Title: The Girl Power Project in Uganda – An evaluation of its impact at the community

Four Texas A&M University graduate students conducted research on the impact at the community level of a girl empowerment program in Uganda. This portion of the panel presentation will address two key aspects of the research: (1) Community impact of the Just Like My Child (JLMC) Foundation’s Girl Power Project that has reached over 4,700 girls, ages 12-15 years, in 71 schools in the Luwero Triangle in Central Uganda over the past 12 years. (2) Qualitative field research method used and lessons learned in its use to collect and interpret impact data from 139 persons from seven stakeholder groups in 19 communities over an intense in-country two-month period in June and July of 2018. Nine open-ended questions were asked of 19 Ugandan JLMC staff members (419 responses), 34 Community Legal Volunteers (730 responses), 34 Girl Power Advocates (675 responses), 12 teachers (181 responses), 10 parents (178 responses), and 30 untrained others (510 responses). There were a total of 2,693 responses that were content analyzed by the four researchers/judges. Also, two partner organizations – a hospital and the police – provided unstructured information reflective of community impact.

Findings and the researchers’ observations reveal an increase in (1) community awareness and advocacy for girl’s education, (2) community knowledge and agency to respond to violence against girls, (3) community awareness and dialogue on women’s equality, (4) assumption of responsibility by community leaders with regard to girl’s issues, (5) flexibility of gender roles within the community, and (6) the capacity of community members to parent their children. Findings have implications for not only illuminating the impact of development efforts on target populations but also on the impact of these efforts on broader communities where the target populations reside, in this case the teen girls. The research method has implications for how qualitative data, i.e., responses from stakeholders, may be content analyzed and categorized into discernable themes based on numerical and percentage weights. This research contributes to equality, equity, and development from a gender and sustainable impact lens.