
Addressing Global Health Challenges through Creative Partnerships

A CONVERSATION WITH ELLEN AGLER

FLETCHER FORUM: Tell us more about the END Fund. What makes the model unique?

ELLEN AGLER: The END Fund was set up to address five particular neglected tropical diseases, or NTDs, that affect over 1.6 billion people. We're working on trachoma, schistosomiasis, intestinal worms, river blindness, and a disease called lymphatic filariasis that causes elephantiasis. These diseases affect the poorest of the poor. If you have no access—or limited access—to water and high-quality sanitation facilities, it's common to have one or more of them. One of the commonalities of the NTDs that we work on is that they can all be controlled or eliminated in the next decade.

There are pharmaceutical companies that make incredibly generous donations for all five of these diseases—they've come out and said they will donate as much medicine as needed, for as long as it's needed to end these

Ellen Agler currently serves as the CEO of the END Fund, a private philanthropic initiative dedicated to ending the five most prevalent neglected tropical diseases (NTDs). It advocates for innovative, integrated, and cost-effective NTD programs with the ultimate goal of ensuring that people enjoy healthy and prosperous lives without the risk of NTDs. Since its launch in 2012, the END Fund has helped to provide NTD treatments to over 85 million people and has trained over 360,000 community health workers in 22 countries, with a focus on sub-Saharan Africa. Ellen has worked on global health programs such as Operation Smile and International Medical Corps for twenty years across more than 50 developing countries in Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. She holds an MPH from the Harvard School of Public Health with a focus on humanitarian affairs, as well as an MSc from the London School of Economics with a focus on child rights and NGO management. The Fletcher Forum had the opportunity to speak with Ellen in April about her work in global health, the END Fund's unique model, and the relationship between health, conflict, and philanthropy.

diseases. What the END Fund has done is help encourage private philanthropists and country leaders to work on delivery strategies so that everyone at risk of or suffering from the diseases gets treatment. It was founded by leaders from the financial sector who saw that a need was being addressed in small ways, but that efforts were not meeting the scope of the problem. They thought, 'we should really engage others to work on this problem and invite other philanthropists to co-invest.' Then you could have a targeted strategy, not only looking at one specific project in a country or at one NGO, but also at the whole area of NTDs, to see where various investments could make the biggest impact on the reduction of disease.

FLETCHER FORUM: What challenges do you feel still remain?

AGLER: Some people say 'wow, you're getting so much more attention on these diseases than you did five or ten years ago, are they really still neglected?' But a lot of us think that the issue is not just that the diseases are neglected, but that the people are neglected. These are people living in the poorest, most rural parts of their countries without adequate infrastructure. Generally, people with greater resources aren't those suffering from NTDs. Even though neglected tropical diseases have been getting more attention and funding, it's still nowhere near the need. It's less than one percent of global health funding. We're really excited that NTDs are now mentioned in the sustainable development goals, but it's just one step.

Another challenge is scale. Approximately 1.6 billion people need treatment at least once a year for neglected tropical diseases and right now only around 800 million people per year are getting treatment for at least one of the diseases—though they are often co-infected with more than one disease. So of that 800 million, not everyone is getting full treatment for all of the diseases they may have. We've made progress, but we're less than halfway there. For some of the diseases that are further behind on the path to elimination, like schistosomiasis, we're only 20 percent there. We have the medicines available. We have the national plans. What is missing is political will, funding, and coordination to be able to scale up to treat all NTDs. We've been around less than five years and are already a major funder in the space—though I don't necessarily know if that's good, as we would like to see a lot more interest and funders joining these efforts. But as we all know, it's been a very difficult time in the economy and aid budgets are not increasing. We're thinking about how to avoid competing for the same resources and how to grow the pie with private philanthropy such that new people and new actors can participate in a really high-value, high-impact proposition.

