



## Collaborative Question

For the Collaborative Question (CQ) you have **about 45 minutes**.

- ✓ **5 minutes** for introductions, writing down student names on the white board and listening to the CQ read out loud.
  - ✓ **5 minutes** for students to re-read the "new information" on the CQ to themselves, structure thoughts and begin thinking about the issues.
  - ✓ **20-25 minutes** for them to discuss the issues, informally adopt roles, collaborate on direction and plan a short presentation of their recommendations.
  - ✓ **10-15 minutes** for the actual presentation and Q&A. Tell the judges about your discussion, respond to the question below.
- **It is important to hear everyone's perspective and for all to participate.**
  - **Your individual participation counts toward the score of your school team.**
  - **A parable like this has no one "right answer."**

### 2015 WAC Collaborative Question

Here is a story that concerns a teenage girl in West Africa that we present as a parable. Three West African countries are suffering under the largest outbreak of Ebola, a deadly hemorrhagic virus, which has never been seen before in this part of the world. In Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, most people die of Ebola because they cannot get access to adequate medical care locally. Compared to adults, even more children who contract the virus will die (as many as four out of each five sick kids.) Women have also been disproportionately affected by the Ebola crisis. By custom, women are caregivers for the sick and thus have contracted the virus in larger numbers than men have. Further, due to the lack of women working in burial teams, families have continued to wash the bodies of their loved ones at home. Stigma for survivors and family of those with Ebola, along with everyday gender gaps (social, educational, economic, etc.) contribute to the overall and lasting effects on women, girls, as well as the society as a whole.

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Zainab is a 16-year-old West African girl living in the capital city. She lives with her parents and 7-year-old brother. Zainab goes to school and each day after school, she joins her mother. Her mother buys and resells vegetables on the roadside of a traffic circle not far from the living area they rent. Zainab sells a homemade sesame candy called beni cake.

One day, her family receives word that her father's brother has died. Her father travels to the village where his brother lives to help wash and prepare the body for burial. Before he died, they had taken the brother to a traditional healer who said that witchcraft was making him sick. Ebola, the healer had said, does not exist. Later, after his brother died, some family members are afraid and say instead that he had had a heart attack, although they hear through the radio about the Ebola symptoms.

In preparing the body, Zainab's father comes in contact with body fluids from the deceased brother. He is exposed to and contracts the Ebola virus. Nine days after his exposure, he gets a fever. Zainab's mother cares for him in the home. Even though he exhibits increasing serious and Ebola-like symptoms, they cover it up. They don't want anyone to know that it is Ebola. They hope it is malaria or something else and are afraid. Further, they have heard that some people in the Ebola wards have been mistreated. They have not been cared for and there has not even been water for patients to drink. Zainab's mother does not know about protective equipment, nor does she have access to it.

As the health of her father gets worse, Zainab and her brother Manso go to the market so that their mother can stay home to care for her him. For several days, they sell after school. They don't make enough money to buy their everyday supplies of rice, oil, onion and a little fish. Their mother has no option but to keep taking care of the father; their customs demand it. They have no choice but to leave school.

Her father succumbs to the virus. A burial team comes and takes away Zainab's father's body. The whole family goes into quarantine, which means that they have to stay inside for 21 days. The government provides them with a little bit of food. Three days into quarantine, her mother falls ill.

Zainab's mother exhibits severe Ebola symptoms; she is sensible and tries to protect her kids. Zainab wants to help her mother, but now her mother believes it is Ebola. They call 1-1-7, the Ebola hotline for an Ebola response team.

Although they are in the capital city, it takes two days for the Ebola team to come. By the time the team arrives with an ambulance, her mother has already died. Zainab does not wash the body because her mother has told Zainab and Manso not to touch her body. Zainab and Manso are overcome with grief and begin the 21-day quarantine again, but alone. Later, their elderly aunt blames Zainab for failing to prepare the body and give her mother her last rites. Zainab feels ashamed.

Now she and Manso are orphans. They have no money for rent and they face daily stigma from their neighbors. Friends and family are afraid to touch them or let them come stay. Following the quarantine period, family members ask an uncle if the two children can stay with him. He says no, and they go to live instead with an aunt.

Now schools are closed indefinitely. They live in a different part of the city and the aunt treats Zainab like a maid. After mornings of cooking, cleaning, and washing laundry by hand, the aunt sends her to the market to sell beni cake and margarine.

One day she hears the neighbors listening the radio. It is a radio program to help students continue to study. Only 25% of people in the country have a radio, but some of the one million students that are out of school are able to begin learning. The government in partnership with UNICEF, and other organizations, including support from the Malala Fund, runs the program. Zainab listens, from a distance, on the days when she doesn't have to be selling at the market or involved in household tasks. She still hopes to finish secondary school and then study to be a lawyer. Her hero had grown up in the slums and she was able to become the head of their country's Electoral Commission. Now what were her chances?

Zainab tells you that her aunt wants Zainab to start a relationship with a neighbor, an older man who is almost 40. The aunt will get a dowry if Zainab marries. Even when the schools open, she will not go to school again. Her aunt says, "It is better for Manso to go to school. You can always have a man to get married to."

As a friend to Zainab and Manso, what can you do? **can we imagine another future for Zainab and Manso? What needs to happen to close the gender gaps in Ebola, burial customs, in healthcare, in education, in economic opportunity, and in early or forced marriage?**

Your Task:

Read through Zainab's story and discuss the question above. As local activists, you have 20-25 minutes to discuss the issues, informally adopt roles, collaborate on direction and plan a short presentation of your recommendations. Be prepared to talk with the judges about them. Finish by answering the question and identifying two reasonable ways to help girls like Zainab.

You may write in the space below and on the reverse, or use the white board for organization. Good luck! We are already proud of you.