

‘Gender Integration in Practice’ Roundtable at the U.N. General Assembly

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Her Excellency Mrs. Mathato Mosisili
First Lady
Kingdom of Lesotho

The Honorable Melanne Verveer
Ambassador
White House Office of Global Women's Issues

The Honorable Russ Carnahan
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Transcript

DANIEL YOHANNES: Welcome and my name is Daniel Yohannes. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

We are pleased to co-host this important discussion with the White House Council on Women and Girls created by President Obama. MCC and the White House share a common vision for sustainable development, one that includes a commitment to gender integration and equality. Any successful strategy for global economic prosperity must include economic opportunities for both women and men.

Yet, we know from experience women are often left out of development decisions and processes. That is why it is extremely critical and a tremendous commitment for MCC to make sure that the issue of gender is integrated in all of our programs at MCC. We are working to increase the capacity, the resources, and the accountability within MCC and among our partner countries worldwide to integrate gender analysis in every single project.

And MCC's commitment to gender integration starts at the top. It is certainly a personal priority for me in terms of how I want to define my tenure at MCC. To reaffirm my personal commitment at the highest level, I've asked Cassandra Butts, our senior adviser at MCC who came to us from the White House where she served as deputy council, to take the lead in our efforts in making sure that we have a very, very successful program.

So Cassandra joins us today to participate in the roundtable discussion. All of us at MCC welcome your feedback and ideas how we could continue to make the program better. We know today we are leaders in this topic and in this area but we want to make it better, we want to make it richer and much stronger. So we want to get your ideas and advice and counsel going forward.

We know that when both men and women can be champions of the development, families, communities, and countries can and do experience new opportunities for prosperity and growth. Again, thank you very much for coming, and I'd like to ask Cassandra to take over. Thank you.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Thank you, Daniel. I want to thank Daniel for his leadership. But for his determination and his designation of this as a priority issue for MCC, we wouldn't be here today, so thank you very much, Daniel.

And I think that Daniel's leadership is consistent with the leadership that we've seen across the U.S. government. Of course, President Obama's leadership, the Secretary of State's leadership, and the leadership of other key administration officials that have identified the gender equality as being in the forefront of our work in foreign assistance, in U.S. foreign assistance.

So what we want to do with this roundtable discussion is we got this incredible array of participants. What we'd like to do is to post questions to the participants and I will identify participants, ask them questions, and I will also -- because I can't see all of them, I can't see quite all the name tags. If you want to engage on a particular question please raise your hand and I will identify you. But in addition having the people at the table engage, I also want to get people in the audience to engage. If there is an issue, a burning issue, that you would like to -- that you'd like to share your thoughts with us on.

So why don't I start by actually introducing -- or recognizing -- our co-host, Tina Tchen. Tina was a former colleague of mine at the White House. She is the Executive Director of the White House Office on Women and Girls, but she's also the director of the Office of Public Engagement at the White House. And I think that Tina has a particular perspective on the issues, particularly the issues of leadership and mandate.

So, Tina, why don't you start us out -- obviously if you have comments, general comments, but specifically focusing on the issue of -- we know that leadership and mandate make a difference and how gender equality can be integrated into foreign assistance. Can you talk about how can we best utilize leadership and how does a clear mandate make a difference in integration of gender equality in foreign assistance?

CHRISTINA TCHEN: Well, thank you, Cassandra and thank you, Daniel. I echo Cassandra's thanks to you for your leadership, on really setting the tone and setting a direction and an emphasis on this important issue. And I'm always delighted to be with Melanne Vermeer, we sort of sometimes feel like a tag team on these issues, which is great. I mean, that's part of -- I mean, I think having leadership and mandate in carrying these things through.

I also want to recognize that we've been joined by Her Excellency Madame Mutharika from Malawi. So thank you for being here as well. What we've done -- for those who are not familiar with the Council on Women and Girls, I'll tell you a little bit about how we are formed and the theory behind it because that is actually part of the case on gender integration and what we have tried to do in this administration.

We thought about it during the transition period, how to move forward on women's policy and girls' policy issues in the administration, building on a lot of the work of the past, which included the Office of Women's Policy that existed in the Clinton administration as well as the Inter-Agency Task Force that First Lady Hillary Clinton and then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright headed in preparation for the Beijing conference.

And taking all of those lessons learned, wanting to advance the ball yet further, decided rather than create a separate office, even with the attention that that would garner to the issue, and there were many in the women's community here in the United States who actually wanted us to follow the lead of some of our other colleagues around the world and create a cabinet post for women. And we thought about that, but the concern in that taking that approach was although it would raise visibility and provide a seat at the cabinet table for issues concerning women and girls, it would only create one seat at the table for issues concerning women and girls. One seat that, you know, could actually easily go away at any given moment.

And what we wanted to do is just something that would, you know, have more lasting, deeper change, sort of throughout the federal government, and how could we achieve that. And so the Council has created a structure so that it is not an external advisory council to the administration, but it is rather similar to the Domestic Policy Council, and the National Economic Council, and the National Security Council; it is a council of essentially all of the cabinet level agencies in the federal government, all the major White House offices with Valerie Jarrett, you know, my boss, the senior advisor to the president as the chair, and myself as an Executive Director. Cassandra knew that I wear two hats in the White House, so in addition to this role I'm also the Director of Public Engagement, which is our entire outreach operation from the White House on all issues.

And the marriage of those two roles has helped because as we do our outreach on things like healthcare or financial regulatory reform or national security, I'm able to make sure that we are paying attention to women and girls as we look at healthcare reform, as we look at financial regulatory reform where women have disproportionately suffered from payday lenders and subprime mortgages.

In each of the issues and no matter what our federal government does, we are touching the lives of women and girls in some way or another. And our message then, as the phrase of gender integration connotes, we want the concerns of women and girls to become just standard operating procedure, embedded in what the federal government does. I sometimes call it "changing the DNA" actually of how our federal agencies operate.

So it will now be deeply embedded. It will make lasting change in how to make their decisions every day rather than being able to point down at the end of the cabinet table and say, "Not my problem. It's their problem. I don't have to worry about that." And so we are trying to do that throughout everything, in a tangible way that affects the agencies across the board.

I have to commend the leadership of our team at our Office of Management and Budget. Starting last year and continuing with this year's budgeting cycle, they have issued a directive from OMB, and we all know how important that is because he or she who holds the purse strings holds much of the decision-making and influence. And OMB has made as part of the annual budgeting process for our agencies a specific requirement that the agencies address as part of their budget presentation to the Office of Management and Budget in their request for the coming fiscal year: How what they are proposing will affect women and girls.

And there will be as part of their meetings with the OMB offices about their budget requests for the upcoming year; a specific session devoted to a presentation on women and girls issues. So, that is a tremendous, I think, very important first step in making sure things are integrated.

But I will say that with that process comes a challenge, because for the very reason that people wanted a separate office to have visibility to the issue of women and girls, the challenge for us is to make sure that that visibility, as we've integrated and diffused issues sort of throughout the federal government, that we maintain that issue across the board. Many of our agencies have really seized the mantle, you know, none more obviously than the Secretary of State because with the creation of -- for the first time ever, you know, an Ambassador on Women's Global Issues for, with Melanne's post, that is really elevated it across the board.

