

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

I am honoured to present the 2024 Annual Report of the JM Education and Research Centre (JMERC), a testament to our rapid growth, dedication, and unwavering commitment to transforming education in Uganda. As a young but fast-growing organization, we take pride in the progress we have made in advancing gender equality, strengthening teacher development, and influencing policy to create inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Our Board remains small but highly committed, currently comprising five dedicated members who bring invaluable expertise and leadership to JMERC. This year, the Board convened three times to provide strategic oversight, assess progress, and ensure that our work remains aligned with our vision and mission. These meetings allowed us to address critical issues, strengthen governance, and position JMERC for long-term impact.

In 2024, JMERC made remarkable strides in its key focus areas. We deepened our partnerships with the Ministry of Education and Sports, Makerere University, and civil society organizations to drive systemic change in education. Our Gender Transformative Education initiative took root, integrating gender equity into school curricula and challenging harmful stereotypes that hinder student success. Through our teacher professional development programs, we trained and mentored 171 educators, equipping them with the tools to deliver learner-centred, gender-responsive, and inclusive teaching. We also expanded our impact beyond schools by signing an MOU with National Television (NTV) to launch *People's Parliament*, a platform dedicated to

sparkling national conversations on gender issues in education. Furthermore, our support for girls' education extended into Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) programs, ensuring that young girls have the knowledge and resources to navigate their educational journeys with confidence.

While we celebrate these achievements, we acknowledge the challenges that persist, including limited financial resources and the need for a more systemic approach to program delivery. However, these challenges present opportunities for innovation, growth, and stronger partnerships. We remain steadfast in our mission to scale our impact and transform education in Uganda.

As we move into 2025, JMERC is preparing for an even more ambitious year. We plan to pilot a systemic approach in 100 schools, ensuring that our interventions become deeply embedded within the education system for sustainable change. We will continue leveraging media platforms, research, and strategic collaborations to drive policy influence and expand our reach.

On behalf of the Board, I extend my deepest gratitude to the JMERC team, our donors, partners, and all stakeholders who have been part of this journey. Your support, dedication, and shared commitment to education and gender equality fuel our progress. Together, we are building a future where every learner has the opportunity to thrive.



Prof. Anthony Mugagga Muwagga
Board Chairperson

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I reflect on JMERC's journey in 2024, I am filled with deep gratitude and immense pride. This year has been transformative, reinforcing our commitment to youth empowerment, gender equality, economic resilience, and foundational literacy. Through strategic partnerships and innovative programs, we have reached thousands of children, youth, and women—empowering them with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities to shape their futures.

A defining achievement of 2024 was the launch of the **Gender Transformative Education (GTE) Initiative**, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports, Makerere University, STiR Education (Uganda), and other key partners. This initiative is shifting school cultures by embedding gender equity into teaching and learning environments, challenging harmful norms, and ensuring every child—regardless of gender—can thrive. Our advocacy efforts, including two high-level policy dialogues with education stakeholders, have helped position gender equality at the heart of Uganda's education agenda.

Additionally, our collaboration with **Kigezi Women Twegese Foundation** has strengthened women's economic empowerment. Over 600 women have been equipped with financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and leadership skills, enabling them to manage resources effectively, grow their businesses, and take on influential roles in their communities. Our work on play-based learning methodologies that integrate social and emotional learning into foundational literacy also gained momentum, with over 200 teachers trained in play-based, learner-centred, and gender-responsive methodologies—enhancing classroom experiences for thousands of students.

In a landmark development, we formalized a partnership with **National Television (NTV) Uganda** to launch the *People's Parliament on Education and Gender Equality*. This platform will amplify national conversations, bringing

together civil society, policymakers, and communities to drive policy change and foster a more just education system.

None of these milestones would have been possible without the steadfast support of our partners and donors, including **Echidna Giving and the Issroff Family Foundation**, whose generosity has fuelled our mission. We also celebrate the dedication of teachers, school leaders, and community champions who are the backbone of these transformative efforts.

As we look ahead to 2025, following the programme evaluation of our school-wide ecosystem program, we are scaling our work with the youth and for the youth to 50 secondary schools. We are also taking deliberate steps to pilot our play-based learning program to generate credible evidence for scaling the programme to more schools and districts in Uganda. Our commitment to evidence-based programming remains unwavering, with research from Makerere University informing national education policies.

