“Challenging the Impossible”

Seminar Transcript

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Sabancı Center, Hacı Ömer Conference Hall
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Speakers:

Mabel van Oranje, HRH Princess of the Netherlands, The Initiator and Chair of “Girls Not Brides” Platform

Dr. Tererai Trent, The Founder of Tinogona Foundation, Senior Consultant

Moderator:

Oylum Talu, Presenter
WELCOME

Oylum Talu: Welcome everyone! Can we first start with a nice welcome applause please?

Distinguished Representatives of the Third Sector,
Distinguished Guests,
Distinguished Members of the Press,

Welcome to Sabancı Foundation’s 7th Philanthropy Seminar, which has now become a traditional event.

We are hosting two leaders who are changemakers for social development: They are the two courageous, determined, strong leaders of social change. I am referring to two leaders who “make impossible possible”: Dutch Princess Mabel van Oranje and the founder of the Zimbabwean Tinogona Foundation, Dr. Tererai Trent. We welcome them once again and look forward to hearing their inspiring stories in philanthropy.

Before we continue with our seminar on “Challenging the Impossible”, let me briefly inform you about today’s program. The opening speech will be delivered by dear Zerrin Koyunsağan, General Manager of the Sabancı Foundation, on behalf of Güler Sabancı, and following that we will be introducing our guest speakers. After Mabel van Oranje and Tererai Trent deliver their speech, we will move to that small section behind me, which is set up for our conversation, where they will share further information about themselves. Later, should you have any questions; we will proceed with the Q&A. So if you have any questions, please prepare them now, because we will turn to you for questions during the final section of our seminar.

Now, for the opening speech, I would like to invite to the stage Ms. Zerrin Koyunsağan, General Manager of the Sabancı Foundation.

OPENING REMARK

Zerrin Koyunsağan: Yes, good morning. In fact Ms. Güler Sabancı was supposed to address you this morning. Unfortunately, she is stricken with flu for the last two days. We have been in touch for the last two days. We spoke this morning as well. She said she was getting ready to come, but unfortunately she was not able to. She asked me to deliver her speech to you. But to start with, today is a very suitable day for our seminar theme, Challenging the Impossible. You all came here challenging the impossible (Translator’s Note: the speaker is referring to the heavy snow outside). Thank you all very much for that, welcome!

Yes, now I would like to read Güler Hanım’s message:

Distinguished Representatives of Foundations and NGOs,
Distinguished Speakers;
Distinguished Dutch Princess Mabel van Oranje and Dr. Tererai Trent,
Distinguished Members of the Press;

Welcome to Sabancı Center and to our seminar! We are holding the 7th Sabancı Foundation Philanthropy Seminar today.
Two days ago, on December 10, we celebrated “World Human Rights Day”. Each year, we organize our seminar in the week that includes that day, because there is a powerful link between “human rights” and philanthropy. “Human rights” is a vital concept for foundations, associations and individuals who engage in philanthropy work. The essence of human rights lies in venerating everything about human kind.

As Sabancı Foundation, we strive to closely monitor the global philanthropy sector conducting activities for “human kind”. The plethora of opinions and new approaches from specialists in their respective fields furnish us with new perspectives.

We identified this year’s seminar theme as “Challenging the Impossible”, because we believe that social change necessitates challenging the impossible. Some people drive change by challenging the impossibilities in their lives. And some organize crucial masses to tackle social problems that seem impossible to solve. We will witness two different models today; the two models that complement one another.

Our first guest is Dear Mabel van Oranje, the chair of Girls Not Brides of which we are also a member. This is a global platform that organizes global efforts to end child marriage.

Our other guest is Dear Tererai Trent, a role model for all world women, with her passion for getting an education despite extremely challenging conditions, and her life story from Africa to America. She works for equality of opportunity and builds schools through her foundation in Zimbabwe.

They will soon share with us their experiences that touch human lives from improving human rights of girls to equality of opportunity in education. We will listen to their struggle for social development. Today, these leaders who challenge the impossible will shed light on us and inspire us. The stories of both speakers will remind us yet again how desperately the world needs women leaders.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank dear Mabel and dear Tererai on behalf of everyone for accepting our invitation and being here with us today.

Distinguished Guests,

There is a widely accepted fact around the world that women’s leadership is vital for social change. The entire body of recent research supports that. That is because women are equipped with a stronger asset of sensitivity, innovation, awareness of social responsibility, and emotional intelligence that is required for change.

Women leaders play a key role in taking sustainable steps for social change. However, like in any other case, they cannot achieve this on their own. It should be a collective endeavor, yet I believe women have a triggering role. Therefore we need to empower women in economy, politics and civil society. Through providing them equal opportunity, we should support them on the path to becoming active and productive individuals.

And education… To ignite women’s potential, “education” is the preliminary condition of all and it is a human right of top priority. I will read the next statement twice upon the request of Ms. Güler Sabancı… “We must ensure that particularly girls attend school at least until the age of 18, until they graduate from high school. This is their most fundamental human right. This will empower them to attain the right of access to the maturity level to make healthy decisions about their own future”. We must bestow them the right to make healthy choices, the right to be an adult.
I will repeat it: “We must ensure that particularly girls attend school at least until the age of 18, until they graduate from high school. This is their most fundamental human right. This will empower them to attain the right of access to the maturity level to make healthy decisions about their own future”.

At Sabancı Foundation, we promote the active participation of girls and women in education and social life and strive to foster a healthier social structure. We open the doors to help people realize their potential and end up at a higher level than they started.

81 out of more than 120 institutions we have established in Turkey are directly related to education. This year, following the restructuring process in the aftermath of the earthquake in the city of Van, we rebuilt a school and opened it. The girls’ dorm we have built in Mardin will be in service in about a month. We have provided around 40,000 scholarships for university students so far and we encouraged achievement by offering more than 1,000 awards to the youth.

In addition to buildings and scholarships in support of education, we aim to promote the human rights of girls and women by funding social projects. Collaborating with Ministries and the United Nations, we work to empower women in economic and social life. We support projects for women’s integration is social life through our grant programs. In recent years, we have been playing an active role in tackling the Child Brides issue. We feel privileged to contribute to the awareness vis-à-vis the public and the media on such a complex issue.

These are the issues for which we try to create solutions as Sabancı Foundation to achieve social progress. However, we should keep in mind that the world is faced with many other problems waiting for a solution. Though social problems may seem immense, sometimes the struggle of a single person can make a difference. And sometimes the complexity of the problem requires global commitment and action.

It is challenging to achieve both, but not impossible. What we need is social leaders who can challenge the impossibilities and achieve their targets.

Our guests here today represent the struggle against local and global problems that seem impossible to solve… I believe our dedication and patience for social change will bring about success.

My belief grows stronger as I see the people, women, girls, persons with disabilities whose lives we have touched as Sabancı Foundation in all corners of Turkey.

Soon we will hear our speakers talking about the impact of challenging the impossible on social change. We should not forget that we now live in a different world. This new world is much more conducive to global cooperation and joint solutions for problems. Therefore, I hope that we will all draw some important lessons from the approaches and experiences of our guests.

Thank you once again for coming to Sabancı Center and attending our seminar.

