



Fatima Frank and Tisiyenji Ngoma's speech to Prince Harry at the Queen's Commonwealth Trust Event, Lusaka

27 November 2018

Tisiyenji

My name is Tisiyenji, from Kasama District, Zambia.

We are so proud to stand with these fellow leaders from Zambia to change young people's futures.

Let me introduce our sisterhood: CAMA.

We are partners with The Queen's Commonwealth Trust. The Queen's Commonwealth Trust came to us because we are leaders and experts.

We are a family without borders -- from Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Ghana.

We are united by a background of poverty, and a commitment to a better future.

All of us completed our education against great odds.

CAMA was born 20 years ago. From tiny beginning we are now 120,000 young leaders.

We understand the issues our communities face.

We use our experience of poverty, of isolation, of gender inequality to change the default settings that lead to exclusion, isolation, abuse, and child marriage.

We work with parents, teachers, government officials and traditional leaders to create a better world for everyone.

Fatima

My name is Fatima, from Zomba District, Malawi.

You know, education is the one thing that brought all of us here today.

52.2 million girls in sub-Saharan Africa are out of school.

75% of girls start primary school, but only 8% will finish secondary school.

Yet the 17 Global Goals to make our planet healthier, wealthier, and safer all depend on girls' education.

But when food is a problem, how can families pay for school?

So as CAMA, we club together to help girls pay for school fees, books, uniforms.

We also help provide and sew sanitary pads. This is so important, because 10% of girls in Africa miss school every time they have their period; and then they start failing exams.

We work with communities to make schools safer, and to cook for the students. We help provide safe lodgings and bicycles for girls who live far from school.

Tisiyenji

We mentor children in our local schools and help them build their confidence with life skills.

We use our own stories to explain that we understand what girls are going through.

I lost my father at a young age. I would have dropped out of school, a child bride.

Then the support I received changed my life forever.

Now I am a university graduate with a bakery business.

I support my siblings and 5 other students through school.

And together we have to give more girls the chance we got.

Half of the 1 billion people in sub-Saharan Africa are under 25.

Only 1 in 4 youth will find a waged job.

90% will work in the informal economy and face exploitation, especially women.

We need financial independence to make choices over our bodies and our lives.

So CAMA also helps girls succeed after school with financial and business skills, and access to grants and loans.

Most of us run businesses. I could share hundreds of success stories.

Ruka here from Ghana runs an award-winning meat processing business. She's mentored and trained thousands of young people.

Salma from Tanzania sells home appliances, mentors students and teaches business skills to hundreds more.

Esnath from Zimbabwe is an expert in sustainable agriculture and shares her skills with hundreds of farmers.

With her profits, each CAMA member supports 2 more girls at secondary school.

We are here on The Queen's Commonwealth Trust platform to talk about these important issues and why we are in partnership with The Queen's Commonwealth Trust.

Fatima

As an educated woman, I am a role model in my community.

Someone who can address the chief.

I went to see him to say, “I’m not happy with the number of girls that are dropping out of school, the challenges that we continue to face. Things need to change.”

He said, “Things have always been this way. You are just a small girl - how can you tell me what to do? Would you have become a teacher if this was not working?”

I said, “Sir, if I showed you the scars I got just trying to get through the barriers that are in this community for girls, you would be shocked.

But they’re not physical, they’re emotional - the torture I went through to become who I am today.

With all due respect, I am a girl, so I understand this problem better than you.”

And I explained why – how poverty drives every decision for families, putting girls at risk of dropping out of school and becoming child brides. This issue affects so many girls. We must do things differently.

The chief looked at me very carefully.

You know what happened?

He called all the other local leaders, and said, “Next time we discuss how to support girls, make sure Fatima is there. She is now our teacher.”

He recognised what I could do.

Sir, The Queen’s Commonwealth Trust recognised CAMA, our movement, our momentum, our ability and our expertise.

In collaboration, we launched The Queen’s CAMA Commonwealth Fund to help us reach more children more quickly.

It began in Tanzania and Ghana in 2017, where we've already supported 3,490 children to go to school. In time, they will join us and help others, too.

It was so successful that another donor funded the expansion to Zimbabwe. The Fund is growing there, too.

Tisiyenji

In September, we launched the Fund here in Zambia.

All of us stand here today as a living testament to the potential wasted when children are denied their right to education.

Together, with The Queen's Commonwealth Trust at our side, we are an unstoppable movement for change.