The other area that really needs to be addressed is engaging more leaders in disease-endemic countries. Take Tsitsi Masiyiwa: she and her husband founded one of the largest telecom companies in Africa, Econet Wireless. It's been so wonderful to have this articulate, powerful, female philanthropist and African leader on our board of directors. She's been saying we need more Africans involved in these efforts. We have strong support from ministries of health, but we realize we need more conversations and active engagement at higher levels in politics, business, and civil society in order to prioritize efforts to end these diseases. Ending NTDs will have a huge impact on health and economics in Africa. A recent study by Erasmus University showed that if we meet disease control and elimination targets, \$52 billion could be saved in Africa by 2030 and over 100 million health life years could be gained.

FLETCHER FORUM: *How do you get attention and impact in a crowded space, particularly when there are very high-profile crises like Ebola and Zika?*

AGLER: The diseases we work with are age-old diseases. You can see references to some of the diseases we work on in the Bible and in ancient Egyptian tombs. These are diseases that go back so long that unfortunately people have gotten used to them. It's considered normal to grow up and have intestinal worms in many countries in Africa—that's considered a symptom of childhood in some places. The issue is recognizing that the baseline level of health could be better for a lot of people, that these diseases are treatable, and that you do not have to suffer from them.

Zika and Ebola, however, are emergent and incredibly important crises to address. But I think it's important to balance the causes of long-term illness, death, and disability with what is spiking on the radar. Still, I don't think it's an either-or proposition. The mosquito that is transmitting the Zika virus also transmits viruses for dengue and chikungunya. Lymphatic filariasis is also transmitted by a mosquito. Vector control is crucial in the fight against all NTDs. I do think that Ebola and Zika being so prominent in the public conversation is helping everybody understand that they need to take the broad set of diseases that are affecting the global population, and recognize that those diseases can affect us personally as well.

FLETCHER FORUM: *You have worked with a broad range of stakeholders—governments, private philanthropy, and experts. What strategy do you find particularly effective to build a community of interest around NTDs?*

AGLER: The scale of the problem is so big that it requires collaboration. Most of the partners in the space are cognizant of that and work within frameworks that are larger than their own organizations. We get together a lot. There are umbrella organizations like Uniting to Combat NTDs and the World Health Organization that play a convening role, provide technical support and help to make sure we are following a common plan with common indicators. The END Fund has also been convening private philanthropists to ensure that there is synergy amongst investments rather than duplication of efforts.

But every one of us in global health doesn't want to spend all of our time on meetings when there is work to do on the ground. We in the

True systems change requires collaborative leadership; managed egos; a willingness to openly share data and research; a focus on a broader mission above any one particular organization; and an understanding from the outset of what the common, measurable end goals are for the collective efforts.

neglected tropical disease community realize that there is this broader system that needs to shift in terms of how financing works and how these technical communities work together to improve reporting and diagnostics. I am always intrigued by this idea of systems entrepreneurship, systems change, and how we get stuff done in our individual areas while also thinking collectively for more sustainable change. As thought leaders like Jeffrey Walker, author of *The Generosity Network*, articulate so well: true systems change requires collaborative leadership; managed egos; a willingness to openly share data and research; a focus on a broader mission above any one particular organization; and an understanding from the outset of what the common, measurable end goals are for the collective efforts.

FLETCHER FORUM: *How do you feel technology has helped or changed the landscape for your work?*

AGLER: The END Fund has been an early adopter of new diagnostic tests for particular diseases and improved ways of mapping. An example is how schistosomiasis is traditionally mapped. You go to a number of schools in a certain geography and collect fecal samples for maybe fifty children per school. You put a gram of feces onto a slide, and literally hand count the number of eggs that you see in the sample. Then you aggregate all this data

to get a sense of prevalence and intensity. That is seriously labor-intensive. Now there is a new test that is almost like a pregnancy test that you can dip in urine. It is faster, more sensitive, and less prone to human error. In some of the places where we have worked, while using the previous test we thought the level was low enough to stop treatment. Once we used this more sensitive test, it showed the prevalence was a bit higher than expected, so we needed to continue treatment after all. The adoption of these pretty simple technologies can improve our understanding of where the disease is and allow us to design more effective treatment strategies.

