

Tuesday, July 12

COVER

"Educating girls - not if, but when. Not why, but how"

What's working here in Morocco.

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May I ask you a question? Who do you remember helping you get to school? Who do you remember making you go when you did not want to? Who do you remember encouraging you to stay in school when it got tough? I bet you are remembering some women in your life.

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And yet, gender equality in education has not been reached despite the obvious role that women have in children's education.

Today, none of us needs convincing that educating girls is important for now and future generations. Today, none of us needs to hear statistics on gender inequality. We live it everyday here in Africa. What we do need is stories about gender equality – gender successes – girls' getting in, staying in, and having access to higher education and jobs in our cities and towns.

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Today, I want to share three success stories with you. Three local success stories about girls here in Morocco, a country that 10 years ago only had 50% of its girls going to school but now has 95% in school. A country that five years ago only qualified 14% of its girls to go to High School, compared to 43% of its boys qualified. A country that four years ago formed its National Strategy for Gender Equality and Equity. A country that has pushed Gender Responsive Budgeting in its government sector. A country that has successfully mobilized public, private and international groups to provide education and opportunity to girls. Listen for stories that will help you in your country:

SLIDE 5

First, the success of Medersat.com – the Your Schools program sponsored by BMCE Bank Foundation and the Ministry of Education. Focusing on rural Morocco, this unique program built over 60 modern and efficient schools -- in a sustainable way – sustainable because each school brings qualified staff, water capability, and electricity –all the infrastructure needed to make sure these schools stick - not a here-today-gone-tomorrow.

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I want to share a short video showing how this program went into a rural area, adopted a run down Kasbah, renovated it with local people, upgraded it to meet educational needs, and provides equal access to girls and boys. Let's watch one of these schools in action – the Palmeraie – that means Palm Plantation – school in southern Morocco.

WATCH 6 MIN VIDEO

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We can learn many things from medersat, but here are the top three learnings: First, Just as your countries are linguistically diverse, so is Morocco. You saw a linguistic policy that is effective and reasonable for the Berber women of Morocco. Second, make the pedagogy relevant to the rural area. Just as your countries experience rural exodus, so does Morocco – unless the education is grounded in specific local cultural and ecological features. Third, integrate the school into the community – you listened to the mothers, fathers, local officials all share in this school – their school for their children. This team, this local team and the country's large BMCE bank Foundation, is what makes these schools successful and sustainable for years to come.

Mederset is big, bold, and sponsored by a bank foundation. My second example is small, simple and owned by parents in the mountains of Ifrane Morocco.

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Ifrane is the coldest recorded place in all of Africa – 1650m elevation, Ifrane is a small rural community that is home to Al Akhawayn University – one of Morocco's finest. But it is also a place where illiteracy is over 60% and girls do not go to school in the winter – when you have a meter of snow on the ground, girls are kept home. To fix this, a local group of parents asked American philanthropist to donate funds to install central heating in public schools. Heating. That's it. 30000 USD heats an entire school for almost 1000 children. In the last three years, over 3000 children have benefited from this simple gift. Girls now attend school all winter – 100%. And our best surprise - the teachers are now coming during the winter – because it is the warmest place in town!

If mederset focuses on access for rural girls in Southern Morocco, and Ifrane focuses on keeping girls in mountain schools during the year, then my third example equips girls to be the future leaders - the George Washington Academy in Casablanca.

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GWA is the first not for profit private school in Morocco. GWA was founded by a Moroccan and American as a not for profit American school that is trilingual – English, French, Arabic. The first – and only – in Morocco, GWA brings an American style education to the middle class which is critical to a growing democracy.

GWA focuses on equipping minds and building character in girls so they can reach the highest levels of their achievement. With over 700 students, 65% female, GWA actively mentors young women including this year's valedictorian - a Moroccan young woman who was admitted to Georgetown, George Washington University and George Mason University.

We have found you must invest in the growing middle class and educating its girls is at the core. Girls at GWA are mentored by American teachers, Moroccan and American businesswomen, international diplomats and humanitarian groups. They focus on developing leadership skills, quantitative skills, and character – in a very multicultural

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setting, preparing them for life outside of school walls.

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GWA's goal is to teach these young women to be strong team players in this global environment – college, jobs life. Many GWA girls are the first in their families to graduate high school and college. To be ready to handle the challenges of college on a global scale, GWA's American/Moroccan curriculum gives them the confidence and character to be leaders in a multicultural, multilingual world. The young women go to top universities like Penn State studying physics, engineering and international studies. GWA is proud to watch them return to Morocco and Africa, bringing their skills and inspiration to the next generation of girls.

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Let's watch some of them in action at GWA, hearing their opinions about education, about globalization, and seeing them interact with their peers – boys and girls - from around the world.

SHOW VIDEO

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So what lessons do we learn from this? First, young women must be mentored to have confidence to articulate their goals, aspirations, and to debate – alongside boys – to be successful in our global village. Second, young women must have language skills – in Morocco that is French, Arabic and the ever important English. Third, GWA encourages learning alongside boys from many cultures so the girls at GWA are mentored to be comfortable and confident in their opinions about themselves and their world.

So, you have seen a range of success stories – from mederset's opening rural schools that give girls access to early education to GWA's equipping minds and building character in Morocco's middle class, future female leaders.

The question is not IF girls get access or WHY it is important. The question is HOW and WHEN do we do this in our countries? Morocco is successful in answering this question using TEAMS - from the country to the city, they bring together teams of local communities, national businesses, and international philanthropists .

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May I ask you a question? Who do you remember helping you get to school? My hope and prayer is that 20 years from now, this audience will remember their mederset school, their heating in Ifrane and GWA. It won't just be about girls anymore– it will be about teams, working together, for everybody. That's How;