



JUMUIYA WOMEN GROUP

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Date: 28 /10/2012

THE GIRLS DEVELOPMENT AGENDA- MENTORSHIP PROGRAM FOR GIRLS

A PROGRAM OF

JUMUIYA WOMEN GROUP (JWG)

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5th October 2012

BACKGROUND OF ORGANISATION

Jumuiya Women Group (JWG) is a Community Based Organization (CBO) registered in 2001 with an active program on women and girls empowerment and advocacy. It aims to achieve its goals through women empowerment, networking, civic education, training, research, advocacy, lobbying and information collection, packaging and exchange. The group derives its strength from the diversity of expertise and experience of its membership and allies. It strives to articulate plurality, human rights, health, security, dignity, freedom, environmental protection, economic justice and peace for all people and open up democratic space for women's organizations in Uasin- Gishu county and North Rift region of KENYA.

Vision

A society in which women and girls are able to realize their full social, economic, and civic potential

Mission

To advocate and support the daily needs and rights of marginalized rural poor women and girls to enable them initiate and manage their own socio-economic and development processes.

Values

- **Self determination:** we believe that women and girls who are empowered understand their value to community and society and are able to demand their right to own property, access quality healthcare, live in a violence free environment and contribute their perspectives to the peace table.
- **Women empowerment:** we believe that providing economic resources to women often increases the likelihood of the next generation being healthy and educated (Programs like micro lending and the Community Integrated Farming Initiatives provide the resources women need to access formal markets and thrive in the process). By providing resources to women, we are helping women transition into a macroeconomic level and achieve ownership of their own labour, inputs and profits.
- **Partnership:** We believe that working in partnership with development partners is central to effective economic, social and organisational development.

Presently JWG has a membership of 20 women who came together with the determination to develop and empower women and girls by working towards development and the transformation of the unequal gender relations in society. Our objectives include:

1. Promote and ensure women's access to power and decision making positions in our local area.
2. Improve the economic conditions of women, girls and other marginalized groups by lobbying for financial services to be extended to them
3. Advocate for equal opportunities and rights for women in all sectors and increase women's access to, and control of resources and benefits.
4. Advocate for the elimination of defilement, rape and other forms of abuse and violence against women and children.
5. Collect and disseminate information on priority and other issues of concern to women.
6. To promote girls education and champion for equal opportunities in utilization of society's resources.
7. To achieve economic independence of women and alleviate poverty through entrepreneurship and income generation activities
8. To promote women health for a healthy society

THE PROJECT BACKGROUND

In Kenya, like any other country is faced with the challenge of adolescence of young people. Unfortunately, many people do not know how to manage the young girls faced with this powerfully formative transitional phase which lies between childhood and adulthood. This is the stage where attitudes are consolidated, skills are acquired, health behaviors are formed, and life courses are charted. It is a period marked by creativity, energy, and resilience, which, if properly tapped, can lay the foundation for a healthy future. Yet in many settings, adolescence is a time in which the world expands for boys and contracts for girls, and gender disparities in opportunity and expectations become pronounced. Many adolescent girls have narrowed social networks and few collective spaces in which they can gather to meet with peers, receive mentoring support, and acquire skills. Girls' lives become increasingly restricted to the domestic sphere—nominally in order to protect them from dangers outside the home. This disparity in girls' social access to their peers and to public space begins in childhood and is exacerbated in adolescence.

In Uasin Gishu county, Kenya, a survey carried out in 2008, revealed that girls in disadvantaged rural backgrounds are surrounded by more people who model paths that lead to dropping out of school mainly due to early pregnancies, getting married when not prepared to do so, making wrong career choices and developing coping difficulties when they go to colleges and workplaces with diverse populations. At the same time they lack the basic resources to see them through school, resources like basic books, money for tuition fees, sanitary pads and uniforms which means unlike their male counterparts, they end up missing classes, some of them never to return back. These girls also have a smaller network of adults with college and university education and a variety of jobs who can help them through businesses, school and into careers.

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Adolescent girls and boys need safe and supportive environments. This is a concept that has received considerable international attention and has been articulated by the World Health Organization (WHO 1999) as follows:

A safe and supportive environment is part of what motivates young people to make healthy choices. "Safe" in this context refers to absence of trauma, excessive stress, violence (or fear of violence), or abuse. "Supportive" means an environment that provides a positive, close relationship with family, other adults (including teachers, and youth and religious leaders), and peers.

