

Webinar: The role of gender equality and girls' education in times of COVID-19

Wednesday, September 9, 2020 at 2pm CEST

Participant biographies

Moderators



Maryam and Nivaal Rehman, Co-Founders of The World With MNR and Education Transformers at UNGEI

Maryam and Nivaal Rehman are twin activists, journalists and filmmakers based in Toronto, Canada. They are currently pursuing a double major in International Relations and Peace Conflict and Justice Studies with a minor in Women in Gender Studies at the University of Toronto. They became activists when they were eight-years old and started inspiring girls in their village in Pakistan to continue their education, when poverty was leading them to quit school and work instead. The now 19-year-old twins have since worked in their local and global community for various causes. They even have their own non-profit, The World With MNR, that uses advocacy, storytelling and development to take action for climate justice, gender equality and inclusivity, and inspire others to do the same.

They are continuing their activism through volunteering, traveling and sharing their experiences through their social media and their YouTube channel, The World With MNR. They've used their platform to cover several events — from the Social Good Summit in New York City, to the UN Girl Up Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. — and interview global figures, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Nobel Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, and Madame Christine Lagarde, President of the European Central Bank. They have also worked with global companies and nonprofits including the UN Girls' Education Initiative, the Malala Fund and the Walt Disney Company to name a few, on various projects for social good. Their activism has led to recognition in media and several awards, including the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award (now the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers). Most recently, they released their documentary on the status of girls' education in Pakistan, and held global screenings to spark further conversation and inspire audience members to take action themselves.

Speakers



Rasmus Prehn, Minister for Development Cooperation, Denmark

Mr. Rasmus Prehn was named Minister for Development Cooperation in June 2019 and is the former chairman of the Danish Research, Education and Further Education Committee. He is also a former folk high school teacher, with a master's degree in social science and has been a member of Danish Parliament since 2005.



David Moinina Sengeh, Chief Innovation Officer & Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, Sierra Leone

David Moinina Sengeh is Sierra Leone's first-ever chief innovation officer. He is also the Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education. Previously he was a research scientist at IBM Research Africa, Nairobi. David was born and raised in Sierra Leone, and received his PhD at the MIT Media Lab, where his research in the biomechatronics group focused on the design of comfortable prosthetic sockets and wearable interfaces. He is the president and co-founder of the international NGO Global Minimum (GMin). Currently, GMin's main project is Innovate Challenges: the first-ever competition created to foster a culture of innovation among high-school students in Africa, where youth can get help in transforming their ideas into tangible solutions. GMin was one of three winners out of 1,000 nominees for the Rockefeller Foundation Next Century Innovators Awards.



Alice Albright, Chief Executive Officer, Global Partnership for Education

Ms. Alice P. Albright was appointed as the first Chief Executive Officer of the Global Partnership for Education's Secretariat in February 2013. Since joining GPE, Ms. Albright has strengthened the position of GPE to be a major delivery agency of the Sustainable Development Goals agenda. Before taking on her role as CEO at GPE, Ms. Albright served in the Obama Administration as the Executive Vice President & Chief Operating Officer of the Export-Import Bank of the United States (Ex-Im Bank) from 2009 to 2013. From 2001 to 2009, Ms. Albright served as the Chief Financial and Investment Officer for the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI) and from 2003, additionally, as the head of GAVI's Washington DC office. Previously, Ms. Albright worked as a banker with a focus on emerging markets and held a variety of positions at the Carlyle Group, JP Morgan, Bankers Trust Company and Citicorp.



Aksel Jakobsen, State Secretary of International Development for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Aksel Jakobsen is State Secretary of International Development in the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Prior to taking up his current post, State Secretary Jakobsen worked as a senior policy advisor to the Christian Democratic Party's Parliamentary group. Before that, he worked as an advisor to the GAVI Board Chair.

Discussants



Aya Chebbi, African Union Youth Envoy

Aya Chebbi is an award-winning Pan-African feminist and the founder of Afrika Youth Movement (AYM), one of Africa's largest Pan-African youth-led movements. She was recognized in 2018 Apolitical List of The World's 100 Most Influential Young People in Government and 2016 List of 100 Under 40 Most Influential Africans in the World. Chebbi's extensive experience over the past decade made her an influential political voice known for rebranding Africa and commitment to youth empowerment, Peacebuilding and Africa's integration. She currently serves as the first African Union Youth Envoy and the youngest diplomat at the African Union Commission Chairperson's Cabinet.



Sonita Alizadeh, Rapper and Girls Not Brides Champion

Sonita uses her rap lyrics and voice to help end child marriage and inspire people everywhere to dream bigger dreams. Sonita was born in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime, but grew up as an undocumented refugee in Iran. She twice escaped being sold as a child bride – a tradition rooted in gender inequity that stretches across cultures worldwide. Though rapping was illegal for her as a girl in Iran, music became her outlet for expression and for hope. One of Sonita's first homemade music videos, "Daughters for Sale" powerfully brought voice to the silent pain of so many of her friends experiencing child marriage. Fast forward to now, after coming to the US on scholarship, currently, Sonita is a college student, and still continuing her activism through rap music to be the spokesperson for the rights of girls to choose their own destiny.



Mohamed Sidibay, Peace Activist and GPE Youth Champion

Mohamed's story is one of resilience. Born in Sierra Leone, West Africa, he witnessed the RUF murder his family when he was only five years old. For the next four years, Mohamed was forcefully conscripted as a child soldier for the same men that murdered his family. In 2002, at the age of 10, he became homeless. Through the help of UNICEF Sierra Leone, Mohamed was enrolled in school for the first time when he was ten years old. After moving to the U.S. in 2007, Mohamed completed high school and went on to receive his Bachelor of Arts from the George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs. Today, at 27 years old, Mohamed is an internationally recognized voice for children in armed conflict. He has been featured on Forbes, Le Monde, BBC, France 24, and Project Syndicate amongst others. He is a member of The High-Level Reflection Group on Strategic Transformation that advises the Director-General of UNESCO. He is a Youth Champion for the Global Partnership for Education and co-hosted the 2018 GPE Replenishment Conference. Mohamed is in his final year of a three-year dual law degree program, where he is pursuing his Juris Doctor (JD) from Fordham, and his L.L.M from Sorbonne Assas Paris II. Upon graduation in 2021, Mohamed will begin his legal career as a Corporate Associate in the NY Office of the global law firm of Covington & Burling LLP.