital Cutting (FGC) and to be married while I was a teenager, but I really wanted to go to school and be a teacher. Girls in my village are prepared from a young age to be mothers. Just like all the girls in my village, I was required to gather firewood, fetch water from the river, take care of my younger siblings, cook and keep the house clean. After all that, we could go to school until we were cut.

I wanted something different. I negotiated with my father that I would undergo FGC if he allowed me to continue with school. He took the deal. After I finished high school, which is very unusual for many girls in my village, I negotiated with the men in my village to come to school in America. I promised that I would come back and use what I learned to help my village. Many boys had come to school in America but they never came back to the village. I was allowed by the elders in my community to leave my village and study in America.

In 2009, while a student at the University of Pittsburgh, I worked to open the first primary school for girls in my village with the help of many friends and supporters. I was tired of hearing about young girls being forced into early marriages, or subject to FGC, or left at home to care for their siblings and not given an opportunity to go to school. We started a boarding school for 4th-8th grade girls that has helped 277 girls get a good education while also teaching them about their health and their rights.

We started a health and leadership training program that serves 3,000 girls and boys each year. We have expanded beyond a boarding school because the demand for our programs is so great. We don't have the capacity to serve the hundreds of girls who show up for the 40 slots we have in our boarding school each year. I am also pleased to share that we continue to support graduates of our boarding school while they continue on to high school. Today, we are supporting 95 high school girls with scholarships, mentoring and trainings so that they can continue their progress.

Faith's story is one that inspires me and frightens me because of all the girls living in extreme poverty and hopelessness that we are not able to enroll in our boarding school. Faith is nine years old. She has five siblings and ten stepbrothers and sisters. Her father is married to three wives and Faith's mother is the third wife. Last year in December, Faith got up very early and asked several members of her family to bring her to enroll in our school. Her father said no. Her mother said no because she needed to earn money to feed the family that day. Faith stole an egg and sold it in the market to buy a pencil. She walked 4 miles to our school over very rough roads. We have hundreds of girls and their families on our campus on enrollment day. I did not realize that Faith was all alone—no family member had come with her—until she broke down during the family interview. After we got her calmed down, she said that her family didn't have any money but she had done all she could to come to get into school. I told her that she would be able to come to our school and start the 4th grade.

The next day she brought her Mother because her mother told her she wouldn't be able to go to school because they didn't have money for school. I told her mother to bring her to school because we would take care of the rest.

I think of the determination and the potential of a girl like Faith who does what it takes to get into school. I think determination like that will create new female leaders in Kenya that can help us face some of the challenges in our country and around the world. How many talents are we wasting when we don't put resources into girls' education?

One of my favorite things to watch is the pride of the fathers as they watch their daughters learn, as they watch them get the highest marks on the national exam. As they watch them stand up for themselves and plan their futures as doctors and lawyers. Fathers are the ones out front saying our girls will not be subjected to Female Genital Cutting. Our fathers are the ones convincing other fathers that there is a better future for the girl child.

The Kakenya Center for Excellence is changing fathers, changing mothers and changing some of the deep rooted cultural practices that hinders girls from continuing with school in rural communities in Kenya. We have an effective model to share with other rural communities who have high rates of early forced marriage and FGC.

Senators, you play an important role in the success of the Kakenya Center for Excellence and other NGOs like ours who are fighting traditional cultural practices. We have been able to assemble private donors to educate future leaders in Africa. It will take many more resources, including the support of the U.S. government, to scale our models and share our strategies with other rural communities in Africa and beyond. A girl who is educated has impact beyond her village. She has an impact on the world.

Thank you for the opportunity to share the Kakenya Center for Excellence, Faith's and my story with you.

Senator RUBIO. Ms. Stone?

Thank you, Doctor, for your testimony.

**STATEMENT OF MEIGHAN STONE, PRESIDENT,  
THE MALALA FUND, WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Ms. STONE. Hi. Good morning. My name is Meighan Stone, and I am so honored to serve as the President of The Malala Fund and to join you today. Thank you so much for inviting the fund.

I wanted to just read a letter from Malala. She is not here today because she is actually in her school. She has been taking exams where she feels every girl should be. So she was honored, in between studying, to send you a letter. Thank you for hearing her thoughts.

She says when the Taliban first came to my home in the Swat Valley in Pakistan, they banned all education for girls. My father Ziauddin was a teacher. He and his friends challenged the Taliban on the rights of girls. A little while later, the Taliban agreed to allow girls to go to school for 3 years but no further.

Why? The Taliban knew that primary education would give girls basic skills they needed to fulfill roles they approved of for women, serving their husbands and doing housework.

But they also knew that it was not enough education to allow them to think critically, to take control of their futures or be leaders in their communities.

Globally, more than 63 million girls are out of school and denied their right to education. Without access to a full 12 years of education, we know that girls' opportunities are limited and that many will continue to marry and have children while they are still young.

I have seen that donor countries often have many good intentions to get more girls in school, but do not commit funding that leads to real change for girls like me. As a student in Pakistan, I have often heard world leaders pledging support to give more children access to education, but still there was no secondary school for girls in my village until The Malala Fund started to build one with local partners.