Each milestone strengthens our vision: a future where all children—regardless of gender or background—have access to quality education and the opportunity to realize their full potential. We invite our partners, supporters, and stakeholders to continue walking this journey with us. Together, we can create a more inclusive, equitable, and transformative education system for Uganda.



Dr. John Mary Vianney Mitana
Executive Director

ABOUT JMERC

Vision

A World where all children and youth learn achieve and thrive

Our core values

- Collaboration
- Hope
- Dependability
- Audacity

Mission

JM Education and Research Centre (JMERC), established in 2019 and registered as a non-profit in 2020, is a dynamic and rapidly growing organization dedicated to improving the life outcomes of learners, particularly girls. Guided by its vision, “A World where All Children and Youth Learn, Achieve, and Thrive,” JMERC fosters personal and holistic development through education.

At the heart of JMERC’s mission is a commitment to collaboration. By engaging students, teachers, school leaders, caregivers, and communities, we ensure that education nurtures not only academic achievement but also social, emotional, and leadership skills—equipping children and youth to thrive in life. JMERC places a strong emphasis on generating evidence-based data to inform its programming, ensuring that interventions are driven by measurable outcomes that strengthen both practice and policy.

We believe that women’s empowerment and leadership are pivotal to achieving our vision. Since August 2023, JMERC has partnered with Kigezi Women Twegyese Foundation to advance financial literacy, leadership, and entrepreneurship among women through Village Savings and Credit Associations (VSCAs) This initiative enhances women’s economic participation and leadership at the grassroots level.

We provide a school Ecosystem of support to uplift learners’ life – outcomes with a focus on intervention for youth, teachers, school leaders, and caregivers/parents

INTRODUCTION

This report highlights the progress and impact of JM Education and Research Centre (JMERC) over the past year, showcasing our commitment to transforming education and empowering learners, particularly girls. It reflects our strides in foundational learning, youth empowerment, gender equality, and women's economic leadership, aligning with our core focus areas.

Through our programs, we have strengthened literacy and social-emotional learning, empowered youth with leadership and vocational skills, and advanced gender-transformative education. We have also expanded women's financial and civic participation opportunities, recognising their vital role in shaping the next generation.

This report is a testament to the collaborative efforts of our team, partners, and stakeholders, whose dedication has been instrumental in driving change. As we celebrate our achievements and reflect on challenges, we reaffirm our commitment to creating a future where all children and youth learn, achieve, and thrive. We also remain dedicated to partnerships and collaboration with like-minded organisations, policymakers, and communities to advance women's social and economic empowerment, recognising that sustainable progress is only possible through collective action.

KEY PERFORMANCES

The progress of JMERC's program activities is thoughtfully and strategically aligned with its core focus areas, which serve as the foundation for all its initiatives. These focus areas provide a clear roadmap for the design and implementation of programs, ensuring that our efforts remain purposeful, impactful, and sustainable. By addressing key educational challenges and fostering collaboration with stakeholders, JMERC continues to drive meaningful change in the educational landscape and the communities we serve.



1.1. Progress of the youth empowerment program

1.1.1. Program Reach and Impact

JMERC's **Youth Empowerment Program** continues to equip young people with the skills necessary for personal growth, academic success, and informed decision-making. In 2024, we set ambitious goals in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) **and** Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), and we proudly surpassed them:

- **SEL Program:** Reached **3,959 students** (132% of target).
- **SRH Program:** Trained **3,969 adolescent girls and young women** (122.7% of target).

- **Youth Employability:** Provided vocational training and distributed **100** sewing machines to learners in partnership with local schools.

These milestones reflect JMERC's commitment to **fostering resilience, self-awareness, and health-conscious behaviours** among youth.

1.1.2. Key Achievements



Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Outcomes

✓ Self-Awareness & Identity Development

- **79% of students** exceeded the self-awareness proficiency target (goal: 75%).
- **95% of girls** and **94% of boys** demonstrated **high self-worth** and **confidence**.
- **91% of girls** and **90% of boys** showed **strong empathy and perspective-taking skills**.



Student Reflection:

"I have grown more confident in myself and now value my emotions and understand others better." – Senior Two student

✓ Emotional Regulation & Self-Management

- **83.9% of girls** and **87.2% of boys** improved in **emotional control and conflict resolution**.
- Students reported better **stress management and resilience** in academic and social settings.



