

Ep. 8: Girls Who Dream Big

[00:00:00] **Trudy Hall:** Hello, there you are listening to on educating girls, create a world of possibilities, a podcast produced by the coalition of girls schools. I'm your host fruity hall who years ago began wondering about educating girls and for the last 40 years never stopped doing so. I include myself in the fine company of educators for whom the education of girls is both professional calling.

[00:00:27] And a personal mission for those of you who have listened to on educating girls before you know that the focus is always on providing opportunities for the adults and gross lives to learn more and understand better what girls need to thrive both in school and in life. So the content of our conversation today may surprise you.

[00:00:47] I'm hopeful. It will connect you a new ways and with fresh insights to the world of girls education. Today, I'm thrilled to speak with two women whose vision for the education of girls has linked them to each other. And to girls [00:01:00] schools around the globe, to women who think big when it comes to educating girls, my family

[00:01:05] **Shabana Basij-Rasikh:** believes in me, I dream big, but my family dreams even bigger for me.

[00:01:12] That's why I am a global ambassador for 10 times 10, a global campaign to educate women. That's why I co founded. The first and perhaps only boarding school for girls in Afghanistan, a country where it's still risky for girls to go to school. The exciting thing is that I see students at my school with ambition grabbing at opportunity

[00:01:40] **Trudy Hall:** that is shabaneh or sick in 2012, a newly minted college graduate.

[00:01:48] Talking about her big dream to educate girls in Afghanistan, through starting Sola, S O L a the school of leadership in Kabul Afghanistan, the first and the only residential [00:02:00] school for girls in Afghanistan. Her story is at the center of our episode, her story, the story of Sola and where it is now after the Talibans returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021.

[00:02:12] It's only possible through a global network of support. She created through her visionary leadership and relentless commitment to a single goal. In her words, quote, the education of Afghanistan's girls may be the single most effective antidote to extremism in that country and quote at no

[00:02:32] **Megan Murphy:** other time.

[00:02:32] Has there been among girls and young women, such a deep sense of shared potential purpose and. There is no doubt the time for girls and for girls schools is now. And that's why I'm so pleased to announce NCGS is repositioning as a global coalition with more than 300 girls schools in 15 countries and growing every day, our membership and our [00:03:00] mission will more accurately and more inclusively be reflected by our new name, the international coalition of girls schools.

[00:03:09] **Trudy Hall:** And that was Megan Murphy, the executive director of the national coalition of girls schools recently announcing that this coalition of girls schools around the world whose membership has become significantly more international since 2012 will now reposition itself as a global resource for girls schools as the international coalition of girls schools in the last decade during her leadership tenure, Megan too, has been relentless about a single.

[00:03:36] Connecting and collaborating globally with individuals, schools, and organizations dedicated to educating and empowering girls. How have the visions of these two forward-thinking leaders become intertwined? And what does their story have to teach us about leadership in a global realm? This is a story about leadership done well through collaboration and integrity.[00:04:00]

[00:04:00] In fact, you may want to share this episode with your daughters after it inspires. I

[00:04:05] **Shabana Basij-Rasikh:** never imagined Avalon the stone would fall as fast as it did.

[00:04:16] No one imagined it, but I will tell you this on August 1st, we were bringing our students back to call them after their semester break on August 15. The Taliban or in Kabul and in control. And on August 30th, we were holding our second day of classes at our new campus in Rwanda with our entire community together and safe.

[00:04:49] **Trudy Hall:** I know that sound clip from shabaneh seems to carry a straight to a happy. Yes, the girls of Sola are safe for now, but it leaves out so [00:05:00] very much. What sort of leadership did that chapter take? Where did help come from? And what's next? Let me introduce shabaneh and Megan, so we can find out born and raised in Kabul.

[00:05:13] Shabaneh finished high school in the U S through the state department's youth exchange studies program, then enrolled at Middlebury. It was in 2008 as a student of Middlebury that shabaneh co-founded Sola shabaneh is a 2011 Magna

cum laude graduate of Middlebury college. And she holds a master's from Oxford university in 2018.

