



5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

2023-2027



With support from:



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Our strategic plan 2023-2027 guides the organisation's growth and effectiveness in realising its vision of a world where all children learn, achieve, and thrive. It provides direction for prioritising initiatives, allocating resources effectively, and measuring progress. The plan aims to enhance learners' life outcomes and impact within the broader school ecosystem by prioritising interventions for students, teachers, school leaders, and parents.



VISION

A world where all children and youth learn, achieve and thrive

MISSION

We support & strengthen school ecosystem to uplift learners' life outcomes with a focus on intervention for children and youth, teachers, school leaders and caregivers

Strategic Priorities

At the core of the plan is a set of five strategic priorities, and the outcomes we aim for within each of those priorities, in pursuit of our overall vision and mission.

Girls' Education and Empowerment

1

Every adolescent girl and young woman in Uganda is socially, emotionally and intellectually empowered to learn, achieve and thrive

1. Girls develop the social and emotional competences they require for their wellbeing.
2. Girls make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health
3. Schools and communities develop supportive systems and structures in which every adolescent girl and or young women can learn, achieve and thrive

Life-skills and Values for youth

2

Every youth in Uganda develops life-skills and values they require for life-long learning and the world of work

1. A contextualised and adaptable SEL for better programme model
2. Youths develop the skills and values they require for life-long learning and the world of work;
3. Teachers develop the ability to nurture and assess social and emotional skills;

Schools and Community Engagement

3

Schools and communities support effective learning for all and girls' empowerment.

1. Teachers use learner-centered and gender responsive teaching, assessment tools and methodologies;
2. School leaders create school cultures, structures and systems that enhance learning for all;
3. Caregivers support children academic achievement & social-emotional learning.

Institutional development

4

JMERC is adequately resourced, sustainably funded, and well-governed to effectively promote the right to quality education in Uganda

1. JMERC staff has capacity to fulfil the organisation's mission
2. JMERC enjoys sustainable funding
3. JMERC's management and governance are well aligned to its vision and mission.

Institutional Internal Capacity to Scale

5

JMERC is well positioned to effectively provide girls/ youth empowerment using a school-wide ecosystem model

1. JMERC's school-wide ecosystem model is tested and adapted by the Ministry of Education
2. JMERC has established strong partnerships and networks required to scale its impact
3. JMERC impacts 1 million youth of whom 70% are female



Financial Plan

YEAR	Budget estimate
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2023	\$ 193,996
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2024	\$ 239,233
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Total Strategic Plan Budget: (2023–2027) = \$1,776,608

Legal Structure and Ownership

JMERC is a non-For-profit organisation registered in Uganda.

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2. WHO WE ARE

2.1. Introduction

JM Education and Research Centre (JMERC) was incorporated as a non-profit organisation in Uganda in 2020, dedicated to advancing Quality Education, Gender Equality and Youth Empowerment. Besides programming, JMERC is committed to generating evidence to inform its programme effectiveness and enhance policy advocacy and stakeholder engagement.

In pursuit of its vision of a World where all children and youth learn, achieve and thrive, JMERC has developed a multi-year strategic plan to guide its programmes, research and policy advocacy.

2.2. Vision, Mission and Core Values

Our Vision:

A world where all children and youth learn, achieve and thrive

Our Mission:

We support and strengthen school ecosystem to uplift learners' life-outcomes with a focus on intervention for children and youth, teachers, school leaders and caregivers.

Our Core Values



Hope

Optimism/ Aspiration/
Assurance/ light at the
end of the tunnel/
Promise/ Longing.

1



Collaboration

Partnership/ Alliance/
Teamwork/
Cooperation/
Networking.

2



Dependability

Trust/ evidence-based/
reliability/ integrity.

3

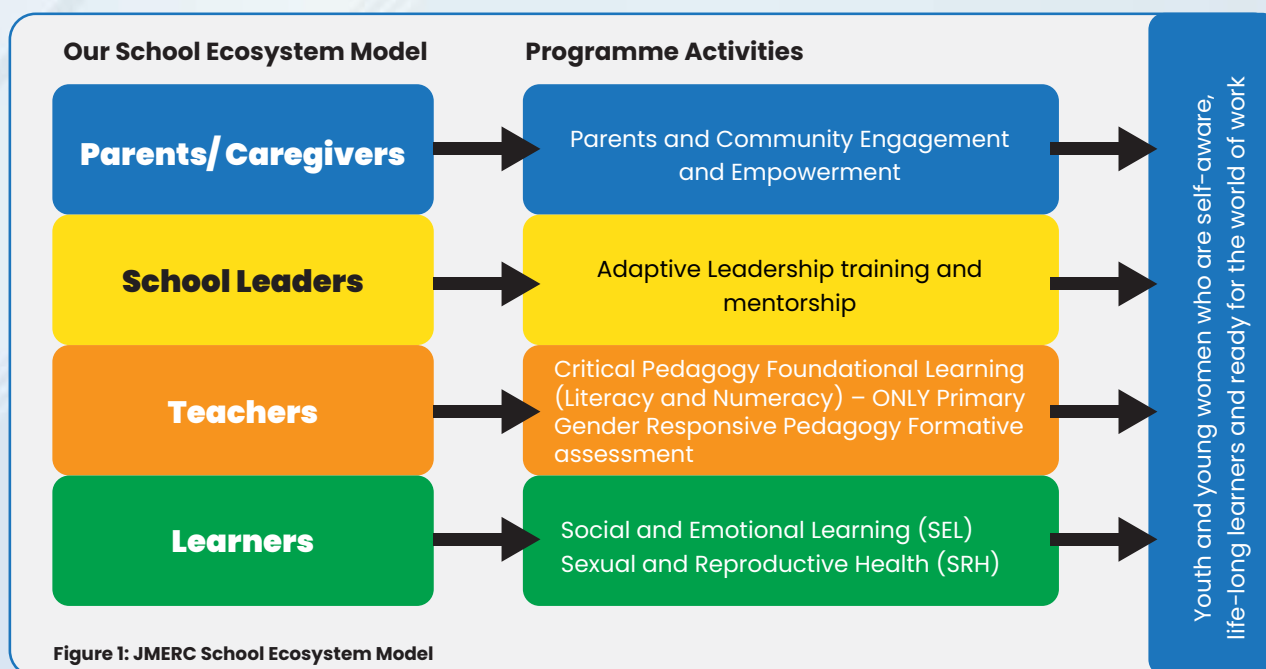


Audacity

Courage/ Heroism/
Guts/ dynamism/
Valour/ Confidence.

