



Sabancı Foundation Philanthropy Seminars

"Love For Humanity Despite All"

Seminar Transcript

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Sabancı Center, Hacı Ömer Auditorium

İstanbul

Speakers:

Amanda Lindhout

Waris Dirie

Moderator:

Şirin Payzın

Şirin Payzın: Good morning distinguished guests. Welcome. We are holding the ninth of Sabancı Foundation Philanthropy Seminars. Good morning to you all again. We would like to thank you once more for being here with us this morning. As you can see, the title of this year's seminar is "Love For Humanity Despite All."

Soon, you will listen to two extraordinary women here. You will really gasp for breath upon hearing their stories. And I'm sure you will contemplate over it. However, their stories will show us that the violence against women, young girls and children is indeed not different all over the world. Their stories will show us that; we may experience pain in our lives however, what is important is what we will do later, how we can overcome this pain and how we can fight against it. And above all, how to take lessons from this experience or pain and how to share it with the rest of the world. This especially will be a lesson about how to transform this into an experience and sharing in order to stop the violence against women and children. We think that you will be highly affected by these stories.

Before inviting our speakers here, I will briefly mention their backgrounds. For now I will leave this here. However, in the upcoming minutes, you will listen to both their speeches and later, on the question and answer section, first I will have a conversation with them on this stage and then take your questions. Your participation is very important for us. Both of our speakers have really extraordinary experiences. Hence, maybe you will be able to benefit more from their experiences with your questions. We will try to achieve this. We have a hashtag. As you can see it is #İnsanSevgisi. You may post your questions and share your comments there. Your comments will also be valuable for us. Therefore, I will be able to see your questions through our hashtag throughout our seminar.

Now, after this brief opening, I would like to invite Sabancı Foundation Chairman of the Board of Trustees Ms. Güler Sabancı here. She will give an opening speech. And later, I will invite our speakers. Ms. Sabancı, please.

OPENING SPEECH

Güler Sabancı: Good morning to you all.

Distinguished guests, our distinguished speakers Amanda Lindhout and Waris Dirie, distinguished artists, distinguished members of the press, dear, distinguished students, your participation today deeply pleased us.

Welcome to the Sabancı Foundation Philanthropy Seminars, which is the ninth one this year, and to Sabancı Center. Just like every year, we are holding our seminar on the week of the Human Rights Day December, 10, because human rights have a great importance in civil society works. Actually, human rights are the essence of civil society works. Human rights are based on the understanding that all human beings are born equal and free with regards to the rights and honor. And we can only talk about a developed society when all the individuals use their rights equally and freely.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to talk about an environment where human rights are ideally applied all around the world. For this reason, we definitely need efficient efforts in order to provide social development. We see that investing on impact is gaining importance on the path leading to development. Obtaining permanent and influential results with impactful philanthropy efforts started to become more important than ever. And we, as Sabancı Foundation, are planning our activities in order to create lasting and sustainable impact by expanding the collaborative ground in civil society. We also hold these Philanthropy Seminars in order to share the new approaches, worldwide effective examples in the field of philanthropy.

Distinguished guests, in a little while, we will listen to two brave women who obtained inspiring results based on their own experiences. I wish that these examples we will listen to will inspire everyone in this room in order to contribute to the social development. I hope we will not leave this room, only feeling like, 'I can do it, too'. I hope each and every one of us will take a step to create our own inspiring stories.

The topic of this year's seminar is "Love For Humanity Despite All". While giving this name to our seminar, we took both the stories of our speakers and also many of the events happening in the world into consideration. What our speakers have experienced and the fact that they have overcome it all with love for humanity spontaneously brought out this title. Our first guest will be journalist and author Amanda Lindhout, who was abducted by rebels in Somalia, achieved to escape at the end of 460 days of captivity and started to engage in philanthropy activities in order to change the circumstances that push people towards oppression. And our other guest is United Nations Goodwill Ambassador Waris Dirie who has suffered Female Genital Mutilation when she was very young, then escaped from her home while she was about to get married with an old man by force and dedicated her life to fight against Female Genital Mutilation after she has become a worldwide famous top model.

Both of them are people who preferred to fight against the realities creating those circumstances rather than covering up the painful experiences they have been through. Despite of what has been done to them, they did not give up on love for humanity and are working for abolishing the conditions that destroys the love in human beings. They are striving in order to prevent other people to experience what they have been through and annihilating the conditions that feed the evil inside human beings. I believe that their stories and their fight on behalf of goodness no matter what, will guide us.

Distinguished guests, every single contribution in the field of human rights, every single project that is realized is of capital importance. We come across human rights in many ways surrounding our lives from encouraging handicapped people for equal participation in social life, to preventing forced marriages in young ages, to educating women and women's participation and sustainable presence in business life. We can only eliminate the obstacles to human rights by being a part of the solution with a holistic approach and more importantly by taking action powered by our love for humanity. As Sabancı Foundation, we will be continuing to support the activities of non-governmental organizations, which take on a great task and chose to be a part of the solution.

The speakers we will be listening here today are brave women who are doing their own shares. They are women who has achieved to create a worldwide effect with their self-experienced stories about human rights and their works concerning the social development. By getting inspired from this, we should fulfill our own parts in our society in order to increase this awareness and to generate a sustainable effect. I wish that our writers, artists, directors and all media representatives will continue and increase their supports in the field of human rights, in creating awareness with their activities.

Before ending my words, I would like to emphasize once more; love for humanity should be our compass especially in this hard period that our country is going through. We should not deflect from this. Human beings are at the heart of everything and love for human beings is the only thing that may overcome all. I wholeheartedly believe that all the works we carry out with love for humanity and determination will contribute to the social development. We see that the number of people working for human rights is increasing with volunteerism increasing all over the world. And this makes us very happy and hopeful.