For girls especially, the idea of a safe and supportive environment is critical, given the burdens and limitations placed on them by parents and social institutions that intensify as girls approach adolescence. Safe and supportive environments can provide girls with a place in which they are treated with dignity and through which they can:

1. develop new and valued skills
2. Form friendships, receive and give peer support, and enhance their social networks
3. Enjoy freedom of expression and movement;
4. Receive mentoring support from trusted adults, who can serve as girls' advocates
5. Take advantage of new learning and educational opportunities.

In response to the dire situation in which girls live in Uasin Gishu county, Kenya, we conceived a mentorship program to educate the poor girls, while enlightening them by introducing an enterprising culture, so that with the limited resources around them, they are able to pull out of the poverty cycles. Thus we started by rescuing some from their homes and commercial sex life and putting them to school. Others were recruited to work as interns in our offices and in the process offer mentorship in all aspects of life as we introduce the concept of community service and peer mentorship. The idea behind this was that upon going back to their communities, these girls could continue impacting knowledge and values to their fellow girls.

From 2005, JWG has found the program as really transformative resulting in behavior change of the girls. Most of them are now acting as role models to other girls and are often holding talks with the younger girls where they stress on the importance of education and how girls can avoid dropping out of school, mainly due to pregnancies and early marriages, which is very common in poor rural communities.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Mentorship is a new concept in Kenya, and organizations are realizing that it is the answer to grow and nurture young girls to become capable, responsible and economically dependent women. It is about counseling the girls as well as supporting them to go to school. Others are supported to pursue craft courses in village polytechnics. The project is based on the premise that a girl is an economic backbone of her home; which she starts at childhood through babysitting, fetching water and firewood, kitchen work, farming etc, work that she continues with in marriage and into their families. When empowered they have the potential to positively transform their families and communities from poverty to well up ones.

3. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the project is to empower girls by providing adolescent girls with individual mentorship, educational programs, and leadership opportunities. The project also inculcate a culture of earning, saving and investment culture in them, instill life skills and encourage them to take a proactive role in solving their own problems now for a better tomorrow.

Specific objectives:

1. Support the girl child to get education through provision of scholarships
2. Support mentorship and counseling support to girls, particularly those in difficult circumstances or come from the remote parts of Kenya
3. Building life skills, knowledge and a change of attitude stimulating girls to work towards breaking cycle of poverty
4. Address retention of girls in schools such as improvement of hygiene and sanitary conditions
5. Prepare girls for college life through building confidence and self worth to successfully complete their education, start careers and embark on family life when they are prepared to do so
6. To offer entrepreneurship knowledge and skills to help girls who are not joining college with opportunities to start life through engagement in informal sectors with an aim of going back to school later in life.
7. Brings out the best in girls, beyond academic excellence
8. Sensitize communities about the perils of gender based discrimination
9. Construction of a secondary for girls to take in girls who have no homes to go to

BENEFICIARIES

This program is designed to benefit the following categories of girls:

Category I: Younger girls, mainly between the ages 8 – 16 who are in primary and secondary schools, or who have not joined those institutions because of financial and other handicaps.

Category II: Girls who have completed high school (aged 17 – 22), and who are in the process of joining colleges & universities. This category also includes those who have fallen into anti-social behavior.

TARGET NUMBERS

The project will benefit 550 girls as follows:

350 girls supported to pursue post secondary school education

40 girls aged 17 – 22 will (in groups of 4) to undergo a six-month mentorship program at JWG and each will go back home to their groups/clubs to mentor the younger girls

200 girls aged 9 – 16: Through the 20 girls, JWG will mentor 200 younger girls in groups of 10, each group under a girl who has gone through our mentorship program

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Phase 1: provision of post secondary scholarships

JWG has noted with regret that western Kenya has few graduate students, especially girls, meaning that their employability is low and minimal. It is widely acknowledged that the attainment of higher education improves chances of employment which comes with improved standards of living and overall quality of life. Average earnings increase to nearly 65% more annually for individuals with an advanced degree. In addition, individuals graduating from postsecondary programs are more likely to work in settings that provide benefits such as health insurance and retirement plans.