Oylum Talu: Thank you. We send our get well soon wishes to Ms. Güler Sabancı. I have been witnessing her conversations with Zerrin Hanım since this morning, and I would like to repeat once again the point that Zerrin Hanım also voiced a moment ago: Education is the fundamental right of every girl until the age of 18. You all agree, right?
Yes, thank you very much Ms. Koyunsağan. I would now like to introduce our first speaker before I invite her to stage. Dutch Princess Mabel van Oranje is the Chair of the global partnership to end child marriages, Girls Not Brides. She is the co-founder and executive chair of the European Council on Foreign Relations. She is a member of the Global Board of Open Society Foundations. Mabel is at the same time a board member of Crisis Action operating in the NGO field, as well as the advisory board member of Global Witness and an advisory council member of the Elders. In 2005, the World Economic Forum named her as one of its Young Global Leaders.

I would like to invite Mabel van Oranje to stage.

OPENING REMARKS OF SPEAKERS

Mabel van Oranje: Good morning. Thank you very much for these warm words of welcome, also the words, the very kind words of Güler Sabancı who unfortunately cannot be here.

“Challenging the Impossible”. That is what we are talking about today. But my question is, what is “impossible”? If you had asked 30 years ago, if you had said, communism will come to an end, the Iron Curtain will come down, the Wall of Berlin will fall, people would have declared that you were crazy. If you, at the time when Nelson Mandela, Madiba, was sitting on Robben Island would have said that by the end of the 80’s and the early 90’s there would be an end to apartheid, most people would probably have said, that is impossible. Or what about foot-binding in China? A harmful practice that took place for centuries and centuries but that disappeared in one generation… Who would have thought that that could happen so quickly? Or think about the fact that there is an American Black President nowadays. That was thought to be impossible for a long long time.

Now I have been involved with a few things that people thought were impossible to change. For example, Montenegro, a small country in the Balkans becoming independent, or the creation of the International Criminal Court which nowadays is in the Hague, and where those accused of the biggest human rights abuses stand trial.

And one of the things that I have learned in seeing the impossible becoming possible is that you need a big vision of change of what you want to achieve. And then the impossible will actually become possible. So today I would like to talk a little bit about an issue that is requiring an enormous vision of change to make the impossible possible. What I want to talk about is ending child marriage, which right now might still seem impossible. So let me tell you a little bit about what child marriage is. Child marriage is a harmful practice that is affecting girls and boys, mainly girls but also in some places boys under the age of 18. These girls are forced to get married with men who they do not choose at a time that they do not choose. And what you often see, and these girls can be 15-16 years of age but they can also be as young as 11 or 12, and I must admit I have met in too many occasions girls as young as 6, 7, or 8 years old when they got married. Now, what happens is when these girls get married almost always their education ends. So if we want to keep every girl at school until the age of 18, actually child marriage is preventing that from happening. And that does not only have immediate implications for the girl, but it also has a long term implication for those girls and their families because it significantly reduces any earning power that they have for the rest of their lives.

These girls also often enter relationships where the husband is much older and then therefore you often see that they will become victims of mental and/or physical abuse and forced sexual relations. You know we often say that marriage protects against infection with sexually
transmittable diseases like HIV/AIDS. In this case, that is often not happening because the men who are often older have been around sexually before their marriage and so they actually bring sexually transmittable diseases into the relationship.

And then there are other reasons why child marriage is not a good thing. For example maternal health… You often see that girls who marry young are forced to show their fertility by having babies at a very young age and having quite a few of them. Now the reality is, think about this: A girl who is 13 years old, herself still a child, giving birth to a child- physically you can just picture that. It is not a surprise that a girl child who is giving birth when she is 15 years or younger is five times more likely to die during child’s birth than if she was 18 or older when she was delivering her first baby. And then once these child brides get babies, often you see that their children are more likely to die in the first year of their lives. In fact a baby who is born to a mother who is younger than 18 is 60% more likely to die in the first year of life than if the mother is 18 or older.

So altogether child marriage is not just bad for the welfare and the well-being of these girls, but it is affecting the well-being of their families and their communities as well. Child marriage is often a driver of poverty. So child marriage is a human rights abuse, it is a form of violence and it is a development issue.

Now you may think, you know that’s all very nice, a Dutch princess standing there, talking about this issue; why should I care? Well you know why you should care? Because these girls are invisible… But the fact that we don't know about them doesn't mean that it isn’t important. And in numbers we are talking about an enormous amount of numbers: Globally 14 million girls get married every year. That means that every 2 seconds, a girl somewhere in the world got married, before she was 18 years old… 1.2. That was yet another girl getting married. You might think this is an issue that is far away. But let me tell you something. It is happening all over the world. Yes, it happens more in Africa and in South Asia then in other places but it is happening everywhere. Even in the UK where I currently live it is happening among immigrant communities, and it is happening across all religions. This is not a one religion issue. This is happening throughout religions. In fact there are 51 countries in the world where 25% or more of the girls get married before they are 18.

So let me give you a few facts and figures about Turkey. And the reality is, because this is an invisible problem, we don't know very well. There is a lack of data about what is happening. But the latest estimate done by the UN is that 28% of all girls in Turkey marry before they are 18. A lot of it, and the reason why we don't know about this is because it happens through religious marriages which as you are not registered, which therefore means they are not legally recognized. So if girls who get married through religious marriages end up in situation where their husband dies or where you know, where they end up with a divorce, they have zero legal rights. And in Turkey, I was also looking at the figures, it happens more in rural communities, it happens more in the east of your country, but it is also happening in the west including in cities like Istanbul.

And you might ask yourself, why is this happening? I am a mother of two young daughters. One is 7 and one is 8 years old. And I think sometimes of the girls that I met who are the age of my daughters, who got married. And I am thinking, I cannot believe it, that their parents married them off, because they wanted to hurt their children. Because I am convinced that all parents in the world want the best for their children. So how can it be that we end up in a paradox that where parents want the best for their children, where parents want to protect their families, they resort to doing something that is actually harmful for their daughters and harmful in the longer term for the community?
It seems that there are four main reasons: The first thing that is driving child marriage is gender inequality. Norms and expectations make that we think that girls can be treated differently than boys and that there is nothing wrong with marrying girls at a younger age. Secondly, there are economic reasons. For poorer families it might mean that marrying a girl off it means one less mouth to feed or in some cases where there is still a bride price to be paid it means a little bit of income for the remainder of the family. A third reason relates to safety and family honor. A fear that girls might get sexually assaulted and that they would dishonor the family… However while we think that maybe marriage might bring safety to the girls, we also know that in different ways because of the health issues and violence issues marriages themselves are actually not safe places.

And lastly there is the issue of tradition: Social norms, social pressure. Imagine that I live in a community. And I have a 13-year-old daughter who the whole community thinks that should be married because in our community it is normal that we marry our girls at the age of 13. Now I can potentially, personally refuse to do that, and I might think I don't want this. But if all of you think that this is normal and I don't do it then either my daughter might never find a husband or you might think that I am crazy. Now many of you might think the same way that I am thinking, you might think, I also don’t want to marry my daughter at 13 and I also would rather not do it, but we don't know this from each other and we are all afraid that we might be pushed out of community. However I am a strong believer in what Graca Mashel has said. Graca Mashel is the widow of Nelson Mandela and she is also one of the members of the Elders who have taken on this issue of child marriage. And Graca Mashel always says, “Traditions were made by men, so traditions can be changed by men”.