We've also done things from the White House. We've included -- and I cite this a lot because people don't often realize -- a part of our national security strategy that was released; our national statement for the United States entire security strategy includes a very specific section that recognizes that empowering women and girls is directly related to the national security of United States. That, you know, making sure that women and girls have rights, have opportunities, that we are addressing the ways in which they are persecuted and violence is perpetrated on women and girls.

Changing that is very much a part of how what we need to do as the United States, not just because it is the right thing to do around the world, it is directly related to our national security. So making sure those things are integrated is what we attempted to do, while at the same time making sure that it remains, you know, at the forefront and part of it is a struggle.

It's a struggle. And sessions like this I've been very interested in, during the course of the discussion this morning, because many of you are on the ground doing this work, you know, in very different settings and how we came to challenges and what you have done to overcome those challenges in those different settings will be very illuminating to us, so thank you.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Thank you, Tina.

One of the things that Daniel is focusing on as one of our priorities at MCC is the engagement of the private sector, and that we have to have an engaged private sector. The MCCs model is to create sustainable economic growth,

reduce poverty through sustainable economic growth, in the partner -- in the countries where we were. And we believe that it's important to bring the private sector in to engage so that we can eventually leave the country and they will have sustained economic growth through a vibrant private sector.

So I do want to take the opportunity to engage our private sector participants today. Laura Liswood? Laura? Can you address the issue of leadership? You are Secretary General of the Council of Women World leaders and you're also at Goldman Sachs. Can you talk about leadership from how the private sector can engage, how the private sector can be a part of the leadership and helping us clarify what the mandate is in integrating gender?

LAURA LISWOOD: Thank you, Cassandra and thank you for your comments and for posing this.

You know, its three-legged stool, really. It's private sector, it's civil society, and it's government; and all three of those sectors have to be engaged in the process. And the private sector is going to be looking at it as, "How do we benefit?" You know, "What's the return on our investment for doing this?" And, of course, there's growing -- there are growing data points that show that investing in women and girls -- putting three women on a board, et cetera -- increases the return on investment. So, you know, the private sector likes business cases.

You know, no one, of course, made the business case for no women; but now we, you know, we do have to make the business case for women -- but it's being made, you know. And I think the private sector, it has the ability, given that often, its number one goal is global. It often reaches out into parts of a country that maybe the government can even support, you know, in developing countries. You know, I'm thinking of, for example, Coca Cola. You know, Coca Cola does some extraordinary things because no matter where you are in the world, there's a Coca Cola truck, you know.

And they've been able to do -- they've been able to pass out information, they hand out condoms, they do all sorts very interesting things. And so -- and I think, you know, I think that that's a clever combination of the two. Obviously, 10,000 at Goldman Sachs, which Ambassador Verveer has very been involved in, is the kind of sort of creativity, you know.

I think for the private sector -- and I think Beth Brooke can kind of respond to this, also from Ernst & Young -- just needs some further data, further encouragement, further interaction and engagement. Not just from civil society but from the government side of things also.

And, you know, they understand what a well-trained, well-educated healthy workforce does for them and it's a war for talent around the world, and they understand that. And, you know, they conceptually understand that women and girls are an important part, you know, not only as consumers but as employees. So I think, you know, the case is easily made. I think it just has to then be put in front of the private sector.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Beth?

BETH BROOKE: Thank you. I would echo and support Laura's comments.

I think the business case for the private sector is starting to be understood much better. It's the economic argument that, as Laura said, including women, it makes a difference, whether its including them in the leadership of a company or including them as employees in the workforce or empowering them as entrepreneurs. But the real emerging force is women as consumers. And I think business is really starting to understand that when we think about the emerging markets like India and China, starting to think about women as an emerging market, which crosses all boundaries. And so business is engaging in a way they haven't, to Laura's point.

I do think your question about leadership, this triad of government, civil society, and private sector, I think is critical. From my experience, and I know Lynn's experience as well, you know, business will act, as Laura said, in their own self-interest. Anything that is sustainable -- I think you have to understand that it has to make business sense for business, otherwise, they will only do it in good times and it will be the first thing to go in bad times. So it has to make sense for the business.

Often times, though, what business fails to see is how the private sector can work together with other private sector companies to actually make a difference on the ground in a country. Let's just say, for instance, our own devices at Ernst & Young, we will only see what we're good at and the impact that we can make. Teamed up with five other private sector entities that have different confidences to make actual difference on the ground in a society, we need government to sometimes to help us see that, to see the needs.

And I think that's what MCC does well. But that's where this convening power that government has, to see the opportunities, to get the private sector to work together. The Private Sector Leaders Forum, which is an entity of the World Bank that Lynn McKenzie and we have been involved with as well as Goldman Sachs and others, I think has been an eye-opener to just that point, that the private sector will work together if were brought together to see what each other are doing and actually that makes a sustainable long-term impact. But that takes leadership of someone other than the private sector company because we only see what's in our silo.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: And that's the leadership role that MCC is very happy to play. And I think, in seeing the people around this table and people that we can tap into to engage and to bring in to the work that were doing, is important. Any other comments from the private sector perspective? Yes. Carol. I'm sorry, I couldn't see your nametag. Please.

CAROL LARSON: Hi, I'm Carol Larson and I'm the president of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. And so we view ourselves as private and part of civil society.

But I just wanted to pick up on the third leg of the stool and some of the comments about the world that civil society organizations, philanthropists as founders, but also the NGOs that we fund, and the kind of creative

relationship that can exist between with government and with private companies both on the ground but also at a policy level.

From our own experience working on reproductive health issues over the last 40 years in different countries, we've really seen following through on your comments about mandate and leadership, you know, of the need to follow that through not only at the top levels but then on the ground. So the power of training women, young women, on the ground in countries, around in their communities about advocacy, about accountability, about working and making sure the spotlight is focused on their needs, that that has really been a key to sustainability of relationships with Nike, with government agencies, because you really need that voice on an ongoing basis.

So I just wanted to echo the leadership kind of at the bottom of the capacity-building of people in their communities and particularly women. And I think we've trained about a thousand young women around these issues and I think they're going to be a force over the next twenty years. And I know that just complements what so many of you do in other forums.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Thank you, Carol. Actually, I'd like to turn to Madame Mosisili, if I could.

Leadership -- one of the things that's so important to the work that we do at MCC is having leadership in our partner countries; leadership that moves the issue forward. And Lesotho is a prime example for our work. Actually, Lesotho is one of the models that we point to. Lesotho was -- has been at the lead for us. We were fortunate to work with Lesotho and passing the legal capacity of Married Persons Act which extended for the first time rights to married women so that they could engage and be able to purchase property so that they could be able to gain loans and really engage and be a part of the economy and ways that they hadn't been before.

But we would not have been able to do it without the leadership of our partner country. Can you talk a bit about the importance of leadership in partner countries and then the work that were doing in Lesotho?