Before ending my speech, I would like to thank Ms. Zerrin, Rana and all of our friends working for Sabancı Foundation who contributed dearly for this seminar to take place today. I hope that our

seminar will be beneficial, will open up new horizons for all of us and will give all of us courage and hope. I would like to express my sincere thanks both to our speakers and you for coming and joining us today.

With love. Thank you.

Şirin Payzın: We thank Ms. Güler Sabancı very much for her speech. As Ms. Sabancı mentioned, violence is really the most important issue that the world has to fight against now. Violence against women, violence against children, violence of all sorts. Therefore, everyone has to join forces. As I said shortly before, we will listen to two really extraordinary women. Amanda Lindhout and Waris Dirie. Soon they will tell us their stories.

Our first speaker is Amanda. Amanda is a colleague. She is a journalist. She is a Canadian journalist. In a little while, she will talk about why she chose to be a war reporter while she is narrating her experience. It's not easy. The places where she visited for her job are maybe the most dangerous places in the world. Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, many regions of Africa. And she is a female journalist who goes to these places fearlessly. She is also a journalist who has been abducted and subjected to violence in Somalia for 460 days as a consequence of this pursuit of news. Soon, she will share the details of her experience with you. She also transformed this experience into a book; "A House in the Sky". It has been translated in Turkish and published in Turkey. You may find the book outside. It is really a striking book. She talks about what she has been through in this book but what is even more important than what Amanda experienced is that she will tell us what she has learned from what she experienced and what and why she would like to share it with people, women and the whole world. We will learn why sharing is important, what we may change while sharing and why we should not keep these experiences as secrets to ourselves.

Among other things, I should state that this book that Amanda wrote will soon be released as a movie. Publishing rights of the book is optioned. Therefore, soon she will also share this experience with the whole world through a movie alongside traveling to many countries and giving speeches. She is an activist too. She is giving various speeches but she is the founder of the Global Enrichment Foundation. And by means of this foundation, she carries out various organizations in order for many women and children, especially in Africa, Somalia and Kenya to be able to live a better life, to stay away from violence, to have a more qualified life and to be able to benefit from rights to education and generally from all fundamental rights.

And she has raised money amounting to 3 million dollars until today. As I mentioned before, she visits many countries, travels a lot, gives many speeches and emphasizes a single thing in these speeches; and that is the importance of "sharing" and "love." Now, let us hear other details from her.

I would like to invite Amanda Lindhout. Yes, Amanda, the floor is yours.

Amanda Lindhout: Well, hello. It is so exciting for me to be here in İstanbul with all of you. I have come a very long way to share with you my story. Sharing stories is what I love, what I've always loved. It is that which drew me to journalism in my 20's and it is sort of ironic that it is now the sharing of my story. But I think that we learn from each other. We can learn from each other's stories. We can definitely learn from each other's stories of survival. And what you're going to hear from me today in the brief time that I have on this stage is a difficult story.

My story begins a long way from here, in my hometown, a place called Red Deer, which is in central Alberta, Canada. It's a small agricultural farming community. And as a girl, I lived with my single

mother and my two brothers. We lived in a basement apartment. We really had no money in the house. My mom worked as a cashier at the grocery store. So we didn't travel at all. But I saw the world through the pages of National Geographic magazine. I kept a big, great stack of them beside my bed. And the world that I saw on those pages, this world that was out there somewhere, it's exotic and beautiful and a colorful place that really called me.

And then as a young woman, I was often asking myself how I could make some sort of a difference in the world. Eventually I thought maybe, journalism could be the answer to that and could be a way to go out and see the world. And so eventually I traveled to over 70 countries. I traveled all through my 20's with a backpack on and starting my journalism career. And I lived in places like Afghanistan and Iraq.

Upon Amanda Lindhout's request, only the introduction part of her speech has been deciphered.

Şirin Payzın: We thank you very much for this beautiful speech Amanda. Yes, we all listened to Amanda's experience. In a little while, they will be here with me. We will have a conversation together, maybe we will talk more about the details but we saw the importance of sharing and we realized what conclusions we may draw and how we can turn all these into power.

We will listen to our other speaker, again an extraordinarily strong woman Waris Dirie who has drawn terrific lessons from her experiences, turned this into a life style and embraced sharing these experiences.

She is born as the daughter of a nomad family in a small town of Galcaio region of Somalia's Ethiopia border. When she was only 5 years old, she was exposed to female genital mutilation. After a tough life, she broke her chains with an astounding escape story when her family wanted to marry her off with an old man when she was 13 years old. While she was working in various jobs in London, she got discovered and built career as a top model. When we first started this project I said, "Yes, I do remember. She has one of the most beautiful faces in the world." She really has. She has been on the cover of many important fashion magazines of the world. She has worked with many large-scale cosmetics firms and fashion designers.

And one day, she found the courage to tell her experience of female genital mutilation to Marie Claire magazine. As you know, fashion world, industries such as cosmetics and beauty are indeed extremely strict industries and are not really open to such stories. After all, you always have to be beautiful, you always have to have a model life and you always have to be an ideal woman. But she did not chose to do that and after telling her story to Marie Claire magazine saw that she could get the attention of all the world on this issue. And therefore, she decided to disclose how common this violent practice against women and young girls is and talk about it more frequently. She will talk about it in a little while. She is maybe one of the first names who has talked about female genital mutilation on Arabian television, such as NBCN-Arabia, Al Jazeera. Her interviews and documentaries are broadcasted in many international channels. As a result, she decided to share her experiences by establishing a foundation and also living her life as an activist. Her foundation is Desert Flower and she also has a book with the same name. She is carrying out many activities, many initiatives for the young girls in the world, for them not to be exposed to this violence. She is also the United Nation Goodwill Ambassadors. I better not belabor and let her tell her experiences. What we hear from her will be very important. But first, we have a film. Let's watch our film. Then, I will invite her here, to the stage. Here we go.

