

[MUSIC PLAYING]

The Maasai raised their boys to be warriors. They raised their girls to be wives and mothers. Here's a definition of girl power. Instead of letting yourself be married off, you strike a deal with your dad. You'll undergo the ritual of female genital mutilation, but not marriage. And you'll keep going to school.

KaKenya Ntaiya did just that. And today she is making it possible for other girls to do the same. If you ask her how to change the world, she'll tell you how. Start with one girl.

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From Brown University's Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, this is trending globally. I'm Sara Baldwin. Our guests today are KaKenya Ntaiya, educator and advocate for women and girls, and Pamela Reeves, advisor to the office of Melinda Gates on Global Women's Affairs and a senior fellow at the Watson Institute. Welcome to the podcast, both of you, and thank you so much for being here today.

Thank you.

KaKenya, I feel that we have to start with you and your incredible personal story. You're Maasai? And you grew up in Kenya. And by the age of five, you were engaged and already being groomed to be the ideal woman, which basically entailed ending your education, undergoing female genital mutilation, and getting married, just to really oversimplify. Can you tell us the direction that your life actually took, and what you did to change its direction?

As you said, I grew up in a village where the best thing that can happen to a girl is to be married, have children, and stay at home. I went to school. When I was in school, I had a dream that I wanted to become a teacher.

And so that is the beginning of changing the direction that I was supposed to have. The one that the community dictated to me, is that I'm going to be married and have children. But here I had a dream of becoming a teacher.

At the age of 12, 13 actually, I had-- culturally we are supposed to go through the rite of passage. And that is female genital cutting. And that enables you to become a woman and enables you to be married and enables you to have your own home.

But on my end, it would end my education. It will end my dream of becoming a teacher. And I had to find ways to get out of it. And I talked to my father that I could only go through that rite of passage if he lets me go back to school.

It was shocking, because no girl had done that. And I was going to run away. And the stigma behind the father of a girl who has not gone through the rite of passage would have been very humiliating for my dad. But he accepted.

I did go through the female genital cutting, and after that, I went back to school. And that changed the direction of my life to where I am today.

It's so interesting to hear you say you had a dream. And I'm so-- we're all so gratified that you followed it. But you must not have been the only girl ever to have a dream. What makes you different? Like what makes you someone who was able to envision something different for herself, and then actually make it happen?

Every child in the whole world-- doesn't matter that they are born in the ruralist place of the world, like my community, or in the most affluent places in the world. They all have dreams. And yes, some dreams are cultured to become reality. And mine was an-- I wanted to escape the life that my mother was living.

Uh-huh.

I am the first of eight, and helping my mother bring up my siblings was not an easy task. Most of the time, we didn't have food. And my little sisters will eat what was there, and my mother and I would not have food.

You know, working people's [? farm-- ?] was just hard work. I think, because of that, being the firstborn and just having that-- working with my mom was difficult. And I think, seeing what I could be from my female teachers was kind of, like, made it a reality. Kind of like, you can actually become a teacher. Because there was a female teacher in front of me.

And who made it-- kind of made it believe that I could actually become a teacher. So it wasn't an easy thing, but I knew that I could be. And I just worked hard to becoming that teacher.

Uh-huh. And you had, at some point, you had the moxie to convince the people in your village. Can you tell us what village it is? I like things to have names.

I come from a small village in Kenya. It's called Anoonsaen. It's in-- yeah, it's near the Maasai [? Mara ?] for those who travel to Kenya. I come from the Maasai people. Very traditional. We are really known for our cultures, and we try as much to remain Maasai, even as cultures change. We are trying to hold on to our traditions. So we are very well known for that.

Uh-huh.

Yes.

So you are in this very traditional community and somehow managed to convince them to support you in your desire to take a different path, right? And can you explain how you ended up in college in the United States?

There were men and boys from my village who had got an education out of the country. And one of the gentlemen was a student at Oregon University. And he had been helping other boys go overseas. And I thought, when I was finishing high school, you know, everybody who was my age made boys were going somewhere.

So I thought, oh, I should also go somewhere. So I did, you know, approached him and told him to look. Help me go somewhere, where hes' taking these boys. So that's how he got me a scholarship at the Randolph-Macon Women's college. It's now called Randolph College.

But even though I had a scholarship, I needed to raise money for the airfare and to get a passport. I grew up in the village where there are no electricity, no running water, and all of that. And then I have to go to the city and look for passports and all of that.

Amazing, amazing.