Student Testimony:

"I used to react impulsively, but now I think before I act. It has improved my friendships and focus in class." – Senior Three student

✓ Goal-Setting & Academic Discipline

- **91.4% of girls** and **93.8% of boys** successfully set and prioritised learning goals.
- While **71% of students** excelled in **self-management**, some struggled with **maintaining focus after distractions**.



Youth Employability and Vocational Training



✓ Empowering Young People with Skills for the Future

- Partnered with local schools to enhance vocational training opportunities.
- Provided 100 sewing machines to learners, fostering hands-on skill development.
- Strengthened pathways to employment by integrating entrepreneurship and practical skills into education.



Student Impact Story:

"I have learned tailoring, and now I can make clothes for myself and others. This skill gives me confidence that I can earn a living and support my family." – Vocational Training Student

JMERC's holistic approach to youth empowerment ensures that young people not only develop social and emotional competence but also gain practical skills to shape their futures



Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Outcomes

✓ Expanding SRH Knowledge & Awareness

- **3,969 adolescent girls and young women trained** (122.7% of target).
- **91% reported improved SRH knowledge**, covering topics like **menstrual health, personal hygiene and sanitation, and STI prevention**.
- **91% now feel comfortable discussing SRH matters**, breaking long-standing taboos.



Student Reflection:

"Before, I thought menstruation was something abnormal, but since learning about it through JMERC, I understand it's a normal process." – Senior Three girl

✓ Menstrual Health & Care-Seeking Behaviour

- **90% menstrual literacy** competency score, indicating strong understanding.
- **60% of girls now know at least one reliable SRH information source**.
- **60% are actively practising care-seeking behaviours** to prevent STI/HIV infections.

1.1.3. Success Story: Empowered and Unbroken: Lucy's Journey of Resilience with JMERC

My name is Lucy, a fifteen-year-old student at Kantare Secondary School in Rukiga District. I am a living example of how JMERC's Girls and Youth Empowerment Programme has transformed my life.

One day, a misunderstanding at a local shop spiraled into a severe accusation. The shopkeeper's wife wrongly accused me of having an affair with her husband, and my stepmother, without seeking the truth, allowed this confrontation to happen. I sought refuge with a trusted adult friend for three days, only to learn that the shopkeeper had been falsely imprisoned, a situation fuelled by my stepmother's exploitation.

Thanks to JMERC's training, I knew how to stand up for what was right. I gathered the courage to approach the police and clear the shopkeeper's name. My determination led to his release, showcasing the strength of character I had gained through the programme.

Upon returning home, I faced rejection from my family. But with the support of my uncle and grandmother, I continued my education. Despite these challenges, I never gave up. Today, I thrive at Kantare Secondary School, proud of my resilience and the confidence JMERC instilled in me.



Lucy's story exemplifies how JMERC's programme not only provides education but also empowers young people to overcome adversity with courage, integrity, and determination.

1.1.4. Looking Ahead

JMERC remains committed to **expanding youth empowerment initiatives** through:

- ✓ **Scaling SEL and SRH programs to 50 additional secondary schools.**
- ✓ **Establishing youth clubs – Open Minds Youth Clubs to strengthen school-based mentorship and peer learning support.**
- ✓ **and capacity development of school teachers to provide school-based support, enhancing emotional resilience, mental health and improved academic performance.**

Through these efforts, JMERC is shaping a **generation of confident, socially aware, and health-conscious youth** who are ready to take charge of their futures.



1.2. Progress on Foundation learning (Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and literacy

1.1.5. Program Reach & Impact

JMERC's **Foundational Learning Program**, integrating **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Literacy**, is designed to enhance **learner-centred, play-based, and inclusive teaching methodologies**

in lower primary schools. Ultimately, it aims to equip learners with demonstrable foundational literacy and social-emotional skills, becoming resilient, empathetic, and academically capable individuals prepared for lifelong learning and holistic development. By the end of 2024, the program made significant strides in **teacher training, instructional quality, and classroom engagement**:

- **171 teachers trained and mentored** (85.5% of target).
- Marked improvements in **learner-centred teaching, classroom participation, and literacy instruction**.

These achievements reflect JMERC's commitment to **enhancing teaching quality and fostering engaging learning experiences** for young learners.

1.1.6. Key Achievements



Learner-Centred Teaching & Play-Based Learning

- **92.5% of teachers** reported an improved ability to create **inclusive and participatory classrooms**.
- Teachers demonstrated greater confidence in **facilitating discussions, encouraging pupil engagement, and integrating interactive learning strategies**.
- Play-based approaches and collaborative learning activities were widely adopted, fostering **critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills** in pupils.



