United States Agency for International Development

Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid

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MALE SPEAKER: Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the ACVFA public meeting. At this time, please join me in welcoming the chair of ACVFA, Jack Leslie.

JACK LESLIE: Good afternoon everyone and welcome. Thanks for all joining us today. We have two very important panels which I think illustrate how USAID has really raised a new model for aid. And before we begin though, I do want to do a few things. First of all, I want to commend the incredible work of aid workers around the world who, at this moment, are on the front lines working tirelessly against extreme poverty and human rights abuses and devastating hardship. I also want to recognize USAID and its outstanding leadership and partners.

We were just in a meeting of ACVFA upstairs and all of us came out of that commenting on the fact that, even at a time of transition, like we're in now, it's just extraordinary to see the level of passion and enthusiasm and commitment from all of those whom you'll hear from today -- many of them you'll hear from today, but who are carrying out such important programs. I mean, over the course of the last year, we have helped connect 7 million small farmers with a wide range of tools through Feed the Future, have provided hundreds of millions of dollars to help West African countries, as you know, contain Ebola. Those

efforts were rewarded by the WHO announcing just last week that
Sierra Leone has now joined Liberia as an Ebola free nation.

There was also the announcement of an additional $100 million to
build 25 new schools in Jordan as part of Let Girls Learn
Initiative to address the crisis that, of course, as all of you
know, has been created by the influx of Syrian refugees. And of
course, the emergency assistance that's provided day in and day
out to tens of millions of people this year in 45 million
countries. It's just amazing the amount of work that's going on
in this building and around the world all the time.

It's appropriate, I think, that we're focusing on the Global
Development Lab today, given what's happened since we last met
in July. Of course, since then, we've adopted the post-2015
development agenda and we're moving, all of you know, to a much
more innovative and inclusive model of development. A model
where all of the countries, including the United States, will
take ownership of the global goals.

We talked about how here in the United States, we are just now
beginning to track how we're actually adhering to the goals.
And all of that is going to require much more innovative
partnerships and financing mechanisms and that, of course, is

very much the mission of what the U.S. Global Development Lab has been all about.

So we've got two panels that are going to explore, about how we move beyond aid to develop more cost effective and sustainable solutions. Alex Thier will be moderating both of those. In the first, we will have panelists Paul Maritz, Carol Dahl, and Ann Mei Chang, who will look at the shifting development landscape and what it means for USAID's development model. They'll dive in, I think, to the work of the Agency's Development Lab. And then we'll hear from Jim Bever, Carolyn Woo, and Jim Watson who are going to be discussing strategies for really fostering innovation and leveraging the resources of the Lab and its partners and all of its stakeholders, in order to develop and deliver much more transformative solutions.

So, thank you all for joining us today. This should be an informative and stimulating conversation. I'm certainly looking forward to it. Before we begin the discussion, we'd like to hear from the Associate Administrator. Al Lenhardt unfortunately can't be with us today. Eric, I'm not kidding, has more jobs than I can even begin to count. But Associate Administrator is one where he stepped in and we appreciate your service Eric and we look forward to hearing from you. Thank you very much.

[applause]

ERIC POSTEL: Good afternoon everyone. It's great to see all of you here and thanks so much for your interest in all of this. And Jack, thanks for your introduction and your partnership and your continued leadership with ACVFA. It's really helping us a lot so thank you very much. And on behalf of Ambassador Lenhardt, I'd like to thank all the members of the ACVFA panel, for their guidance and their support year round, which is really critical to our success. And we know how busy you all are and we benefit all the time from your engagement as well as the overall engagement of the development community. And that's why I want to thank everyone also for being here as we all collectively work on the various development agendas on behalf of the American people.

And, this is, as always, a very important time to be involved. Jack mentioned some of the things that have been going on. And it's a big year in terms of the SDG's being announced, and a whole series of other meetings that have happened or will soon happen. And that's also true in terms of the challenges. As some of you know, when we have a humanitarian crisis, we create what's called a Disaster Response Team, or DART.

And we have four of those running at the same time right now,
which we've never had that many before. And we have challenges,
you mentioned Ebola. We have Syria. We have Yemen, which isn't
as much on the radar screen but by the numbers, that's actually
the biggest humanitarian crisis right now. And the next thing
on the horizon is the effects of El Nino, where we're seeing
increased food insecurity in a number of places around the
world. In Central America, in East Africa, possibly in
Indonesia and some other places. So, it's never a dull moment.
We have the agenda, then we have the unexpected results, but
that also means there's a lot of opportunities.

The coming together of everybody at the UN General Assembly to
adopt the new global goals will obviously guide development work
by many of us for the next 15 years, whether it's saving lives
at birth, promoting gender equality, or ending extreme poverty.
It will also guide how we do that. There were 131 speeches made
at the Financing for Development conference in Addis and out of
them, 113 of the speakers talked about the importance of
domestic resources to development, which is completely different
than the conversation from10 years ago.

The goals are ambitious and necessarily so. Because after all,

these goals have to be as ambitious as the challenges we are facing are daunting. And that means that we have to go beyond business as usual. And that's where today's topic involving science, technology, innovation and partnership comes in. And partnership is a big part of that. Partnership with all of you, with businesses, with NGOs, with universities. We need to share risks and to work together to solve these big problems, because even for an agency or even a government as large as the United States is, we can't do it alone.

And in doing this, we have to let the evidence guide us about what's working, what's not, and changing course when we know something isn't working. And we need innovations so we can help countries to leapfrog major development challenges. We don't have to do it in series, just running down the same railroad track. There are opportunities to leap frog.

And so, as part of that, we've got to build a culture at USAID and our ecosystem that not only embraces innovation but promotes and encourages it. And the Lab is part of that, not the only part, but it's an important part. To think differently and to show the international community how effective these approaches can be. And that's why I and our whole leadership at USAID are very excited about the work that the Lab has been doing since it

was established, since last year.

They've been working on competitions and challenges like the Development Innovation Ventures. They've been working on Grand Challenges. They've been working now, increasingly thinking about scaling to open doors to development and source new groundbreaking ideas from new people and new places. For instance, just last month the DIV, the Development Innovations program, announced $14 million in new grants that went to a wide range of people and organizations around the world.

And many of them have never worked with USAID before. And they're doing this to test new solutions in developing countries, whether it's an earthquake early warning system in Mexico or a new method to identify fake medicines in Kenya. And then as we get evidence about what works, what can scale, then we can work with them to attract additional sources of funding and to really double down on the things that show the ability to affect large numbers of people. In total, through the DIV, the Lab has invested in more than 360 solutions to food security, health, climate change, and economic growth challenges around the world.

And they're using a tiered model such as I described, which is,

you provide a little in partnership with some other folks, test it, see how it works. If it's got some potential, we'll provide some additional assistance, but in combination with others. And then in a third round, do even less with others providing the vast majority of assistance. And some of those will never make it to the third tier or even the second tier. And that's consistent with what we've seen with innovation in our own country and that's the way it should go, which is to let the evidence guide the investments.