I am asking the United States and other donor countries for funding for 12 full years of education to ensure the poorest girls around the world receive the education they need to succeed.

I feel lucky to be able to complete my secondary education as many girls in my village are still missing out on school and to have the opportunity to address leaders like you on their behalf.

They want you to know that they are ambitious and they want an education that will allow them to fulfill their potential and provide for their families, just like girls in the U.S. I hope together that we can make that a reality.

Thank you. Malala.

I am going to abbreviate my remarks and just focus mostly on the recommendations Malala asked us to share and start with a thank you. I think so many times advocacy organizations like our own do not take time to say thank you when there is actual leadership from government. So we want to just say a special thank you to the U.S. Government for your recent commitment for the Education Cannot Wait fund.

And we wanted to say a special thank you for the \$5.1 billion in funding that the U.S. has dedicated to Syria humanitarian relief. Malala and myself were at the Supporting Syria Summit in London in February, and there Secretary Kerry, of course, announced about \$290 million in funding to help children go to school in Jordan and Lebanon. That was an extraordinary commitment on behalf of the U.S. Government. Thank you for your leadership.

So in addition to her gratitude—because Malala is Pashtun, she always starts with hospitality and gratitude—we want to leave you three recommendations that she wanted us to share.

First, she hopes that you will increase funding for girls' education. We can talk about girls a lot, and we can say the right talking points, but the numbers reveal the real truth. We have seen education funding flatline all over the world, including in the U.S. We really want to see an increase in the budget this year. There is unprecedented need. The great hope is that \$875 million will be dedicated to bilateral education funding and that \$125 million will go to the Global Partnership for Education, of which Malala is a dedicated champion because she believes strongly in their work. This is a really small down payment on our future, and it is funds we can either pay now or we will pay dearly for in the future in an unstable world.

Second, in Malala's own experience and The Malala Fund's work globally, we know that developing country educators and frontline organizations are best placed to understand the needs of girls in their own communities. However, we see that the top 20 recipients of USAID funding are actually U.S.-based organizations. We need to see the real numbers dedicated in terms of funding to help leaders change their own countries. That is the only way we are going to see resilient change.

Lastly, we believe this committee has a tremendous difference you can make on transparency. We would ask that you would consider directing the Congressional Budget Office to determine exactly how much the U.S. Government spends on actual girls' secondary education, not wraparound services which are vital, but direct resources to educate girls between the ages of 12 and 18 and how much is being spent in each country. Often in our meetings with government officials, they do not know the answer to this question, and that data is vital.

We hope you will also apply that same stringent approach to data with our developing country partners because girls like Malala know all too well that we need to focus on what happens when the funds arrive to the country, not just what happens here in appropriations. We have to demand real data measurement. If we say girls count, we have to count them. We need to have real vision and ambition for ministries of education when they use this funding.

In closing, in light of current events, we felt it was important to note that Malala is a proud Muslim. It is a faith that she holds dear and inspires her work for peace and education. Our Malala Fund team, many of whom are here with me today, is made up of mostly women, and they are mostly the next generation of leaders that we hope to see leading globally. We are Christian. We are Jewish. We are Sikh, B'hai. Our staff is Hindu, gay, straight. We are Pakistani. Our team is Nigerian, British, Afghan, South Sudanese, Malawian, Indian, and American. And I am probably forgetting a few countries even in that long list. Despite our differences, we stand for ourselves but never against each other. We are united in hope and in commitment.

I want to leave this honorable committee with a request, a humble request from Malala and from our team, and it is the evidence

of which we see in action every day, to be willing to suspend disbelief for just a moment and to consider that the current media and political landscape hides an incredible opportunity, that the young women and also men of Malala's generation globally who are often not at the summit negotiation table, who are not yet in parliaments, but who are desperate to learn and lead their countries towards change are not just a youth bulge, but they are the very key to unlocking peace and stability in the countries in which we see conflict today. We do not see them in peace negotiations, but we find them so easily online. We do not see them quoted in newspapers, but they are so eager to talk to us and to share if we are only willing to listen. They are hiding in plain sight.

Some see a young Syrian as a threat, but the young Syrian women we meet in refugee camps want to go to school and become journalists. They want to rebuild their nation. They want to serve in government because they see the change that needs to happen. They want to change our world for good just like Malala. They need our faith and our partnership not condemnation or doubt. They need an education just like we do here, just like we hope for our own daughters in America. They need our leadership and our generosity, and that is something I know we all agree and believe is one of America's greatest strengths.

Malala defended her own education at great personal peril and risk. Today she is fighting to make sure all girls can go to school for a full 12 years because she understands that education is the key to their futures and to ours as well.

So on behalf of millions of girls around the world, Malala thanks you for your leadership, and she asks for your support and continued commitment to education for all. Thank you.

[Ms. Stone's prepared statement follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF MEIGHAN STONE

Good morning, my name is Meighan Stone. I am honored to serve as president of the Malala Fund and to join you today.

I would like to begin by reading a statement from Malala Fund co-founder, student, education advocate and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Malala Yousafzai. She isn't able to be with us today as she is in her own high school, attending class—where she believes every girl should be.

Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Boxer and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to provide a statement on the issue of girls' education, a campaign to which I have dedicated my life and which impacts so many of my sisters around the world.

When the Taliban first came to my home in the Swat Valley in Pakistan, they banned all education for girls. My father Ziauddin was a teacher. He and his friends challenged the Taliban on the rights of girls. A little while later, the Taliban agreed to allow girls to go to school for three years—but no further.

Why? The Taliban knew that primary education would give girls basic skills they needed to fulfill roles they approved for women—serving their husbands and doing housework.

But they also knew that it was not enough education to allow them to think critically, take control of their futures or be leaders in their community.

Globally, more than 63 million girls are out of school and denied their right to education. Without access to a full 12 years of school, we all know that girls' opportunities are limited, and many will continue to marry and have children while they are still young.

I have seen that donor countries often have many good intentions to get more girls in school, but do not commit funding that leads to real change

for girls like me. As a student in Pakistan, I often heard of world leaders pledging support to give more children access to education, but still there was no secondary school for girls in my village until Malala Fund started to build one with local partners.

I am asking the United States and other donor countries for funding for 12 years of education to ensure the poorest girls around the world receive the education they need to succeed.

I feel lucky to be able to complete my secondary education as many girls in my village are still missing out on school, and to have the opportunity to address leaders like you on their behalf.

They want you to know they are ambitious and want an education that will allow them to fulfill their potential and provide for their families, just like girls in the U.S. I hope together we can make that a reality.

Thank you, Malala

We meet today at a critical time of instability for not just girls, but our nation and world. Malala believes education is the answer to these challenges—but only if we act.

For refugee girls, the situation today is grave. Girls living in conflict-affected countries are nearly 90% more likely to be out of secondary school than their peers in peaceful countries.

Every year of school these children miss costs them dearly in lost opportunities for themselves and the future of their country and creates a vacuum in which fear and extremism can take hold.

Malala is thankful for the U.S. government's support for education in emergencies, through recent commitments to the Education Cannot Wait Fund and the U.S. government's leadership in \$5.1 billion USD in Syrian humanitarian relief since the start of the conflict.

Malala and I attended the Supporting Syria summit in London in February. We were grateful to hear Secretary Kerry announce more than \$290 million in new U.S. development assistance to educate refugee children living in Jordan and Lebanon. Thank you.

In addition to sharing Malala's gratitude, we come today to respectfully share three requests from Malala, on behalf of girls globally, with the Committee.

First, at this critical moment, Malala hopes you will increase your support for girls' education around the world.

As Malala mentioned and as everyone here knows, millions of girls cannot go to school for 12 years—yet somehow education aid globally is actually declining and in the U.S. has flatlined. The President's recent budget request calls for the same amount in basic education funding next year as the United States is giving this year.

In the 2017 budget, we ask the U.S. to allocate 875 million dollars for bilateral education aid and 125 million dollars for the Global Partnership for Education, of which Malala is a dedicated champion. This is a small down payment on a peaceful, prosperous future—funds we will pay later if not now, and dearly, to ensure stability. Second, in Malala's own experience and the Malala Fund's work globally, we know that developing country educators and frontline organizations—not international contractors—best understand girls in their communities and are best placed to develop solutions. Today, the top 20 recipients of USAID funding are all U.S. based organizations. We urge the U.S. government to invest more in local organizations and national governments to more effectively and sustainably address the issues keeping girls from learning.

Lastly, we also believe this committee can make a tremendous difference on transparency. We ask that you would consider directing the Congressional Budget Office to determine exactly how much the U.S. government directly spends on actual girls' secondary education—specifically ages 12 to 18—and in which countries. We have found that often even U.S. government officials cannot provide clear answers on this question.

Malala believes the U.S. can also be a leader in demanding data and results from our developing country partners too. Girls like Malala know all too well that we need to focus as much on what happens once the funds are in country as we do when appropriated and to not tolerate graft, or lack of data measurement, vision or ambition from Ministries of Education.

In closing, with the current events, I feel it's important to note that Malala is a proud Muslim, a faith she holds dear and inspires her work for peace and education. Our Malala Fund team is made up of mostly women, with many of them from the next generation of global leaders. We are Christian, Jewish, Sikh, B'hai, Hindu, gay, straight. We are Pakistani, Nigerian, British, Afghan, South Sudanese, Malawian,

Indian and American. Despite our differences, we stand for ourselves, but not against each other. We are united in hope and commitment.

I want to leave this honorable committee with a request, the evidence of which we see in action every day, to be willing to suspend disbelief for a moment, to consider that the current media and political landscape hides an incredible opportunity. That the young women and also men of Malala's generation, those who are not often at the summit negotiation table, or yet in Parliaments, but who are desperate to learn and lead are not just a "youth bulge," but the very key to unlocking the peace and prosperity we all seek. I don't ever see them in peace negotiations, but I find them easily online. I don't hear them quoted in newspapers, but they are so eager to talk to share if we will only listen. They are hiding in plain sight.

Some see a young Syrian as a threat. But the young Syrian women we meet in refugee camps want to go to school and become journalists and rebuild their nation. They want to serve in government. They want to change the world for good. But they need our faith and partnership—not our condemnation, or doubt. They need an education. They need our leadership and our generosity, something we all believe is still America's greatest strength.

