VULNERABLE AND MARGINALISED GROUPS' PLAN (VMGP)

FOR THE

"GENERATING GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES AND PRODUCTIVITY FOR WOMEN ENTERPRISES (GROW) PROJECT"

(P176747)

FINAL VERSION

Prepared by the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development

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ACRONYMS

Abbreviation	Description
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CBO	Community Based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ESCP	Environmental and Social Commitment Plan
ESF	Environmental and Social Framework
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESS	Environmental and Social Standard
FBO	Faith Based Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
GROW	Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LCV	Local Council V
LMP	Labour Management Procedure
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PDM	Parish Development Model
PDO	Project Development Objective
PLHIV/AIDS	People Living with HIV/AIDS
PSFU	Private Sector Foundation Uganda
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RHD	Refugees and Hosting Districts
RPF	Resettlement Policy Framework
SEF	Stakeholder Engagement Framework
VMG	Vulnerable and Marginalized Group

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Foreword

The Government of Uganda received financing from the International Development Association of the World Bank towards the implementation of the Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises (GROW) Project. The Project Development Objective is to increase access to entrepreneurial services that enable female entrepreneurs to grow their enterprises. GROW Project is a nationwide project that is implemented in 135 districts, 11 cities, including Kampala Capital City Authority(KCCA) and 44 Municipalities and is therefore implemented under the Local Governments (as amended) Act, 2015.

The GROW project is designed to support women entrepreneurs, enhance their productivity and ensure they have access to the resources necessary for their businesses to thrive. The key objectives of the GROW project are facilitating access to financial resources, training, and mentorship programs that enhance women's entrepreneurial skills and business acumen; supporting women-led enterprises to drive local economic development and create employment opportunities; improving the livelihoods of women and their families by promoting sustainable income generating activities; and building capacity of local communities to support women's economic initiatives and foster a culture of inclusivity and equality.

The Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Plan (VMGP) has been developed to address the persistent challenges faced by women entrepreneurs among the Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups (VMGs) identified under the Project, including those from ethnic minorities including Ik, Benet, Batwa, and Tepeth. This plan is the result of extensive collaboration aiming to enhance skills, broaden access to quality labour opportunities, and strengthen community support. The plan incorporates the real-life experiences of Uganda's women entrepreneurs within these ethnic minority groups and sets clear objectives for empowerment and sustainable growth.

I am confident that this initiative will catalyse a more inclusive and resilient GROW Project. It is my hope that every stakeholder embraces this plan with the determination to transform potential into measurable progress.

For God and My Country

Amongi Betty Ongom (MP)
Minister of Gender, Labour and Social Development

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Preface

The Government of Uganda received financing from the International Development Association of the World Bank towards the implementation of the Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises (GROW) Project. The Project Development Objective is to increase access to entrepreneurial services that enable female entrepreneurs to grow their enterprises. GROW Project is a nationwide project that is implemented in 135 districts, 11 cities including Kampala Capital City Authority(KCCA) and 44 Municipalities and is therefore implemented under the Local Governments (as amended) Act, 2015.

The GROW project is designed to support women entrepreneurs, enhance their productivity and ensure they have access to the resources necessary for their businesses to thrive. The key objectives of the GROW project are facilitating access to financial resources, training, and mentorship programs that enhance women's entrepreneurial skills and business acumen; supporting women-led enterprises to drive local economic development and create employment opportunities; improving the livelihoods of women and their families by promoting sustainable income generating activities; and building capacity of local communities to support women's economic initiatives and foster a culture of inclusivity and equality.

In line with the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination, the GROW project has developed a Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Plan which outlines strategic interventions to ensure that women entrepreneurs among the ethnic minorities are not only beneficiaries but also active participants in the GROW Project. This plan prioritizes environmental and social sustainability, aligning with our national and international obligations to protect human rights and promote sustainable development.

The VMGP is grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic context of the women entrepreneurs among the ethnic minorities and it identifies tailored activities key activities to enhance their productivity.

I therefore call upon all stakeholders, including government agencies, development partners, implementation partners' community leaders, and the beneficiaries to embrace this plan and work collaboratively towards its successful implementation as we build a brighter and more inclusive future for all.

For God and My Country

A.D. Kibenge
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development

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1. Introduction

The Government of Uganda, through the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, in partnership with the Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU), is implementing the Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises (GROW) project funded by the World Bank. The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to increase access to entrepreneurial services that enable female entrepreneurs to grow their enterprises.

The Project arises out of the desire to respond to the needs of women entrepreneurs to grow their businesses, sustain self-employment and create more jobs. The Project Development Objective (PDO) is to increase access to entrepreneurial services that enable female entrepreneurs to grow their enterprises. The project targets female-owned enterprises, including refugee-owned businesses. GROW will therefore support women entrepreneurs with the growth potential to improve productivity, and sustainability and transition their enterprises from micro to small and then to medium scale. Beneficiary selection under the GROW Project follows transparent and inclusive criteria to ensure equitable access for all women, including those from ethnic minority and marginalized groups. Eligibility is based on demonstrated interest in enterprise development, membership in women's groups or cooperatives, and commitment to project objectives. Identification is conducted through participatory community consultations, with local governments, cultural institutions, and civil society organizations engaged to reach vulnerable populations such as the Batwa, Benet, Tepeth, and Ik.

The project is implemented in all the districts and cities of Uganda including Refugee settlements and Refugee Hosting Districts (RHDs). The project implementation is supervised at multiple levels to fasten addressing of any issues or challenges that may arise, ensuring effectiveness and efficiency. GROW Project is being delivered under four project components namely:

- Component 1: Support for Women empowerment and enterprise development services.
- Component 2: Access to finance for women entrepreneurs;
- Component 3: Enabling infrastructure and facilities for women enterprise growth and transition and;
- Component 4: Program management, policy innovation, and evidence generation.

The project triggered the World Bank's Environmental and Social Standard 7 (ESS7) concerning Indigenous Peoples and historically underserved communities in sub-Saharan Africa. ESS7 emphasizes the importance of the rights and interests of Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups (VMGs) and mandates their engagement in all project stages, proportionate to potential risks and impacts.

For the purposes of this plan, Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups (VMGs) shall refer specifically to ethnic minorities, consistent with the scope of ESS7 on Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities.

The key objectives of ESS7 include respecting the human rights, dignity, and culture of VMGs; avoiding adverse project impacts on VMGs or mitigating them when avoidance is not possible; promoting accessible and culturally appropriate sustainable development benefits for VMGs; ensuring meaningful consultation and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) with VMGs where applicable and; recognizing and preserving VMGs' cultural knowledge and practices. The Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) prepared and disclosed a Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Framework (VMGF) and a Resettlement Process Framework (RPF), stakeholder Engagement Framework (SEF) and Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) during project preparation to meet World Bank requirements.

While the VMGF highlights the importance of VMGs' rights and advocates for proportionate engagement based on project risks, the SEP and RPF establish mechanisms for participation while

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safeguarding their rights during land acquisition and involuntary resettlement respectively. Additionally, the Environment and Social Commitment Plan includes strategies to empower VMGs to engage actively in the project. The overall aim is to ensure that the needs and concerns of VMGs are addressed effectively throughout the GROW project. The VMGF emphasizes the importance of creating a plan for Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups that addresses the specific needs of various differentiated ethnic minorities in line with the ESS7 on including the Batwa, Tepeth, IK, and Benet.

2. Purpose of the VMGP

This VMGP has been prepared as a practical tool to guide the implementation of GROW project interventions that may affect the Women Entrepreneurs among the Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups identified under the GROW Project. The purpose of this VMGP is also identify actions for avoiding or minimising or compensating for potential negative social and economic impacts on the VMG women entrepreneurs. This includes appropriate ways of engaging the VMGs to benefit from the project. The measures are described in the form of a management plan with specified responsibilities and timelines to ensure that implementation can be monitored throughout the project life cycle. The VMGP, therefore, highlights actions and strategies that will ensure that the eligible women entrepreneurs among the VMGs participate in, and equitably benefit from the project.

2.1. Specific Objectives of the Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Plan

1. To identify eligible women entrepreneurs among VMGs groups within the project area
2. To identify businesses undertaken by the eligible Women entrepreneurs
3. To identify geographical, economic and linguistic barriers to participation of Women Entrepreneurs in and benefiting from the GROW Project
4. To propose areas of inclusion within the GROW project (sub-components)
5. To match potential economic opportunities with the GROW Project services and products

3. Scope

3.1. Geographical Scope

The GROW Project is a nationwide initiative covering all 135 districts, designed to empower women entrepreneurs through training, financing, and enterprise development. Under the GROW project, the women entrepreneurs among the ethnic minority groups of the Batwa, the Tepeth, IK, and Benet are identified as vulnerable and marginalised. While its scope is national, the project places special emphasis on Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups (VMGs) to ensure inclusivity. These include the Batwa, who live in Southwestern Uganda around Bwindi and Mgahinga (Kisoro, Kanungu, Kabale); the Benet, found in the Mount Elgon region, particularly Kween and Bukwo districts; the Tepeth, residing in Moroto District in the Karamoja sub-region; and the Ik, located in Kaabong District, also within Karamoja.

3.2. Beneficiary Scope

The Project Development Objective is to expand access to entrepreneurial services that enable female entrepreneurs to grow and sustain their enterprises in targeted locations. Section 66 of the Project Appraisal Document identifies women and their enterprises as the primary beneficiaries of the project. In alignment with the Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Plan (VMGP), the initiative will prioritize support for women entrepreneurs from the Batwa, IK, Tepet, and Benet communities. By focusing on these groups, the project aims to foster inclusive economic participation, strengthen women-led enterprises, and build the resilience of marginalized populations through tailored capacity-building, financial inclusion, and improved access to market opportunities.

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4. Methodology

4.1. Sources of Data and Data Management Processes

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the preparation of the plan to understand and address the needs of the vulnerable and marginalised groups, leading to more effective and impactful planning and implementation. The detailed timeframes during which the surveys were undertaken and stakeholders engaged, are illustrated in specific VMGPs under the stakeholder consultation sections respectively. This table below presents a summary of the key consultation activities, including the dates of implementation, the categories of stakeholders engaged.

Table 1. Summary of Stakeholder Engagements Undertaken During the Development of the VMGPs

S/n	Ethnic Minority Group	Stakeholder	Dates of meeting sessions	No. of Participants
1.	Ik	Local Government, CSOs, Ik Women entrepreneurs,	28th Jan and 23rd May 2025	65
2.	Batwa	Local Government, CSOs, Twa women entrepreneurs	28th Jan, 3rd Feb, and 26th May 2025	57
3.	Benet	Local Government, CSOs, Benet women entrepreneurs	28th Dec 2024, 3rd jan 2025, 27th May 2025	22
4.	Tepeth	Local Government, CSOs, Tepeth women entrepreneurs	27th Jan 2025, 23-24th may 2025	35
	Total			**179**

4.2. Data Collection

4.2.1 Primary Data

Quantitative data was collected using the survey from the women entrepreneurs at the household level. The questionnaire captured baseline data including but not limited to; Demographics; Household characteristics, Access to safe &clean water, Community sanitation and hygiene; Education and literacy levels; types of business, livelihood security Income generating activities; investment; saving & credit; skill gaps; Household asset ownership; Access to health and HIV/AIDs services Employment and Labor conditions; Gender Based Violence (GBV), child rights, Community groups; membership & roles; Gender needs (practical & strategic); Housing and settlements, Transport.

Table 2. The framework of data collection among the VMGs

a. Number of women engaged in Micro, Small and Medium Businesses (in ref to the Uganda MSME policy)
b. Business sectors in which women are engaged
c. Sizes of businesses in which women entrepreneurs are engaged
d. Existence of women's platforms under which women entrepreneurs are organized
e. Business and investment needs of the women entrepreneurs among the targeted communities
f. Potential risks/barriers to maximizing targeted communities 'women entrepreneur's

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participation and benefits from the GROW Project, causes and,

g. How barriers can be minimized through the GROW Project services and products

h. The need for affirmative action and, if yes, what form can it take.

Qualitative data was collected to complement the quantitative data using key informant interview and Focus Group Discussions.

Key Informant Interviews were applied using the Key Informant Guide to individuals with perceived knowledge of vulnerable and marginalised women in business. At the national level, stakeholders included relevant sector institutions, including but not limited MGLSD, and PSFU, Stakeholders at the local government levels (District and lower levels) included political, technical, religious and cultural leaders in the communities hosting the targeted vulnerable tribes/groups.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were undertaken using a Focus Group guide. These were undertaken among specific vulnerable and marginalised groups that were purposively identified for their unique character in the project area including but not limited to Women Entrepreneurs living with Disabilities, similar business sectors among others.

Observations were made during the transect walks and photographs taken to identify challenges, behaviors, and interactions within the Vulnerable and Marginalised communities, providing first hand insights into their needs and existing resources. This helps in building a case for necessary interventions

Transect walks were made involving systematic walking through different areas of a community to assess environmental, social, and infrastructural conditions. They also allowed direct engagement with women entrepreneurs among the Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups, enhancing understanding of their realities.

Photography was also undertaken to capture visual evidence of living conditions, progress, and key issues. Visual documentation amplified the experiences of vulnerable groups, making their realities more visible to under the GROW Project.

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Figure 1. Consultant facilitating a Focus Group Discussion with the IK/Teuso women entrepreneurs



Figure 2. One of the businesses was discovered during the transect walks undertaken within the Benet community.

4.2.2 Secondary Data

Relevant literature including national and district-level documents were reviewed to gather detailed documentation on the socio-economic characteristics of the specific VMGs and their alignment with the GROW Project National documents included: National Development Plan (NDP) III; Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) Census Reports; and national publications on core thematic areas including economic and enterprise development for women; Persons with Disabilities (PWDs); persons living with HIV/AIDS; and marginalised communities the project area. At the project level relevant documents reviewed included: The World Bank Environment

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and Social Framework; Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Framework (VMGF); Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF); Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF); Stakeholder Engagement Framework (SEF); Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and interim Grievance Redress Handbook. At the district level, respective district development plans were reviewed.

4.2.3. Data Analysis

Quantitative Data was entered and analyzed in STATA using descriptive statistics majorly frequencies. Qualitative data was typed in MS Word and thematicllay analyzed and synthesized using Nvivo qualitative analysis software.

4.3. Ethical Considerations

For developing the VMGPs, informed consent protocols guided the process of engagement of the vulnerable and marginalised groups specifically the ethnic minorities thus respecting community autonomy and protecting cultural and environmental resources. Entry into the community was through the respective leaders. An introductory letter was written to the districts introducing consultants and research assistants. All Participants and respondents provided informed written consent to participate in the study. Participation in the study was voluntary. To ensure effective and inclusive participation, consultations were conducted in local languages where the Batwa, IK, Benet and Tepeth are found; representatives of the vulnerable and marginalized groups in collaboration with the local administration in the project area agreed on a venue that was considered by way of mutual consensus as appropriate; provided adequate notice for the consultation meetings and allowed time for consensus building, and the articulation by VMGs of their views and preferences; ensured that the time chosen for the meetings is appropriate for majority of the VMGs to attend.

5. The General Structure of Consultations

The VMGP has been developed through inclusive and systematic participation from the VMGs and local stakeholders, including District Local Governments and representatives from NGOs focused on Indigenous Knowledge (IK) issues. The target communities had been previously consulted in the first phase during the preparation of the VMGF and SEP in March 2022. These engagements were undertaken at the preliminary stages of the Project in preparation of the VMGF and SEP as preconditions for commencement of the GROW Project. Each engagement, including key informant interviews and focus group discussions, is built on this prior consultation process. Feedback was provided regarding the project's status and the outcomes of the earlier consultations. Key aspects of the VMGF were discussed, and participants were reminded of the important issues raised during those previous consultations as per annex 5 of the VGMF. Some of these issues included:

- Low literacy levels among the Indigenous Knowledge (IK) communities.
- Microfinance Support Centre is the only credit services provider in most areas.
- Some community members access funds through the SAGE program.
- Regarding the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), when faced with complaints, the ethnic minority groups already have traditional grievance resolution structure, led by elders. Clan leaders resolve issues, including marital disputes and land conflicts. However, criminal matters are directed to the formal grievance redress structure of the LG.
- In terms of livelihoods, women in Kaboong are predominantly engaged in farming and beekeeping (apiary). Conventional technology is used to manufacture Honey. Access to modern technology and equipment can help improve the honey production.
- There is a need to teach women entrepreneurs value addition skills for purposes of competitiveness and growth in business

- Women entrepreneurs should be encouraged to join business forums to ensure that they get free mentorship and expert views and ideas on the dos and don'ts' of where they can pick crucial tips for business growth and success
- The project should also include the Vulnerable and marginalized groups for example under UWEP, Indigenous groups in Bundibugyo and Kabale such as the Batwa, and IK in Kaabong were considered for funding. The majority are involved in agriculture, art and craft, weaving, tailoring embroidery and cosmetology.
- There is also need to sensitize the men to help diffuse and alleviate any misconceptions about women enhancing and boosting their enterprises. Most men have a tendency of abdicating responsibility once they realize that their spouses are earning an income.
- Similar projects, such as Emyooga and NUSAF, have been implemented in the area, allowing women to be mobilized to benefit from the GROW project
- Project should follow the Do No Harm principle, to ensure that through this intervention social and environment risk aren't triggered and where it is inevitable mitigate measures for negative effects on the social fabric should be instituted especially among the Vulnerable and Marginalized groups such as indigenous persons, the old, sick and infirm, refugees among others.
- There is need to understand the level where entrepreneurs are in terms of their operations
- Training materials for all the targeted groups will need to be translated and simplified for easy understanding.
- The project will need to carry out a needs assessment a have a clear understanding of the training needs.
- The project should have a ToT (Training of trainers) strategy in the respective regions to help train the various women led entrepreneur groups
- There is need to engage husbands to be part of the training so that they can appreciate what the project objectives and goals
- The project proponent can work reputable NGOs and CSOs such as Council for Economic Empowerment for Women of Africa – Uganda Chapter (CEEWA- U) who have experience of working with women entrepreneurs.
- The project should have tailored mitigation measures for Gender based violence.
- There is need to benchmark this project from previous projects.
- There is need for proper identification of impacts, this will guide on the type of safeguards documents that have to be prepared such as ESIA, Project briefs, RAP and the like.
- There is need to build capacity of project personnel on issues related with disabled persons
- The Common User Facilities should have assistive devices for the visually impaired, rumps for those with wheel chairs to enable them access and utilize these facilities
- Training materials should be designed and produced to benefit all including the disabled, the visually impaired and the illiterate.

The second and third phases of consultation were carried out during the preparation of the Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Plan. The specific dates of consultations with the differentiated groups are detailed in the "Consultation Process" section under each respective group.

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6. Administration Arrangements for all the VMGPs

6.1. Involvement of Key Stakeholders' Institutions and their Contribution to the Project.

Table 3. Stakeholders Engaged During the Development of the VMGPs and their Roles(source: Field data)

Sn	Key stakeholder	Role in the implementation of the VMGP
1	MGLSD	Leads the planning and development of strategies to ensure the inclusion of VMGs
		Screening for projects affecting Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups;
		Review project proposals, ensuring that they adequately apply the World Bank's Indigenous Peoples Policy;
		Assess the adequacy of the consultation process and the affected vulnerable communities' broad support to the project; Monitor project implementation, and include constraints and lessons learned concerning VMGs and the application of this VMGP in its progress and monitoring reports; it should ensure that affected VMGs are included in monitoring and evaluation exercises
		Assess the adequacy of the assessment of project impacts and the proposed measures to address issues about affected vulnerable communities. When doing so project activities, impacts and social risks, circumstances of the affected indigenous communities, and the capacity of the applicant to implement the measures should be assessed. If the risks or complexity of particular issues
		Coordinate with various stakeholders including local government, NGOs, and community organisations, to ensure effective implementation of the VMGP
		Organize training sessions and workshops for local government officials and other stakeholders to enhance their capacity to address the needs of the VMGs
		Establish a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the progress of the VMGP to ensure that the objectives are being met to make necessary adjustments
		Advocated for policies that promote the inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable and marginalized groups within the GROW Project framework
		Conduct awareness and sensitization campaigns to inform the public and stakeholders about the importance of including vulnerable and marginalized groups in the GROW Project
		Establish common user facilities and gender-inclusive workplaces infrastructure to support the growth of women owned enterprises.
2	Private Sector Foundation Uganda (PSFU)	Facilitate access to financial services through the GROW financing facility, which includes grants, loans and other financial support mechanisms
		Provide essential business management skills training, trade specific skills training to help women entrepreneurs grow their businesses.
		Organize training sessions and workshops to enhance the skills and knowledge of women entrepreneurs, helping them to transition from micro to small and medium enterprises
		Collaborate with MGLSD to monitor and evaluate the progress of the VMGP, ensuring that the project objectives are being met.
3	Local Government	Identify women entrepreneurs among the VMGs within their jurisdiction and assess their specific needs to tailor intervention effectively
		Engage with communities to raise awareness about the GROW project and ensure the participation of Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups in the project activities
		Facilitate capacity-building initiatives by organising training sessions and workshops for local stakeholders, including community leaders and women entrepreneurs
		Collaborate with relevant NGOs, private sector organisations, and community-based organisations, to create a supportive ecosystem for women entrepreneurs.
		Implement a clear and transparent grievance redress mechanism to address any issues or concerns by Vulnerable and Marginalised groups
4	Non-government organisations	NGOs conduct research to identify community needs and develop projects that address those needs. Oversee project implementation by ensuring that activities are carried out as planned. Track project progress, and identify challenges and areas of improvement. Assess project impact by determining whether goals and objectives have been met.
5	Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups (VMGs)	VMGs help to identify their needs and priorities, which helps in informing project design and implementation. They provide feedback on project progress, which helps to identify challenges and areas for improvement. They take ownership of the project activities and ensure sustainability and continuity beyond project completion.

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6.2. Coordination and Implementation Arrangements

The implementation arrangement for all the VMGPs will follow the established plan. All activities will be guided by these VMGPs and the approved project work plans. Local government focal point officers, together with technical staff from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), will coordinate the process by identifying priority activities, setting timelines, allocating resources, and defining responsibilities. Inputs are drawn from baseline assessments, community consultations, and stakeholder engagements among the VMGs to ensure that the work plans are evidence-based and responsive to local realities.

VMGs will be engaged through community consultations where their priorities and needs will be identified. Grievance redress systems will be established to allow them to raise concerns and influence adjustments to project activities. In terms of capacity building, VMGs will be provided with tailored training programs in areas such as entrepreneurship. These trainings will be adapted to local languages and cultural contexts to ensure accessibility.

The focal point officers will monitor the implementation of the project activities in accordance with the implementation guidelines for local governments. The focal point officers will also guide the women entrepreneurs among the VMGs to access the project services and products The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), in collaboration with other stakeholders, will provide overall strategic direction, supervision, and comprehensive monitoring of the implementation of the plan in alignment with the broader GROW project.

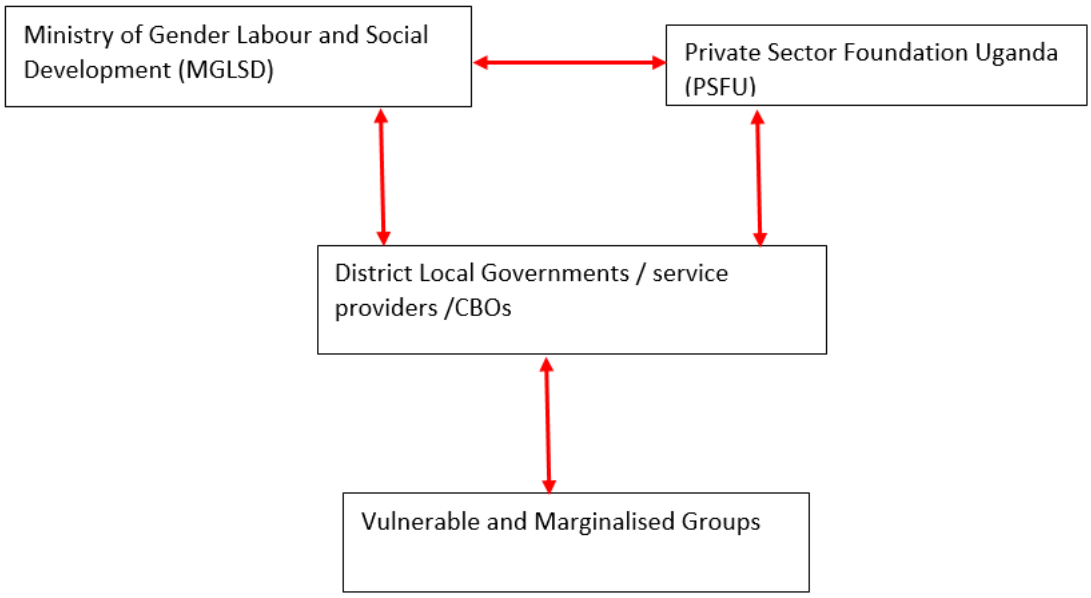


Figure 3. Implementation and collaboration arrangement for the VMGPs

6.3. Activity implementation Arrangements.

During the Implementation of activities outlined in this VMGP, MGLSD and partners shall ensure a deliberate effort to include the VMG-led institutions or institutions working with the VMGs in this VMGP in the implementation of specific activities especially those targeting the VMGs, within the limits of requirements permitted under the World Bank Procurement Guidelines.