MATHATO MOSISILI: If leadership has been bought into the -- any ID, it will not be able to move. Like the bill that Cassandra has just mentioned, the marriage equality bill, it took some time before I think they nourished the leadership into the right direction because we still have the stereotype kind of -- or I would say not stereotype -- but the culture plays a very pivotal role in determining a lot of women as minors and then girls and not be doing this and that.

But once leadership bought into it, they understand. You will be surprised we still have our -- the king, that legacy, it's still male-dominated. But then despite the fact that we have had that bill passed, the bill is for everybody but it doesn't touch the culture in royalty. how they -- the succession. It's still male-dominated. So it will still take some time before our chiefs, that is, royalty, begin to accept that, "Yes, women can be integrated."

Yet, on the other hand, the majority, all the citizens, are enjoying that freedom of women now having access to the loans in the banks and also access to land, which was not a thing that was easy.

Once leadership buys into this, then it becomes easy for them to go international to sign protocols that then would be committed. And when they come home they would be domesticated and then made people understand this. We -- I remember the Beijing platform. It took quite awhile for people to understand what this really meant. For our men, it meant the women now wanted to take over. And it was only when leadership understood exactly what Beijing platform meant, that then things begin to ease right at the grassroots level.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Thank you very much. And you've created the perfect opening to recognize Ambassador Verveer, who can talk about Beijing and how that did spark really a movement and a focus on these issues. And obviously, the leadership of the Secretary of State has been critical in putting this issue out in front in the U.S. Government. Melanne?

MELANNE VERVEER: Thanks. Thanks, Cassandra.

You know, Your Excellency, when you talked about Beijing, I was thinking there's such a link between Beijing and the big discussion were all having here at the United Nations, which is MDGs. And I really believe deep down if we had done a better job achieving that platform for action, we'll be in better shape right now on the MDGs because women's empowerment is so much a part of how we end hunger and alleviate poverty and deal with some of the serious health issues that confront us.

But let me start by saying there are often a lot of discussions going on this week here. And if we can make it to Friday I think it will be miraculous. I feel like it's a marathon. But in many ways, I believe this could conceivably be one of the most important discussions because we talk a lot about how critical investing in women and girls is to outcomes. We got all the data about how countries are more prosperous and poverty is reduced and governance is improved but somehow in the implementation that data is not reflected. And here we are talking about gender integration and practice.

And many of you have heard this from me, and you've got the best and the brightest around this table. I look at the representatives of NGOs and foundations in the business sector, and, of course, having their Excellencies and Congressman Carnahan, who is an absolute champion on these issues and sits on the House Foreign Relations Committee -- it's just great having you here. But here we all are; and how we do this integration is really tough. But if we don't do it right we will not have put ourselves where we need to be, because I believe we've got to institutionalize these practices.

MCC has been a real leader. I wasn't in my position but a week when Ginny Seitz, whom I did not know prior to that, called me and said, "We're doing gender mainstreaming and integration here at the MCC and I want to come

over and talk to you.” And I thought, you know, this is truly remarkable and quite wonderful. So I’m in a position now. President Obama, the Secretary, are absolutely committed to these issues. There isn’t a day when we don’t remind ourselves that women and girls are the core in many ways of our foreign policy that it is one of the top principles in our development initiatives.

And yet, how do we do this well? At the State Department, it is not enough to have an office that’s devoted to women and girls. It would be an outpost. It might do a few good programs. But that’s not what this is all about. The goal is ultimately you wouldn’t need an office like that because these issues would be so well-integrated across the work of the State Department that that would be not essential.

So our overwriting goal is to integrate within all the bureaus, within the departments, these issues because they are critical to the outcome of the regional bureaus. Whether it’s the Africa bureau or it’s the Western Hemisphere bureau, women’s issues have to be factored in or we’re not going to get the kind of results we all want to see. And it’s not just the anti-trafficking office or the human rights office, it’s the economic bureau, where we are putting a lot of attention for the reasons that Laura and Beth just said.

Women really do grow GDP if we remove the barriers and enable them to do that work. So we’ve got that as our goal post and are working really in ways that are very direct and integrated to bring about these kinds of results.

So what else are we doing to ensure that we can reach a point where this is not just lip service, this is not just saying were doing this, but actually we are going to get the kind of results? I would say three things that are absolutely critical. And how well we do those three things well say a lot about where we come out.

One is strategic planning. You may have heard about this QDDR process, the Quadrennial Development and Diplomacy Review. The Defense Department does it. We’re doing it for the first time in terms of applying it to diplomacy and development. And in that process, women and girls are a pillar of that process. There is a working group completely devoted to this. And our hope is that as a result of that, in a strategic planning way, we will have a better commitment to a process engaged in that will enable us to achieve those goals.

Secondly, the budget process: Our budget planning bureau has asked all the regional and functional bureaus at the State Department, NIAID, to account for women and girls in their budget plans. Now, I can tell you. I’ve sat in on a lot of these budget meetings and I have to wait and hear, you know, how is this going to come out. It’s a sort of new idea, but once it is grasped and once people can see the results of a process like this, there is a greater excitement about embracing it because it helps the overall end goal that we have. So in their budget plans, they need to describe how they are advancing the status of women and their needs in a way that it really reflects their overall missions in those offices and bureaus.

Thirdly, and perhaps maybe the most difficult until we figure out how to do this well: Measurements and evaluation. And I think we have done a really respectable job with some of the President’s major development initiatives,

the Global Health Initiative we've worked with many around this table on, really has a women and girls focus; family planning, nutrition that recognizes how we have to take our vertical programs, like PEPFAR and what it does so exceptionally on HIV/AIDS and the other infectious diseases, and build on that and other services that women and girls and their families critically need.

So that has been an extremely serious effort to apply that lens on this global health initiative, the gender lens. It's also been done with Feed the Future; the major hunger initiative that the administration has put forward. You know we've had many agricultural programs. One, in advancing and enhancing egg productivity, they have not recognized that the majority of the farmers around the world, the small farmers, are women. And if those programs only look at men farmers and don't apply the gender lens, then the women farmers are not going to get the training they need, they're not going to be affected in terms of the kinds of crops, access to credit, be involved in decision making, and perhaps most significantly, land tenure rights. If you don't have land tenure rights, you can't have the kind of outcomes that are essential.

So we have been working this in the initiatives very assiduously and now were working to institute a robust measurements and evaluation of framework and process that will include indicators for women and girls. And there are people at AID now whose expertise is focused on this because we know it's not enough to say, "Oh, well, this program will help women and girls," and then there is no way -- there are no indicators in place and there's no way in the end to measure whether or not that actually happened.

I heard a testimony not too long ago on the Hill by a former general who was an international activist who was involved in one of the peace processes in Africa, and he said after the conflict, as they were making the transition to the new constitutional government, it was very much in his mind that women and girls had to be factored in and, you know, where they were factored, that's made an incredible difference in those African countries. And everybody said to him, "No, no, no. It's understood; women and girls will be -- it's cross-cutting and they'll be integrated."