But all the time when men were going overseas, there was always celebrations. And people raised money. And there was excitement. But everybody was saying, why does a girl-- why do we even have a scholarship for a girl? Why are we sending? What a wasted opportunity? Everybody was against that.

And I thought they were going to dance for me. But now they were saying no. I had to figure out how do I get these people to dance and raise some money for me.

And celebrate your desire to--

Exactly. So I ended up speaking to one of the elders that, if he said yes, kind of everybody says yes. And just kind of walked with the traditions. And the whole village was against it. But at the end, the whole village came together. And they sent me to the U.S. One of the things that I promised them was that I will come back.

Uh-huh.

I will use my education to better our community. Of course, at that time I was talking to them, I just wanted to see them to support me in and off I go.

But you did come back.

I did come back.

And then you founded your center for excellence. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Uh--

Well, you built to school.

In 2009, I was a student at the University of Pittsburgh working on my doctorate program there. And I had been going home, maybe, all the time I've been in the US, I kept going home. And every time I went to my village, girls were being forced into early marriages.

They were being mutilated. Their dreams were ending. And I was in the world where I learned that girls have rights. And there was that disconnect, that what I was hearing and that there are laws that protect children. That FGM is against the law in Kenya.

That was not changing anything in my community. It was the same--

And all along--

Story.

Your mother could have owned property.

Exactly. I mean it was-- the women are still abused. They're still mistreated. They were considered children. And the story was not changing.

Uh-huh.

And somehow, you know, I couldn't wait anymore. I couldn't-- I felt like I needed to step in and do something. And education had made a difference in my life.

Uh-huh.

That's the person I am today is because I went to school. I was able to dream. I was able to go to university. I've been able to travel the world and see so much. But I needed to bring that education to people in my village. And so I started the KaKenya Center for Excellence.

Uh-huh.

Of course, I tell people my goal was to start with 10 girls. But 100 came. I ended up with 30 girls. Now, you know, nine years later we've educated over 300 girls through the center. First graduating class is finishing high school this year. Next year, off to college.

That's amazing.

Thank you.

And I wonder, do you ask them to think about coming back?

I don't ask them. Each one of them has come from-- I mean, I have students who are coming in a family of 30 siblings. Each one of them has a sibling. And it's not two. It's more than eight.

Uh-huh.

And each one of them wants the best for themselves, but the best for their sisters. When we have our trainings or holidays-- when our campus is closed for the holiday, the girls come with their sisters to study. And to see that-- you don't have to tell them.

Uh-huh.

When you empower women, when you educate a girl, she doesn't go alone. She brings others along. She brings the brothers, she brings the sisters. And you know, that's why I went back. I had sisters that I needed to make sure that they don't go through FGM.

I had cousins. I had-- you know, I needed to empower my mothers. I just, you know-- we come back. And we want to bring others with us. That's what makes the difference between educating a woman and educating a man.

Uh-huh. I was going to ask you about your sisters. Did you-- did they undergo FGM? And did they marry young? Or did they follow in your footsteps? And choose a different path for you, since you blazed the trail?

Only the ones who are right behind me. One went with me through the FGM, but the others-- none of them had gone through. They are all in school or at [INAUDIBLE]. Now you know are driving. They didn't get married early. It's really about, when one goes ahead, it kind of open the doors or others.

You brought them all. You opened the door.

Yes.

It's amazing. So let's talk about female genital mutilation for a second. According to the World Health Organization, about 200 million women and girls alive currently have been affected by it. And 3 million are at risk of undergoing it. And I just wonder, am I crazy? Or do you agree that if a cultural practice with mutilation in the name and exactly zero health benefits were being used on boys, that it would have been eradicated a long time

ago?

So I think the international organizations and the international law say mutilation.

Yep. And I notice you say cutting.

Or cutting.

Uh-huh.

But culturally, they will not call it that. They call it circumcision. They call it a rite of passage. They call it other sweet, you know--

Euphemisms.

Words that are not-- describe what actually happens to the women, or what happened to the children. We're talking about nine-year-olds. We're talking about 10-year-olds. We are talking about 11-year-olds who are being mutilated.

They are being cut off-- their genitalia is being cut off with a knife. It's child abuse. It's traumatizing. It is--

Uh-huh.

It's horrifying.

And it's fundamentally a violation of human rights.

Exactly. So you cannot-- you know, we can't [INAUDIBLE], oh, let's call it, I don't know what. It is what it is.