Teacher Reflection:

“Since adopting these methods, my pupils are more engaged in lessons, interact more confidently, and participate actively in learning activities.”— Lower Primary Teacher



Improved Teaching & Assessment Practices

- Data from our continuous Monitoring and Evaluation showed that trained teachers effectively applied **learner-centred techniques** in their classrooms.
- Educators increasingly incorporated **active learning strategies, storytelling, group discussions, and hands-on activities** to enhance literacy instruction.
- The shift toward **formative assessments** helped teachers **better track pupil progress** and adapt their teaching approaches accordingly.



Enhancing Literacy through SEL Integration

- Teachers integrated **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)** principles into literacy instruction, improving **reading engagement, comprehension, and expressive communication**.
- **Pupils demonstrated stronger collaboration, empathy, and confidence** in classroom interactions, fostering a holistic approach to foundational learning.



Teacher Reflection:

“I now see my pupils thinking critically and expressing themselves better. They are more confident in reading aloud and engaging in discussions.” – Lower Primary Teacher

1.1.7. Looking Ahead

JMERC remains committed to **scaling the impact of the Foundational Learning Program**. To achieve this, we shall:

- ✓ Systematically pilot the Play-Based teaching methodologies that **integrate SEL in literacy instruction**.
- ✓ Conducting a **rigorous study to assess changes in pupils' literacy and SEL skills, as well as teacher perceptions and teaching approaches**.

Through these two activities, we shall refine the programme and generate credible and adequate evidence to scale the programme across the country.



1.3. Gender transformative Education initiative.

In 2024, JMERC made significant strides in promoting **gender-transformative education** by equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge to create **inclusive, gender-responsive learning environments**. Through **structured training, classroom-based mentorship, and high-level policy engagement**, JMERC supported educators in **challenging gender stereotypes, fostering equitable participation, and implementing fair assessment practices** that benefit all learners.

1.1.8. Programme Impact and Reach

i) Empowering Educators for Gender-Responsive Teaching

By the end of 2024, **171 teachers (85.5% of the target)** successfully completed gender-responsive teaching training and mentorship. These educators:

- **Integrated gender-sensitive teaching strategies**, with **86% actively applying these methodologies** in their classrooms.
- **Adopted gender-responsive assessment practices (78%)**, ensuring fairness in student evaluations.
- Reported **greater awareness of gender dynamics**, leading to more equitable engagement of boys and girls in learning activities.

Educator Testimonial

"After attending the workshops, I now consider gender sensitivity in all classroom activities, encouraging both boys and girls to collaborate effectively." – Teacher, 2024

These interventions are **transforming classroom practices**, helping to dismantle gender biases and foster **an inclusive learning environment** that supports all students



1.1.9. Key Achievements

i) Strengthening Institutional Commitment to Gender Equality

JMERC worked closely with the **Ministry of Education and Sports, Makerere University, and STiR Education** to embed gender-responsive approaches into Uganda's education system.

Key milestones included:

Two high-level stakeholder meetings that convened policymakers, education experts, and civil society actors to discuss strategic integration of gender equity into education policy and practice.

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- Seven schools formalized their commitment to gender-transformative education through signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), achieving a 70% milestone in institutional collaboration.
- A strategic partnership with NTV, formalised through an MOU, to launch a dedicated national broadcast under the "People's Parliament" program, facilitating nationwide discussions on gender equality in education.

These efforts **strengthen systemic engagement**, ensuring that **gender-responsive education moves beyond the classroom** to influence broader education policies and institutional practices.

ii) Expanding Access to Gender-Responsive Education

To further support gender equity in education:

- JMERC **integrated Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) education** into our school programs, equipping young girls with essential knowledge to make informed health choices, remain in school, and succeed academically.
- Schools implemented gender-sensitive leadership and classroom practices and institutional reforms, fostering a learning environment where both girls and boys thrive.

These initiatives directly address barriers to education for girls, ensuring that schools become safe, inclusive, and supportive spaces for all learners.

1.1.10. Looking Ahead

While 2024 marked **significant progress**, JMERC recognizes the need for **a rigorous long-term impact assessment** to evaluate the effectiveness of gender-transformative education initiatives.