4

2.3. Our Program Model



Why a school ecosystem?

We believe that “It takes a village to raise a child” (African Proverb). In order to achieve our ultimate goal of socially and economically agile youth and young women in Uganda, JMERC employs a school-wide ecosystem approach focusing on students (especially girls), teachers, school leaders and parents/caregivers working together to develop a supportive, responsive and adaptive learning ecology. We seek to develop a supportive school ecosystem that empowers children and youth, especially girls and young women, amplifying their life-skills, values and attitudes so that they can learn, achieve and thrive, transforming themselves, families and communities. We do this by providing; (1) Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) training and mentorship to the youth (girls and boys) and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH – girls and boys); (2) Teacher capacity development so that they can prepare and create classroom

environment that are learnercentred, gender responsive and transformative. Teachers are trained and mentored on how to use classroombased assessment to inform and enhance learning paying attention to gender and learner-ability differences so that no learner is left behind; they are trained in teaching and learning methods that nurture students critical and problem solving skills. (3) School leaders are trained in adaptive leadership so that they develop a school culture that are gender responsive and transformative, fostering students’ ability to learn, achieve and thrive and; (4) parents and community engagement on their educative roles and how they can support children/youth especially in ways that support learning and achievement and social and emotional wellbeing. Working together, we rekindle the hope of the most vulnerable children and youth in Uganda, promising them a bright future!

2.4. What we have achieved

2.4.1. Building the foundation

With support from Issroff Family Foundation (IFF), JMERC has consolidated its leadership, management and governance capabilities, Programme Model & strategy, Fundraising & Development strategy & financial management. JMERC has also developed the necessary policies and operational manuals required for effective & efficient implementation of this strategic plan, 2023-2027.

2.4.2. Girl-child empowerment

We engaged 158 adolescent girls in a Participatory Action Research exploring their social and emotional wellbeing and the supports they needed for their wellbeing and Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH).

The study revealed:

- Participants face interlocking challenges such as lack of agency to utilize the skills, inhibiting gender norms and power inequalities, and general lack of supportive ecosystem;
- Lack of family and community support for their social and emotional wellbeing and SRH;
- Potential stigmatisation especially for school- girls who got pregnant or gave birth during the Covid-19 crisis.



2.4.3. Teacher Support Programmes

At the start of 2020, JMERC empowered 102 teachers in the use of Formative Assessment (FA), thereafter, the government of Uganda ordered the closure of schools which disrupted most of the teachers' CPD programmes.

We then focused on supporting teachers to reach out to their learners during the time the schools were closed to ensure continuity of learning. In the process, we worked with 200 teachers who in turn reached out to, and supported 680 students for continued learning During the period of schools closure



2.4.4. Adapting assessment into policy and learning (ADAPT)

In February, 2022, we launched the ADAPT project at Makerere University. ADAPT is a research initiative seeking to promote acquisition of the 21st century skills among the adolescents in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. ADAPT initiative has three main objectives:

- i) To generate lessons from past and present national and regional learning assessments and initiatives to enhance national data-driven decision making;
- ii) To build capacity of a dynamic learning community to integrate and assess 21st century skills and support utilisation of learning assessments at the school and sub-national levels;
- iii) To mobilise policy uptake on the utilisation of learning assessments in the education plans, curriculum frameworks and teacher development.

Key accomplishments so far include:

- Formation of the National Advisory Group (NAG) comprising of key strategic policy makers – Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU), Uganda National Commission for UNESCO (UNATCOM), the Association of Secondary School Head teachers of Uganda (ASSHU), various departments of the MoES, and members of the Civil Society organisations.

- Formative research on learning assessments in East Africa – with a focus on Uganda
- Mapping of learning Assessment in Uganda and the key actors

2.4.5. Conferences and outreach

In the past one year, JMERC has had four main presentations and outreaches, further creating strategic linkages and awareness about JMERC activities:

- CODE Board Meeting September 2021 – Selected to present to the CODE Board about Context Matters Research Grant Program – Grantee perspectives;
- The 12th Annual PALFA Conference, October 2021 – Understanding the Social and Emotional wellbeing and the supports they need for their wellbeing and SRH;
- Information Session: April 2022, Context Matters Research Grant Program - 2020-2022 – Selected by CODE to share our experiences on “Preparing a research grant application”
- Adapting assessment into policy and learning (ADAPT): Adolescent 21st Century skills in Kenya,
- Uganda, & Tanzania. Paper presented at the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI) Uganda, July Convening 2022.

2.5. Lessons Learnt

Despite our achievements and the enormous work done by the government /civil society organisations in Uganda, significant work remains to be done. The following lessons inform this strategic plan inform.

a) Girls' education and empowerment requires an integral approach

Thousands of girls and young mothers who become pregnant or gave birth during the COVID-19 pandemic have no or limited social and emotional support. Many of them are either out of school or at the risk of dropping out. During crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the vulnerability of marginalised populations to adversity intensifies (UN, 2020). Therefore, if “recovering from the pandemic means improving the lives of the most vulnerable” (UN, 2020, p. 6) including girls and young women, collective efforts must address the precarious conditions shaping their lives. Our recent participatory research with adolescent girls has revealed the need for a strong school-wide ecosystem supporting their social and Emotional Learning (SEL), empowerment, wellbeing and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). While direct interventions for adolescent girls to improve their agency are critically important, they can benefit better from a supportive school ecosystem – teachers, school leaders, parents and the wider community.

b) Parents and Community engagement needs to be strengthened

Our previous work especially during the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the significant role that parents, families and communities play in the social and emotional well-being of children and youth, especially girls as well as in their entire learning process. Despite these key lessons, most available interventions in education and girls'/ youth empowerment have remained stubbornly silent about this need. Given the evidence from communities, with many adolescents getting pregnant during the school closures and most of them not likely to return to school, there is an urgent need to mobilise and engage parents and communities for support of the children and youth, especially girls and their education and social-emotional wellbeing.