So that's just one of the ways that you're going to hear today about how the Lab is moving forward, and what we also need to do within the Agency is to institutionalize this culture of innovation. And you'll get a chance to hear more about that in terms of the opportunities and the challenges from these two panels of really experienced and wise folks.

And I hope that we can get your backing for taking innovation and taking risks and encouraging innovation.

There's a -- if you didn't get it on the way in, please do on the way out -- you'll see the Lab Advisory Group's report that they finished and made recommendations about how to carry this work forward. And I do want to thank the advisory group to the

Lab for their effort. For their expertise and their advice on how to move this forward. They've put a lot of hard work in and I know I speak for everybody at USAID that we're really appreciative of everything you're doing. So thank you all.

So I know you're eager to get to the panel so one last thing I'll just say is that it's also -- it's as important to talk about failure as success and that's something that's very hard to do in a political environment, but we have to be able to do that and we have to have people say that the failure is actually part of the success. Not everything that we try will work but to me, if we learn from the failure, that can be as important as learning from the success.

What I'm always saying to the teams is, we're going to take the risks and I'll back you for the risks, as long as it's been thoughtful and it made sense to try that. And if it didn't work out, that's okay. But if we don't learn from that in the Agency and we repeat it, that's a no go and that's what we have to avoid. So I hope that all of you will encourage people to talk about both sides of the coin so that we can move forward towards these big goals partly using science, technology, innovation, and partnership so we can try to end extreme poverty and promote resilient democratic societies everywhere.

So thank you again very much for being here and for your

continued engagement with USAID and on that note, I'll turn it

over to the folks doing the panels. So thank you all.

[applause]

ALEX THIER: Thanks everybody, I'm Alex Thier, I'm the head of

Policy Planning and Learning and I'm going to ask Paul and Carol

and Ann Mei to come and pick the most inviting looking chair on

the stage. We have about 65 minutes, by my watch, and we've got

a lot of fantastic people to hear from. And at the same time,

we want to hear from you. So we're going to try to do all of

that together. Each of these people could draw a crowd in and

of themselves, and I'm not going to spend a long time

introducing them. I'll go one by one as I ask them a question.

But we've got them all here densely populating an hour of

fantastic-ness, talking about development.

I want to thank all of you for coming today through the rain,

finding this room, which is a magnificent room but not easy to

find. But I know you're going to enjoy the show. So we're

going to start with you Paul. Paul has worked for a succession

of some pretty great companies: Microsoft, EMC, he founded a

company named Pivotal I believe. And he is someone who is

probably known for seeing what's coming and figuring out how to

measure it to succeed. So that's the business that we're all in

too. We're trying to figure out what's coming and how to get

better. How to marshal the evidence to know that what we're

doing is actually making a difference and that's a lot of the

reason why we wanted to take some of these capabilities and

create a Global Development Lab.

But I want you to challenge us a little bit by telling us what

it really takes to be an evidence based decision making

organization. How does that work and what are the things from

what you've seen here at USAID that you still need to put in

place in order to make that a reality?

PAUL MARITZ: Well, the -- I think the one thing that I've found

in my 35 years in business is that neither people nor

organizations really like learning. [laughs] It's an

uncomfortable process and we'd all much prefer to prepare, you

know, listen to and believe the tales that we tell ourselves.

And it actually is a discipline that one needs to adopt. Some

people are lucky and they get theirs automatically, but most

people require an actual plan to learn [laughs], to structure

your endeavors in such a way that you get feedback early on

because, you know, there are a lot of people who like to claim
that they are visionaries and can see around the corner.

And in reality, very few people, if anybody, can really foresee
that. And as Jim, who's been in investing and tech companies
for many, many years will tell you, there are very few startup
companies that ended up in the position that they first thought
they were going to end up. Along the way, people find out what
works and what doesn't. And really successful organizations are
those who can get meaningful input early enough so they can make
the course corrections and that can make you look incredibly
wise in seeing when you're able to adapt to the realities and
opportunities that you find yourself in.

And, you know, you've probably heard talk in certain companies
in the technology industry over the last 10 years, there's been
this tremendous move to what's called being agile. And it comes
in different forms but everybody talks about agile
organizations, agile methodology, et cetera.

At the basis of it is basically having the humility to admit to
yourself that you're not going to know where you're going to end
up, so you need to be getting input as early as possible into
the process and then adopting techniques that force you to be

objective about responding to that input.

So rather than trying to build the complete system, you know, I started working the technology industry 35 years ago and at that time, we used to go on long, huge journeys. You know, we'd go write a new operating system that took us five to seven years to do and, you know, we had to marshal huge teams of people to do that and you'd didn't know if they were going to be successful for five or seven years.

The world doesn't work that way anymore. We've got tremendous sources of information. Every person walking around today is a beacon beaming information out to you in many different ways. And there's the opportunity to instead build a succession of systems. Start off with the simplest system that will meaningfully give you feedback. So you talk about, you know, you hear in the agile world people work now in sprints. And the idea is that at the end of every sprint -- sprints are not measured in years, they're measured in weeks or months. You stop, you get the feedback, you take stock, you readjust, you re-plan, and you move forward.

In fact, that's a necessity because a lot of the services in the technology world that are delivered today, cloud services like

Google's search service, are not products that are delivered in versions. They are living services that continue forever. You don't hear Google announce that we're now delivering version 11 of search. In reality, they're delivering a new search service to you every day. Because they're continuously taking the feedback and improving the experience and changing the underlying software.

And that actually is a people problem. It's enabled by technology but unless you have an organization that is comfortable working that way, you aren't going to get the benefit and the results of doing that. So, with that, one of the interesting challenges I think we have is, how do we bring that kind of thinking into the development space? How instead of going on five to seven year, you know, grand campaigns that require us to put at risk $3- to $5 million and we won't know for 10 years whether it's successful or not, how do we instead take a different view of things and say, what can we learn from it and how can we structure our journey to take much more incremental steps but at each incremental step, there has to be objective learning.

So, how do we do this? Not just in the Lab, but how we do this incremental step in the real world and how do we implement in

the real world to get feedback in time that we can change? And

I don't want to steal Jim's thunder, but when he comes up here,

he'll introduce you to a much more palatable way of talking

about changing directions. But I think that's one of the

interesting things that we're trying to achieve with the Lab,

which is this new entity within USAID which is being created in

part to help incubate and provide a space for that type of

approach. And that thinking can grow inside USAID.

On the one hand, bring in people like Ann Mei who have

experience of working in technology in the commercial world. On

the other hand, connect to the incredible people who work in the

missions of USAID and have the scale and reach that could make

these solutions very, very powerful.