Key priorities for 2025 include:

- **Tracking changes in teacher perceptions and classroom practices**, measuring the sustained impact of gender-responsive teaching.
- **Assessing systemic shifts in school leadership and culture**, evaluating institutional commitment to gender equality.
- **Expanding the reach of the People's Parliament program**, amplifying gender equity discussions at the national level.

Through these efforts, **JMERC remains committed to building an education system rooted in gender equity, empowerment, and inclusion**, ensuring that all children—**regardless of gender**—have equal opportunities to learn, grow, and thrive.



Women's Social AND Economic Empowerment.

In 2024, JMERC, in partnership with the **Kigezi Women Twegyese Foundation**, made significant progress in **empowering women economically** through financial literacy, entrepreneurship training, and community-driven financial solutions. These interventions aimed to **enhance women's financial independence, break the cycle of poverty, and create sustainable livelihoods.**



1.1.11. Programme Impact and Reach

i) Empowering Women Through Financial Literacy

Recognizing that **financial literacy is key to economic empowerment**, JMERC trained **613 women** in **budgeting, savings, investment, and credit management**. These sessions provided participants with **practical financial skills**, enabling them to make informed economic decisions and improve their financial well-being.

ii) Strengthening Community-Based Financial Networks

To **sustain economic empowerment**, the program encouraged women to form **Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)**—community-driven financial groups that:

- ✓ Enable women to **pool resources and access credit** without traditional banking barriers.
- ✓ Foster **cooperation, resilience, and financial self-reliance**.
- ✓ Provide a **sustainable financial safety net** that empowers women beyond the program.

iii) **Expanding Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs**

Beyond financial literacy, JMERC introduced women to **entrepreneurial opportunities** by:

- ✓ Training them in **small business management**.
- ✓ Connecting them with **local markets and business mentors**.
- ✓ Encouraging **income-generating activities** tailored to their skills and community needs.

Our Monitoring and Evaluation data indicates that increasing number of our target women have already **started businesses, increased savings, and formed support networks**, demonstrating the program's **transformative impact** on women's economic resilience.

1.1.12.Key Achievements

- ✓ **613 women trained in financial literacy**, equipping them with practical knowledge in financial management.
- ✓ **Formation of multiple Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)**, strengthening women's access to financial resources.
- ✓ **Increased entrepreneurship participation**, with many women starting small businesses and developing sustainable income streams.
- ✓ **Enhanced financial confidence**, with participants reporting greater control over their economic decisions and long-term planning.

Testimonial

A participant shared her experience:

"Before this training, I had no idea how to manage money effectively. Now, I have started saving and even planning for a small business. This knowledge has given me hope for a better future."

1.1.13.Looking Ahead

While the **progress in 2024 has been significant**, JMERC recognizes the need to **scale its impact** and provide continued support in key areas:

- ✓ **Expanding financial literacy training** to reach more women in rural areas.
- ✓ **Strengthening business development support**, including mentorship, market access, and business financing opportunities.
- ✓ **Conducting a comprehensive impact assessment** to track long-term economic outcomes for participants.
- ✓ **Building partnerships with financial institutions** to improve women's access to credit and investment opportunities.

JMERC remains committed to **breaking economic barriers, fostering financial independence, and creating sustainable opportunities** for women in Uganda. Through **community-driven solutions and strategic partnerships**, the program will continue to **empower women to become financially self-sufficient and active contributors to their communities**.

FACTORS EXPLAINING JMERC'S PERFORMANCE IN 2024

JMERC's remarkable achievements in 2024 were driven by a combination of **strong partnerships, dedicated educators, donor support, and strategic program implementation**. These factors not only enabled JMERC to **exceed key targets** but also strengthened its ability to drive **systemic and sustainable change** in Uganda's education sector.

Parliament partnership with NTV, which provided a **national platform for public discourse** on gender equity in education.

These efforts **amplified JMERC's reach, impact, and sustainability**, ensuring that its interventions were not only relevant but also embedded within existing government structures.