Malala defended her own education at great personal risk. Today she is fighting to make sure all girls can go to school for 12 years because she understands that education is the key to their futures and to ours as well.

On behalf of millions of girls around the world, Malala thanks you for your leadership and asks for your support and continued commitment to education for all. Thank you.

Senator RUBIO. Thank you, and thank you for your testimony.

Let me begin with Ms. Ntaiya. Your website explains some of what is involved in the selection process for the students at the boarding school. It notes that the orphans are automatically accepted, otherwise they have to come with one parent, as in the story you just told.

I was wondering how many of the students that you have are orphaned.

Dr. NTAIYA. About 20 percent of our students are orphans mostly because others—they are hidden. And when we take enrollment, they might not come. So sometimes we have to follow up to know a certain family, the parent died, and we have to go look for the kid because what happened is a girl, when the parents are not available or dead, she becomes house help for the grandfather, for the grandmother, or the other people in the homes. And she is really hidden from the society, and that is what happens.

Senator RUBIO. How do they typically find out about the school?

Dr. NTAIYA. Through word of mouth, but we also run a health and leadership program that we integrate within schools in our community. We work with about 40 schools, and within those schools, they hear about our Center for Excellence. But also in the last 3 years, our school has performed the best in the county that we are in, and that word goes out and everybody wants to bring their daughter. So last year we had 230 girls apply. We could only take 40 girls.

Senator RUBIO. For the ones who do have a parent at least, maybe two, the fact that they even came to the school is usually an indication that the parent is supportive of education?

Dr. NTAIYA. It is a way that they want to educate, but most of the parents—they just want to get rid of the girls because one burden is out. And when we take them in our school, we do support fully the students that come into our school. So the parent feels that if she can just go there, they are forgotten, but it is also a sign that they are committed to what we do because every parent that comes into our school—once they are enrolled, all the girls cannot

be mutilated. They cannot be married out early. They are committed to ensuring that the girl continues to high school. And they are always committed once a month to come and visit the girls, and it is a commitment that has brought joy eventually to the girls and to their parents.

Senator RUBIO. That is the follow-up question. So you described a scenario where a parent basically is looking for a place, sadly, to get rid of one more mouth to feed in the home, and the school provides that outlet. And that is a terrible situation.

But once these girls complete their schooling and emerge educated, succeeding, have you seen changes in the family where suddenly they view it differently? All of a sudden, that is replaced with a certain sense of parental pride that perhaps initially was not there?

Dr. NTAIYA. What has been very amazing is when the girls are given the opportunity, they bring pride to their families. Most of the time, they are brought in there. Of course, the parent is saying, you know, just take her. It is less burden. But eventually that girl ended up bringing their girls, their sisters, to some of the programs we have. They end up ensuring that the father is educating the other girls or all kids in her family. We have a lot of parents meetings that parents come, and the girl ensures that the parents come to the parents meeting.

In this ripple effect, you see a pride that first the father is not sure whether they should allow this girl to go to this school, and then she is accepted, and then I am not sure if she is not going to go through female genital cutting. And then these girls perform the top of a class in the whole county that we are in, and all of a sudden, their father, who has never gone to school, their mother, who has never gone to school, is out there saying this is my daughter and I want her to go to school.

They have been fortunate because I myself grew up in the village. I told and I showed the community what it means to educate a woman. I came to this country. I got my education, but I went back and really invested in them. So they have this saying that if you educate a girl, we have seen her fruits. And that is kind of the whole idea they have now of girls that go to our school, and even those who are not going to our school, if they can get a scholarship to go to high school, they can come back and help us.

Senator RUBIO. Is the Kenyan Government supportive?

Dr. NTAIYA. Yes. We do work with the Kenyan Government, especially the local ministry especially when we do our trainings in different schools that we are in. We work with them in the measurement and evaluation in evaluating our program. We are really key about quality because the Kenyan Government allowed free primary education that really ended up to destroying the quality of the education that was coming out in all the schools. And for us, we know we have 40 students. That is a big number when you think about it, but compared to other schools who have 40 students—that have up to 100 students in one class, our quality is very high. And the government really takes pride in that when you compare. It is like a competition we have ranking in the country. All of a sudden, you find that the government is saying we are

partners, and they are very supportive. They have helped us build some of our buildings in our school. Yes, thank you.

Senator RUBIO. Ms. Hiebert, in your testimony, you stated enrollment is not enough in refugee situations. If you could take time to expand on that exactly what that—I think I know what you mean, but if you could expand on that for the record.

Ms. HIEBERT. Sure. Thank you, Senator.

Yes. We know that we have made great progress in terms of enrollment for children getting into primarily primary grade levels over the last several years with the MGBs. But enrollment is not enough. We need to actually have quality education, and particularly when we are thinking about children who are in crisis and conflict situations, those are the children who are at most risk. We know that there are generations of children who will be lost if we do not have them just in school, but also have them learning quality education in school.

But secondly, the other part of that is the non-formal education. So, for example, in Lebanon where we are working, we have a non-formal education program for students who are not able to attend school either because there is not a space for them or because they are working. And yet, we have a challenge with the Lebanese Government to approve that non-formal education. So access is not enough.

