



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Plan
for the Batwa around the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park

UNDER THE PROJECT
Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate Smart Development
(IFPA-CD)
P170466

Prepared by the Ministry of Water and Environment and Uganda Wildlife Authority

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ACRONYMS

BDO	Batwa Development Organisation
BIDO	Batwa Indigenous Development Organisation
BIEO	Batwa Indigenous Empowerment Organisation
BINP	Bwindi Impenetrable National Park
BMCT	Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust
CFR	Central Forest Reserve
CRM	Collaborative Resource Management
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DLG	District Local Government
ESF	Environmental and Social Framework
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESS	Environmental and Social Standard
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FIP	Forestry Investment Programme
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent
GoU	Government of Uganda
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
IDA	International Development Association
IFPA-CD	Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate Smart Development Project
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MGNP	Mgahinga Gorilla National Park
MTWA	Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities
MUST	Mbarara University of Science and Technology
MWE	Ministry of Water and Environment
NFA	National Forestry Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NP	National Park
PA	Protected Area
PF	Process Framework
PROBICOU	Pro-biodiversity Conservationists in Uganda
TSP	Technical Service Provider
UWA	Uganda Wildlife Authority
VG	Vulnerable Groups
VIC	Visitor Information Center
VMGF	Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Framework
VMGP	Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Plan
VMG	Vulnerable and Marginalized Group
WB	World Bank
WR	Wildlife Reserve

Introduction

The Government of Uganda (GoU) is implementing the “Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate-Smart Development (IFPA-CD or Project) Project”. The project is financed by the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank (with financing of US\$148.2 million equivalent). The implementation of the project is led by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), and the National Forestry Authority (NFA). As of August 31, 2025, the NFA has been mainstreamed into MWE. Therefore, throughout this document, all subsequent references to this entity will be noted as MWE/ex-NFA to accurately reflect this organizational change. The project was approved in April 2020, became effective in August 2021, and closes on June 30, 2026.

The development objective of the Project is (i) to improve sustainable management of forests and protected areas and (ii) increase benefits to communities from forests in target landscapes. Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (hereinafter BINP or Bwindi), located in the Albertine Rift, is one of the protected areas under the project.

During project preparation, the MWE, jointly with UWA and ex-NFA, prepared and disclosed the project specific [Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Framework \(VMGF\)](#).¹ The VMGF was prepared to meet the requirements of the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) under the Environmental and Social Standard 7 (ESS7) on Indigenous Peoples / Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities. The purpose of the VMGF is to guide the preparation and implementation of Project interventions where there is a presence of these Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups (VMG) in Project areas.

The VMGF provides guidance to the implementing agencies on addressing the needs of **distinct, vulnerable, social and cultural groups** which possess the following characteristics, as defined by ESS7: *(i) self-identification as members of a distinct cultural group; (ii) collective attachment to geographically distinct -habitats or ancestral territories; (iii) customary cultural, economic or social institutions that are separate from those of the rest of the society; and (iv) an indigenous language, often different from the official language of the country or region.* The Batwa people is a group that meets these criteria in the IFPA-CD Project area, described in detail in section 4.2 below.

The VMGF recognizes the importance of the rights and interests of the VMGs / the Batwa and calls for their effective engagement in the design and implementation of the Project activities in four of the Project’s protected areas, namely Echuya Central Forest Reserve (CFR), Mgahinga Gorilla, Bwindi Impenetrable and Semuliki National Parks (NP), as the Batwa live adjacent to these four Protected Areas (PA). These PAs are shown on the map below.

¹ <https://ugandawildlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Vulnerable-and-Marginalized-Groups-Framework-VMGF-for-Uganda-IFPA-CD.pdf>

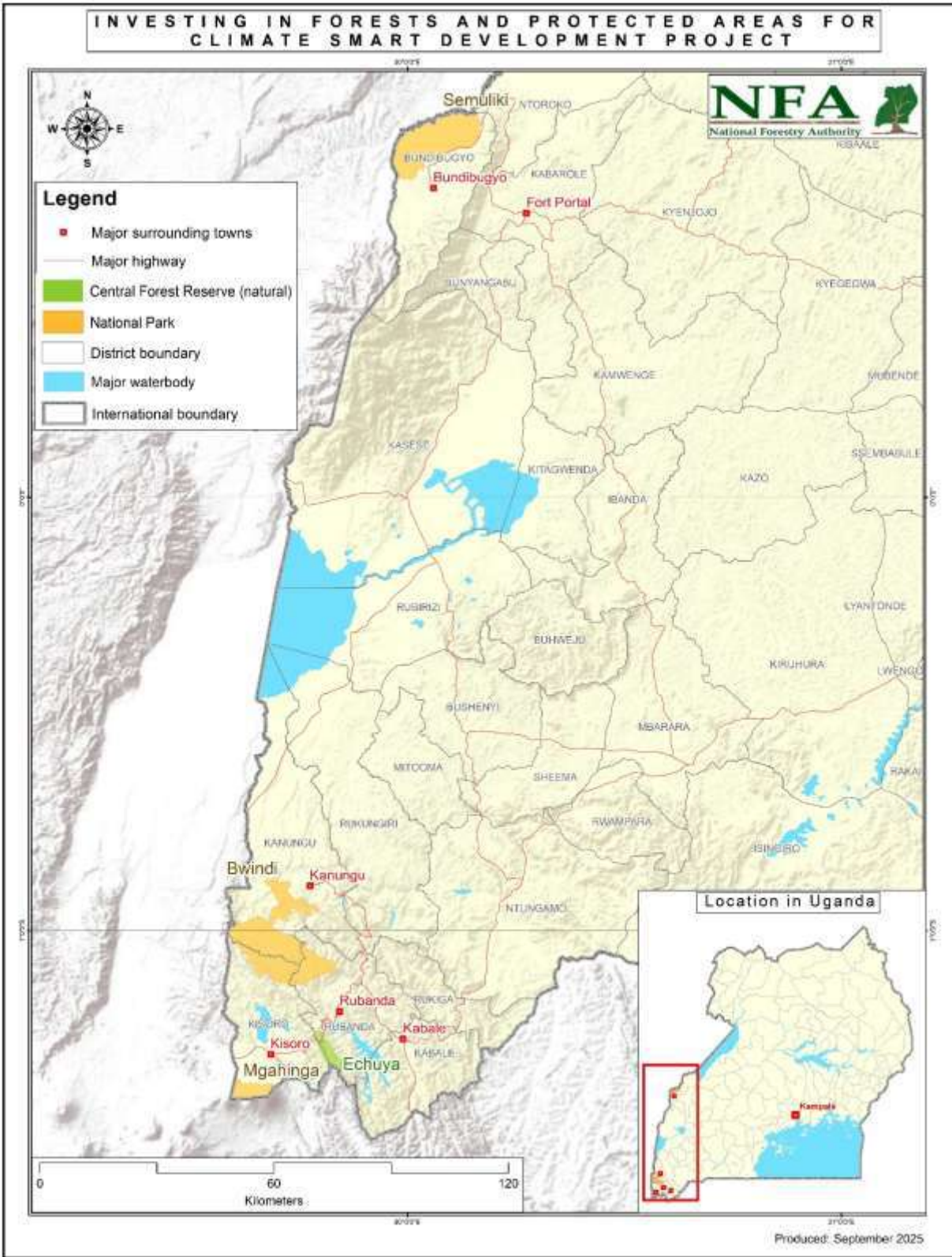


Figure 1. Map of four PAs with adjacent Batwa communities

The VMGF highlights the need to develop a separate Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Plan (VMGP) for each of these project-targeted PAs with a view to ensure that Batwa communities living around them participate in and equitably benefit from the project. **This is, therefore, the specific VMGP for the BINP, that has a population of about 1,400 Batwa living nearby.**

The VMGF and the four VMGPs developed under the Project draw on the use of existing participatory forest management mechanisms used by UWA and ex-NFA for protected areas adjacent communities, which are set out in the Uganda Wildlife Act (2019) and the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act (2003). For the purpose of this VMGP, the relevant participatory forest management arrangement is the Collaborative Resources Management (CRM) model, which is implemented in protected areas managed by UWA such as BINP. The details of the current Collaborative Resources Management (CRM) groups are set out in Annex I. *CRM Groups in Bwindi National Park.*

Collaborative Resources Management (CRM) - This is an arrangement of management in protected areas managed by UWA. It is based on the result of a negotiated process, whereby protected area management shares benefits, costs, decision-making authority and responsibilities, rights and roles in the management of wildlife resources with with local communities living adjacent to such protected areas and other stakeholders. UWA started establishing CRMs in the 1990s with an objective of increasing support for conservation.