[00:05:36] Shabaneh was awarded the Malala metal. One of Afghanistan's highest national honors for her work in promoting girls access to education. In 2019, she was named at the Forbes 30, under 30 Asia list in the social entrepreneurship sector in 2021. As the events in Afghanistan, shocked the world, the Washington post named her a contributor to their global opinions [00:06:00] section.

[00:06:02] Megan earned her BA from Allegheny college and an ma from the university of Pittsburgh. Her early career in educational administration, took her through admissions and development leadership. Working in the college realm initially until she was recruited to the Marlboro school in Los Angeles, she joined NCGS in 2012 where her development of global strategic alliances led to the first ever global forum on girls education in 2016, an event, which now happens, try any early where educators from around the globe come together to exchange ideas about innovative approaches.

[00:06:35] For academic excellence and the healthy development of girls she's well-known in the girls school arena as a thought leader in global conversations related to advancing girls. Let me offer a warm welcome to both of you. I feel so privileged to have this opportunity to be with you as we talk about dreaming big and what that takes.

[00:06:57] And Megan, I'd like to start our conversation by asking you [00:07:00] how you first. About Sola and the vision that Shevana had for Afghanistan's girls, um,

[00:07:05] **Megan Murphy:** Trudy and Shavasana. It is so nice to be with you. Um, I actually met shabaneh many years ago at a conference for boarding schools in Washington, DC. And I knew right away that I met someone who had an incredibly important vision for girls education in Afghanistan.

[00:07:24] I also knew that shabaneh possessed the agency and self-efficacy. To make her vision a reality by establishing solar right then and there I was keenly interested in following and supporting Shevana's work. And so from that meeting, we stayed in touch. Sola became a member of our coalition. And then shabaneh you attended the global forum on girls' education.

[00:07:50] And that drew nearly 1000 educators from 24 different countries who all came together to talk about best practices for [00:08:00] teaching and learning of girls. And subhan his presentation at that convening was incredibly well received. So shabaneh, and I have been friends and colleagues and I certainly have been a follower of her writing and her work, uh, ever since we.

[00:08:15] **Trudy Hall:** Uh, thanks so much for that, that tells me that Shabana knew exactly what she was doing when she started her school, that she came to, uh, the resources that were offered by the organization. And shabaneh from the moment I heard you are Ted women talk in 2012, I was there in the audience. Very exciting. It was clear that you were a woman on the.

[00:08:35] Can you tell us a bit about your thought process in expanding global awareness of your vision? How did you go about networking in the earliest days of solos existence?

[00:08:45] **Shabana Basij-Rasikh:** Um, thank you so much. It truly is a pleasure to be speaking with you and Megan today. Um, the core ideas behind. Solar, the creation of solar was that we would create networks of sisterhood across Atlanta, sun, um, [00:09:00] and, uh, by definition it needed to be expanded.

[00:09:03] Um, you know, if we wanted to create that, uh, in Afghanistan, nationally, we needed, uh, soldiers and institution to model that, and it's a work and operation. And so, um, it was incredibly important for us to be connected to the right networks and, and to be learning from. Uh, models that already exist and has worked for centuries, um, boarding school, uh, model, uh, solar, bringing it for the first time in Afghanistan and while localizing, uh, this model of education, I want to start with.

[00:09:37] Um, very critical for the success of, uh, solar. It was clear that we had so much to learn, uh, from our sister schools across the world. Um, and it was really wonderful to know at that early stage that there are these coalitions and networks that already exist supporting, uh, [00:10:00] similar initial.

[00:10:01] **Trudy Hall:** So I know that no books are going to be written about the journey that you and Sola have made over the last decade or so.

[00:10:09] And I'm apologizing in advance for skipping lightly over some of that history that some of our listeners may not know about. But I want to dive into what's happened over the last year. I've heard you say quote, when you face the uncertainty of what might be, you can turn it into the certainty. Of what will be end quote, how did you go about facing the uncertainty of the return of the Taliban and what factors did you have to take into consideration?