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Table 4. Activity Implementation Arrangements

Activity	Responsibility	Key Partners/Institutions	Implementation Focus
Implementation of VMGP activities	MGLSD, PSFU and Implementing partners	VMG-led institutions and institutions working with VMGs	Ensure the inclusion of VMG-led institutions in the implementation of specific activities targeting VMGs.
Targeting VMGs in activities	MGLSD, PSFU and Implementing partners	VMG-led institutions and institutions working with VMGs	The deliberate effort to incorporate VMG-led institutions in activities targeting VMGs.
Adherence to World Bank Procurement Guidelines	MGLSD, PSFU and Implementing partners	VMG-led institutions and institutions working with VMGs	Ensure all activities are within limits of requirements permitted under World Bank Procurement Guidelines.

6.4. Monitoring and Evaluation Requirements

The implementation of this VMGP will align with the overall Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for the GROW project. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) is responsible for coordinating M&E and ensuring that data and information are produced in a timely manner and meet quality standards. Monitoring data will be collected at both field and agency levels by designated focal point officers from District Local Governments (DLGs). This data will then be forwarded to the GROW Project and the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) for consolidated reporting.

The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) will conduct periodic field monitoring visits, as needed, to verify the information received from the monitoring reports. In conjunction with the M&E Framework, project reporting formats and a feedback mechanism will be developed for use by the MGLSD. The VMGP outlines key targets and indicators that will inform the design of data collection tools for its implementation.

Monitoring will be the primary mechanism through which those implementing this VMGP receive feedback and alerts regarding any delays or issues. The monitoring framework will assist the implementers in assessing the pace of activity implementation. It enables timely responses and provides insights into effective implementation strategies. Additionally, it will help determine whether the activities of the GROW project comply with this VMGP, the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), and national policies and legal procedures that ensure the participation of Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups (VMGs).

The implementation of this VMGP will depend on a participatory monitoring and evaluation process. This approach will monitor the effectiveness of activities aimed at improving the standards of living for VMGs. Monitoring field visits by the PIU will actively involve the leaders of the respective VMGs and NGOs or CBOs led by or working the concerned VMGs to validate beneficiary lists, verify activity delivery, collect feedback and flag risks, ensuring they have a direct understanding of and appreciation for the process. Their perspectives on both the positive and negative potential impacts will also be taken into account.

6.5. Administrative Reporting

The M&E mechanisms adopted for the project will ensure that in addition to process and outcome Indicators, appropriate impact indicators are defined as related specifically to impacts on vulnerable groups and their livelihoods. These will include: how many vulnerable people participated actively and benefitted from project activities and documentation of their opinions on project impacts and if any of their specific concerns were addressed during implementation. In measuring the extent and quality of participation, it will be important to understand and capture how gender differences will affect the participation of girls and women in scheme activities. Gender analysis will therefore be an integral part of monitoring and evaluation of scheme activities. The monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the project will ensure that in addition to process and outcome indicators appropriate impact indicators are defined and related

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specifically to impacts on vulnerable groups and their livelihoods. It is recommended that an impact evaluation be undertaken about 6 months before project completion to assess the changes in the overall living standards compared to the time before project implementation.

6.6. Financing Arrangements for the VMGP

The cost for implementation of the VMGF will be incorporated in the project cost and the administrative costs for social assessment, and preparation of VMGs will be financed under Project. Additional costs to specifically cater for VMGs include those related to their informed and meaningful engagement, including mobilization, translation of reports, and special focus meetings and capacity building for project staff dealing with social issues including those at the local government level. All mitigation activities and benefits included in the VGMF and the VMGP will be budgeted under the project. A detailed budget breakdown is provided with specific activities for the implementation of these VMGPs

6.7. Preparation of Activity Plans, Budgets and Reporting

The budgeting arrangements for implementing the Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Plan (VMGP) will align with the overall budgeting framework of the GROW project and adhere to the Government of Uganda's (GoU) budgeting procedures and fiscal year (July-June). The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) will facilitate the development of annual work plans and budgets for specific activities targeting vulnerable and marginalized groups (VMGs). These plans and budgets will be guided by the VMGP and integrated into the overall annual work plans and budgets prepared by MGLSD. The budget for VMG activities will also be incorporated into MGLSD's annual budget for the project. This budget must be approved by the Project Steering Committee and subsequently by MGLSD and the World Bank. Once MGLSD receives the project funds, expenditures for implementing VMG activities will be carried out in accordance with the approved work plans.

Table 5. Summary Budget for Implementing the VMGPs

Sn	Implementation budget for specific VMGPs	Amount (UGX)
1	Total budget for implementing VMGP for the IK	1,790,000,000
2	Total budget for implementing VMGP for the Batwa	1,860,000,000
3	Total budget for implementing VMGP for the Benet	1,730,000,000
4	Total budget for implementing VMGP for the Tepeth	1,780,000,000
10	**Grand total**	**7,160,000,000**

The overall allocation for the Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Plans (VMGP) is UGX 7,160,000,000 (Uganda Shillings Seven billion, One Hundred Sixty Million Only). Budgets for individual activities are embedded within their designated subcomponents. Where an activity does not have a specified subcomponent, its funding will be sourced through reallocation from other components following the necessary approvals by the World Bank.

8.7. Arrangements for Reviewing and Updating the VMGP

The MGLSD and key partners such as PSFU, in collaboration with DLGs and selected VMGs led institution, VMG representatives, local authorities, implementing partners and relevant NGOs agent or technical service provider shall carry out a review of the implementation progress, identify challenges and recommend adjustment. Updating of the VMGPs will require additional consultations with the VMGs, as was done during the preparation of the VMGPs, based on their decision-making process.

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7. Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Plans

7.1. Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Plan for the Ik (Teuso) Women Entrepreneurs

7.1.1. Population and location

The Ik, live on the edge of the Karamoja - Turkana region along the Uganda - Kenya border in Kaabong district, Karamoja. IKs are majorly resident in Kaabong district (sub counties of Kamion, Timu and Morungole), Karamoja region, Northeast of Uganda; and nine parishes namely; Morungole, Usake, Lokwakaramoi, Kamion, Nawadou, Kokosowa, Lokinene, Kapalu, Loitanit. As of the 2024 UBOS Census, there are 15,241 individuals belonging to the Ik community, an increase from 13,939 in 2014, which consisted of 6,845 males and 7,094 females. Approximately 83% of the Ik people reside in rural areas. The VMGP consultations were conducted exclusively with women entrepreneurs within VMGs. This targeted approach reflected the project's emphasis on targeting and supporting entrepreneurial women as a distinct subset of the broader female population. While the total female population is reported for context, the consultation numbers represent engagement with those mapped as entrepreneurs, ensuring that the findings and recommendations are directly relevant to the intended beneficiaries.

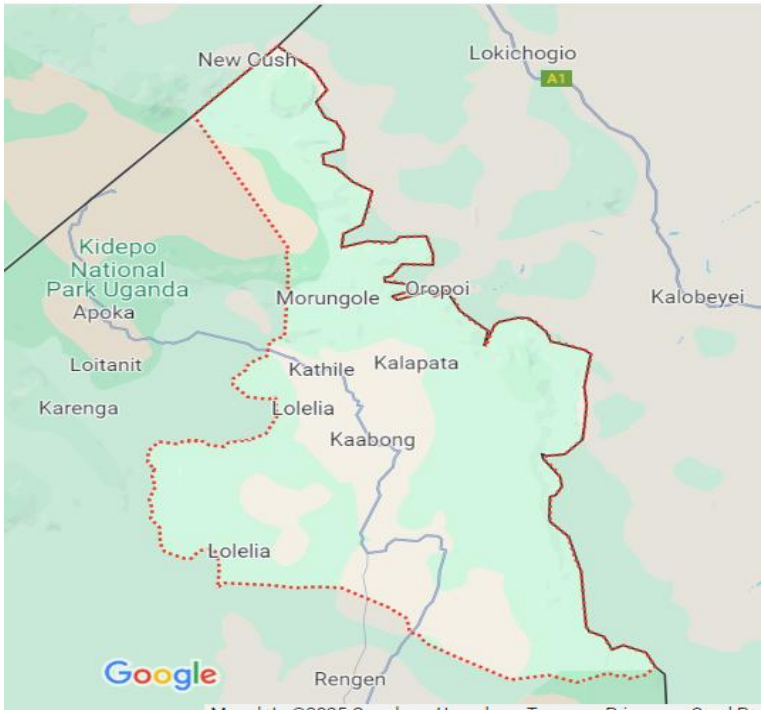


Figure 4. Map showing settlement areas of the IK

7.1.2. Social Organisation

The Ik are a small ethnic group in northeastern Uganda whose settlement patterns and kinship structures have evolved as adaptive responses to a challenging environment marked by inter-group insecurity and the need for collective survival. 99% of the Ik tribe are blood relatives since they all originated from the Sigetia clan. In many traditional societies, narratives of a single ancestral origin can be a powerful tool to strengthen communal bonds. Their homes are organized in a compact, fortified compound resembling the manyatta style seen in other East African pastoral communities. In these compounds, more than ten households live together within a block bordered by a wooden or thorn fence that links each household through shared entry and exit points. This design is not merely practical architecture; it embodies a system of mutual defense and communal care highly adapted to the region's history of conflict and insecurity.

The Ik people of northeastern Uganda organize their governance through clan-based structures, councils of elders, and consensus-driven decision-making. Each clan serves as a fundamental unit of social and political organization, with leaders representing their members in wider community matters. Elders hold a central role, acting as custodians of tradition, mediators in disputes, and

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advisors on community decisions, with their authority rooted in respect rather than coercion. Decision-making is typically collective, relying on open dialogue and compromise to ensure outcomes reflect the interests of the community. Age is a key determinant of influence, with older men and women commanding greater authority, while women also play important roles in family-level governance and cultural continuity. Conflict resolution emphasizes reconciliation and harmony, focusing on restorative justice rather than punishment. Although the Ik are subject to Uganda's formal local government structures, their traditional governance remains strong, particularly in matters of marriage, land use, resource sharing, and cultural practices, and development initiatives often engage elders and clan leaders to secure legitimacy and community acceptance.

Historically, the Ik have faced threats from neighboring pastoralist groups such as the Jie and Dodoth in the Karamoja region, as well as incursions by groups like the Topotha from South Sudan and the Turkana from Kenya. These threats necessitated forming closely-knit and defensible settlements. The practice of clustering households into a single compound provided a strategic advantage by centralizing vigilance and support, thereby increasing their ability to withstand raids and incursions. This pattern is common among communities living in areas where resources are scarce and conflict is frequent, as it reinforces both physical security and social interdependence.

7.1.3. Gender Roles

A number of Ik women engage in small sale farming, and animal husbandry; Bead works; cultural tourism and small retail shops. Among the IK community, Women play critical roles in foraging, collecting wild fruits and brew local brew comprising of maize mixed with sorghum yeast or millet beer commonly known as Kwete for trade or consumption during social gatherings like marriage, meetings among others while the men focus on security and traditional hunting, often trekking to isolated regions of Morungole forest.

7.1.4. Economic Activities

The IK community relies on small-scale farming and bee keeping as a source of livelihood. Conventional technology is used to manufacture Honey however; improved access to modern technology and equipment can help improve the honey production. They also rely on eco-tourism due to its unique cultural diversity such as the Geographical landscape with escarpments, caves and rocks (Morungole, Kamion, etc.) blended with strong tradition like the Nyokorota traditional dance and the unique Icetods language. Ecotourism activities among the Ik community in Kaabong District are primarily community-led but developed in close collaboration with non-governmental organizations and private tour operators who provide training, infrastructure, and market access. The Ik themselves play a central role through cultural groups and local guides who host visitors, perform traditional dances, share oral histories, and sell crafts. Benefit sharing is structured so that households and cultural groups receive direct income from performances, guiding, and craft sales, while a portion of revenues is reinvested into community projects such as education, health, and infrastructure. NGOs and tour operators retain a smaller share to cover logistics, marketing, and reinvestment in facilities, ensuring sustainability. This model guarantees that the Ik are not passive participants but active owners of their cultural tourism assets, while external partners provide the technical and financial support needed to make the initiatives viable.

7.1.5. Culture and Tradition

The IK tribe is renowned for its distinctive marriage customs where honey plays an essential role. In the process of arranging a marriage, families agree on harvesting a minimum of ten liters of honey, though the precise amount may vary according to mutual accord. This honey is stored in a

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gourd for over a year before it is presented to the bride's family. Importantly, once received, the honey is reserved exclusively for elders aged 60 and above, reflecting its deep cultural significance. This practice underscores the IK community's profound respect for its elders, a value zealously upheld and passed on to younger generations through traditional teachings. From early childhood, IK children learn the importance of these cultural norms, including caution in their interactions with strangers, a lesson that endures throughout their lives. In focus group discussions, participants affirmed the lasting impact and meaning of these cherished traditions.

In a focus group, participants shared that:

"*When a visitor appears in the Ik community, community members instinctively take cover among rocks and in the forests to avoid any interaction. If a child or a woman is seen before they have hidden, they are generally reluctant to divulge any information to a stranger. Only elderly men are authorised to engage with outsiders. Once persuaded, these elders mobilise the necessary groups using the local language, and gradually, individuals come out of hiding in response to the elders' call and directives*"

7.1.6. Non-Government Interventions

There is significant support and mindset activities implemented by partners like; Mercy Corps, Kaboong Peace Development Agency (KAPDA), Dado, Karatunga, Warriors Squad Foundation, PAG compassion, and AFI. The presence of these organizations can be exploited to create partnerships that support the Women entrepreneurs access GROW Project service and products.

Table 6. Non Government Organisations Mapped Within the IK Community(Source: field data)

Agency	Focus Areas
Murongole Conservancy	➢ Implementing ecotourism initiatives to support wildlife conservation efforts. ➢ Conducting capacity-building programs to equip farmers with essential skills and knowledge. ➢ Promoting sustainable agricultural practices and environmental stewardship among farming communities.
Kaboong Peace and Development Agency (KAPDA)	➢ Providing scholarships to support education and empower future leaders. ➢ Implementing livelihood programs to enhance economic stability and self-sufficiency. ➢ Promoting peace-building initiatives to foster harmony, conflict resolution, and community cohesion.
Karatunga	➢ Promoting conservation agriculture for sustainable farming and environmental protection. ➢ Providing scholarships to support education and skill development. ➢ Enhancing ecotourism initiatives to conserve wildlife and boost local economies.
PAG compassion	➢ Providing scholarships to support education. ➢ Improving maternal health services for safer childbirth. ➢ Promoting religious initiatives to strengthen faith and community values.
AFI	➢ Combating malnutrition through nutrition programs. ➢ Enhancing crop production for food security. ➢ Improving health services for community well-being.

7.1.7. Government Interventions

The government through Kaabong District Local Government have also supported the Ik community to benefit through some government programs like Parish Development Model, EMYOOGA, Youth Livelihood Programs, Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme, among others.

7.1.8. Women Engagement in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

Among the Ik, business is a relatively recent concept as the community transitions from a traditional barter system to entrepreneurship. Historically, the Ik exchanged goods within their community and with the Turkana in Nawontos and Oropoi, Kenya. Items such as maize, beans, gourds, honey, and roofing grass were bartered for goats, sorghum, and kitenge fabric. Labour was also exchanged, whether for goats, kitenge, or money, especially in contexts like refugee camps, where services were traded for essential items.

This gradual shift illustrates the community's ability to adapt to new economic opportunities while still preserving elements of their traditional trade practices. Today, while many Ik women have embraced business, investment, and trade, traditional practices still play a role. For instance, when food commodities surpass the needs of a household, surplus items are traded for goods such as sorghum, goats, or clothing based on family requirements. It is estimated that between 100 and 300 Ik women are currently engaged in micro-businesses both within and beyond their local community. Despite various challenges, these women are increasingly venturing into new business initiatives, reflecting a dynamic adaptation to evolving economic conditions. Common businesses include:

Table 7.Types of Businesses Among the IK Women Entrepreneurs (Source: field data)

S/n	Enterprise	Detail
1	Retail trade	Women purchase goods like cooking oil, soap, salt, body creams and oils, and household items (plates, cups, saucepans) from wholesale shops, mainly Shanisa Enterprises in Kaabong Town Council.
2	Sale of Agricultural produce	Sales are conducted directly from homes to traders, with some also selling in local centers like Kaabong or across the border in Kenya. These small-scale transactions are primarily intended to acquire essential household items, displaying the families' resourcefulness in meeting their basic needs.
3	Restaurant	Food is cooked in small quantities, typically around one to two kilograms of rice per day.
4	Processing and Sale of honey	Production is carried out using conventional methods. The honey is harvested and stored in guards or jerry cans, then kept in granaries and other cool places. It is sold along with the wax.
5	Hairdressing/saloon	Most of the hair plaiting and treatment is done locally at verandas and semi-permanent houses or salons. The majority of the necessary items are procured from traders in Kaabong town council. Women typically bring their weaves or braids, and the salon owners provide the services at fees ranging from 5,000 to 20,000, depending on the type of service offered.
6	Cultivating and selling vegetables	Tomatoes, cabbages, onions, and other vegetables are in high demand due to the presence of various institutions like army barracks, police stations, schools, and sub-county offices. This constant demand has encouraged many women to venture into vegetable farming, albeit on a small scale

7.1.9. Existence of Women Platforms.

During the focus group with Ik women entrepreneurs, the discussion included the role of dedicated platforms that support and organise these entrepreneurs. Participants noted that there are indeed women entrepreneur platforms that serve as key networks for collaboration and empowerment within the community.

Table 8. Organisations Supporting Women Entrepreneur Platforms

S/n	Organisation	Purpose
1	Village Savings and Loan associations (VSLAs)	Most women entrepreneurs are in small VSLA groups of between 10 to 30 members and most of these groups are mixed both men and women where they save money on weekly basis and also have access to loans
2	Women groups previously formed by partners and government	capacity building and funds among the common ones are the UWEP groups, mother care groups among others
3	Local farmer groups	Support in farming in a revolving manner, every member's garden is ploughed by all members until all gardens for members are complete.
4	Cultural groups	women converge together once in a while to practice and present traditional dances to the tourist while others engage in making and sales of traditional crafts

7.1.10. Grievances Management

The Ik (Teuso) have historically relied on traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to address grievances. Their methods are deeply rooted in communal dialogue, mediation by elders, and customary law, ensuring that disputes are settled in a way that maintains social harmony and respects cultural values. The GRM of the IK is characterized by the following:

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i. The Ik community places significant trust in elders, who act as mediators in disputes. Their wisdom and experience guide the resolution process, ensuring fairness and adherence to traditional norms.
ii. Disputes are often resolved through open discussions in community meetings, where affected parties present their grievances, and collective decisions are made.
iii. Instead of punitive measures, the Ik emphasize reconciliation and compensation, ensuring that relationships are mended rather than broken.
iv. Family and clan structures play a crucial role in resolving conflicts, with disputes often settled within extended family networks.
v. In some cases, grievances may be escalated to formal legal systems or local government structures, especially when traditional methods are insufficient.

According to the IK during the Focus Group Discussion, it was found that initial reporting of grievances is done to the IK clan leaders or elders who also double at the informal GRC. At this point, many of the grievances are resolved, apart from those, which are crime related. Where the clan leaders fail to resolve such grievances, escalation is made to the GRCs at the district or national level. For the case of the GROW Project the informal grievance redress mechanism of the IK will be linked to the formal GRM structure of the project to ensure that their grievances are received and resolved in fair and timely manner as indicated in the proposed referral pathway in figure 5 below.

Ik women will have the option to access the project's Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) directly, without needing to go through community elders or the GRC, especially in cases where they may feel uncomfortable or fear retaliation. This is particularly important for grievances related to gender-based violence (GBV), where confidentiality, safety, and survivor agency are paramount.
In addition to informal and customary mechanisms, the project GRM includes multiple culturally appropriate and accessible intake channels, such as: Focal Point officers at the local government levels, dedicated toll free line 0800307777, suggestion boxes at the district local governments.

All GRM staff will be trained in survivor-centered approaches, and GBV-related grievances will follow a confidential referral pathway aligned with the national GBV response protocol. These pathways are designed to avoid re-traumatization and ensure access to psychosocial, legal, and medical support. For further details on the GRM structure, intake options, and referral protocols, please refer to the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)

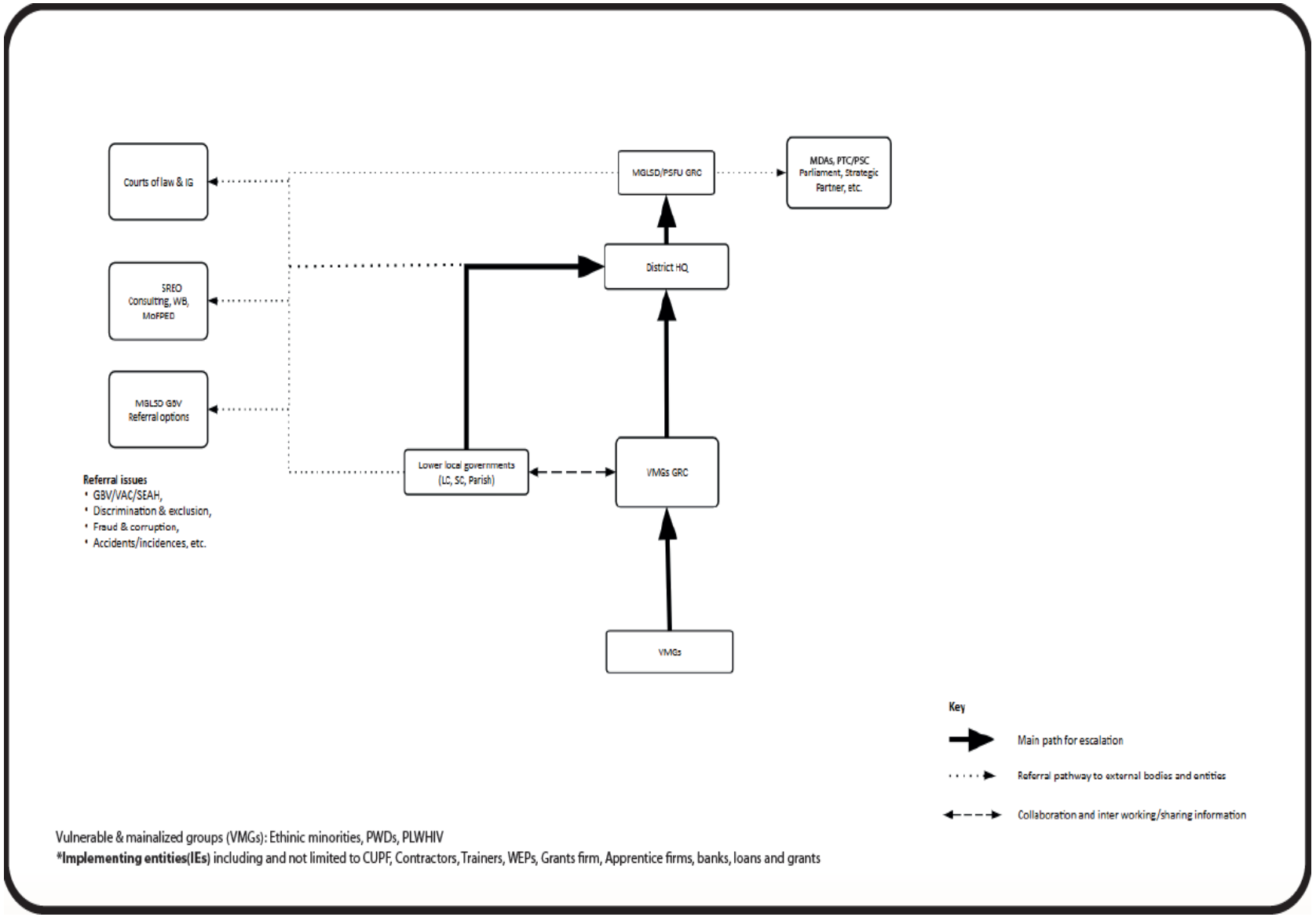


Figure 5. General Grievance Redress pathway for the Vunerable and Marginalised groups under the GROW (source: GROW Project Grievance Redress Mechanism Handbook)

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7.1.11. VMGP Development Process and Approach

7.1.11.1. Consultation Process with the Ik during the Development of the VMGP

Stakeholder mapping was undertaken during which relevant stakeholders (Ik community, local government and NGOs) were identified, mobilised and consulted during the development of the plan. Introductory meetings were held between the consultant and district local government to explain the purpose of the VMGP and gather initial feedback to ensure accessibility and inclusivity. Focus group discussions were held with different segments of the Ik community including women entrepreneurs and Elders. Key informant interviews were held with key informants including community leaders, and local government focal point officers for the GROW Project to gather in-depth insights. Accordingly, all meetings with stakeholders were held on 28 January 2025 at the district headquarters, murongole, Timu and Kamion respectively. Second level consultations were conducted in May 2025 to provide clarity on the specific needs of the Ik. The table below indicates the summary of key stakeholder consultations undertaken among the Ik.