The CRM arrangement is based on the Uganda Wildlife Act 2019 and the related Community Resource Access Guidelines (Guidelines for the Management of Non-Timber Resource Access in Protected Areas by Neighbouring Communities) 2023. CRM (originally called *Multiple Use Programme*) was first introduced in Bwindi and Mgahinga in the early 1990s through written agreements of the communities with UWA's predecessor, the Uganda National Parks, in programs to implement collaborative management of plant (flora) resources, beekeeping and honey collection. The details of the current Collaborative Resources Management (CRM) groups and agreements (as of December 2025) are set out in Annex I *CRM Groups and Agreements in Bwindi National Park.*

The above protected areas' co-management arrangements are also further described in the Process Framework (PF) developed to guide Project implementation. The PF outlines participatory processes for determining appropriate use restrictions and measures to address potential adverse impacts on livelihoods that may result from such restrictions. In addition to the VMGP and the PF, the Project has developed several other instruments to manage environmental and social risks in accordance with Uganda's laws and policies, as well as the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF). Notably, the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) ensures that information is disclosed in an inclusive, timely, and culturally appropriate manner, and that project-affected and interested parties -including the Batwa people- are meaningfully engaged. The SEP outlines specific strategies for engaging the Batwa communities that were considered during both the preparation and update of this VMGP. Furthermore, the SEP describes the Project Grievance Mechanism, which is also addressed in section 11 of this document.

The SEP builds on the key principles of stakeholder engagement outlined in the Stakeholder Engagement Framework, prepared during project preparation and disclosed in 2020.

The Environmental and Social Management Framework, prepared and disclosed in January 2020 and further updated in 2024 and in 2025 identified key project impacts, proposed mitigation measures, outlined mechanisms for the screening of proposed project activities and identified potential environmental and social impacts and their subsequent management. The Labour Management Procedures were designed and disclosed in 2020 (and updated in 2024) to guide engagement and management of workers under the project.

1. Purpose and Scope of the VMGP

This VMGP sets out measures and actions agreed upon with the VMGs present in the Project areas, specifically, in this instance, the Batwa communities living around BINP, to enable their effective participation in and benefit from the Project. The initial version of the VMGP was adopted and [disclosed in 2023](#),² based on two rounds of dedicated VMGP consultations with the Batwa communities and NGOs and CSOs working with the Batwa around BINP undertaken in 2021 and 2022. The VMGP was updated in December 2025 to incorporate insights from lessons learnt during VMGP implementation and additional consultations undertaken in 2025. This document represents a further updated version reflecting progress with the implementation of the revised VMGP and updates of the stakeholder engagement records. The measures described in this plan include specific responsibilities and timelines to ensure that its implementation can be monitored throughout the remainder of VMGP implementation.

2. Background and Rationale for the Update of the VMGP

Implementation of the VMGP was initiated in 2023. As implementation has advanced and implementation lessons started emerging, by late 2024 three Batwa-led CSOs communicated expectations for project support that differed from those agreed in the consultations undertaken as part of VMGP preparation (such as supporting land rights, including a Batwa representative on the Project Steering Committee, support to various infrastructure investments for the Batwa (like a cultural museum and a training center), transferring ownership of the Batwa trails to the Batwa, giving 10 percent of the project funds to the Indigenous Peoples, and so on). In response to such feedback, an update to the VMGP was undertaken in 2025. This revision of the VMGP for Bwindi was informed by engagements during implementation of VMGP activities, additional engagements held in April 2025, consultations carried out in July 2025, and validations undertaken in December 2025. Each of these involved multiple meetings with Batwa communities, civil society organisations (CSO), including Batwa-led organisations, and local government representatives. Details of consultation feedback for the revision of the BINP VMGP can be found in Annex III.

This additional update is being undertaken to reflect progress with implementation of the revised VMGP, including selection of beneficiaries for the project supported livelihoods activities (see Annex VI) and updates of the stakeholder engagement records.

² https://mwe.go.ug/downloads/bwindi-vmgp-march-2023_ug-ifpa-cd-project-p170466/

3. Project Background

The IFPA-CD project has four components. Table 1 below sets out those activities under Components 1 (subcomponents 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3.) and 2 (subcomponent 2.1.) that have been or will be implemented in BINP. There were no activities under the other subcomponents of Components 1 and 2, or under Components 3 and 4 that were implemented in Bwindi and, as such, these are not relevant or included in Table 1 below. Component 4 finances project monitoring and management, including environmental and social management. Preparation and revision of this VMGP is an activity under Component 4. A full description of all Project components and activities can be found in the disclosed IFPA-CD Project Appraisal Document.³

It is important to note that project financing supplements ongoing activities funded by UWA and its partners in the target PAs, based on the priorities identified during project preparation. It aims to improve ecological condition and tourism infrastructure of these PAs, using co-management approaches working with the communities, within the existing legal and regulatory framework.

Table 1. Project components and activities applicable to BINP VMGP

Components/Subcomponents	Activities
Component 1: Investments to improve the management of forest protected areas.	Focus on improving the management of government-owned forest and wildlife protected areas to ensure they can continue to generate revenues and provide important environmental services. Provide support to seven National Parks, three Wildlife Reserves, and 27 Central Forest Reserves (CFRs). Implementation led by the MWE (ex NFA) and UWA. Summary of activities: Improve management of high biodiversity values of forests and for generating jobs and revenues that can help sustain their conservation and increase benefits to local communities.
Sub-component 1.1: Improvement of infrastructure and equipment for the management of forest protected areas	Activities in Bwindi, implemented by UWA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of UWA staff housing (senior and junior ranger posts) – planned • Investment in logistics and communication equipment (vehicle, motorcycles, binoculars, etc.) – completed
Sub-component 1.2: Increasing the involvement of local	Activities in Bwindi, implemented by UWA

³ See <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/304401587952865863>. See also modifications introduced by Project Restructuring <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099111925105631444>

communities in the management of forest and wildlife areas by increasing their access and benefits from these areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-oriented Human-wildlife conflict prevention infrastructure– (Investment in tea seedlings) -completed • Support for the establishment/renewal of collaborative resource management agreements under UWA (ongoing) • Livelihood support activities (ongoing) • Community awareness activities (ongoing) • Roll-out of the Earth Ranger monitoring system to support human wildlife conflict prevention (planned)
Subcomponent 1.3: Restoration of degraded natural forests and habitats within Protected Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investments in fire detection and management (fire detection and fighting equipment and facilities; personal fire protective equipment) – completed • Eradication of invasive vegetation species and monitoring of removal – ongoing
Component 2: Investments to increase revenues and jobs from forests and wildlife protected areas	
Increase revenues and jobs from these forest and wildlife protected areas through targeted investments in tourism and productive forestry	
Summary of activities: Increase the economic contribution of forests through boosting revenue generation and job creation and strengthen incentives for improved forest management. Investment in tourism infrastructure to achieve continued development of nature-based tourism, and in addition, investments to increase forest industry-based jobs and incomes.	
Subcomponent 2.1: Investments in tourism	Activities in Bwindi, implemented by UWA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bridge maintenance • Construction of entrance gate structure and associated facilities (Bwindi North, Buhoma) • Construction and equipping of Visitor Center (Bwindi South, Rushaga) • Develop picnic site at the waterfalls in Bwindi North (Buhoma) • Construction of bird hides

4. Relevant baseline conditions

4.1. Description of BINP

The BINP was originally established as the Bwindi (Impenetrable) Forest Reserve in 1932. Later it was established as a Gorilla Sanctuary by General Notice No. 584 of 1961 and amended by Legal Notice No. 53 of 1962, Legal Notice No. 567 of 1962 and Statutory Instrument No. 10 of 1964 (Protected Area System Plan for Uganda Vol. 4, 1999). The Impenetrable Forest came under National Park status by resolution of the National Resistance Council of 13th August 1991 and became known as BINP under Statutory Instrument Supplement No.3 of 1992.

BINP, which covers 321sq.km, is one of the few large expanses of forests on the African continent of the Afromontane Forest vegetation type, where lowland and montane vegetation communities meet. It forms a significant part of the great Albertine Rift ecosystem and is known for its Pleistocene refuge characteristics that make it an extremely high bio-diversity spot.⁴ As home to half of the world’s Mountain

⁴ Uganda Wildlife Authority, The Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park, General Management Plan 2014-2024 (extended to 2025).

Gorilla population, it is also the only area in the world that hosts both the highly endangered and globally significant Mountain Gorilla and the Chimpanzee in the same habitat. With minimal human disturbance, coupled with community benefits arising out of ecotourism, the conservation of the endangered mountain gorilla and other unique biodiversity of the site is enhanced. It is also an Important Bird Area (IBA) and, at the same time, a World Heritage site.

BINP is managed according to the General Management Plan; the current General Management Plan is dated 2014-2024 (extended to 2025); the new plan for the period starting in 2026 is currently under validation. The park is zoned into four zones: the tourism zone, wilderness zone (strict conservation zone), administration zone, and the collaborative management zone (where community members are allowed access under permission from UWA, as per the Collaborative Resource Management section 4.3 below).