There is an ambitious project that was just funded called the Global Trachoma Mapping Project. Trachoma data used to be collected by hand through a very slow, analog process with low coordination. Now, tablets are used and findings are uploaded into an interactive database to measure the prevalence. We now have a global trachoma map. It has improved treatment strategy remarkably by saving on the amount of drugs and personnel needed, thus reducing program costs. This information is shared with all partners working in this particular disease area so everyone can work with the same high quality data.

FLETCHER FORUM: *You have developed some interesting insights on global philanthropy and engaging Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives for big challenges—does anything stand out to you?*

AGLER: Corporate social responsibility has gotten so much more sophisticated in recent years than when I first started fundraising in developing countries 20 years ago. CSR is usually now aligned with companies' core values and value propositions and includes significant employee engagement. Companies are now asking how they can use their entire value chain to address the global problems that interest them.

I love some of the initiatives that Abbott was involved in years ago. They were donating to Partners in Health and then they realized that Partners in Health was trying to build this peanut-based high-protein food for severely malnourished kids. They needed a big peanut processing plant, so Abbott built an entire factory, showed Partners in Health how to do processing, how to develop a supply chain, and how to train on manufacturing and quality control. That was really using their corporate expertise for a project in addition to check writing. We see that more and more on the CSR side.

Then you take a step back and think of private philanthropy and a family foundation. We've got people who have done extremely well over

the course of their careers and they want to give back in strategic ways. They have found that instead of finding a pet project, joining a community of philanthropists that is co-investing in something allows them to share the risks and also the joys of giving. Multigenerational family foundations work on projects as an expression of their family values and they get so much joy out of doing it together. It's been wonderful to see that.

The same goes for multicultural giving. We certainly have philanthropists from the United States, but we also have philanthropists from Dubai, Zimbabwe, and Saudi Arabia who are coming together and bringing their unique assets. For example, Islamic philanthropy has historically been very local and it's considered to be a higher form of philanthropy if it is done anonymously. To see this particular group of people wanting to get more strategic about their philanthropy is very encouraging. They've recognized they can't only give anonymously because they might not be able to be as strategic or join with others to publically advocate for an issue. The power of coalitions of philanthropists supporting causes with their ideas, influence, and funds is a tremendous force for good. A particular group of inspiring philanthropists we work with in Saudi Arabia—the Shefa Fund—has made a huge impact in the areas of NTDs, polio, and leishmaniasis, and has partnered with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as part of its learning journey.

FLETCHER FORUM: *At Operation Smile you worked at initiatives called “Health as a Bridge for Peace” in Israel and Palestine, and in Colombia. Can you tell us more about any virtuous relationships between the work that you are doing in the health space and some of these systemic conflicts?*

AGLER: I think that health can be a bridge to peace. Usually, even parties who stand on different sides of politics agree that kids shouldn't be sick.

.....

Health can be a bridge to peace. Usually, even parties who stand on different sides of politics agree that kids shouldn't be sick.

.....

When I lived in Colombia, we would get permission from both the head of the main guerilla group, the FARC, and the commissioner of peace to allow the medical community access to a particular conflict-ridden region. We were able to provide medical care to kids who otherwise couldn't get it, because they had such complicated problems.

Previously, the physicians with specialties to treat them had to flee those areas. But the kids didn't have the resources to leave. Operation Smile was

really good at this. In my time there, in addition to the Colombia projects, they brought together Israeli and Palestinian surgeons to provide surgeries to Palestinian children who were burn victims. And we've seen this for years with UNICEF, where cease-fires agreed upon for a specific vaccination campaign end up lasting much longer because of the trust built. In 1995, President Jimmy Carter negotiated what is supposedly the longest humanitarian ceasefire ever—the “Guinea worm ceasefire” in Sudan—in order to distribute filters to prevent Guinea worm and other diseases. There are so many opportunities for incorporating peacebuilding with health and humanitarian initiatives.

Right now the END Fund is working on projects in the Central African Republic. In the last few years it's been a difficult place to work. We keep having to stop our projects because of violence. This year, for example, instead of doing one national campaign for de-worming, we are working on strategic, targeted, and mobile efforts in places that have a window of peace. They go and run a medical campaign there, and de-worm all of the kids in that particular region while there's a moment of calm. Then you might roll it to another area. We've had to change our approach, depending on conflict.