ALEX THIER: Thanks

PAUL MARITZ: Sorry

ALEX THIER: No, it's good. Carol. You are the EDirector of

the Lemelson Foundation. You've been at Gates before and the

National Institutes of Health. You have been very focused on

innovation in your career and in places that speak to the sorts

of things that we do. One of the things that our friends in

Silicon Valley like to talk about is failure and publicizing

your failure and learning from your failure, admitting your

failure.

Just between us in this group, it's not the strong suit of this

Agency or the US government to talk openly about failure but it

seems so critical for innovation to be able to do that. So how

do you welcome risk taking into organizations that typically are

not risk takers so that you can make the cycle of innovation

succeed?

CAROL DAHL: Yes, so first of all, I want to start by

congratulating the Agency and also the Lab in making some --

what I consider to be smart choices and one is recognizing that

power for science, technology and engineering and the impact

that is going to have in terms of development and I'll come back

to that in a minute.

The second is to actually focus on the innovation pathway and

the critical sort of entrepreneurial spirit that's needed to

solve problems that we previously haven't solved. And so that's

where risk comes into it. Those two things I just said.

The first thing is, why science, technology and engineering when

in fact, if you look at the sustainable development goals, or even perhaps more exclusively look at a report that was co-funded with USAID around the 50 breakthroughs for science and technology impacting development. You'll see that most of the major things we're worried about actually require science and technology and engineering to achieve the ultimate goals.

So that's critical. Why is that relevant for talking about risk? Well, it's critical because if you look at science, science is not an exact -- it's an exact art in a sense [laughs]. We know how to discover things but we don't know how to take them effectively and efficiently and turn them into outputs that have impact for people. It's why we continue to do biomedical research. It's why we continue to study engineering and make progress in that domain.

So in fact, there's inherent risk there. So how do you manage that in an organization? I think some smart choices have been made here and I think they're the right choices for doing it. First of all, you have to cast a wide net. Look at the idea space that's out there and embrace the opportunities that may be there.

But then, you have to be smart about making your decisions,

gathering evidence, making tough choices, shutting things down, but also, there are sometimes projects where you have to be in it for a long time. You have to have patience, recognizing good opportunities and being patient and filling in the gaps along the pathway.

I think it's critical to gather evidence along the way so you can make informed decisions. Science, technology and engineering and math as enablers are inherently risky so in order to achieve outcomes with those, you have to take that risk.

The second piece is around innovation and entrepreneurship which is, if we're going to take great ideas, turn them into products, solutions and services that reach people, we've pretty much proven we don't exactly know how to do that, right? So if we're not taking risks, it's business as usual. And I think Eric just said, business as usual is not sufficient. And I agree with that statement.

So risk needs to be taken. And that's about approaches so it's not just the "what you're working on," but how you're doing it that's going to have influence. So I think in the case of the Lab, what's been put forward is, how do we fill in the gaps in

the innovation process? How do we bet on the fact that people have to be more entrepreneurial in the way they approach things? That we might even embrace, you know, businesses as part of the solution.

So doing that means, once again, that you need to cast your net widely but you also need to evaluate steps in the process, look to fill in those gaps, and recognize that certainly even in the best of businesses, we know that failure happens. So accept that learning, information, and evidence is going to help you make smart decisions along the way.

The second place where I think the Lab is experimenting is in how we do business in partnership and I think this is really important to the development community. We know that a single entity alone cannot solve the problems, even with the budget of the US government and so we need to work together. And what has been a bit outside of the norm of government is really embracing the potential for private public partnerships in this space.

That's risky. We don't always know incentives align. We have to work closely together. It's easier to just control things yourself but in fact, reaching out to partners means you have new expertise, new experience, drawing in sectors with great

experience in delivering products and delivering to people

worldwide. But it also means that you need to think back on how

you create win/win partnerships and ensure that they're going to

be positive for the future.

So I think the Lab has a huge potential in terms of

experimenting around what we do and capturing the value of

science, technology, engineering to do that. But also how we do

it, which is following that innovation pathway, not just to

assuming a good idea is ready for scale but actually building

the pathway to ensure that it will scale and then embracing the

private sector as a way of being both a partner and maybe even a

solution to how we're going to address some of these great

challenges.

ALEX THIER: That's great. Thanks. Ann Mei, you have worked

for an interesting and diverse array of organizations. Apple,

Mercy Corp, Small Mountain View, California's Search Firm, I

don't know, Google, before you came here. And one thing I'll

note about working with Ann Mei which is terrific is you never

leave a meeting without a challenging a question, even if you

want to.

[laughter]

And so, you're listening to the advisory board here talk about pretty fundamental things for a big organization like USAID. Changing the way we use evidence, being iterative in our decision-making, being able to incorporate taking risks. Can you tell us a little bit about what the experience has been and where you think we need to go with the Lab from here?

ANN MEI CHANG: Yes, thank you Alex. And I just want to start out first by thanking Paul and Carol and the rest of our advisory board. They've really taken two days out of their time to spend time with us and really given us incredible advice and perspective from the various diverse backgrounds that they come from. And so that's been incredibly useful. I would echo a lot of what Paul and Carol have said. It's been interesting for me, transitioning from a company like Google to working within the US government. And, you know, there's more similarities than differences. We're trying to both do things at a massive scale. And we have really passionate, talented people in our organizations.

You know, I think one of the things that is different, and one of the things I think the Lab is really trying to champion is, you know, trying to find out how we can take the best of the

modern tools and approaches that have helped Silicon Valley be

so successful and apply them in the development context. And I

think the biggest part of that is about, what does innovation

really entail, and how do we build a much more agile culture and

tools that enable us to get there.

And I would say that, while we can talk about all of the

different innovations that, you know, make great stories, but

fundamentally, the Lab is about changing that culture. It is

about figuring about how to take risks -- and the way we embrace

failure is we need to make smaller bets that are riskier before

we tier up to bigger bets where we have a little bit more

confidence.

USAID is set up in general to make big bets. You know, we make,

big procurements through RFAs and RFPs and so it makes it very

difficult for us to make those small bets. So the Lab has put

tools in place like the Grand Challenges, like Development

Innovation Ventures, that allow us to make those smaller bets up

front so we can take greater risks.

It's easier to take a risk with a hundred thousand dollars than

500 million dollars, right? And it's more prudent to do this.

We also need tools to help us innovate, right? And to me, I

think often times when I talk to people about innovation in D.C., there's this misperception that it is geniuses in Silicon Valley that innovate and I've worked with many of these supposed geniuses at Apple and Google and otherwise and none of them is as brilliant as we think they are. They are often wrong, most of the time.

But what they do know is how to test and iterate, you know, Google has become as effective as it is as a search engine because literally every day there's hundreds of experiments running on the home page that test different user innovations, different algorithms, and the ones that work best are adopted into the search engine and each day, the search engine gets better. And that incrementally gets dramatically better. And we need to figure out how to build that into our own programming at USAID rather than thinking we can plan everything in advance, five years in advance and execute.