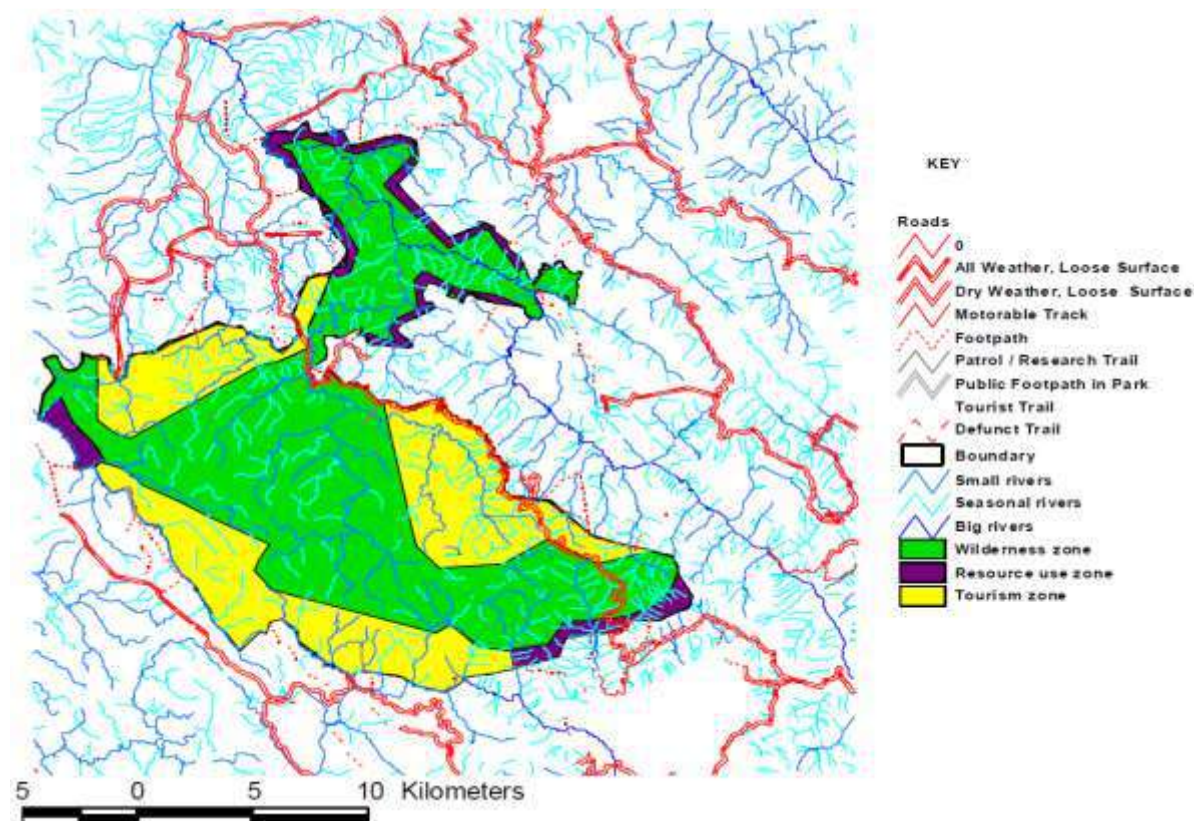


Figure 2. Map of BINP with Zoning

4.2. The Batwa around BINP

The Batwa are former forest dwellers that lived as hunter-gatherers in most of the forested areas occupying the Great Lakes region, particularly in southwestern Uganda, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Lewis, 2000; Beswick 2011). The creation of Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Area (BMCA) in 1991 (that encompasses BINP and MGNP) required the Batwa to be definitively removed from their

homes in the mountains and be displaced in a modern world unfamiliar to them, although their displacement started already in the 1930s with the initial gazettement of these protected areas.⁵ The Batwa ended up squatting in nearby farmland. Some land purchases have been made for them by various organizations. This all took place well before the IFPA-CD project started.

According to the Batwa Population Census by Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust (BMCT), carried out in 2016, there are a total of 578 Households of Batwa in both Kisoro and Kanungu Districts, with a total population of 2,656 people. Of these 1,293 are Males, while 1,363 are females. The average household size among the Batwa is 5 people, and 68.8% of the Batwa are below 25 years.

Table 2. Population of Batwa in Kisoro and Kanungu Districts (2016)

District	Number of Households	Males	Females	Total
Kisoro	413	908	972	1,880
Kanungu	165	385	391	776
Total	578	1,293	1,363	2,656

National census data from 2014 indicated a total of 6,200 Batwa in Uganda, which decreased by 38% to 3,857 in the 2024 census. These variations in population estimates suggest that available data on Batwa populations in Uganda is of limited reliability.

Batwa Population in Bwindi

The Batwa that live around BINP are currently settled in a number of park-adjacent communities in the districts of Kisoro and Kanungu, as seen in the table below.

Table 3. Batwa communities and settlements around BINP

Sector	District	Community /Settlement	Parish	Sub county
Southern Sector of BINP	Kisoro	Kanyamahene	Rubuguri	Kirundo
		Rushaaga	Rubuguri	Kirundo
		Byabitukuru	Rubuguri	Kirundo
		Nyabaremura	Rubuguri	Kirundo
		Bubale	Kirundo	Kirundo
		Kashaija	Rubuguri	Kirundo
		Mukungu	Nyundo	Nyundo
		Sanuriro	Nteeko	Nyabwishenya
Northern Sector of BINP	Kanungu	Bikuuto	Southern Ward	Butogota Town council
		Kebiremu	Eastern Ward	Butogota Town council
		Kihembe	Kihembe	Kanyantorogo Sub-county
		Byumba	Bujengwe	Kayonza Sub county
		Rurangara	Bujengwe	Kayonza Sub-county

⁵ Batwa groups are pursuing the matters related to that historical relocation in the Ugandan High Court (United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda and 11 Others v Attorney General and 2 Others (Constitutional Petition No 3 of 2013) 2021 UGCC 25 (19 August 2021).

		Kitariro	Rutugunda	Kirima Sub county
		Mukongoro	Central Ward	Buhoma Town council
		Karehe	Southern Ward	Buhoma Town council
		Buhoma	Central ward	Buhoma Town council
		Kitahurira	Buremba	Mpungu sub county

Source: Field Data

As of 2024, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics estimates that there are approximately 3,857 Batwa people in Uganda, comprising less than 0.01% of the country's population. It is estimated that out of these, about 1,400 reside in settlements adjacent to Bwindi in about 277 households.

However, during the consultations undertaken during preparation of this VMGP with key stakeholders and leaders of the Batwa from different park-adjacent communities/Batwa settlements around the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest⁶, the following population estimates were provided:

Table 4. Population estimates for the Batwa park-adjacent communities/settlements around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park (2022)

District	Batwa Settlement	Sex		Total	Number of House holds	Average Household size
		Males	Female			
Kanungu (<i>Nothern Sector of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park</i>)	Bikuuto	44	45	89	15	5.9
	Buhoma	4	6	10	3	3.3
	Byumba	68	69	137	21	6.5
	Karehe	20	23	43	10	4.3
	Kebiremu	50	32	82	24	3.4
	Kihembe	46	45	91	24	3.8
	Kitahurira	27	43	70	10	7.0
	Kitariro	68	71	139	21	6.6
	Mukongoro	57	59	116	21	5.5
	Rurangara	24	28	52	13	4.0
	Byumba	7	5	12	3	4.0
	Total	415	426	841	165	
Kisoro (<i>Sothern Sector of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park</i>)	Bubale	20	22	42	10	4.2
	Kanyamahe	6	7	13	3	4.3
	Kashija	18	21	39	8	4.9
	Mukungu	90	90	180	35	5.1
	Nyabaremura	13	17	30	7	4.3
	Rushaga	38	42	80	16	5.0
	Ryabitukuru	22	28	50	12	4.2
	Sanuriro	61	67	128	21	6.1
	Total	268	294	562	112	

⁶ Consultative meeting with Key stakeholders and Batwa NGO leaders held on 22/6/2022 and Buhooma Visitor Centre, Rushaga on 21/6/2022.

Source: Field Data

According to the table 4 above, out of the total population of Batwa in Kisoro and Kanungu (2,656) the IFPA-CD Project activities related to BINP will directly involve a total of 1,403 (863 Males and 720 females) members of the Batwa community, while the remaining 1,253 will benefit indirectly. Of the 1,403 direct beneficiaries, 841 members come from the Northern Sector, while 562 are from the Southern sector of BINP. The indirect beneficiaries (1,253) live in settlements that are not listed in table 4 above because they do not border BINP.

It should be noted that, from the meeting with Batwa communities held at the Buhoma visitor centre in June 2022, one male leader highlighted that the estimated total population of Batwa living in communities around Bwindi in Kanungu District is 841⁷ which is higher than 776, the number reported by BMCT in 2016. This creates an impression that the population of the Batwa in Kanungu has increased, or the variation could be resulting from the migration of the Batwa from one district to the other, and/or other natural causes (births) for increase.

In Kisoro District, according to a key stakeholder consultation meeting held in Rubuguri in June 2022, there are only 562 Batwa residing in the Southern Sector of BINP. BMCT had previously reported a total of 1,880 Batwa for the entire district. It should be noted that, in addition to the Batwa living near BINP, there are other Batwa settlements in Kisoro District, particularly in areas around Echuya CFR, MGNP, and in locations such as Kisoro Town.