Table 9. Summary of key Stakeholder Consultations During the Development of the Ik VMGP.

S/n	Stakeholder	Venue of meeting	Date of meeting	No. of Participants
1.	District officials (Focal Point Officer and District Community Development Officer).	District headquarters	28th Jan 2025 & 23rd May 2025	4
2.	Youth groups	Murongole	28th Jan 2025	20
3.	Women entrepreneurs	Murongole,Timu and Kamion	28th Jan 2025	25
4.	Sub county leadership	Murongole,Timu and Kamion	28th Jan 2025	6
5.	Opinion leaders	Murongole,Timu and Kamion	28th Jan 2025	6
6	Community Based Organizations(KAPDA, FIDA, DADO and Voice of Hope Karamoja	Phone call interviews	23rd May 2025	4
	Total			**65**

7.1.12. Applicability of Free Prior and Informed Consent

During the design of the GROW Project, the project team held dedicated consultation sessions with the IK, particularly focusing on women entrepreneurs. The entire process of developing the VMGP was dedicated to ensuring their full participation. These informed consultations helped secure broad community support for the project. At this stage, FPIC as required under ESS7 is not triggered because project activities will not have adverse impacts on IK's lands, territories, or resources subject to traditional ownership or under customary use of occupation. Additionally, the project will not involve the relocation of any VMGs nor will have significant impacts on VMGs' cultural heritage. The GROW project does not support the use of Ik's cultural heritage for commercial purposes.

7.1.13. Specific Issues of the Ik Women Entrepreneurs and Recommendations

Stakeholders provided valuable suggestions and recommendations during the engagement sessions. Some of these inputs extend beyond the project's mandate and cannot be implemented under this intervention. However, those that fall within the project scope will be incorporated and will be pursued as part of the implementation process as indicated in the action plan.

Table 10. Primary Issues and Proposed Recommendations Captured during the Development of the Ik VMGP (Source: field data)

Sn	Issues	Recommendations
1.	The Ik has very many untapped opportunities in businesses and most of them can grow their businesses once supported with the necessary skills.	Offering training programs in business management, financial literacy, and vocational skills to empower Ik women entrepreneurs
2.	Traditional financial institutions often view the Ik as high-risk clients due to their marginalised status of collateral, making it difficult for them to access credit.	Providing tailored financial services and credit facilities to Ik women entrepreneurs to help them start and expand their businesses.
3.	GBV/ SEA/SH is prevalent due to entrenched gender inequalities and cultural norms. Women and girls are	Establish safe spaces where women can share experiences and seek support

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	particularly vulnerable to physical, emotional, and sexual violence. Among the Ik people, traditional gender norms, power imbalances, and socio-economic stressors can exacerbate violence against women and girls. In settings where community cohesion may be weakened by marginalization, the lack of protective social structures further increases risk.	Set up counselling centres and helplines for survivors.
		Involve men and boys in discussions about gender based violence to promote positive role models
		Ensure access to healthcare services, including mental health support.
		Work with local authorities to ensure accessible legal aid for survivors
4.	Risk of exclusion: Marginalization and social exclusion contribute significantly to the vulnerability of the Ik people. Being positioned on the fringes of political, economic, and social life intensifies risks by limiting access to education, healthcare, and justice. Gebresilassie, (2024) indicated that indigenous peoples in Africa experience social exclusion which amplifies exposure to other risks such as GBV and economic exploitation	Inclusive Policy Design to advocate for local and national policies that actively integrate indigenous perspectives into governance can help bridge gaps
		Community Empowerment through engaging the Ik people in decision-making through participatory approaches furthers their inclusion and builds resilience
		Economic and Social Integration Programs: Initiatives that create community cooperatives or local business associations can encourage participation in the mainstream economy.
5.	Child labour emerges as a coping mechanism in communities facing chronic poverty and social exclusion. For the Ik people, limited economic opportunities force children into work at the expense of education and healthy development.	Programs to enhance household incomes (e.g., microfinance initiatives and vocational training) can reduce the economic pressures that lead to child labour
		Investing in education, with measures such as stipends, scholarships, and school feeding programs, has been shown to reduce child labour rates.
		Raising awareness about the long-term harms of child labour and the benefits of education is essential for social change.
6.	The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in marginalised communities is often compounded by social stigma, isolation, and limited access to healthcare. Among the Ik people, discrimination combined with cultural taboos may hinder effective preventive measures and treatment. Peer-reviewed evidence in related communities points to a complex interplay between social exclusion and heightened health vulnerabilities, including HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, gender disparities can leave women entrepreneurs particularly at risk, both from HIV transmission and from associated stigmatisation.	Enhancing health care access by ensuring availability of comprehensive HIV/AIDS services, encompassing prevention, treatment, and counselling, can mitigate the spread of the disease. Integrating HIV-related services into community health programs has been supported by systematic reviews in Africa
		Reducing stigma through education through community workshops that dispel myths and stigma associated with HIV/AIDS are crucial. Peer-led health education often leads to higher uptake of HIV testing and treatment services
		Undertaking Targeted Vulnerability Assessments to identify high-risk individuals and tailor interventions to their specific needs, such as through community outreach facilitated by trusted local figures.
7.	The literacy rate among IK women is extremely low, which limits their ability to compete for leadership positions and access educational opportunities.	Advocating for the rights of Ik women and providing legal support to address discrimination and violence
8.	Ik women entrepreneurs face limited market access.	Facilitating access to local and regional markets for Ik women entrepreneurs to sell their products and services
9.	The Ik people face exclusion from social, economic, and political opportunities. This kind of marginalisation disproportionately affects women and children.	Offer training in entrepreneurship and financial literacy to enhance independence
		Facilitate access to funding and resources for the Ik women entrepreneurs
10.	The Language of the Ik is growing extinct due to cultural dilution.	Facilitate the documentation of the Ik language and cultural heritage including developing Ik dictionary, and learning materials for children.
11.	Economic hardships force children into labour, depriving them of education. This perpetuates cycles of poverty and vulnerability	Implement initiatives to eliminate child labour and promote access to education.
		Provide support for families to reduce economic pressures that lead to child labour
12.	Cross cutting integrated mitigation strategies Engaging the Ik people in every stage—from the design to the implementation of policies—ensures that interventions are culturally appropriate and gain community buy-in. Multi-Sectoral Collaboration**:** Coordination among government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, and international bodies is essential to ensure comprehensive risk management Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation: Implementing robust feedback and assessment systems allows for iterative	

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	refinement of strategies, ensuring they remain effective over time as circumstances evolve.

7.1.14. General Aspirations and Needs for the Ik Women Entrepreneurs from the Consultations

7.1.14.1. Enhanced Access to Financial Services

Currently, Ik women entrepreneurs face significant structural barriers to financial inclusion. They often travel 30 to 70 kilometers to reach the nearest bank, such as Centenary Bank, or access mobile money services. The limited number of mobile money agents in the area, constrained by financial and network challenges, further restricts their ability to obtain loans and manage savings. As a result, many of these women are compelled to keep their money at home or, in some cases, even bury it underground, exposing their savings to risks from pests and termites. From a sociological perspective, this situation illustrates how geographical isolation and infrastructural inadequacies intersect with gender dynamics to shape economic opportunities. The difficulty in accessing formal financial services not only undermines the entrepreneurial potential of Ik women but also reinforces existing social inequalities. The lack of safe and reliable banking options limits their economic agency, thereby affecting their broader social mobility and community status.

To address these challenges and enable Ik women to fully benefit from the GROW Project, it is essential to establish mechanisms that improve access to financial services. This could involve expanding mobile money networks or supporting selected women to become agents for regional banks, such as Centenary, Stanbic, Post Bank, and DFCU. Such initiatives would not only provide practical financial support but also contribute to the empowerment of Ik women, fostering a more inclusive and resilient economic environment for the community.

7.1.14.2. Access to Mechanization

Growing insecurity from surrounding pastoralist communities has reshaped the socio-economic landscape of the Ik community. The persistent threat of animal theft, locally known as "Arem", combined with the community's proximity to the turbulent borders of South Sudan and Kenya, exposes the Ik to heightened risks. Neighboring groups such as the Topotha, Turkana, and other Ugandan pastoralists like the Jie and Dodoth contribute to a challenging security environment. This sustained insecurity has driven the Ik away from their traditional livelihood of animal rearing and set the stage for a broader socio-economic transition.

In response, many Ik women entrepreneurs have shifted their focus toward crop production, a change influenced by both necessity and opportunity. The region's cool, consistent rainfall and fertile volcanic soils at the escarpments create ideal conditions for agriculture. As a result, staple crops such as maize, beans, sorghum, and millet, along with Irish potatoes and various vegetables, are now prominent in the local economy. Women report that these crops yield not only favorable harvests but also robust market opportunities, with produce being sold in local Kaboong markets and even across the border in Kenya. This adaptive transformation highlights the capacity of the Ik to reconfigure their livelihoods amidst external pressures, reinforcing the resilience of their cultural and social frameworks.

Traditional farming practices among the Ik, deeply rooted in cultural heritage, have long relied on conventional methods. These include using hand hoes, broadcasting seeds instead of adopting row planting, and employing limited pest and disease control measures, such as insufficient crop rotation and minimal use of pesticides, along with the planting of traditionally preserved seeds and poor post-harvest management. Collectively, these practices contribute to lower productivity and overall production. This scenario underscores how traditional knowledge and practices, while culturally significant, can sometimes constrain economic potential in a rapidly modernizing world.

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7.1.14.3. Promotion of Value Addition

Adding value to local products is not just an economic strategy, it is a pathway for enhancing market access and elevating the income of Ik women entrepreneurs. Many have specialized in maize production and honey sales, a choice that reflects both traditional practices and adaptive entrepreneurship in the face of emerging market demands. Honey production in the Ik community is emblematic of indigenous innovation, harvested from natural settings such as caves, tree trunks, rocks, and soil, and from beehives crafted locally from sizeable wood. These beehives are styled through a unique process: they are smoked with dry grass and smeared with a sticky substance known as "sos" to attract bees, thereby integrating local ecological knowledge with cultural tradition.

Between March and November, Ik men typically engage in honey harvesting during nighttime, a practice influenced by environmental conditions and constrained by limited protective equipment. Their efforts are reinforced by the support of their spouses, who then play a central role in processing and preserving honey. Women manually squeeze the honey and store it in locally available containers like jerry cans, pots, and gourds for sale, use in marriage ceremonies, or family consumption. In Morungole, as in many indigenous contexts, bees hold an ecological and symbolic resonance that extends beyond mere commercial value.

The concept of a communal apiary in Morungole illustrates how traditional beekeeping practices can become a space for intergenerational knowledge sharing and collective innovation. Elders pass on indigenous techniques, natural hive construction, selective harvesting, and seasonal management, embedded in oral traditions and a deep respect for nature. This transfer of knowledge not only strengthens communal bonds but also reinforces a collective identity centered on the stewardship of the land. Such a model serves as a visionary framework, demonstrating that indigenous heritage and sustainable innovation can coexist, offering a replicable example for other indigenous communities.

Similarly, while the Ik constituency is a prolific producer of maize, the local market dynamics present challenges. Despite abundant production, maize is often sold as a cereal at very low prices, sometimes as little as 600 UGX per kilogram during peak seasons. This staple is traded within the community, in Kaabong Town Council, and across the border in Kenya. Providing women entrepreneurs with value-added agricultural equipment such a maize milling machines could significantly boost production efficiency, enhance market access, and ultimately transform the economic landscape of the community.

7.1.15. Potential Risks and Barriers for the IK Women Entrepreneurs' Participation and Benefits to the GROW Project.

7.1.15.1. Social and Cultural Norms

In the Ik community, entrenched socio-cultural norms markedly shape the economic opportunities available to women. Although increasing numbers of women are venturing into entrepreneurship, they often find themselves confined to sectors with lower profit margins, such as small restaurants, salons, and retail shops, while more lucrative fields like “boda” (motorcycle taxi) operations remain largely inaccessible due to prevailing social barriers.

These economic constraints are further compounded by traditional gender roles that assign women significant domestic and family responsibilities. Such roles limit the time and energy available for entrepreneurial pursuits, effectively curtailing their capacity to fully engage in business ventures. Additionally, conventional practices restrict asset ownership among Ik women: assets such as land and livestock, which could serve as collateral for accessing financial products and services under

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the GROW Project, are traditionally reserved for men. This lack of asset ownership further reinforces economic disparities and limits women's financial empowerment. Collectively, these social and cultural dynamics illustrate how gendered expectations and institutional practices in the Ik community continue to shape and, at times, impede women's entrepreneurial potential.

7.1.15.2. Insecurity

The Ik community, located near the borders of South Sudan and Kenya, endures ongoing insecurity that profoundly shapes its socioeconomic landscape. Constant incursions and looting by neighbouring pastoralist groups, including the Topotha from South Sudan; the Turkana from Kenya; and fellow Ugandan pastoralists such as the Jie and Dodoth, have created an environment of persistent fear and instability. This chronic threat has compelled the community to abandon its traditional practice of animal rearing in favour of crop production. However, the shift away from cattle rearing, once a cornerstone of their food security, has inadvertently engendered food scarcity and heightened vulnerability to famine. This transformation underscores the complex interplay between geography, cultural adaptation, and economic survival in contexts marked by insecurity.

7.1.15.3. Inadequate Access to Financial Services by the Women Entrepreneurs in Ik Constituency

In the Ik constituency, women entrepreneurs navigate a complex web of spatial, institutional, and gender-based constraints that limit their access to formal financial services. The prohibitive distance, often spanning 30 to 70 kilometers, to the nearest banks or mobile money outlets not only underscores infrastructural deficiencies but also reinforces existing gender disparities. As a result, many women have found themselves dependent on Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), which, while fostering community solidarity, offer only limited financial reach and scope.

In Kaabong District, the presence of a single formal banking institution, Stanbic Bank, greatly restricts the diversity and quantity of loan facilities available. This singular dependency creates a bottleneck, impeding rural women's ability to build substantial savings and access necessary capital for expanding their businesses. Furthermore, the local mobile money services, predominantly controlled by men, operate with low liquidity, typically below 1,000,000 UGX. This situation not only limits the financial resources available for savings but also compounds the structural exclusion of women from broader economic participation.

7.1.15.4. Poor Infrastructure

Ik women entrepreneurs face major hurdles in their business activities due to poor infrastructure services in their region. These deficiencies significantly limit both the operation and growth of their enterprises. Key challenges include:

i. Poor Road Conditions: Many areas within the Ik constituency have inadequate roads, especially during the rainy season. This makes it difficult to transport goods to local and cross-border markets, leading to increased transportation costs and reduced profit margins
ii. Limited Access to Reliable Electricity: The scarcity of consistent power supply hinders business activities that require electricity, such as running small enterprises, using electronic devices, or preserving perishable goods, thus curtailing growth and innovation.
iii. Inadequate Access to Clean and Safe Water: A shortage of clean water affects both daily living and business operations. Enterprises that depend on water, like those involved in food processing, struggle with operational challenges that affect product quality and productivity.

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iv. Poor Telecommunications Infrastructure: In many parts of the region, unreliable internet and mobile phone services restrict the ability of women entrepreneurs to communicate with customers, suppliers, and financial service providers, including mobile money agents.

v. Lack of Proper Market Facilities: The available markets are often overcrowded and poorly managed. They typically lack essential amenities such as shelter, water, and sanitation, making it difficult for women to effectively display and sell their products.

vi. Inadequate Storage Facilities**:** Without proper storage, agricultural products are at risk of spoilage and loss. This not only reduces potential income for women entrepreneurs but also adversely affects the overall food security in the region.

7.1.16. Potential Positive Impacts and Recommendations

The project is anticipated to generate positive outcomes for the Ik community through enhanced women's entrepreneurship, expanded skills development, and more inclusive participation in decision-making. This section summarizes the general recommendations emerging from stakeholder engagement. Of these, only measures consistent with the project scope have been retained. Such activities have been incorporated into the action plan for implementation, whereas recommendations beyond the project framework are noted for consideration but do not form part of the intervention.

Table 11. Potential positive Impacts and Recommendations.

Sn	Potential Positive Impact	Recommendations
1.	The project could provide women entrepreneurs with access to financial resources to help them expand their businesses	Ensure the availability of tailored loan products for women entrepreneurs, considering flexible repayment plans and lower interest rates.
		Provide financial literacy training to help women understand how to effectively manage loans and financial assets.
		Develop partnerships with microfinance institutions and banks to increase access to capital.
2	Through training and mentorship programs, Ik women entrepreneurs will acquire essential business skills, improving their ability to manage and grow their enterprises	Pair women entrepreneurs with experienced mentors who can offer personalized guidance based on their industry.
		Incorporate peer-to-peer learning programs to enhance collaboration and shared experiences among entrepreneurs
		Regularly update training materials to align with market trends and technological advancements.
3	The project will facilitate networking by creating new and strengthening existing women entrepreneurship platforms, allowing women entrepreneurs to connect with other business owners, potential clients, and mentors.	Host regular in-person and virtual events to connect women entrepreneurs with industry professionals and potential clients
		Develop a digital platform where women can display their businesses, share resources, and access opportunities.
		Facilitate partnerships with international organizations to expand networking opportunities beyond local markets
4	The project will help women entrepreneurs increase the productivity of their businesses by establishing common user facilities. This will include providing women with the tools and support needed to succeed. Various women entrepreneurs are engaged in the honey production business; however, are challenged by limited access to modern production equipment and access to market.	Equip facilities with state-of-the-art technology and equipment relevant to various industries
		Provide regular technical training on using the tools and facilities to ensure optimal utilization.
		Introduce support staff to maintain facilities and assist women entrepreneurs in utilizing the provided resources effectively

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7.1.17. Potential Negative impacts of the GROW Project and Proposed Mitigation Measures.

The proposed mitigation measures directly address the identified potential negative impacts of the project, which were also discussed during consultations with the Ik community and women entrepreneurs. All measures outlined in this table are already integrated into the VMGP Action Plan, supported by relevant ESF instruments, and reinforced through the project design.

Table 12. Potential Negative Impacts and Recommendations.

Sn	Negative Impact	Mitigation Measures in the Action Plan	Mitigation measures in ESF instruments	Mitigation measures in Project Design
1	Increased income and independence may trigger resistance or violence from spouses or community members who feel threatened by shifting gender roles.	Community dialogues with men, elders, and leaders embedded in capacity building and awareness creation activities in the action plan.	Gender Action Plan under ESF includes awareness campaigns on gender equity.	Gender Action Plan of the GROW project ensures women's participation is normalized and legitimized.
2	Many women operate in informal settings (markets, roadside stalls) with poor sanitation, exposure to dust, fumes, or extreme weather	The ESMP for the proposed construction shall include standards on Occupational Health and Safety.	Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMP) cover occupational health and safety standards.	Project design incorporates training in Occupational Health and Safety. It also provides provision of protective gear and ergonomic guidance
3	Women entrepreneurs may lack access to information, application processes, or financial services.	Create awareness about the GROW loan to enable Ik women entrepreneurs to access the loan	Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) ensures transparent communication channels	Community-based identification and validation with elders and women leaders included in the GROW Project Stakeholder Engagement Plan
4	Cultural and Language Barriers. Standardized approaches could ignore traditional decision-making structures and women's roles.	Deliver training in the Ik language or through trusted facilitators. Adapt materials to local literacy levels and cultural contexts.	SEP requires culturally appropriate engagement methods.	Training Materials will be adapted to literacy levels and cultural contexts.
5	Ik women already face compounded marginalization; without deliberate inclusion, men or dominant groups may capture most benefits.	Women's participation in consultations formally was recognized in project roll-out	Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) Handbook includes oral reporting options and transparency requirements.	Project design Prioritises women's participation and tailored interventions. The GROW GRM has established a culturally appropriate grievance channels accessible to Ik women, including oral reporting options.
6	Failure to engage elders and women leaders could reinforce	Conduct capacity building sessions for entities	SEP mandates involvement of	Partnerships with community-based

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	perceptions of exclusion and weaken community trust.	implementing the VMGP. Work with NGOs and community-based organizations already trusted by the Ik to deliver support.	traditional leaders and trusted NGOs.	organizations embedded in project design.

7.1.18. Specific Interventions to Implemented under the Project

This section presents the activities selected for implementation under the project. They originate from the general recommendations raised during stakeholder engagement and are captured in various sections of the plan. Activities that fall within the project scope have been explicitly identified, integrated into the action plan, and will be implemented. Recommendations outside the project scope are acknowledged but remain outside the current intervention framework

i. Conduct training sessions on entrepreneurship, business management and financial literacy
ii. Construct common user facility, equip it with value addition materials for Craft making, and Honey production and processing. The hub can also have a display area for the materials and act as training center and community center for meetings.
iii. Document to Ik language and Culture
iv. Capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP(as indicated in section 6.1, table 2)
v. Monitoring implementation activities for the VMGP activities

7.1.19. Suggested Measures to Strengthen the Capacity of Local Government to Address VMG Issues

Stakeholder engagement discussions highlighted several possible measures to strengthen the capacity of local governments in addressing VMG-related issues. While not all of these measures were formally agreed upon with local government, they are either fully or in part, embedded within the VMGP Action Plan, supported by relevant ESF instruments, or reinforced through the project design.

Table 13. Suggested Measures to Strengthen the Capactiy of Local Government to Address Issues of the IK women Entrepreneurs

Sn	Negative Impact	Implemented through the Action Plan	Implemented through the ESF instruments	Implemented through the Project Design
1	Organize workshops and training sessions for local government staff especially GROW focal point officers to enhance the understanding of challenges faced by Ik women entrepreneurs and the resources available to support them	VMGP includes capacity-building workshops tailored to marginalized women's needs.	SEP provides for inclusive stakeholder training and awareness.	Training modules embedded in roll out of the project.

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2	Encourage local governments to collaborate with NGOs, private sector organizations, and other stakeholders to create a supportive ecosystem for women entrepreneurs.	VMGP requires partnerships with trusted NGOs and community-based organizations as implementing entities.	SEP mandates multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration.	The Project design embeds cross-sector partnerships for sustainability.
3	Providing local governments with necessary resources such as funding to focal point officers to effectively support women entrepreneurs			The Project design includes funding lines for focal point officers
4	Assist the local government in establishing systems for monitoring and evaluating the progress of initiatives aimed at supporting women entrepreneurs.	VMGP monitoring framework tracks participation and outcomes for Ik women	ESF monitoring instruments (ESMP, SEP) provide evaluation indicators.	The Project design integrates milestone-based M&E systems.
5	Develop and implement a clear and transparent grievance redress mechanism to address any issues or concerns raised by the women entrepreneurs	VMGP action plan includes culturally appropriate grievance channels (oral reporting, trusted facilitators	GRM Handbook under ESF instruments ensures standardized complaint resolution.	Project design embeds transparent grievance procedures accessible to women entrepreneurs.