FILM

Marie Claire editor: Waris, good to see you. You look great. What are you wearing? Do you want something to drink? Coffee, tea, water, sparkling water?

Waris Dirie: Water please.

Marie Claire editor: Another water please.

Waiter: Yes, Ma'am.

Marie Claire editor: So, I watched the BBC film. Thought it was amazing. So, tell me how do you feel seeing your mother? You haven't seen her, how long?

Waris Dirie: 20 years.

Marie Claire editor: Wow. 20 years. God. I would love not to see my mother for 20 years. You really are a nomad girl! Now look at you. You're a top model that everybody adores. So, tell me how you got discovered, tell me the day that changed your life. You just walked into a fast-food restaurant and there was this photographer, right?

Waris Dirie: That's not the day that changed my life.

Marie Claire editor: What? What do you mean?

Waris Dirie: I don't want to do anymore of these "Nomad Girl Top Model" stories.

Marie Claire editor: Well, that's what we arranged. That's what our readers want.

Waris Dirie: If I tell you a story, you guarantee that it will be published?

Marie Claire editor: Okay, I can't guarantee you anything. You know, we're one of the top magazines, we got readers all over the world. Okay... Okay... Tell me about the day that changed your life.

Waris Dirie: I was three years old. And the night before I was given an extra portion of rice. I didn't know why.

End of film...

Şirin Payzın: Now, I'd like to invite Waris Dirie to stage. Waris Dirie.

Waris Dirie: Thank you. Pleasure to be here. Good morning. It's nice to be here. I wanted to be in Turkey for so many years. It was a true passion of mine to come here and have great long holiday but I'd never made it. In the end today, so it's nice to be with you.

I'm sure some of you feel shocked to see this movie. This movie is real, that clip is real. It is reality to hundred million women worldwide. And I'm sure more than that. Not all over the world but also, right here in Turkey. It happens. There are other communities that brings this terrible practice.

I was born in Somalia. Raised there. I really, truly have any idea how old I was. I was about, I would say, 4 or 5 and I clearly remember that horrid day. I knew all the girls go through this. I know all the girls go through this. There is something happens and nobody explain to us or to the girl when you are getting mutilated or what happens or what's it for?

I would not wish this torture to anyone. Even to my enemy. And as a child, you cannot understand what's happening or what happened. What is the meaning of this? What is the purpose? Why God create me to go through this? And therefore, I get to understand, learn on my own without education, without help, without understanding, no one tell you what has been done and why it happened.

But one day I found out, the only reason for what happened was because I was born a female. A girl. And that was my punishment. I grow up as a Muslim child. And to believe a greater, higher power, God.

I thought, "God. You create men. And women." And this is the price. What is the price to be a woman? And what is the reason we existed anyway? If this is all I have to look for life? Surely God don't hate me that much. Now, what is this? What is this meaning? So I had to take the bull by the horn and find out this whole thing. And it is just absolutely nonsense. Madness. Crazy.

Upon Waris Dirie's request, only the introduction part of her speech has been deciphered.

Şirin Payzın: Waris. Thank you so much. I would like to invite Amanda here.

Our distinguished audience, participants, guests, in this section, I will have a conversation with our speakers but what I really want is for you to participate in this conversation and join us with your questions. Your questions will enrich the conversation we have here even more. And most importantly, if you have anything crossing your mind, maybe your ideas about what may be done after this point and would like to share your opinions with our speakers, please send them to me.

I would like you to ask short questions. Of course we would gladly accept your comments if you have any. And let me remind once more, our hashtag is #İnsanSevgisi. We would be glad if you post your opinions, comments there. Hereby, the people who follow us will know what we are talking about and how important this issue is through social media, even if they are not here.

Şirin Payzın: It's wonderful to have both of you. And wonderful speeches actually, teaching.

I would like to start with you Amanda. I talked about your book. And it's translated also in Turkish. But it must be hard for you to share your experience in the book. Tell us a little bit about your feelings. How hard was it to put everything together and just tell your story?

Amanda Lindhout: Certainly it was difficult but it's also a very healing thing to do. I took three and a half years and I worked with a wonderful American co-author, Sarah Corbett. It's really just the two of us for three and a half years. And putting it down was a way of processing it and getting out of my system in a way and it was very cathartic.

The difficult moment was really then when it was released and it was out in the world. Because all of the details were there in public. And that was another process to go through, just coming to place of peace, with knowing that people are not preview to some of the more difficult details, some of the violence and sexual abuse that I chose to put in the book.

But the book came out three and a half years ago now. And so I had these years of traveling around the world on book tours. And I'm really proud of "A House in the Sky". I'm glad that I did it. It's also make into a movie as versus the story as well. And I look forward to that too. The intention for the book was to tell the story that I hoped to inspire and remind of them the strength of the human spirit inside of all of us.

Şirin Payzın: But in this book you explain, you tell us the whole story, even the most difficult part, the most difficult days.

Amanda Lindhout: I did.

Şirin Payzın: So, the book is a snapshot of what occurred in those 460 days.

Amanda Lindhout: And I was very selective about what to put in the book. I didn't put the worst things that happened to me in the book. And that there are just details that didn't need to go in the book and out of essence of my own, privacy and dignity I chose not to put them in there.

Şirin Payzın: Okay, Waris. You mentioned briefly. But I really want to go into detail about that. Because I think it's a huge courage to decide to talk about your experience. And you decided to tell your story to Marie Claire, which is a fashion magazine actually. And the rules are very, you know, I mean it's fashion business so everything has to be perfect. But you rather chose to explain what happened to you. Why you dare to do that, I mean it was daring to explain everything. Why?

Waris Dirie: Well, first of all, I was ready to come for FGM (Female Genital Mutilation). I knew it was time for me to head on. To let go. To come after, stop everything else and come for FGM.