Socioeconomic organization and land issues

Batwa people have limited intermarriages with other members of the community and, similar to other communities in Uganda, men are traditionally the bread winners among the Batwa. The forest was a main source of Batwa livelihood (based on hunting and gathering of forest resources) until their definitive eviction from BINP in the early 1990's. However, there was no deliberate government resettlement plan at the time, and no alternative land was provided to the Batwa outside the conservation area. Lack of land increasingly became a key component of Batwa's progressive marginalization and vulnerability.

As a result of discrimination, marginalization, lack of land, and inadequate access to social, economic, and political opportunities and services, the majority of the Batwa live destitute lives and suffer severe isolation, discrimination, and socio-political exclusion⁸, begging for food and working as a source of cheap labor. A study conducted by Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) in 2020⁹ found that the majority of Batwa households do not own land. Most of the Batwa who own land acquired it through the assistance of NGOs, as confirmed in a consultative meeting held in Rubuguri on 20th June 2022. Most of this land was not registered, and some Batwa did not even have a sale agreement for the land they claimed was theirs. In many cases NGOs buy land for the Batwa communities, but land titles are held in trust by the NGOs, to avoid unscrupulous speculations and use of the land by other actors taking advantage of the Batwa. In a related study by BMCT (2016), 28 of the 74 members of the Batwa interviewed (38%) revealed to have benefitted from Trust land. Most of them live on communal land, with temporary shelters made of mud. Many Batwa people sleep in the same room with children and visitors. It was also reported

⁷ This population excludes the Batwa living in settlements that are not neighbouring the Park.

⁸ Batwa consultative meeting organized and facilitated by the Consultant on 20/6/22 in Rubuguri Town council Kisoro District.

⁹ Mbarara University of Science and Technology (2020), The marginalization of the Batwa people of Southwestern Uganda, as an indigenous community.

during the consultations with key stakeholders in Ruburi Town council on 20th June 2022 that some Batwa individuals who have no house at all have resorted to sleeping on verandas of shops in trading centers. During community Consultations in 2022¹⁰, most Batwa believed that land ownership, access, and use would be the answer to almost all their development challenges.

During the consultative meetings held with key stakeholders and Batwa NGO leaders in 2022 it was highlighted that Batwa's rights to the forest lands have not been recognized within Uganda and they have not been compensated for the loss of their lands and the resultant lifestyle (hunter-gatherers) since their eviction from the forest three decades ago.¹¹ However, Batwa's desire for hunting, medicinal plants, and religious rituals in the forests still remains, decades after their evictions.

Batwa Culture

Evidence from literature indicates that the Batwa had a unique culture largely associated with their hunter and gatherer lifestyle prior to 1991.¹² During their forest habitation, they used to wear hides and skins, and they pay dowry in the form of sheep, goats, and honey. A study done by MUST further reports that the Batwa people were born and lived in the forests with most of them tracing their origin in Bwindi (MUST, 2020). According to the same study, more than one in three Batwa still identified themselves with the forest as their origin. Accordingly, some Batwa community members still go to the forests for spiritual and medicinal purposes under the arrangement of CRM with UWA¹³.

Traditionally, the Batwa had places set aside for burial and sendoff rituals associated with the last funeral rites. For example, burial sites were usually deep in the forests near big trees, and the dead were buried standing upright. Also, the Batwa worshiped, venerated, sacrificed, and offered appeasement gifts to their "god" in special places. However, when they were driven out from the forest in the 1990's, their cultural practice of worshipping ancestors was interfered with. Like most traditional patriarchal communities, Batwa men were responsible for protecting their families and property, while the production of food and raising the children remained a role for the women. On the other hand, men were free to use their money and resources as they wished. The Batwa believe that they were created to be kings (*batware*) of the area¹⁴. Originally, the men were hunters, and the women were involved in ceramics. To be recognized as a man, one would first trap or kill an animal. Men would collect medicinal herbs to administer to male children, while women gathered these for themselves and their children. Men were responsible for providing fire (*gushingata*) and were also expected to be warriors. The Batwa also love ancestral dancing, especially the Rutwa dance.

A key element of the Batwa culture is their language. According to MUST 2020, about one-third of the Batwa identified Orutwa (Rutwa) as their native language, although only a few old aged Batwa can still speak it. Evidence from the consultative meetings held with the Batwa in Rubuguri on 20/6/22, Sanuriro 21/6/22, Rushaaga 21/6/22, Buhoma on 22/6/2022, as well as during the 2025 consultations, also indicated

¹⁰ Consultations held with Batwa communities in June 2021, in Rubuguri and Rushaga, Kisoro District.

¹¹ Consultative meeting with key stakeholders and Batwa NGO leaders held on 22/6/2022 and Buhooma Visitor Centre, Rushaga on 21/6/2022.

¹² Fauna & Flora International (October 2013), Batwa cultural values in Bwindi Impenetrable and Mgahinga Gorilla National Parks, Uganda. A report of a cultural assessment.

¹³ Mbarara University of Science and Technology (2020), The marginalization of the Batwa people of Southwestern Uganda, as an indigenous community; Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust (2016) Batwa Population Census Report.

¹⁴ Interview with Gad Shemajere, A mutwa Leader, held on 18th June 2021, in Kisoro District.

that most of the Batwa can no longer speak Orutwa language as they have continuously adopted other languages spoken by the dominant communities within which they live. As seen in the consultative meetings,¹⁵ most Batwa are able to speak Runyoro- Rutooro and Runyakore-Rukiiga. Unfortunately, the Rutwa language (also known as Orutwa) is at risk of getting extinct in the community, as the language is not written and not promoted. For example, there is no local radio station in the area that uses/broadcasts its programs in Rutwa language.

Through consultations with Batwa community members and review of the General Management Plan for BINP, specific cultural values have been identified and their importance in resource conservation is highlighted as shown in table 5 below, extracted from the General Management Plan. These cultural values have been confirmed through consultation meetings with the Batwa and key stakeholders in June 2022 around BINP as part of preparation of this VMGP. Batwa people are allowed regulated access to cultural sites within the park. The BINP General Management Plan explicitly recognizes “access to cultural sites under agreed terms and conditions” among permitted activities and includes actions for identifying and accessing cultural/spiritual Batwa sites in the park, among others related to cultural values of the Batwa people.

Table 5. Cultural values of the Batwa and their importance in the Management of BINP

Cultural values	Importance in BINP management
Beliefs/Indigenous-local knowledge about medicinal herbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable use of resources • Respect for park resources in terms of human health improvement
Spiritual beliefs and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing the park as a home and thus motivation for protection
Tourism trails/Batwa forest experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversified tourism products • Gainful engagement of the Batwa as tour guides, porters etc. • Promoting and preserving the Batwa culture and way of life as a tourism product
Batwa Music Dance and Drama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation Communication strategy and awareness raising • Empowering the Batwa community through generation of income

Source. Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park, General Management Plan 2014-2024 (extended 2025)

Education

Batwa communities in Uganda have poor education levels. Many studies have alluded to the fact that more than half of Batwa people have no formal education at all¹⁶. Of those who have managed to acquire some education, there are more males than females. In a study by BMCT (2016) involving 74 respondents it was also observed that only 3% of the Batwa around Bwindi have achieved at least secondary-level education. The consultation meetings held with the Batwa in Rubuguri, Sanuriro, Rushaaga and Buhoma

¹⁵ Consultation meetings held with the Batwa in Rubuguri on 20/6/22, Sanuriro 21/6/22, Rushaaga 21/6/22, Buhoma on 22/6/2022, Consultative meeting by the consultant with Key stakeholders and Batwa NGO leaders held on 22/6/2022 in Buhooma Visitor Centre, Consultative meeting with Key stakeholders and Batwa NGO leaders held on 22/6/2022 and Buhooma Visitor Centre, Rushaga on 21/6/2022.

¹⁶ Mbarara University of Science and Technology (2020), The marginalization of the Batwa people of Southwestern Uganda, as an indigenous community; Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust (2016) Batwa Population Census Report.

between June 20-22, 2022, revealed that poverty, negative attitudes towards education, and discriminatory acts were the key leading causes of the low educational attainment among the Batwa. For example, during consultation meetings held with Batwa community members in Kanungu (in Buhoma on June 22, 2022), it was observed that the children of other tribes such as the Bakiga do not want to associate with Batwa children in school, and it is common to insult Batwa children with negative comments. The pupils of other tribes do not usually share school materials freely with others. According to the Population Census carried out by BMCT (2016) among 171 Batwa members, the Batwa who have never attained any formal education in Kisoro accounted for 57.7%, while those who attained tertiary level of education - 0.4%. It was also noted that women constituted a bigger percentage of the Batwa who had never attained any formal education.