We need to figure out how we build more adaptive mechanisms through things like real time data solutions, tools that we're working on in the lab. We're working with Alex's team and PPL to come up with ways to revise the program cycle and the tools that we have within the agency to be more adaptive to allow for those feedback loops. So I think that's absolutely essential.

And then the last piece is, we really need to think about how are we going to scale and be sustainable? Programs should not end at five years. We need to figure out how we scale the solutions we have to the size of the problem. And we often think here in D.C. that we've scaled if we reach a million people and, you know, I come from a culture where you don't even talk about, having a seat at a table unless you have at least ten million people. And if we think about the problems we're trying to solve, they're generally on the scale of a billion people.

So a million people is only .1% of the way there so we really need to think about how are we going to get to the scale of the need that's out there?

ALEX THIER: That's great. So we're going to take questions. I don't know if there's floating mics or if they have to line up? So, if you have a question, jump to the microphone there, there. Make it pithy, interesting, challenging: meaning brief. Please, go ahead. And if you wouldn't mind introducing yourself before you ask your question.

DAVID ALFIRM: It's on. Sorry, my name is David Alfirm from an

organization called Safer World. So in the Lab and in what
you're talking about, there's a lot of depth and a lot of
richness in quantitative empiricism. How do we go about
gathering this information and how do we go about producing
information and pathways for information in a different way?
What I'm interested in is, in areas where it is the relationship
among people, the distributions of power among people that
really make the difference. Especially in countries where what
we may be looking at is a need for a fundamental re-conception
of how the state and this population interact.

How does that technological imperialism work with the need for
quantitative or qualitative, excuse me, relationship based,
power based discussions in order to change that environment so
that these pathways can do the work that they're supposed to be
doing? Especially since, if we look at the -- this becomes
especially critical in conflict affected fragile states -- if
you look at the World Bank, OECD, the ODI, more and more of
these research centers are stating categorically that over the
next decade or so, that will be where the concentration of the
world's poorest are.

ALEX THIER: Thanks. So, for any of you, some of the most
important things for the long term success of development are

also the hardest to measure.

PAUL MARITZ: I'm just going to deflect this question.

[laughter]

Because we have in our advisory panel, someone is not sitting up here but is sitting down there. Mark, do you want to take that one or do you want me to deal with it?

[laughter]

Okay, Mark, nice try. Mark works at the intersection of technology and communications. And how to use data techniques to answer interesting questions in the world. I mean, it's a fascinating question because not all interesting items of information come from emanations of your cell phone. Although there is a lot of very interesting information that does come as emanations from your cell phone.

And there will be a lot of other interesting sources of information in the future. You know, I think this is a challenge where there's an opportunity to work with the research community as to how does one measure and answer those questions

because, just because they are qualitative, doesn't mean to say you can't talk objectively about them.

And you all live in Washington D.C., you have this tremendous insight into how do you translate voter sentiment and voter intentions and voter behavior into measurable data that can be acted upon. So, I think that there's a real opportunity for the innovation in the Lab to come together with the academic and social science communities as to how does one tackle such problems given the fact that we're on the way to providing every citizen, every person in the world to a highly connected device or devices. Does that help, and if so, how do we use that technology to make it easier to reach out and interact in meaningful ways with people.

So, very important questions and I think collectively, as a community, not just in the development space but across the board, we have some very interesting learnings to go and benefit from this. So if you have any thoughts about interesting ideas and experiments, please send them to Ann Mei.

[laughter]

ALEX THIER: Either of you want to add anything?

ANN MEI CHANG: I was just going to add, you know, certainly that's a very important question and also very difficult to answer in the abstract, but what I would say is, the Lab doesn't have the answers. What we have are tools and approaches that we think can help us get the answers more effectively. And so, in this case, Paul mentioned research. Through our PEER programs we support researchers in developing countries who fully understand the local context and help build their capacity in working with US researchers to research problems like this.

We promote access to more data because we believe that people in all parts of the power structure who have equal access to the data that's out there will make better decisions and that we'll be better informed in making those decisions. And, you know, we also believe in this concept of co-creation and so one of the things we would probably do in a situation like this is bring all of those parties together and often times they haven't all sat together and talk together with the private sector and with technologists about the problems. We've seen amazing things emerge from just bringing those different perspectives together where everyone sees a different part of the elephant, but again I don't know the solution to that problem. But those are just some of the types of tools we have at the Lab that we would look

to apply and hope to at least shed some light on the problem.

ALEX THIER: Great. Do we have another question? Please, if you wouldn't mind going to the microphone. Thanks.

ASRATIE TEFERRA: Is this on? Okay. My name is Asratie Teferra. I'm from Books for Africa, a [unintelligible] organization. My question is very simple and you partly answered it. As a former development professional back in Ethiopia -- I'm from Ethiopia originally. The issue always was international institutions that assume they know it for you. How are you really interacting with the actual people that we intend to benefit? Is there any mechanism that has been built in to really listen to the real people on the ground that development is about? Thank you.

ALEX THIER: So one of the most important things I think that we've done in the last couple of years is work on transparency, making it much more evident what we do and trying to make this available to people on the ground everywhere so that they can see that. It's a really interesting question. How does the work of the Lab speak to the experience of the folks that we're actually trying to reach on the ground?

ANN MEI CHANG: Yeah, it's a great question. We absolutely believe that it is people who are on the ground, who really understand the local context, who are going to be the people who provide the solutions ultimately. I mentioned the PEER program where we work with local researchers. We also through our various innovation programs have encouraged a much greater percentage of applications from developing countries. So I think about a third of our applications roughly are coming from developing countries because there is a lower barrier to entry. It's much harder for someone in a developing country to apply for a USAID RFA or RFP. That's like 50 million dollars and this is a $100,000 grant, and so there's a lower barrier to entry. We're working with accelerators and incubators in developing countries to try to build that capacity. So we absolutely believe that that's path forward and are working towards that, and Carol may actually have some --

CAROL DAHL: Well I would just echo that in fact. You said most of the things I would say. I would say that there is also a focus on bringing in, when you're talking about creating new types of products or services, bringing in the new approach, newer approaches of human centered design as a way of actually engaging people on the ground, ensuring that's the case. And I would comment on the accelerators and incubators, that this is

very much a focus through things like the Pace program and so
on, a focus on local businesses, businesses that are actually
going to be within the countries and stay in the countries and
actually be part of the local community. And those are probably
in some ways the best resource for getting accurate information
because businesses do actually hear what the customers want and
need. And when the customer is the people, you also want to
create a solution for it. It's very useful feedback.

ALEX THIER: Interesting. Any other questions? Jump to the
microphone. Go ahead please.