One day the magazine called my agency and said, "Can we do a story? We want to do a story on what is about her become a super model from a camel crowd and camel girl, and so on." So I said, "Just go, get lost." Then I thought about it after I hang up the phone and told them no, but Click! I said, "Oh." This can open it all and open it all for my story I can tell this story. And this is a women's magazine. I could do this one. But will they want to do it? So I went, said okay. I didn't tell them what it was. I just said, "Yes, yes I'm sorry, I'm sorry for yesterday. Let's do this story." I got there and said, "Yes, but not the story you want. I have another story. Do you want to do it or not? And if you're going to do, please tell me now. Because it's not easy for me to tell you this story. So you tell me yes or no." "I don't know. Let me think. I have to call editor." And then she came back and she said, "Okay." So I went for it. And it really did. It opened the door.

Şirin Payzın: Why were they afraid of? I mean, she needed time to think about it because...

Waris Dirie: It's a glossy magazine. Unfortunate to say, you know, nobody wanted the truth. No one wanted to know the truth, you know, when it comes to such a thing. Oh, my mother. Sorry, I just... It's a long story.

Şirin Payzın: You haven't seen her since?

Waris Dirie: Long time I haven't seen her. It will be like four and five years.

Şirin Payzın: Is she still back there, she lives there?

Waris Dirie: Yes. She is in Somalia, yes.

Şirin Payzın: You were just telling that people don't want to talk about it.

Waris Dirie: Yes. So they didn't want the truth. "Oh, so woman thing. Mutilation? Maybe another time." It was a promise to do this. You got to do it and they have to. They really took a risk I must say. And they were shocked when the magazine came out. They couldn't believe, the audience, how much they got and how many people sent them letters and e-mails about the subject alone. And so that really opened the door for that.

Because people in America didn't know that. Then I said, "I don't care, I've got to do that." And nobody wanted. Really, all the publishers in America said no. "No, thank you." "Yes, yes we'll get back to you, we'll call you." And then I said, "I'm going to do this for the library." I would do that for the library, somebody got to do that. People have to know, so just some lady said, "Okay," some publisher said, "Okay, we'll do the story." The book came out and the book ran away by itself. Because the story was a strong story. Nobody can tell the way I tell it, brutally honest.

Şirin Payzın: What you say is important. I think this is what we have also in Turkey because you mentioned that nobody really wants to talk about it, about violence. Violence against kids and violence against women. And everybody thinks like, somewhere, something happened to some women. It's not part of our lives. So it's telling these stories like cutting your comfort zone, right? It's hard to hear all these experiences, it's hard to hear all these stories. So maybe you want to tell us a bit about sharing Amanda.

Amanda Lindhout: Yes. Yes. I'm quite passionate about sharing my story actually. I have the great opportunity to travel all over the world and share it with audiences like this. It is something which was a difficult experience that I've lived through. The experience from which I've learned a few things. What I have come to realize as I traveled around the world is that though I've had this experience, you know most people don't have of being kidnapped. But most people, so many women can relate to threats in my story of oppression, of abuse. And unfortunately, yes, we know, is common everywhere around the world. Women are marginalized and abused.

I think, at least for me I found a tremendous amount of growth and healing that comes from sharing my story, from connecting with other people who've experienced and survived violence as well.

Şirin Payzın: Did you have any conversations with those boys who captured you? Did they talk to you or have you shared anything?

Amanda Lindhout: Well, sure, yes. I mean, I was in captivity for as I said 460 days, it's a quite a long time. Yes, there were conversations that took place within the confines of captivity. It's actually early on, though they had never been to school, they were quite bright. They spoke some broken English; they listen to the BBC radio every day. They like to practice of English that they knew.

So I learned something about their lives. It's really what I learned about their lives that helped me get to a place of compassion as well. Because it was not difficult for me to see them as perpetrators of violence but also the victims of it too.

Şirin Payzın: After all these years, what are your feelings for them? Because you just talked about forgiveness. When you analyze those boys and those people who are using violence against other people, how do you describe them? What are your feelings about them?

Amanda Lindhout: What are my feelings about those boys today? I strive every single day when I wake up in the morning to find a place of forgiveness inside of them. Because that's something I do for myself that's not something I do for them. If I can let go of that, then I can live a fuller rich life, not held back by accumulation of negative emotions. So, honestly I don't feel a great deal of hate inside of myself for those boys anymore.

But I have hard days. I have days like you know, I might have a bad dream the night before and the next day I'm wrestling with pity killer memories. And when those memories come up so do emotions like anger. But I truly, if I were able to have any outcome that I wanted on the other side of this whole thing, it would be that those boys too would find somehow find healing in their lives and become productive members of the world and society. Like that would be a great outcome, you know, I don't know if that's ever going to happen but...

I don't feel lust for revenge or a need for them to spend the rest of their lives in prison in order for me to move on with my healing.

Şirin Payzın: Let's talk about a little bit also about the future as you mentioned. As ambassadress of "goodwill" and ambassadress of United Nations, you said we know that there are many campaigns and many activities to stop the violence all over the world. And also, female genital mutilation is now, there is an awareness as you mentioned but what is next? Western world now talks much more about those issues. But what about those little girls in Africa or in other part of the world? What else can we do? What can you do or can we do?

Waris Dirie: We can do a lot. Now, there is only one way to do this. And that is education. I am writing a book now. It's a children's book, education children's book. The first ones will be for Africa and then there would be the rest of the world. But in order to know, in order to demolish any problem, first we have to know what it is. What's causing it? And people have no idea what really is going on, what they do and why are they doing it. It's because lack of education. Something else even more important than education is that it is necessity for the girl to be valued, to worth something.