c) Learning outcomes

In Uganda, about 8.8 million children are enrolled in primary education. Of those in grades 3 to 7, only 39.5% can read a grade 2 story while 25.1% cannot read a two or three-letter word (World Bank, 2021). The situation is not different for numeracy and life skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and creativity. This is a huge learning poverty which translates into poor learning outcomes in the subsequent levels of learning, especially in rural communities where families survive on less than \$3 a day. At all levels of education, the system is stubbornly unresponsive to the gender learning needs leading to many girls and young women dropping out of school. Using the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach and the School-wide ecosystem model, JMERC will work to improve children's learning outcomes with a focus on those in rural communities.

d) Teachers and school leaders' wellbeing and professional support

Teacher and school leadership capacity development support in technical areas social and emotional support remain critical areas for JMERC in supporting the quality of education and girl-child/youth empowerment in Uganda. Moreover, our experience shows that teachers and school leaders require a more sustained, collaborative and friendly coaching and mentorship approach to translate the lessons learnt into practice.

e) Youth Empowerment

Uganda has one of the youngest and fastest-growing populations in the region. Uganda's annual population growth is 3%, meaning 1,200,000 Ugandans are born every year (NUFP, 2023). Approximately 1.2 million young people (15-24 years) join the labour force every year. Research has also revealed that the youth, who are in school, are either not learning or learning skills which are not relevant to their current or future needs (Odongo, 2018). This is a challenge because the young population which would be an untapped "demographic dividend" that would be integral to the future prosperity of Uganda. To respond to this challenge, JMERC will collaborate with secondary schools providing vocational and entrepreneurship skills to secondary school students, preparing them for the world of work.

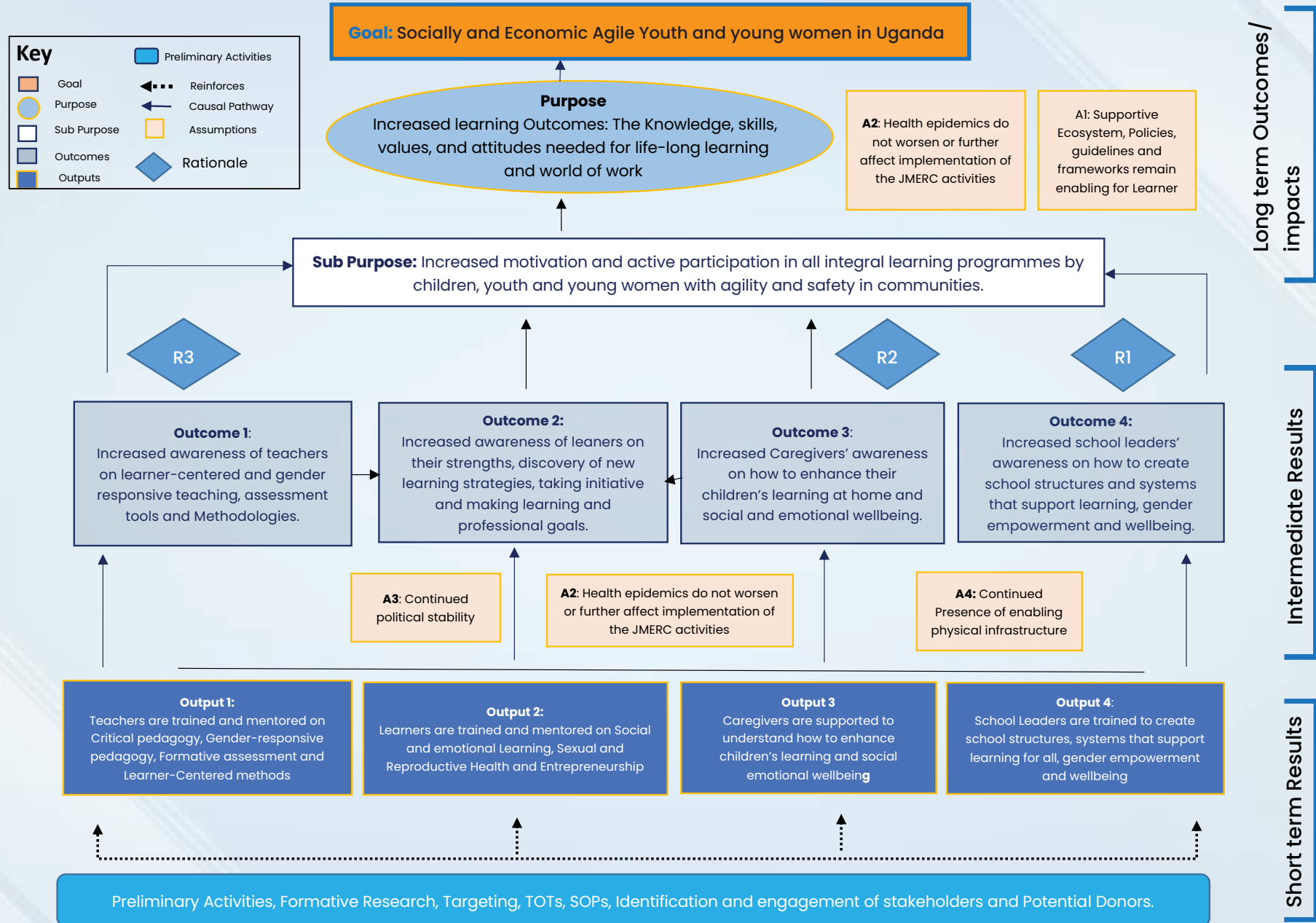
2.6. Thematic areas of focus

The JMERC strategic Plan 2023-2027 rests on three main strategic anchors/themes:

1. Quality Education
2. Gender Equality
3. Youth Empowerment



2.7 Theory of Change



Theory of Change (ToC) Narrative

This theory of change describes the development hypothesis that drives the overall JMERC strategy and provides a framework for the JMERC Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) component. Figure 2 presents a diagrammatic illustration of the causal links that join output results to outcome results, which eventually contribute to the purpose and overall JMERC goal, and critical assumptions.