CHRIS O'DONNELL: Yes, my name is Chris O'Donnell, and I'm a
retired USAID contracting officer, and I have a company,
Development Essentials, and I've been teaching courses, how to
win USAID awards. I think that the Global Development Lab is
great and it's so great that it's part of my course, how to put
together proposals under this kind of innovative solicitation.
But it seems like with so many innovations going on at USAID
that USAID is kind of gravitating away from grants.gov. I tell
my clients wait for the new solicitation, yet this kind of, you
know, is not like soliciting grants off of the website and
newsletters. I'm just wondering what, with all the innovation,
what can USAID do to make sure that everything is kind of

gravitating towards grants.gov where we're so used to looking for solicitations?

ALEX THIER: Okay, good question. Let me say that we're about to run out of time so I'm going to give each of you a chance to say something fantastic that you forgot --

[laughter]

-- to say already, and a chance to answer this question. And just to broaden it slightly, you know, you've been a partner of USAID in different ways. You've gotten to know us now, Paul. I think one of the points of this question is not only how does the innovation platform and the work that we do work better for our partners. We're ultimately the implementers, but are we friendly? Are we friendly to business? Are we friendly to technology in the way that we need to be or are there additional steps that we have to take to be open enough to really make these sorts of partnerships work? So why don't we go back down this way. We'll start with you and with Paul. Go ahead.

CAROL DAHL: You know, I think one of the things that really the Lab has been critical in innovating with is the whole challenges approach. And I see that as an opportunity because what it does

is actually state what are you looking to solve, right, and
opens the door for pretty much anyone to compete. And I think
one of the interesting things in the programs that we've seen
already coming out of the Lab and in the partnerships across the
bureaus of the agency is that there are new ideas coming forward
from people who maybe haven't been in this space before. So I
think it is opening the door for people to engage in new ways.
I can't speak to the gov.org and that, but I come in also just
from the perspective of another, you know, group working in the
development space that the openness that the Lab and USAID now
are expanding in general to partnership is huge because it's
opened the door for other organizations like ourselves, the
Lemelson Foundation. We do a number of partnerships with the
Agency, much more transparent and seamless in terms of our way
of working together and opportunities to open the door, not only
to their resources, but our resources through joint, you know,
partnerships and programs together. So I think it is opening
the door for more people to be engaged. I turn to you [laughs].

ANN MEI CHANG: Well I have to admit that I'm still learning
about how all the different mechanisms work, and so I can't
answer your question directly about grants.gov, but what I can
say is that at the Lab we're trying to pioneer new tools. We
see ourselves as this sort of incubation bed or test bed for new

tools including different ways that we do procurements, but what
we're doing also, part of our strategy, is very much to
mainstream those things. While we may be testing those things
out in the Lab right now, our goal is to have those things, the
ones that are successful, be adopted across the agency and
become more of our standard way of doing business. And so what
we're seeing is more of these challenges not just coming from
the Lab, but also more missions doing co-creation workshops,
doing -- there's, you know, not necessarily grand challenges,
but local challenges. And that's something that we want to see
more of. We can try and find out later and get --

ALEX THIER: Oh yeah, yeah.

ANN MEI CHANG: -- back to you about where -- how grants.gov
works.

PAUL MARITZ: I think just to wrap up along the theme of being a
learning organization. I think we just got an item of feedback
that we'll go act upon which is that we're making things more
confusing, and we'll try and get back to you and take -- and
find out what the real issue is and see what the --

ALEX THIER: It's very exciting and I think that people just

want to make sure they're capturing all the guidance from USAID

and the place that they normally look for that is grants.gov.

PAUL MARITZ: Good.

ANN MEI CHANG: That's great feedback. Thank you.

ALEX THIER: Okay, thanks a lot.

[applause]

Great panel. And now join me, Carolyn, Jim and Jim. We had --

there was a sale on Jims today so we got two.

[laughter]

And we're doing pretty good on time so relax. I know you have

to leave sometime in the middle. Carolyn, I'm going to start

with you. You have one of the most influential charitable

organizations in the world, and have been a critical partner for

us. So you've seen this evolve over time. I'm really

interested to hear about how you think we're doing with this new

evolution of the Lab and how it has made us more or less

effective as a partner for organizations like Catholic Relief

Services.

CAROLYN WOO: Alex thank you. I actually see some of the
changes as profound because they reflect an attitude change. So
the Global Development Lab in itself is a wonderful invention,
but, you know, it affects less than one percent of the funding
in USAID, but what is profound is the new attitude. So the
first attitude is that USAID may not have all of the answers.
It may not have all of the wherewithal so it's very important to
keep learning. I think the Lab is actually a learning tool. It
sources new approaches, new technology, tries them out, but it
also recognizes that it needs a lot of partners in that
conversation and it opens up those partners. It also says that,
you know, we accept the responsibility to some degree to source
as widely as possible and to test this. So I think that there
are different attitudes here which are being challenged. One is
the whole idea that we need to keep improving. We don't have
all of the answers and we want to invite other people to be part
of that quest. So I think it's great.

I also think that the problems that we're dealing with, the
number of people who need help, we will not have enough
resources to deal with that. So it's a question whether we
accept the responsibility that despite the fact we never think

we have enough money, we do have a lot of money. And how are

we going to bring our very best game to serve people? And the

best game is not working harder, it's working differently. It's

the humility of accepting that.

ALEX THIER: That's really interesting. Just as a quick follow

up, what are some ways that you strive for CRS to be doing this

for itself, this sort of change that's necessary to bring in

more and to innovate more quickly so that we can reach the

people that our resources alone are not likely to be able to

reach?

CAROLYN WOO: Yeah, I would tell you again its two big

attitudes. The first one is do we recognize that serving people

is a privilege? Are we approaching this as a privilege? And

the more people we can serve is really sort of the privilege of

having the opportunity to make a difference in so many lives.

So that we don't just approach our work and say well what do you

want me to do today? What change do you want? So the first

thing is that do we recognize the privilege in our work? The

second thing Alex is that I think for organizations it is very

natural to get into inertia. There's no question about that.

People do work hard, but along the way people just get used to

certain things. They don't want to renegotiate relationships.

They don't want to bring more people into the picture just because it takes a lot more time. We ask people to change. Sometimes that is not well defined. Why don't you come on my wagon? Well your wagon is not well built in my mind. You may know what you're talking about, but I don't know what you're talking about. But the bottom line is that with those types of attitudes we've become so preferential. We don't put the problem ahead of our own discomfort, and I think sometimes it's to recognize that when we don't want to change, we're actually putting ourselves ahead of the problem and the privilege.

ALEX THIER: [affirmative] Beautifully said.