So what are we going to do? How are we going to make this problem, that might sound slightly impossible to you now, how are we going to make it possible to actually solve this? Well, let me bring the tough news first. There are no easy solutions, we need a holistic approach and we need to work at a global level, at a national level and at local level. Because ultimately change needs to happen at the local level within the communities, but that won’t happen unless we create an environment nationally of laws and of policies where it becomes possible to create this change locally and there what we also need is globally much more attention to this issue.

So the first thing I think that we need to do is we need to raise much more awareness that child marriage exists, that it is harmful and that it should end. We need to make sure that we have laws that make it clear that girls and boys should not marry until 18. And you know in many places in the world there are laws, but they do not get not implemented; so let’s make sure that we start implementing them.

We also should empower girls; we should give them information, we should give them life skills, we should find support groups for them, and we should give them education, which we were talking about a bit earlier. Very importantly we need to change the attitude of parents and communities and we know that this can work. There are examples, not enough yet, but there are many examples that show if you engage in a respectful way with the community- and that doesn't mean me walking in telling people how to live their lives, because you know I am an outsider and I will be accused of being a cultural imperialist who should mind her own business-, but when you bring to communities people who they trust and start talking about the harmful implications of child marriage, the fact that, you know the economic implications for the community and the health implications for the girl and the community, then you often see that village elders and religious leaders and other people who are like opinion formers in the communities realize that it is not only against the best interest of the girls to continue child marriage but it is also against the interest of the community; then they become willing to change this practice.
And lastly, we can provide economic support and incentives to keep girls out of marriage by keeping them for example in school. And of course we should not forget that those girls who were already married at young age deserve our support.

Now in order to create this wave of change that I think is necessary, to make this seemingly impossible task of ending child marriage possible, let me share, what I think, a few factors of success based on what I think whenever big or small changes happened in history what was necessary in order to do that. And I have 4 of them.

The first one is to be pragmatic. Whenever we try to create change we need to look what are the real needs, the local needs on the ground. We need to learn from our successes, and if we fail we should admit it. Because there is no success without failure… And similarly, with what we learn while we are trying to implement programs, we should change our strategy if that is necessary.

And I am very encouraged that one of the grantees of the Sabancı Foundation, the Flying Broom organization; they are actually now trying to learn much more about what is happening locally in towns and villages in Turkey about child marriage and how best to change it. So this pragmatism is crucial I think.

Secondly I believe that if you want to create big change, you should realize that we can all make a difference, each and every one of us, but nobody can do it alone. So we have to work together, we have to bring our voices together so that they sound louder, and that is one of the reasons why we created Girls Not Brides, the global partnership to end child marriage. Because we realize now we are more than 300 NGOs from more than 50 countries, we are starting to be heard. The United Nations is listening to us. You know, the Human Rights Commission is listening to us. The African Union is starting to listen to us. Politicians are starting to listen, but it also means that we can learn from each other.

The Flying Broom organization, which I referred to earlier; they traveled to India, to Bangladesh, to Niger, and to Nigeria with the help of the Sabancı Foundation to learn about what is working and not working. You might think like what is there to learn in those places, they are so different. And yes they are very different, but there are also similarities, and that can help to better understand what might work here in Turkey, and the other way around.

And we ultimately have to unite all these changemakers if we really want to see big change happen. But as I said, we can all make a difference but we cannot do it alone. But I really hope that all of you will start to help making a difference here.

Thirdly we need leadership. We need leadership in formal shapes; politicians who take the lead, religious leaders who speak out against the practice of child marriage; a wonderful woman like Güler Sabancı taking the lead on speaking out on these both nationally as well as globally.

But we also need informal leadership and I am often very impressed with informal leaders who are trying to create change, teachers who are trying to protect girls from marriage, girls who are trying to inform their peers that this is a bad practice and help them understand what they can do to stop it and young boys who are actually trying to tell their parents that it is not good if their parents marry them to young girls. All these informal leaders, many of them we will never hear about, can play a crucial role.

And my fourth factor of success, I would say, is patience. Real change, big change does not happen overnight. It requires time and it requires determination to see the issue that you want to solve to see through.
So if I may, being here in Istanbul, a city that I absolutely love, I would like to leave behind a few thoughts about what could happen here in order to tackle child marriage. Because I was looking at a report, that the parliament, your parliament has a committee on equal opportunity for men and women, and they did a report in 2009 about child marriage. It is a very interesting report with I thought a series of very good recommendations, but unfortunately there is very little action taking place to implement these recommendations. I will refer to a few of these recommendations, but basically I have made my own action list, and also based on my visits that I paid here earlier this year, and what I learned from the Girls Not Brides’ partners in Turkey.

So, I think first of all here in Turkey, as anywhere in the world, there is need for an acknowledgment that child marriage exists and that it is harmful practice. We need to break the taboo of not talking about this issue. We need to talk about it and we all have to play a role in this. And I want to acknowledge again the leadership role that Sabancı Foundation is playing here. But Sabancı cannot do it on its own; we all need to do this.

Secondly we need much more data. We need the government to help us in finding much more about what is happening in communities, why do girls drop out of school- is it because of child marriage, what the boys think, etc. And we need the law. Turkish Law right now says that 17 is the age for marriage, although in practice unfortunately the law is not being implemented, so there are, what we understand, that many marriages happen far beyond the age of 17. And the national partnership of Girls Not Brides, there is a platform called a No to Child Brides. It is a group of 10s of NGOs here in Turkey. They are pushing now for the law to be changed and so that 18 will become the minimum age and that will actually get implemented.

We also need a national action plan that needs to be implemented locally. We need to make sure people are informed about the risk of early pregnancy; they need to get awareness about the importance of education. Within the education system we need the teachers to help to identify what can and cannot be done and a whole action plan, and we need money for that. So ideally I guess a little bit of government support for that…

And lastly, I am delighted to see Turkish Government, on the global level, is playing an important role in helping to tackle child marriage. It has been supporting proposals for resolutions at the UN that would prohibit child marriage very explicitly, even though it is already prohibited in international conventions. But the Turkish Government has also an important role to play in the debate that is currently taking place about what will happen in 2015. You might know that there is something called Millennium Development Goals, which will expire in 2015. And they are basically about how we are going to eradicate poverty. Because child marriage is so much linked to all kinds of drivers of poverty, it would be great if we can make sure that in the next set of development goals, in the next development framework which will start after 2015, that child marriage is in there as an indicator. Because we know that if we make progress on child marriage, we are making progress on education, we are making progress on ending violence, we are making progress on ending maternal death, we are making progress on ending infant death, we are making progress on more equality for men and women; so it would be great to have it in there as an indicator. And I hope that the government will be pushing for that.

In conclusion, challenging the impossible… That is what people might think we are doing when we are trying to end child marriage. But I know that it can be done. I will never forget a girl who I met when I was in Ethiopia. It was actually a group of girls. They all were married at a very young age. And when I asked them what they wanted for their own children, for their own daughters;
their answer was very clear: Two things. First of all, they wanted their girls to go to school and learn the things they couldn't learn and stay in school until they were 18. And secondly what they said to me, what we want for our daughters is that they can marry who they want, when they want. Now I am convinced that if we start creating this change that actually change can happen really quickly. I am in fact convinced that it can happen in one generation, because these girls, if they get the opportunity, they will make sure that their girls will never ever be child brides. So it might seem impossible, but I am convinced that we can do it in one generation. But it requires all of us to work together. And I hope we will become partners in this effort. Thank you.