The girl becomes an asset for the family. So they are poor so she has to be exchanged in order to, you know, to be married. Now, to be married she has to go through all this. Because she will not be accepted in the society. It just builds up one after another. It's all lack of education. What is waiting for that girl tomorrow? Tomorrow that girl just says, "Mama, do you know what FGM is?" The child can teach the mother because the mother doesn't know. So it is just a little pattern of nobody knows anything.

Think twice. It's just normal, becomes so normal. And the only way to change this cycle is education. And this is where I attack. It's just going for education for children now.

Şirin Payzın: Do you think education is much more powerful than tradition?

Waris Dirie: You know what they say, education is power, right? Power is education. Knowledge, yes, it is. It will be and it is. It has to be. I know better know, that what I know what I didn't know anything. Yes, they will know.

Şirin Payzın: Amanda, what would you say about that? Philanthropy is important, I'm sure that your speech is all over the world, make a huge difference but... What more? What can we do? It's good to make all these activities but how to change on the ground?

Amanda Lindhout: Well, I think that we all as just human beings here in the world have a responsibility to do what we can to give back in the ways we can. And for some people, like Waris and myself, we have platforms and stages to stand on and to create awareness about the issues that we are passionate about. But everybody has their own base in which they can work to make their community or the world a better place with their own passion and with their own skills. And we really have the responsibility to do that.

Everything begins with the choice and a commitment to that. And it can even look as simple as like every day making a commitment to be a compassionate person. Whatever ways that shows up that day. You know like pointing your feet in the direction of that and really walking that path in life to be a compassionate person, to help others. And being committed to doing that will create a more opportunities, you know, to contribute in bigger and bigger ways. The more committed you become to being that person and living that path. Opportunities will come, there is certainly no shortage of groups that you can align yourself with, that are doing great work in the world.

Şirin Payzın: I think we have to mention also how important is the media. I think, reporting from the different areas of the world and reporting about those issues are so important. So freedom of media, freedom of journalism is highly also in dealing with these issues too.

Waris Dirie: They have a great responsibility. It's shocking sometimes what you, what I see in the media. They do not help things; they even create more of negative stories than what it really original was. So media has a big responsibility and they need to know what to do with it.

Şirin Payzın: Don't you think Amanda? I mean do you agree?

Amanda Lindhout: Yes. And, you know I think the media also plays a great role as well in terms of like, informing us about what's going on, in the case of the work that I've been able to do in that part of the world. And for the success of raising money, we have two fund programs there. It's been also like having media support that helps tell the story, the narrative and informs people in places like Canada where I live or United States where I spend a lot of time speaking about this issue.

People go, "Why? I don't even know where Somalia is on a map, let alone what's going on over there." But through the power of media, they can read about it, you know, educate themselves. And then find ways to help like your organizations and like mine.

Şirin Payzın: Usually, I think it's all over the places it's the same. You're reporting about the war but in a statistic way. Like how many people died. What is going on? How many soldiers? And you know, politics, politics, politics... Actually, we have to concentrate more on human issues I guess, right? Human stories. That's the most important part. And more we tell about the human stories, more we can create this awareness. What's your opinion about this?

Waris Dirie: The more we can relate to each other. We all have a story, each human being, we all have a story. But to share that story and to encourage and push others, it is value, it's good.

Şirin Payzın: I'm going to turn to the audience, but before to doing that, it was briefly mentioned but do we know, what is the specific number of little girls who are suffering from the FGM?

Waris Dirie: The UN estimation right now, 200 million, but I'm sure it's more. Because just a couple of years ago, there was not a number in the system of UN for Asia. The whole Asia was out of the number.

Şirin Payzın: And do we discuss about that? I mean, can you imagine this number? It's not an agenda for people. So, how to make it an agenda? I know that for UN, it's a big issue but what about the rest of the public? How to make an agenda?

Your foundation is concentrating on that, right? Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Waris Dirie: The foundation Desert Flower is based on four countries and is really raising awareness for the last 15 - 16 years. And we also save girls from Djibouti, Sierra Leone. We have a few thousands. It's four thousand now. We support these girls every month, they go to school, we guarantee their school and the food for the family and the medical services. We don't have enough money to save more, but the more money we raise, the more girls we save to educate them and save them from FGM.

Şirin Payzın: And educate also the mothers as you said.

Waris Dirie: Yes, yes. It's for everybody really. The more you learn the better.

Şirin Payzın: Amanda, have you been back to Somalia since then?

Amanda Lindhout: I have been back to Somalia yes. I was back in Somalia about five times after captivity in the years that immediately followed. It's been a long time since I've been back to Somalia. It's very unlikely that I will go back there again. It felt important during the first years that I was setting up my foundation to go and build partnerships. And now I see that wouldn't be good for my well-being, for my healing. You know, it is an ever evolving journey, what was good for me and what I was capable of a couple of years ago has changed. And now it's not something that I need to do. I wouldn't put myself in that kind of danger. It just wouldn't be healthy for me.

So now with the foundation, we work in partnership with organizations that are on the ground, Somalia based organizations. And the work that we did in the first couple of years with the foundation wasn't much more about creating and the implementing programs. Now we are in support of the existing programs that are operated by partners. It just doesn't require my presence.

Şirin Payzın: But basically what they deal with kids right? To educate them.

Amanda Lindhout: Yes, our primary mandate is about education, but especially focus on female education. In 2011, there was a famine in Somalia, we did a lot of fund raising for also for famine relief work. But yes, when that famine was wrapped up we ended those food relief programs and focus exclusively on education now.

Şirin Payzın: Do you think this is important too? I mean all these programs, philanthropy and all these foundations are designated to help women and educate women. But what about men? I mean, education for men about women issues especially or about human rights, basic human rights are essential too. What do you think about that?

Waris Dirie: They need a special program for education. Sorry guys. A special education when it comes to female. How to deal? What is she? You really need some special education.