1. Collaborative Partnerships & Policy Alignment

JMERC deepened its partnerships by signing additional **Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)** with the **Ministry of Education and Sports, Makerere University, civil society organizations, and other key stakeholders**. These strategic collaborations played a crucial role in:

- Facilitating **the seamless implementation of the Gender Transformative Education (GTE) initiative**, ensuring that gender-responsive teaching and assessment methodologies were embedded within the education system.
- Aligning JMERC's activities with **national education policies**, enhancing institutional support, and increasing program sustainability.
- Expanding JMERC's influence at the policy level, particularly through initiatives like the **People's**

2. Support from Donors

The **financial support from Echidna Giving** was instrumental in **sustaining and scaling JMERC's interventions**. This funding enabled JMERC to:

- Train and mentor **171 teachers in gender-responsive pedagogy, formative assessment, and critical pedagogy**—far exceeding initial targets.
- Equip **over 616 women with financial literacy skills** in partnership with **Kigezi Women Twegye Foundation**, fostering economic empowerment and resilience.
- Implement **classroom-based mentorship**, ensuring that teachers could **apply their training in real-time** to improve student learning outcomes.
- Expand engagement efforts with **parents, school leaders, and policymakers**, fostering **multi-**

stakeholder collaboration to drive systemic change.

By securing consistent financial resources, JMERC was able to **implement high-impact programs without major disruptions**, demonstrating **efficient resource utilization and strong donor accountability**.

3. Dedication of Teachers and School Leaders

The commitment of **teachers and school leaders** was **pivotal to the program's success**. Teachers **enthusiastically embraced** learner-centred, gender-responsive methodologies, while school leaders worked to create **inclusive and**

supportive learning environments. Their efforts led to:

- **92.5% of teachers** reporting improved ability to create **participatory and inclusive classrooms**.
- **86% of teachers** effectively integrating **gender-responsive methodologies** into their teaching.
- **100% of school leaders** observing **improved student attendance and engagement**, particularly among girls.

The **collaborative spirit of educators and school administrators** ensured that JMERC's initiatives were **successfully adopted and institutionalized** within the target schools.

LESSONS LEARNED

A. Strengthening Integration into Government School Systems

JMERC recognized that **embedding activities within existing school structures** enhances sustainability. By working closely with **government education officials and school leadership**, JMERC can **reduce logistical challenges** and **streamline program implementation**, allowing for **broader, long-term impact**.

B. Leveraging Digital Platforms for Community Engagement

Engaging school communities **physically** proved to be **time- and labour-intensive**. To **expand outreach**, JMERC will increasingly **leverage virtual platforms** to:

- Engage **parents, community leaders, and stakeholders** in discussions on **gender-based barriers in education**.
- Provide **ongoing mentorship and professional development** for teachers.
- Enhance **knowledge-sharing among schools**, reducing the need for frequent on-site interventions.

C. Applying a Gender-Transformative Lens Across All Programs

JMERC has learned that **gender-responsive approaches must go beyond the classroom** and engage with **policy, social, and cultural systems**. Addressing entrenched **gender norms and biases** requires:

- **More active policy advocacy** to integrate gender-responsive practices into national education frameworks.
- **Community-wide engagement** to shift societal attitudes towards **gender equality in education**.
- **Strengthened efforts to recruit and support female teachers**, ensuring a **more balanced and diverse teaching workforce**

CHALLENGES AND ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES

i) Balancing Program Demands with Academic Commitments

Many schools struggled to balance JMERC's activities with their **regular academic responsibilities**, leading to inconsistent participation. To address this, JMERC:

- Worked with school leaders to **integrate training and mentorship into existing schedules**.
- Prioritized **high-impact components** to **minimize disruptions** while maintaining program effectiveness.
- Conducted **regular feedback sessions** to adapt strategies to each school's needs.

ii) Addressing Teacher Turnover and Training Sustainability

Frequent **teacher transfers** created gaps in implementation, as newly transferred teachers lacked prior training. To mitigate this, JMERC:

- Established **continuous professional development programs**, ensuring that new teachers could **quickly adapt** to program methodologies.
- Encouraged **peer mentorship**, allowing trained teachers to **support their colleagues** in adopting JMERC's approaches.
- Developed **training resources and toolkits** to provide **self-guided learning opportunities** for new teachers.

iii) Enhancing Parental and Community Engagement

Encouraging **fathers** to actively engage in their children's education proved difficult due to **cultural norms and work commitments**. To address this, JMERC:

- Organized **flexible engagement activities**, such as **evening meetings and community forums**, to accommodate working parents.
- Promoted **inclusive messaging**, emphasizing that **both fathers and mothers** play a crucial role in their children's educational success.
- Strengthened **collaboration with community leaders**, leveraging their influence to **encourage parental participation**.

iv) **Scaling with Limited Financial Resources**

While **Echidna Giving's support** was invaluable, the growing demand for JMERC's interventions **outpaced available funding**. This affected JMERC's ability to:

- Expand **teacher training and mentorship programs**.
- Increase **community engagement initiatives**.
- Provide **more comprehensive support for women's economic empowerment initiatives**.

