



Empower Women, Empower a Community - Uganda

Budget: \$21,000 for a one-year project. Fully funded.

The Project:

This project follows on from previous women's empowerment projects and comprises two initiatives that will have a direct impact on vulnerable women living in some of the poorest communities in Mbale. The first initiative is women's savings and loans groups which have demonstrated great success since being implemented in 2011. This project will create 18 more groups together with ongoing training and project management. A new support officer will be employed to provide greater support and follow-up to existing groups. The second initiative is vocational skills and business training for young mums to learn income-generating skills to look after themselves and their young children. (Student graduation pic right).



Outcomes and Impact:

- A full-time Project Officer was appointed and is responsible for daily monitoring and support of the existing 100+ network of existing savings groups. This is proving to be a strategic outlay as the program continues to expand.
- Refresher training has been held with leaders of the Village Savings and Loans (VSLA) groups and the Train-the-Trainer team who play a key role in monitoring and evaluation across multiple groups.
- 12 new VSLA groups have been started in the Mt Elgon area and 2 in northern Uganda in an ex-refugee camp.
- COVID-19 has affected the ability to visit groups personally at times and regular phone calls have replaced visits.
- There are currently 274 at our partner's vocational training school which includes hairdressing and tailoring with plans for training in food production eg rearing goats and raising poultry.



Through the VSLA program, Fatina (pic RHS) has become more independent as have many women in her group. *"The savings has helped us as women, rather than relying on men only."* Fatina is incredibly proud (as she should be!) that she has educated one of her children all the way through university, the first in her family! Fatina supports herself by buying matooke bananas and cutting them into clusters for people to buy in the village. Agatha (middle), a widow, has opened a small café and is now able to send her two children to school. *"Not only has it benefitted us, it benefits the whole community. We are better neighbours and we are more connected."*

There are a staggering 20,000 indirect beneficiaries of this project and 3,700 directly benefitting. It is truly life-changing for so many with VSLA groups becoming self-sustaining once established. Thank you for supporting these communities with great projects!