He said it was one of the biggest mistakes, and he learned a great deal by it because it wasn't specified, because there weren't measurements indicators, evaluations, policies directly set to that end, it never happened. So we're mindful that we've got to collect sex and age to segregate a data. We have to ensure accountability in this area and, in the end, each of these reforms will be absolutely critical to what is the intended purpose, which is to ensure that we do bring in women and girls not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it's absolutely essential in the kind of policies were putting forward for the kind of success we want to have, and for the sustainability.

So that's where we are. We will be measured by how this process goes forward and its long standing component. And I would also say on the issue of the private sector; we truly have put a premium on engaging with the private sector. And public/private partnerships are very much a part of -- going forward, critical to this area; and as the Secretary often says really, a critical part of twenty-first century diplomacy. Business has so many competencies

that we need in development, in particular, and that we need to tap each other's competencies. Nobody has got all the money in the world today. But if we work more closely together, we're going to get better results, so that's where we are.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: All right. Thank you. Thank you, Melanne. Let me go to Congressman -- oh, actually -- all right, Daniel has to leave for another event. He is very much in demand over the next couple of days. We thank you so much Daniel. God bless.

DANIEL YOHANNES: Thank you. Thank you very much. Enjoy your day. Okay. I wish you all the best. Thank you.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Thank you, Daniel. Let me go to Congress Carnahan, who has a unique perspective on these issues from his perch on Capitol Hill. He is the chairperson of the Subcommittee on International Organizations and Human Rights.

Congressman Carnahan, how do you identify effective programs for the integration of gender?

RUSS CARNAHAN: Thank you Cassandra and to the MCC and the White House Council for using the power of convening here today. I think it's so critical that we get the right people around the table. And in terms of the fact the strategy is -- some earlier speakers that hit on that involving government NGOs to private sector, but we've got to get the right people around the table that recognize the unique role of women in society.

And that we focus on girls and boys, women and men to be sure that we're getting the right education and insight in terms of how we make our policy decisions. And I think there's been some important changes in momentum and, certainly, I think, leading by example, in terms of what the administration has done, the special acknowledgement and appreciation for the work that Ambassador Verveer does with her office in integrating into the policy discussion.

You know, also -- I think shining the light on success and failure. I think there's the important role of peer recognition and peer pressure to identify what works and, you know, to cite examples throughout history -- you know, the important role of women in the peace process in Northern Ireland. The Ambassador mentioned the role of women farmers, you know, in Afghanistan; the role where, you know, the vast majority -- their economy is driven by agriculture. The majority of the farmers were women.

If we're not incorporating that into our strategy, we're not going to get the best results -- or making reforms in Ethiopia ending early marriage. And just cultural reforms that are so critical to have buy in. So I think those were some strategies where we have examples of things that have worked and we need to continue those. And from the administration's leadership with Secretary Clinton; she's been very articulate in really leading and in advocating that women's rights are human rights.

We need to continue with these comprehensive approaches in terms of how we incorporate women and -- I think it's important, too, in the Congress. We've had hearings recently on the advancement of women in politics and civil Society. The work that each of you do really helps inform the Congress, really helps us incorporate that into our strategies, that I really think will make a difference going forward.

So thank you all for what you do and for being part of this broader discussion, to really continue some of the good progress that has been made.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Carnahan. I'm always tempted to look at my colleague Ginny Seitz to talk about the good work that were doing at MCC -- so many of these issues we're working on at MCC -- and we think about them at MCC.

Ginny, do you want to talk about some of the focus of our work and on issues of -- on issues of leadership and mandate and effective programs? Certainly, Ambassador Verveer was talking about monitoring and evaluation and how that's an element that they're giving more attention to in the work that State is doing and USAID is doing. That's something that is always -- has also been a part of our work. But why don't you share more about what we're doing at MCC?

VIRGINIA SEITZ: Thank you, Cassandra.

I think that the topic for today, looking at leadership mandate, capacity, resources, and accountability, we have very much appreciated and adopted from our friends in the NGO and advocacy communities. And as an agency that looks to -- has among its core values -- partnership and country ownership, rigorous monitoring and evaluation, and accountability structures, and because we're very small agency with the staff of about 300 people -- and we're new -- so we're, in a sense, a little bit more like the private sector. We've been able to move gender integration and a focus on gender quality forward, in a way, that has led us to adopt a gender policy which is unlike other policies in other organizations.

And that, it basically says we recognize gender inequality is a constraint to economic growth and poverty reduction. And here are the things that we should do and here are the things our country partners should do. And over the last five years, we've learned that it's really critical to have capacity -- and it sounds so simple -- but if you don't have people with the analytical expertise involved in even helping shape the consultations that go into making development decisions, you're going to miss out on their perspectives that represent women and girls. So we are really working on having capacity within our partner countries and within our own agency.

You need resources. You need -- I've heard from all of you about the necessity of articulating and defining enough resources to pay attention to how gender differences in inequality shape development -- so were doing that. And we are -- and we're working through and, hopefully, we'll get some very good ideas around accountability, not

only in monitoring and evaluation, and ensuring that not only do you collect sex-disaggregated data but that you analyze it and that you do something with it.

So again, it's that, and it's also how do we ensure that as an agency? We're all responsible in some way for paying attention to gender, not just the four of us who have it on our title.

So we are -- I am -- eternally grateful for the leadership of Mr. Yohannes and Cassandra in the direction we're moving in because we really have gotten to the point where all of our colleagues recognize that if you're thinking about an agricultural program, you're going to make sure that you look at all of the people who might have some relationship to farming, and you're going to look at the credit constraints and the land constraints, and you're going to really think through how that program should be designed so that the entire family can benefit.

Thank you.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Congressman Carnahan has to leave us. Thank you so much, Congressman Carnahan for coming and sharing your thoughts, and your support of our work.

I'd actually like to go to one of our international partners. Nick, can I -- I was very fortunate, actually, to have the chance to visit DFAIT over the summer in July. And DFAIT is doing a lot of very good work and has taken a leadership role. Can you talk about the work that DFAIT is doing and maybe comment on the issues that Ginny raised, the leadership and capacity, and ensuring accountability?

NICHOLAS GOSSELIN: Yes. Thank you.

I know many of you know we've had an election in the U.K., and the good news falling on that election is the new coalition government of the U.K. It has funding as far as in the development perspective reaffirmed the importance of women's empowerment. And in fact, we've just set out six key priorities for our work of which women's empowerment is one of those. That's the good news.

The less good news, the bad news, is, from my perspective, I completely agree you with Melanne Vermeer, Ambassador Vermeer, in that the challenge for me as the policy director in DFAIT is how do you actually drive this policy through your organization because, frankly, we've been struggling this for 15 years in DFAIT. And I could tell you a fantastic compelling story about how good we are on women's issues. I could give you really good examples of projects that were doing.

But if we're honest with ourselves, we all understand and know the evidence. We don't have to persuade ourselves about that. But in practice, we still haven't changed the culture of the organization to really take this seriously. Over the last five years, we've had a gender policy action plan which has done things like have a very senior person in the organization be a champion for women's issues, gender issues. Even my pay is linked to progress on gender issues.