7.1.20.1. Action Plan for Implementing the Ik VMGP.

The table below presents a sequence of activities, targets, assumptions etc. proposed in line with consultations with the Ik women entrepreneurs held on 28th Jan 2025 at, Kamion and Timu sub-county and meetings of stakeholders and NGOs working on issues of the IK community. Whereas stakeholders identified a range of needs and priorities during consultations, only the specific activities and interventions set out in the Action Plan below will be implemented under this project

Table 14. Action Plan for Implementing the Ik VMGP .

Outputs and targets	Specific activities	Verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Responsible entity	Target
Component One: Support for Women Empowerment and Enterprise Development					
Improved entrepreneurial skills among the Ik women entrepreneurs	Conduct training sessions on group dynamics and business management	No. of training sessions conducted	Training attendance records and evaluation report	MGLSD	At least 2 training sessions conducted: 100 IK women entrepreneurs trained
Component Two: Access to Finance for Women Entrepreneurs					
Enhanced Access to GROW loan	Create awareness about the GROW	No. of loans disbursed to Ik	Project reports and financial	PSFU	At least 10 loans disbursed

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	loan to enable Ik women entrepreneurs to access the loan	women	institution reports		to IK Women entrepreneurs
Component 3: Enabling Infrastructure and Facilities for Women Entrepreneurs Growth and Transition					
Access to Common User Facilities	Construction of infrastructure to house women entrepreneurs engaged in the honey production business. Providing modern equipment for processing, packing and value addition to honey. The infrastructure can be used for community meetings and cultural promotion events. [1]	No. of common user facilities established among the Ik	Infrastructure set up in among the Ik	MGLSD	1 artisan Hub Constructed and Operational
Document IK language and Culture	Consultancy services to document the IK language and culture	IK language and culture documented	IK language and culture documented	MGLSD	one comprehensive IK language resource
capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP	Conduct capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP	No. of entities trained on the VMGP	Training reports	MGLSD	10 implementing entities trained
monitoring for implementation of the VMGP activities	Conduct periodic monitoring for implementation of the VMGP activities.	No. of monitoring activities undertaken.	Monitoring reports	MGLSD	1 monitoring activity conducted annually

[1] Where the ethnic minorities live in forest protected areas, the proposed common user facilities will be established on government land for purposes of sustainability. Uganda Wildlife Authority will be consulted on the and requirement a and availability

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7.1.20.2. List of activities and budget for implementation of the IK activities for women entrepreneurs under the GROW Project.

The activities presented in this section are derived from the action plan and will be formally incorporated into the project for implementation.

Table 15. Proposed Budget for implementing the Ik VMGP

Sn	Activity	Budget UGX	Responsible party	Component	Timeline				
					Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
1	Conduct training sessions on entrepreneurship, business management and financial literacy	50,000,000	MGLSD	Sub component 1B – Support for core business development for micro and small enterprises					
2	Consultancy services to document the IK language and culture	300,000,000	MGLSD	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
3	Create awareness about the GROW loan to enable Ik women entrepreneurs to access the loan	80,000,000	MGLSD &PSFU	Sub component 2B -Facilitating access to credit for enterprises growth					
4	Construct and equip multipurpose infrastructure to house women entrepreneurs engaged in the honey production business.	1,200,000,000	MGLSD	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
5	Conduct capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP including Local government, and CSOs, Contractors of CUPFs.	80,000,000	MGLSD &PSFU	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
6	Conduct periodic monitoring for implementation of the VMGP activities.	80,000,000	MGLSD& PSFU	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
	Total	**1,790,000,000**							

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7.2 Vulnerable and Marginalised Group Plan for the Batwa Women Entrepreneurs

7.2.1. Population and Location

According to the UBOS Census, 2024, the estimated population of the Batwa is 6,400, which is about 3% higher than the 6,200 reported in 2014 with the percentage of the women higher (approximately 51%) of the total number in all districts. The Batwa people are spread across five districts in southwestern Uganda: Kisoro (31%), Kanungu (21.8%), Kabale (15.6%), Bundibugyo (18.7%), and Rubanda (12.5%), with the majority residing in Kisoro District.

Table 16. Estimated Population of the Batwa per district(Source NHPC, 2024)

District	**Total Population**	**Male Population** (≈49%)	**Female Population** (≈51%)
Kanungu	1,400	686	714
Kisoro	2,000	980	1,020
Bundibugyo	1,200	588	612
Rubanda	800	392	408
Kabale	1,000	490	510

Approximately 88% of the Batwa population lives in rural areas, while only 12% are in urban areas. Traditionally, the Batwa were hunters; however, the establishment of the Bwindi Mgahinga, Semliki national parks and Echuya forest reserve has deprived them of their livelihood, forcing them to seek alternative means of survival. The Batwa, one of the most vulnerable and marginalized communities, continue to live in extreme poverty. They lack access to basic social services, face high illiteracy rates, and suffer from alarming levels of child mortality. While other citizens enjoy economic opportunities and social stability, the Batwa struggle for survival. The VMGP consultations were conducted exclusively with women entrepreneurs within VMGs. This targeted approach reflected the project's emphasis on supporting entrepreneurial women as a distinct subset of the broader female population. While the total female population is reported for context, the consultation numbers represent engagement with those mapped as entrepreneurs, ensuring that the findings and recommendations are directly relevant to the intended beneficiaries.

7.2.2. Land Ownership

Approximately 50% of the Batwa population lives on small plots of land obtained through donations from NGOs, churches, and individuals. However, these lands are rarely granted ownership rights, leaving the Batwa in a state of uncertainty. The other 50% live as squatters on land owned by others, with communities like Rukeri highlighting this dire situation. During Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions held, it was noted that despite their desperate need for support, many organizations that claim to assist the Batwa exploit them instead. Some of these provide land to the Batwa but with hidden motives. Rather than empowering the Batwa, these institutions retain ownership of the land and, in many cases, benefit from the free labour of the Batwa. Frustratingly, some organisations use the Batwa as a means to attract donor funding, creating an illusion of support while perpetuating their dependency. Instead of fostering true independence and dignity, these interventions maintain a cycle of exploitation, leaving the Batwa with little hope for genuine progress.

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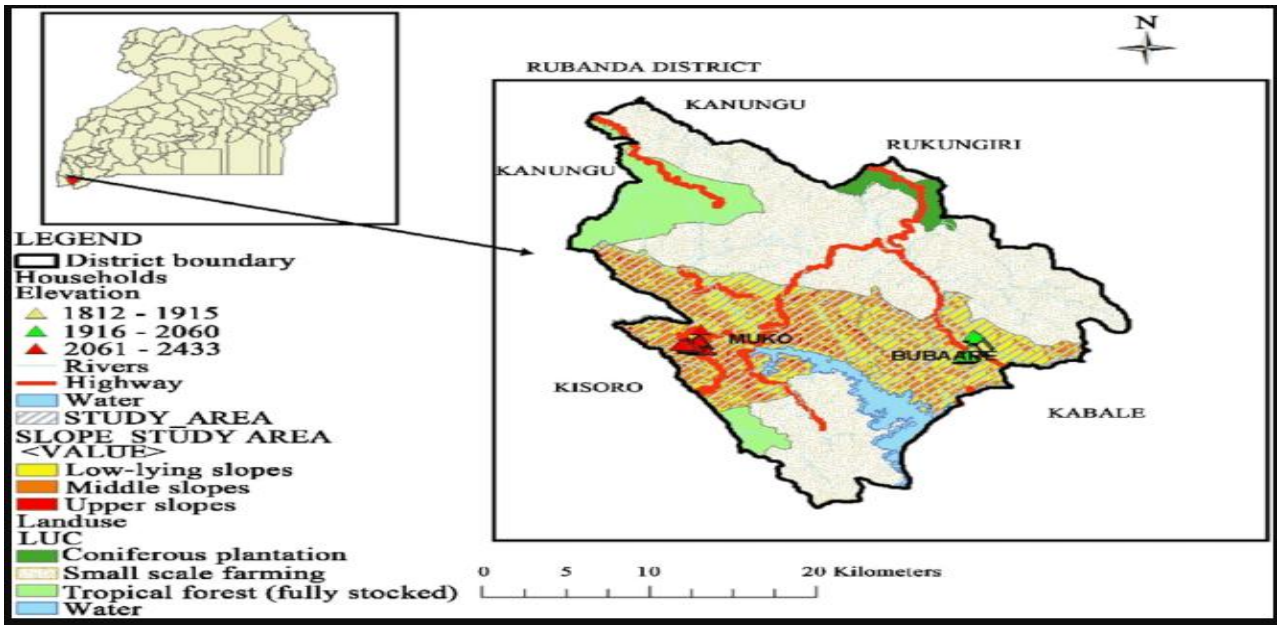


Figure 6. Map showing settlement of the Batwa.

7.2.3. Social Organisation.

The Batwa traditionally live in extended family units, where multiple generations reside together. Kinship ties are crucial, and family members support each other in daily activities including child rearing among others. The Batwa are organised into clans, each with its own totem and specific roles within the community. Clans play a significant role in social cohesion and identity, and they often have specific responsibilities and privileges within the larger community. Leadership among the Batwa is often based on age and wisdom. Elders play a crucial role in decision-making and conflict resolution. They are respected for their knowledge and experience and are consulted in important matters. The Batwa have rich cultural traditions, including rituals, ceremonies and storytelling. These practices are integral to their social organisation and help preserve their heritage and identity. The Batwa's political and social representation is fragmented and locally rooted, with no single, unified structure of authority or decision-making body that can legitimately speak for all Batwa communities; instead, leadership and influence are dispersed across small community elders, informal leaders, and a patchwork of community-based organizations and external NGOs, which means that voices are unevenly heard and priorities vary by locality. This fragmentation produces several practical challenges: it makes it difficult for governments, donors, and projects to identify legitimate interlocutors; it increases the risk that some groups or individuals will be excluded from consultations; it encourages multiple, sometimes competing advocacy agendas that can confuse policy responses; and it creates openings for external actors to dominate representation in ways that do not reflect internal Batwa priorities.

7.2.4. Gender Roles

Gender roles among the Batwa are deeply rooted in their traditional culture and have evolved. Historically, Batwa men were primarily responsible for hunting and providing for the family, while women took care of the household duties, such as cooking, cleaning and child-rearing. Men also played an important role in community decision-making and leadership. The loss of their traditional lands to national parks in 1991 significantly affected the Batwa's way of life. Both men and women faced challenges in finding alternative livelihoods but women were particularly more significantly affected due to the need to walk long distances in search of food, shelter and work. There is growing recognition of the importance of educating girls and promoting gender equality

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within the Batwa community, efforts are being made to challenge traditional gender roles and empower women to take on more active roles in the community.

7.2.5. Economic Activities

Batwa women throughout southwestern Uganda have developed a diverse portfolio of economic activities that build on both traditional skills and innovative adaptations to changing economic and cultural landscapes. Their enterprises span agriculture, animal husbandry, artisan crafts, cultural tourism, and other community-based activities. This economic diversity not only serves as a livelihood strategy but also as a powerful assertion of identity and resilience in the face of historical marginalization. Below is an in-depth look at how these activities unfold in key districts of Kanungu, Kisoro, Bundibugyo, Rubanda, and Kabale.

7.2.5.1. Kanungu District

In Kanungu, Batwa women are increasingly turning to agriculture as a reliable source of income. Here, small-scale horticultural ventures have taken root, quite literally, with the cultivation of cabbage, sorghum, and beans geared toward both local consumption and local markets. Given the challenges posed by limited arable land and historical displacement, these women have also adopted innovative practices such as intercropping and intensive gardening techniques. Alongside agriculture, small livestock enterprises, ranging from piggery to occasional rearing of sheep and rabbits, provide a supplemental income stream. The emphasis on artisanal production is equally strong: handicrafts and jewellery, often imbued with cultural symbolism, are produced by Batwa women and sometimes marketed alongside agricultural produce. Training initiatives led by organizations such as the United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU) have played a pivotal role in refining these economic activities by offering skills in craftsmanship, product design, and business management.

7.2.5.2. Kisoro District

In Kisoro, the economic activities of Batwa women capture a narrative of adaptation amid adversity. Faced with challenges like land shortages and the enduring impacts of displacement, many Batwa households have innovated by cultivating smaller but high-value plots of land. The cultivation of vegetables such as Irish potatoes and cabbage is integrated with intensive gardening practices that maximize limited space. Complementing their agricultural efforts, Batwa women have found a niche in the cultural tourism sector by orchestrating performances featuring traditional dance, music, and storytelling. These cultural displays not only celebrate their rich heritage but also serve as a live marketplace for the sale of handicrafts and jewellery. Organized training sessions, often coordinated by local NGOs and UOBDU, have empowered these women in areas such as financial literacy, marketing, and technical skills specific to modern agricultural practices, thus fostering a gradual yet tangible improvement in their socio-economic status.

7.2.5.3. Bundibugyo District

Bundibugyo's landscapes and deep forest cover offer a unique backdrop that many Batwa communities have woven into their economic fabric. In this district, Batwa women harness their traditional knowledge to produce intricately designed handicrafts and jewellery that resonate with both local and tourist sensibilities. The strong cultural narrative of the Batwa is a marketable asset for those involved in cultural tourism. The district's natural and cultural heritage positions them as authentic guides to indigenous practices and forest conservation. In addition to these cultural products, small-scale commercial agriculture is also undertaken, with groups cultivating a variety of vegetables suitable for local climatic conditions. Capacity-building initiatives and

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entrepreneurship training have further enabled Batwa women in Bundibugyo to refine product quality and expand market access, ensuring that their ventures are not only culturally enriching but also economically sustainable.

7.2.5.4. Rubanda District

Rubanda, characterized by its rugged, hilly terrain, has seen Batwa communities adapt through innovative land-use strategies. With limited fertile land available, Batwa women here have adopted terrace farming and other land management techniques that maximize productivity on marginal lands. Their agricultural ventures often include the cultivation of staple crops and vegetables that are well suited to local microclimates. Beyond agriculture, Rubanda's Batwa have also embraced the growing opportunities offered by cultural tourism. By organizing community-based tourism initiatives, featuring traditional dances, music, and storytelling. Batwa women not only earn income but also educate visitors about their heritage and sustainable farming practices. Handicraft production, especially jewellery that marries traditional motifs with modern designs, is becoming an increasingly important element of the local economic landscape. Training and support from local development organizations have been crucial in enhancing these ventures and linking them to broader market networks.

7.2.5.5. Kabale District

Kabale distinguishes itself through a relatively more integrated local economy and better access to broader trade networks. In this district, Batwa women are active in both agriculture and the arts. They produce commercial varieties of vegetables such as cabbage and Irish potatoes on small-scale farms, capitalizing on Kabale's favourable market conditions and infrastructure. Concurrently, the district's vibrant cultural tourism scene has opened up new channels for Batwa artisans, whose handcrafted jewellery and decorative items now attract urban buyers and tourists alike. Kabale District's local government, aware of the potential in these niche markets, has enhanced initiatives to integrate Batwa enterprises into larger economic frameworks. Efforts include capacity-building workshops in business management and product branding, which are essential for overcoming historical barriers to market access. The combined effect of these initiatives is a more robust economic platform from which Batwa women can leverage both traditional craftsmanship and modern entrepreneurial skills.

These district-specific patterns highlight the dynamic ways Batwa women are redefining economic opportunities in southwestern Uganda. Whether through adopting progressive agricultural techniques, reinventing traditional crafts, or tapping into the expanding cultural tourism sector, these enterprises highlight a vibrant synthesis of tradition and innovation. Such economic diversity not only helps to alleviate day-to-day financial hardships but also serves as a foundation for broader social empowerment within the Batwa community.

7.2.6. Culture and Tradition

The Batwa often referred to as the "keepers of the forest," have a rich cultural heritage that is deeply intertwined with their environment. They possess a profound respect for nature, which is reflected in their spiritual beliefs and daily practices. The Batwa view the forest as a sacred sanctuary and treat its flora and fauna with great respect. Storytelling is a vital part of their culture, with narratives passed down orally through generations. These stories reflect their daily lives, experiences, and deep connection to the forests. Additionally, the Batwa are skilled in traditional crafts, such as basket weaving and tool making from natural materials. These crafts are not only practical but also hold significant cultural value.

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The Batwa culture is deeply intertwined with its language, which is a vital aspect of their identity. According to MUST, 2020, about 1/3 of the Batwa recognize Orutwa, also called Rutwa, as their native tongue, but only a handful of elderly individuals still possess the ability to speak it fluently. Recent consultative meetings unveiled a troubling trend: the majority of Batwa have shifted away from Orutwa, adopting the languages of the dominant communities that surround them. Today, most Batwa communicate in Rukiga and Kifumbira, which highlights the urgent need to preserve their linguistic heritage.

7.2.7. Non-Government Interventions

This section maps NGOs working with Batwa communities across the regions to inform future collaboration with the GROW Project. These organizations provide a complementary mix of advocacy, service delivery, and capacity-building, and focus on one or more priority areas: land and tenure advocacy; livelihoods and income support; health and psychosocial services; education and cultural preservation; and legal aid and rights awareness.

Table 17. Mapped Non Government Organisations Within the Batwa Community

Agency	Scope
United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda (UODU)	Addressing the Batwa's poverty, landlessness, and socio-economic marginalization. Initiatives include securing land, and housing rights, promoting education and adult literacy, income generation through agriculture, and ensuring forest access and benefit sharing.
Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU)	Promotes cultural recognition and human development. It focusses on inclusive resettlement, livelihood and agriculture, education, health and rights and leadership development.
LASER PULSE project	Involves co-creation event to understand and address the challenges of the Batwa. They focus on land ownership. Access, ad utilization, as well as development goals and objectives
Bwindi Community Hospital - BCH	BCH runs the Batwa Outreach project, which aims to advance Batwa's human rights by providing healthcare and safe water. they also work on promoting cultural rights to improve health outcomes
Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment (SWAGEN)	Support Batwa women in producing and marketing environmentally sustainable but also commercially viable clay cooking stoves.
Muhabura Diocese	Help the Batwa not only deepen their spiritual lives but also likely include addressing their social and economic challenges. The Batwa are often marginalized, so any programs aimed at improving their livelihoods, access to education, and health services, along with spiritual guidance, can make a meaningful difference.
Fight For The Forgotten	Empower the Batwa by providing access to clean water, education, and land ownership, which are critical for their development. Additionally, it supports vocational training and income-generating activities to enhance self-sufficiency and financial independence.
Nduringe Conservation and Development Foundation	Integrates cultural preservation with tourism initiatives, enabling the Batwa to display their rich heritage while earning an income. Through these efforts, NCDF not only addresses poverty but also fosters resilience and dignity among the Batwa, ensuring a brighter and more sustainable future for their community.
Uplift The Rural Poor	Focuses on equipping the Batwa with sustainable livelihood skills, such as agriculture, entrepreneurship, and vocational training, to foster self-reliance and economic growth. Additionally, it advocates for access to education, healthcare, and basic social services, ensuring the community can overcome systemic challenges.
Bwindi Batwa Community Development Association	Aims to alleviate poverty through targeted strategies that empower and uplift their livelihoods. By promoting sustainable agriculture, offering vocational training, and encouraging entrepreneurship, NCDF helps the Batwa to become economically self-reliant.
Gorilla Organization	Focuses on education initiatives, ensuring access to basic and vocational learning opportunities for Batwa children and adults.
Bwindi Gorilla Batwa Empowerment Foundation	Improving access to healthcare, ensuring food security, and fostering environmental conservation efforts that integrate the Batwa into protecting the forests they once called home.
Rushaga Batwa Community Stitching Kyakabi Association	Empowering the Batwa people by providing various support strategies, such as skills training in stitching and tailoring, creating sustainable income opportunities, and promoting cultural preservation.
Alpha And Omega Church Birara Batwa Community	Focuses on providing education, vocational training, and healthcare support, ensuring that the Batwa have access to essential resources and opportunities for

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	personal growth.
Lift Up Jesus	Raise awareness about Batwa culture and traditions, promoting their inclusion in society while advocating for their rights and access to resources.

7.2.8. Government Interventions

Batwa have been mobilized to benefit from other government programmes like Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP). For example, the 80 Batwa households in Kashasha Town Council located in Rubanda district Batwa have accessed loans worth 4,000,000 through the AICM, while only 2,000,000 of Parish Development Model (PDM) has been accessed. The government has established the Universal Primary Education (UPE) Programme; however, only a small number of Batwa children benefit from it due to various challenges that lead to school dropouts. These challenges include a lack of lunch provision, insufficient uniforms, inadequate scholastic materials, and other necessities required for school. To address these issues, organizations such as UOBDU, BMCT, ADRA, and others provide support to Batwa children, helping them attend either boarding or day schools to ensure they receive an education. It has been observed that Batwa children can perform better academically when they attend boarding schools that provide the necessary resources for education. During a focus group discussion with women entrepreneurs, it was mentioned that a Batwa boy from Kisoro District is currently receiving funding to pursue a degree at Birham University.

7.2.9. Types of Businesses Engaged in by Women Entrepreneurs among the Batwa

Table 18. Types of Businesses among the Batwa Women entreprenurs

Sn	Sector	Description
1	Crafts and Handicrafts	Creating intricate beads jewelry and accessories
		Making pottery items such as bowls, plates and decorating pieces
		Producing woven products like baskets, mats and traditional clothing
2	Agriculture	Growing crops such as vegetables, fruit and grains
		Raising livestock like poultry, goat and cattle
3	Trade and retail	Selling handmade crafts, agricultural products and other goods in local markets
		Operating small retail shops selling a variety of products
4	Food processing	Making traditional baked goods such as bread and cakes
		Preserving food items through drying, smoking or pickling
5	Tourism and hospitality	Offering cultural tours and guiding visitor through their ancestral lands
		Providing homestays of small guest houses for tourists
6	Medicinal plants	Harvesting and selling medicinal plants and herbs used in traditional medicine
7	Clothing	Producing traditional clothing and textiles using local materials

7.2.10. Existence of Women Platforms.

According to the information gathered during the focus group discussions, the Batwa women entrepreneurs lack established women entrepreneurs' platforms. Only a few belong to informal women's associations to undertake savings and credit schemes and welfare. It is therefore imperative that during the formation of the WEPs, the Uganda Women Entrepreneurs Association Limited (UWEAL) assists the Batwa women entrepreneurs to form and be part of the larger women entrepreneur platforms so that they can easily access GROW products and services.

7.2.11. Grievances Management

The Batwa have grievance resolution mechanisms (GRMs) that are deeply rooted in their cultural practices and community-based approaches. According to information gathered from the Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews, the Batwa often rely on traditional leaders and elders to mediate disputes and address grievances. These leaders use dialogue and consensus building to resolve conflicts, ensuring that decisions are culturally appropriate and accepted by the community. The Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises

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(GROW) Project, will integrate Batwa's GRM into its framework by adopting community-based and culturally sensitive approaches. This linkage will involve recognizing the role of traditional leaders and incorporating their mediation practices into the project's grievance redress system as in Figure (5). Additionally, the GROW Project will provide training to these leaders to enhance their capacity to handle grievances related to women's economic empowerment. A clear referral pathway for linking Batwa's GRM to the GROW Project will include the following steps:

i. Community-Level Resolution: Grievances are first addressed by traditional leaders and elders or CSOs within the Batwa community.
ii. Project-Level Mediation: If unresolved, the grievance is referred to the GROW Project's local grievance officers, who collaborate with community leaders to find a solution
iii. Regional-Level Escalation: For complex cases, the grievance is escalated to regional project coordinators who work with government representatives and NGOs.
iv. National-Level Resolution: As a last resort, grievances are referred to the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, which oversees the GROW Project
v.