[00:10:41] I

[00:10:41] **Shabana Basij-Rasikh:** have to be honest there truly, um, that when, when this was becoming more eminent, um, I was facing this, uh, uh, on two levels, um, on a deeply personal level, I was in complete denial. Um, really, uh, [00:11:00] eh, could

not, and still feel to wrap my head around, uh, the decision, um, to unconditionally withdraw, um, troops from Afghanistan.

[00:11:12] Um, I was in utter shock. Uh, didn't believe it could happen. Um, so even to the very end, um, August 15th, when I got that news, Um, that the Taliban had entered Cabo city. I was in Kabul city and I still could not believe it, but that was a very personal human response. Throughout this whole time. I kept on telling myself this can't happen.

[00:11:42] This can't be, and the world has invested so much, uh, both in terms of human resources and financial resources in Afghanistan. This just can't happen. But then, uh, There was this other side of me as a, um, [00:12:00] uh, founder of, uh, the first and only private all girls boarding school in, in Afghanistan, in a country where it was already so sensitive to operate this model of education for girls, inviting girls from the most remote parts of the country.

[00:12:20] Uh, to come to Cabo city to a safe and nurturing space to be educated. And in that role, I felt an enormous sense of responsibility. Um, I knew, um, even before the, uh, April, 2021 announcement, uh, That, uh, in fact, uh, much, much earlier than that, I knew that, uh, there will be a time when, if it comes to it operating as usual would be incredibly, um, irresponsible [00:13:00] precisely because solar is a school of nearly a hundred girls.

[00:13:07] Where our students come from 28 of the 34 provinces it's core to our mission that we recruit girls from the most remote parts of Afghanistan. Each year, we look at our admission season as a, as an opportunity, um, to bring girls African girls who might be, uh, Uh, you know, on the verge of not being able to continue, uh, with their education, uh, all incredibly bright and smart girls, but may not have the resources to continue.

[00:13:40] And, and naturally that means girls coming from different parts of the country. So a lot of our, without being able to go into much detail, a lot of our decision-making, uh, was informed by looking at. Constantly looking at the districts where our girls were coming from against the districts that [00:14:00] were falling to the control of Taliban.

[00:14:02] Um, and I think what guided, uh, me and my team, uh, who was incredibly plugged in throughout the entire process was the fact that we put the continuum of learning for our girls at the center of everything we were trying. Their safety, their safety first, but then immediately after that was that continually of their learning.

[00:14:29] A lot of times when people talk about Afghanistan, it's always about the recent events of Taliban takeover. And even though COVID is so present in our lives,

so much of our recent decisions have been shaped by, by COVID challenges. But when it comes to Afghanistan, that almost. Uh, crosses people's minds unless you remind them.

[00:14:54] And we were already dealing with those challenges, ensuring that our girls have continually of [00:15:00] learning in that kind of environment. And then this happened. So we were navigating a lot of uncertainty. To begin

[00:15:06] **Trudy Hall:** with. I know that Megan, you became aware through your global network of girls schools, that girls schools should come together somehow in support of what was going on with solar.

[00:15:17] Can you talk a little bit about the networking that occurred as we began to hear news of what was going on in Afghan?

[00:15:25] **Megan Murphy:** Um, sure. Trudy, it was, um, I believe it was August 30th and I received a call from Dr. Muira, this one napkin, uh, who was very interested in making sure that, uh, our community and our network, uh, convened, uh, because we needed and wanted to see.

[00:15:44] Uh, solar students, uh, continue their education uninterrupted. And so sure enough, within 48 hours, uh, a group of school leaders came together in the zoom room and collaborated in order to do whatever we could to see a [00:16:00] continuity of education for solar.

[00:16:03] **Trudy Hall:** And so, you know, shabaneh, as you've just mentioned, you're sort of bravely holding your school community together through COVID through, you know, what's going on in Qubole.