- i) **Poverty:** Despite increased access to free education under the Universal Primary Education Program (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE), feedback from community consultations indicated that lack of educational materials like stationery and school uniforms contributed to poor educational attainment among the Batwa. More importantly, they do not have access to food at school and neither is it readily available at home and in the communities. Most Batwa do not have enough land to cultivate and even those who have are reported to be reluctant to adopt new culture of cultivation. Some of them end up renting out the land to other people, and they remain casual laborers in other people's gardens.
- ii) **Negative attitudes towards education:** It was also observed that most Batwa still have a low interest in education and do not acknowledge the benefit of education. This is partly because the Batwa were not used to the mainstream system of education and, therefore, are not familiar with it, since their traditional system in the forest involved elders passing on their knowledge informally to the younger generation, orally and in practice. Despite disciplinary actions against learners by parents and authorities, most children do not obey and prefer to stay out of school.

“Our children do not like schooling; in many instances, they have been given books and other scholastic materials by non-governmental organizations and other well wishers. But when they leave home going to school, they end up loitering in trading centres and resort to begging.” (Feedback from the female Batwa leader during a Meeting with Batwa Leaders in Rubuguri, Southern Sector of BINP Kisoro District on 20/6/2022).

- iii) **Discriminatory acts against the Batwa at school:** There were reports of discriminatory acts against Batwa students, which affected their learning experiences.

“Yes, there are schools. We have schools in this area such as Iryaruvumba Primary school, and the Batwa children are allowed to join them, but the challenge is that when they reach there, sometimes they are not treated well just like others and because of that, they do not study very well. Because of that, they do not take education very seriously.” (Male key informant from Rubuguri Kisoro, District on 20/6/2022).

Health and Wellbeing

During the consultative meetings with key stakeholders working on Batwa issues for preparation of the VMGP for BINP, it was reported that, apart from the government aided universal access to health, NGOs and civil society have been at the forefront of Batwa health and wellbeing. It was also reported that Batwa communities have the poorest health. This is also in line with findings of a number of studies (MUST (2020), BMCT (2016) which also raised concerns about the health of the Batwa. For example, in a study involving 322 Batwa around Bwindi, it was noted that 39% smoke, while 57.2% take alcohol. Of those who take alcohol, there are more men than women. More than 13% of those who take alcohol drink on a daily basis. In Batwa settlements/communities around BINP the reported HIV prevalence was 5.9%, with a higher rate among females than males. Regarding maternal health services, only 38% of the Batwa attended antenatal care. It has also been reported that only 50% of Batwa women have their delivery at a health facility. Only 37% of the Batwa have previously reported to have ever used a family-planning method. Only 32% of the Batwa children around BINP complete routine immunization schedule for children under 5 years. It was also observed that only one in five Batwa households had a latrine at their residence. During the field visit done by the team preparing this VMGP in June 2022 in Rushaga and Rubuguri, it was observed that cooking is carried out either in open spaces or in the rooms where they sleep.

Concerning gender-based violence (GBV), at least 1 in every 4 Batwa women experience GBV in a period of just one month. This violence is largely perpetuated by spouses and is highly associated with increased abuse of alcohol and poverty¹⁷. At least 30% of the Batwa women in the area have reported physical violence. Most of the Batwa women have reported sexual, economic and emotional violence. GBV is further exacerbated by a myth that sleeping with a female Mutwa (*Mutwakwazi*) cures HIV/AIDS as well as back pain.

The Batwa Forest Experience Trails in Bwindi

The Batwa trail in Bwindi, also called “Batwa experience” is a tourism product co-managed by UWA and Batwa community members, which was officially launched in April 2019 with the support of Nkuringo Cultural Centre, Bwindi Batwa Development Organisation and MUST, among others. The trail consists of Batwa guided interpretive walks focused on forest, the Batwa traditional forest culture (i.e., making fire, herbal medicine, hunting techniques, music and dances) and sites of Batwa significance. The walk takes place just inside the park boundary.

UWA is currently in the process of negotiating a tri-partite agreement with the Association of Batwa Empowerment Group (ABEG) & Batwa Development Programme (BDP) to manage a Batwa trail in Bwindi North (Buhoma). See also Annex I.

These Batwa experience trails are not supported under any of the Project activities, as per project design, as they are developed by UWA and its partners using different programs and funding sources. Their governance and revenue-sharing arrangements are also unrelated to the IFPA-CD Project.

UWA’s Tourism Revenue Sharing Scheme

¹⁷ Feedback from consultations with the Batwa in Rushaga in Bwindi held on 21/6/22.

In order to support its community conservation objectives and secure more support from the local communities, UWA has a long-standing revenue-sharing scheme, based on the legal provisions within the Uganda Wildlife Act (2019) (and its predecessor Wildlife Act Cap 200).¹⁸ Under this scheme, 20 percent of all gate fee proceeds and a portion of the revenue from gorilla trekking permits are remitted for implementation of community projects in the sub-counties adjacent to the boundaries of the protected areas. Implementation of such community proposed investments is done through the district local government; while the communities select which investments the Community Project Management Committee will submit for funding. The amount of money shared with the communities varies depending on the number of tourists who visit the Park and track the gorillas. Revenue sharing funds may be allocated to household and community initiatives that fulfill two main criteria: they must help to reduce human-wildlife conflict or contribute to enhance the livelihoods of households residing in park-adjacent villages. Examples of community projects supported through the UWA Revenue Sharing Scheme include the construction of local health clinics, schools, and similar facilities. At the household level, the program has funded initiatives such as goat rearing, piggeries, tree planting, bee keeping, and Irish potato growing.

The UWA Tourism Revenue Sharing Scheme is the mainstream scheme under national law, established over a decade prior to the project, is operated by UWA under the national law, and was not developed or implemented with the support of IFPA-CD, nor is it used for implementation of any Project activities.

4.3. Collaborative Park management and community benefit sharing

Collaborative Resource Management (CRM)

According to the BINP General Management Plan 2014– 2024 (extended to 2025), in the **collaborative management zone of the park** the management priority is to conserve the park values through an integrated approach encompassing protection, education, restoration and community conservation approaches. The zone is confined within 2 km of distance from the park boundary where there are no tourism activities. Collaborative resource management in this zone is organized through specific user groups and formal agreements. CRM groups consist of the organized community resource-user groups (informal associations) that represent local stakeholders living adjacent to wildlife protected areas, including national parks. CRM agreements, for their part, are the formal, negotiated instruments (typically MoU) between UWA and those groups, which define the scope of resource access, the resource user community for each agreement and the agreed resource-use area for that community, roles, responsibilities, decision-making, benefit sharing, monitoring, and compliance. The agreements establish the rights and obligations under which the CRM group operates; and the groups implement and monitor the agreed activities in collaboration with UWA, which oversees and enforces the terms.

All CRM groups have a governance body elected by the resource users themselves, namely a Resource User Group Committee of approximately 9 members. In the locations where the Batwa are present and

¹⁸ UWA's **Uganda Revenue Sharing Guidelines (2013)** describe the overall goal of revenue sharing which is “*to ensure strong partnership between protected area management, local communities and local governments, leading to sustainable management of resources in and around protected areas by enabling people living adjacent to protected areas to obtain financial benefits derived from the existence of these areas that contribute to improvements in their welfare and help gain their support for protected areas conservation*”

are members of the groups, the MoUs of these groups require that these committees include at least two Batwa (preferably a male and a female) to represent Batwa on this committee.

This Committee functions include participating in the assessment of resource use conditions and in the drafting of MoUs, management of resource access activities, monitoring of resource sites, assessing impact of resource access on PA and reporting non-compliance and illegal activities (as defined in the 2023 UWA Resource Use Guidelines and MoU's provisions).

Regulated harvesting of biophysical non-timber resources in a sustainable manner by community residents is therefore allowed in agreed resource-use areas mainly through negotiated collaborative management agreements. The 2023 UWA Resource Use Guidelines also permit access outside of CRM, on a case-by-case basis, based on specific requests co-signed by the Local Council (LC1) Chairperson.

Permitted Activities in BINP collaborative management zone

- Resource harvesting where appropriate as per collaborative management agreements
- Research, monitoring, and park operations
- Accompanied visitor use
- Visitor information and interpretative services
- Fire management activities
- Small scale garbage disposal sites for garbage originating from works permitted in the zone

There are also a number of restricted activities and facilities within the BINP collaborative management zone. Unaccompanied visitor use, whether for day trips or overnight stays, is not permitted. Unregulated resource harvesting is also prohibited, as is agricultural encroachment, settlements, timber harvesting, grazing, and charcoal burning within this area. Permanent or year-round structures that support resource harvesting are not allowed either. During 2022 consultations¹⁹, Batwa communities demonstrated their awareness of these restrictions.