Batwa women entrepreneurs will women will have the option to access the project's Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) directly, without needing to go through community elders or the GRC, especially in cases where they may feel uncomfortable or fear retaliation. This is particularly important for grievances related to gender-based violence (GBV), where confidentiality, safety, and survivor agency are paramount. In addition to informal and customary mechanisms, the project GRM includes multiple culturally appropriate and accessible intake channels, such as: Focal Point officers at the local government levels, dedicated toll free line 0800307777, suggestion boxes at the district local governments. All GRM staff will be trained in survivor-centered approaches, and GBV-related grievances will follow a confidential referral pathway aligned with the national GBV response protocol. These pathways are designed to avoid re-traumatization and ensure access to psychosocial, legal, and medical support. For further details on the GRM structure, intake options, and referral protocols, please refer to the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)

7.2.12. VMGP Development Process and Approach

Consultation Process with the Batwa included special consideration for women entrepreneurs. The Batwa were previously consulted during the drafting of the VMGF. The 2025 consultations built directly upon the inputs and priorities recorded in those VMGP processes, validating and updating earlier findings through targeted follow-up meetings with Batwa communities, local civil society partners, and customary leaders. This approach preserved continuity, reduced consultation fatigue, and ensured that 2025 measures respond to both previously identified needs and recent community feedback. Consultations were undertaken among the Batwa women entrepreneurs on the 28th of January 2025 and 3rd of February 2025 at the Rubanda District headquarters, Kashasha Village Cell I and Kashasha Village Cell II respectively. Ultimately, women entrepreneurs were identified within the Batwa community, including community leaders and local organisations. The consultation process engaged Batwa interlocutors through a targeted, multi-step approach: the consultant first mapped local leadership and civil-society actors to identify community elders, informal leaders, grassroots CBOs, and NGOs with legitimate ties to Batwa settlements. Meetings were organised and held with the community leaders to discuss project objectives, gather input and address concerns. Focus group discussions were then held with women's groups to gather detailed feedback and insights on how the Batwa women entrepreneurs can benefit from the GROW Project. The table below illustrates the key stakeholder consultations among the Batwa women entrepreneurs.

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Table 19. Stakeholders Counsulted During the Development of the Batwa VMGP

S/n	Stakeholder	Venue of meeting	Date of meeting	No. of Participants
1	Rubanda District Leadership	Rubanda District Headquarters	28th January 2025	4
2	Kinyarushengye Batwa CBO	Mushanje Cell	28th January 2025	12
3	Twa Community	Kashasha Village Cell I	3rd February 2025	18
4	Twa Community	Kashasha Village Cell II	3rd February 2025	12
5	Kisoro District Local Government (Focal Point Officer, District Tourism Officer, District Community Development Officer)	Kisoro District Local Government.	26th May 2025	3
6	Sanuriro group	Rubuguri Town Council	26th May 2025	8
	Total			**57**

7.2.13. Applicability of Free Prior and Informed Consent

The GROW project team consulted with the Batwa during the project design with dedicated sessions specific to the women entrepreneurs, for example, during the preparation of VMGF. The preparation of VMGP was entirely dedicated to Batwa women entrepreneurs, and their full engagement was secured during this process. Informed consultations with Batwa people were, carried out and this led to broad community support of the project. At the current stage, FPIC, as provided by ESS7, is deemed not to apply, because project activities are not expected to affect their lands, territories or resources therefore, will have no adverse impacts on land and associated natural resources under customary use or occupation. The project will also not relocate any VMGs and will have no negative impacts on cultural heritage. The GROW project does not support the use of Batwa cultural heritage for commercial purposes and therefore FPIC is not triggered on this ground either.

7.2.14. Specific Issues for the VMG and Recommendations

Stakeholders provided valuable suggestions and recommendations during the engagement sessions. While some of these inputs extend beyond the project's mandate and cannot be implemented under this intervention, those that fall within the project scope will be identified, incorporated, and pursued as part of the implementation process outlined in the action plan.

Table 20. Primary Issues and Proposed Recommendations Captured During the Development of the Batwa VMGP (Source: field data)

Sn	Issues	Recommendations
1	Despite the efforts of various NGOs and churches to assist the Batwa by providing them with small parcels of land, none has granted formal land ownership to the Batwa families. As a result, traditional financial institutions often consider the Batwa to be high-risk clients due to their marginalised status, which limits their ability to offer collateral. This situation makes it challenging for the Batwa to access credit.	Providing tailored financial services and credit facilities to Batwa women entrepreneurs to help them start and expand their businesses.
2	For Batwa women, the legacy of displacement and exclusion contributes to persistent gender inequalities. Economic hardship and weakened traditional social structures leave women especially vulnerable to physical, emotional, and sexual violence. Studies on indigenous populations in Africa have found that when cultural identity and community cohesion are disrupted, the protection mechanisms that traditionally regulated gender relations can collapse, increasing GBV risks	Community-Led Awareness and Education initiatives that engage Batwa communities in dialogues about gender roles and rights are critical. Educational programs—designed in consultation with community leaders and using culturally appropriate messaging—have been shown to reduce acceptance of GBV in marginalized settings.
		Integrated Support Services that include establishing local, accessible centers that offer psychosocial counseling, legal support, and reproductive health services can provide Batwa women with timely help and build long-term resilience. Research underscores the effectiveness of "one-stop centers" for survivors, where coordinated services facilitate both recovery and legal recourse.
		Economic Empowerment Programs that support income-generating activities for women (e.g.,

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		microfinance, vocational training) lessen economic dependency, which in turn can reduce vulnerability to abuse
3	The power imbalances worsened by economic marginalization and social isolation place Batwa women entrepreneurs at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and harassment. While documented research specific to the Batwa is sparse, broader studies in humanitarian and indigenous contexts reveal that SEA/SH is often linked to weak legal protections and the disruption of customary norms that once provided social checks.	Strengthening Legal Frameworks to enhance legal awareness and ensuring that national and local laws are enforced and can offer a deterrent effect. Community legal education programs help survivors understand their rights and the means available for redress
		Establishing secure, trusted mechanisms for reporting abuse—potentially through community-based monitoring teams or partnerships with non-governmental organizations—can mitigate instances of SEA/SH. Peer-reviewed evidence indicates that clear grievance redress systems bolster trust and empower vulnerable community members**.**
		Training local leaders, law enforcement, and community members on SEA/SH can help shift the culture of impunity. Sensitization workshops have been effective in similar marginalized communities in reducing tolerance for exploitative behaviour.
4	Risk of social and economic exclusion. The Batwa's historical exclusion from land rights, education, and political participation perpetuates their marginalisation. Exclusion not only restricts access to needed services but also reinforces the stigmatization that underpins other social risks such as GBV and economic exploitation. Research on indigenous peoples in Africa indicates that systemic exclusion increases vulnerability to a range of adverse outcomes because affected communities are often left out of policy-making and resource allocation processes.	Inclusive Policy Formulation**:** Governments and development agencies should actively involve Batwa representatives in the creation and implementation of policies that affect their communities. Participatory policy-making can help close the gap between indigenous needs and state interventions
		Community Empowerment Programs: Initiatives that foster community self-organization—such as cooperatives or local decision-making bodies—can enhance social inclusion. Peer-reviewed studies show that when marginalized groups are given a voice in local governance, there are improvements in access to education, healthcare, and other services
		Capacity Building: Education and skills tailored for the Batwa can increase their economic opportunities and political participation, thereby reducing the cycle of exclusion.
5	Child labour: Persistent poverty and limited access to education have left many Batwa children at risk of being drawn into child labour. In indigenous communities, children are often forced to contribute economically, at a cost to their educational and physical well-being. Findings form focus groups Discussions during this study and the complimentary peer-reviewed literature consistently links poverty with increased rates of child labour, further perpetuating cycles of deprivation	Improving access to education: Interventions such as school feeding programs, scholarships, and community-supported schools can incentivize families to keep children in education rather than work. Empirical studies from sub-Saharan Africa have shown that enhancing educational access diminishes child labour rates
		Providing economic support to families: Conditional cash transfers and livelihood programs that directly support families financially can reduce the economic necessity of child labour. Evidence suggests that when households receive financial support, children are more likely to attend school and less likely to work.
		Strict Enforcement of Child Labour Laws: Strengthening the monitoring of child labour practices through community involvement and local governance can help ensure that labor laws are observed
6	The Batwa's marginalization is compounded by a heightened vulnerability to HIV/AIDS due to factors such as poor access to healthcare, low literacy levels, and stigma. Studies on indigenous populations in Uganda and surrounding regions indicate that limited health infrastructure and discriminatory practices can exacerbate the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS in these communities.	Culturally Tailored Health Education: Health interventions must be designed to overcome language and cultural barriers. Community-based outreach that involves respected Batwa figures can promote HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention, and testing in a culturally sensitive manner
		Improved Healthcare Access: Deploying mobile clinics and community health workers can bridge the gap in services. Expanding antiretroviral therapy (ART) programs

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		and ensuring local clinics are equipped to provide comprehensive HIV care is essential
		Stigma Reduction Initiatives: Programs that focus on demystifying HIV/AIDS, using peer educators and community dialogues, can reduce stigma and encourage more people to seek treatment. Research shows that reducing stigma improves both preventive behaviours and adherence to treatment protocols.
7	**Integrated and cross-cutting Mitigation approaches** Multi-sectoral collaboration: The social risks faced by the Batwa are interconnected. Addressing them means coordinating efforts between government bodies, NGOs, local community groups, and academic institutions. Integrated strategies, combining health, education, legal, and economic initiatives, have been repeatedly stressed in the academic literature as the most effective way of lifting indigenous communities out of chronic vulnerability. Participatory and culturally sensitive approaches: Successful interventions are those that actively involve the Batwa in every stage, from needs assessment to program design and evaluation. Participatory action research (PAR) methods foster community ownership and ensure that solutions are aligned with local realities Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Management: Continuous assessment of interventions, based on both quantitative data and qualitative community feedback, allows for the fine-tuning of strategies. This adaptive management is critical for sustainability and for responding to shifting community dynamics over time.	

7.2.15. General Aspirations and Needs of the Batwa Women Entrepreneurs

i. Batwa women entrepreneurs aspire to gain access to financial resources, including land, and grants to expand and start their businesses respectively. They also aim to expand their micro and small enterprises, increase productivity and achieve sustainable income.
ii. The Batwa women entrepreneurs intimated the need for training in business management, financial literacy, and technical skills to enhance their entrepreneurial capabilities. They also seek to participate in capacity-building programs that provide mentorship, networking, networking opportunities and market access
iii. Batwa women aspire to have equal opportunities in the business environment, free from discrimination and bias. They also aim to engage with their communities and contribute to local development through their entrepreneurial activities.
iv. The Batwa women entrepreneurs also aspire to preserve and promote their cultural heritage through their businesses, such as traditional crafts, arts and agriculture and ensure that their cultural identity is respected and represented in the broader society
v. They also seek to have access to healthcare services, including mental health support, to ensure their overall well-being.
vi. Batwa women aspire to have their land rights, and other legal rights recognized, and protected while seeking to advocate for policies that address their specific needs and challenges as entrepreneurs.
vii. They also aspire to adopt sustainable agricultural and business practices that protect the environment and ensure long-term viability. Ultimately, they seek to be facilitated in developing strategies to cope with the impacts of climate change on their livelihoods.
viii. The Batwa seek to have a Batwa Artisan Hub. The Hub would be a centralized, community-managed facility that brings together production, training, marketing, and cultural preservation under one roof. It would serve as both a physical workshop for creating traditional crafts and a vibrant showcase for Batwa artistry. The hub would not merely be used as a production site but as a living cultural center where indigenous knowledge is honoured and enhanced through collaboration and innovation. The Hub would have

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Production workshops. Training and skill development centre, Exhibition and Marketing space, Resource information centre, meeting room that would be rented out for a charge.

7.2.16. Potential Risks and Barriers

i. Traditional financial institutions often view the Batwa as high-risk clients due to their marginalized status and lack of collateral, making it difficult for them to access credit. Additionally, the GROW Loan threshold between 4m – 200m may be discriminative of the Batwa women entrepreneurs since majority may not be eligible to qualify for the loan. Where the Batwa women are not eligible for the GROW Loan, they will be facilitated to gain from other services and products including but not limited to the Essential skills training.
ii. Batwa women frequently encounter biases and stereotypes that can hinder their access to funding, resources and opportunities. This includes among others traditional gender roles and cultural expectations, which limit their participation in entrepreneurial activities.
iii. Majority of women entrepreneurs who participated in the focus group discussions indicated that they had limited or no background of formal education. This applies to the entire Batwa community. The limited access to formal education affects their entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. Additionally, there is limited targeted training programs that address the specific needs and challenges faced by the Batwa women entrepreneurs
iv. Across the board, the Batwa community faces challenges in accessing healthcare services. In the case of Batwa women entrepreneurs, this affects their ability to run businesses effectively. In addition, the displacement from their ancestral lands could have increased vulnerability to violence and exploitation
v. Batwa women encounter challenges in accessing markets and establishing business networks due to their marginalized status. These issues are further exacerbated by limited infrastructure and support systems.
vi. The lack of recognition of the Batwa land rights affects their ability to secure land for business activities
vii. Batwa women generally face social stigma and discrimination, which affects their confidence and willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activities.
viii. Balancing entrepreneurial activities with household responsibilities - Batwa women are often the primary caregivers in their families, responsible for tasks such as childbearing, cooking, and fetching water. These duties leave them with time and energy to dedicate to their businesses, hindering their ability to scale up and succeed
ix. Gender-based discrimination and inequality may limit the opportunities for women in decision-making processes and economic activities

7.2.17. Potential Positive Impacts of the Project and Proposed Recommendations

The project is anticipated to generate positive outcomes for the Batwa community through enhanced women's entrepreneurship, expanded skills development, and more inclusive participation in decision-making. This section summarizes the general recommendations emerging from stakeholder engagement. Of these, only measures consistent with the project scope have been retained. Such activities have been incorporated into the action plan for implementation, whereas recommendations beyond the project framework such conditional cash transfers and improved health care access are noted for consideration but do not form part of the intervention.

Table 21. Potential Positive Impacts and Proposed Recommendations.

Sn	Potential Positive Impact	Proposed Recommendations

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1	The GROW project will lead to environmental sustainability by encouraging Batwa women entrepreneurs to adopt sustainable business practices. This will minimize their environmental impact and contribute to conservation efforts. Training will also be provided to help Batwa women adapt to climate change and mitigate its effects on their businesses	Develop incentives for Batwa women entrepreneurs who adopt eco-friendly business practices, such as tax benefits or access to green financing
		Facilitate partnerships with environmental organizations to provide ongoing support, resources, and knowledge on sustainable business strategies
		Introduce locally tailored climate adaptation strategies, ensuring business models remain resilient amid environmental challenges
2	The project will facilitate social inclusion and empowerment through promoting gender equality and social inclusion, ensuring that Batwa women have equal opportunities to participate in entrepreneurial activities	Implement affirmative action policies to ensure Batwa women entrepreneurs have fair access to markets, resources, and decision-making platforms
		Establish community-led support groups where women can share experiences, challenges, and solutions, fostering empowerment through peer collaboration.
		Conduct regular gender-sensitivity training for stakeholders to eliminate biases and promote inclusion across all sectors
3	Through the project, Batwa women entrepreneurs may gain from product development and innovation. The subcomponent shall provide support for product development, helping the Batwa women create innovative and marketable products. Training shall also be provided to improve the quality and competitiveness of Batwa women's products, making them more attractive to customers.	Provide funding specifically for research and development, allowing Batwa women to experiment with new product ideas and improve existing ones.
		Offer access to modern technology and equipment to enhance product quality, efficiency, and market competitiveness.
		Create mentorship and industry-link programs, connecting Batwa women with experienced innovators to refine their products for broader commercial success.
4	Through entrepreneurship training and capacity building, the Batwa women entrepreneurs may be able to gain training in business management, financial literacy, and technical skills, helping Batwa women to enhance their entrepreneurial capabilities. The mentorship programmes may also help the Batwa women entrepreneurs to connect with experienced entrepreneurs who can provide guidance, support and valuable insights on business.	Customize training programs to align with local business needs and cultural contexts, ensuring relevance and practical application.
		Provide continuous learning opportunities through online and in-person workshops, preventing stagnation in business growth
		Develop a structured mentorship framework that includes networking events and exposure visits to successful enterprises
5	Through the GROW financing facility and the grants, Batwa women could access loans and grants or expand their businesses, providing them with the necessary capital to grow their enterprises.	Expand financial products to include tailored savings programs that help women build financial resilience over time
		Ensure accessibility by reducing bureaucratic hurdles in loan applications and grant eligibility, making funding more inclusive
		Establish financial advisory services to assist women entrepreneurs in making strategic investment decisions with their funding

7.2.18. Potential Negative Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures.

The proposed mitigation measures directly address the identified potential negative impacts of the project. All measures outlined in this table are already integrated into the VMGP Action Plan, supported by relevant ESF instruments, and reinforced through the project design. None of the interventions is deferred to future or uncertain planning, ensuring that safeguards are systematically applied and that the Batwa women entrepreneurs benefit from immediate, transparent, and accountable implementation.

Table 22. Potential Negative Impacts and Proposed Recommendations.

Sn	Potential Negative Impact	Mitigation measure in the VMGP action Plan	Mitigation measure in the ESF Instuments	Mitigation measures in the project desgn
1.	Unsafe training environments lacking lighting, separate sanitation, or privacy can	Women-only sessions, or mixed sessions conducted with safeguards, are embedded across all	ESMP includes OHS standards for safe venues and sanitation facilities.	Project design(component operational notes) requires accessible,

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	heighten GBV risk and reduce participation.	activities in the action plan. Each training is required to take place in accessible, well-lit venues with adequate privacy and sanitation facilities. Safe transport arrangements or travel stipends are provided to ensure secure participation, and sessions are scheduled in ways that minimize household conflict.		well-lit venues with privacy provisions.
2	Increased mobility and visibility from attending trainings can expose Batwa women to harassment en route or at venues and provoke domestic tension as women gain skills and income.	GBV risk mitigation measures and embedded in project SOPs, budgets, and partner contracts; adopt survivor-centered referral pathways and confidential reporting channels	SEP and GRM instruments embed confidential reporting channels and partner accountability.	Project design integrates SOPs and budget lines for implemetation of the GBV action plan
3	Women entrepreneurs may lack access to information, application processes, or financial services	Create awareness about the GROW loan to enable Batwa women entrepreneurs to access the loan	SEP ensures transparent communication and outreach.	Community-based identification and validation with elders and women leaders included in the GROW Project Stakeholder Engagement Plan
4	Cultural and language barriers: standardized approaches could ignore traditional decision-making structures and women's roles.	Deliver training in the Lutwa language or through trusted facilitators. Adapt materials to local literacy levels and cultural contexts.	SEP requires culturally appropriate engagement methods.	Training Materials will be adapted to literacy levels and cultural contexts.
5	Twa women already face compounded marginalization; without deliberate inclusion, men or dominant groups may capture most benefits.	VMGP ensures women's participation in consultations is recognized as legitimate and establishes oral grievance channels.	Women's participation in consultations formally was recognized in project roll-out	Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) Handbook includes oral reporting options and transparency requirements.
6	Failure to engage elders and women leaders could reinforce perceptions of	Conduct capacity building sessions for entities	SEP mandates involvement of traditional leaders and trusted NGOs.	Partnerships with community-based organizations

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	exclusion and weaken community trust	implementing the VMGP. Work with NGOs and community-based organizations already trusted by the Batwa to deliver support.		embedded in project design.

7.2.19. Specific Interventions to be implemented under the Project.

This section presents the activities selected for implementation under the project. They originate from the general recommendations raised during stakeholder engagement and are captured in various sections of the report. Activities that fall within the project scope have been explicitly identified, integrated into the action plan, and will be implemented. Recommendations outside the project scope are acknowledged but remain outside the current intervention framework.

i. Conduct training sessions on entrepreneurship, business management and financial literacy
ii. Constructing common user facility and equip it with value addition materials for Craft making and Honey production and processing. The hub can also have a display area for the materials and act as training center and community center for meetings.
iii. Document to Ik language and Culture
iv. Capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP
v. Monitoring implementation activities for the VMGP activities

7.2.19. Suggested Measures to Strengthen LGs to Address Issues of Batwa Women Entrepreneurs

Stakeholder engagement discussions highlighted several possible measures to strengthen the capacity of local governments in addressing VMG-related issues. While not all of these measures were formally agreed upon with local government, they are either fully or in part, embedded within the VMGP Action Plan, supported by relevant ESF instruments, or reinforced through the project design.

Table 23. Suggested Measures to Strengthen LGs to Address Issues of Batwa Women Entrepreneurs

Sn	Measure	Implemented through the VMGP Action Plan	Implemented through the ESF instruments	Implemented through the project design
1	Offering capacity building and training of local government officials on gender equality, cultural sensitivity, and specific needs of Batwa women entrepreneurs	VMGP includes capacity-building workshops tailored to Batwa women entrepreneurs' needs.	SEP provides for inclusive stakeholder training and awareness.	Training modules embedded in various components of the project
2	Develop and implement policies that specifically address the needs and challenges of Batwa women entrepreneurs, ensuring their inclusion in economic development initiatives	VMGP requires deliberate inclusion of Batwa women in accessing GROW service and products.	SEP ensures policies reflect culturally appropriate engagement and inclusion.	Project design integrates gender-sensitive and inclusive policy measures of the ethnic minorities and

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				other vulnerable groups
3	Invest in infrastructure that supports the growth of Batwa women-led businesses, such as marketplaces, and storage facilities among others.	VMGP action plan prioritizes establishment of Common User Facilities that enables Batwa women's participation and enhance their productivity	ESMP covers infrastructure standards and safeguards.	Project design includes provision of gender inclusive workplaces and enabling infrastructure.
4	Organise community forums and consultations to gather input for the Batwa women entrepreneurs and incorporate their feedback into policymaking	VMGP mandates culturally appropriate consultations with Batwa women.	SEP requires inclusive community engagement and feedback mechanisms.	Project design embeds participatory forums and feedback loops in the Grievance Redress Mechanism
5	Foster Public-private partnerships between local government, private sector, and Non-governmental organizations to provide comprehensive support to Batwa women entrepreneurs. In addition, collaborative projects can be implemented to address the specific needs of the Batwa women entrepreneurs such as vocational training and financial support.	VMGP action plan calls for partnerships with trusted NGOs and community-based organizations.	SEP mandates multi-stakeholder collaboration frameworks.	Project design embeds cross-sector partnerships and collaborative projects for training and financial support.

7.2.20. Action Plan Implementing the Batwa VMGP

Whereas the Batwa identified a range of needs and priorities during consultations, only the specific activities and interventions set out in the action plan below will be implemented under this project as they fall within the scope of the GROW project.

Table 24. Action Plan for Implementing the Batwa VMGP

Outputs	Specific activities	Verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Targets
Component 1: Support for Women empowerment and Enterprise Development Services				
Improved entrepreneurial skills among the Batwa women entrepreneurs	Conduct training sessions on entrepreneurship, business management and financial literacy	No. of training sessions conducted	Training attendance records and evaluation report	At least 2 training sessions conducted: 100 Batwa women entrepreneurs trained
Assistance with business registration and compliance	Provide legal support and assistance with business and compliance	No. of women receiving legal assistance	Legal support records and compliance reports	20 Batwa women supported to register businesses
Component Two: Access to Finance for Women Entrepreneurs				
Create awareness about the GROW loan to enable Ik women entrepreneurs to access the loan	No. of loans disbursed to Batwa women entrepreneurs	Project reports and financial institution reports	KPMG reports	At least 10 loans disbursed to Batwa Women entrepreneurs.
Component 3: Enabling Infrastructure and Facilities for Women Enterprise Growth and				

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Transition				
Access to Common User Facilities	Construct Batwa Artisan Hub bringing together production, training, marketing and cultural preservation under one roof [2]	No. of common user facilities established among the Batwa	Infrastructure set up in among the Batwa	3 artisan Hub Constructed and Operational
Capacity Building of Implementing Entities	Conduct capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP	No. of entities trained on the VMGP	Training reports	10 implementing entities trained
Monitoring of implementation of the VMGP	Conduct periodic monitoring for implementation of the VMGP activities.	No. of Monitoring activities undertaken	Monitoring reports	1 monitoring activity conducted annually

[2] Where the ethnic minority groups live in forest protected areas, the proposed common user facilities will be established on government land for purposes of sustainability. Uganda Wildlife Authority will be consulted on the land requirements and availability.

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7.2.22. List of activities and budget for implementation of the Batwa activities for women entrepreneurs under the GROW Project.

The activities presented in this section are derived from the Action Plan and will be formally incorporated into the project for implementation.