CAROLYN WOO: Well --

ALEX THIER: Thank you. Jim Watson, just to be clear [laughs] who I'm speaking to. Jim, you have an amazing career as an investor in a place that is known for that -- it would be fascinating to hear your view on what has happened over the years in Silicon Valley -- but what's interesting is that although we don't often think of ourselves this way, the people at USAID are also investors. We take the American taxpayer dollars and in partnership with others even more, and make decisions every day about what we think is going to be most

effective. But I'm curious what advice you have for us as an

investor and a very successful one over time, about what we need

to do to get better at our investment decision making. And I

understand in particular you were down in Colombia, one of our

storied missions, seeing how we do some of our work there. What

advice do you have for us?

JIM WATSON: Every time you think it's not about the people,

it's about the people. Every time. So it's not about the

technology. It's not about a point in time or place. It's

about the people that you're asking to come together on a

project in a company or in a mission to bring about innovation.

So what's really struck me about being on the advisory board

with the Development Lab is the ability to reach out, bring in

people that are interested in changing the world, interested in

innovation, and create a fertile environment for them to do it.

So it's not unlike a startup company in Silicon Valley where you

have to be able to say we have limited resources and then make

sure that you create a culture where it's okay to pivot, that

when we try something, we have quick feedback on data. We put

in a little bit of money and we say we don't think this working,

but this is what we've learned. We're going to go try this. I

don't know of -- and there are over 160 companies that we've

funded -- I can't think of one company that actually ended up

doing what they said they were going to do.

Okay, so that creates an amazing resiliency of mind in a culture
that says it's okay to think. It's okay to think differently.
It's okay to test. What's not okay is to fake the data. Okay,
so let's create the milestones. Let's measure against those
milestones. Let's say you know what, this is not working.
We're not getting what we expected. Let's pivot. Let's change.
And that creates a culture where it's safe to think and where it
is about attracting the right people.

ALEX THIER: Now you're in Washington D.C. and it's often said,
particularly if you read the papers, that USAID is judged based
on the worst dollar spent. That's what makes it into the
congressional hearings, that's what it makes it into the
newspapers, and so there are sometimes challenges for us in
acknowledging challenges. How would you advise we communicate
with our funders, with our public, about how it's okay to change
your ideas along the way?

JIM WATSON: Well I think everything is based on expectations,
and truth and transparency really are the tools of expectation.
So as long as we are telling the truth and it is very
transparent as to what's happening, you can create expectations

that we are going to change. We are going to find things that
don't work. And it was interesting, Paul and I and the team, we
were up on the Hill today which is a totally new experience for
me, but it seems that there is a real thirst for the truth where
if you walk in and say you know what, we tried these 10 things.
Here's the five that did not work and why they didn't work and
what we learned about it, what data we collected it from it, and
how we move forward with these other five things that we really
seem to be harvesting results. As opposed to we have 10 things
we're doing. They're all working perfectly. Okay, I've never
had a company that I could say that. It's usually these are the
eight things that aren't working. Here are the two that we
might be able to salvage. So I think that truth and
transparency is what's going to make this lab different, and as
you say within the walls of Washington and government, being
able to come to the table and be brave enough to come to the
table and tell the truth about what hasn't worked and what we
learned.

ALEX THIER: Thank you. Jim Bever, my colleague and friend.
Jim, for those of you who don't know Jim, he's been out and
about in the world doing USAID's work for longer than he'd
probably care me to read off of my card, although you're welcome
to ask him. But Jim is one of the most storied Foreign Service

Officers in our organization. He has been the Mission Director,

wait for it, because it's a stunner, in Ghana, Egypt, West Bank

Gaza, and Afghanistan. So you've seen it all and you've seen

things come and go. So let's have a reality check moment, okay.

All of the work that USAID does for the most part really happens

out in the missions, and you've got fantastic, but overworked

officers in the field who are trying to manage large budgets and

challenging security environments, partners, the State

Department, you name it. How does what we're talking about

today help those people instead of make it harder to do their

jobs?

JIM BEVER: Okay, thank you very much Alex, and I see some of

those partners here so I have to be careful what I say. Well I

think let's just take an example from Ghana which is where I

just came from a few months ago. What really pleasantly

surprised me about the work that we're doing together in Ghana

was that the focus was not so much on technology as on the

regulatory environment set up in the country, in this particular

case, digital finance, digital mobile banking. The government

of Ghana was struggling with how to expand and extend its

electronic financing capabilities around the country, and the

Lab came in, helped us work through the regulatory changes with

the Central Bank, and the Bank of Ghana. This is the sort of

thing where government actually can help private sector around the world by leveraging and sometimes bringing big muscle movements with all of our diplomatic capabilities to open markets up and make things happen. In the case of Ghana, it's been much more successful than we thought. Through the Lab, we were able to hire people, some Ghanaian experts as well, to be inside the finance ministry and the Central Bank in this regard. And one example of the development benefits that came from that, quite rapidly actually, has been what we call a leap program which was -- which is a social safety network program for single headed households in the poorest part of the country in the northern part of Ghana which is a predominantly Muslim, there are some Christian and animus cultures in the north, but this is the area with the gravest malnutrition in the country. And it's also an area where there has been a lot of civil unrest in the past. So we were able to actually extend mobile banking and do some digital finance, direct deposits and direct financial contributions to those women headed households, many of whom had quite a few children they had to feed, to get the medicine they needed, to get them to school, and give them a chance in life. If we hadn't gone back to the Lab, if we hadn't had the Lab help to make the regulatory changes, we wouldn't have been able to do what we were able eventually do in the north. Now the World Bank and others are interested in joining us in this program.

So it has a multiplier effect. So I would just say, you know, the Lab was very helpful to us in that regard in a way that we were not particularly expecting. That's a success as I look at it.

A challenge, however, is when we forget the legal or policy changes that are needed and I'll give you a different example. When I was Mission Director in Egypt, even though it was in the middle of the Arab Spring and the revolution, we still had programs ongoing and one of them was the continuation of a long term joint science and technology development program with the Egyptians. This program already had quite a few years under its belt before I joined the Agency many, many, many years ago. I think I calculated we have invested maybe a billion dollars between our two governments, mostly American, some Egyptian, in that program. Very few, when you go line item by line item by line item, very few of those joint technology development efforts actually ever reached fruition in the marketplace.

As a matter of fact, my research showed me less than this many [holds up three fingers]. And when we dug in and explored why, it became much clearer to us. In the -- under Egyptian law, there was no legal protection for the researcher to allow a sharing arrangement for royalty, sharing of royalties. If

you're a researcher, and they're almost all with the
universities, and universities are almost all government, it's
all for the state. So that's to me a challenge as we roll out
science, technology, innovation, and other practices to make
sure from a development agency perspective the value we add is
not just the technology brain power, it's the institutional,
policy, legal, regulatory, and competitive framework in which
these can flourish.

ALEX THIER: [affirmative] That's great, thanks. All right, we
are going to take some questions if we have them. The mics are
still there. I see Jon moving towards one. Go ahead Jon.
Please introduce yourself.