For me, telling a compelling story about what I'm doing -- but I don't think even that's been enough in terms of changing the culture in the organization. So we are struggling with this if we're on this, and I think we've now decided that were going to do four things in DFAIT, or were thinking about doing four things.

The first is live up to our own rhetoric, which is change our own culture, our own organization. So, you know, we have gender-segregate statistics on how many senior managers are women, how women are feeling in the organization, having programs from mentoring young women through the organization. So I think, you know, we're going to change ourselves actually to be able to take this, take this gender seriously.

The second is, as you're doing in the US, think about our own strategic planning. We're going through a process of reviewing all our eight programs at the moment. And there's been a very clear, strong signal that picking up women and gender issues is going to be part of that and we want to see how they're being reflected in the proposals that were getting back from our country officers.

The third is changing the culture. It is surprising when I walk -- when I go around DFAIT, how little our very good staff know about the evidence on gender equality. It's all there, but somehow we're not reflecting it. We're not telling ourselves what the evidence is. And I'm not sure that we need, actually, more monitoring and evaluation. It's good to do, but it's already there. I mean this is, for everybody in this room, is a no-brainer. I mean why -- but why haven't we articulated that, and communicated that in the organization -- seeing our job is still in communication.

But the fourth, and maybe this is the slightly more controversial approach in DFAIT, is that we are seriously thinking actually of shifting away from our previous mainstream approach to identifying four or five key policy issues that we want to drive through the organization. And to track and monitor those and hold ourselves to accountable as to whether we're making -- we've being successful against them.

I'll tell you what they are and this is the one were thinking about. Please tell me if we got this wrong because this is a live ongoing debate in DFAIT.

One is reducing age of early marriage or -- sorry, increase the age of early marriage -- so to address the issue about the age of which girls get married. The second issue is reducing the number of unintended pregnancies, and the whole issue of, and we'll be touching on this tomorrow, the whole issue of reproductive health and newborn health reproductive rights. The third is to complete a quality education not only at primary, but at secondary. And this is a bit of a shift at DFAIT because in the past we've focused mainly on primary, and now we're looking at lower secondary and higher secondary.

The fourth is creating opportunities for women's economic empowerments. And I think this is a question of how would you measure that. But we'll reflect on that in a moment. And five, violence against girls. And really, it's a shift more to thinking about who are the key -- or who are the future, the future adolescent girls. And we know

that a lot of cultural and economic problems are intergenerational, and if you start with girls, then they're the future women.

And again, we all know this. So that's what we're thinking about. So, in the past, we're mainstreaming. We don't think it's working so let's set some key policy priorities and see if we can hold ourselves accountable against those. As I say, this is the live ongoing debate. We're not quite sure we got this right but we certainly think we need to try something different.

Thank you.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Well, is DFAIT getting it right? Does it -- do you want to comment on that? I think -- sorry, Nick, you've kind of opened yourself up for that one. All right. It was good. Lynn, do you want to?

LYNN TALIENTO: Yeah. Or actually, I think you are -- I won't comment on the specific topics, but I think you, actually, in a wonderful way, made the case for measurement. And I think translating again, I was speaking on behalf of the private sector and clients that I advised on how they take on issues of women in their workforce or in their communities, one of the comments I often get from my clients is, "Okay, I get it. Women's empowerment. Women's em--what the heck is that? What -- women's empowerment? Help us!" So we said, "Okay, let's talk about financial inclusion."

I'll give you a disguised client example. A client with a huge female sales force said, "Okay, we'd like to do financial inclusion." "But what do you mean by that, savings accounts, credit?" Okay, fine, we translate it. Okay, great: "What are the best practices in getting women in these circumstances, in these conditions, in these kinds of communities, access to savings? Well, we'll go find that for you." And it took us, a McKinsey team, three months to figure out exactly what the best practice was, what works and in what circumstances.

There isn't a repository, I would argue. At least from the private sector's perspective of exactly what works and why, so I think that's part of it.

But the other thing that you said that I thought was compelling is once you start to focus a very big topic like women's empowerment on five or six key levers, and this, of course, there's a lesson from advocates in the room, right? Advocacy on behalf of an issue has to become advocacy on behalf of a specific objective with specific stakeholders and a specific win that you've defined. Once you've done that, I think you do have a real shot at moving the needle on these issues because I think it's almost too big not to reduce it to something that is that targeted. So I think it's a great list.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: We've got -- we've got two others on this side of the table who want to comment. Can I have Ritu first, and then Adrienne?

RITU SHARMA: Hi, Nick. Ritu Sharma from Women Thrive Worldwide. We've been advocating with the MCC on gender since its inception; its announcement in 2002 at the Monterey Conference. So, obviously, we're really pleased that MCC kind of has adopted what we call our LEMSTRA formula, the leadership, mandate, structure, resources, accountability formula.

But I -- your comments make me want to run screaming out of the room. And that is because you're making a very classic mistake of conflating women and gender. Those are two very different things. "Women" is programs focused on closing the gap in equality between boys and girls, men and women. And the five really excellent focus areas that you have listed are all programs for women and girls.

But if you don't integrate gender into those programs, even those programs will fail. And the difference is that, as you know, "gender" is an analytical method of looking at the differences between men and women, the beliefs, the practices, and then integrating those into the design of a program into its implementation and into its evaluation.

And so it's both. And I really would encourage you not to abandon mainstreaming because you cannot replace mainstreaming with these five areas. But I would suggest rather that you shift your messaging in your communications.

And gender -- if people within an institution feel that gender is something they have to do, that it's a top-down initiative, that they're going to get their pay dinged if they don't do it, it's a real sticky approach. But to rather show how their project, for which they are accountable, will actually be more likely to succeed, they will actually meet their goals. They will be more -- even if they don't care about women, they will be more effective.

So it's to really sell gender analysis and methodology as the way to be successful. So that anybody, regardless of their beliefs about women or not women or whatever, they -- I think they're much more likely to adopt it. So I'm sorry to have such a strong statement but I think it's just an excellent illustration of how, sometimes, institutions conflate these two things and when that happens, that's when gender mainstreaming fails.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Thank you, Ritu. There'll be no running from the room. I should be clear about that. Just stay put and dialogue. Nick, do you want to respond?

NICHOLAS GOSSELIN: Well, I can respond in one of two ways, but let me respond in both.

We need this debate and I -- let me challenge you back. We've been doing this for 15 years and failed so, you know, we haven't got it right. And we can do yet more communications, we can do yet more imploring our organization to mainstream, but we just haven't -- it just hasn't worked.

Now, I'm not saying that we're going to throw away gender mainstreaming. I'm not saying that the organization is insensitive to the balance between men and women. It's there, it'll continue. What I'm saying is that we feel as an organization, the only way we're really going to drive this is to force the issue by focusing on one or two or three

or four key issues. That doesn't mean we won't do gender issues. We won't do the mainstreaming. We won't do the gender analysis. But this is the way to try and get it on the agenda and to drive through the organization. So I'm not saying that we're abandoning it but I'm saying that we need to supplement what we're doing.