Senator RUBIO. I think you also talked about it in the sense of the bill that you had spoken about. There was a House version, not a Senate version.

But what are the top areas where the U.S. Government can intervene effectively to support either girls' education or educational programming for refugee children?

Ms. HIEBERT. Particularly I was delighted to hear that my colleague also talked about the Education Cannot Wait Fund. I think that is a critical piece for us to continue to support. The U.S. Government has pledged \$20 million. From our perspective, it would be great if we could pledge more, particularly for education emergencies.

As I mentioned, only 2 percent of humanitarian assistance goes towards education. It is a neglected area of our U.S. Government programs. So we do need to have more financial support.

I think also supporting the SDGs, and again the U.S. Government has done a great job in supporting the SDGs. But we would really urge all of our foreign policy staff, as they engage with governments overseas, to really look at how their policies are affecting particularly children in conflict and crisis situations, but also particularly girls as well. So that would be another key piece.

And then I think working with Senator Durbin on the companion piece of H.R. 4481, that would be great if we could have the Senate take up that piece, that legislation on Education for All Act.

So those would be two key pieces.

Senator RUBIO. Ms. Stone, I know that Nigeria is one of the challenging countries where the fund is at work. Can you tell us a little bit more about your work with the kidnapped girls that have escaped Boko Haram?

Ms. STONE. Yes. Thank you, Senator.

So Malala was honored to travel there 2 years ago on her birthday, which the U.N. named Malala Day, and she thought it was important to go, do two things: to meet with the families of the girls who were abducted to stand in solidarity with them because as a girl impacted by conflict herself in her own community, she knows that story and she wanted to be there with who she calls her sisters and their families. And so she met with the families of the girls who had been abducted. She made a commitment at that time that any girl who returns, that the Malala Fund would pay for their education to complete high school, which we have done for a number of the returnees who have escaped from Boko Haram, which we are honored to do.

And she met with the President at that time, Goodluck Jonathan, I think who was a bit surprised at how pointed her questions were about not only the response to the lack of safety for school girls but also the lack of robust data and funding to support girls' secondary education in Nigeria. It is a place where we continue to work. We have incredible local partners there that are finding powerful ways to work within the cultural context to help girls in Kaduna State and in the north where Boko Haram is active to actually access education at great peril.

Senator RUBIO. In her home country of Pakistan, it has the second largest number of girls who are not in school in the world. I know you have worked with vulnerable unmarried girls to provide access to quality post-primary education. For the girls who were child brides, what has been the typical response of their husbands? And do you work with girls who may already have children themselves?

Ms. STONE. This is an issue for anyone focused on girls' secondary education is what happens when a girl is married when she is too young and she may or may not have children. And a lot of policies will not allow them to return to school. This is a place where the U.S. Government can say, when we bring this funding, we also expect you to change the law to allow girls to have access to a right to the age of 18. We can support local leaders who are pushing and fighting for that in their own country.

We find that—

Senator RUBIO. In Pakistan in particular, the girls that are child brides—what has been the typical response both from government and from their husbands and from the society?

Ms. STONE. I would say two things. One is that it is not seen as a right of a girl to return to school when she gets married or when she has a child.

But the thing I would say immediately following is we see in Malala's own family that tremendous change can happen within a generation. Her father—Ziauddin's father was a mullah and a cleric and had different perspectives on the rights of women. Malala would be the first to tell you it was her father's empowerment and belief in her not only as an education—you know, deliver himself as a teacher, but believing powerfully in his daughter. And I think sometimes we look at this part of the world and we think things are intractable. But we see in their own family that generationally there can be incredible change if you reach out to communities and work with them intensively.

Senator RUBIO. Has that been the experience in your work in Pakistan?

Ms. STONE. We have definitely seen promise. We are able to work in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the Taliban have been active, and we found that there is absolutely opportunity to work with local community leaders to ensure that more girls can go to school.

Senator RUBIO. I know that on her 18th birthday, she traveled to Lebanon. Is that correct? And she had opened an all-girls school near the Syrian border. It was named in her honor. Could you give us an update on that school? For example, how many girls are enrolled? For those girls who graduate, what sort of employment or university-level educational opportunities exist for them as refugees? How is it going there?

Ms. STONE. Thank you, Senator. We are pleased to report on it. I was actually with her on that trip. There is a local partner there—and this gets to the point of local issue—called the Kayany Foundation that built that school. There are over 300 girls who are enrolled. As someone referenced earlier, in Lebanon, they do not allow for formal camps. Those are coming from informal squatter communities. They have become enrolled. They are progressing in their studies. None of them are old enough to have graduated yet, but we cannot wait to see that happen one day.

The curriculum there is a modern curriculum. It gives them digital training and other skills not just a post-colonial education, which is rote memorization, but really critical thinking skills they need to get real jobs.

Senator RUBIO. How many girls are enrolled?

Ms. STONE. Over 300, and we are actually funding a second school with the same foundation, and we are thrilled to see another 300 girls enroll in that school as well. They are in the midst of building it at present. Also in Bekaa Valley.