Table 25.Proposed Budget for Implementing the Batwa VMGP

Sn	Activity	Budget	Responsible Party	Component	Timeline				
					Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
1	Conduct training sessions on entrepreneurship, business management and financial literacy	50,000,000	MGLSD	Sub component 1B – Support for core business development for micro and small enterprises					
2	Consultancy services to document the Batwa language and culture	350,000,000	MGLSD	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
3	Create awareness about the GROW loan to enable Batwa women entrepreneurs to access the loan	80,000,000	PSFU	Sub component 2B -Facilitating access to credit for enterprises growth					
4	Construct a Batwa Community Hub/ Multipurpose hall to serve several purposes, including the display of cultural crafts to preserve Batwa legacy, a recreation hall or meeting hall that can be rented out at a fee. The hall should be designed through community-led planning to empower the Batwa by blending traditional heritage with modern development	1,200,000,000	MGLSD	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
5	Conduct capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP	120,000,000	MGLSD &PSFU	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure					
6	Conduct periodic monitoring for implementation of the VMGP activities.	60,000,000	MGLSD &PSFU	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure					
	Total	**1,860,000,000**							

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7.3. Vulnerable and Marginalised Group Plan for the Benet Women Entrepreneurs

7.3.1. Population and Location

The Benet also known as the Mosopisyek on Ndoboros are an ethnic minority found in North-Eastern Uganda, in the Districts of Kween, Bukwo and Kapchorwa. The Benet population across these three districts is estimated to be 9,080 people in Uganda National Population and Housing Census -UNHCS (2014). However, the UNHCS 2024 does not provide statistics for the recently concluded census survey. The VMGP consultations were conducted exclusively with women entrepreneurs within VMGs. This targeted approach reflected the project's emphasis on supporting entrepreneurial women as a distinct subset of the broader female population. While the total female population is reported for context, the consultation numbers represent engagement with those mapped as entrepreneurs, ensuring that the findings and recommendations are directly relevant to the intended beneficiaries

Figure 8. Maps showing settlements of the Benet

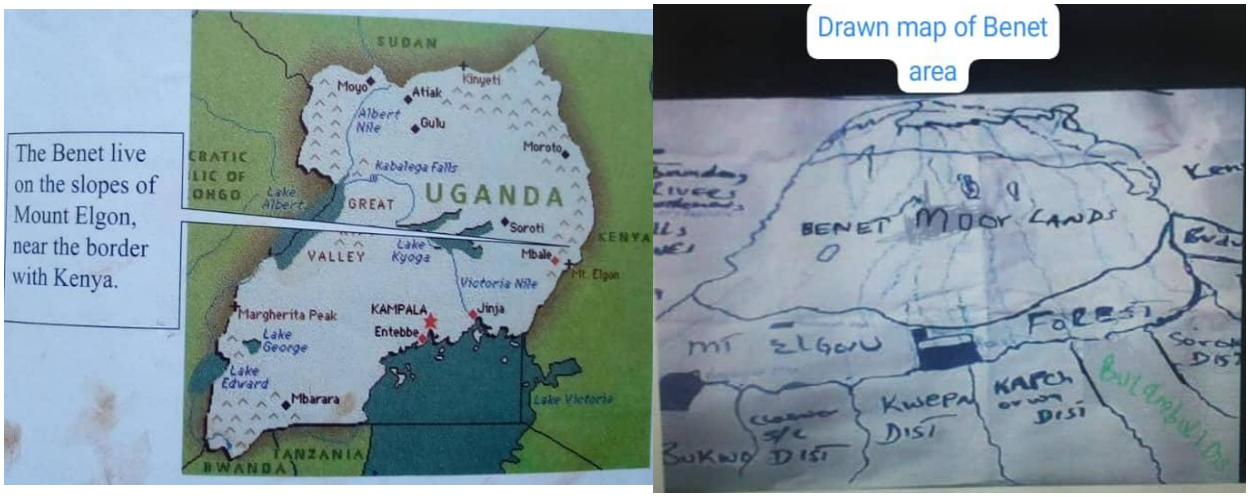


Figure 7. Images showning settlement areas of the Benet.

7.3.2. Social Organisation

The Benet community in Uganda has a distinct social organisation based on family and kinship structures. According to a report by Cross Cultural Foundation Uganda (2023), the Benet family structure is typically extended and plays a crucial role in providing support and maintaining social cohesion within the community. The kinship among the Benet is primarily patrilineal meaning descent is traced though the male line. Therefore, inheritance, family ties, and social status are often determined by the father's lineage. Simone's kids (2023) however notes that women equally play a significant role in the family, particularly in terms of child caring and maintaining household responsibilities. Marriage is an important institution in Benet society, and it often involves bride wealth. Marriages create alliances between different families and strengthen social bonds within the community. The elders hold a respectable position in the Benet community and are often involved in decision-making processes and conflict resolution. They are seen as custodians of cultural knowledge and traditions and their guidance is highly valued.

7.3.3. Gender Roles

The gender roles among the Benet are deeply rooted in their cultural traditions and social organisation. Men are traditionally seen as the primary breadwinners and the heads of the households. They are responsible for activities including farming, hunting, and head of family

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decisions and providing for the family. According to CCFU (2023), men also play a key role in the decision-making processes within the family and the community. Women on the other hand are primarily responsible for child bearing, household chores, and agricultural activities. They engage in activities such as farming, making handcrafts such as Kulungut, Karebet among others and taking care of children. Women are also crucial in maintaining social ties and supporting community events and are purely responsible for preparing food for example Kaleta that is a mixture or Irish and maize flour, fetching water and firewood.

7.3.4. Economic Activities

Agriculture serves as the backbone of the economy, engaging the largest portion of the Benet community in crop farming and livestock rearing, at both subsistence and commercial scales. The primary crops cultivated include maize, beans, Irish potatoes, cabbages, and onions. Livestock reared in the area consists of cattle, sheep, goats, and poultry. Some members of the Benet community, particularly women, also engage in producing traditional crafts such as basket weaving and pottery. Basket weaving, locally known as "Kulungut," is traditionally used during winnowing and circumcision ceremonies. Additionally, they produce "Sesuet" baskets, which are used for carrying flour and for eating. Other crafts include pottery and bead making. Small-scale trading activities occur at a moderate level, primarily involving local markets and informal trade. This includes selling agricultural produce such as Irish potatoes, cabbages, and passion fruits, as well as handicrafts like Kulungut, Karebet, and Sesuet. Honey and its products, including Lakwek, are also sold, along with other goods like tomatoes and Sukuma (collard greens), and firewood. Tourism has emerged as a lucrative business, offering cultural tours that include visits to Sipi Falls and ancestral lands rich in cultural sites such as caves and waterfalls. Activities like homestays and guided nature walks further boost this sector.

During key informant interviews and focus group discussions, participants identified several challenges they face, including; Limited access to modern farming techniques and inputs; Price fluctuations in the market; Poor road infrastructure; Exploitation by middlemen; Scarcity of raw materials for producing handicrafts and limited knowledge of modern designs; Lack of formal business training and financial support; Inadequate storage equipment for products like Lakwek, which can spoil easily; Limited capital to expand businesses; Insufficient funding and resources. These challenges underscore the need for support and development in the sector.

7.3.5. Culture and Tradition

Among the Benet, Basket weaving is a traditional economic activity, particularly for women. It is not only a source of income but also a cultural practice that has been passed down through generations. Circumcision is also a significant cultural practice and signifies the transition from childhood to adulthood. Additionally, child-naming ceremonies are practised where children are given names that carry cultural and familial significance. The Benet also have various taboos that govern their behaviour and interactions, which are integral to their cultural identity. In addition, the Benet have a rich tradition of folklore, including songs, proverbs, and idioms that convey cultural values and wisdom. They also use traditional medicine derived from local plants and herbs, which are an important part of their healthcare practises. The "Muguso" cave and Mount Elgon National Park hold significant spiritual and historical importance for the Benet.

7.3.6. Interventions by Non-Government Organizations

The section maps NGOs working with Benet communities across the regions to inform future collaboration with the GROW Project. These organizations provide a complementary mix of advocacy, service delivery, and capacity-building, and focus on one or more priority areas: land

and tenure advocacy; livelihoods and income support; health and psychosocial services; education and cultural preservation; and legal aid and rights awareness.

Table 26. Non Government Organisations Mapped within the Benet Community (Source: field data)

Name	Scope
Amnesty International	Advocacy and legal support and human rights monitoring.
Uganda National NGO Forum	Advocacy and legal support and human rights monitoring
Benet – Mosop Indigenous Community Association (MEBIO)	Community empowerment and education
Coalition of Pastoralist Civil Society Organisations (COPESCO)	Community empowerment and education
Kapchorwa Civil Society Alliance (KACSOA)	Promote women entrepreneurship by providing platforms for women to share experiences and support each other and encouraging for sustainable groups
Action Aid Uganda	Economic empowerment and training
CARE International	Economic empowerment and training
ACFODE,	Microfinance services
Action for Disability	Microfinance services which offer special grants for PWDs
FINCA Uganda Limited	Microfinance services
CCFU (Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda)	Documents the oral history and culture of the Benet Equipped Benet women with financial skills like record keeping and also provided financial support

7.3.7. Interventions by Government

Government interventions play a critical role in empowering women in the Benet community and helping them overcome challenges in growing their businesses. Some of these interventions include Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programmes (UWEP) implemented by the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social, Development aims at improving women's access to financial services, equipping them with skills for enterprise growth. The program provides interest-free revolving credit to women to initiate or strengthen their enterprises. Since 2015, the UWEP has funded numerous subprojects and supported many women entrepreneurs. The GROW Project is also an initiative by the Government of Uganda aiming to increase access to entrepreneurial services that enable female entrepreneurs to grow their businesses from micro to small and medium. The project targeted female-owned enterprises, including those owned by refugees, and provided support in various districts, including those hosting the Benet community. Other Government interventions among the Benet include the Youth Livelihood Program (YLP) and Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE).

7.3.8. Types of Businesses Engaged in by Women Entrepreneurs

Table 27. Types of Businesses Among the Benet Women Entreprenurs

Types of Business	Description
Handicrafts	Includes basket weaving, beadwork, and other traditional crafts. These products are often sold locally and internationally.
Agriculture	Involves crop farming, animal husbandry and agro-processing. Women engage in growing crops like maize, beans and vegetables, as well as raising livestock.
Trade and retail	Includes selling foodstuff, clothing and household items. Women often run small shops or stalls in local markets.
Tourism and	Involves offering cultural tours, and hand-entertaining visitors through cultural dances. The sector

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hospitality	leverages the rich cultural heritage of the Benet community.
Retail business	This involves operating a shop, selling tomatoes, selling local brews like Lakwek, and selling milk among others.
Poultry keeping	This involves raising chickens primarily for subsistence and at a small-scale commercial level.

7.3.9. Existence of Women entrepreneur Platforms (WEPs)

The associations listed below were systematically mapped to inform future collaboration with the GROW Project and to help ensure continuity of service provision beyong the project life.

Table 28. Associations Supporting Women Entreprenurs Among the Benet

Association supporting the WEPs	**Focus**
Community Women Enterprise Network (CWEN)	CWEN empowers women entrepreneurs by providing co-production and processing facilities, packaging, branding, marketing, and promotion services. They also organise events and networking opportunities to help women entrepreneurs connect and grow their businesses.
Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Association Limited (UWEAL)	Supports women in business innovations and nurtures their project ideas they provide training, mentoring, business counselling, and networking opportunities to help women entrepreneurs succeed.
Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programmes (UWEP)	Implemented by the Ministry of Gender labour and Social Development, UWEP aims to improve access to financial services for women and equip them with skills for entrepreneurship growth. The program provides interest-free credit for enterprise development and offers training in business skills and management.
Action Aid Uganda	This has helped fight against gender-based violence within the Benet families.

Most women entrepreneurs are in small VSLA groups of 10 to 30 members. They have received training support and materials from South East Private Sector Promotion Enterprise Limited (SEPSPEL) as indicted in the table below.

Table 29. List of Some of the Recognised Women Entrepreneurs Groups Among the Benet

Group Name	**Focus**
Tekantet Women's Group,	Consists of both men and women, saves money weekly and offers small loans to members for income-generating activities.
Merry-Go-Round Savings Groups	Organized in churches, where members contribute regularly and take turns receiving lump sums, fostering savings and investment among women.
Organized Clans' Women Zonal Groups	These groups aim to raise money among like-minded women within the clan
Bank Group Women	Programs like the MAMA Loan, supported by Finance Trust Bank, target women operating small-scale businesses
KAKENET women group	It's a group of women who have come together to make weekly savings and offer loans to the its members and the community members

7.3.10. Grievances Management

The Benet have a system of administration led by the council of elders "Kirwokiik" who are selected critically considering serious traits like not a womaniser (Sonkapkoor), presentable (Conoot) meaning well composed, Sober (Tamoon), Generous (kuputyem). These council members are supreme in deciding cases and settle disputes amicably amongst the Mosop community without bias. They also have prophets "Workoyiik." Gods select these after certain rituals have been performed. They can foretell certain events like famine, sicknesses, pandemics, plagues, locusts (Tolongwook) etc. This information informs the elders and the Mosop community on how to prepare to handle these challenges. As in figure (5), a clear referral pathway for linking Benet's GRM to the GROW Project will include the following steps;

i. Community-Level Resolution: Grievances are first addressed by traditional leaders and elders within the Benet community

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ii. Project-Level Mediation: If unresolved, the grievance is referred to the GROW Project's local grievance officers, of GRCs who collaborate with community leaders to find a solution
iii. Regional-Level Escalation: For complex cases, the grievance is escalated to regional project coordinators who work with government representatives and NGOs.
iv. National-Level Resolution: As a last resort, grievances are referred to the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, which oversees the GROW Project or courts of law. This pathway ensures that grievances are addressed at the most appropriate level while respecting the Benet's cultural practices and promoting inclusivity in the GROW Project.

Benet women entrepreneurs will women will have the option to access the project's Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) directly, without needing to go through community elders or the GRC, especially in cases where they may feel uncomfortable or fear retaliation. This is particularly important for grievances related to gender-based violence (GBV), where confidentiality, safety, and survivor agency are paramount. In addition to informal and customary mechanisms, the project GRM includes multiple culturally appropriate and accessible intake channels, such as: Focal Point officers at the local government levels, dedicated toll free line 0800307777, suggestion boxes at the district local governments. All GRM staff will be trained in survivor-centered approaches, and GBV-related grievances will follow a confidential referral pathway aligned with the national GBV response protocol. These pathways are designed to avoid re-traumatization and ensure access to psychosocial, legal, and medical support. For further details on the GRM structure, intake options, and referral protocols, please refer to the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)

7.3.11. VMGP Development Process and Approach

7.3.11.1. Consultation Process with the Benet

The consultation process among the Benet included special consideration for women entrepreneurs. Consultations were undertaken among the Benet women entrepreneurs on 28th December 2024 at Kwos Primary School, 3rd January 2025 at Mengya Village and 27th May 2025 at the District Local Government headquarters and on phone call. Ultimately, women entrepreneurs were identified within the Benet community including community leaders and local organisations. Meetings were organised and held with the community leaders to discuss project objectives, gather input and address concerns. Focus group discussions were then held with women groups to gather detailed feedback and insights on how the Benet women entrepreneurs can benefit from the GROW Project. The table below illustrates the key stakeholder consultations among the Benet women entrepreneurs.

Table 30. Stakeholders Consulted During the Development of the Benet VMGP.

S/n	Stakeholder	Venue of meeting	Date of meeting	No. of Participants
1	Tekandet Women's Group (Leaders)	Kwosir PS	28th Dec 2024	10
2	Benet women's basket weaving group (Leaders and members)	Mengya village	3rd Jan 2025	6
3	Musopisek Empowerment Foundation (Coordinator & secretary)	Phone call interview	27th May 2025	2
4	Kween District Local Government (Lands Officer, District Planner, Focal Point Officer)	Kween District Local Government Headquarters	27th May 2025	3
5	Benet Lobby Group (Programmes Manager)	Phone call interview	27th May 2025	1
	Total			**22**

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7.3.11.2. Applicability of Free Prior and Informed Consent

The GROW Project team actively engaged with the Benet community during the design phase, organizing dedicated sessions that included the joint development of the Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Framework (VMGF) and the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF). The entire process of preparing the Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Plan (VMGP) was centered on the Benet community, ensuring their active participation and full engagement throughout. Informed consultations with the Benet resulted in strong community support for the project. Although the project will focus on benefiting Benet businesswomen, it is not expected to have any adverse effects on the land or natural resources traditionally used by the community. Consequently, Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) is not deemed to apply. Additionally, the project will not lead to the relocation of any Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups (VMGs) or negatively affect cultural heritage. The GROW project does not support the use of Benet cultural heritage for commercial purposes and therefore, in line with ESS7, FPIC is not triggered on this ground either.

7.3.11.3. Specific Issues for the Benet and Recommendations

Stakeholders provided valuable suggestions and recommendations during the engagement sessions. While some of these inputs extend beyond the project's mandate and cannot be implemented under this intervention, such improving health care access and enhancing education access, those that fall within the project scope will be identified, incorporated, and pursued as part of the implementation process outlined in the action plan.

Table 31. Specific Issues and Proposed Recommendations Captured During the Development of the Benet VMGP

Sn	Issues	Recommendations
1	Benet children particularly girls have limited access to education due to cultural. In contexts where families experience economic hardship, children may be compelled to contribute to household income or support family businesses, often at the expense of their education and development. Child labour not only undermines the long-term prospects for these children but also reinforces cycles of poverty.	Sensitize the communities on the importance of education for girls
		Strengthening the enforcement of child labour laws through community monitoring and local governance ensures that children's right to education and development is upheld
		Enhancing Educational Access through providing programs that provide scholarships, school feeding schemes and community-supported schooling can reduce the economic necessity for child labour. Evidence indicates that when educational opportunities expand, children are less likely to be forced into work
2	Benet women and girls have limited access to healthcare services leading to high maternal and child mortality rates. Marginalized communities like the Benet, often encounter higher HIV/AIDS prevalence due to factors such as stigmatization, limited access to healthcare, and low awareness of preventive measures. For women entrepreneurs facing multiple layers of exclusion, HIV/AIDS poses not only a public health risk but also a threat to economic stability and social inclusion. According to BMC Public Health (2024), Uganda has highlighted that social and economic marginalization contributes to reduced healthcare uptake and increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS	Health interventions must be adapted to overcome language and cultural barriers. Community-based outreach programs that involve respected local figures can effectively spread knowledge about HIV prevention, testing, and treatment.
		Improving Healthcare Access through deploying mobile clinics and training community health workers can address the gap in health service delivery. Evidence from similar settings shows that expanded access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) and comprehensive HIV care significantly improves health outcomes
		Initiatives that demystify HIV/AIDS, such as peer education, public awareness campaigns, and integration of services within broader health programs, can decrease stigma. Reduced stigma has been correlated with higher rates of testing and treatment adherence
3	Benet women have limited access to economic opportunities, leading to poverty and overdependence on men. They also face exclusion from vital networks—political, financial, and social—that are essential for business success. Social exclusion limits access to information, resources, and social capital, which in turn perpetuates cycles of	Inclusive Policy Design and Representation through Ensuring that women from marginalised groups are included in policy formulation and decision-making not only addresses representation but also ensures that their needs are prioritised. Participatory governance models have been linked to improved social inclusion outcomes
		Building Business Networks and Peer Groups through facilitating the formation of business cooperatives, mentorship

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	poverty and vulnerability. This kind of exclusion exacerbates inequalities and reduces opportunities for upward mobility	programs, and networks among women entrepreneurs can enhance information exchange and resource sharing. Social capital is a significant predictor of business success and reduces isolation among women in challenging environments
		Capacity Building and Access to Finance through Providing access to microloans and delivering targeted entrepreneurship training programs can help reduce economic vulnerability. Tailored economic empowerment initiatives increase market participation and social inclusion.
4	SEA/SH is linked to unequal power dynamics and the normalisation of exploitative behaviours in environments where women have limited social protection. In entrepreneurial settings, especially those operating within peripheral or marginalised communities like the Benet, the absence of robust legal and workplace safeguards can lead to an increased risk of sexual misconduct. The World Bank's Good practice note on SEA/SH highlights that SEA/SH thrives where accountability mechanisms and codes of conduct are weak.	Reinforcing the enforcement of national laws and local policies that protect women against SEA/SH is critical. Legal literacy campaigns can empower women entrepreneurs to understand and exercise their rights to reduce instances of abuse
		Establishing trusted and secure platforms for reporting incidents whether within business networks or community services can provide a safe route for documenting and addressing abuse. Clear and confidential grievance redress systems build trust and serve as deterrents to potential perpetrators
		Capacity Building and Sensitization Training sessions for business owners, employees, and community leaders about SEA/SH can foster a culture of zero tolerance. Sensitization programs, including gender-sensitivity workshops, have been shown to shift cultural norms and mitigate exploitative behavior
4	Benet culture and language are at risk of being erased due to cultural assimilation and lack of documentation	• Document Benet language, culture and traditions • A program should be rolled out in schools to enable the teaching of the Benet language in schools
5	Integrated Approaches and Cross-Cutting Measures Engaging Benet women entrepreneurs directly in research, program design, and evaluation helps ensure that interventions are well tailored to their unique challenges and cultural contexts. Coordination between government agencies, non-governmental organizations, international donors, and local community groups can lead to more sustainable outcomes. Interventions that merge legal, health, educational, and economic empowerment measures are most effective in addressing interconnected risks. Implementing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks allows programs to evolve with changing circumstances, ensuring that they remain effective over time.	

7.3.11.4. General Aspirations and Needs of the Benet Women Entrepreneurs

During the development of the VMGP, Benet women entrepreneurs articulated clear and practical aspirations. These priorities informed the VMGPs proposed interventions and guided the design of targeted measures to ensure that project activities respond to Benet women's economic goals, cultural values, and safety needs.

i. The Benet women wish that they could have platforms to receive training on potential entrepreneurship skills to enable them to acquire basic knowledge of business skills and financial management
ii. The Benet women require access to affordable credit and financial support that can help them acquire capital to expand and diversify their businesses

7.3.11.5. Potential Risks and Barriers

i. There is limited access to financial institutions. The Benet have access to only microfinance FINCA Uganda Limited, UGAFODE Microfinance Limited and ASA Microfinance Limited. Ultimately, this limits their access to credit and the growth of businesses. The GROW Loan threshold is also quite high for the Benet women entrepreneurs and is likely to limit them from accessing the loan.

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ii. Women have limited access and control of assets like land and they may not be able to qualify for loan products with a requirement of collateral security.
iii. Many women entrepreneurs have limited business skills and knowledge to effectively manage their enterprises. Access to mentorship and guidance is often limited, hindering business growth.
iv. Cultural Barriers to traditional gender roles and cultural norms, limited access to resources, social stigma and decision-making power limit women's participation in business activities.
v. Limited infrastructure makes it difficult for women to access markets and distribute their products. This includes, among others, inadequate access to clean water, electricity, and poor roads, which hinder transportation and often hinder business operations.
vi. Women entrepreneurs may have limited awareness of their legal rights and business regulations.

7.3.11.6. Potential Positive Impacts of the Project and Proposed Recommendations

The proposed recommendations listed in the table below are intended to enhance the positive impacts anticipated. These measures are not automatically equivalent to activities under implementation. Only those explicitly identified as being within the project scope have been incorporated into the VGMP action plan and will be implemented. Other measures are addressed through complementary ESF instruments or existing project design features, while recommendations outside these frameworks are noted for consideration but do not form part of the current intervention.

Table 32. Potential Positive Impacts and Proposed Recommendations.