The TOC for JMERC is based on the understanding that:

- If teachers are trained and mentored on Critical pedagogy, Gender-responsive pedagogy, Learner-Centred and Formative assessment, and
- If learners are trained and mentored on Social and Emotional Learning, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Entrepreneurship and
- If caregivers are supported to understand how to enhance their children's learning and socialemotional well-being, and
- If school Leaders are trained and mentored on how to create school cultures, structures, and systems that support learning, gender empowerment and well-being:

Then there will be increased awareness of learners on their strengths, discovery of new learning strategies, taking initiative and making learning and professional goals, resulting from an increased awareness of teachers on learner-centred & gender-responsive teaching, assessment tools &

methodologies, with an increased school leaders' awareness on how to create school cultures, structures and systems that support learning, stakeholder engagement and gender empowerment, and an increased Caregivers' awareness on how to support their children's learning, and social-emotional wellbeing.

Critical Assumption: JMERC activities are designed with key assumptions about the context, local systems, and stakeholder outlook in mind. These include but not limited to;

A1: Supportive Ecosystem, Policies, guidelines and frameworks remain enabling for learners. We assume that across primary stakeholders - the Government of Uganda (GoU) (Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), the district local governments, other ministries), there exists sufficient alignment of priorities and a shared urgent need to identify and model cost-effective interventions. That the ecosystem will give conducive policies and guidelines which support and enable successful implementation of programme activities. This can be measured through reviewing changes in the global, national and district education policies, guidelines and frameworks and ensuring they remain supportive/ enabling to the communities we serve.

A2: Health epidemics do not worsen or further affect implementation of the JMERC activities. Health epidemics can be a huge sock/barrier towards education programme activities. While schools may still be able to carry out basic activities related to teaching and learning in the face of a health shock, it might be difficult to engage in external collaboration involving social interaction. This assumption can be

measured using the following indicators; 1) Using the Ugandan Ministry of Health (MoH) Disease Early Warning System (DEWS) and other reporting systems to check the trend of the outbreak of diseases in the country, and 2) Number and type of health epidemics reported in terms of frequency, severity and affected populations in the past 12 months from World Health Organization (WHO), MoH, and other health stakeholders

A3: Continued political stability. Political stability is a critical condition for the success of all JMERC programme activities. The assumption is that political stability will continue to prevail in Uganda and especially in the target districts of operation. This will enable JMERC to implement its programme activities and schools will be in position to put in practice the JMERC programme interventions. This assumption will be measured by assessing 1) the number of political-related conflicts in the area, 2) number of times schools are closed due to political instability or tension

A4: Continued presence of enabling physical infrastructure. Presences of enabling and adequate access to infrastructure such as roads and transportation is a key to education and community engagement activities. Improving roads is beyond the scope of JMERC programmes and therefore makes JMERC to rely on external actors like the District Local governments together with the central government who have that mandate to provide physical infrastructure. JMERC assumes presence of physical infrastructure to access schools and communities to implement the planned programmes. The indicators to measure this

assumption include the number and nature of physical infrastructure improvements undertaken in the areas of operation.

Critical Rationales

R1: School leaders have created school cultures, structures, systems and safe spaces that support learning, gender empowerment and stakeholder engagement.

R2: Parents have supported their children learning and their social and emotional wellbeing

R3: Teachers use learner-centred and gender responsive teaching, learning and assessment tools and approaches.

2.8. Key Partnerships & Networks

At the start of the year 2022, JMERC won a prestigious opportunity with the Issroff Family Foundation (IFF) through the Collective Learning Initiative (CLI). Through the CLI, we have been able to bond, engage and collaborate with innovative, talented, and proximate founders and/or leaders of organisations, sharing experiences and best practices – we are now part of a wider learning community, further strengthening our capacity to scale the impact of our programmes. We have interacted with brilliant content facilitators honing our school ecosystem model, systems, and structure. We have participated in incredible lessons on finance and fundraising, harnessing access to funding. We are now confident that we shall have the impact on education we desire for children and youth (especially girls and young women) in Uganda. The CLI programme has strengthened our capacity for

leadership for impact, strategic planning, finance, Board development and wellbeing. As part of the programme, we have developed JMERC five-year (2023-2027) strategic plan.

At the end of June 2022, JMERC joined the Regional Educational Learning Initiative (RELI). RELI is network of a member driven initiative working to ensure inclusive learning for all children in East Africa comprising 70+ East African organisations. The network brings together a diverse, energetic and impactful group of members from across East Africa. This is a great landmark for JMERC as we strive to create positive impact on educational policy and practice through research and direct interventions with students, teachers, school leaders and parent/caregivers.

We are collaborating with the College of Education and External Studies, Makerere University to harness our research capabilities. We are now

co-implementing a regional project: Adapting assessment into policy and learning (ADAPT): Adolescent 21st Century skills in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

We are proud to associate with CODE through their Context Matters' Research Programme which funded the first of our initiatives in Uganda. Through this grant, we have been able to hone our girls and youth empowerment programme.

We are also grateful for the partnership with the Global Fund for Children (GFC) as our official Fiscal Sponsor. This enables JMERC to receive donations from different donors across the Globe.

We have partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports through which we are able to fulfil our mission to uplift the life outcomes of the youth/students through our school-wide ecosystem support model.



3. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

The context for JMERC's work is changing, and so our work must evolve to meet it. Our strategy process identified two major contextual factors that provide opportunities to advance our work, but we also face challenges – some are within the existing and emerging policy landscape, the need to respond to the post COVID-19 recovery agenda, and some specific to our work on developing the school-wide ecosystem to enable all children learn, achieve and thrive. Finally, we see various needs specific to our internal capacity to implement our mission

3.1. Emerging Policy Landscape

a) The Lower Secondary School Curriculum

At the end of 2019, the MoES launched a revised Lower Secondary Curriculum (LSC) in Uganda. While the LSC, has created new challenges to schools, teachers, school leaders and policy makers ranging from interpretation and understanding to effective implementation, they also present major opportunities to leverage: the LSC presents opportunities for Ugandan children and youth to learn and master the skills and values they need to thrive, transforming their lives, families and communities. Many countries have relied on curriculum reforms to create a cadre of human resources that have transformed their societies and economies.