Oylum Talu: Yes, I was listening to Mabel van Oranje’s speech and also noticing this statement here. Dear Mabel started her words with the issue of what is impossible. Not a very long time ago, nobody would believe that communism would collapse, that there would be small states forming in Europe one after the other, or that Berlin Wall would come down. She added, nobody would believe that Nelson Mandela, whom we lost only a few days ago, would ever get out of prison. However, what seemed impossible has now become possible since we witnessed all of these changes.

Dear Mabel van Oranje not only shared with us the underlying reasons of this challenging and hard-to-solve problem both in Turkey in the world, but also the avenues for solution. Thank you once again.

Mabel talked about making impossible possible. Our next guest is also someone who realized what seemed impossible, Dr. Tererai Trent. She has more than 18 years of international experience in program and policy evaluation and serves as a senior consultant. She works on 5 different continents and in global humanitarian aid institutions such as Heifer International. Convinced that education is the topmost path to eradicating poverty, Trent shares her life story all the way from Zimbabwe to the US with the rest of the world.

In order to offer a better future her children and help out women in similar condition, Tererai went for undergraduate, graduate and doctoral studies and defied all sort of challenge to attain her goal. Oprah Winfrey, a world-renowned name who is the doyen for my profession, has hosted more than 30,000 guests for 25 years and declared Dr. Tererai Trent the most favorite guest of all times. Why? That is because she made impossible possible. I will now invite Dr. Tererai Trent who was born into poverty yet never gave up on her life struggle, and yearned for helping out others along the way.

Distinguished guests, it is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Tererai Trent.

Note: Due to the personal preference of Dr. Tererai Trent, only a part of her speech is published here.

Tererai Trent: Thank you very much. Our common humanity and responsibility to each other is what ignites this world. It flows from our ability to connect, learn and inspire each other. On this earth, we have a purpose. It is how we embrace our connectedness. That is what helps to influence and trigger the purpose that we have.

As we mourn Nelson Mandela, I am reminded by his words in his autobiography where he stated, “It is only through education that the daughter of the peasant becomes a doctor. The son of a mineworker becomes the head of a mine. The child of a farm worker becomes the president of a great nation”. As you listen to my story one might assume that this story is only about Tererai. As the princess well said, it is everybody’s story. It is not only about me. It is not only about Tererai. My story is a story that is happening in the world. Unfortunately it is story that is represents the
realities of our world. It is a story of many girls, a story of many women, a story of many individuals who are seeking freedom, seeking education, seeking meaning, seeking leadership, and failing… Because the system is not conducive enough for women and girls to thrive.

There is no political will, the powers to be ignores these disparities. It is a story of gender inequalities, a story of violation of human rights. As Hilary Clinton once said, women’s rights are human rights.

But it is also a story of hope, a story of achieving dreams, a story of keeping dreams alive, a story that justifies why Sabanci Foundation should continue to empower women and girls, should continue to stand for those policies that will change the girls’ rights, should continue to forge and bring other organizations together and say these girls are our children. We have to make a difference.

Today, as I speak there are almost 800 individuals in the world who cannot read and write. The majority of illiterate people are girls and women. Unfortunately, they comprise three quarters. While South Asia is the highest number of people who cannot read and write followed by Sub-Saharan Africa, unfortunately in Africa we begin to see the effects of the disparity by the manner in which girls and women are infected by HIV and AIDS.

As you all know, there are globally 34 million people living with HIV and AIDS. Of that 34 million, 23 million are from Africa. And what is sad about that 23 million, 60% of the infections are amongst women and girls, with almost 75% of the infections are among girls of ages 18 to 19.

Why? Do you really think that girls and women in Africa, they are promiscuous? No, I say no. I think there is more sex in Hollywood than any other place that I know of, but we don't have those numbers of infection. It is story that tells me that the girls and women are being denied education and yet it is such a fundamental right. Girls are being forced to marry early.

And there is data tells us that when girls remain in school and are given a chance to have an education their chances of infection from HIV and AIDS are greatly reduce. Also we know that we have about 7 billion population. This explosion will continue to rise but if we place education in the hand of girls and in the hands of women, oh my dear gosh, the numbers will be reduced.

Every girl, every child, their rights, are human rights. Thank you.

Oylum Talu: Tererai, please stay with us for our next session. Please have a seat.

Yes, she said that she is not special or different, yet it is such an incredible story, an incredibly inspiring story, isn’t it? It gives you the goosebumps and brings tears to your eyes.

Please I would like to invite you once again to our stage Mabel for our next session. Please have a seat.

MABEL VAN ORANJE: Many times…
Oylum Talu: Mabel can you please tell us a little bit about your work, especially Girls Not Brides organization?

Mabel van Oranje: I used to work for an organization called The Elders which was created by Nelson Mandela and it brings together 12 former heads of state, presidents, people like Kofi Annan, Jimmy Carter, Martti Ahtisaari, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mary Robinson, you get the idea of what kind of people… the Elders… and Graca Mashel is one of them as well. And Nelson Mandela brought them together because he felt that the world has become like a global village and yet we do not have village elders that look after the well-being of that global village. And one of the things that the Elders wanted to work on was the issue of girls and women’s equality because they realized that actually this is one of the big injustices in the 21st century. And it is in a way is ridiculous that even in far advanced societies, industrialized societies women are still playing a secondary role. And the way they looked at this is actually by tackling something which you know might be very sensitive, namely the role of religion and tradition.

Because in principle, there is not one religion that says we do not believe in equality of girls and women and you know, you have to marry your girls at a young age. But the reality is, very often it is tradition and it is religion that is perpetuating harmful practices that are hurting the opportunities of girls and women.

So The Elders said let us embrace this. Because if you or I embrace these things we will be accused of what I was mentioning earlier; being a cultural imperialist and of sticking our business into somebody else’s religion or tradition. But for people like Archbishop Tutu and Graca Mashel and Kofi Annan and Fernando Enrico Cardoso, to stand up and to say something is wrong here, and this should be and can be changed, that can make a huge difference.

I will never forget for example President Cardoso, the former President of Brazil, one of the big problems in Latin America is violence against women. Men think it is cool to actually beat up your wife or your girlfriend or what have you. So when he stands up and he says it is actually not cool to do that has an impact. Anyway, so I was lucky enough at the time to be their CEO, and I worked with them to try to give much more visibility to in general this issue of tradition and religion being misused, but especially this terrible practice of child marriage… Because we realized that if you address child marriage you are addressing so many other issues at the same time. So the way we did it, as I was saying earlier, you always need to have big vision; so we figured there are particularly two things that The Elders are well-placed to do: One is to help to start breaking the taboo and to get this issue discussed. So they started in 2010. And now three years down the line, and I think we are starting to see some progress there. And the other thing is, they realized, let’s create a network of organizations that actually want to tackle this. This organization called Girls Not Brides.