Şirin Payzın: Actually we have a huge problem of violence against women in Turkey.

Waris Dirie: I heard this and this is so sad. You people, men, you guys... What is the problem? What is the problem? What's happening? What are you doing? Where is your mama? Don't you have a mama? Will you beat your mama? Will you beat your sister? Your daughter?

Stop this. It's really a terrible thing to do. You don't get love back in this way. You create so much pain and suffering and what for? Enjoy life with what you got and who you got with you. And just love. That is all you do, love. Love your life. Love what you have. Love everybody.

Şirin Payzın: Bravo. I just mentioned Turkey but it's not Turkey of course, many countries are suffering because of this problem. We always say one way to deal with that is women empowerment. But the other way is just to educate and it's not women problem only, it's a men problem. So we have to name it correctly that's why I asked you.

Now I want to turn to the audience and I would like to get some questions. Please mention your names. You may ask in Turkish, too. We have a simultaneous interpreter.

Münevver Uğurlu: I am the Chairman of the Board of Samsun İş Kadınları (Business Women) Executive Board. I am at the same time the Chairman of the Board of Canik Belediyesi Kadın Meclisi (Municipality Women Executive Board). Today, we came with my teammates. We would like to thank Ms. Güler Sabancı and Sabancı family very much for inviting us here today and for organizing this program.

Of course our subject is employment but at the same time we are working together with our girls who were subjected to violence both in country side and in the district in our region. I would like to ask Waris and Amanda. We are giving employment training for girls who suffered from violence but we have great difficulty in providing the sustainability. Because their hearts are broken. We want to struggle for them to leave aside their offenses and make them move on their paths. We want to mentor them, we work in collaboration with our experts and Provincial Coordination Committee in our universities. I would like to ask them what would they tell these girls, if they were to be together with us? Thank you.

Amanda Lindhout: Well, thank you for your question and welcome to all of you for being here today. Sounds like you're doing really great work here in Turkey, congratulations on that. I can only answer that question only as a survivor of violence myself. And I can tell you that for those girls whose hearts broken, healing is possible. Because I'm experiencing healing all these years on the other side of violence. So I know that it's possible because I live it.

But it's a commitment that they need to make to themselves. Because that's where they will find the healing is inside of themselves. And it sounds like you're doing wonderful support with therapists and people around them to help them get to that place where they can feel confident again about themselves on the other side of being diminished through violence.

I find so much inspiration in community as well. Community of other survivors of violence, community of women who've been through the same. And maybe that's something that these women find healing in as well. Being connected with each other in ways that are supportive, where conversations, where really deep healing conversations, facilitated conversations with therapists take place for stories that are hard to tell.

I have found so much healing in narrative and in expression of the story of happened to me. And it certainly doesn't have to be for everybody on a stage like this. But even with another person or a small group of other survivors, there can be so much support and resource in that sense of community. Speak out. That's one way to deal with it.

Waris Dirie: That's exactly the way with the word, "speak out". It is amazing that I am sitting here to give an advice, such advice that you ask. Because I was that little girl one time. I had no one, no one to give me advice or even to talk. No one to share.

As a Somalian child, girl, you cannot talk about FGM first of all. You cannot talk about domestic abuse. You cannot talk about violence at home. You cannot talk about, you can't. There is no one to talk to. So, you really have to find your own way. That's what I did.

But these young girls are not in that place. They got you. I wish I had too then. But they got places and people like you. I had no education, I get back to education, I had none of that, I didn't understand ABC. Today you have technology, anything you need to, what you want to know, you find. So, there is a lot to be learned.

The all you need is yourself now, is left is you. Get up and the follow the dream you want in life. And focus on that. That you are good, you're OK, you're going to be fine. Believe me on that, you're going to be fine. You came through all of it, one day you will look back and say, "God, how did I do that? How did I do it?" But you will because it's all in us. So, these beautiful little girls will be fine.

Şirin Payzın: Hopefully. May I have another question? From the gentleman. Let's give men a chance.

Reşat Egeli: I will ask a kind of a specific question. My name is Reşat Egeli. I am a professional tour guide serving in English, French, Italian, Spanish and Japan. The issue that we have just seen in the film, female genital mutilation. In which countries this is applied? And also there is a practice, an operation called "infibulation." In which countries this practice is applied?

Waris Dirie: It is applied in 97 countries. And rest of Asia, almost half of Asia where all the Muslims are, all the Muslim nation.

-Yes, there are three types... and the worst one is infibulation, they wipe it up and they sew all the vagina...

Many people believe it's an old tradition and it's not practiced anymore. No, no, no! It's still going on all over the places. It's practiced today.

Saruhan Singen: Have a good day. My name is Saruhan Singen. I am at the same time founder of Down Café in İstanbul. Of course they may not have a chance to observe in all this chaos but there is another dimension of love of humanity, our side of love. As you know, actually the mentally challenged people have great love in them. Have they ever got any such chance? Have they ever come across something like that in their lives? Have they ever found any chance to work with mentally challenged people?

Amanda Lindhout: Well, I do quite a bit of speaking around the world for different mental health groups. I, myself, have post-traumatic stress disorder, after everything that happened to me. And it's

quite a journey actually just figuring out what takes place in my own mind and body now with post-traumatic stress disorder. So I have a great deal of compassion and admiration really for people with different mental health issues.

Waris Dirie: I feel sorry when people tell me “Oh, you only fight for female mutilation.” No. I fight for all humanity. And against all injustice.

Şirin Payzın: I think maybe the question goes to not only to all women but specially to handicapped women. It’s a big threat for them also, violation and rape.

Waris Dirie: Of course, I’m sure it is. They don’t have the ability to talk about it. They shouldn’t be separate from anyone else. As for the society we should all be included. And they should have a really people who speak for this, them and stand for them. And they should have a great support to whatever that they need. Because they not only are handicapped but also are women and we don’t know what they got through. Nobody speak for them or speak with them. So I would have get involved with that myself. Because like I said any problem is my problem. I go for it.