CRM arrangements for resource access and use in BINP

In addition to BINP General Management Plan (2014-2024 -extended to 2025), existing collaborative resource management arrangements in Bwindi are governed by the Uganda Wildlife Act (2019) and UWA Guidelines for the Management of Non-Timber Resource Access in Protected Areas by Neighbouring Communities (2023). The CRM model arising from this regulatory framework is implemented through CRM groups and agreements (MoUs), as noted above. The MoUs provide for collaborative use and management of the non-timber park resources and streamline the roles and responsibilities of a community conservation group, on one hand, and the roles of UWA on the other hand, and allow access by communities to multiple use zones within the park and/or areas for beekeeping activities. So far, fourteen parishes in BINP are benefiting from the CRM program, where they are allowed to harvest forest resources such as firewood, handicraft materials (*Smilax auceps* and *Gouania longispicata*), medicinal plants and

¹⁹ Consultation meetings held with the Batwa in Rubuguri on 20/6/22, Sanuriro 21/6/22, Rushaaga 21/6/22, Buhoma on 22/6/2022, Consultative meeting by the consultant with Key stakeholders and Batwa NGO leaders held on 22/6/2022 in Buhooma Visitor Centre, Consultative meeting with Key stakeholders and Batwa NGO leaders held on 22/6/2022 and Buhooma Visitor Centre, Rushaga on 21/6/2022.

some have placed beehives in the park, all in a controlled arrangement. The community members accessing the park are always accompanied by the UWA staff, for their safety and security.

In BINP the CRM program has been implemented since the early 1990s and has registered reasonable success in improving park-community relations and community livelihoods. Currently (at the time of revision of this VMGP), there are eight active CRM MoUs that allow regulated and sustainable resource access/use in the park collaborative management zone (see also Annex I).²⁰ The eight MoUs have 45 Batwa members in total. Two of these MoUs were negotiated and signed with the support of the IFPA-CD project. It should also be noted that under CRM agreements in BINP, the Batwa groups have preferential treatment as they have exclusive access to specific forest resources; for example, only the Batwa are permitted to collect “wild yam” in BINP.

According to the existing CRM arrangement, monitoring of resource offtake is intended to be a joint effort between resource users and park staff, as outlined in the agreements signed by both parties. The CRM agreements on resource access/use in Bwindi require that the Executive Committees established by the CRM groups include at least 2 Batwa members. While this collaborative approach has seen participation from park staff and some resource users, there is an opportunity to further enhance engagement from resource users in monitoring activities. Participation has been challenged by limited understanding and appreciation of the roles of members of CRM institutions (e.g., Resource Use Executive Committees). Increasing participation in the integrated resource use zone - particularly in the beekeeping areas of Nyamabale, Kashasha, Mushanje, Kiyebe, and Kitojo - could be achieved by further strengthening awareness on CRM among Batwa community members as well as by supporting the capacity of the Batwa in representation in CRM Executive Committees and improving the capacity of these committees. As seen in section 7 below, these strengthening actions, informed by a stock taking of Batwa participation in said committees, are included within this revised VMGP.

5. Status of VMGP implementation (pre-revision of 2025)

As part of the VMGP revision process, UWA compiled and discussed with stakeholders a consolidated view of VMGP implementation to date. The table below summarizes progress against planned outputs as well as actions and outcomes achieved. It reflects what had been completed or was in progress prior to the VMGP update and served as the evidence base presented to stakeholders during consultations in July 2025.

Table 6. Status of VMGP implementation in BINP as of early July 2025

Output and Targets ²¹	Status of interventions carried out under original VMGP
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²⁰ In addition, there are also three MoUs related to tourism that are not Project related. One is a MoU specific to the so-called Batwa “Forest Experience” Trail, which was renewed in 2024 (during the Project period, but not project supported). A second MoU exist specifically for porters in Bwindi-Mgahinga Conservation Area, thus covering the two parks. A third MoU concern Action for Batwa Empowerment group & Batwa Development Programme, which is at approval stage by UWA management. Lastly, there is an informal arrangement with Nkuringo Batwa community (Batwa-only) whereby the group has been given a platform to perform for visitors.

²¹ As per the original VMGP.

<p>At least 100 Batwa being able to understand key CRM provisions and increase the involvement of the local Batwa communities in the management of the PA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Batwa are part of 7 out of the 8 CRM active resource user groups in BINP (Parish of Karangara, Kashasha, Mushaje, Nyamabare, Rutunguda, and Buremba-Mpungu; and Mpungu bee keeping group). Resources to be accessed include firewood, herbal medicine, basketry /craft materials; and placement of beehives along the park boundary. Batwas are not members of the Southern Ward Resource User Group CRM because there are no Batwa community members on Southern Ward of Kanungu District. • 2 of the above CRM MoUs with Batwa members were negotiated and concluded with Project support. • Regulated resource access has been implemented with communities in need of resources. Needy residents within the parish, including the Batwa, participate in the resource access after registering as a member of a resource use group. • Consideration has also been made where they need certain items from the PA on special requests, especially resources used once after a long period of time. • UWA staff have been trained on how to undertake situational analysis of resource access and negotiate CRM MoUs. • The Batwa will be employed during the construction of the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) which is about to start.
<p>Reach out to a total of 300 Batwa with awareness raising information on the importance of sustainable wildlife management.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness raising engagements were held with the Batwa communities on sustainable wildlife management (20 sessions among Batwa communities living adjacent to UWA PAs). Topics discussed include the role of stakeholders in natural resource management, impacts of protected areas in the lives of the surrounding communities, existing laws and policies for the protection of wildlife. • The participation of the Batwa in undertaking inventory of herbal medicine created an opportunity for them to appreciate sustainable use and equitable benefit-sharing of wildlife resources.
<p>Working with the Batwa to take an inventory of all medicinal plants for further research and mapping</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory of herbal medicine used by the Batwa was undertaken under leadership of the Batwa community members, in the three national parks (Semuliki NP, BINP & MGNP). The activity still continues using Earth Ranger to geo-reference herbal plants used by the Batwa as well as taking original plant photographs for ease of identification.
<p>Identify and train a total of 200 Batwa, organize and train Batwa groups on identification and management of livelihood improvement projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 Batwa were organized and trained on identification and management of livelihood improvement projects (weaving baskets and mats, wood curving, making bee wax candles & jelly, perfumes, shoe polish, mushroom and vegetable growing) • 25 Batwa members of Rubuguri (southern part of BINP) and 25 of Buhoma sector Northern BINP were among the groups selected and trained in Gorilla carving, basket weaving, shoe polish making, candle making and petroleum jerry out of honey wax • The Batwa of Mukongoro (15 households) from the Northern Sector near Buhoma, and Sanaliro (3 households) from the Southern Sector near Gulingo, were trained in cook stove construction
<p>Carry out marketing for tourism products</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work for the construction of the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) at Rushaaga in BINP has commenced. Once completed, the Batwa communities within close proximity of the park will be provided a space to

	display their cultural performance and sell their art crafts to tourists. This provides those willing to participate with a strategic location to access the tourist market and sell their products.
Support and training on rainwater harvesting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Batwa community of Mukongoro settlement has been supported with one 5000lt rain water harvesting tanks in Sanaliro Batwa settlement – Southern Bwindi to address water shortage in BINP • In BINP, water tanks have been given in two phases. Phase1, five 5000ltr tanks were given, phase two, seven 5000ltr tanks were given to CRM groups of Kashirija near Rubuguri Town Council • Out of the above tanks, three were specific for the Batwa community • Some Batwa also share the other tanks with community members • The Batwa were trained in Energy cooking stoves construction (25) and constructed some stoves at Mukongoro Batwa Settlement (northern sector) and Sanaliro Batwa settlement near Nkuringo sector headquarters-Southern Bwindi.

6. Development and Consultation Process of the VMGP

The development of the VGMP followed the earlier adoption of a VMGF, which was prepared in consultation with target communities previously engaged during Uganda's REDD+ Program. During the VMGF consultations, Batwa communities as well as CSOs and NGOs (both Batwa-led and non-Batwa led) identified several key issues, including:

- The need to ensure Batwa communities and their leaders are fully included in planning, selection, design, and implementation of IFPA-CD activities.
- Strengthening collaborative resource management with UWA and investing in Batwa groups through training in crafts, beekeeping, and confidence-building.
- Ensuring coordinated, culturally sensitive interventions that support Batwa traditions while meeting conservation and development goals.
- Integrating Batwa cultural values into Protected Area management and linking this to education and employment rooted in indigenous knowledge.
- Promoting gender-balanced job opportunities such as guides, porters, and boundary management.

After completion and adoption of the VMGF in 2020, the preparation of the VMGP specifically for Batwa communities around Bwindi began in 2021. Community consultations were held in 2021 and 2022 (with significant delays as a result of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic), with the VGMP adopted and disclosed in March 2023. The VMGP documented the feedback received from the Batwa living adjacent to BINP and the specific actions that had been identified and agreed with them for inclusion under the IFPA-CD Project, as well as measures for avoiding, minimizing or mitigating for potential negative social economic impacts on them, if any. This includes appropriate ways of engaging Batwa communities to benefit from the project, in line with ESS7. The measures are described in this plan, which also specifies the responsibilities and timelines to ensure that implementation can be monitored throughout the project lifetime. The VMGP is aligned with strategies and actions prioritized in the BINP Management Plan 2014-

2024 (extended to 2025), which seeks to recognize the socio-economic and cultural rights of the indigenous Batwa in collaboration with other partners.