We are funding in places that others aren't. I think that's in part because of the flexibility of private philanthropy—the patience that we can have to target NTDs when others might need to pursue formal emergency aid. Four years ago, when there was a coup in Mali, the U.S. government was funding an NTD program there, but because there was no longer a democratically elected head of government, they were no longer allowed to deploy funding. A really successful project was about to fall apart, which could have meant diseases resurging. We engaged a group of private philanthropists to keep that program going and provide treatment in refugee camps over the border in Niger until people could go back to their homes. We helped with that continuity until USAID was able to come back in two years later.

Then there's migration. If you took the size of the total population of refugees, it would be one of the twenty largest countries in the world. You can't always think about things in terms of national strategy. We helped eliminate trachoma from Burundi recently, but now Burundi is really struggling and people are crossing borders. That same population is in Uganda, in Rwanda, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo because of the unrest in Burundi, and we will likely need to re-map for disease there. We can't just check it off and say it's done, because of the dynamics of migration and conflict. It's all very much intertwined.

I heard a fascinating story when I was recently in Saudi Arabia—we were discussing the polio workers in Northern Pakistan who were getting killed in recent years. There was a conspiracy theory around the polio workers being there as part of a CIA campaign. To still address the issue of polio in the region, some Saudi philanthropists and the Islamic Development Bank had the idea to start manufacturing the polio vaccine there, right outside of Jeddah in Mecca. They would have labels in Arabic, saying “Made in Mecca,” and that would make the polio vaccines seem less “foreign” than if they had English labels on them. That idea was brilliant! I’m not an expert on that particular story, but I think these kinds of regional, culturally-specific solutions are great.

The interplay of culture, politics, and conflict is very interesting.

.....
The interplay of culture, politics, and conflict is very interesting. You can't disaggregate those factors or limit yourself to focusing on just five diseases. All of this is interconnected.

You can't disaggregate those factors or limit yourself to focusing on just five diseases. All of this is interconnected. It's so obvious, but we need to understand what that means on a regular basis, how our own issue areas are being affected by all these other larger social and political dynamics, and how we can be smart in the way we deploy effective health solutions to embed within a larger development and political context. As one of the END Fund

advisors, Gabrielle Fitzgerald, always reminds us, “twenty-first century problems require twenty-first century solutions.” We’re solving problems in unexpected ways now. For that reason, it’s an exciting time to be in the field. *f*

Empowering a Distributed Workforce in Africa's Tech industry

A CONVERSATION WITH CHRISTINA SASS

FLETCHER FORUM: *Tell us about the mission of Andela. What experiences informed you and your co-founders of the need to found Andela?*

CHRISTINA SASS: Our mission is to empower 100,000 young technologists to be technology leaders, and to lead the spread of the digital revolution across the African continent. As one of Andela's four co-founders, my approach to the model stems from understanding that public education is still woefully disconnected from market opportunities and the needs of employers. I have long been hyper-focused on how to force existing education models to prepare people for job opportunities that are available and realistic to them. The unique opportunity for Andela is this historic moment in time when we have all of the tools necessary to connect brilliant, talented people to wherever they're most needed in the world. We are looking to revalue talent wherever it is; we use the tagline, "Talent is evenly distributed but opportunity is not." Andela sought out a huge pool of open jobs that are most valuable on the international marketplace that people can do remotely, without debt, without leaving home, and without creating any brain drain. The single greatest opportunity with those criteria

Christina Sass is the Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of Andela, a company that recruits the most talented technologists across Africa and places them as distributed teammates with the world's leading engineering organizations. Andela's mission is to build the next generation of technical leaders in Africa, providing the continent's most driven, talented young people a pathway into the global economy. With headquarters in Lagos, Nigeria, Nairobi, Kenya, New York, and San Francisco, Andela is backed by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and Google Ventures, among others. Christina is a Fletcher alumnus (F09).

is software development. We looked at how we could create talent pipelines into growing tech teams, allow brilliant young people to add value and soak up cutting-edge best practices within those teams, and then bring it back to the continent. This is the model that has emerged and evolved.