From a societal benefit standpoint, communities with a more highly educated population are better able to attract lucrative business opportunities, sustain economic growth and effectively compete in a global marketplace. They tend to have greater quality of life amenities such arts, culture and entertainment—increasing their appeal and ability to attract and retain a more highly-skilled and civic-minded population. In addition, they are less dependent on public assistance programs due to lower unemployment rates and fewer individuals and families living in poverty.

Arising from the issues addressed above, JWG has established the scholarships program as a permanent approach to addressing the many challenges faced by the girl child in our region by supporting 350 girls each year. In this regard, we have established an endowment component aimed at growing in perpetuity, funds to direct towards holistic girl child initiative, while also having an on-going grant making component which make funds available to initiatives that are focusing on curtailing this problem.

PHASE 2

JWG's mentorship program encompasses a 20 hours per month formal learning sessions, divided as follows; 10 hours is used to focus on introducing girls to administration and general office duties including typing/processing reports, attending staff meetings, attending visitors, communication, preparation of training material, filing, etc

Another 10 hours per week are dedicated to Business start up skills acquisition program which is considered as very critical to those aspiring to establish their own small enterprises. Some of the topics usually covered include:

- Identify and screening sources of Business ideas
- Identifying Sources of Business start-up money and other necessary resources
- Importance of group membership in relation to business funding
- The concept of leadership; improving leadership skills
- Development of a business plan and its importance
- Sponsoring own education, going Back to school

Phase III- Peer Mentorship

The Peer Mentorship program is where older girls are supported to offer peer mentorship. These sessions are held once a week where girls are assisted to address their own challenges using examples and life lessons from the peer counselors. This is based on the understanding that older girls understand and identify with them best and so the groups flourish together. They are then coached together by instilling the discipline already learnt at JWG. This means, girls as young as 10 years can do simple tasks and earn, save and invest, a culture which will get them out of poverty. In these groups, girls are assisted to go through school by being provided with sanitary towels and pants, pens, tuition money and other simple requirements that hinder their education. Mentorship ensures that a girl has someone to turn to in case of a problem in life.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Responsibility for monitoring and reporting on progress on the implementation of the project rests upon the management of JWG which performs the oversight role of the project through the Project Steering Committee. The Chairlady, often works very closely with the Project Coordinator, in studying work plans and progress reports from the field and report to the Project Steering Committee on a quarterly basis, which are then used as progress monitoring tool.

The Project Coordinator, often monitors project implementation through regular field visits and advise on project implementation. Towards the end of each year, an external evaluation is always carried out, with the main goal of assessing the overall project's performances. The evaluation which initiated by the Project Steering Committee involves a cross section of the stakeholders. The lessons and findings are often shared in form of end of project report. The same is used to inform how the girls program will be designed in the future. It is also used by donors to assess the success and also challenges that the project faces.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND AUDITS

JWG adheres to a fund accounting system for non-profit organizations. Funds for the girls program have been set aside and assigned a separate account, where donations are send and used specifically for the purpose intended. JWG often compiles the financial reports for the various donors, which are submitted when and as required.

Such reports are often analyzed for accuracy prior to input into the general ledger. Once the books have been updated, official financial reports are produced.

SUSTAINABILITY

JWG often uses a multiplicity of approaches and strategies to ensure that the program sustains the passion and interest of the donors, girls and their parents and guardians. The project mainly builds the capacity of girl mentors who are selected and trained based on their ability to influence other girls.

JWG is often very keen to identify those girls who will not abuse their power. The fact is that many mentors have been accused of engaging in verbal, physical, and sexual harassment. In this respect, JWG has introduced strict adherence to ethical codes of conduct for mentors which emphasize training on how to identify and combat harassment. To this end, JWG will conduct a session on the qualities of a good mentor: some of the discussions points will revolve around the following:

- The person should be knowledgeable
- should exercise good and fair judgment
- should have reformed and shown consistent behavior change

On fundraising, JWG will redouble efforts to ensure that a number of proposals are formulated and submitted to various donors, local and international. As well, JWG will establish partnership and networking with other similar sporting programs and organizations worldwide.

CONCLUSION

JWG is proud of having introduced mentorship, as a new concept that has revolutionized the way and approach to addressing girls challenges. The methodology we have adopted is proving to be working given the many girls who have been transformed and assisted to have a new look of life. Girls have been empowered and in turn reciprocate with younger girls. Mentorship is powerful social and economic change vehicle that is has transformed many.