Uh-huh.

And it can end. It will come to an end. But it really takes about people stop saying, that is their cultural. There's nothing cultural about it. Because culture is supposed to be something that's uplift. Something that is celebrated. It doesn't torture.

Uh-huh.

It doesn't bring pain. It doesn't bring trauma into humans. That is not culture. It's a violation of girls' bodies and their mothers bodies. It's a human rights violation. We need to call it what it is.

Uh-huh.

And we need to come to a point where we say, you know, it's their thing. It's not their thing. It's our responsibility. People who know what it is, people like me who went through it, who will come back and say, this is not right. It needs to end.

Can you help us understand how the practice endures? I mean, it sounds like girls don't know exactly what they're in for. But at some point, someone must say something. Or someone must see something. Or a sister will say something. And I've heard you talk about your own experience. And you sounded like you didn't really know what was going to happen.

It's a socialization thing. It's-- as you grow up, they talk in the house. You see your sisters go through it. You see your cousins go through it. It's a socialization thing. And it's part of everyday life. So it's not like something that is taken away. It's every day. It's there.

So from a time you are little. You probably went to see a girl go through that. It's celebrated. It's what would make you a woman. It's really changing the mind from the pain you go through--

I see.

Because-- and then what also happens that we're not-- we are not supposed to talk about what happens to you after. You can only talk to the people who went through it. But you can't talk to the children, or the ones who haven't gone through it.

I see.

So it's really-- you know, you mute people. It's a form of control. You know, you mute people. You don't tell them what it is. And once you go through it, you cannot talk about it. And that's how it-- it's socialization. It's part of the culture. It's like, you know, [? bad days. ?] Oh, we have 16 [? bad ?] days. It's like [? pattern. ?] Well, we need to do this.

It's like, the people don't think critically about it. They start telling you that taboos, like things will happen to you if you talk about it. So if you start playing with the people's mind like that, and they had never seen anybody talk about it, then no one wants to talk about it.

But when you start talking about it, and then people realize nothing would actually happen to you. You're still OK.

You're still here.

And then people, oh. So actually this is a form of control.

Uh-huh.

Yes.

Pamela based on your work at the State Department and for the office of Melinda Gates, what can you tell us about the status of this practice, not just in Kenya but across the world?

Well, I was just going to say that KaKenya is doing remarkable work that the world is sitting up and taking notice about on this topic. And others are doing work too. And we have so much data now that we've collected around the world from different communities. Because it doesn't just happen in Kenya. And it doesn't just happen in Africa.

Right.

It happens all over the world, in different forms, with different justifications. But we know that when people talk about it, and when, for instance, the tribal elders are made aware of human rights, what happens to a woman after she has undergone FGM, the ripple effect for years to come.

When they are not aware of that, and they become aware of a lot of that information, we've seen people sit up and say, honestly, I had no idea. Let's talk to the village, or the group, or the community, about it, because had I known this, I'm not sure I would have had my own wife do this. Or my own child. My own daughter.

That's encouraging.

So there is a turning of the tide. But it is based on what KaKenya is talking about, which is, saying these things out loud. Talking about them. Naming them. And getting the information out. So whoever is collecting that data, whoever is collating, indexing all of this empirical information, and the interviews and the stories that we hear. When they are able to get it out and share it, it really, really makes a difference.

Now when you talked about earlier the 3 million that are at risk, that is in a year long.

In one year.

This year.

This year.

So we are talking about each year. Right now how many goals have been cut.

Uh-huh.

And as Pamela is saying, it's not only there in Africa. It's happening in the U.S.

Oh, yeah. It's happening in England. It's happening in all these developed countries. And it's no longer their problem, it's our problem.

Uh-huh.

And we must collaboratively really tackle the issue from the root cause. And it's about educating people about it. It's about going out and talking about it. It's about implementing the laws that are in the box. It's actually coming to the village and let's talk about it. Let's understand each other.

Uh-huh.

Yes.

And I am so-- I so appreciate that you differentiate tradition from something that is actually harmful and not cultural. Because we are careful not to-- you know, one wants to respect tradition. And you come from a traditional culture. And you know, if all the traditions got thrown out, it would be a sad thing.

But I appreciate that you say, that's not tradition. That's harm. So I'm very interested too, KaKenya, and Pamela, please weigh in on this. I notice KaKenya, that in your work, you're very careful to keep education, end of child marriage, and end of FGM, all together. Why aren't they separate issues for you? Why is there interconnectedness so important?