However, the implementation of the LSC remains a challenge, skewed against learners in the rural schools and communities. Moreover, the LSC requires active participation of

parents/caregivers; it requires teachers to adjust their teaching methods to more participatory approaches, adapt formative learning assessment instead of summative assessment. Schools and teachers have realised the great need for professional support in these areas and, JMERC finds great opportunities for deep and meaningful collaboration to improve teaching and learning.

b) National Teachers Policy (NTP)

In 2019, the government of Uganda passed the National Teachers' Policy (NTP). The aim of the NTP is to "provide a framework to professionalism and standardise the teaching profession. It is to provide strategies to enhance professionalism; develop and enforce standards; and streamline the professional development and management of teachers" (NTP, 2019, p.8). JMERC, therefore, finds a great opportunity to collaborate with the MoES in provision of the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of Teachers and School leaders. Every teacher and school leader will have to undergo a CPD programme every year in critical and selected areas of need. Uganda has over 1 Million school teachers who will need this service. JMERC embraces this opportunity to collaborate with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to raise the professional standards of teachers and school leaders in Uganda.

3.2. Post-COVID-19 Recovery

The Social Protection and Basic Services of the UN COVID Recovery Roadmap, Pillar 2 highlights that protecting and promoting people's current and future well-being requires



action across a range of areas, including ensuring their ability to access high-quality education and Pillar 4 highlights the need for rapid learning systems and knowledge mobilisation to facilitate evidence-based decision making for resilient systems and structures (UN, 2020). JMERC' Strategic Plan 2023-2027 focuses on support for quality education, gender equality and youth empowerment through our school ecosystem model and knowledge mobilisation through research. This is an opportunity for us to contribute, not only to the COVID-19 recovery programme in Uganda through providing support for quality education, gender equality and youth empowerment. Another opportunity is the increasing need to contribute to the global knowledge mobilisation through research.

3.3. Needs: Strengthening JMERC internal Capacity

Our ability to implement this strategic plan is as good as our internal capacity to correct for our weaknesses, stand with audacity in overcoming the existing and potential threats to our vision, mission and core values while strategically and fully utilising all existing and potential opportunities.

Filling our staffing gaps in all critical areas and relentlessly availing training and learning opportunities to our team will increase our capacity to implement our mission, achieve the impact within the communities which we serve, raise adequate resources to scale up our work while positioning our brand within national and international educational space.

3.4. SWOT Analysis

Strength

1. Bold Vision and implementation
2. strategy
Leadership has excellent reputation & strong support in the community
Determined and experienced team/ staff
Deep knowledge about national education landscape
Strong experience and expertise in Research
Exposed and diverse Board
Expertise in fundraising & strategic planning and management

Weaknesses

1. Inadequate funding to fill the planned staffing gaps in the Organogram
2. Being young organisation with less performance data
3. Limited fundraising team
4. Over reliance on a small pool of revenue sources

Opportunities

1. Strategic partnerships such as the Ministry of Education and Sports.
2. Wide networks such as the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI).
3. The New Lower Secondary School Curriculum.
4. The New National Teacher Policy.
5. Poor performance of Universal Secondary Education (USE) and Universal Primary Education (UPE) schools
6. Post-COVID-19 gaps in education

Threats

1. Unfair competition within the industry
2. The effects of COVID-19 making schools too busy for meaningful engagement.
3. The increasing cost of operation due to inflation



4.0. OPERATING PLAN

4.1. Strategic Priorities/Targets:

Strategic Priority 1

Girls' Education and Empowerment

Ultimate Outcome: Every adolescent girl and young woman in Uganda is socially, emotionally and intellectually empowered to learn, achieve and thrive

Intermediate Outcomes

- 1.1. Girls develop the social and emotional competences they require for their wellbeing
- 1.2. Girls make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health (SRH)
- 1.3. Schools and communities develop supportive systems and structures in which every girl and or young women can learn, achieve and thrive

Social and emotional wellbeing is an enabler to effective learning, achievement and thriving. Therefore: if girls develop social and emotional skills; if girls develop the ability to make informed decisions about their SRH; and if schools and communities develop supportive systems and structures; then every adolescent girl and young woman in Uganda is socially, emotionally and intellectually empowered to learn, achieve and thrive.

Strategic Priority 2

Life-skills and Values for youth

Ultimate Outcome: Every youth in Uganda is a life-long learner and well prepared for the world of work.

Intermediate Outcomes

- 2.1. Youth develop the social emotional learning (SEL) skills
- 2.2. Teachers develop the ability to nurture and assess social and emotional skills
- 2.3. Youth develop entrepreneurship and workreadiness skills.

Our work under this strategic priority focuses on supporting youth to be life-long learners and being prepared for the world of work. If youth develop social, emotional learning (SEL) skills; and if teachers are trained and mentored to teach and conduct formative assessment in a way that nurtures students' SEL competences; and if youth are trained on entrepreneurship and work readiness; then every youth in Uganda will become a life-long learner, well prepared for the world of work.

Strategic Priority 3

School and Community Engagement

Ultimate Outcome: Schools and communities support effective learning for all.

Intermediate Outcomes

- 3.1. Teachers use learner-centered & gender responsive teaching, assessment tools and methodologies
- 3.2. Teacher use teaching and learning methods that enhance Foundational Learning for all children
- 3.3. School leaders create school cultures, structures and systems that life-long learners who are ready for the world of work.
- 3.4. Caregivers support children's learning, and social - emotional wellbeing and collaborate schools.

Supportive schools and communities enable effective learning for all: If teachers use learner-centred & gender-responsive teaching-learning approaches; and if teachers use formative assessment in a way that is gender responsive and nurtures students' SEL competences & Foundational Learning skills; if School leaders create school cultures, structures & systems that support learning, gender empowerment and wellbeing; and if Caregivers support children's learning, and social-emotional wellbeing and collaborate with schools then schools and communities will provide an ecosystem that supports effective learning for all.

Strategic Priority 4

Institutional internal development

Ultimate Outcome: JMERC is adequately resourced, sustainably funded, and well-governed to effectively promote the right to quality and equitable education in Uganda.