[00:16:14] Um, and yet that taking a break from all that intensity. I know, as a leader, you also had to stay focused on the future too. So you're, you're dealing with two worlds. You're dealing with what's going on immediately, but you're also dealing with where you want to see, um, so long ago. And you've always spoken about flexibility and adaptability as being key for leaders.

[00:16:37] What are you and your team thinking about creatively?

[00:16:42] **Shabana Basij-Rasikh:** You know, um, like I mentioned earlier, um, continuity. Yeah. Uh, learning for our students, uh, was at the core of, um, the decisions that we were trying to make. And prior to, um, [00:17:00] you know, collapse of, uh, Afghanistan, uh, we'd been looking at a number of, uh, contingency plans.

[00:17:08] Um, we had looked at, um, several options. We had looked. Uh, do we send our girls home so that they are out of harm's way and in a safe environment with their families and provide them with, uh, smartphones or laptops and monthly internet, uh, access, uh, and switch them to online learning like we had done, um, in the beginning of COVID, uh, though not perfect, but we thought of that as a student.

[00:17:42] Uh, and as we were exploring that possibility, uh, one of the things that really concerned us, um, this was in early summer, uh, the, uh, we saw a trend, uh, on which the Taliban were increasingly, um, [00:18:00] targeting, uh, the electricity infrastructure and telecommunication infrastructure, uh, which meant, uh, It was very likely that a lot of places, uh, in provinces and in cities would be cut off from electricity access.

[00:18:19] Um, and even if our students had these laptops or smartphones, if they didn't have electricity to keep those, uh, charged or powered, it meant we lost access to them. Even though to begin with that access was not going to be perfect. One. Um, and so then, uh, our nightmare became in that scenario that we would send the girls home and then we would have no way of contacting them or reaching them.

[00:18:49] And then they will have no way of being able to reconvene. Um, similar to this, we explored many other, [00:19:00] uh, Possibilities. Um, and the one that ultimately made most sense to us was, um, conducting a study abroad program for all of our students. Um, we initially looked at this, uh, with a lot of flexibility. This could be a semester abroad.

[00:19:27] Well, this could be a year abroad and that's how we are communicated that to the parents of our students. Um, the idea again was that there was so much political uncertainty, uh, in Kabul. Um, there were far more questions about how, uh, the unconditional. Withdrawal of troops would take place. What would that mean?

[00:19:55] Uh, on the ground? Um, there was already so [00:20:00] much, um, so many challenges, uh, where, you know, in terms of coming to any kind of a negotiated political negotiated, um, settlement or our agreement with a set of conditions that. The announcement of making the withdrawal, unconditional, uh, removed any incentive for, uh, for the Taliban to really agree to anything.

[00:20:29] Um, and even though a lot of people, uh, in Washington, DC and in Kabul, uh, did not imagine. The scenario at that time of Taliban takeover? Um, I think even Taliban at one point said they were quite surprised that they took over Cabo, uh, city or the entire country that quickly. But, um, what remained, um, [00:21:00] the, the reality.

[00:21:01] Um, this additional layer of uncertainty that we hadn't dealt with, no one had dealt with. And though, um, from solar's inception in 2008 to date, we've always navigated, uh, uncertainty and we have done so incredibly brilliantly, uh, when it comes to educating us on girls. But the thought process behind the study abroad program was that.

[00:21:31] Uh, let's take our student for an amazing experience. We've always done this, um, every year, uh, for a smaller group of students taking them to, uh, partner schools in India. For instance, we had done that for the past five years. Uh, let's let's do this, but this time for the entire student body and until. You know, we get some clarity about what's going to [00:22:00] happen.

[00:22:01] Politically in Kabul, our students will be out of immediate physical harm's way able to get a grade. Experience, uh, studying abroad and then we will return, um, uh, remember the, at this point we were fully, fully engaged in constructing a campus, uh, the heart of complicity. Um, so the thought process was let's take our girls abroad.

[00:22:31] Uh, let's continue to. Uh, accelerate building our own campus in Kabul and while the semester or a year, um, is in process, uh, when the students return, they will come back to our own permanent campus in Calvin city. Um, so, uh, we switched gear that made more sense. Uh, we could logistically look at it and then we switched gear to.