MALE SPEAKER: Great, thank you. I'm a recovering technologist,
and one of the things I'm wondering is, looking at the progress
of the Lab and the changes, the cultural changes, the attitude
changes that Carolyn was speaking about, how is the work of the
Lab and the things that they choose filtered through the major
mission commitments of USAID? Particularly poverty, human
dignity, gender, and the ability of grassroots civil society to
interface effectively with government. Is there a sort of a
filtering system for the kind of innovations that the Lab
champions and how is it doing on that in terms of focusing in on

the problems that will have the biggest impact on extreme poverty?

ALEX THIER: So that's a great question. USAID recently launched, hopefully everybody got a copy of it, a vision for ending extreme poverty. We've got some big things on our agenda with the SDGs, the Sustainable Development Goals, having been recently passed. We've got key presidential initiatives like Power Africa, Feed the Future, Saving Lives at Birth, big things that we've already committed to. How is the Lab making sure that the work that it's doing is not off on the side, but is directly generating impact through the big initiatives that this Agency and this government have committed to? Any of you, please.

CAROLYN WOO: I would just say that in two very major ways this is a major step in the last year. Number one is if you look at the priorities of the Lab now, the three big priorities. One is tying in to Feed the Future, particularly the whole financial inclusiveness issue which is a gender issue. And the next one is Power Africa, particularly using off grid solutions rather than waiting for the very expensive, slow grid solutions. Without power, you actually cannot really get rid of poverty. So you can see the alignment -- you know, in year one I think

there were like 26 different priorities, but look at it now, how it is aligned with these big initiatives. The second thing is also seeking that dialogue and that conversation with the missions. I think it's a very explicit move. I think now at least 10 different missions have come forward, more than that. We actually just saw a demonstration for example of a how a tool like a GIS tool is now embraced by different missions to identify where the needs are and where they have been investing their dollars. So I think those two things align with the key priorities as far as engaging with the mission directors.

ALEX THIER: Thank you. Jim Watson is not offended by the question, but he has an appointment. Last word before you step off the stage?

JIM WATSON: Well I would, I would just say that change is difficult. All right, it always is, whether it's a startup in Silicon Valley or whether it's a Lab at USAID, and what we've learned is that change goes through about three layers. It starts out where everybody's a naysayer, pretty much convinced it won't work. Then you have the next one which is where everybody opposes it, and you can look at Uber and Airbnb and what's going on there, and then you have a generation that comes along and says oh, it's always been like this, right. We always

share cars. We always share apartments. And so I'd say I think

keep an open mind in terms of the changes, the innovation that's

going on, and be able to insist on great measurements, be able

to insist on how we can leverage the changes that are happening,

but most importantly, make it easy to recruit amazing people

that want to come in and want to change the world. Because at

the end of the day, that's all that matters, okay.

ALEX THIER: Thank you Jim.

JIM WATSON: All right, thanks.

ALEX THIER: Thanks for your time.

[applause]

Why don't we see if there are additional questions? The

gentleman sitting right here.

JIM BEVER: If I could just comment one moment. The questions

about filters, what are the filters at a mission level? You

know, for the mission leadership, anyone at the mission, an AID

mission, we're a strategic organization. We actually do follow

strategy. We develop a strategy. It's a U.S. Embassy strategy

so it's interagency. We deal with our partners so in terms of the Lab and innovations and entry points, it's got to be during that strategy development process at our USAID missions where we try to figure out how to invest our people's money best. Once a strategy is set, the entry point really is a different one which is trying to then persuade us that some innovative approaches can help us achieve that strategy that we've already come up. We're not likely to be evolving that strategy very quickly once we're in the middle of it. Even in administration changes, there's a one or two year lag before we start shifting in a different direction. So get in early is the only thing I can say or help us figure out how what you're bringing to the table will help us achieve our strategy. Sorry.

ALEX THIER: Great. Please come around and introduce yourself.

GLENN GEELHOED: This may be to you, to Alex as well as Carolyn and Jim. I'm Glenn Geelhoed, George Washington University professor and also the founder and CEO of a small volunteer NGO, Mission to Heal. Most of the organizations that I see have sort of a subtle vested interest in failure. After all, the problem goes away, so will they, and I'm worried about that and what we're really asking. It's a very small series of steps from advocacy to agency to ownership of a problem in the people, and

if we look at the filters that you just cited Jim, our stunning successes ought to be the ones that sunset first. My job, as I self-define it, is to work my way out of a job, and as a consequence, we're left with those that are not very successful, and that perpetuates the Agency. So the question is how do you get sustainability without Agency perpetuity?

[laughter]

JIM BEVER: Okay, well one thing I would do -- by the way, Alex is in charge, among other things, of the evaluations in our agency, but the most striking evaluation results I think come not during our projects, but a few years after we've finished funding them. If they're still underway, we succeeded, and I wish we could just change our mentality about that so that we think about that first when we design our programs with our people's precious money so that we get the sustainability you are talking about. I mean we were intended to be a temporary agency and in fact when you look around the world, we have left many countries. Occasionally we're thrown out of the country.

[laughter]

ALEX THIER: And some we go back to.

JIM BEVER: And sometimes for very good, you know, reasons from

the perspective there's -- they throw us out because we got

really, really, really close maybe to the truth of what's going

on in the country. But, you know, the ones we've left are doing

pretty well. They're major training partners. So I think there

are -- we're not really trying to perpetuate ourselves as an

Agency to be honest with you. That isn't really what President

Kennedy had in mind. It is the nature of institutions and

bureaucracies though to try to do that, no doubt, but in terms

of the people, we actually do rotate and we do leave and we go

on and do other things, and I see quite a few in this audience

today. So I think if we start with what do we want to see a few

years after we're finished, we'll do a better job with the

sustainability that you raised which is a very legitimate

question.

CAROLYN WOO: I just want to say I think sustainability really

depends on two things and then it's undercut by a third thing.

The two things which are necessary, they're quite natural. One

is local capacity. In a lot of the countries that we work in,

our partners tell us you know what, we really just want to

displace you one day. Help us displace you. Because it's that

natural ambition and now people have information and education,

they basically said, you know, help us be like you, and we work with a lot of those partners. I think there is that natural desire for local capacity to come into its own, if we're willing to fund that and make that happen. The second thing is that sustainability also depends on market forces, particularly when they're business models. And I just want you to know that in emerging markets there are a lot of businesses who are looking at that as an opportunity. And there's a question with such an Agency as USAID – do you actually facilitate the entry of businesses, to remove some of those barriers so that businesses can actually enter -- and that's what they're actually doing in the Lab. So I think those are two very natural forces and we can actually hold them back if they're working very well. I think what has become a major problem is the lack of peace. A lot of the good work that we've done is being undone. If you look at a lot of the early places that USAID has worked in Southeast Asia for example, those benefits stay and those markets are growing. Look at Vietnam. Look at Cambodia for example, but without peace, which is the problem that we are facing today. It's like, you know, it's like development in reverse in terrible ways. So I just want to say there are two very natural forces and that if we only facilitate those forces to let them happen, they will take over and we'll be out of a job. And that is the desire of the local people to really

govern their own fate and be their own masters in their own development, and also the role of business coming in.