RITU SHARMA: I think you're doing a phenomenal job, getting women and girls on the development agenda and addressing barriers for them. That is not -- what you're moving away from is mainstreaming gender analysis, so I'll just leave it at that.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Okay. There's a lot of interest in responding. So if I could, Adrienne, I think, would be next. And then I'd like to take Michele Moloney-Kitts. Adrienne?

ADRIENNE GERMAIN: Adrienne Germain from the International Women's Health Coalition. And, actually, I spent 15 years changing an institution from the inside and I strongly agree with what you've put forward as what you're doing now.

And with your reply that it doesn't mean giving up the continuing effort to do gender mainstreaming -- I do think actually that both the carrot and the stick are important. What made the difference in the institution that I worked in, in fact, was holding people accountable in their annual performance reviews for what they actually were doing. And it was a time when that institution believed that working on behalf of women was sculpturally imperialistic or trivial and irrelevant to their work in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. And I think we still have, across the development spectrum of agencies, people who feel that way or, as you indicated, are just not informed and need to give it a priority to get informed.

But what I wanted to respond to -- your comment, and to actually agree very much with your list -- is that the weight of your list, it seemed to me just hearing it for the first time is hitting very centrally at a major additional challenge that we have. And so I wanted also to applaud DFAIT for that. And that is the following: Around the commentarial, in the commentary this morning, we touched on issues that I've been working on for 40 years that are still present with us, almost with the same intensity as when I started 40 years ago.

Whether it's land rights or getting technical assistance to women farmers or dealing with women's health rights, in particular, their reproductive health rights, or any number of the list of issues that has been put on the table this morning. And we always say women and we can assert that that means women of all ages. However, we have to face now that we have the largest generations ever, two of them, that the world has ever seen and that one-third of the world's population are under the age of 19.

And we have 1.2 billion who are 10 to 19 and another 1.2 billion 0 to 10 already born, and they are facing pressures and the lack of services and the lack of support from their societies and their families that are just unprecedented in the world. And the Millennium Development Goals that we're all here for this week don't even acknowledge

them. They are not in the Millennium Development Goals except in the indicator level, that's three levels down from the top.

So in addition to our continuing commitment and conviction about women, we have to name these young people -- and this goes back to Carol Larson's point about our investment in their leadership from the ground up. Their talents, they are far ahead of where I was when I was a teenager in terms of what they are learning, what they know, their access to the Internet, how they communicate with each other, but they are far behind where they are in their access to a quality education, which Nick named.

They are still being forced into early marriage for all kinds of reasons. They get pregnant when they don't want to be. They don't think about family planning but they certainly don't want an STD, a sexually transmitted disease, and they don't want an unwanted pregnancy. But to change our language, change our services, find out how to communicate with them, that's a women's issue. It's a girls' issue and it's a boys' issue. We have to raise our children differently.

So we ought to be here when we talk about women, re-conceptualizing part of what we do for these young people so that we grow up in a world where they have a world that isn't dominated by violence against women and the horrible kinds of things that are proliferating. Now, whether it's the Congo, at that extreme, or the daily insults and violence that women in this country face.

So, I think that the Millennium Challenge Account, and the White House Council on Women, and Melanne's wonderful office, all of these are pieces of a puzzle fitting together, but please let's remember these two huge generations, that if we don't name them and we're not specific in gathering as we too did say, both the boys and the girls especially in those generations, so that their futures are different, we'll miss the boat entirely.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Thank you, Adrienne. Michele?

MICHELE MOLONEY-KITTS: Yes. Thank you. Just a quick background on PEPFAR, because HIV is a disease of the disempowered and very highly disproportionately affects women and girls, I think PEPFAR has had probably a little bit more experience of really large-scale programming on the ground through our partners with USAID, Department of Defense, and HHS. And there are a couple of key lessons that we've learned that were applying moving forward that I think also respond a bit to your issue, Nick.

First of all, I would greatly support that priority areas that you've outlined, I think they're excellent. But there are a couple of things that we've learned, one of which I think is going to be highly controversial in this room. First is that when you target, you have a real tendency to end up with boutique projects. And we have -- I can show you fabulous projects in every PEPFAR country either working on economic strengthening or gender-based violence that affect and reach, you know, 500 women in a community because of an amazing leader.

So one of the challenges is how do we institutionalize these efforts and bring them to scale? And this is something that actually PEPFAR is very focused on and we are working very closely with government leadership and civil society to really see if we cannot scale up gender-based violence programs in a couple of countries. So boutique is issue number one.

Issue number two, and the one that I think is going to be the most controversial potentially, is men and boys. So, every time we have a conversation about gender and we talk about gender programming, everybody stands up and says, “Now, we’ve got to make sure that we have interventions for men and boys because they are such key influencers of, you know, communities, power, relationships, and all these things.” And I think everyone in this room would agree.

So I have some really stunning data from PEPFAR countries where we started five years ago and we had five strategies that we told our countries to work on relative to gender, and one of them was men and boys. And it’s really interesting. We didn’t have grade indicators so we counted numbers of programs and numbers of investments.

Well, let me tell you, the one area that has totally taken off in PEPFAR programming is work with men and boys. And so you have to ask yourself, “Why is that?” And the reason why I believe is because it is so much easier to work with men and boys and to reach them than it is to find the 12-year old girl who used to go to school, who’s now secluded, who has ten layers of adults who may or may not let you get to her and will never get access to a resource or a service.

So, I think, we have to be very, very careful in our efforts, and I appreciate what you’re talking about Ritu, but in all honesty, you know, this is a very key issue.

And then the last thing -- and I just want to applaud really Adrienne’s comment. Where are the girls? I mean, were not talking about them. Even Nick, this is one of things I’m being obsessive about in my office, so please don’t feel bad. Every document I read that says adolescent, I scratch down and add pre-adolescent and adolescent.

I mean, we have got to think about 10- to 12-year olds. We saw data from Swaziland. One out of three girls’ first sexual experience is forced. The data on gender-based violence, and this is my last point, the data on gender-based violence and the experience of girls around the world is available. It is available. If that data was about typhus or cholera, we would have hundreds of thousands of people around the world flying around, having meetings, mobilizing police, “Where is the justice system? Oh my gosh, this is a public health emergency.”

So what does it take for us to sit and say, “Well, gender-based violence is one of my priorities.” I mean, oh my goodness, what are we doing? Why aren’t we seizing that data and standing up and saying this is a worldwide crisis?

So, again -- I'm sorry, I'm a little -- I get a little riled up about that issue. But, anyway, I do think you're quite on track but I hope that as you roll it out, you'll think about some of these lessons that we've been able to learn along the way. Thank you.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Thank you, Michele. Patti O'Neill, with OECD.

PATTI O'NEILL: Absolutely. Firstly, let me congratulate the U.S. on the political leadership that you're getting from your President, your Secretary of State and Ambassador Verveer, women's empowerment in your development programs. And I also want to congratulate DFAIT since we've been focused on naming the last few moments on the leadership, but in particular the humility about the performance of the last 15 years. I think they've made a real effort to ensure that the implementation of their programs does in fact meet the record. And I don't think anyone is being more humble than DFAIT has been.