[00:22:59] Trying [00:23:00] to identify, um, host nations and, um, you know, uh, there was a lot of details that we needed to sort through. Um, and then, uh, in July, um, there was a decree issued by the Taliban, um, that shook the nation, uh, I remember that night really clearly, uh, after the, the decree was, um, a decree came out, um, a, which said that families who had, uh, daughters between the ages of 15 and older, um, that they had to be married off to Taliban, uh, soldiers, um, Cabo city that was already dealing with so.

[00:23:49] Uh, felt, uh, like it was suffocating. Um, and, um, the next, the next day, uh, I was in conversation with a [00:24:00] couple of my colleagues, uh, at solar, uh, who have young daughters, um, uh, one high school age in university age. And, um, and she came to me, um, Telling me that, um, she and her husband, uh, spoke about this decree and they decided that they had gone back and forth as to what they're going to do.

[00:24:28] Um, should they, should they arrange a marriage for, for their young daughters so that they won't have to be subject to being married off of the Taliban or they explored many options and they finally had settled on. Um, buying poison. And, uh, they decided that when the Taliban takeover Cabo city, they're going to

poison their daughters, [00:25:00] um, I cannot fully express, um, what I felt and how I felt when my colleague was sharing this with me.

[00:25:14] Um, it was quite sickening. Um, but I also felt so helpless. Um, I felt so angry and ashamed and, um, there was just a, just a range of emotions I was experiencing, um, with a colleague who. Um, was sharing this with me here is, uh, an Afghan woman, uh, who grew up without an education and always talked about how she wishes.

[00:25:53] She had the opportunity to go to school, but didn't because of war because of [00:26:00] years of war and how she's been so invested in her daughter's education.

[00:26:09] **Trudy Hall:** That story is heartbreaking. It's unbelievable. It's unsettling. And it's happening to you as a person, as you're leading. How are you able, are you able to separate what is happening to your heart and your mind when you hear a story like that and still continue to live?

[00:26:35] An entire community, or is it important to you that you don't separate, that you stay with one with, with the way you feel and the, and that's part of how you lead? Cause that story really is, uh, an unbelievable story. I mean, it clearly it happened, but I mean, it just touches us in an inhumane way when we hear

[00:26:54] **Shabana Basij-Rasikh:** it, th there is a reason why I am sharing this story, um, to, [00:27:00] um, you know, What we ended up doing, um, when I heard this, um, it was very clear, um, that when we were looking at our study abroad program, yeah, it couldn't be just our hundred girls studying abroad that it needed to be, um, taking the entire solar community abroad, uh, for.

[00:27:28] And so that expanded, that's how solar went from a school of nearly a hundred girls, um, to a community of 250 people. Once we left, uh, Afghanistan, we, uh, we were incredibly in incredibly fortunate, um, to, uh, to be able to. Uh, relocate, um, to the amazing nation of Rwanda. In fact, as I'm [00:28:00] telling you this right now, exactly at this time six months ago, I mean, literally to the hour, uh, we were, uh, on a plane, the entire community of nearly 250 people.

[00:28:18] On a plane, uh, from Doha, uh, to Kigali, um, exactly six months ago. Um, and I remain incredibly grateful to, um, the nation of Rwanda, um, for opening their arms, um, to, uh, hosting. Uh, it happened quite fast. It happened quite efficiently. And, uh, our community since arriving there, our students, our colleagues, um, they have not, um, felt like refugees or outsiders.

[00:28:55] Um, so what ended up happening was, uh, we did [00:29:00] leave Kabul. Not just with the nearly a hundred students, but it was our a hundred students plus several of, uh, solar graduates, uh, who were studying at various universities in the region, but were home for the summer break or had graduated from those universities and were working in Kabul city.

[00:29:26] And, uh, they were part of it. And then, uh, so our, uh, Faculty staff and immediate family members of our faculty and staff. And that's what, uh, made up are nearly 250, uh, community members. Um, it, you know, it was difficult, um, to, um, to have to define, uh, what our community. [00:30:00] I was going to who, who was going to be part of that community.