Şirin Payzın: One question, maybe you can also include your experience but it may be a follow up to your question. What about the psychology of the parents? I mean, it’s not only these little girls or even boys sometimes or a woman facing violence or experiences like yours. What about your mother for instance? I don’t want to ask about your mother but how she behaved and what was her journey in a way? And what to do about that? Because it’s not one person’s experience but also entourage and families.

Amanda Lindhout: I think when there is like you know, violence it touches the whole family. And so yes, in my case of being kidnapped, that really affected my family because they were all put into position like having to actually quite literally save my life through payment. But the recovery from that has been really difficult.

I came home and spoke to my family about the abuse I had gone through. And yes, it’s been very difficult for my mom. She also strives every day to try to find forgiveness. But she says that it would be easier to forgive somebody who hurt her than somebody who hurt her child. And so she is definitely on her own journey of recovery which is very challenging for her.

Şirin Payzın: This is something that maybe all these projects have to concentrate on too. May I have another question.

Meral Tamer: I am Meral Tamer. I am a journalist. I listened to these two brave activist women with admiration. I address my question to Waris. She mentioned that female genital mutilation is practiced in Turkey. But I wonder if she said this based on the data of United Nations or not? Maybe if she can open up the subject a little, we can attend to this issue too. I mean, I don’t know, we don’t know that there is FGM in Turkey. If there is, it is a fatal situation. And maybe we can address to this issue.

Waris Dirie: I don’t exactly know many girls are mutilated in Turkey. But we do know that it brings the communities from, not original Turkey but coming from different places. They do practice therefore they are in Turkey too. But I don’t know exactly the estimate number. I don’t have it. But that’s something we need to research, find and really get on it. It cannot be acceptable here.

Şirin Payzın: Is it practiced, is it a common practice among the Muslim societies or in Africa or in that part of the world? Mostly Muslim?

Waris Dirie: Yes, yes. In Arabia they do it too.

Şirin Payzın: So in mostly a Muslim nation it exists. Actually maybe it's not directly related to the religion, do you think it is related to?

Waris Dirie: That's the reason they use it. Of course we know it's nothing to do with religion. Religion is used so much of without people understanding. This book, people do not really know what is inside. At the same time believe some of it or what they think it is. So, again, my mother cannot read the Quran. My father cannot read the Quran. Five times of prayer and still follows what is inside this book including all this terrible torture against women and humanity, I don't know.

So it's manipulation, it's a lot to do with manipulation that I do say it. But also to do with lack of understanding of this religion, of what it means. What's real and what is not. What is acceptable? What is logical? They don't know. So we have to really educate the people about this too.

Şükran Çelebi: Hello. My name is Şükran Çelebi. I am Health and Education Foundation Board of Trustees member. I want to ask my question to Waris Dirie. I would like to know the estimations about FGM during your childhood and as of today.

Waris Dirie: After going through all these, I wish to know all now. I still don't believe it's two hundred million. Really I don't believe because who's really running around in places in the world where it's all practiced. Who is counting it? Nobody. First of all, they keep it secret. It is more than it says. I would like to know too. If you find out, let's work together.

Şükran Çelebi: So all through education, campaigns is there a dramatic decline? I want to learn about that.

Waris Dirie: I don't believe so. How can it be because the number is going up? Therefore, there are laws. What use is the law if you don't follow the law? They exist. There are now maybe three countries in the world where there is no law against FGM. Somalia is one of them. But people they practice, they do it.

Şükran Çelebi: I want to congratulate both of you for your precious dedication. Thank you.

Şirin Payzın: Thank you. Yes, please, the lady in the back.

Audience: Hello. I am a mother of two boys too and maybe there is no FGM in Turkey, we don't know for sure but we have male circumcision and it is practiced at very young ages. And at the same time I am a psychologist. I had serious problems about intruding to my own children, to their bodies without having their consent. And this is an issue that is never discussed in this country. At that period, while I was talking both with my psychologist colleagues and my doctor friends, they told me not to dramatize the situation and there is nothing to worry about it. We have it practiced on my elder son when he was 5 years old. Despite all of our explanations, it still was traumatic for him in my opinion. His father thought it was definitely normal. I am a woman; I haven't experienced this but I feel really bad thinking what if that happened to me.

For my younger son, I extended the time in order for him to make the decision himself. But when he was 10 or even 8-9 years old, he started to say that he would be ashamed if his friends saw him. I mean there is a big group pressure here. There was no anesthesia in Turkey 20 years ago. I think that people were experiencing painfully. Okay, they were doing this with celebrations, feasts and by giving them money but still...

And it is also interesting that I haven't seen any studies about this issue. I know there are many subjects to study about but this is an interesting one. Certain topics are impenetrable. No matter how scientific it is, there are some areas that we don't enter.

Waris Dirie: I heard this question so many times. Because it's just so close, because mutilation is mutilation. I feel absolutely the same the way I feel female genital mutilation. Because I don't understand what is the reason of this too. For what is it? Okay, some say it's cleansing but I am not dirty, I took a shower, I'm clean. What's the problem? I'm sorry, I don't understand.

Amanda Lindhout: I think that's a hard question to answer, I mean, certainly the trauma we go through physical trauma, it makes imprints as for the rest of our lives. That could certainly tribute to acting in other ways as adults. That could be violence, certainly.

Waris Dirie: I remember you said the boys have feasts. I didn't have that what they did to me. I did go through on my own. Though it is disgusting and terrible.

Rana Kotan: I'm Rana, I work for Sabancı Foundation. My question is about your philanthropic efforts. You talked about the foundations you established to address these social issues. But they are very hard to address alone. So my question is do you collaborate with other foundations who work in the same area?