When a girl get cut, she get married. Education ends.

It's as simple as that.

So you cannot say this is a separate issue. They are all connected. And in the basics of all that, it's about empowerment. It's about bringing those who don't have access to giving them access. Those who don't have information, to giving them information.

It's about really linking. Education is kind of like the underlying-- the cushion under really solving all these issues that we have in the world. And if we could really start looking at the-- I mean, you can start from global peace. You can-- I mean anything. If there's no education, things don't go right.

Well, that's a question I have for Pamela too. You know, you're doing this lecture series on women's role in global security and prosperity. And I'm-- you know, I wonder if you could just talk about what does education have to do with global security? The education of women.

So it's interesting. Education is not the silver bullet to solve all ills. But it is one of the closest things we have to it. We know from research, and longitudinal research in many countries, many years, that when a girl is educated, she earns more as an adult.

When a girl is educated and she has children, she delays the birth of-- the age in which she gives birth. Those children are healthier, and they become educated. We know that there are public health outcomes. There are educational outcomes. Economic outcomes. Even decision-making and agency outcomes when a girl is educated.

But it's a cycle. So the girls, as I say, are more likely to get educated when their mothers are educated. They're more likely to live long enough to get educated when their mothers are educated. So along with that cycle is the breaking down of barriers and creating systemic change.

When a community, when a country, when an economy values its girls enough to give them a birth certificate, to recognize their birth, so that they can then get educated. To give them seats in a school that is safe and offers a quality education, and makes that educational opportunity sustainable. That's a reflection of a whole host of systems that have changed, just to make those openings.

So there's a-- it's a forward, and it's a circle coming back effect. One might ask, what's so scary about educating girls that we haven't done it before?

One might.

One might. And I think nobody has that answer. But I think the answers lie in these deeply entrenched, very comfortable for some people, cultural norms and traditions that puts everybody in their place.

But that actually makes the world less secure, is what you're saying?

But that actually makes the world less secure. Because it does not promote stability when you have a community teetering on the edge because the women have no part. They are segregated. They are separated. They're not helping that community grow.

When you want to move forward in every aspect, it makes no sense to leave half of your productive population behind. And I don't just mean economically productive. Or productive in agriculture, which women are tremendously productive in that sector.

But with their ideas and their creativity and the boons that we know emerge from diverse problem solving. And we know all this is true. Now there are some direct correlations when women are involved and educated.

They are more likely to support their families, which may prevent some literal security breaches or compromises in the future of those children's-- you know, what they become. We know that when women are educated in an integral part of a community and really part of the decision-making process and leadership process of a community, there's less poverty.

Another facet of some of the insecurities that we see, whether it's food insecurity, actual military or philosophical, as it were, insecurity. Everybody has a stake in the success of the community, the success of the family. And then the ripple effect again, moving outwards. And when everybody is a stakeholder, everybody protects the trajectory forward in a more-- with more ownership.

Yeah, in a more invested way.

In a more invested way, yeah.

Which ultimately benefits everybody. But I have a related question to that, which is about girls' education. Girls-only education. So why educate girls separately? The argument could be made that it would benefit boys to see girls being educated, as though they were their equals. Or being brave and thoughtful and outspoken in the classroom. Why is it important? I think it's sort of fundamental to your work, KaKenya, that these girls have a space.

It really goes back to which community you are coming from. The community come from the same societal ways of doing things is also enforced in the school. So you would find in the school where there are boys and girls, the boys are told-- they go and play soccer. The girls go and sweep the classroom. Or go collect firewood.

Or in a place that is extreme where there's no lights, they will create night classrooms for boys, where girls cannot come. So there is still that ways of not putting the girls to be at the front. Because they're considered, kind of, you know less. And they are considered that they-- they're going to be married any way.

The reason, I think, for me that I really advocate for girls' boarding schools in communities where girls are seen as workers, it's very critical. Because they have to walk to school first. Those walks to schools are dangerous. Sometimes there are human and there are animal predators.

They're raped on their way to school. And people don't talk about rape. You know, when they get to school, they probably didn't eat. And they go back home, there's no lights in the evening for them to study. And they're back to collecting water, cooking in the evening. And all the work that they have to do in the morning before going to school and the evening-- it's like they are workers.

So while we're talking about quality education, and I think this is all education. I think in the U.S. you do the same,

is at the end of the year, you're doing exams. And you're going to test this people the same way. The person who had a teacher all day, and the person who didn't do work all day. They're doing the same exam.