[00:30:05] So to your question, uh, sometimes that separation isn't helpful sometimes in fact, keeping all of this as a leader together is necessary. Um, and I have, I have remarkable colleagues. I have, um, the leadership at solar. Um, they've all been. And in the success of solar, uh, it's no surprise that we arrived in Rwanda on August 25th.

[00:30:41] And by August 29th, our students were back in classes. We resumed classes that quickly. Um, and it was precisely again, um, Very detailed planning [00:31:00] in this incredibly difficult time. Of how do we ensure that our girls are the center of everything we do at solar?

[00:31:12] **Trudy Hall:** So I, I keep hearing several things. When you talk about Sola, I hear the criticality of the continuity of their educational process, and I hear a consistent theme about their physical and emotional safety.

[00:31:28] Megan, as you listen to, um, shabaneh tell the story of what it took to take a community and actually make it global. Uh, that whole community changed the way it was pulled together. It had different membership. It lived in a different country. Um, you yourself are facing a leadership challenge in which you're going to have to create.

[00:31:55] Global community just as shabaneh has had to [00:32:00] move through. What do you think about that? Like how do you, as you listen to her story, what keeps you centered? What are, what are your driving principles as you build your community? Solas

[00:32:10] **Megan Murphy:** journey does really highlight for us the power of connection and community.

[00:32:16] And I think that that is inherent in who we are as a community of girls schools. It's also. Makes us sadly aware that Afghanistan is not the only country in

which girls need our support and our commitment and Shavasana through telling your story of Sola. It's just a real opportunity for us to shine a very bright spotlight on the critical need to ensure that we have safer, higher quality education for girls.

[00:32:53] Globally. And that's where our international coalition of girls schools is [00:33:00] positioned to make those connections and to build a stronger community of girls schools. I think Judy, the pandemic really required us to develop new patterns of work and new patterns for connection. And what we learned at our coalition is.

[00:33:18] Were, we were able to bring together 2,500 educators over 85% of our membership to find solutions, to delivering a quality education to girls during the pandemic. And through that. Schools were no longer working locally and regionally. They connected across the globe and we saw firsthand how that combustible energy lifted up those regional discussions and school centered conversations to new places, to new Heights.

[00:33:57] And through that, we learned the [00:34:00] greater possibility. For the girls who we serve in our schools. It's interesting. Our international coalition of girls schools includes Sola as well as schools throughout Canada and the United States. Our schools are in Australia. In Rwanda in South Africa and a total of 16 different countries.

[00:34:24] And they're incredibly diverse. They are public and state schools. They are independent. They are day schools in their boarding schools, but what really brings our community of schools together is this shared commitment to the transformative experience that happens when you bring girls to get. And I think a set of shared values, our schools, whether it's solar or a school in Johannesburg girls' schools share this commitment to agency and self-efficacy to community and collaboration, leadership, and [00:35:00] integrity, and an incredibly strong commitment to equity and inclusion.

[00:35:05] **Trudy Hall:** And I'm as you described that, Megan, um, and this need for girls around the globe to really feel empowered, to take on their role as change makers and to become this next generation that lifts up, um, you know, the issues that humanity needs to deal with and tackle them firsthand. As you both think about that.

[00:35:28] I want to go back to what drives you personally. I'm always intrigued. When I talked to strong successful women leaders, when they have been guiding organizations through significant change personally, do you have a set of values that guides you shabaneh what, what, what is your true north? What keeps you moving steadily through times of transition and change for me?

[00:35:54] **Shabana Basij-Rasikh:** You know, uh, it, it is, it is our vision solar's mission and vision. I have [00:36:00] never, ever had any doubt in my mind about solar's mission and vision. For me, it's as critical as breathing air. Um, you know, I have never had to sit down and wonder, uh, am I. Am I doing what is right. I know that it's core. It's a core belief of mine, um, for me, and because of that, solar is not, uh, solar is not a job.