To overcome this, JMERC will:

- **Diversify funding sources** by seeking **additional grants, philanthropic support, and strategic partnerships**.
- Explore **cost-effective digital engagement strategies** to reach a **broader audience with fewer resources**.
- Advocate for **greater government support**, ensuring that gender-transformative education becomes a **national priority**.



JMERC's Plan for 2025

1 Leveraging National Television (NTV) for Policy, Women's Leadership, and Social Change

JMERC will strategically utilize the Citizens' Parliament for Education platform on NTV to initiate nationwide conversations on the policy, social, cultural, religious, and gender-based barriers that hinder access to education. This high-impact media initiative will:

Amplify public awareness by bringing education challenges into mainstream discourse.

Engage diverse audiences across formal and informal sectors, fostering inclusive participation.

Challenge traditional norms and perceptions, encouraging shifts in attitudes toward gender equality and education.

Highlight and promote women's leadership and empowerment in education by featuring women educators, policymakers, and community leaders as key voices in the discussions.

Mobilize collective action from policymakers, educators, parents, and civil society to drive meaningful reforms.

By harnessing the power of media, JMERC aims to influence national education priorities, encourage evidence-based policymaking, and inspire social transformation that supports equitable education for all learners, with a particular focus on elevating women's leadership in education

2 Strengthening Evidence-Based Learning and Pilot-Testing the SELL-PLAY Programme

JMERC will continue its partnership with Makerere University's College of Education and External Studies to:

Enhance data-driven decision-making in program implementation.

Generate rigorous evidence to inform national and regional education discourse.

Contribute to policy formulation by translating research insights into practical recommendations.

Pilot-test the Social and Emotional Learning and Literacy through Play (SELL-PLAY) Programme as outlined in the Play, Learn, Grow: A Toolkit for Integrating Social and Emotional Learning into Foundational Literacy Development.

The SELL-PLAY programme is designed to:

Strengthen social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies among learners.

Enhance foundational literacy through play-based methodologies.

Provide educators with practical tools to integrate SEL into literacy instruction.

By rigorously testing SELL-PLAY, JMERC will generate robust evidence on its effectiveness, ensuring that it can be scaled and institutionalized within Uganda's education system.

Active Participation in Key Networks for Greater Impact

3 JMERC will expand its influence and knowledge-sharing efforts by remaining actively engaged in key education networks, including:

- The Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI): A coalition of education organizations working to improve learning outcomes across East Africa.
- The Learning Through Play Community of Practice: A collaborative initiative led by the Ministry of Education and Sports and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) that promotes innovative, play-based learning approaches.

Through these networks, JMERC will:

- Share best practices and lessons learned from its gender-transformative education model.
- Collaborate with other stakeholders to scale innovative education solutions.
- Influence education policies and frameworks, ensuring that gender equality remains a national priority.

By maintaining a strong presence in these platforms, JMERC will expand its reach, enhance its credibility, and drive system-wide improvements in education.

Transitioning to a Systemic Approach for Sustainable Impact

4 In 2025, JMERC will shift from individual school-level implementation to a comprehensive, systemic approach that tackles deeply ingrained policy and socio-cultural barriers to education and gender equality. This strategic transition will:

- Embed gender-transformative education more deeply within Uganda's education system.
- Engage policymakers, education authorities, and community leaders to drive long-term change.
- Ensure scalability and sustainability by integrating key program components into existing national frameworks.

To test, refine, and perfect this systemic model, JMERC will pilot the approach in 50 schools before rolling it out on a larger scale. This pilot phase will:

- Allow for real-time adjustments, ensuring adaptability across different educational contexts.
- Provide data-driven insights on effectiveness, informing future expansion.
- Strengthen JMERC's advocacy efforts, demonstrating the feasibility and benefits of system-wide adoption.

By transitioning to a more scalable and policy-integrated approach, JMERC is laying the groundwork for lasting transformation in Uganda's education sector, ensuring that every learner—regardless of gender—has access to equitable, inclusive, and high-quality education.

OUR PARTNERS



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA



RELI

Regional Educational
Learning Initiative