In Kenya, it's extremely-- the exams are put in the thing that actually makes you go to the next grade and makes you go to the next-- to high school. And high school are put in different categories. So if you're very well performing, you go to the top, well-funded high school.

If you're not, you end up in the local that doesn't have any funding. So already there is that division.

Uh-huh.

And when there's that division. Girl doesn't study. She doesn't do well. The father says, ah, you're not even well, you're not even smart in school. You're being an embarrassment to this family. Let's marry you off.

You know the system is already set for you to fail. So when you have girls in a boarding school like we do, they are all their time is to study. All their time is to be children. All their time is to laugh. They're not walking miles. We give them a well-balanced food.

They're really treated well. And you know what? It pays off. When they do their exams, they go to the top national schools in the high school. And it's really about providing the best. And if you don't give the girls that space, everybody out there is waiting for them to be workers.

Well, I'm glad you brought up everybody out there too. Because then what? So they've had this incredibly protected time to flourish. And then, you have a first cohort, right? Graduating high school. And then there's the world, and the world hasn't kept up with their little world, right? So do you prepare them? Or are they so awesome by then that they're ready for the sort of regressive attitudes that they're going to encounter when they get out?

We work with them within the community. So even though they're within the school, they still go to their homes.

Uh-huh.

You know, three times a year. They go stay with their moms and parents. So they're always going back to their homes. And our education is not just about math and English and, you know, whatever sciences.

It's really about building the [INAUDIBLE] by the culture. It's building the girl, building for her to try no matter where she will end. Some will end up in university. Some will end up being NASA. Some of them will be doctors.

Some of them will be pilots. Some of them will be police. I don't know. Whatever they will end up. But they will be the best at whatever place they're going to land. So it's really about building the character, building the people, so

they can thrive anywhere.

So, yes, the world may not be ready for them. But trust me, they are ready for the world. Amazing students. You know, you give them opportunities, and they grab it. And they run with it. I mean, they speak very well.

So maybe your next project could be educating a generation of boys who are up for being partners with these women.

We work with boys too.

You do? Tell me about that.

We work with boys. We have a training where we work-- just build still characters from within boys and girls, how to respect their sisters. It's really about, we are all common. We all contribute to this world. It's not-- doesn't mean that girls are the only people who should wash clothes. You can also wash your own clothes. You know, it doesn't mean that the girls are the only cooks. You can cook for yourself.

So it's really about building a next generation of people who will have-- who can live together harmony. And that means you have to work with the boys and work with the girls. And have those conversations with all of them.

Because you are changing the mindset. You are changing the culture. You are changing the way things have been normally done. And you're really preparing them, not just for the village, but you're preparing them for the world. We're preparing girls in my community for leadership in Kenya. No, they're preparing boys in our community for leadership in Kenya.

It's not just about that village. It should be about out there. What is your purpose in the world? And how are you going to thrive with that? So some will remain in the village. Some will go somewhere else. But it's really about thriving in whatever place that you're going to be.

So what is the landscape in Kenya now? And can you talk a little bit about public and private partnerships? Because I think your schools are-- some of them are private, and some of them are public and private?

We have one that is public-private partnership. And we are in the middle of building a second one that's going to be privately run, or owned. Yes, so it's very critical that we work with the government. Because they-- you know, that to really effect change, you somehow have to find the code for working with the government and really influencing a systemic change.

And some of our work, it's within a district. We started with 100 schools. Now our really goal is to work with about 500 schools within our communities that have the same issues. So we can go to a school, and really start having

those conversations about how is a girl coming to school? Can she be able to say that I was raped?

Where do I go get help? Can she be able to raise her hand and ask questions in class? Can she be able to say, I have a right to go to school? And it's really about building and giving people voices. You know, we're muted. But how about, how can we unmute those voices?

And be heard.

And be heard. And it's beautiful when you see these trainings happening, and finding the girls speaking up, and the boys speaking up. It's beautiful.

That's wonderful. And even I've seen pictures of girls when they arrive at your school, which starts in fourth grade?

Yeah. And a few months later, I mean, a steady diet of food, safety and information, and they're just radiant. They're transformed. It's amazing.

Yeah, magic happens.

Yeah. So you both do such important work on women's rights and girls rights. What inspires you? And what frustrates you?

KaKenya inspires me.

[LAUGHTER]

Me too.