Senator RUBIO. And I imagine the education—in what language are they learning?

Ms. STONE. Arabic.

Senator RUBIO. It is primarily Arabic. Are they learning second languages as part of their education?

Ms. STONE. Arabic is so vital. A lot of the girls have actually been out of school for up to 4 or 5 years, and it is not uncommon to sit with a girl and ask her to write something in Arabic and she can only remember sometimes how to write her own name. So we start with the language they learned in in Syria.

Senator RUBIO. How do you account for the different—so you are getting a 10-year-old girl, one of whom may be reading at a 3rd grade level, one who may not be able to read at all, another who might be a bit more advanced for whatever reason. It must be a real mission to kind of put everyone at the right starting point.

Ms. STONE. It is. You are exactly right. It is clear you studied the issue quite closely. This is a challenge, Senator, for anyone doing this work. It is how do you help kids catch up and catch up quickly so they can get back into school and then complete their education. And language is a barrier also in places like Turkey where kids are trying to learn, girls are trying to learn in Turkish when they are Arabic speakers and they may have been out of school for 3 or 4 years. So it is tremendously challenging. They

have to take exams to get into the high school system in Turkey that are in Turkish. So not only are they trying to catch up, they are trying to learn another language which is very challenging.

Senator RUBIO. But I guess for lack of a better term, the grade they are in is not necessarily based on their age. It is based on their starting point.

Ms. STONE. Exactly. There is a lot of support and funding and effort that has to go to helping them catch up, but they are able if they are given the opportunity.

Senator RUBIO. Well, I appreciate all of you being here. We have gone a little longer than we were supposed to be scheduled, but this is such an important hearing. I want to thank all of you for being a part of this. This is an incredibly important issue, as you heard from the first panel.

And it is important for us not just to hear from the U.S. Government side, which we did and we are grateful for their service, but also from those who are on the front lines in the nongovernmental organizations, in particular the three recommendations that you have made, Ms. Stone, about the increase in the funding, ensuring that the funding is going to local partners and empowering local organizations who can, in turn, become force multipliers, not simply running it through our own systems. We are not just there to put money in but also to empower local capacity.

And the third is a very interesting one and that is finding out from CBO, from the Congressional Budget Office, just how much of all this money is actually being targeted specifically at secondary education for girls are good suggestions. The third one, in particular, is one that I think we can follow up on.

So I am grateful to all of you for being here, and I thank you for your patience, for your testimony, for the time that you spent, for the work that you are doing on this incredibly important issue.

So all I would say is that the record of this hearing is going to remain open for about 48 hours. There are some members that could not attend. We had some other Foreign Relations Committee activity going on separate from this. But their staffs are here. They are watching on C-SPAN 14 or whatever channel we are on. So there may be some questions that may come to you in writing, some follow-up questions from some of our other members or maybe even from our office. And I would just ask if you get that—I know you are all very busy—but to the extent you could answer that, it is important. The record of this hearing in many ways will help shape the congressional debate as we move forward on things like the suggestions you have all made.

So thank you all for being here.

And with that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:16 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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## Additional Material Submitted for the Record

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED  
TO CATHERINE RUSSELL BY SENATOR BOXER

*Question.* How will the U.S. Government measure progress for the objectives outlined in this strategy, specifically enhancing girls' access to quality education in safe environments? Has the U.S. Government established targets for the recruitment and training of female teachers, a key component of expanding access to girls' education?

*Answer.* The United States Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls is the first U.S. strategy to focus on this age group. Furthermore, the United States is the first country in the world to develop a strategy solely focused on the protection and advancement of adolescent girls. The Strategy brings together four government agencies—the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the Peace Corps, the State Department, and United States Agency for International Development—to address challenges related to adolescent girls' safety, health, and education.

Pursuant to the objectives of the strategy, efforts will be coordinated across the U.S. government and integrated into agencies' ongoing work. Agencies will implement the strategy through a range of approaches appropriate to their respective mandates. Agency implementation plans outline the specific modalities that each agency will adopt to achieve the goals and objectives of the strategy.

The strategy calls for an interagency working group to meet regularly to coordinate overall implementation and measure agencies' progress in achieving its goal and objectives. Additionally, both State and USAID's implementation plans include a set of illustrative specific indicators against which efforts could be tracked. Progress will be assessed in line with various existing policies and strategic frameworks, including the Department of State's Policy Guidance on Promoting Gender Equality, USAID's Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy; MCC's Gender Policy, the United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally, and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security.

The Department of State will primarily implement the strategy through diplomatic engagement, including through multilateral and bilateral diplomacy and public engagement. Priority thematic areas for the Department's implementation of the strategy include addressing harmful practices affecting adolescent girls, in particular early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting, and promoting legal and policy frameworks that empower girls and advance their rights, including those that expand girls' access to education. Among U.S. government agencies, the Department of State is uniquely positioned to address these issues given its focus on promoting and protecting human rights and ensuring that governments are effective and accountable. These priorities also reflect the U.S. Government-wide commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition to diplomacy and public engagement, the Department will also seek to enhance and expand programming to empower adolescent girls; strengthen coordination around issues affecting girls; and integrate a focus on adolescent girls throughout the Department of State's operating structure.