Sn	Potential Positive Impact	Proposed Recommendations
1	Economic empowerment through training and education. By acquiring new skills, they can engage in income-generating activities, improving their financial stability and independence	Tailor training programs to align with the local economic landscape and industries, ensuring that acquired skills are immediately applicable
		Include digital literacy and technology skills to help Benet women access modern business tools and opportunities
2	The GROW project may offer a platform for Benet women to build confidence and self-esteem. As they achieve success in their enterprises, they can develop a strong sense of self-worth and identity	Provide continuous mentorship and coaching to reinforce self-esteem and address personal and professional challenges
		Share inspiring success stories within the community to motivate and empower others
3	The GROW project could foster a sense of community and social connection among Benet women. By working together and supporting one another, they can build lasting relationships and a network of peers who share similar experiences and challenges	Establish women entrepreneurship groups or cooperatives where Benet women can collaborate on projects and share resources
		Create platforms for knowledge exchange, such as workshops or forums, where women can learn from each other's experiences.
		Develop community centres or virtual hubs dedicated to promoting solidarity and building connections among women
4	The GROW project may contribute to the preservation and promotion of the Benet culture. By promoting opportunities for women to engage in traditional practices and share their knowledge with others, the project can help safeguard the cultural heritage of the Benet community	Integrate cultural components into entrepreneurial activities, such as promoting traditional crafts, foods, or performances in business ventures.
		Establish a crafts and ecotourism hub/ Common user facility to provide space for exhibition, workshop, and storage and retail area. The facility will provide space for making traditional crafts, handmade jewellery, woven textiles and eco-friendly souvenirs for tourists both locally and internationally. The construction of the facility should use natural, locally sources, and biodegradable materials. The project could also provide equipment for organic milk production and processing. The Common user facility can provide a one stop centre foe training and capacity building
		Partner with cultural organizations to create marketing campaigns that highlight the unique heritage of the Benet community
		Offer workshops where women can pass on traditional knowledge and practices to younger generations.

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7.3.11.7. Potential Negative Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

The proposed mitigation measures directly address the identified potential negative impacts of the project. All measures outlined in this table are already integrated into the VMGP Action Plan, supported by relevant ESF instruments, and reinforced through the project design.

Table 33. Potential Negative Impacts and Proposed Recommendations.

Sn	Potential Negative Impact	Mitigation measure in the VMGP action Plan	Mitigation measure in the ESF instruments	Mitigation masures in the Project Design
1	Transactional exploitation and harassment can occur where intermediaries control access to loans, markets, or training slots, and where grievance channels are weak or inaccessible. These dynamics are intensified by past displacements and local tensions over land and resources	VMGP adopts the GBV sentive GRM which institutionalizes survivor-centered response: confidential reporting channels, trained GBV focal points, and referral pathways to health, psychosocial, and legal services.	GRM Handbook under ESF instruments ensures standardized complaint resolution and accountability.	Project design embeds grievance channels and partner with GBV service providers mapped under the project
2	Domestic and community backlash may rise as Benet women gain income, mobility, or visibility, potentially leading to intimate partner violence, coercion, or social ostracism.	Men and leaders are engaged through facilitated dialogues and public commitments to reduce backlash and normalize women's economic roles.	SEP requires inclusive engagement and awareness campaigns to reduce backlash.	Project design integrates gender-sensitive training schedules and safe transport stipends. The project is undetaking training sessions on Norms change by CARE international
3	Shared or newly constructed common user facilities and informal market spaces can expose women to OHS hazards: poor ventilation, unsafe handling of materials, inadequate sanitation, and accident risks during transport to markets or trainings.	VMGP requires routine project monitoring through which incidenents and OHS aspects are monitored OHS training, monitoring of incidents, and inclusion of OHS indicators in routine project monitoring.	ESMP covers OHS standards: lighting, ventilation, sanitation, PPE, and emergency referral systems.	Project design embeds ergonomic workstations, secure storage, and provision of PPE and first aid kits.

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7.3.11.8. Specific Interventions to be implemented under the Project

This section presents the activities selected for implementation under the project as part of the VMGP. They originate from the general recommendations raised during stakeholder engagement and are captured in various sections of the report. Activities that fall within the project scope have been explicitly identified, integrated into the action plan, and will be implemented. Recommendations outside the project scope are acknowledged but remain outside the current intervention framework.

i. Training in areas like entrepreneurship and to enable Benet women to engage in income-generating activities.
ii. Microfinance support to offer access to microfinance services such as small loans and saving programs to help Benet women grow their businesses.
iii. Market access to facilitate connections between Benet women and the local market enabling them to sell their products and services.
iv. Establish mentorship programs that pair Benet women with experienced entrepreneurs and other business partners.
v. Document Benet women's traditional practices stories and customs to preserve their cultural heritage.

7.3.11.9. Suggested Measures to Strengthen Local Governments to Address Issues for the Benet Women Entrepreneurs

Stakeholder engagement discussions highlighted several possible measures to strengthen the capacity of local governments in addressing VMG-related issues. While not all of these measures were formally agreed upon with local government all measures to improve local government capacity are either fully or in part, embedded within the VMGP Action Plan, supported by relevant ESF instruments, or reinforced through the project design.

Table 34. Suggested Measures to Strengthen LGs to Address Issues of the Benet Women Entreprenurs.

Sn	Measure	Implemented through the VMGP Action Plan	Implemented through the ESF instruments	Implemented through the project design
1	Offering capacity building and training of local government officials on gender equality, cultural sensitivity, and specific needs of Benet women entrepreneurs	VMGP includes capacity-building workshops tailored to Benet women entrepreneurs' needs.	SEP provides for inclusive stakeholder training and awareness.	Training modules embedded in various components of the project
2	Develop and implement policies that specifically address the needs and challenges of Benet women entrepreneurs, ensuring their inclusion in economic development initiatives	VMGP requires deliberate inclusion of Benet women in accessing GROW service and products.	SEP ensures policies reflect culturally appropriate engagement and inclusion.	Project design integrates gender-sensitive and inclusive policy measures of the ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups
3	Invest in infrastructure that supports the growth of Benet women-led businesses, such as	VMGP action plan prioritizes establishment of Common User Facilities that enables Benet	ESMP covers infrastructure standards and safeguards.	Project design includes provision of gender inclusive workplaces and

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	marketplaces, and storage facilities among others.	women's participation and enhance their productivity		enabling infrastructure.
4	Organise community forums and consultations to gather input for the Benet women entrepreneurs and incorporate their feedback into policymaking	VMGP mandates culturally appropriate consultations with Benet women.	SEP requires inclusive community engagement and feedback mechanisms.	Project design embeds participatory forums and feedback loops in the Grievance Redress Mechanism
5	Foster Public-private partnerships between local government, private sector, and Non-governmental organizations to provide comprehensive support to Benet women entrepreneurs. In addition, collaborative projects can be implemented to address the specific needs of the Benet women entrepreneurs such as vocational training and financial support.	VMGP action plan calls for partnerships with trusted NGOs and community-based organizations.	SEP mandates multi-stakeholder collaboration frameworks.	Project design embeds cross-sector partnerships and collaborative projects for training and financial support.

7.3.11.10. Action Plan for Implementing the Benet VMGP

The Action Plan sets out specific indicators and activities to achieve the targets and systematically address the needs and aspirations of the Benet community. While consultations identified a broad range of priorities, only the activities and interventions defined in the Action Plan will be implemented under this project

Table 35. Action Plan for Implementing the Benet VMGP

Outputs and targets	Specific activities	Verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Target
Component 1: Support for Women empowerment and Enterprise Development Services				
Improved entrepreneurial skills among the Benet women entrepreneurs	Conduct training sessions on entrepreneurship, business management and financial literacy	No. of training sessions conducted	Training attendance records and evaluation report	2 training sessions: 100 Benet women entrepreneurs trained
Component Two: Access to Finance for Women Entrepreneurs				
Create awareness about the GROW loan to enable Benet women entrepreneurs to access the loan	Provide credit facilities to the eligible Benet Women Entreprenurs	Project reports and financial institution reports	KPMG reports	At least 10 loans disbursed to Benet Women entrepreneurs
Component 3: Enabling Infrastructure and Facilities for Women Enterprise Growth and Transition				
Access to Common User Facilities	Construct Benet Artisan Hub bringing together production, training, marketing and cultural preservation under one	No. of common user facilities established among the Benet	Infrastructure set up in among the Benet	1 artisan Hub Constructed and Operational in Moroto

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	roof [3]			
Capacity Building of Implementing Entities	Conduct capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP	No. of entities trained on the VMGP	Training reports	10 implementing entities trained
Monitoring of implementation of the VMGP	Conduct periodic monitoring for implementation of the VMGP activities.	No. of Monitoring activities undertaken	Monitoring reports	1 monitoring activity conducted annually
Documenting the language and Culture of the Benet	Consultancy services to document the Benet language and culture	Benet culture and language documented	Consultancy report	I comprehensive resource for the Benet completed

[3] Where the ethnic minorities live in protected areas, the proposed common user facility should be established on government land for purposes of sustainability. Uganda Wild Life Authority will be consulted on land requirements and availability

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7.3.11.11. List of activities and budget for implementation of the Benet activities for women entrepreneurs under the GROW Project.

The activities presented in this section are derived from the Action Plan and will be formally incorporated into the project for implementation

Table 36. Proposed Budget for Implementimg the Benet VMGP

Sn	Activity	Budget	Responsible Party	Component	Timeline				
					Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5
1	Conduct training sessions on entrepreneurship, business management and financial literacy	40,000,000	MGLSD	Sub component 1B – Support for core business development for micro and small enterprises					
2	Consultancy services to document the Benet language and culture	300,000,000	MGLSD	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
3	Create awareness about the GROW loan to enable Benet women entrepreneurs to access the loan	80,000,000	PSFU	Sub component 2B - Facilitating access to credit for enterprises growth					
4	Construct Benet Artisan Hub bringing together production, training in Bamboo Value Addition marketing and cultural preservation.	1,200,000,000	MGLSD	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
5	Conduct capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP	80,000,000	MGLSD& PSFU	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
6	Conduct periodic monitoring for implementation of the VMGP activities.	80,000,000	MGLSD& PSFU	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
	Total	**1,730,000,000**							

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7.4. Vulnerable and Marginalised Group Plan for the Tepeth Women Entrepreneurs

7.4.1. Population and Location

Historically, the Tepeth were the original inhabitants of Karamoja but were driven to the top of Mount Moroto due to tribal wars with the Karimojong (took refuge in the mountains when the Karimojong arrived from Ethiopia in the 1600s. The Tepeth reduced from 23,422 (11,041 males; 12,381 females) in 2014 to 19,286 in 2024 (UBOS Census 2024. About 99.5% of the Tepeth reside in the rural areas of Tapac Sub- County, Tepeth County in Moroto District. They speak the "So" language and reside in conical huts made of sticks, thatch, and mud in the semi-arid savannahs and scrubby forests. In Tapac Sub- County, they reside in the six parishes of Tapach, Loyaraboth, Katikekile, Kodonyo, Natumukale, and Nakwanga. In Katikekile Sub- County, they are found in the five parishes of Lia, Musas, Musupo, Kakingol, and Narengenya, located in the mountain valleys of Mount Moroto at the border with Kenya. The VMGP consultations were conducted exclusively with women entrepreneurs within VMGs. This targeted approach reflected the project's emphasis on supporting entrepreneurial women as a distinct subset of the broader female population. While the total female population is reported for context, the consultation numbers represent engagement with those mapped as entrepreneurs, ensuring that the findings and recommendations are directly relevant to the intended beneficiaries

7.4.2. Social Organisation

Anthropological observations of the Tepeth reveal a social organization deeply embedded in kinship and communal solidarity. The Tepeth live in extended family units where multiple generations reside together, sharing responsibilities and pooling resources. This living arrangement is not only practical but also symbolically reinforces the community's reverence for elders, who are considered the custodians of tradition and the primary transmitters of cultural knowledge. The society is predominantly patriarchal, with men holding significant roles in family and community decision-making. A council of elders, esteemed for their wisdom and experience, plays a pivotal role in resolving disputes, guiding communal affairs, and safeguarding cultural customs. Among the Tepeth, formal authority in the council of elders is usually vested in male elders, reflecting customary gendered leadership patterns. Women's roles are often informal but influential: senior women, mothers, and ritual specialists act as advisors, convey community sentiment, and mobilize households. Women also participate through women's groups, age-set networks, and family heads, which the elders consult on matters affecting domestic life, social welfare, and rites. In practice, this means women shape outcomes indirectly, by providing information, mediating disputes at household level, and pressing elders to consider women's needs, rather than by occupying formal decision-making seats. This leadership is further structured through a hierarchical system featuring chiefs and sub-chiefs, who oversee conflict resolution and mediate interactions with external groups. Decision making in Tepeth elder councils is consensus oriented and deliberative. Elders convene to discuss issues such as land use, conflict resolution, resource allocation, and customary law; they deliberate until a broadly acceptable position emerges, often after consulting lineage heads and influential community actors. Consensus is preferred over majority voting, and decisions are legitimized through public pronouncements, ritual endorsement, or the backing of key kinship leaders. Where women's interests are at stake, elders typically seek input via separate consultations with women's representatives or through household intermediaries, and final rulings are announced by the elders' forum. Additionally, the Tepeth are organised into age sets, groups that individuals join throughout their lives, which serve as enduring networks of social support and collective participation in communal activities. These

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age sets, along with the extended family structure, underscore the community's profound connection to its environment and cultural heritage.

7.4.3. Gender Roles

During a focus group with Tepeth women entrepreneurs, participants highlighted a clear gendered division of labor. Men are primarily responsible for herding livestock and providing security for the community, while women focus on farming, creating handicrafts, and managing household duties. This delineation of roles reflects deeply rooted cultural practices and reinforces the social order within the Tepeth community.

7.4.4. Economic Activities

The Tepeth are gradually engaging in various economic sectors that aim to enhance their livelihoods and increase their socio-economic inclusion.
Traditional agriculture remains a cornerstone of the Tepeth economy. Like many rural communities in Uganda, they practice subsistence farming, cultivating staple crops such as maize, beans, and locally adapted vegetables. Some initiatives are also encouraging small-scale commercial agriculture where surplus produce finds its way onto local markets. In addition, livestock rearing, often on a small scale with animals like poultry, goats, and sometimes cattle, is practiced both for domestic use and as a form of financial security, providing a buffer during lean seasons or in times of economic stress.

Encouraged by broader development projects, certain segments of the Tepeth population are also exploring artisanal production. Traditional crafts and locally made items not only serve as expressions of cultural identity but also hold market potential. These crafts, when combined with local trade activities, can be an important income source. In many cases, training provided by government and non-governmental organizations helps enhance quality, market-readiness, and business skills, gradually enabling these products to reach a wider customer base.

In recognition of the socio-economic barriers faced by minority groups, several initiatives, such as the GROW Project led by Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, specifically target ethnic groups like the Tepeth. These initiatives provide capacity-building programs in areas such as financial literacy, business management, and value addition for locally produced goods. Such entrepreneurship training is fostering the emergence of small business ventures in sectors ranging from agriculture to craft production. Additionally, efforts are being made to valorize cultural heritage through tourism. Although cultural tourism has been more prominently developed among some indigenous groups, there is potential for the Tepeth to showcase their unique traditions and crafts to tourists, thereby creating additional income streams.

Beyond traditional sectors, emerging opportunities, such as digital entrepreneurship, are slowly making inroads into marginalized communities under broader digital inclusion programs like Uganda's Digital Acceleration Program. While the direct impact on the Tepeth is still developing, these initiatives aim to broaden the scope for income generation by integrating modern skills training with traditional economic activities, thus opening avenues for a diversified economic base.
In summary, while the Tepeth currently rely on traditional subsistence agriculture, small-scale livestock rearing, and artisan crafts for day-to-day survival, targeted interventions are beginning to encourage entrepreneurial ventures and cultural tourism. These multifaceted economic activities are designed not only to provide immediate financial stability but also to empower the Tepeth in the long term by improving access to markets, credit, and modern business skills.

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7.4.5. Culture and Tradition

The Tepeth community, once noted as one of the few groups in Uganda practicing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), has largely abandoned the practice in recent years, a shift largely attributed to sustained government campaigns and evolving social norms. In its place, the community continues to value the role of initiation ceremonies in marking the transition into adulthood. Ceremonies featuring traditional dances like "Naleyo" and "Edonga" are integral in imparting cultural rituals and teachings that reinforce social values and collective identity.

Additionally, the Tepeth celebrate a variety of festivals and communal ceremonies designed to strengthen social cohesion and preserve their cultural heritage. Notably, since the outlawing of FGM, an annual cultural day in November has been established as a critical forum for sensitization against practices such as FGM and early forced marriages, highlighting the community's shift toward more progressive norms.

Traditional religious beliefs among the Tepeth remain closely tied to their natural environment, with rituals aimed at appeasing spirits playing a significant role in their cultural life. In recent times, however, there has been a notable adoption of Christianity by some community members, a phenomenon marked by the blending of traditional beliefs with Christian practices. This syncretism reflects an adaptive cultural resilience, illustrating how the Tepeth continuously negotiate their heritage in the face of contemporary social, religious, and political influences.

7.4.6. Interventions by Non-Government Organisations

This section maps NGOs working with the Tepeth communities across the regions to inform future collaboration with the GROW Project. These organizations provide a complementary mix of advocacy, service delivery and capacity building and focus on one or more priority areas; Education, Livelihoods, Business development and Environmental conservation.

Table 37. Non Government Organisations Mapped Within the Tepeth Community

S/n	Name	Focus
1	Welthungerlife	Environmental conservation, livelihoods, infrastructure
2	Straight T	Education scholarships
3	Tapac Initiative for Community Development (TICODEP)	Education scholarships
4	Tapac Integrated Development Organization (TIDO)	Education scholarships to FGM survivors
5	Naita- A Tepeth CLA	Land rights awareness to communities
6	Caritas Moroto	Minerals and land rights
7	Matheniko Development Forum (MADEFO)	Women empowerment through livelihoods enhancement
8	Rural Resilient Community Empowerment for Sustainable Development.(RRCESD)	Women empowerment through VSLAs, Business development

7.4.7. Government Interventions

Table 38. Government Interventions among the Tepeth.

Initiative	Focus
Generating Growth Opportunities and productivity for Women enterprises (GROW) project	The project aims to increase entrepreneurial services for women, including those from marginalized communities like the Tepeth
Karamoja Regional Development Initiative (KAREDI)	Focuses on the development of the Karamoja sub region, which includes the Tepeth community. The initiative aims to improve infrastructure, education, health services and economic opportunities in the region.
Child trafficking prevention initiatives	Various program and research projects, such as those conducted by Makerere University and Resilient Africa Network (RAN), focus on addressing child trafficking in the Karamoja sub-region, which included the Tepeth community

7.4.8. Types of Businesses Engaged in by Tepeth Women Entrepreneurs

A diverse range of livelihood strategies that reflect both traditional practices and adaptive responses to contemporary opportunities characterizes the socio-economic landscape of the

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Tepeth. Over 80% of the community remains predominantly engaged in pastoralism, a cornerstone of their economic and cultural identity, while around 25% adopt subsistence farming on communal lands during the rainy season. This blend of livestock herding and seasonal agriculture illustrates their reliance on natural resources and collective land management for survival and economic stability. Historically, the Tepeth were not only pastoralists but also hunters and gatherers, supplementing their diet and resource base by harvesting honey from the forests. According to the Key informant interviews held with the focal point officer, and the CSOs, indication was that bee keeping is an important sustainable source of income for most of the Tepeth communities living around and adjacent to Moroto areas. There was uniform consensus that there was need to establish a common user facility equipped with honey value chain to increase the income for the Tepeth women entrepreneurs and the Tepeth community at large. The Key Informant interviews indicated that women entrepreneurs are also actively engaged in manufacturing arts and crafts to boost their income. The crafts business also showcases and preserves the Tepeth culture. Therefore, the common user facility would also consider incorporating a space for manufacturing arts and crafts and a display area. Today, economic diversification is evident as both men and women engage in mining activities, extracting gold, limestone, and marble in areas such as Kosiroi, Lia, and parishes including Natumukale, Loyaraboth, Musupo, and Nakwanga. This involvement in mining represents an important shift towards integrating alternative income sources beyond traditional pastoralism.

The gendered division of labour further shapes their economic structure. While men are primarily involved in cattle trading, a critical commercial activity for the community, women have increasingly participated in small-scale enterprises such as brewing, retailing, baking, and wholesale. This separation not only underscores longstanding cultural norms but also highlights the adaptive measures women employ to carve out their economic niches in a changing market environment.

Table 39. Types of Businesses Among the Tepeth Women Entrepreneurs.

Sector	Description
Livestock rearing	The women entrepreneurs rear cattle, Goats and sheep. Livestock provides a primary source of income for the Tepeth through the of animals and animal products
Mining	The Karamoja sub region, which includes the Tepeth community, is rich in limestone and marble deposits, which is used in construction. Gold mining is also done especially in the areas of Nakabati valley. Mining provides a primary sources of income for many Tepeth families through the sale of minerals and also created job opportunities for the local community
Retail businesses	Brewing, retailing, bakery and wholesale
Apiary	The Apiary business is an emerging and promising economic activity among the Tepeth community. Conventional methods are used to produce sheer honey from flowers of sheer tree and traditional honey from natural bee habitats. The apiary business provided a source of income through the sale of honey and other bee products.
Arts and Crafts	The Tepeth women entrepreneurs also produce arts and crafts with trainings undertaken by NGOs in the area.

7.4.9. Existence of WEPs

Focus group discussions with Tepeth women entrepreneurs revealed a significant gap that there are currently no established platforms dedicated to supporting their entrepreneurial efforts. Recognizing this, it is imperative for the GROW Project to establish Women Entrepreneurship Platforms (WEPs). These platforms would provide essential access to project services and products, foster networking, and empower women through collective capacity building. By addressing this void, the project can help Tepeth women overcome socio-economic challenges and tap into new opportunities for growth

Table 40. Some of the Organisations Supporting Tepeth Women Entrepreneurs

Association supporting the WEPs	Focus
Emyooga	Empower women entrepreneurs by providing financial support to enable them to do business through their SACCOs.
Micro-Projects	These projects are established to support women to get financial grants under OPM to enable them to support the welfare of their families.
Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Association Limited (UWEAL)	Supports women in business innovations and nurtures their project ideas they provide training, mentoring, business counselling, and networking opportunities to help women entrepreneurs succeed.
Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programmes (UWEP)	Implemented by the Ministry of Gender labour and Social Development, UWEP aims to improve access to financial services for women and equip them with skills for entrepreneurship growth. the program provides interest-free credit for enterprise development and offers training in business skills and management
FIDA	This has helped fight against gender-based violence within the families and legal representation of women.

7.4.10. General Aspirations and Needs of the Tepeth Women Entrepreneurs

During the development of the VMGP, Benet women entrepreneurs articulated clear and practical aspirations. These priorities informed the VMGP's proposed interventions and guided the design of targeted measures to ensure that project activities respond to Tepeth women's economic goals, cultural values, and safety needs.

Table 41. Business and Investment Needs of the Tepeth Women Entrepreneurs.

Sn	Need	Intervention/ Opportunities
1	Tepeth women entrepreneurs often lack access to affordable credit and financial services to start off expand their businesses	Utilize the microfinance services to enable the women to access the GROW Loan. For example, women entrepreneurs engaged in crop farming can use credit to purchase fertilizer, farming equipment and farming equipment
2	Investment in training programs focused on business management, financial literacy, and technical skills	The Grow project should offer training programs that empower women with the knowledge and skills needed to run successful businesses. For example, training in financial literacy will help women entrepreneurs manage their finances better, leading to more sustainable business practices
3	Mentorship and networking opportunities to connect with experienced business leaders and peers	Providing mentorship and networking opportunities to connect with experienced business leaders and peers to help women entrepreneurs gain insights and advice from successful business leaders, helping them navigate challenges and grow their businesses.

7.4.11. Potential Risks and Barriers

i. The region is difficult to access due to challenging road conditions and the mountain barrier that separates it from the district headquarters.
ii. The Tepeth society practices gender inequality, similar to many other communities in Uganda. Women are often treated as inferior and are socially excluded from decision-making processes and civic engagement because they are perceived as having little worth. Among the Tepeth, Domestic Violence is normalised, with wife beating being viewed as a form of discipline.
iii. There is limited access to education and low literacy levels among the Tepeth people. Many Tepeth children have to attend schools in neighboring areas where the primary language of instruction is Ngakarimojong, rather than their native Soo language. As a result, school dropout rates are notably high, especially among girls.
iv. The community experiences poor radio and telecommunication networks, along with a lack of electricity. Residents often have to travel long distances to access telecommunication services, such as Mobile Money and phone charging, in Moroto town. Leaders and businessmen predominantly hold phone ownership, with males making up the majority of users.