So we're done with that question. So I think the thing that really challenges all of us is the frustratingly slow pace that women's and girls' advancement is happening at, in this world, in this century, forever. You know, it's really remarkable to see that we're in an internet age, a global age, a really forward-looking moment in history.

And yet, you know, three million girls a year are at risk for FGM. 63 million girls are out of school around the world. I mean, they're just-- the statistics are staggering. And they don't make any sense.

Well, and in America, women earn less than men for doing the same work.

That's right. There's a wage gap here. There's a glass ceiling. There's glass walls and glass floors. There's-- I mean, it's pretty remarkable what isn't happening.

Uh-huh.

And I think the frustrating part of that probably boils down to some implicit bias issues that are larger than any one of us. But when you meet somebody like KaKenya, and you see the progress that can be made by one person. One single person against all odds, who then has the right idea, the tenacity to pursue that idea, and then the support of so many people who have heard and understand and say, wait a minute. Now that you say it, now that you put it that way, you're right. This isn't right.

And I believe. I believe in what's right too. I want to help. And KaKenya has built around her. She might not say built, but I would. An amazing group of people and followers. Whether they know they're followers of KaKenya's idea or not, there's myriad numbers of people who are against FGM for their own children.

They don't want to see it. They don't want to marry their girls off at 8, 9, 12 years old. But they don't feel that they have another choice. They don't know what options are out there. And KaKenya has demonstrated what options are out there.

So I've been in global development for 30 years. And it is sadly very unusual to see somebody so steeped in the issues, like KaKenya, that she is actually able to solve the problem. And what frustrates me, if we're going to go on with that theme, is that there aren't more people like that.

It's not necessarily their fault. Right? It's their circumstances. Where they had access, where they created their own access. And how they're able to articulate their own solutions or concerns to share with the world.

But doesn't government play a role as well?

Government plays a role.

In some policies.

Government is able to do a lot. Government is not able to do everything. I think when you partner the government with civil society, with the people on the ground, and with the private sector. That is a very, very powerful trifecta that can really move these issues forward. That can really make change.

It's not easy to get everybody on the same page. Everybody has their own bottom line, as it were. We all do. Private sector does. The government does. Civil society does. But when we see that we-- when we keep our eye on that far-off horizon of what is right and what success can look like, and we all agree on what that goal is, we can go far in reaching it.

KaKenya, does anything-- what inspires you every day In what must be incredibly rewarding work, but also not

easy? And what frustrates you?

I think what frustrates me, which I don't dwell on, is as Pamela said, the slow pace. And I think people are afraid of women leaders. That you ask for a meeting, and you ask for a meeting, and because you're a woman, people have to have another meeting before they meet with you.

It's just that frustration of people not believing. I think people are afraid of change. I think--

Oh, yeah.

If you don't know what it is, you'd really struggle to like, push it back. And I think that took me a lot of years to just build trust in the village. You know, I would come in and build trust with the government. Build trust with the villagers. Build trust.

And it's a very, very slow process. Now, when they see the girls, the success we have done, now, it's easy. It's like, oh, yes. This is wonderful. We are doing a great work. And you are thinking, if we catch on, the day I came on, and they say, let's do it, we'll be very there. We would be like very far.

But that-- we have to be patient. And it's a very-- change is a slow process, and it takes time. And it is a very slow, lonely journey. But that goes back to what inspires me, is that one, the girls that I work with, they are amazing.

What happens in their lives. I mean, you see the transformation. It's like immediate. The moment you tell the girls, you can come to the school. You have a home. You know, you have a boarding. You have books. You have a uniform.

It's like the light. Just their faces just brightens before you can do anything. And that just-- it's really, really special to see that. And to me, also what inspires me, is the outpouring, amazing group of people who know me, who don't know me. Who come along with me and support me with ideas.

You know, having a team, like Pamela, opening their doors. Their networks. You know, I think Pamela was saying, KaKenya did it alone. I actually didn't do this alone. I have a whole village. I have a whole country, literally, that hold me up. That support me. That, you know, when I'm down, they lift me up.

You know, just outpouring love from strangers that became my friends to just, you know, they cheer me on. And that alone-- I can't stop. I have to keep going, because when people believe in what you do, and they come along, then you just have to keep going.

So I am inspired all around. Everywhere I go. I meet people every day that inspire me.

Well, I can say I'm inspired by you. Thank you both so much for coming in today to talk. I'm so sad that we're out of time. But it's been really, really uplifting to speak to both of you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you very much.

[MUSIC PLAYING]