FLETCHER FORUM: *Can you expand a bit on Andela's model to connect technologists to Fortune 500 companies and other companies abroad?*

SASS: The model has three parts: select developers, level them up through master's level training, and then fully integrate them with growing tech companies. For selectivity, on the supply side we're looking at over 50,000 applications to the program for about 230 software developer slots. We're examining their problem-solving, logical reasoning, and drive—and we're refining the characteristics that make a great remote developer, constantly tweaking what those are and how to evaluate for them. For each recruitment cycle we'll have about 1,000 applicants and we'll hire between six and eight individuals who will form a cohort. They go through the rest of the four-year fellowship together.

The large majority of developers we hire (around 80 percent) have graduated from university with a degree in Computer Science or Engineering. After joining Andela, they engage in three months of intensive simulations followed by three months of building on our own products, during which they're reinforcing best practices for distributed agile development teams and building real products for real users. The goal is for them to apply their skills exactly as they will when working with our partners. Ultimately, Andela is preparing developers for what we call the "Google test"—could we place them with one of our partners, like Google or Facebook, and have them start contributing from day one?

We also spend a lot of time on business skills and soft skills coaching. Even though our developers are technically proficient, skills such as receiving and incorporating feedback in a short period of time, and being able to do so remotely, are very important for a world-class software developer to possess. Those are the kinds of things we are looking at in the six-month technical leadership period.

Once developers receive the Andela stamp of approval and are deemed ready for client work, we hold an internal recruiting process to find them a good match with one of our company partners. They are then fully integrated into that tech team. This means that they will work a forty-hour week, with five guaranteed hours per day overlapping with that tech team. They are on the team's Slack channels or instant messaging system, and

have a company email address just like any other employee. Developers orient onsite at the company's headquarters, usually for anywhere between two weeks to three months, to learn the culture and working style. Then they'll work remotely from one of our tech campuses in either Lagos or Nairobi.

FLETCHER FORUM: *Given that developers work remotely in Africa, how have Slack and other professional technologies made these partnerships between African developers and Andela's clients possible?*

SASS: Slack, Trello, Blue Jeans, and a handful of other tools are absolutely critical to the distributed team model. Internally, we use Slack, but if our partners choose to use a different platform, then our developers will be on-boarded to whatever that is. We are pushing the needle on what a world-class distributed team looks like and we are helping to inform our partners, particularly ones that have not done distributed work before.

At the TechCrunch Disrupt Hackathon in San Francisco earlier this year, a team of Andela developers built a fascinating tool called Imprompt.io

that makes looping in a remote team member very simple. If two colleagues have an impromptu meeting at the water cooler and come up with a great idea, they can easily call in a remote teammate via Amazon Alexa, the voice that powers a hands-free speaker you control with your voice, or ask Alexa to "listen" and transcribe the meeting notes in the case that their teammate is unavailable.

I will use this example: if our colleague Kim Wilson isn't here with us, we can say, "Hey Alexa, is Kim Wilson online and available?" Imprompt.io will check her calendar, check if she's online on Slack, and if she is, it will start a call with her right away. Then it will transcribe the whole conversation—either just between the two of us, or with Kim if she actually picks up the call—and then Slack will send that conversation to all of us. These are the kinds of tools that really enable people to not miss those in-person moments, to be able to track information as it happens in real time, and to thrive as a distributed team.

We are pushing the needle on what a world-class distributed team looks like and we are helping to inform our partners, particularly ones that have not done distributed work before.

