Research Project Title: How to Improve the Welfare of Young Women in Rural Kenya
Location: Kakamega, Kenya
Research Topic: Gender Equity, Empowerment
Partner Organization: Foundation for Sustainable Development and Maraba CDC

Description of FSD: Foundation for Sustainable Development is an international development organization that seeks to support communities in achieving their goals through asset-based development and international exchange in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. FSD provides opportunities for students and professionals to engage in real community development work instead of a typical study abroad or drop-in service project program. FSD works in six countries and for more than two decades has supported more than 250 community partner organizations and trained more than 3,000 volunteers. Its community development efforts have maintained an ongoing project sustainability rate of nearly 80 percent, addressing health, social, environmental, and economic issues by responding to community priorities and offering training, grants, and volunteer support to community partners.

Description of Community Partner: Maraba CDC is a faith-based organization focused on child development. The organization supports children from needy and or vulnerable backgrounds to enable them to become responsible and fulfilled Christian adults. This is achieved through spiritual development, education & cognitive development, socio-emotional development, and physical development. We endeavor to ensure that all our children attain basic education, excel to the tertiary level of education, and are physically healthy. We do this through spiritual training and discipline, mentorship, guidance and counseling, skills training, and the nurturing of talents and gifts.

Maraba CDC (Child Development Centre) exists to be a shining star through excellent academic achievements, impartation of skills, and empowerment to create a self-reliant community.

Social Issue: Despite the critical role they play in key economic and social outcomes, many girls and young women in Kenya face a wealth of challenges. Because of poverty and outdated social norms, many poor girls are forced to marry at very young ages leaving them vulnerable to HIV, sexual violence, and physical exploitation, among other dangers. Lacking a full range of economic opportunities and being devalued because of gender bias, many girls are seen as unworthy of investment or protection by their families.

Research Project Description: Maraba CDC supports girls or young women between 10 and 24 years of age. Young people are the fastest growing segment of the population here in Kakamega and their welfare is a fundamental key to economic and social outcomes. But girls in Kakamega face systematic disadvantages over a wide range of welfare indicators, including health, education, nutrition, labor force participation, and the burden of household tasks. The researcher will examine ways to improve the welfare of girls and young women among rural communities in Kakamega.
The researcher will:

- Summarize evidence about the importance of girls and young women within economic and social development
- Recommend effective investments that will give adolescent girls in rural communities a full and equal chance for rewarding lives and livelihoods
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- Provide the rationale and policy roadmap necessary to mobilize such support from national governments, donors, private sector and civil society
- Inform the public about ways in which we can all contribute to improving the situation of adolescent girls in Kakamega

The researcher will describe why and how to provide adolescent girls in rural communities a full and equal chance in life with targeted recommendations for national and county governments, donor agencies, civil society, and the private sector.

**Methodology:**
The research would combine quantitative and qualitative methods. Primary data collection methods will include interviews, questionnaire surveys, and focus groups. These methods will be employed in order to gain actual information on the welfare of girls and young women among rural communities in Kakamega. The questionnaire will be pilot tested with the researcher upon arrival. In this study, a systematic random sample of girls and young women will be selected from the rural communities in Kakamega.

**Community Impact:**
The study will provide a compelling starting point for Kakamega county-specific agendas to recognize and foster girls’ potential.

**Student profile:** The researcher should have a background in research methodologies and a strong desire for gender initiatives and community development.