ALEX THIER: Great. We have time for one more question if you wouldn't mind.

CAROLYN WOO: Can I go?

ALEX THIER: Yeah.

CAROLYN WOO: I was supposed to go 10 minutes ago and I don't even have pre-check for my flight.

[laughter]

So I'm a little bit nervous, but I do want to say one more thing before I go.

[laughter]

I think that some of the agenda of the Lab is very timely, very necessary, and I think it is a challenge which is manageable. The use of science, technology, innovation, and partnership is hard work, but it can be done. The second thing is sourcing

resources whether it is ideas and dollars from wide open spaces,
I think that's very doable. The third part of it is using the
type of tools that allow you to experiment, to innovate, to fall
in small steps, I think that's very doable. There's one thing I
think is always very hard and I put myself in that category. If
you look at entrepreneurs from Silicon Valley, I don't know if
they're still around. You think – is this a different breed of
people? How do these people get into this – agile, pivoting and
calling failures, failures? Is there something different about
them? And I just want to say the answer is no. What is
different about them is that they are betting their own money.
It is amazing the degree of urgency and honesty and assessment
and whatever it is when it is your own capital at risk. I think
USAID and Catholic Relief Services, so I put myself into that
category, we are not spending our own money.

We are spending taxpayer's or donor's and taxpayer's money, and
I think that when we're doing that, it requires an extra
discipline to remember sort of that the natural sort of losing
your own money is just a gut level feeling, you know, that
propels you to do all things courageous. I think here is when
we recognize that we are the stewards of someone else's money
and should let that take a stronger hold in us. So I'm -- I
hope I'm not sorry for saying this --

ALEX THIER: No.

CAROLYN WOO: -- but I think that that is the difference between the degree of urgency, the degree of honesty, the degree of assessment in their lives. So if you allow me now to not be nervous --

ALEX THIER: That's a powerful point to leave us with. If anybody knows a TSA agent, please give them a call.

[laughter]

Thank you Carolyn.

CAROLYN WOO: Thank you.

[applause]

ALEX THIER: So Jim, we're going to have to bring it home with a last question.

FEMALE SPEAKER: My name is Jan and I'll open this question to the others who also could answer -- I'd love to hear your

insight. So I'm the founder of Four Girls Global Leadership,
and it's not just our organization, it's a social change
movement to fundamentally think and see and treat girls around
the world differently from disposable trash quite honestly, to a
powerful agent of change. And I'm reminded of E.O. Wilson I
believe who said that we are living in a time where human beings
are stuck in the stone ages and our institutions are medieval
and technology is God like. And I know the questions that we're
asking are, you know, we're stuck in the mindset of, you know,
centuries and centuries ago. So how do we use innovation to,
you know, help us think and thus act in a different way?
Because I really feel like that we are not catching up to
technology and innovation.

ALEX THIER: Thank you. I mean I don't know if you're still
mic'd. They took your microphone? There's a mic on the podium.
If you want to say something about empowerment especially for
women and girls, you're welcome to join us. Jim, do you have
any thoughts about that?

JIM BEVER: Yeah, I'll add, but ladies first.

ANN MEI CHANG: Go ahead please, sir.

JIM BEVER: You know, one advantage of technology is it's not always gender neutral, but it can be gender neutral. And there's nothing like having the right level of education or practice or just giving a girl, a young woman a chance to show what she can do with some new kind of way to solve a problem. It dispels myths. It disproves all of the hypotheses that this female can't do this sort of thing. And I should know because I'm the son of a physicist who designed, you know, satellites for NASA. She was a female among almost all men. She was a physicist among almost all engineers, and she was in her sixties among almost all younger people. And her ability to mobilize the facts, use the technology, she was a high vacuum, electronic discharge sort of physicist. And the engineers would come beat a door to her, beat a path to her door and she basically was able to apply the technology, disprove all of their premeditated conceptions, and that was in our culture. That was here in our country just 20 years ago. So it can be done. You can change the world and technology if it's made available in the right way, can help equalize things among all of us. Ann Mei?

ALEX THIER: Ann Mei, final thoughts for the panel.

ANN MEI CHANG: Yeah, so I thought I'd just talk a little bit about women in technology, agreeing with Jim that technology can

either be a great equalizer and offer women greater

opportunities, or it can actually be a great divide and create a

sort of second digital divide. And we've seen both happen so

there is still in the world, in some areas more than others,

women have less access to mobile phones and even less access to

the internet than men do. And so as you think about the power

of the internet and the power of mobile phones, when women don't

have access to these tools, they can get left further and

further behind. But when they do have access to these tools, it

can really give -- empower them and give them agency so that

women can save money on their mobile phones and have more

financial independence by having a mobile bank account in ways

that was not possible necessarily with traditional technologies.

When you look at sort of the economy, we're seeing more and more

jobs move into the ICT sector. The downside for women is that

men still dominate in that sector and so there's a real risk

that women again get left further and further behind. But the

upside is as the proliferation of mobile phones and the internet

continues, many of these ICT sector jobs are ideal for women who

could maybe do work from home, have more flexible hours, have

more flexibility in the way they do their work. And so be able

to manage their home lives as well their professional lives in a

more integrated way. And so with all of technology, there is

risk and there is also huge potential and our job we think of as

at the Lab is to harness that potential and guard against the risk.

ALEX THIER: Thank you. So please join me in thanking what I think has been a really fantastic panel.

[applause]

Provocative, and most of all, we really appreciate everybody's candor because that's the only way to have an effective conversation. So I want to turn it over to Jack to bring us home. Thank you Jack.

JACK LESLIE: Great, great. Thanks Alex. One more time, let's thank our panel and all the members of the advisory board of the Development Lab who are doing great work. I also want to by the way just put in a word here and thank Alex Thier, who as the Assistant Administrator for Policy, Planning and Learning has really brought to the job such smarts and such energy. Alex is going to be, unfortunately, leaving us next month, but I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for your service. We wish you well. We'll miss you very much. Thank you.

[applause]

And I do -- I don't know about you, as always I leave this --

these sessions really feeling both inspired and much better

informed. I hope you do, too. This is our last meeting of this

year. As you know, you'll get lots of email notice. Jayne and

others do a great job of that. For next year's meeting, we hope

you look out for all of those and return to us then. Thanks all

very much for coming.

[applause]

[end of transcript]

This is to certify that the attached proceedings of the Advisory

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