The VMGP has been developed and revised through inclusive participation of Batwa communities adjacent to Bwindi and local stakeholders, including Kisoro and Kanungu District Local Governments, as well as NGOs and CSOs that are led by Batwa or work on Batwa issues and/or BINP conservation. Each new consultation carried out built on the earlier efforts, beginning with feedback on the project's progress and previous outcomes. Key VMGF and VMGP aspects have been revisited, and participants reminded of earlier discussions.

The main phases of consultation that have informed the VMGP for Bwindi, along with their respective methodologies, are summarized below. Annex V provides a summary table of all stakeholders consulted for the development and revision of the Bwindi VMGP.

6.1. Phase I of Consultations (June 2021)

Initial consultations with Batwa leaders were held in 2021 during Uganda's COVID-19 lockdown, following strict SOPs. Methods included Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), one-on-one physical discussions, Focus Group Discussions of not more than 5 people organized within the framework of SOPs, and virtual or telephone interviews with the leaders of the Batwa around BINP. The interviews were conducted in the local languages of Rukiga and Kifumbira/Kinyarwanda that the Batwa around BINP speak and understand. The team preparing the VMGP was already conversant with these languages. There was also a deliberate effort to ensure that the FGDs were organized in open spaces to avoid gathering and crowding.

In the Southern Sector of BINP, two FGDs were held on the 17th of June 2021. One meeting was held at the offices of Bwindi Batwa Development Association (BBDA), and this was attended by selected leaders of the Batwa people, while the other was organized in an open space in Rushaaga. The focus group meetings and the KIIs attracted a total of 15 participants from the Batwa. The consultations for the Batwa living in the Northern Sector of BINP were done on the phone. In total, these consultations reached out to 30 people. As a result, a draft VMGP was prepared. However, participation was limited due to COVID-19 restrictions and the unsuitability of remote methods, as few Batwa people had phones. As a result, most consultations involved only selected Batwa members, and the ability of participants to fully express themselves was constrained.

There was therefore a need for more consultations in order to reach a broader range of stakeholders, including NGOs working on Batwa issues, and more Batwa community members within the project area, and generate more site-specific baseline information.

6.2. Phase II of Consultations (June 2022)

After COVID 19 restrictions were lifted, a second round of dedicated consultations were held with park adjacent Batwa communities, NGOs, CSOs and relevant authorities. In total, 184 people were engaged in this round of consultations, including park adjacent Batwa communities, NGOs/CSOs and relevant authorities. The meetings aimed to gather stakeholders' concerns and preferences on IFPA-CD project design and implementation to ensure Batwas' participation and equitable access to Project benefits. The VMGP consultation was developed in line with Chapter Six of the Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups

Framework (VMGF) and the SEP for the IFPA-CD Project. These consultations also served to validate the draft VMGP prepared based on phase I of consultations.

Consultations with Batwa communities and/or Batwa representative groups around BINP. 167 people from Batwa communities around Bwindi participated in four consultation meetings held on 20-22 June 2022 at Rubuguri Town Council, Rushaga, Sanuro and Buhoma Visitor centre. During these meetings, participants were guided to prioritize activities and to rank project issues through an issue-identification exercise based on previous reports²². These consultations clarified project objectives, investments and implementation arrangements and were conducted in vernacular (Rukiga, Kifumbira/Kinyarwanda) to enable meaningful participation of the Batwa members. Prior communication was made by telephone through NGO representatives to share objectives, venue, and expected outcomes. Physical meetings followed a set agenda. Through the consultation process, participants identified several challenges and proposals related to participation in and benefit from BINP management. The table in Annex II provides details on number and location of 2022 consultative meetings with Batwa communities around BINP.

Some of the key challenges identified by the Batwa community members during the meetings held in June 2022 included:

- **Limited capacity and participation**, such as the insufficient organisation and capacity of Batwa groups and CBOs around BINP as well as the limited involvement of the Batwa in CRM groups and in decision-making or leadership roles.
- **Livelihood and benefit distribution issues** resulting from the unequal share of development benefits, with the Batwa benefiting less than others and being often excluded from investments of the existing revenue sharing scheme; the need to initiate income generation activities for the Batwa and build their capacity in crafts making.
- **Legacy and historical issues**, such as the lack of access to land, the expectation to secure additional land and the lack of studies on Batwa resettlement.

Batwa communities also provided their feedback on the activities that could be included under IFPA-CD. As recorded in the original VMGP, their proposals included:

- Institute incentives mechanisms, such as awareness raising and sensitization for communities whose actions contribute towards reduced illegal activities.
- Negotiate and sign new CRM groups for Batwa and or increase membership of the Batwa in the current CRM membership.
- Build the capacity of CRM groups to ensure compliance with the MoUs by emphasizing specific roles and obligations of either party.
- Provide for participation of Batwa cultural leaders in taking an inventory of all medicinal plants in BINP.
- Support the Batwa people in establishing herbal demonstration sites outside BINP park.
- Provide for participation of Batwa elders in identifying and mapping out earlier spiritual Batwa sites in BINP.
- Include access to Batwa cultural priority sites in CRM agreements.

²² Specific area issues, needs and aspirations are already presented in specific Protected Area Reports and Annexes to the project VMGF document.

- Recruit Batwa youth and build their capacity in tour guiding and tourism.
- Support Batwa elders to train young ones with the intention of passing on their forest indigenous knowledge and experience to future generations.
- Organize, train and build the capacity of leaders of Batwa-led NGOs and groups in identification and management of livelihood improvement projects.
- Provide access to indigenous tree seedlings and support the Batwa to establish nursery beds to enhance income generation.
- Strengthen collaborations between UWA and other organizations both local and national such as Nkuringo Cultural Centre, Pro-biodiversity Conservationists in Uganda (PROBICOU), MUST, Bwindi Batwa Development Organization, and other partners.
- Provide targeted conservation training for organized groups, strengthen their institutional capacity in proposal development and fundraising, and offer support through essential office equipment such as computers.

Consultations with CSOs and authorities. Further consultations meetings were held at Rushaaga – Rubuguri on 21 June 2022 and at Buhoma Visitor centre on 22 June 2022. These engaged a total of 17 stakeholders, including key partners and stakeholders such as local level UWA staff, representatives from the Kisoro and Kanungu District Local Government (Chief Administrative officer, District Tourism Officer, District Natural Resources officer), NGOs, and community development groups that represent and assist the Batwa around BINP. Participants were purposively selected based on their experience and work related to conservation in BINP and the Batwa. Most organizations working with and led by the Batwa participated in this 2022 consultation process, namely:

- Action for Batwa Empowerment Group
- Batwa Empowerment Village
- Batwa Development Program
- Batwa Development Organization
- Pro-Biodiversity Conservationists in Uganda (PROBICOU)
- Batwa Indigenous Development Organization
- Nkuringo Cultural Center
- Batwa Development Organization

The full list of organizations led by or working with the Batwa around BINP is provided in Annex IV.

The feedback received from these stakeholders at this meeting focused on the following areas:

- **Conservation lessons.** Participants stressed the value of reviewing and integrating lessons learnt from earlier conservation efforts targeting the Batwa around Bwindi to determine what works and what does not.
- **Institutional strengthening and inclusive stakeholder involvement.** Participants called for strengthening the capacity of local authorities, especially the district Local Governments of Kisoro, Kanungu, and relevant government departments, particularly in their ability to address the needs of vulnerable groups like the Batwa people. They also noted the importance of involving community organizations and clearly define the responsibilities of key stakeholders involved in implementing the VMGP for Batwa around BINP.

- **Batwa livelihood needs and preferences.** Participants highlighted the need to consider the current livelihood needs and preferred options of Batwa communities, including e.g., participation in community forest reforestation, medicinal gardens, employment opportunities; agricultural and apiary support as well as livelihood activities that support cultural preservation.

During these consultations, participants were informed that certain issues such as land purchase, support for the Batwa Forest Experience Trail, and the establishment of a Batwa cultural centre, fall outside the IFPA-CD Project’s scope and could not be addressed through its activities. However, acknowledging and documenting these concerns is important and it may help guide other partners interested in supporting the Batwa community.

Agreed actions for VMGP implementation under the IFPA-CD Project. Based on the consultative meetings held in 2022,²³ specific activities were identified and agreed to be included in this VMGP and supported under IFPA-CD project. These activities include:

- Strengthening the management of CRM groups in BINP
- Working with the Batwa, to take an inventory of all medicinal plants for further research and mapping
- Conducting project awareness-raising campaigns to local Batwa communities on the importance of sustainable wildlife management.
- Organizing and training the Batwa groups on identification and management of livelihood improvement projects, including provision of inputs.
- Carrying out a marketing drive for Batwa tourism products – e.g. crafts

Recognizing that the VMGP and other management plans are not intended to be static documents, but must instead be responsive to evolving conditions, a further comprehensive consultation process was undertaken, described below, with the aim of ensuring that the VMGP for Bwindi remains relevant and adaptive, reflecting both the lessons learned from ongoing implementation as well as the needs and priorities of the Batwa communities and other stakeholders.