I am very proud that this initiative Girls Not Brides of which I am now the Board Chair, that was incubated by The Elders, has now grown to be such a strong organization and it is having its own financial support, etc., that actually this week it became an independent organization and stepped out of The Elders organization. That is very nice. It doesn't mean that The Elders are no longer supporting this issue; I mean Archbishop Tutu himself has made a public commitment many times saying that he will fight the practice of child marriage with the same determination that he has been fighting apartheid. So you know some of the elders will definitely stay engaged. It is good to see that we are creating more and more momentum and I am so incredible excited, partially because of the wonderful partnership with the Sabancı Foundation and there are a few really amazing NGOs here in Turkey that are working here. We really see momentum happening here.
Oylum Talu: We say, girls but not brides, but you were a child bride. You got married when you were 11 years old right? Like your mother and like your grandmother. What can be done to end this harmful practice, dear Tererai?

Tererai Trent: I truly believe education is the main pathway out of all these issues. If I look at myself, when my mother said if you get this education not only defining who you are but you are also defining every life that comes out of your womb. Meaning, my mother realized there was a point to break this cycle. As I got educated myself I began to see that that raising and that culture is not good for girls. It marginalizes and it oppresses us. And my own girls, they are educated. I have a daughter, she just graduated with a mechanical engineering degree, and I am looking at it and thinking, dear Gosh, is she had not had that education probably she would end up just like me. So the education truly makes a difference.

Oylum Talu: Can education solve all the problems?

Tererai Trent: I think education with good minds can solve some of the problems…

Oylum Talu: Good minds and education…

Tererai Trent: Because we need policy makers who can understand some of these issues. As long as we have people who support us that believe in education. Because if you are not educated you cannot advocate for good policies. So education becomes the engine, it becomes that thing that transforms nations.

Oylum Talu: Dear Mabel, we know that you are actively lobbying to get child marriage into the post-2015 development agenda of the United Nations. Is it progressing?

Mabel van Oranje: Yes. It is making good progress but you know, I always get worried, when you are making good progress also the risks of losing what you have gained become bigger and bigger and bigger. So there seems to be agreement- there was this high level panel thinking about the future of the MDG and the mayor of Istanbul was a member of 26 eminent people were members. They came out with a report, I believe it was May or June, that identified equality for girls and women as one of what they thought should be a target for the future of the development goals. And very specifically said that ending child marriage should be part of that. We had lobbied very hard. We have done a lot of advocacy work; we meaning the 300 NGOs, you know… trying to get this into their report. We were then very happy to see that when the Secretary General of the United Nations issued his report on what he thinks needs to happen with the future of the development goals. Actually also there, he was making specific reference to ending child marriage.

I mean you have to realize, ending child marriage, 3 years ago, you would have a report of 150 pages on for example education for girls, there would may be one reference to child marriage on like page 78. So here you have an issue that was completely neglected now getting to the core of the debate. But the reality is that there is now a whole process: These two reports are very good. But there is now a whole process of member states, 193 I think member states of the UN having to agree on this on the future of the development agenda. And that is supposed to take a year and a half, and you know how politics sometimes can go. It gets very dirty. It can go like horse trading. Oh I want this, oh I will give you that.

I would personally find it absolutely unacceptable if they say we do not care about young girls getting married, so you know what, we are not going to include it. We are going to neglect the advice that is given to us by the High Level Panel and by the Secretary General. But you never know. You just never know. Because maybe at some point they will all get in a fight about should
we define the right age for marriage? And them some people might say, we think 18 is too old, 16 is better. You just don’t know. So these things for me, I think there is an amazing momentum building up, but we didn't win yet. And we still need to keep going and that is one of the things we want to focus on in the coming two years of making sure this gets included.

And you may think like, who cares about these high level discussions and all these UN things. Let me put in very simple terms why it matters that we get this in. There are two reasons. First, the one that I mentioned earlier: If we are serious about getting girls into school, if we are serious about having girls not die in child birth, if we are serious about ending infant mortality, if we are serious about reducing HIV/AIDS, if we are serious about ending poverty, if we are serious about equality for men and women, we have to tackle child marriage. We can no longer ignore it. We are fooling ourselves.

And the second reason why it is important to get it in is that ending child marriage is not necessarily a very expensive business. It is not like you have to buy antiretroviral like you have to in the case of trying to stop HIV/AIDS. A lot of the community work that we are talking about is time-intensive, it requires human resources but it is not like we need billions. However if we want money to do these things we need to have the issue on the agenda. Because this is how cynical the world is: If you are not recognized as a priority it is very hard to get money flowing.

Oylum Talu: Tererai, you agree.

Tererai Trent: Yes, totally I do.

Oylum Talu: You went to Oklahoma State University, as you said. At the same time you were working at three jobs, taking care of 5 children plus a husband. How did you manage all these? Can any woman do that?

Tererai Trent: I think yes, we can. We can. Remember my situation was very difficult and I had buried my dreams. And I wanted to achieve them. So, I also wanted to make a difference so that my own girls don’t have to go through what I did go through. So, I had this motivation in me that no matter what it takes, I was going to do it. I also realized that where I was coming from, it was bad than the deal that I had in front of me. So who was I to say well this is so difficult for me? And I could see the light at the end of the tunnel; I could see that if I just achieve my dreams, I’d have it. In a million years who would have guessed that I would be here sitting with you guys? It is the power of education.

Oylum Talu: Dear guests let’s write down our dreams and let’s bury the paper. Let’s motivate ourselves.

Tererai Trent: But I don't think it is a question of burying the dreams, but I think it is a question of being intentional with what you want. My mother advised me to bury, because she realized that I needed something to believe in. I was so overwhelmed with my challenges. Look at most NGOs and business entities, they write strategic plans, they write objectives and they are guided by those. So my mother knew that I needed something to guide me. It is not in the burying but it is in the actual writing and maintaining that vision.

Oylum Talu: And you guidance was that paper, right?

Tererai Trent: Yes.

Oylum Talu: You always remember that. That is quite a story. Mabel, you said in your speech that this subject is invisible. Do you think it is becoming visible?
**Mabel van Oranje:** It is. But it is going very slowly. It is not actually going very slowly. It is actually going quite quick, but it is enormous, so there is so much that needs to be done. And I think we also need to watch out that, once the issue becomes visible and people start writing reports and resolutions, which is all very nice but ultimately we know that doesn’t change. And we need all the visibility, all the resolutions and reports, commitments and big political talk to trigger the change that needs to happen on the ground. And so what I feel, what I think is very exciting I would not evict it would happen only 3 years or so after the Elders started working on this issue. I think we are now getting to the stage where we need to see much more work happening on the ground in the communities, and this is becoming possible because there are more groups interested in working on the ground. It is becoming possible because we see increasingly donors, whether it is foundation but also government donors, willing to put money behind this. And so the next big challenge, apart from keeping that momentum going and growing globally, will be to actually be able to point out that change is possible on a meaningful scale.

We know from a lot of pilot work that is happening that it can work but now we need to see that grow… Because there will always be skeptics. You must have had so many people in your life who said impossible, stop, give up, and there will always be people who say you know it can’t be done. So we need to make sure that in a few years time, let’s say in 5 years time, we can point to a few countries and say, look at that place. Something really meaningful is happening.

For example in Zambia, there is now an amazing Minister who deals with traditional and religious leaders and who is working together with the wife of the President and a few others. They have made this national plan which they are trying to implement. Now let’s see how that works, and they are making assessments.