Intermediate Outcomes

- 4.1. JMERC staff has capacity to fulfil the organisation's mission
- 4.2. JMERC enjoys sustainable funding
- 4.3. JMERC's management and governance are well aligned to its vision and mission

Access to resources, sustainable funding and good governance are key enablers to institutional internal development: Therefore, if JMERC has the operation and management staff – well trained to implement our mission; if JMERC receives sustainable funding; and JMERC is well managed and governed, then JMERC will be develop the internal capacity to effectively promote the right to quality and equitable education in Uganda.

Strategic Priority 5

Institutional Capacity to Scale

Ultimate Outcome: JMERC is well positioned to effectively provide girl/youth empowerment using a school-wide ecosystem model.

Intermediate Outcomes

4. JMERC's school-wide ecosystem model is tested and adapted by the Ministry of Education
5. JMERC has established strong partnerships and networks required to scale its impact
6. JMERC impacts 1 million children and youth of whom 70% are female

Effective provision of a programme is a key enabler and indicator of institutional capacity to scale: Therefore, if JMERC's school-wide ecosystem model is tested and adapted by the Ministry of Education; if JMERC has established strong partnerships and networks required to grow its impact; and if JMERC is able to impact, one million children and youth, then JMERC will have developed its capacity to scale its school ecosystem model.



4.2. Research priorities

We strongly believe in the role of data in informing our programming at the very grass root level in the communities we work with, our development path as well as for effective communication and advocacy with education and development partners. Therefore, this strategic plan has a research agenda with research priorities that are anchored onto the respective strategic priorities.

Research Priority One:

How can girls within low-resourced contexts be empowered and supported to develop agency and to learn, achieve and thrive?

3.2.1.1. What social and emotional learning competences do adolescent girls and young women require for their wellbeing? What supports do they need to develop these social and emotional competences?

3.2.1.2. How best can we support sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls and young women in ways that advance their human dignity?

3.2.1.3. How can schools and communities within low-resourced contexts effectively support adolescent girls and young women to learn, achieve and thrive?

3.2.1.4. How best can we build, support and sustain a vibrant movement for girls' education and empowerment in Uganda and the region?

Research Priority Two:

How can the youth in Uganda develop life-skills and values they require for life-long learning and the world of work?

4.2.2.1. How can we decolonise and contextualise the concept of SEL for better programme adaptation and scale-up?

4.2.2.2. What social and emotional learning competences do students require for life-long learning and the world of work? What supports do they need to develop these social and emotional competences?

4.2.2.3. How best can schools nurture students' SEL skills for life-long learning and the world of work?

Research Priority Three:

How can schools and communities support effective learning for all?

4.2.3.1. How can teachers be supported to use learner-centred and gender responsive teaching, assessment tools and methodologies in ways that enhance effective learning for all?

4.2.3.2. What innovative approaches can teachers use to enhance children's Foundational Learning (FL) skills?

4.2.3.3. How can parents/caregivers support children's learning at home, and social-emotional wellbeing and collaborate schools?

4.2.3.4. What are the alternative approaches to engage and empower parents to support students' learning?

Research Priority Four:

How can we strengthen our capacity for resource mobilisation, sustainability, governance in order to effectively achieve our mission?



4.2.4.1. How can we develop a human resource team with passion and audacity to implement the JMERC mission?

4.2.4.2. How can we develop a funding model to sustain JMERC programmes?

4.2.4.3. What management and governance structures do we need to put in place? How can we develop a learning and self-improvement culture?

Research Priority Five:

What evidence data do we need to show the effectiveness and efficiency of JMERC in promoting quality education, gender equality and youth empowerment?

4.2.5.1. What do we need learn, do or develop in order to sustainably grow our program impact?

4.2.5.2. What lessons can we draw from the JMERC ecosystem model? How can these lessons inform educational policy and practice in Uganda?

4.2.5.3. What partnerships and networks do we need to scale the JMERC ecosystem model?

5.0. DEVELOPMENT PLAN



JMERC is at an early stage of its development which is why the development plan strategy is in many ways one of the most important elements of this strategic plan 2023–2027. JMERC development plan is anchored on our strategic priority 4 and strategic priority 5, highlighting the pathways to our institutional internal development.

Goal 1:

Securing long-term and stable funding sources

6.1.1. Building & strengthening the consultancy arm of JMERC, to diversify revenue sources and to generate more income.

6.1.2. Strengthening existing funding partnerships and forming new ones

6.1.3. Emphasise long-term relationships in all efforts to raise funds. Fundraising success for JMERC will require investment and support from donors and other supporters for generations

6.1.4. Seek multi-year commitments to support JMERC activities when requesting support from donors and grantors. Longer-term commitments will make it possible to focus attention on the activities for which the organisation was created. Seeking support that includes longer-term commitments may be an important strategy to ensure the “investment” in the organisation is a solid one.

Goal 2:

Increase the total annual revenue of the organisation to \$500,000

5.2.1. Invest heavily in capacity building steps that improve our ability to raise financial resources. JMERC will increase its capacity for fundraising by investing in the development of its personnel, systems and structures.

5.2.2. Develop the capabilities of the Board of Directors to lead major donor fundraising efforts. The growth of JMERC over the next five years will depend on having the people involved who can help lead the organisation to the next level. This includes people with a variety of skills, connections and demographics. JMERC will grow its capacity for fundraising by both training existing board members to be more engaged and effective in their fundraising roles, and by recruiting additional board members and other volunteers who will commit their efforts into building relationships and asking for money. Both training and recruiting will be important strategies for creating the cadre of fundraising volunteers to reach the potential

JMERC has for raising money.

5.2.3. Develop a comprehensive and capable database to support the fundraising programs of JMERC. This program will need the capacity to track details about direct mail acquisition testing and results, major donor cultivation and solicitation and other facets of the fundraising program.

Goal 3:

Developing clear and targeted marketing and fundraising messages

5.3.1. Redesign and re-brand JMERC Website

5.3.2. Develop a communication strategy for our current and potential funding partners

5.3.3. Develop programmes that build relationships as the cornerstone of fundraising effectiveness. These relationships will take place through a series of “touches” managed through events, meetings and other contacts.



6.0. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation is made possible by our team members and the systems and processes we put in place to support them.