FLETCHER FORUM: *What is Andela's vision for connecting these African developers to big tech companies and bringing the tech industry to Africa and developers' local communities?*

SASS: Each Andela developer commits to four years with us, and the point of that is for them to be able to go through the intensive six months and then work with multiple cutting-edge tech teams of different sizes—startups all the way up to large enterprise companies. This is so they can see how complex teams at different stages of development work, and can think about that for their own companies, or tech divisions they are leading in Nairobi, Accra, Cape Town, wherever. That is why we feel like they need to see and feel; they need to orient in person once a year. They will actually go to that client or to a new client and be immersed in the best, most agile practices. This is how we hope to leapfrog the need to build an MIT or a Berkeley in one of the cities where we are operating. We would rather our developers be apprenticing and honing the craft of software development alongside the best-in-class teams. We are wildly excited and convinced of their talent, but they still need to do it. Everyone needs to sit beside an expert who is seven years more advanced and actually do it. The fastest possible way is not for them to get another master's degree but to build world-class products. We know that our developers are helping teams build better and faster while they get to be a sponge for all of that knowledge—how do they do stand-ups; how do they do a sprint; what is the timing of all of that? What is the publicity like around it? How are they helping to inform it? All of that messaging, how does the team communicate when there's a big change? When the brand or something else changes, how do they change it across multiple platforms? That's the kind of thing we want them to experience in real time with real teams and then bring that back to Lagos and Nairobi and be able to incorporate it in their own businesses or in their own tech teams.

FLETCHER FORUM: *In September, you spearheaded Andela's participation in a women's education event in Kenya by way of Global Give Back Circle. How has this been a collective movement that spans beyond just the efforts of Andela? How has tapping into this human capital resource in Africa been part of a larger movement to access talent in Africa?*

SASS: When we started Andela, we were utterly convinced of the talent. There are a couple of different ways that we validated it, but I'll tell you one story that was particularly profound. We use a psychometric test that's

designed by a test maker in Toronto, and most of the talent that they're screening is from the U.S. and Canada. When we launched our second cohort in Lagos—this was when we were still getting organized but we made a big push to get a lot of applicants—we got 2,500 applicants for the position. We were shocked by that number. The testing service called us and said, “We have never seen so many applicants on the platform, what in the world is this job that everyone is applying to like wildfire?” And secondly they said, “You already have 48 candidates in this pool that we think are in the top two percent of intellect in the world.” That was the point at which a lot of us—the four founders—who were thinking about it as a pilot, pivoted and focused on it as a full-time new company. Just because of the extraordinary untapped potential talent. This was a remarkable indicator of what we all believed to be true. We had the supply side—2,500 people—without much effort, and who wanted this kind of an opportunity. We knew we were onto something huge. This was our promise, and something that we have tried to deliver on every single day: *How do we let the entire world know about the caliber of talent that we are seeing?* We promised them that we would not waste any of their time on something that is not immediately relevant to a client that they're excited to work for, that they are pumped to be part of their team and build their product.

How do we let the entire world know about the caliber of talent that we are seeing?

In the last two months, we have seen a fundamental shift in this landscape that was expedited by the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and by Andela. In August, Mark Zuckerberg made his first trip to Africa, and within an hour of being on the ground in Nigeria he was standing in our Lagos office. This was game changing. Again, it is not that the talent wasn't there, it is just that they had never been in a global spotlight like that, and it happened relatively quickly. This was something that we knew would happen, that we were all driving towards—all of the founders were never going to sleep until this happened—but in a two-month span, we saw a whole new focus on the attention and energy of the tech sector in Africa. People had a new revelation, thinking, “Wow, there's all these startups in Lagos, there's so much of an entrepreneurial spirit there.” And Andela said, yes! How have you not seen that before? But that external validation is important. Now we are doing that through the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and all of our different partners—and that includes IBM, Microsoft, and dozens of high-growth startups across the U.S.—that are now saying, “these developers

are great, I need two more. I need you to grow with us.” We have certainly been able to accelerate the attention and energy on this and cannot wait for it to be a watershed moment, where it is an obvious source of talent, where people ask, “How did we not think about that before? There’s such a pool of untapped talent there. That’s exactly the kind of fresh energy and ideas and the landscape in which I want to grow my tech team.”