You know, I think also there are always bumps on the road and always people tell you it can’t be done, but I am convinced when you have a plan, a strategic plan that makes sense. I mean, if you have a vision of a more right and more just and more equitable world and you have a sound plan and you are willing to change course if things don’t go exactly as you thought, then it is doable. And I have personally committed a long long time ago myself to working on issues where I know there are people who want to create real change. And I see it as my personal commitment to try to help all these changemakers. Very important ones, very famous ones and very ordinary and therefore the extraordinary ones; the girls in the village, the teachers, religious leaders to work with anybody who is trying to create real change, to try to do whatever I can to help to empower them to create that vision.

**Oylum Talu:** Tererai, you were denied an education because you were a girl when you were a kid? How did it affect you?

**Tererai Trent:** I think it affected me because I wanted that education as a girl. I can relate to those girls being married young, girls being denied. It affects your self-esteem; you always feel that you are lesser than others. It affected me in just day-to-day life. I felt marginalized but I was very fortunate because I had a very strong mother. My mother always said, “you are bigger”.

**Oylum Talu:** How about your father? We understood that your mother was a very strong- is she still alive by the way?

**Tererai Trent:** My mother died recently.

**Oylum Talu:** Oh, I’m sorry. How about your father? What was your father saying?
**Tererai Trent**: You know I come from a patriarchal society. And patriarchal men have their own way of thinking. But personally I don't want to demonize men or demonize my father. I always say, it is because of ignorance. If my father and the men in my village had been born in Istanbul and had gone to school, I doubt very much that they would be that way. It is ignorance. But when we bring education to these communities we change generations.

So I know at times we feel it is the tradition, but remember whoever authored the tradition mostly they were men and mostly they were ignorant. But when we bring education and enlightenment we tend to change narratives. And I say that: Look at all the countries that were colonized by whoever. One thing that was denied was education. In most cases because later on the colonizers realized that when you educate, you empower, when you empower you make individuals reach their maximum potential. So education is the key to open up minds, to change the narratives.

**Mabel van Oranje**: Can I add on to that? Because there is no doubt that education is absolutely crucial and the number one thing that we need to work on... But what I find very interesting when you look at how social change happens. There is something strange about what does it take it for us as a community to collectively decide we don’t want child marriage anymore. We need to get agreement that it is harmful for all of us collectively and we need to get that information. But what happens it that at some point when you collectively agree that something is not good and if you want to end it, it really switches overnight, and that’s kind of that social change on how behavior and how traditions become unacceptable, we know very little about it.

Think for example something like; I may be not in the right country to say that, because I know that people still do quite a bit of smoking here, but, you know, growing up in the Netherlands everybody would smoke. Not everybody but you know, it was completely socially accepted. And in the span of just a few years, smoking became unacceptable. I mean people who smoke, people look at them like “eew.” You see it with the whole issue of gay marriage and lesbian marriage which in most countries 30 years ago, everywhere in the world it was seen as a taboo, and now you see that is completely changing.

**Oylum Talu**: Everything is changing.

**Mabel van Oranje**: So how do social norms change? I mentioned foot binding earlier. I mean here is something that was done for hundreds and hundreds of years and it basically takes 20-30 years to change it, so something switched in people’s heads. And it created a social pressure that now you are no longer an outsider if you do not want to marry your girl at a young age, now you are an outsider if you do want to marry her at a young age. So what we need to figure out is how we get that snowball rolling. Because ultimately, reaching out to all these 14 million girls every year one by one is going to be impossible. But we do know that if we reach out to a critical mass that that snowball is going to roll and that it is going to happen almost automatically.

And I would be very very interested as we engage in this process that we learn much more about this. Because there are other big challenges in the world, whether you think about climate change, whether you think about violence, that also will require at some point, some maybe big political solutions but many of them need behavior change. We will demand that we as humanity change the way we look at challenges. And so we need to learn from that I believe. And so I am very keen to see how that happens.

**Tererai Trent**: And I think when I say education I don’t necessarily mean formal education. The fact that I can go back to my own community, a community where we have probably 97% illiteracy, but they see me as a role model, they see the changes that I can bring, it is a learning in its own form. When we received that 1.5 million from the Oprah Winfrey Show, there was a
learning curve in the community. They said to themselves, there is something good about this; how can we receive this 1.5 million? It means they see potential in us. The community themselves they started molding bricks, hand molding bricks, 500,000 bricks that they molded for the school. That is a transformation at the community level. It didn't take degrees to do that. But they can now see and relate to me as a role model in their own community, and say; “you know what, our girls can also be just like Tererai, they can also bring education, and they can also change”. Remember my father used to point to the boys, and say; “these are the breadwinners of tomorrow. We need to educate them”. My mother would always say, pointing at the girls, “these are the breadwinners of tomorrow. Look at what Tererai has done”. We need to educate. So those are some of the social changes that we can see at the community level, but they have to see something to believe that, yes, we can do it.

**Oylum Talu:** Actually, in your speech you said individuals cannot make big changes, we have to unite. But you two can make change, because your philanthropy, your personality, and your role model character can make changes. Am I right?

**Tererai Trent:** But you know, when I say am a role model, I am not saying I am the role model. But I think the community they have never seen women coming back; and change the narrative. They have always seen men doing that. But I also realize that alone I cannot make the change. In Africa we have a saying, it takes more than two thumbs to crush the head lice because we don't have pesticides for the head lice, so you find all the women crushing because it takes two. So it takes all of use in the community to make that change and one person can have the vision and say you know what, I am part of you. We can do this together.

**Oylum Talu:** We can do this all together. Princess Mabel, you are Dutch. You are part of the Dutch Royal Family. Actually you are a princess. How does your identity affect your work, how does it help?

**Mabel van Oranje:** You know I got engaged in work to make the world a better place, a more just place, to promote human rights, to promote democracy a long time before I met my husband. And I admit here that one of my big worries was that if I would stay with him, could I still continue to do my work? Because I really feel that I am so incredibly grateful for - I feel so lucky that I was born in a wealthy country where there is a lot of respect for human rights, freedom of expression, etc. I mean imagine I had been born in your village and my mother had not encouraged me to write down my dreams. I might not be sitting here today. And so I have always felt that I should give back. And that in a way to make my life meaningful I should do what I can to help make other people more prosperous and the world a better place.

So as I was saying I as actually a little worried when I found out that I really loved my husband, would becoming part of his family in any way affect my ability to work? And luckily it hasn't done so. It has sometimes it made some things easier. But it has also sometimes made certain things more complicated.

**Oylum Talu:** How complicated for example?

**Mabel van Oranje:** I don't know. People sometimes look at you in a different way, you know, people sometimes wonder is she doing that because she is a princess or because… you know how it is, people have prejudices, people think, oh she is a princess so she must be like this or that.

**Tererai Trent:** But the beauty is you have taken this power that you have for the greater good. You are using the platform to reach out to issues that are so fundamental and so important for this world. Otherwise you could have just stayed in your castle and do nothing about it.
Mabel van Oranje: I know I would have done it. I was already so busy with all this stuff.

Tererai Trent: That is what I am saying, it is important that you are doing that.

Mabel van Oranje: You know whatever happens I am committed to this issue…

Tererai Trent: Thank you for doing that.

Mabel van Oranje: And it is something we can all do in our own way.