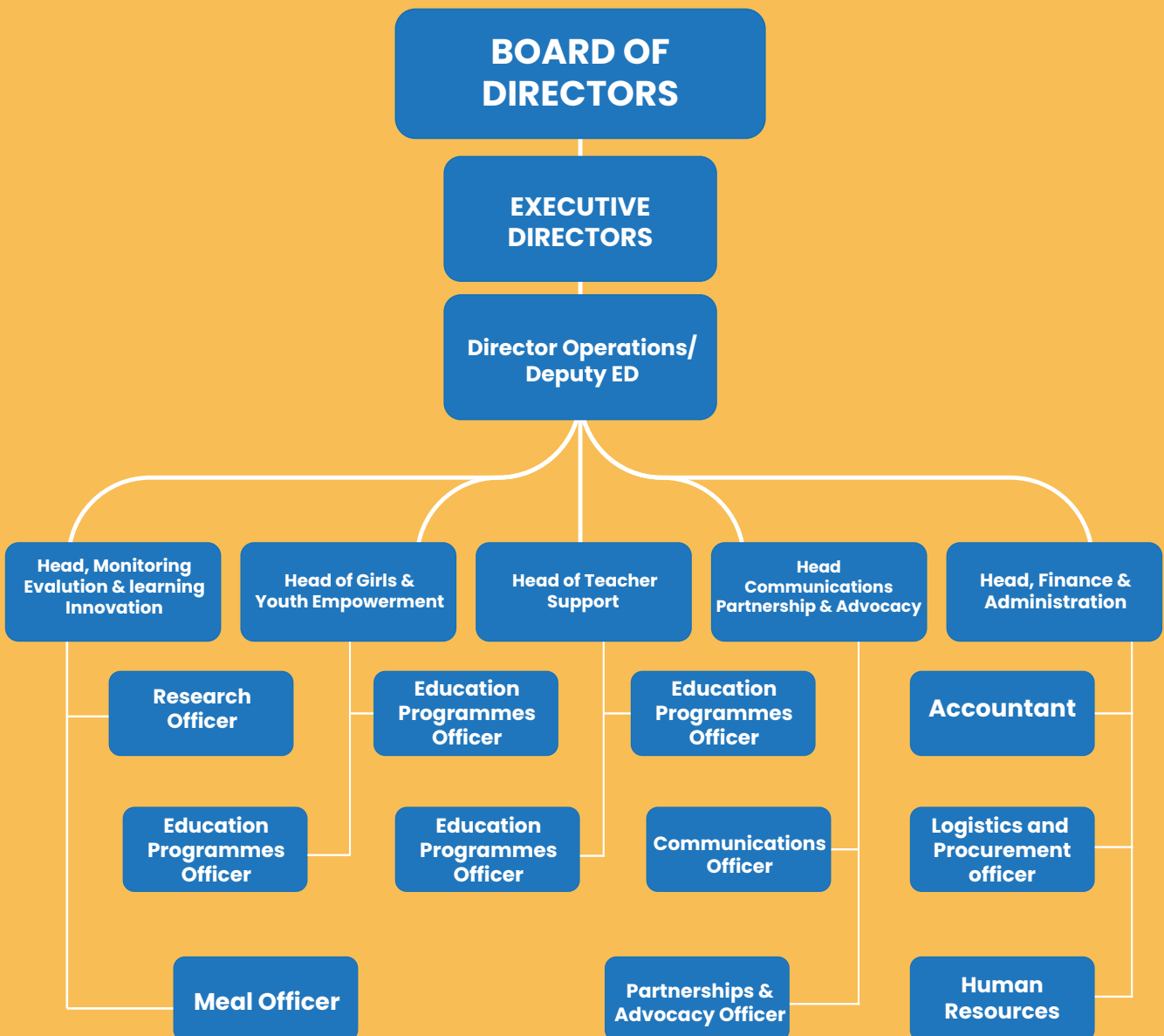
6.1. Our Team

JMERC has a vibrant and focused technical team that coordinates its work and promotes the aims and objectives of the strategic plan. The current revised JMERC organogram (see below) is aligned with this strategic plan and the five strategic priorities. Through robust fundraising, we will generate enough funds to fairly

remunerate staff, as well as to provide the equipment they need and an open and conducive working environment. Furthermore, JMERC is committed to equity and inclusion through strengthening the representation of underrepresented groups, including directly affected and the communities we serve such as women and youth.

Organogram

This is JMERC’s planned human resource roadmap to actualise this strategy



6.2. Monitoring, Evaluation Research and Learning

Our monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MERL) approach ensures we track progress toward our goals, collect and use data, document lessons learnt, and share knowledge and best practices with our beneficiaries, educational policy makers, our funding partners, other partners and the wider international audience.

The system will be an iterative process of monitoring, evaluating, learning, adjusting, and adapting.

Our MERL system has 4 (four) components:

We conduct baseline assessments to provide a situational analysis prior to every programme intervention, as well as to gather data that will help the programme set realistic targets. These assessments also inform learning questions that guide learning throughout the strategic period.

We develop annual work plans through a participatory process involving JMERC staff, our beneficiaries/participants, and partners. This also involves conducting feedback surveys, physical review meetings and field monitoring. We monitor our progress against specific indicators that feed into our overall MERL Plan. Our annual work planning is informed by an assessment of trends in various indicators to determine whether prior assumptions still hold or should be adjusted. Work planning also includes setting or adjusting learning questions.

We hold ourselves accountable for meeting the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), both internally on our teams and to our partners, so that

necessary adjustments can be made to our work plans. Additionally, this being our first strategic plan, any subsequent annual work planning session will be informed by the assessment of trends in various indicators to determine whether our results framework assumptions still hold. JMERC also collects feedback from our beneficiaries, partners and all our stakeholders on performance, relevancy, and needs.

We convene a learning network to serve as a platform for interpreting and understanding M&E data, lessons, best practices, and success stories. It is composed of the different stake holders such as our beneficiaries/participants, Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEBC), National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), and members from the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI) among others. The network is led by our Director, Research, Learning and Innovation, working closely with the Communications and Advocacy Officer so that lessons learnt can be shared in communications materials as program highlights and success stories. The learning network meets twice a year.