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v. The Tepeth community is gradually losing its native language, Soo. Surrounded by tribes such as the Turkana, Pokot, and Matheniko who speak Ngakarimojong, the community has increasingly adopted this dominant language

vi. Development partners have, at times, unintentionally harmed the community by converting essential services and resources into fee-based systems, reducing access and affordability for the poorest households, and by conducting superficial, one-off consultations that amount to tokenistic engagement; together, monetization and tokenism block meaningful community participation, undermine customary management systems, and prevent Tepeth people from shaping equitable, culturally appropriate solutions that protect livelihoods and social cohesion.

7.4.12. Grievances Management.

The Tepeth have a hierarchical leadership structure with chiefs and sub-chiefs overseeing various aspects of community life, including conflict resolution and interaction with external entities. The Tepeth society is organised into age sets or groups that individuals belong to throughout their lives. These groups provide social support and participate in communal activities together. Tepeth community operates on principles of mutual aid and cooperation. The Kethnans also known as the high priest are the highest decision-making organ of the council of elders. They play a crucial role in resolving disputes, making community decisions, and preserving cultural traditions. They preside over all the traditional functions in their communities. Under the GROW Project, a clear referral pathway that connects traditional mechanisms with the GROW Project's formal GRM will be developed in line with figure (5). For instance:

- Step 1: Grievance reported to community elders
- Step 2: Elders mediate and document the issue
- Step 3: If unresolved, the grievance is referred to the GROW Project's local representative or GRCs' other relevant entities as indicated in the grievance redress pathway for Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups in Figure (5).
- Step 4: Formal resolution process initiated by the GROW Project, with feedback provided to the community

Tepth women will have the option to access the project's Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) directly, without needing to go through community elders or the GRC, especially in cases where they may feel uncomfortable or fear retaliation. This is particularly important for grievances related to gender-based violence (GBV), where confidentiality, safety, and survivor agency are paramount.

In addition to informal and customary mechanisms, the project GRM includes multiple culturally appropriate and accessible intake channels, such as: Focal Point officers at the local government levels, dedicated toll free line 0800307777, suggestion boxes at the district local governments.

All GRM staff will be trained in survivor-centered approaches, and GBV-related grievances will follow a confidential referral pathway aligned with the national GBV response protocol. These pathways are designed to avoid re-traumatization and ensure access to psychosocial, legal, and medical support. For further details on the GRM structure, intake options, and referral protocols, please refer to the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)

7.4.13. VMGP Development Process and Approach

7.4.13.1. Consultation Process with the Tepeth

The consultation process among the Tepeth included special consideration for women entrepreneurs. Consultations were undertaken among the Tepeth women entrepreneurs on 27th January 2025 at the Moroto District headquarters and at the Moroto Regional Museum. More consultations were held on the 23rd May with CSOs (MADEFO and RRCESD) working among the Tepeth. Ultimately, women entrepreneurs were identified within the Tepeth community including local organisations. Focus group discussions were then held with women groups to gather detailed feedback and insights on how the Tepeth women entrepreneurs can benefit from the GROW Project. The table below illustrates the key stakeholder consultations among the Tepeth women entrepreneurs.

Table 42. Stakeholders Consulted During the Developmenent of the Tepeth VMGP.

S/n	Stakeholder	Venue of meeting	Date of meeting	No. of Participants
1	Katikekile kitopolounoi women group	Moroto District Headquarters	27th January 2025	8
2	Tapac Women Saving group	Moroto regional museum	27th January 2025	13
3	So Rights Development Organization (SORIDO)	Murongole	27th Jan 2025	5
4	Matheniko Development Forum (MADEFO)-	Organisation offices	23rd May 2025	3
5	Rural Resilient Community Empowerment for Sustainable Development.(RRCESD)	Phone Call	23rd May 2025	3
6	District Local Government (LCV councilors of Tapac and Katekile sub counties and the District focal point officer for Moroto District)	Moroto District Head quarters	24th May 2025	3
	Total			**35**

7.4.13.2. Applicability of Free Prior and Informed Consent

The GROW project team consulted with Tepeth during the project design with dedicated sessions specific to the women entrepreneurs, for example during the preparation of VMGF. The preparation of VMGP was entirely dedicated to Tepeth women entrepreneurs, and their full engagement was secured during this process. Informed consultations with Tepeth were, therefore, carried out and this led to broad community support of the project. At the current stage, and based on ESS7, FPIC is deemed not to apply, because the project activities will not affect their lands, territories or resources therefore, will have no adverse impacts on land and associated natural resources under customary use or occupation. The project will also not relocate any VMGs and will have no negative impacts on cultural heritage. The GROW project does not support the use of Benet cultural heritage for commercial purposes. Therefore, in line with ESS7, FPIC is not triggered on this ground either.

7.4.13.3. Specific Issues for the Tepeth Women Entrepreneurs and Proposed Recommendations

Stakeholders provided valuable suggestions and recommendations during the engagement sessions. While some of these inputs extend beyond the project's mandate and cannot be implemented under this intervention, such as implementing scholarships, school feeding programs, reproductive health services, and health promotion interventions, those that fall within the project scope will be identified, incorporated, and pursued as part of the implementation process outlined in the action plan.

Table 43. Specific Issues and Proposed Recommendations Captured During the Development of the Tepeth VMGP.

Sn	Issues	Proposed Recommendations
1	Marginalised women entrepreneurs like the Tepeth are particularly susceptible to GBV due to entrenched patriarchal norms and economic dependency. For Tepeth women, the double burden of social exclusion and gender discrimination not only increases their exposure to physical and emotional violence in both domestic and public spheres but also undermines their ability to participate fully in entrepreneurial activities. Such violence can manifest in overt physical abuse, coercive control in business negotiations, or intimidation that restricts freedom of movement and communication.	Community-led awareness and norm transformation through initiatives that use culturally sensitive dialogue to challenge harmful gender norms have been shown to reduce GBV. Workshops and awareness campaigns involving local leaders and peer educators can help shift attitudes and empower women to recognise and report abuse
		Establishing "one-stop" centres where legal aid, psychosocial counselling, and reproductive health services are offered can provide immediate support to survivors. Coordinated, trauma-informed service delivery improves recovery outcomes and fosters resilience among survivors
		Enhancing financial literacy, access to microcredit, and entrepreneurship training not only builds business capacity but also reduces economic dependency, a key driver of vulnerability to GBV. Studies indicate that when women have better control over their finances, they are more able to resist and leave abusive situations
2	Tepeth children particularly girls have limited access to education due to cultural and economic barriers. Economic hardship among marginalized communities can compel families to involve children in entrepreneurial activities, either as unpaid helpers or as a means to sustain household income. While child labor is not unique to women entrepreneurs, its prevalence among the Tepeth community exacerbates intergenerational cycles of poverty and limits children's access to education and development opportunities.	Implementing scholarships, school feeding programs, and conditional cash transfers targeted at marginalized communities can mitigate the incentive for child labor. Programs that directly bridge the gap between economic needs and educational access have been shown to reduce child labor rates significantly
		Microfinance and livelihood diversification programs that assist families in augmenting household earnings can lessen the economic pressures that necessitate child labour. Targeted income support can be an effective means of keeping children in school
		Strengthening local monitoring of child labour practices, alongside reinforcing government labour standards, ensures that children's rights are protected. Collaborative efforts between community-based organizations and governmental bodies can create effective watchdog networks
3	Tepeth women and girls have limited access to health care services leading to high maternal and child mortality rates. Marginalized groups, including Tepeth women entrepreneurs, are often at increased risk for HIV/AIDS due to intersecting vulnerabilities such as limited health literacy, restricted access to healthcare services, and pervasive social stigma	Establish community health centers that provide cultural sensitive healthcare services**.** Build/extend health services nearer the Tepeth community
		Health promotion interventions must be tailored to address language and cultural barriers. Engaging trusted community figures in outreach initiatives can enhance the acceptance of HIV prevention and treatment messages, leading to increased testing and adherence to antiretroviral therapies (ART)
		Deploying mobile clinics and supporting community health workers to provide regular HIV screening and care services can significantly improve health outcomes. Integrated health service models that combine HIV care with broader primary health services have proven effective in similar contexts
		Initiatives that use peer educators and community dialogues to confront and reduce HIV/AIDS stigma can create environments in which individuals feel safer to seek help. Studies have shown that reducing stigma is closely linked to improved treatment adherence and preventive behaviours
4	Tepeth women have limited access to economic opportunities, leading to poverty and overdependence on men. Tepeth women entrepreneurs are subsequently deprived of critical networks, information, and resources that other market actors take for granted. This exclusion limits their access to formal credit, market linkages, and political advocacy, further reinforcing cycles	Building and Strengthening Entrepreneurial Networks through facilitating the establishment of dedicated business cooperatives, mentorship circles, and peer-to-peer networks allows these women to share experiences, access information, and jointly negotiate better terms with financiers and service providers. Empirical evidence suggests that robust social capital is a transformative force for marginalised entrepreneurs
		Inclusive Policy and Representation through actively involving Tepeth women in policy dialogue and decision-making processes at both local and national levels can help ensure that their needs are reflected in development programs. Participatory governance models have been demonstrated to foster social inclusion and improve resource allocation to

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	of poverty and marginalisation. Brown, et al (2017), linked exclusion not only to reduced economic opportunities but also to lower self-confidence and diminished agency	marginalised groups.
		Targeted capacity-building initiatives through tailored training in both technical and soft skills, from financial management to leadership, can significantly reduce the barriers imposed by social exclusion. Programs that blend skill development with community networking have proven effective in enhancing economic participation and driving inclusive growth
5	Over the years, the young generation has not been trained in cultural heritage mentorship due to limited resources to convene. The language was also viewed as a security threat among the Karimojongs. This has led to a diminishing of the Tepeth language and culture.	Facilitate the documentation of the Tepeth language and cultural heritage including developing Tepeth dictionary, and learning materials for children.
6	Tepeth culture and language are already getting erased due to interaction with other cultures and a lack of documentation	Collaborative documentation and archiving through partnering with local academic institutions, such as Makerere University (which has successfully engaged in similar projects to document endangered languages), to develop a digital corpus of the Tepeth language. This would involve recording oral histories, traditional songs, rituals, narratives, and vocabulary, then archiving them in accessible digital repositories
		Support for cultural festivals and community outreach through organising annual cultural festivals that celebrate Tepeth music, dance, and storytelling. These events can be used not only to reinforce cultural pride but also to disseminate language resources developed through documentation projects.
7	Integrated and Cross-Cutting Strategies Participatory, community-centred programming through engaging Tepeth women entrepreneurs, as well as broader community stakeholders, in every phase of program design and implementation ensures that interventions address real challenges and are culturally relevant. Participatory action research (PAR) models can be instrumental in this process. Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships through coordinated efforts among government entities, non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, and the private sector. Collaborative frameworks allow for the pooling of resources and expertise needed to tackle interconnected challenges at multiple levels. Robust Monitoring and Adaptive Management through establishing monitoring and evaluation systems enables the continuous tracking of program effectiveness, with adjustments made based on both quantitative data and qualitative community feedback. This adaptive management approach is crucial for ensuring long-term impact and sustainability.	

7.4.13.4. General Aspirations and Needs of the Tepeth Women Entrepreneurs

i. Strengthening the existing business women groups to enable them to get empowered
ii. Training on entrepreneurship. The Tepeth women wish that they could have platforms to receive training on potential entrepreneurship skills to enable them to acquire basic knowledge of business skills and financial management
iii. Access to credit and financial support, the Tepeth women require access to affordable credit and financial support that can help them acquire capital to expand and diversify their businesses
iv. Support to have exchange visits to other minority group communities to learn and get experience in managing their business.

7.4.13.5. Potential Risks and Barriers

Identified barriers and risks highlight the need to have targeted interventions and support to help the Tepeth women entrepreneurs overcome challenges and achieve their business aspirations.

i. The GROW Loan threshold is also quite high for the Benet women entrepreneurs and is likely to limit them from accessing the loan.
ii. Women have limited access and control of assets like land and they may not be able to qualify for loan products with a requirement of collateral security.

iii. Many women entrepreneurs have limited business skills and knowledge to effectively manage their enterprises. Access to mentorship and guidance is often limited, hindering business growth.
iv. Cultural Barriers to traditional gender roles and cultural norms, limited access to resources, social stigma and decision-making power limit women's participation in business activities.
v. Limited infrastructure makes it difficult for women to access markets and distribute their products. This includes, among others, inadequate access to clean water, electricity, and poor roads, which hinder transportation and often hinder business operations.

7.4.13.6. Potential Positive Impacts of the Project on the Tepeth Women Entrepreneurs

The project is anticipated to generate positive outcomes for the Tepeth community through enhanced women's entrepreneurship, expanded skills development, and more inclusive participation in decision-making. This section summarizes the general recommendations emerging from stakeholder engagement. Of these, only measures consistent with the project scope have been retained. Such activities have been incorporated into the action plan for implementation, whereas recommendations beyond the project framework are noted for consideration but do not form part of the intervention.

Table 44. Potential Positive Impacts and Proposed Recommendations

Sn	Potential Positive Impact	Proposed Recommendations
1	The project will grant women entrepreneurs access to financial resources, enabling them to scale up their businesses	Develop partnerships with microfinance institutions to provide affordable loans and grants tailored to Tepeth women's business needs
		Conduct financial literacy workshops to ensure women understand budgeting, investment strategies, and how to manage credit responsibly
		Establish a revolving fund to ensure sustained access to financial resources for long-term business growth
2	Through mentorship and training initiatives, Tepeth women entrepreneurs will develop vital business skills, enhancing their capacity to manage and expand their enterprises.	Design personalized mentorship programs by matching Tepeth women entrepreneurs with mentors who specialize in their industry or field
		Regularly update training curricula to include emerging trends such as digital marketing and sustainable business practices
		Organize peer-to-peer learning sessions to foster collaboration and shared experiences among women entrepreneurs
3	The project will promote networking by establishing and reinforcing women's entrepreneurship platforms, allowing them to engage with fellow business owners, potential customers, and mentors	Host regular networking events, both local and regional, to connect Tepeth women entrepreneurs with potential business partners and clients.
		Create an online platform where women can showcase their products, access resources, and network with stakeholders remotely
		Develop partnerships with national and international organizations to expand their networking opportunities and market access
4	By setting up shared facilities, the project will enhance business productivity for women entrepreneurs, equipping them with essential tools and support for success	Equip shared facilities with modern tools and technologies that cater to diverse industries represented by Tepeth women.
		Provide training on the effective use and maintenance of shared equipment to ensure optimal utilization.
		Assign facility coordinators to support entrepreneurs in accessing resources and troubleshooting challenges.

7.4.13.7. Potential Negative Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

The proposed mitigation measures directly address the identified potential negative impacts of the project. All measures outlined in this table are already integrated into the VMGP Action Plan, supported by relevant ESF instruments, and reinforced through the project design.

Table 45.Potential Negative Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures.

Sn	Potential Negative Impact	Mitigation measures in the VMGP Action Plan	Mitigation Measures in the ESF instruments	Mitigation Measures in the Project Design

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1	Domestic backlash can occur due to women access to loans or new income which may jeopardize women's safety and undermining business gains.	VMGP mandates facilitated dialogues with men and Tepeth community leaders in all activities and public commitments to legitimize women's economic roles.	SEP embeds inclusive engagement and awareness campaigns to reduce backlash.	Integrate facilitated sessions with men, elders, and household members into the loan disbursement cycle to normalize women's economic roles and reduce backlash
2	Loans taken without adequate business skills or market access can lead to default, forced sale of assets, or reliance on male guarantors, eroding women's autonomy.	VMGP mandates training sessions on entrepreneurship, business management and financial literacy	SEP supports transparent beneficiary identification and capacity-building frameworks.	Project design embeds peer networks, mentorship programs, and tailored entrepreneurship training modules.
3	Shared or newly constructed common user facilities and informal market spaces can expose women to OHS hazards: poor ventilation, unsafe handling of materials, inadequate sanitation, and accident risks during transport to markets or trainings.	VMGP requires OHS training, monitoring of incidents, and inclusion of OHS indicators in routine project monitoring.	ESIA and ESMP embeds OHS standards: lighting, ventilation, sanitation, PPE, and emergency referral systems.	Project design incorporates Environment and Sovial Impact Assesments to mitigate the negative impacts of the established infrastructure

7.4.13.8. Specific Interventions under the Project

This section presents the activities selected for implementation under the project. They originate from the general recommendations raised during stakeholder engagement and are captured in various sections of the report. Activities that fall within the project scope have been explicitly identified, integrated into the action plan, and will be implemented. Recommendations outside the project scope are acknowledged but remain outside the current intervention framework

i. Conduct training sessions on entrepreneurship, business management and financial literacy
ii. Constructing common user facility and equip it with value addition materials for Craft making and Honey production and processing. The hub can also have a display area for the materials and act as training center and community center for meetings.
iii. Document to Tepeth language and Culture
iv. Capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP
v. Monitoring implementation activities for the VMGP activities

7.4.13.8. Suggested Measures to Strengthen Local Government to Address VMG Issues

Stakeholder engagement discussions highlighted several possible measures to strengthen the capacity of local governments in addressing VMG-related issues. While not all of these measures were formally agreed upon with local government all measures to improve local government capacity are either fully or in part, embedded within the VMGP Action Plan, supported by relevant ESF instruments, or reinforced through the project design.

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Table 46. Suggested Measures to Strengthen Local Government to Address Issues of Tepeth Women Entreprenurs

Sn	Measure	Implemented through the VMGP Action Plan	Implemented through the ESF instruments	Implemented through the project design
1	Offering capacity building and training of local government officials on gender equality, cultural sensitivity, and specific needs of Tepeth women entrepreneurs	VMGP includes capacity-building workshops tailored to Tepeth women entrepreneurs' needs.	SEP provides for inclusive stakeholder training and awareness.	Training modules embedded in various components of the project
2	Develop and implement policies that specifically address the needs and challenges of Tepeth women entrepreneurs, ensuring their inclusion in economic development initiatives	VMGP requires deliberate inclusion of Tepeth women in accessing GROW service and products.	SEP ensures policies reflect culturally appropriate engagement and inclusion.	Project design integrates gender-sensitive and inclusive policy measures of the ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups
3	Invest in infrastructure that supports the growth of Tepeth women-led businesses, such as marketplaces, and storage facilities among others.	VMGP action plan prioritizes establishment of Common User Facilities that enables Tepeth women's participation and enhance their productivity	ESMP covers infrastructure standards and safeguards.	Project design includes provision of gender inclusive workplaces and enabling infrastructure.
4	Organise community forums and consultations to gather input for the Tepeth women entrepreneurs and incorporate their feedback into policymaking	VMGP mandates culturally appropriate consultations with Tepeth women.	SEP requires inclusive community engagement and feedback mechanisms.	Project design embeds participatory forums and feedback loops in the Grievance Redress Mechanism
5	Foster Public-private partnerships between local government, private sector, and Non-governmental organizations to provide comprehensive support to Tepeth women entrepreneurs. In addition, collaborative projects can be implemented to address the specific needs of the Tepeth women entrepreneurs such as vocational training and financial support.	VMGP action plan calls for partnerships with trusted NGOs and community-based organizations.	SEP mandates multi-stakeholder collaboration frameworks.	Project design embeds cross-sector partnerships and collaborative projects for training and financial acess

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7.4.13.10. Action Plan for implementing the Tepeth VMGP

The action plan sets out specific indicators and activities to achieve the targets and systematically address the needs and aspirations of the Tepeth community. While consultations identified a broad range of priorities, only the activities and interventions defined in the Action Plan will be implemented under this project

Table 47. Action Plan for Implementing the Tepeth VMGP

Outputs and targets	Specific activities	Verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Responsibility	Target
Component One: Support for Women Empowerment and Enterprise Development Services					
Training programs for Tepeth women entrepreneurs	Conduct training sessions on entrepreneurship, business management and financial literacy	No. of training sessions conducted	Training attendance records and evaluation report	MGLSD	2 training sessions: 100 Tepeth women entrepreneurs trained
Component Two: Access to Finance for Women Entrepreneurs					
Access to GROW loan	Create awareness about the GROW loan to enable Tepeth women entrepreneurs to access the loan	No. of loans disbursed to refugee women	Project reports and financial institution report	PSFU	
Component Three: Enabling Infrastructure and Facilities for Women Enterprise Growth and Development					
Access to Common User Facilities	Constructing common user facility and equip it with value addition materials for Craft making and Honey production and processing. The hub can also have a display area for the materials and act as training center and community center for meetings. [4]	No. of common user facilities established among the Tepeth	Honey Production and Value Addition hub constructed and equipped.	MGLSD	1 artisan Hub Constructed and Operational in Kween
Document to Tepeth language and Culture	Consultancy services to document the Tepeth language and culture	Tepeth language and Culture documented	Tepeth language and culture documented	MGLSD	I comprehensive resource for the Benet completed
Capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP	Conduct capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP	No. of entities trained on the VMGP	Monitoring reports	MGLSD	10 implementing entities trained
Monitoring implementation activities for the VMGP activities	Conduct periodic monitoring for implementation of the VMGP	No. of monitoring activities undertaken	Monitoring reports	MGLSD	1 monitoring activity conducted annually

[4] Where the ethnic minority groups live in forest-protected areas, the proposed common user facilities will be established on government land for purposes of sustainability. Uganda Wildlife Authority will be consulted on the land requirements and availability.

7.4.13.11. List of activities and budget for implementation of the Tepeth activities for women entrepreneurs under the GROW Project.

The activities presented in this section are derived from the Action Plan and will be formally incorporated into the project for implementation

Table 48. Proposed Budget for Implementing the Tepeth VMGP

Sn	Activity	Budget	Responsible Entity	Component	Timeline				
					Y1	Y2	Y3	Y 4	Y5
1	Conduct training sessions on entrepreneurship, business management and financial literacy	40,000,000	MGLSD	Sub component 1B – Support for core business development for micro and small enterprises					
2	Consultancy services to document the Tepeth language and culture	300,000,000	MGLSD	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
3	Create awareness about the GROW loan to enable Tepeth women entrepreneurs to access the loan	80,000,000	PSFU	Sub component 2B - Facilitating access to credit for enterprises growth					
4	Constructing and equipping of a Honey Production and value addition hub to also act as a display and training center and community center for meetings	1,200,000,000	MGLSD	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
5	Conduct capacity building sessions for entities implementing the VMGP	80,000,000	MGLSD &PSFU	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
6	Conduct periodic monitoring for implementation of the VMGP	80,000,000	MGLSD& PSFU	Sub Component 3B – Enabling Access to Gender Inclusive Workplace infrastructure.					
	Total	**1,780000,000**							

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Annex One: Photo Album for Consultations during the Development of the GROW Project Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Plan (VMGP)



Figure 9. Focus Group Discussion with Teuso Women entrepreneurs



Figure 10. Focus Group Discussion with the Teuso Women Entrepreneurs

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Figure 11. GROW focal Point Officer for Kaabong district facilitated the FGD among the women entrepreneurs in the Kalapata Market, Kalapata Sub County



Figure 12. Alcohol Business is common in every town center with women taking the front line



Figure 13. Batwakazi women engaged in Focus Group Discussion.



Figure 14. Batwakazi Women of Kashasha were also engaged in the FGD.

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Figure 15. FGD among Batwakazi Women Entrepreneurs in Kashasha sub county, Rubanda District.



Figure 16. Some of the Key informant Batwakazi of Mabuyemeru, Busanzi





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Figure 17. Some of the participants feeling in consent forms with the aid of the GROW Focal Point Officer, Rubanda District.



Figure 18. Stakeholder engagement in Bituuko settlement.



Figure 19. Apiculture is a viable business among the Batwakazi in Rubanda district.







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Figure 20. Benet Women entrepreneurs during consultations.



Figure 22. Benet Women Handicraft Association adds value to bamboo through making bamboo handicrafts.



Figure 24. Respondents selected for interview among the Tepeth.

Figure 21. Making Handicrafts is a lucrative business among the Benet women entrepreneurs



Figure 23. Benet Women Handicraft Association has diversified to farming of cabbages to ensure sustainable flow of income within the group.



Figure 25. Consultation with the Tepeth Women entrepreneurs.

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Figure 26. Illustration of some of the Micro Businesses among the Tepeth Women entrepreneurs.



Figure 27. Facilitating the Tepeth women entrepreneurs to fill in the consent forms.



Figure 28. GROW project Focal Point Officer aiding the Tepeth women entrepreneurs in filling consent forms.



Figure 29. Some of the Businesses undertaken by tepeth women entrepreneurs in Umeme Zone , Moroto Suburb

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