Oylum Talu: Thank you for doing that. I have known you through the cameras and photographs for so many years, but when I first met you I was like, oh my God she is so calm, she is so down to earth. It is a great honor to meet you and to have you here, and of course you too, Tererai. It was a pleasure to have you both at Sabancı Center.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Ladies and gentlemen, now it is time for our Q&A session. As you see, we are hosting two remarkable names at our 7th Sabancı Foundation Philanthropy Seminar, which has become a tradition. Our guests this year are a very prominent leader Mabel Van Oranje and Dr. Tererai Trent who has brought change to her community through inspiring others with her life story and proving us the importance of education. They are waiting to hear your questions.

Participant: I actually have a question for Tererai. I was just wondering, you made such an immense change in your community. Has that had any reflection on a higher level? What about the government, policy change? Have you had any conversation with the government officials? I was just wondering if that change can spread out to other parts of the country, not just stay within your community. That is remarkable. So once you have that momentum why not use it?

Tererai Trent: Thank you for that. And I have consciously and deliberately used that platform to reach out to the government. Remember these schools are a very prominent leader Mabel Van Oranje and Dr. Tererai Trent who has brought change to her community through inspiring others with her life story and proving us the importance of education. They are waiting to hear your questions.

Tererai Trent: Thank you for that. And I have consciously and deliberately used that platform to reach out to the government. Remember these schools are public schools, these are government schools. The schools have now become more like the model for the whole country. I get invited. I work hand in hand with the Ministry of Education and we develop curriculum together. I work with the local NGO, Save the Children. So we are really having so much influence within the government. Because they have seen what we can do, they have seen the results. Remember, we got this funding in 2011 and within three years, we have managed to build a school. We have managed to train 125 teachers. When we took over in this school we started with 6% pass rate and today we have about 45% pass rate. That is remarkable in a rural area. So the government is saying, what is it that you have? What magic can we also use? So working with the government, we make sure that we can spread all over the country and make these necessary changes.

Oylum Talu: Any other questions? Wow, great, there are plenty of questions. Let’s start from there. Can you please introduce yourself before you ask your questions?

Participant: Hello. Itır Erhart. I work on human rights issues and gender issues. Member of Bilgi University.

So whenever we do work against child marriage we really focus on women. We try to educate them; we try to tell them this is wrong, this is not healthy. Even in small communities we go to work with women. What about men? I was thinking that men who marry these women need to be
educated and need to be shown that this is not healthy; this is not good for the community. So I was thinking that men who did actually marry child brides, they should come up and say “I didn't do something right. I shouldn't have done it and these are the consequences we suffered”. What do you think about that, men’s involvement in this project? Thank you.

**Oylum Talu:** Well, we need to educate men as well? What would you like to say about that?

**Mabel van Oranje:** I completely agree. In many instances it is actually very difficult for the girls and even for their mother to stand up and say, “No, we don't want this”. And we need to reach out to the men and that can be sensitive obviously. I think we need to especially reach out to two or three different groups of men. One is the community leaders, religious leaders, any other men of influence in the community, and help them understand, this is not a good thing to do. Because they will obviously have a huge influence over the community.

Secondly, I think we need to reach out to the fathers, not so much to say that, look the fact that you married to your wife when she was young, you were wrong. No, often these boys or young men didn't have a big choice either. But we would need them to realize what it would mean to marry their daughters young, so that they realize this is not a good thing to do for my daughters.

And thirdly, there are examples of, when you reach out to boys who are at the age of potentially getting married that they might—I mean I have met kids for example in India, boys who convinced their parents that it was not a good idea for them to marry girls 11, 12, 13 years old.

So I am convinced that if we just work on women and girls, it is not going to be enough. It is very important but it needs to be complemented by working on men. And that is also why it is important that we get eminent role models. I have had very interesting conversations with the mayor here, I don't know if this resulted in him speaking publicly about child marriage, but that would of course be really interesting. My dream for example is that we get Bollywood stars, and you know, famous Indian cricket players, and Nollywood stars from Nigeria to join the Elders and other eminent persons who are speaking out about this. Because they are such enormous role models for their own communities. So I know you guys have a few good soccer stars, wouldn't it be good for some of them to speak out? So that’s I think the way we need to look at that.

**Oylum Talu:** It is a good idea. We have such good soccer players, pop stars like every other country…

Any other question?

**Participant:** I am Güler Kayahan from the Association for the Physically Handicapped. I would like to add one point rather than asking a question. We all know how crucial education is, and the same holds true for people with disabilities as well. I would like to share an experience. You know that companies employing more than 50 staff are legally required to employ people with disabilities. When they approach us with such request, we have trouble finding people with disabilities that are eligible for the offer, because these people do not have an adequate education. Their whole life would have changed only if they could. They would be more productive and a more active participant in society. I wanted to underline this particular issue within the framework of the importance of education.

**Oylum Talu:** Thank you very much. In other words, education should not only aim at ending child marriages, but also permeate all segments of the society.
**Participant:** That is absolutely very important, and more so for people with disabilities whose lives have been disabled and riddled with challenges. Thank you very much.

**Mabel van Oranje:** You know, it is really interesting, because I was actually last week talking about this. Because it is another big, invisible challenge that we are not dealing with. I might have the figures wrong, so forgive me, but I believe that one out of every 10 or 8 people in the world has a physical or mental disability. We often do not see them and like you said they are not integrated in the workforce. And even when they get educated they often are discriminated against.

So I was talking with my friend who has a company in the Netherlands, it is a social good company, a social enterprise. And they are selling solar panels, because in the Netherlands we sometimes have sun, not so often but you know, they are selling solar panels. She has employed a whole bunch of people who are deaf and guess what; because they can do sign language they now have all these deaf people in the Netherlands who are informed about the solar panel business through these guys who work there who are deaf. So they now have a ton of new customers who just love them because they are employing deaf people and because these deaf people have been making advertisement. So there is often a win as well, we just need to be much more creative in the way we look at these. But again this is something where we might think it is impossible. You know what? No, if a bunch of us find the energy and momentum, I don’t have time right now because of focusing on child marriage but maybe later in my life I will come and help you.

**Oylum Talu:** Any other questions? Yes, please. Next it is your turn.

**Participant:** I am Sondan Durukanoglu Feyiz, Vice President of Sabancı University. I am also a physics professor. I have a personal question to Tererai. As a professor I talk to several high school students and they don't know the meaning of doing PhD. My personal question to you, as a person with no high school diploma I really wonder how the idea of doing PhD came to your mind?

**Tererai Trent:** You know Zimbabwe is the last country to gain independence in Africa, you know that. So here is what was happening. When we gained independence Zimbabwe became the darling of the world because of what Mugabe did with the reconciliation. All of a sudden as rural communities we had people from all over the world coming to Zimbabwe because we have good safaris and we have all these good things. And you start hearing and seeing educated women, holding papers, you know they are coming to do research, and as they are opening them, wearing their glasses and I am thinking, “I just want to be just like that woman!” Seriously, I used to think wearing glasses; I used to equate wearing glasses with education. I would hear, I am doing my research in PhD. So that alone really made me, well, I think I can be just like it.

**Oylum Talu:** But you don't use glasses.

**Tererai Trent:** No, I realized you don’t need it.

**Oylum Talu:** I hope you don't need it; it is just a joke.

**Participant:** My name is Ufuk Pulat. I would like to ask our guests if they have ever asked world leaders, leaders of different nations what their thoughts around these issues are. It is a question for both of you.