The illustrative indicators included in the Department's implementation plan are linked to these approaches—for example, the strategy recommends that increased diplomatic engagement on issues affecting adolescent girls be tracked through the number of resolutions supported by the United States in multilateral fora on issues affecting adolescent girls, or the number of laws drafted, proposed, or adopted with U.S. Government assistance designed to protect girls' rights, prevent or respond to gender-based violence, or expand girls' access to education, health, and services.

To assist our colleagues in implementing this strategy, the Office of Global Women's Issues has developed a toolkit that provides specific examples for bureaus, offices, and embassies on how to build a focus on adolescent girls into their ongoing work and to track their progress. This toolkit will be transmitted via front channel cable in the coming days.

The Department's efforts to promote and protect and advance girls' human rights will be complemented by USAID's work to empower girls through development assistance around the world. USAID's implementation plan prioritizes building on the agency's existing work with adolescent girls across sectors by focusing on reducing gender disparities in access to education; reducing gender-based violence, such as ending harmful cultural practices of early and forced marriage; and increasing the participation of women and girls in decision making.

These efforts continue to be coordinated and advanced across the Agency by mainstreaming and integrating issues that impact adolescent girls across sectors;

documenting progress, integrating lessons learned, and promoting best practices; and expanding collaborations and partnerships. USAID will continue to prioritize expanding into emerging fields to meet the needs of adolescent girls, and to consider the challenges of adolescent girls in program design and implementation.

In particular, USAID supports efforts to provide a quality education to adolescent girls, a key component of which is teachers' professional development.

In 2015, USAID education programs trained more than 464,000 teachers and educators of whom some 242,000 were women. Support for teachers has been an integral component of the Agency's programs under the USAID Education Strategy, which also include broader policy reform efforts, working with communities, and providing textbooks and other teaching and learning materials. From 2011 to 2015, USAID reading programs reached nearly 19 million boys and 19 million girls. USAID education programs in conflict-and-crisis-affected environments improved or established quality education in safe learning environments for around 6 million boys and young men, and 6 million girls and young women. They also created learning opportunities for 2.4 million children and youth who would otherwise be out of school—around 1.1 million of them are girls and young women, and 1.3 million boys and young men.

The Department and USAID will continue to coordinate closely in achieving our shared goals—for example, the Department and USAID worked closely to select the Let Girls Learn Challenge Fund focus countries of Malawi and Tanzania, and are currently collaborating to design a holistic whole-of-girl program in each of these countries to increase adolescent girls' enrollment and retention in school that empowers them to achieve their full potential. Let Girls Learn programs focus on creating enabling environments in which girls can best learn and thrive, including preventing school-related gender-based violence, unwanted sexual attention on travel to and from school, and addressing harmful gender norms both in schools and in communities.

*Question.* I firmly support the establishment of the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues, and have introduced legislation to make this office permanent at the State Department. This office plays a critical role in ensuring that women and girls play a central role in the development and execution of U.S. foreign policy.

- Please describe the specific efforts this office is undertaking to expand access to education for girls worldwide. How does the State Department plan to build on these efforts, moving forward?
- How has the establishment of the Office of Global Women's Issues at the State Department concretely advanced the status of women and girls worldwide? How has the establishment of the Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues impacted our efforts with partner countries on women and girls?

*Answer.* The Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI) works to expand access to education for adolescent girls through a range of approaches, as outlined above. The central policy framework guiding our efforts in this area is the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls. S/GWI created and drafted the strategy, as well as the Department of State's implementation plan, and utilizes its expertise and resources to initiate policies across the Department in support of adolescent girls' development and empowerment.

Through the leadership of Ambassador Catherine Russell and through broader bilateral and multilateral efforts, the Department engages diplomatically to urge other governments to focus their efforts on adolescent girls and address harmful norms and practices, as well as discriminatory legal and policy frameworks that restrict girls' access to education. S/GWI serves as a resource to colleagues throughout the Department, providing guidance and advice to assist officials in determining how best to advance girls' access to education through new or ongoing efforts. With advice and guidance from S/GWI, embassies and posts engage with governments where proposed policies would negatively impact adolescent girls' education, such as legislative or policy proposals that would lower the legal minimum age of marriage or penalize pregnant girls by limiting their access to schooling.

These diplomatic efforts have proven to be successful. As an example, the Department, through S/GWI's guidance, secured bilateral commitments from Canada and the Nordic countries to address barriers to adolescent girls' education. These partnerships will allow fruitful and long-lasting cooperation on the education of adolescent girls.

The flagship initiative focused on girls' education under the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls is Let Girls Learn (LGL), a global initiative announced by President Obama and championed by First Lady Michelle Obama that brings to

gether the efforts of the U.S. government alongside outside donors and civil society organizations. Through LGL, agencies implement programs that focus specifically on the provision of education, and focus additional efforts on confronting the many barriers that prevent girls from attending school. As two examples, S/GWI is funding a \$7 million program in Afghanistan that will address early and forced marriage as a barrier to adolescent girls' schooling and is funding a \$750,000 program in Nepal aimed at reducing the prevalence of school-related gender-based violence and promoting equitable learning outcomes of adolescent girls.