But what I want to do right now is to come back to this question of measurement and data, and I'm afraid I'm going to bring it back to the U.S. At the OECD, we bring together the 24 large bilateral donors which are members of the Development Assistance Committee. Our job is all about aid and development effectiveness, which is to say, about the quantity and the quality of aid. It's about peer reviews, peer pressure, and good practices in development cooperation. About what works and what doesn't, and it's about statistics.

We had the unique database of statistics on all our statistics right down to project level. Now as we all recognize here the critical importance of investing in women and girls' rights, it's important that this become visible. And at the moment, unfortunately, the United States is the single donor who is not reporting on your aid statistics and yet you are the primary leader. You do report on your other aid statistics which, of course, we welcome, and yet you have some of the most exciting and innovative programs, and we could all learn from them.

And at the moment, that lack of reporting is probably quite seriously distorting the data picture, because I think it means that we actually have an underreporting across the globe on what is actually being spent on gender equality and where this good spending is going on. You're a major player. And it would be absolutely wonderful if, given the size of your foreign assistance budget, we could encourage you to start reporting.

I think this is all about accountability. We certainly recognize the challenges you face. But in view of what Ambassador Verveer said about your approaches to budgeting, expenditure, and measurement, I think this is a wonderful opportunity, and I do encourage you to join us. And thank you very much for bringing us together today for this discussion.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Well, let me just say, on that one, let me follow-up with you, because I think that is something we can take up, so we will do that. Dr. Kanyoro?

MUSIMBI KANYORO: Thank you. I wanted to give an example from what we are doing with girls that really response to many of the issues that DFAIT mentioned, that are also part of what many people have seen as a way in which we would make the progress. The top line is to say that what the conversation that was going on between the two was not different they're on the same way, because one could be a methodology of getting there and the other identifying the issue.

When walking on something like delay of marriage, there is no way such an issue can be tackled without approaching the whole community. So in Bihar, India, we've worked for nine years, invested quite a good amount of resources, and have been able to come up working together with our partners with an increase in the age of marriage of more than two-and-a-half years. And that is significant in demographic areas.

So what needs to be done for such an example -- that's what it means in such boutique kinds of places. If we go to what -- where we begun the conversation, collaboration between private and public, between NGOs and governments, we could go straight to the next stage and think about scaling up of the several boutique projects that exist in -- by many of the people seated in this room and elsewhere.

And what does it take to scale and what does it take to collaborate to scale? And what does it take to involve governments in those particular places straight from day one, when we begin to walk in these areas? There is a strong -- sometimes -- exclusion of governments that will have to maintain and sustain these things.

Then the next issue that I think will require us going to the next stage is looking at long-term issues, the sustainability issues. Again, if we go in to any of the countries in which many of us work, there are a lot of boutique programs that do not have included in them long term sustainability. And probably, definitely, the others should be asking the questions to all of us, what is the sustainability possibility of this, what we are including. There are more than 600,000 girls that need to be in school and are not in school.

A couple of days ago, a number which disturbed me was given, that 80 percent of young new entries in the universities in Ethiopia dropped out of the university before they finish. Eighty percent. And statistics after statistics are disturbing, whether this in high school or in any university and even primary school. And I think the analytical questions that we need to ask in all of these areas is what is it that we need to focus on that helps to remove -- to get to the solutions that we want to. And I think it's possible to do this collaboratively.

And finally, I wanted to say change, this is about social change. So even when we use a business case to make the case, yes, we can make a business case, but we have to ask the next question in a business, it is not everything adding -- one adding up to two -- we have to ask also that question, what does it take to sustain social change and how does social change come about? And how does the business case incorporate issues that are not statistically or financially calculative?

Thank you.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Thank you very much. I do want to recognize Her Excellency Madame Mutharika, who is here with us today from Malawi. And I want to give her an opportunity to comment on some of the things that she's heard.

I was very fortunate yesterday to be able to sit in on a conversation with both Her Excellencies who are here and also Madame Kibaki from Kenya. Focusing on the issue of nutrition and malnutrition, and the attention that they and the commitment that they have made to addressing malnutrition in Africa. But I do want to give you -- I want to give you an opportunity to comment.

But if you don't mind, if I could just go to a couple of participants over here -- and then I will give you the opportunity. Thank you. Liza?

LIZA GROSS: I wanted to speak that -- I'm Liza Gross from the International Women's Media Foundation. I may be the only journalist in this table so I would try to speak up for the vital importance of a sound and relevant media strategy for any of these programs that are being talked about today and others that we have not talked about.

In my experience, most of these programs think of a media strategy as, "Oh, let's get the Guardian to publish a story about our program." Or, "Let's write a press release and send it to radio station X and who knows what happens to this." I would like to illustrate with a very successful program that a donor came to us, his primary interest is not journalism, it's not media, his primary interest is sustainable agriculture, and he's done a lot of work in Africa and is now turning his attention to Latin America. But he understood that the work that he was doing with women farmers was not going to be amplified, it was not going to have the relevance he needed. If he couldn't get the engagement of the news consumers and of all those stakeholders involved.

So he added this portion of a media training on agricultural issues. And we were the organization that developed and executed this for him. So what did we do? We did -- it is women in agriculture and we are working with local journalists in Mali, Zambia, and Uganda, men and women, to cover the issue of gender in agriculture professionally, to understand the specific characteristics of these issues and be able to be an effective communicator, effective media person, covering it.

And over the course of four years, we have actually managed mind shifts both in the media professionals and in the consumers. When these reporters first went out to the field to talk to these women farmers, they did not see themselves as relevant subjects. "Why are you coming to me? Who am I to talk to you about agriculture?" Well, they are women entrepreneurs. But they did not see themselves as such. Now, many of the women farmers who participate in our donors programs are also people who argue daily on a listserv that we have set up for them, and they talk about not only -- issues ranging from irrigation equipment to a broader policy issues.

So, I cannot underscore enough how a sound media and communication strategy that is transformational in the way the issue at hand is talked about and is addressed contributes to the success of an issue.

UNKNOWN (FEMALE): I think that every single person who has spoken today, regardless of the specific sector or issue that they were specifically focused on has really helped all of us to see the absolute essential need for cross-sector collaboration. We can't keep doing this alone. It's silly, and it doesn't work.

Every single issue that we heard voiced and put on the table could benefit from cross-sector collaboration stakeholders convening, and I applaud the Millennium Challenge Corporation for doing this. But we need more of this because the other thing that we've heard is that these efforts have to be resourced, they have to be identified as things that can be leveraged and become sustainable. I'm absolutely wholeheartedly behind the issue of no more boutique programs. We can't keep doing it.

One of the things that I've started saying because of my age is, "I'm getting too old to keep saving the world one woman at a time." We're all too old to keep saving the world one woman at a time. We got to figure out how to hold hands, how to tap dance together and how to make a difference.

I also want to say that occasionally in today's conversation, what you've heard is a willingness on the part of those of us from the United States to come clean and say, "You know what, we're not doing not doing such a hot job here either." We kind of have gotten -- have made a fool of ourselves on the issue of, "Oh, wow. There are more girls graduating from high school. There are more girls enrolling in college. There are more girls now entering the workforce." And to our colleague's point about dropping gender out of this, the question then has to become, "What's happening to an entire generation of not just girls, but boys as well?"

