



Girls' Education and Gender Equality

Fall 2021

**Kakenya Ntaiya, Senior Fellow, Watson Institute
Founder, Kakenya's Dream**

The Study Group will meet six times in the Fall of 2021 on these dates: October 4, 18, November 1, 15, 29, and December 13. Each session will meet from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Engaged at age 5, Dr. Kakenya Ntaiya experienced female genital mutilation (FGM) as a young teenager in preparation for child marriage. Her life was set to follow the traditional Maasai path of ending school to become a wife and mother, but Dr. Ntaiya had a different dream. She negotiated with her father to return to school after surviving FGM. When she was accepted to college in the United States, she promised her community she would use her education to serve her rural Kenyan village in exchange for their support. She went on to earn her PhD in education from the University of Pittsburgh and returned to her community to fulfill her promise.

Dr. Ntaiya founded Kakenya's Dream to educate girls, end harmful traditional practices including FGM and child marriage, and transform her community. In 2009, the Kakenya Center for Excellence boarding school opened its doors, serving 30 vulnerable Maasai girls. Today, Kakenya's Dream reaches thousands of young girls, boys, and community members across rural Kenya each year through three holistic, girl-centered programs.

Study Group Description:

Gender equality is the 5th goal in the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and has dominated development discourse for centuries. Over the years, progress has been made towards gender equality for women. Countries have implemented laws to ensure women have equal access to political and economic leadership, they have addressed girls' access to education and created strict laws to end harmful practices that hinder women's and girls' progress in general. Despite such progress, globally, women are still facing Gender Based Violence (GBV); they are more illiterate and poorer and lack equal representation in political and economic leadership.

The study group will explore how progress toward gender equality has been undermined further by the Covid-19 pandemic and how small non-governmental organizations tackle gender inequality to create a better world for women and girls in East Africa.

We will focus on two strategies used to address gender equality, namely the importance of girls' education and the involvement of men and boys.

The first sessions of the study group we will learn how Kakenya's Dream, as a small non-governmental organization, leverages education to address harmful practices that hinder girls from continuing with their education in rural Kenya. We will then move to hear from expert guest speakers working at the local and global levels to address gender equality. The goal of the study group is to provide students with the space to explore their interest in the development field especially using the gender lens.

Sessions Outline

Oct 4th

Session One: How to Change Social Norms to Achieve Gender Equality and Empower a girl child.

- TED Talk: A girl who demanded School

Oct 18th

Session Two: What Works in Girls' Education

- What Works in Girls' Education. Evidence for the World's Best Investment by Gene Sperling and Rebecca Winthrop with Christina Kwauk - *Read Chapter 4: What Works: A catalogue of evidence on addressing Girl's Education Needs*. Available online

Nov 1st

Session Three: Impact of Covid-19 on Girls' Education

- #HerEducationOurFuture Keeping girls in the picture during and after the COVID-19 crisis (UNESCO Fact Sheet). Available online.

Nov 15th

Session Four: The Role of UN on Gender Equality

- Against My Will defying practices that harm women and girls and Undermine Gender Equality (*UNFPA 2020 State of the World Population - available online*)

Nov 29th

Session Five: The Role of Government on Girls' Education and Gender Equality

Dec 13th

Session Six: Reflection on the Study Group