6.3. Communication and Advocacy

Implementing our strategy will require significant communications capacities. Separate from this strategic plan, we will develop a robust communications and engagement strategy outlining how we will use digital as well as traditional media to reach clearly defined stakeholders at local, national, regional, and international levels. A sample of activities and capacities that will be included in the communications and engagement strategy:

External activities

- Quarterly newsletter production
 - Regular update of the website, blog, and social media feed
 - Engagement of strategic networks such as the Regional Education and Learning Initiative (RELI)
 - Production of JMERC promotional materials
 - Presentation of JMERC's work and success stories at national and international workshops
 - Publication of key success stories in selected strategic journals
 - Strategic media engagements (print and press)
 - Strategic policy engagement and advocacy
 - Documentation, production, and dissemination of key reports
- ## Internal capacities
- Staff training on digital communications and digital security
 - Documentation and communications support to project leads





7.0. FINANCIAL PLAN

This Strategic Plan requires funding of \$2,707,222 USD over the 5 years. It will be generated through a robust fundraising strategy that reaches out to the development partners, interested individuals and partnering with various networks to deliver this strategy.

Further, JMERC staff should be able to undertake income - generating activities including consultancy services for which the organisation receives the fees, as staff will be undertaking such work as part of their employment.

8.0. CONCLUSION

The successful implementation of the JMERC strategic plan will enable us to create a world where all children, youth and young women learn, achieve and thrive, transforming their lives, families and communities.

APPENDIX 1: Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

ULTIMATE OUTCOME	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME	OUTCOME INDICATORS	TARGET	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
1. Every Adolescent girl/Young women in Uganda is empowered to learn, achieve and thrive	1.1. Increased awareness of girls and young women about social and emotional competences they require for their wellbeing	1.1 Proportion of adolescent girls/Young women who demonstrate social and emotional learning skills	60%	MERL Reports
	1.2. Increased awareness of adolescent girls and young women who make informed decisions about their Sexual and Reproductive Health	1.2. Proportion of adolescent girls and young women who know at least one source of information/service for SRH	80%	MERL Reports
		1.2.2 Proportion age of adolescent girls and young women practicing care-seeking behaviour that reduce STI/HIV infection	70%	MERL Reports
	1.3. A strong and vibrant movement supporting girls' education in Uganda and the region	1.3.1 Number of organisations, institutions and individuals subscribing to girls' education movement	20	MERL Reports
		1.3.2 Proportion of organisations, institutions and individuals actively participating in girls' education movement	80%	MERL Reports
	2. Every secondary school student in Uganda develops life-skills and values they require for life-	2.1 Increased contextualisation and adaptation of the SEL for better programme model	2.1.1 A contextualised and adaptable SEL for better programme model	N/A
2.2		2.2	65%	MERL Reports

long learning and the world of work	Improved skills and values students require for life-long learning	Proportion of students (girls and boys) who demonstrate skills and values for life-long learning.		
	2.3 Improved skills and values students require for the world of work.	2.3 Proportion of students (girls and boys) who demonstrate the skills and values needed for the world of work	65%	MERL Reports
3. Schools and communities support effective learning for all.	3.1 Improved use of learner-centred and gender-responsive teaching and assessment tools and methodologies	3.1.1 Proportion of who use learner-centred teaching-learning methodologies	60%	MERL Reports
		3.1.2 Proportion of teachers who use gender-responsive assessment methodologies	60%	MERL Reports
		3.1.3 Proportion of teachers using formative assessment to improve students' learning	70%	MERL Reports
	3.2. Improved learners' Foundational Learning skills	3.2. Proportion of learners with improved foundational learning skills	750%	MERL Reports
	3.3 Improved parents and community support to students' learning, and social-emotional wellbeing.	3.3.1 Proportion of parents/caregivers providing social and emotional support to their children	60%	Project performance Reports
		3.3.2 Proportion of parents/caregivers who actively engage in school activities	60%	MERL Reports

4. JMERC is adequately resourced, sustainably funded and well governed to effectively promote quality education and gender parity in Uganda.	4.1	Increased capacity of JMERC has the capacity to fulfil its mission	4.1.1	Number JMERC staff whose capacity is enhanced to fulfil its mission/mandate	ALL	Staff training reports Project Reports
	4.2	Increased access of JMERC to sustainable funding	4.2.	Funding available for at least 5 years of the strategic plan	Strategic Plan Budget	Financial Reports
	4.3	Improved management and governance of JMERC	4.4	Number of meetings conducted JMERC Board and the leadership team	ALL	Governance reports. Programme performance Reports.
5. JMERC is well positioned to effectively provide girls/youth empowerment using a school-wide ecosystem model.	5.1	Increased application and adaptation of JMERC's school-wide ecosystem model	5.1.	Proportion of schools and government institutions adapting the JMERC ecosystem model	60%	MEL Reports Advocacy reports
	5.2	JMERC has established strong partnerships and networks required to scale its impact	5.2.	Number of partnerships and networks established to scale the impact of JMERC	20	Programme performance Reports
	5.3	Increased level JMERC on the communities it serves	5.1.	Number of children, girls/youths impacted by JMERC programmes	1 Million	MEL Reports

Appendix II: Work Plan – 2023 – 2024

ACTIVITIES	2022	2023												2024											
		1 st Quarter			2 nd Quarter			3 rd Quarter			4 th Quarter			1 st Quarter			2 nd Quarter			3 rd Quarter			4 th Quarter		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Develop monitoring and evaluation tools	X																								
Selection of schools	X																								
MOUs with schools	X	X																							
Baseline survey		X	X																						
Delivery of Social and Emotional Learning – SEL Training (3 days) – Youth (Boys and Girls)			X	X	X																				
Delivery of Critical Pedagogy Training (3 Days) – (Teachers)					X	X																			
Delivery of Adaptive Leadership Training (2 Days) – (School Leaders)						X	X																		
Delivery of Formative Assessment Training (3 Days) – (Teachers)							X	X																	
Mid-term Formative Evaluation											X	X	X												

Classroom support – Teachers								X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Coaching and mentorship (Girls/Youth)					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Delivery of Sexual and Reproductive Health Training (3 Days) – (Girls and boys)									X	X	X														
Coaching and mentorship – School leaders						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Parents and Community Engagement										X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
Gender Responsive Pedagogy Training (3 days)										X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X								
Foundational Learning Skills							X	X	X	X	X	X													
End-line Evaluation																						X	X	X	



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