And last but absolutely not the least, I think there is a critical link between education, employment, and empowerment. We can educate girls out the wazoo but if we don't create an economic climate where they have access to gainful employment, they will never be empowered and the generation behind them will feel less incentivized to be educated, employed, and take their voices to the table. We've got to work together.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Madame Mutharika, we are extremely fortunate at MCC to be working with Malawi, and we are at a very critical stage of our project development in Malawi. And we hoped that we will be able to move forward, but it has been with the important leadership of Her Excellency's husband at indicating that there are critical issues in the energy sector that we must address and so were very excited about our work in Malawi.

And I would like to give you an opportunity to comment on what you've heard today and in the issues that you think are important in terms of the gender equality and gender integration.

HER EXCELLENCY CALLISTA MUTHARIKA: It's been enlightening to hear the various speakers.

And what I really would like to say is that in Malawi there is political will, there is political leadership and championship of gender equality in the country. For example, the vice-president is a woman, the attorney general is a woman, the clerk of parliament is a woman, and we have several principal secretaries in the different ministries

and departments. The number of MPs in parliament now is 43 out of 193. Previously, in the 2004 elections we had 26, so there has been a rise.

And I think most of the people are saying it's because of the leadership that we have at the moment. And about 56 of the members -- of the women members of parliament are also coming from the ruling party. It shows that Bingu wa Mutharika is trying his best to assure that women are included in decision-making positions.

Malawi is also a signatory to many international and regional protocols. And I think we are all working together with the government to ensure that what we have signed for is really implemented in all sectors. We also have gender desks in all the departments. But I think, like in most countries, what is said, what is written down is not actually what we see being implemented so we still have a lot of work to do there. In terms of girls' education, again, we have the civil society talking about it and bring something about it, we have government.

But I think where we are lacking is that, I think, I don't see the realization that we -- I think we have, as government, to realize that the majority of the women, the majority of the girls are in the rural areas -- because 85 percent of the population is in the rural areas. But there seems to be a lot of concentration of people in the workplaces that's in the urban areas, and that only consists of about 15 percent of the population. And I should -- I would think, I would imagine -- that most of it again is men.

So, I think, there is -- we must -- since I became the first lady April of this year, I've been, you know, asking myself these questions as to what we have to do to ensure that we now begin to talk to the chiefs and the people in the villages so that they understand issues of gender equality and how important it is for their own development.

In addition to that, I don't hear much about women in the private sector as to know whether they are being included in the board rooms and are at senior management level. And again, since I became first lady, I've been talking to a few women leaders in the private sector to say they must come together and then perhaps include me in some of their meetings so that we can see, you know, how we can help them to bring to the attention of the chief executives that women must be included in the senior management levels even in the private sector.

So there are two issues. The private sector, as well as the role women -- I think we need to ensure that we are doing something about them because without them then there wouldn't be any development. That's where, you know, the population is in the rural areas. Thank you.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Thank you. Thank you very much. And we actually, in our work in Malawi, one of the things that we are looking at very closely is how we get out to the rural areas to ensure that the work that we're doing has an impact out there and that women are included and have been in the work that we're doing out there. So we should definitely -- if that's an issue, that is important to you, we will make sure that we will connect with you in the work that we're doing, in the outreach work that we're doing, on gender equality. Thank you very much.

I actually did notice that Sharon Cromer at the end of the table there, who is our USAID representative, had her hand up and had a question. Sharon, I'm going to actually let you have the last word, because we are at ten o'clock and I want to be respectful -- and I know that Tina does too -- of the time the people have to devote to this and the other priorities and things are going on today. Sharon?

SHARON CROMER: Thank you.

I didn't expect to have the last word but in any case, a lot of words have been said earlier. I just wanted to support that and say that we've achieved a lot in the MDGs in the area of poverty reduction, school enrolment, and some aspects of health and there's a lot to celebrate and to learn from.

But the challenges remain daunting. And doing more of the same simply will not get us where we need to be by 2015, so we need to be more focused and strategic. And while we agree that gender mainstreaming is critical, we do have to, like our DFAIT colleagues, set priority areas. And at USAID, we've done just that. We are focused on reducing gender-based violence, on increasing women's access to better health through the Global Health Initiative, and securing economic empowerment of women through the new agriculture Feed the Future program.

And we're doing many of the same things that our partners on the ground, including DFAIT, are doing. But I agree with Michele that in a lot of ways we've been focused on boutique projects, and we need to move away from that. And we at USAID are trying to do just that. We're trying to figure out how to harness human ingenuity. How to apply innovations that will develop -- deliver development leaps, how to deliver existing developments, solutions that reach more women and children more quickly at lower cost.

I think that's a challenge for all of us. And we do need to get smarter about tracking progress and measuring what works and what doesn't work, and apply it immediately. So, that's my one remark. Thank you.

CASSANDRA BUTTS: Well, I think this has been an incredibly informative conversation. I want to thank my friend and colleague from the White House for agreeing to co-sponsor this with us, or co-host this with us. And I can't make -- I'm biased, obviously, but I can't say enough about how the leadership from the White House has made a difference in elevating these issues and giving us an opportunity across the U.S. government to give attention to these issues. And so, I thank my friend and colleague, Tina Tchen.

And, you know, there are a number of incredibly important issues that were raised today. And I -- looking at Ritu and also Nick -- I think that that engagement was very important. And the challenges and the attention between the focus on gender integration and gender mainstreaming in a more programmatic focus on women and girls are something that will be ongoing.

And, you know, at MCC, we are looking at more of a mainstream approach but we also recognize that there are other ways of getting at the issue. But I appreciate that engagement and the willingness to engage, and Nick, the

willingness to put out what DFAIT is doing and Ritu, the willingness, the challenge, and that's an important -- that was an important part of this conversation. I want this to be ongoing and this isn't the -- this won't be our only opportunity. Tina?

CHRISTINA TCHEN: Well, that's actually what I was going to say, Cassandra, is to thank you all once again. I know this is a really busy time and a busy week so I appreciate and grateful for the time that you all took to be here and to share with us, you know, really very, very important issues.

The issue of, "Why don't we have a council on men and boys," is something I get asked a lot, so I appreciate that conversation. But I will tell you, I'll put it right out there where I am. The data, you know, sort of speaks for itself, that women and girls still face challenges that we are not at parity and there are specific issues that have to be addressed. I think that's something the President certainly feels. That's why one of the first things he did in the first three months in office is to create this Council.

We are very much open to ongoing conversation, whether it is one-on-one -- that is the great thing about my being in charge of public engagement, as well, is that I would invite, you know, any of you, you know, at the table in the audience to stay in touch with us. I want to introduce Jenny Kaplan, who is the Deputy Director of the White House Council on Women and Girls and is my, you know, right-hand person on all of these issues.

Please stay in touch with us. We'll stay in touch with Cassandra as well as we have this really important discussion on how to push these issues forward. And we would welcome, one-on-one or as a group, you know, additional work with all of you.

So thank you very much.

EVENT CONCLUDES.