**Mabel van Oranje:** (To Tererai) Maybe I will talk about child marriage and you will talk about education… So I think it is fair to say that 3 years ago there was no leader talking about this issue of child marriage. And now we see increasingly world leaders who talk about it partially because
they are encouraged by these two reports that I mentioned from the High Level Panel and from the Secretary General. We also see people, individuals becoming champions, for example the Foreign Minister in Canada really cares about this. Of course whenever it is a man who starts embracing a women’s issue; I am always happy when somebody becomes a champion for a cause but when it is a man it is even better, you know. It just helps so much. So you see that the Dutch government is now behind this, the British government. I was on a panel two days ago with the British Development Minister. They feel so strongly about the need to tackle harmful practices that hurt women and girls. Hilary Clinton is a great champion. But what is very important is that we need leaders not just from the West, we need leaders from the South as well. Because ultimately and that is why the Elders is so important, but I was mentioning what is happening in Zambia is so useful. And we see other governments that are now starting to care.

And that is also one of the reasons why I so much hope that the leadership we see in this country on an NGO and on a foundation level, and we see globally Turkish government pushing some of these resolutions they want to implement. For Turkey to play an even more prominent role globally would be fantastic. Because this is an issue in your country as well… So I mean Turkey could only do that if obviously the government starts tackling the practice here at home as well. Otherwise you are not credible globally. For example very interesting, when we had a meeting earlier this year here, we brought together people working to end child marriage from many countries. I was fascinated by what the Pakistani guests were telling, because apparently in Pakistan Turkish soap operas are really popular and are incredibly credible, I mean they are much higher quality than their own soap operas, they don't watch Indian soap operas for obvious reasons, etc.

Anyway, apparently you guys have a soap opera that is a lot about child marriage. And that soap operas is super influential in Pakistan and therefore as a consequence the whole issue of child marriage has become much less of a taboo and is much easier to discuss thanks to Turkish soap operas. So you know, yes we need leaders but we also need these kind of things.

**Oylum Talu:** I wonder which one was that.

**Mabel van Oranje:** I am not an expert on Turkish soap operas, at least not yet.

**Tererai Trent:** I think global leaders doing their work. I truly believe that they want to see changes around gender issues and education. Look at all the resolutions that have been made by the United Nations. And I think one of the points that you raised is, when we talk about these issues, which leaders are in the forefront of these issues? For instance, if you talk about developing countries let’s make sure that we energize, we inspire the local leaders… Because if a local person stands in front and says we need to make these changes people can relate to that person. But when a Western person comes in, it almost seems like a top-down approach and people are just tired of that. So our role is, Western countries probably as leaders, is to make sure that we energize the local leaders, we give them enough education, we support them with the resources, with knowledge, with everything we can so that they can be the ones that stand in front and be seen as role models. I think it will work much better than us going in and telling people, you are making mistakes, this is what you are doing, we don't need to do these, you need to change your policies. I don't think it will make anything move forward.

**Mabel van Oranje:** I agree with her.

**Participant:** This is a question for Tererai and this question is inspired by what Mabel was talking about. It is also based on my own experiences collecting stories in the Aegean region of Turkey. I am an MFA student in creative writing. I am travelling around in villages in the Aegean region.
And my aim was to only collect folk tales, fairy tales, just that... and along the way I came to realize that those stories come with real life stories. And never really apart... so along the way my project kind of transformed into something else. So now it is both about fairy tales and folk tales and also about real life stories. I am working with Turkish American Society and Columbia University.

And here is my question: People like to see role models going out there, get education and come back or just to see that this can happen. And by the way it is so true that child marriage and only religious marriage exists in west of Turkey too. It is so sad to see. But sometimes when people see that some people come back to their community to be role models or just to show that this can happen, this is possible. People sometimes think that this is giving false hopes to them. They tend to think this is not going to happen for them. And I mean this at least shows that they want to change, but as Mabel says sometimes it is so difficult to create that change, and sometimes people tend to see those people as a threat rather than giving hope. Did that ever happen to you? Were you ever regarded as a threat? “Oh, she is going to change the way we do things around here”, kind of attitude. I was just wondering. Thank you.

Tererai Trent: You know, that is an important question. I do not think that my community saw me as a threat because I grew up in that community. I was born in that community. They knew my struggles. So when I came back I didn't come back with hope, I came with the real deal. I came with education. It wasn't blah blah blah talk, we are going to have education- I came with a package, here is education. If you want your kids to be just like me, this is it. And the community accepted that by molding bricks because they realized if this Tererai can do it, our own girls truly come back and make us proud. They can be working. They can be the one providing for us, and they can be the one educating their own children.

So for me it was not like I just talked about, we need to educate, we need to do- I came back 1.5 million. And later on, which was never shown in the video, I was in South Africa with Oprah, I was speaking at her school. You know she has a school in South Africa. After I spoke we had our dinner and I was about to go home. And she said Tererai; I have something that I want to give you. This time, there are no cameras, there is nothing. Here are 500.000 for building a library in your community. Now we have a library in a rural community never seen in any rural place in my country. So those changes when people see we are promoting reading, we are promoting literacy boost within our country, it energizes parents to appreciate that, if your child is able to read and write, you know, you are proud! I hope I am answering your question. But they have never seen it s a threat.

Oylum Talu: Any other questions? Let’s get the final question from you.

Participant: Hi. I have a comment about being a role model. Well, I turned paraplegic following a traffic accident. I have been bound to the wheelchair since 1994. Being a role model is so important in all areas of life; no matter what happens to you in life, be it marriage advice or divorce or having a disability like me, it really makes life easier to meet people who know what it means or who have been successful in that area. When I had the accident I thought I was the only person in Turkey who turned paraplegic after an accident, because there were no other people with disabilities in the family or around me. That was really tough for me.

And then, just like the lady did, I decided to be a good role model for other people and I very well know now that it is very important to meet them, to teach them what kind of a life this is, to be their comrade, and to walk the same path with them. At the same time, I am a board member of the Turkey Paraplegic Society. We have a project titled Tudos, in collaboration with Spain. We
visit hospitals or homes as role models or peer consultants, or people reach out to us. And we try to guide them for a better life. Thank you.

**Dilek Sabancı:** I would like to say something. I am Dilek Sabancı.

I would like to thank both of the speakers for giving such a good speech about women and girls but not brides and educational issues. I was so impressed by watching the film, I couldn’t stop crying… Not because of unhappiness, not because of negativeness… I was crying because of positiveness. The effort, the ambition, and the motivation you have to make a difference… That was why I was crying. Congratulations for this very good seminar. We need more people like you, on the government level, on the non-profit level, on the industrial level; we need a lot of examples like you to make this world go better. Thank you.

**Oylum Talu:** It was an incredible seminar, right? It was incredible. Thank you very much for joining us. *Dankje wel*, Princess. And thank you, how do you say in your language?

**Tererai Trent:** Tatena.

**Oylum Talu:** Tatena and dankje wel, thank you for joining us.

Ladies and gentlemen, we were with two truly inspiring guests. We have reached the end of the 7th Philanthropy Seminar. We hope to see you again the 8th Philanthropy Seminar… I hope today’s seminar has deeply touched you and I do see that has been the case. Until next time, goodbye.