The Department will build on these efforts moving forward and integrate a Department-wide focus on these issues through its Adolescent Girls Strategy implementation plan. The implementation plan recommends that Ambassadors and officers at U.S. embassies raise issues affecting girls' education in bilateral dialogues, work with host government officials to learn more about barriers to girls' education in their respective countries, and advocate for more and more impactful attention to these issues in government policies and programs. It also recommends that political officers meet regularly with organizations that are working to empower girls or address barriers to their educations. Embassies are expected to make a concerted effort to engage adolescent girls and their communities through public diplomacy and outreach, as public engagement is a critical strategy in dispelling the harmful norms that devalue girls and girls' education. S/GWI has developed a comprehensive toolkit with specific recommendations for posts on implementing the strategy, and will continue to engage with posts to support them in these efforts and track progress against the indicators included in the Department's implementation plan.

In his 2013 Presidential Memorandum on the Coordination of Policies and Programs to Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women and Girls Globally, President Obama stated: "Promoting gender equality and advancing the status of all women and girls around the world remains one of the greatest unmet challenges of our time, and one that is vital to achieving our overall foreign policy objectives. Ensuring that women and girls, including those most marginalized, are able to participate fully in public life, are free from violence, and have equal access to education, economic opportunity, and health care increases broader economic prosperity, as well as political stability and security."

Achieving these goals requires dedicated resources, personnel with the appropriate expertise, and senior leadership. The Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI) provides leadership and expertise within the Department of State and across the foreign affairs agencies to advance gender equality and to empower women and girls around the world. The office has promulgated important policy frameworks that incorporate a broad range of governmental partners, and serve as platforms for partnership with civil society actors. These frameworks include: the U.S. National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security; the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally; the U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls; and the U.S. Department of State Strategy for Women's Economic Empowerment. These strategies provide concrete tools and technical assistance to embassies and consulates, and the office, S/GWI, serves as a critical hub for expertise and resources to guide and advance U.S. Government engagement on gender issues.

The Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues enhances the United States' ability to engage bilaterally with senior leadership in countries around the world on issues of women's empowerment and violence against women and girls. Through this engagement, the Ambassador-at-Large encourages countries to develop and implement laws and policies to improve gender equality and shares promising practices and lessons learned from the United States and other countries. The placement of a senior level diplomat within the office of the Secretary of State enables more effective organization of efforts within the USG, more coordinated policies and programs across government, and less duplication of efforts. To cite just one example among many, as a result of the Ambassador's leadership, the Department—in coordination with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, USAID, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce—launched a U.S.-Pakistan Joint Implementation Plan on Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment last month. A dedicated senior diplomatic position makes clear to other governments the importance the United States places on advancing the rights of women and girls and provides policy leadership and guidance within the State Department on these issues.

The Ambassador and the Office are uniquely positioned to advance programs that focus on advancing the status of women and their communities. By virtue of having an office and a highly-ranked position devoted to this focus, the U.S. Government more effectively contributes to and incorporates research and innovation happening

outside of government, and brings innovation broadly into government programs and policies. The efforts described below provide four concrete examples.

1. Through the Global Women, Peace and Security Initiative, which has provided over \$13 million in small grants to support 55 projects in 30 countries, S/GWI builds the capacity of civil society organizations around the world to advance the human rights of women and girls.
2. S/GWI and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), are assessing the problem of early and forced marriage within Syrian refugee and host communities in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon and based on recommended actions, will fund specific programming to address this problem.
3. S/GWI implements the Secretary's Full Participation (FP) Fund, launched in 2013 to help American diplomats and development professionals better support gender equality and women's empowerment. The FP Fund provides seed money to diplomatic posts, bureaus and offices to support innovative gender integration initiatives. Through the FP Fund, S/GWI has collaborated with public and private sector partners to develop entrepreneurship and business centers focused on women in Pakistan, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea. These centers serve as sites for training, meetings, mentoring, technology support, and some offer programming to engage men and boys and to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. The Centers help to build the capacity of women business owners and support women-led businesses.

The FP Fund enabled the Department and USAID to establish a program dedicated to addressing the issue of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Guinea. The Department partnered with the Government of Guinea and with multilateral and civil society actors to work to eliminate the practice in Guinea's eight districts—impacting up to 65,000 girls through community awareness and capacity-building efforts.

Through the Secretary's International Fund for Women and Girls, the Office has also led the charge in strengthening civil society and private sector partnerships to support women and girls in the areas of health, peacebuilding, addressing gender-based violence, as well as supporting women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. As a recent example, S/GWI partnered with Kiva to launch the Women's Entrepreneurship Fund to empower women entrepreneurs globally by increasing their access to finance. The Fund provides companies, foundations, and governments with an opportunity to leverage their capital by matching, dollar-for-dollar, Kiva lenders investing in women entrepreneurs and an opportunity to reinvest their resources in new entrepreneurs after their loans are repaid. S/GWI also assisted in the creation of the Alliance for Artisan Enterprise, an international public and private sector partnership housed at the Aspen Institute, to find markets for and elevate the importance and productivity of artisan enterprises. Our engagements with these key partners helps to advance foreign policy priorities.