Amanda Lindhout: Yes, I'll say for us we have always found an associate working in the country where there are such security concerns as there are in Somalia. It's much better to work in collaboration with other groups that are on the ground. That obviously know the layer of the land a lot better than just coming from the outside and thinking you know what to do. You know we work with them, some really amazing Somalian activists. There is a wonderful woman there of us, Somalian first female gynecologist Dr. Hawa Abdi. We work in partnership with her foundation. We've done a lot of work there with her.

Waris Dirie: No. I'm a one woman show my friend.

Serpin Alparslan: I am Serpin Alparslan. I am a journalist. I see two angels here. And I appreciate their commitments. But there is a topic that is burning out at the moment. Ezidis. Do you have any plans for Ezidis? Do you know about this issue? About the Ezidis, there are 500.000 Ezidis in the world and maybe only 50.000 people are left at the moment. Maybe they are even extinct. Do you have any idea about this and have you thought about doing anything for them? They are a small tribe living in Syria. They are being punished by ISIS because they are not Muslims. Can you create an awareness for this situation?

Şirin Payzın: And we have many Ezidi refugees in Turkey after the Syrian war.

Amanda Lindhout: Yes, well, I'll comment on that. Well, yes I've been following in the news the terrible violence against the women especially. And how so many thousands of them have been abducted as sexual slaves. It's something that I think about a lot actually. And have I done anything

to create awareness and support those women? I actually haven't. Though I would rather like to. It is something that's very much on my mind these days. And if I had an opportunity in some way to support maybe an organization that's doing work with those women I would certainly welcome that.

Waris Dirie: I'm chasing my own trouble. I didn't hear this.

Şirin Payzın: You know, after the Syrian war actually we have a huge humanitarian crisis in this part of the world. I mean there is tragedy also like that was in Africa or now in Middle East. She was just mentioning one of those Christians from Syria. They are refugees right now in the neighboring countries. Their position is highly critical like other refugees so she just wanted to add, to mention about that. Maybe you can work on that issue too.

Waris Dirie: No. I need to move on because I cannot say anything about this. Because I don't know about it, I'm sorry.

Meltem Kurtsan: I want to share something. I am Meltem Kurtsan. I am the Founding President of KADİGER (Women Entrepreneurs Foundation). First of all, I want to congratulate these two brave women. I want to share one of my memories that I remembered from Waris' sauna experience.

It was year 2000. We, as Women Entrepreneurs of the World, women entrepreneurs of the underdeveloped, developing countries were invited to Geneva, Switzerland to the Head Quarters of United Nations. There were two doors of the meeting room. If you went out of one of the doors, you saw a toilet and you saw another toilet if you went out of the other door. You thought that one should be men's and the other should be women's. But it turned out that both of them were men's. And the women's toilet is at the end of the hall and a very small one. I mean, if there is discrimination, if it is present even in United Nations, then we should put emphasis on it. What would you say?

Waris Dirie: I like this. Yes, you see? Discrimination. If you do it, do it at least in a smart way. The guy I asked, "Why my sauna not on?" And the man says, "There is nobody in it." Every day we got to chase life and live life and get it done this and that. I have to come and deal with the toilet and the sauna?

Let's move on with life, with a dignity and respect together. We are together so let's move on together. We live together. We are associated, mother, son, daughter or husband. We are all together. You cannot make me less than what did you think you are. We're made the same way, God made us the same. You didn't build yourself.

Şirin Payzın: I have to wrap up the seminar but very briefly, maybe you want to mention us what's the official position of the United Nations about the Female Genital Mutilation? Is there any act?

Waris Dirie: Let me bring you back to where the center is. I don't work with UN any longer. For more than 10 years, I have no idea what the UN do. I don't know. When it comes to FGM nobody's acting much except these people who believe.

Şirin Payzın: It's not officially forbidden or it's not officially banned?

Waris Dirie: No. No, there's work to be done. We need to just... we need really serious laws. That you need to be punished if you continue to do this. And it's not just FGM... Wrongness.

Şirin Payzın: Amanda. Do you have any last words, just to finish?

Amanda Lindhout: Well, sure, I guess then I'll take this opportunity once again just to say what a pleasure it is to be here. And an opportunity for me to once again heal myself through story-telling. So I really appreciate everybody's in that role today being such a wonderful supportive and attentive audience. It's been a really pleasure to be here. Thank you very much.

Waris Dirie: I want to say something. I want to say, first of all, how many years have I wanted to come and live here. I'm not so sure anymore. No, no, I love you. But things need to change. Things need to change for Turkey in order to move up the world. With great love and respect.

Second, I want to say to the young ladies, and any women, female that you think you can't do anything. Or you don't know how to do it, or you're in a place where you think how can I do this?

Find your strength, you have the strength and you can do it. Do not, do not, do not shut your mouth and accept any abuse or injustice in your life or unkindness. You can do better in your life. Chase your love and dream and joy in life to live. You can. Live your life.

Şirin Payzın: Bravo.

I would like to thank them very much on behalf of Sabancı Foundation. I would like to thank you very much for your works, and also for experience that you shared with us today. And thank you very much for joining us and it was really precious, unique for us to hear from you. I really want to thank you.

Sometimes, we need to stop and think; we are talking about many dimensions about the violence against women but today we had the chance to talk with our two guests from abroad. Both of them are women who have come from very different places, from very different backgrounds and who intersected at some point, did not keep quiet at that point and who also showed us that we should not keep quiet either. Listening to them in one sense makes one's hair stand on end but also I'm sure gave you all the same strength. We need to talk more; we need to share more.

I thank you all once more for coming and being with us this morning. I would like to invite Ms. Güler Sabancı here. Let's have our family photo taken.

I hope, we can prevent the violence against women, violence against our children at least after all these works.