FLETCHER FORUM: *In addition to the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, how have other entities—such as other investors, non-profits, or governments—been partners to the Andela movement?*

SASS: We have a lot of supporters and champions. We are a big part of the tech ecosystem, from ways to get the great curriculum and training that is already out there upstream to young and budding technologists. We have participated in all kinds of open source projects and hackathons—we won the first Uber hackathon on the continent. I’ll give you an example of ways that Andela is tapping in to solve local problems. We are located in a part of Lagos called Yaba, where there are many different tech start-ups. One is Hotels.ng, which is a competitor to Hotels.com, but for a Nigerian market. They opened up a hackathon to predict ten percent of cancellations on their platform. They wanted to be more efficient and enable better use for everybody—the hotel, the company, etc. Andela predicted over 40

.....
A great partnership to us looks like a high-growth company that really needs to build an extraordinary tech team and that wants to grow alongside us.

percent of their cancellations and we were able to roll out the way that they did that on Android and on iOS within a weekend. That’s a great example of a growing company that came to us with a problem in that local marketplace and said, “Help us solve this.” We blew it out of the water with that 40 percent.

We’re also thinking about how to get more women in technology, how do we get the messaging upstream, how do

we convince people to take more time with the foundational curriculum and then reapply? There are lots of different ways that they are tapping into a larger ecosystem.

FLETCHER FORUM: *Which of the partnerships that Andela has been involved with has been most successful? What does Andela define as a successful partnership?*

SASS: We are really heads-down focused on the core business model at this moment, which is long-term placements with developers in each of these tech stacks. The large majority of our partners right now are our clients. We have just under 50 clients, and a great partnership to us looks like a high-growth company that really needs to build an extraordinary tech team and that wants to grow alongside us. That starts out with one or two developers, and eventually one of those becomes a team lead and hires several more, and is thinking about how we grow alongside them for the foreseeable future.

FLETCHER FORUM: *In what, if any, situations has Andela found it more strategic to move forward without a partnership where one was intended or possible?*

SASS: We have remained friendly and supportive of all governments, but we have not formally partnered with any to date. I think that it is important for us to have the freedom to move and remain autonomous. The biggest, most obvious one is our choice to be set up as a for-profit business, and go after top-level clients—we are not going to effectively convince the world of the caliber of this talent otherwise. In order to do that, we raised serious capital from some of the best venture capital firms, some of their first investment in the continent. It's a huge amount of faith and trust in us and the startup team, but it's also the only way to say that this is truly competitive talent. Our choice to do that enables us to move very quickly compared to some of the other sectors and ways that we might have set up the business. We have the freedom to pivot and move with the markets to where we see fit, and we have had very positive reactions from the governments in both locations. We are trying now to see how we can leverage each other without being further tied down.

FLETCHER FORUM: *What have been some of Andela's greatest challenges?*

SASS: A challenge has been to change hearts and minds about Africa as a new source of talent. We did not spend a whole lot of time making the case on "why Africa?" What we did was put a wildly competent and effective person on their team. We had to test that out in different ways. First that was incorporating a thirty-day trial period, where our developers were doing short-term projects to get up to speed. Once clients saw how well the developers were working with the rest of their team and the quality of the products that were being built, we saw a real tipping point, where they

said, “Yes, we definitely want to hire a full-time, longer-term one.” But we certainly have had to convince people of a new source of talent at the beginning, and that was a huge challenge. A lot of the attention and energy on tech sectors around the continent is really blowing up alongside of us, and we would like to think we had a big part in dragging them along with us.

FLETCHER FORUM: *What are Andela’s opportunities for the future?*

SASS: We are actively scaling into new countries. We are looking at Uganda, Ghana, and South Africa. Those are huge opportunities for us to bring more future Andelans, spread the good word, and be the go-to place for young technologists. Perhaps a bigger opportunity—the ultimate—is what’s going to happen when our developers graduate. They are about two and a half years in now to a four-year fellowship, and we will see our first graduates in a year and a half launching their own companies, becoming Chief Technology Officers, helping to advise governments and other large corporations on how to best leverage the new digital economy across the continent—that’s the massive opportunity. Once they have four years with world-class development teams, we cannot wait to see them unleashed, and see how they create and build on their own, and how they help us to scale.

FLETCHER FORUM: *Thank you. f*