[00:36:36] It's a vocation it's, um, it is critical, um, to my identity, uh, as an African. Growing up as a young Afghan girl, it is critical to a prosperous Afghanistan and the region and the world. And so [00:37:00] it always keeps me focused and grounded. So when I would talk about the need for solar, yeah, I would always, and I continue to always bring it back.

[00:37:17] To a global level. And that is while we're addressing the needs of girls education. And honestly, it is linked to this problem that out there globally, we have hundred and 50 million plus girls who are not in school today and that's not okay. We're in 2022. Um, if today it's acceptable that girls in Afghanistan cannot access education.

[00:37:44] It will become accepted. In another part of the world. The next day, we shouldn't look at these situations in isolation. They're all linked and we should be living in a world now [00:38:00] when it should absolutely, uh, anger us. But most importantly, drive us to action. Knowing that there are so many girls who are not in school and it's not just someone else's problem.

[00:38:15] Now, years and years of longitudinal studies, evidence-based research show that addressing girls education or their access to education is one of the lowest hanging fruit when it comes to. Uh, addressing so many global crises, whether we're talking about eradicating poverty, we're talking about health crisis.

[00:38:43] We're talking about climate crisis. Any of these crises, we need to send those girls to school as soon as possible because it's not, they who need. It's actually, we need their help and we need their help as soon [00:39:00] as possible. So that's why it's so important to truly understand the value. Global networks.

[00:39:09] Um, one that Meghan is now, uh, working, uh, really hard to, um, amplify and it's so, so, so important. Now

[00:39:20] **Trudy Hall:** it sounds to me as if the two of you could link arms and go on a mission around the globe and begin to educate all the world's girls so that the other 50% of our population, um, could step in and take on their responsibilities to make the world turn better.

[00:39:35] Um, Megan, as you hear, uh, Shevana's vision for Sola and the criticality of tying that vision to a global movement for girls education. Um, I know you personally have some strong feelings on that subject. What do you, what do you think about what vision does it call to mind for you?

[00:39:54] **Megan Murphy:** Educating girls is the single most important pathway to a more peaceful [00:40:00] and prosperous.

[00:40:02] Period. All of our planet's biggest challenges, whether it's climate polarization, equality, racism. Will not be solved effectively and efficiently if we don't have more women around the table of decision-making. And I think that those indispensable women who we need around those problem solving. Tables of decision-making are going to come disproportionately from girls' schools.

[00:40:33] Um, because what we do at girls schools is we're incredibly committed and United in elevating women's leadership worldwide. And we do that inside our schools, by making sure that our students are educated and empowered to assert their voice in the world and to claim, claim their space in the

[00:40:54] **Trudy Hall:** world.

[00:40:55] Megan. Shabana I could talk with the two of you for a long, long time.
[00:41:00] And unfortunately our, our episode has to come to an end here. I am going to end our conversation today by allowing our listeners to hear a very powerful clip from Shevana's 2021 Ted talk given just last fall. She challenges us in a way that I think we cannot ignore.

[00:41:24] To address the issues. Both of you are so eloquently talking about today. So thank you very much for, for joining us. And I will let our listeners hear shabaneh his wonderful words.

[00:41:36] **Shabana Basij-Rasikh:** So today I issue another challenge to the world. Do not look away as the noise dies down and Afghanistan slips from the front pages do not look.

[00:41:52] Nine years. It will be the year 2030 it's the year I will celebrate [00:42:00] my third, my 40th birthday. So here's my dream. My birthday was in nine years. I hope to be speaking with you again from solar's campus in class. With all of my students there, I will see you then if you do not want. Okay,

[00:42:31] **Trudy Hall:** this has been the eighth episode of uneducated girls.

[00:42:34] And as you have learned today, it is now officially produced by the international coalition of girls schools. As always, we would love to hear from you with thoughts and suggestions. Please send comments or questions to podcast@girlschools.org and join us next time. As we seek to inspire you a new with insights and resources you can put to use.

[00:42:54] Thanks for this. It's important to the girls in your lives that you did.[00:43:00]