6.3. Phase III: Consultation process for VMGP revision (July and December 2025)

Background: concerns on VGMP implementation from Batwa representative organisations

In October 2024, during the period of implementation of the VMGP, three Batwa representative organisations - Batwa Development Organisation (BDO), Batwa Indigenous Development Organisation (BIDO) and Batwa Indigenous Empowerment Organisation (BIEO) - expressed concerns that some of their proposals were not fully captured in the original VMGP and therefore, alleged that they were not getting some of the anticipated benefits from the project implementation.

²³ Consultative meetings held with the Batwa in Rubuguri on 20/6/22, Sanuriro on 21/6/22, Rushaaga 21/6/22, Buhoma on 22/6/2022, as well as meetings with key stakeholders and Batwa NGO leaders held on 22/6/2022 and Buhooma Visitor Centre, Rushaga on 21/6/2022 respectively.

In order to address the concerns of these three CSOs and, where possible, further enhance the meaningful engagement of Batwa communities with the IFPA-CD project, a team from the MWE, UWA and NFA conducted a third-phase of consultations to engage Batwa communities and relevant NGOs/CSOs and government stakeholders to review the VMGP to include additional issues and/or proposals which were not considered in the original VMGP, also incorporating the lessons learnt from VMGP implementation to date.

Consultation structure and methodology

Consultations to inform the revision of the Bwindi VMGP took place in July 2025. In April 2025, under the leadership of MWE an initial meeting with the aforementioned 3 Batwa organisations (BDO, BIDO and BIEO) as well as other organisations working with Batwa communities around BINP, namely the United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda, Nkuringo Community Development Foundation, and BioVision Africa to start discussion on the VMGP revision.

The formal consultation process for updating the Bwindi VMGP continued between 12 to 16 July 2025. Consultations meetings were held with Batwa communities, Batwa-led organisations and key partners and stakeholders supporting Batwa communities in Bwindi, including UWA field staff, representatives from the District Local Government, NGOs, and community development groups that represent and assist Batwa communities around BINP.

It should be noted that the area around BINP has a higher population of Batwa in comparison to the three other targeted PAs with VMGPs under IFPA-CD Project. Therefore, a majority of the July 2025 consultations for updating the VMGP for BINP focused on the areas south and north of the park, with 6 grassroots community consultations that engaged 145 Batwa participants in total. These consultation meetings were held on 12th July with Buniga Forest Trail/Sanuriro Batwa community; 13th July 2025 with the Rushaga Batwa community and the Nyabaremura Batwa community; and on 15th July with the Kitaliro and Kihembe Batwa communities. A series of meetings were also held with CSOs/NGOs and other partners on 12th July with Nkuringo Conservation and Development Foundation (NCDF) at Rubuguri; on 13th July with BIEO; on 15th July with the District Local Government and Batwa CSOs, namely Batwa Development Program (BDP), Action for Batwa Empowerment Group (ABEG) and Empowering Vulnerable Communities (EVC); and on 16th July with UWA staff and ABEG at BINP. A total of 17 CSOs/NGOs were consulted for the revision of this VMGP.²⁴

During validation of the proposed actions for the VGMP in December 2025, further consultations with CSOs were conducted. Alongside the District Community Development Officer, the District Tourism Officer and the representative from UWA, 15 Batwa focused CSOs participated in validation meeting held on December 8, 2025 in Kisoro town (Kisoro District).

Consultations were conducted with advance notice of more than three weeks, and information was provided to the identified stakeholders and Batwa communities in accessible languages and formats. Meetings were held in local languages (Rukiga, Rutooro and Rutwa), with translators from among the stakeholders. The consultation meetings started with providing a brief feedback on the status of the project implementation, status of implementation of the original VMGP and outcomes of the previous

²⁴ The partner engaged undertaken in Kisoro district in July 2025 covered the revision of the VMGP for Bwindi, Mgahinga and Echuya CFR.

consultation process. The key aspects of the VMGP were highlighted and the participants were reminded of the key proposals discussed during the development of the VMGP in 2022. Therefore, the process of updating the VMGP built on the information gathered during the design and implementation of the original VGMP and supplemented with the outcomes of the new rounds of comprehensive consultations held in July 2025.

To ensure effective participation from stakeholders, consultations were open to all relevant stakeholders and at the start of the meeting they were encouraged to freely express their views and opinions, since the review of the VGMP means to capture the reality on the ground. Systematic documentation of the process and feedback received then informed the update of the VGMP, with a focus on increasing engagement and relevance of the VGMPs to Batwa communities, having regard to the Project objective, scope and remaining implementation period. Accordingly, the stakeholders consulted were reminded of the importance of agreeing on actions that are feasible, can be feasibly implemented through the project and could be effectively implemented before the Project's closure date (June 2026). For example, issues of land acquisition, the existing government tourism revenue sharing scheme, and the existing Batwa tourism products cannot be feasibly supported through the project due to the project duration and the limited nature of project activities (as described in the legal agreement for the project).

Consultation outputs

During the revision of the VMGP for Bwindi, stakeholders provided valuable feedback on several key areas: the current needs of Batwa communities living around Bwindi, lessons learnt from ongoing VMGP implementation -including both successes and challenges- and proposals for improving the updated VMGP.

Batwa communities' needs: Stakeholders requested opportunities for training in crafts, agriculture, tailoring, customer care and marketing. While they acknowledged that many had received training in crafts, guiding, medicinal plants, bee keeping, and vegetable growing, the lack of agricultural tools, sufficient craft materials, and the provision of capital funding for enterprise development was a major barrier to income generation and sustainable livelihoods. They also expressed the need for improved co-management of park resources and representation in decision-making structures as well as employment opportunities, including for the youth. In addition, some community members expressed the need for dedicated spaces such as craft centres, cultural centres, and sales venues to promote craft sales and cultural tourism. They further highlighted issues such as livestock and farming support, lack of land and water supply.

District technical staff and CSO/NGOs representatives: The district government reported mobilising Batwa groups under the Parish Development Model, with some Batwa employed locally. Key Batwa NGOs (BDP, ABEG, EVC) described work on land purchase, livelihoods, health, and education, but also identified persistent constraints in water access, land tenure, among others. Batwa led-organisations also called for Batwa-led NGOs to be prioritized over external NGOs in development interventions and provided their views on challenges related to youth and women-specific issues, such as early pregnancy and school dropout. The need for targeted livelihood support, including craft sales and financial literacy, was also pointed out by participants. Initiatives to preserve Batwa culture, such as an herbarium [herbal inventory] music, and a cultural centre were seen as crucial for both economic empowerment and cultural preservation. Some participants also referred to issues related to access to land, the Batwa trail, UWA revenue sharing, which were identified as issues outside of the Project feasibility.

UWA staff: Participants reviewed past collaboration with Batwa NGOs on fuel-efficient cook stoves, water tanks, and training. Batwa medicinal plant documentation continues, but UWA staff noted the short duration of some of the training, and the difficult follow up as trainers often come from Kampala and the need for sometimes more in-depth, follow on training. Participants further expressed the need to strengthen CRM structures, clarified that UWA remains open to requests for forest access for traditional use and noted that mushroom growing has a strong potential.

Lessons learnt from implementation on the VGMP in BINP: During the engagements with the Batwa community, NGOs/CSOs and district stakeholders, it was generally acknowledged by community members and implementing officers that the implementation of the project, although still ongoing, has resulted in a number of both positive impacts and limitations.

➤ **Identified positive impacts include:**

- Resource access, off-take, and monitoring mechanisms have been made more feasible, with clear terms, conditions, and procedures now streamlined and documented to ensure sustainable use and accountability.
- Increased knowledge and awareness of the Batwa and local communities on the importance of sustainable forests and wildlife management
- Documentation of specific medicinal plants as requested by Batwa communities resulting in a wider range of plant species has now been included for community use under the MoUs.

➤ **Identified limitations include:**

- Trainings were undertaken in enterprise development, but the Batwa communities were not supported with start-up capital or sufficient inputs to initiate their enterprises.²⁵
- Historical grievances over removal from the BINP by government remain a factor that affects relations with donor-funded projects.

The revision of the VMGP for BINP involved a comprehensive consultation process that encompassed both the stakeholder engagements conducted in July 2025 and a subsequent, iterative validation phase. This final validation was carried out in December 2025, to review and confirm the proposed actions under this updated VMGP. Further details about this validation process are provided in Section 7 below.

7. Agreed Actions for the Revised VMGP and Validation

Drawing on the feedback from stakeholders consulted during the VMGP update for Bwindi and taking into account the Project's objectives, scope and timeframe as well as applicable regulatory and practical constraints, the following targets and actions focused on Batwa communities have been agreed for implementation until the present Project closing date in June 2026.

Validation of the proposed actions under this revised VMGP was conducted through a final, iterative consultation process held in December 2025 (that also took place and involved communities around

²⁵ Provision of additional inputs has now been planned through the project.

BINP), involving the same stakeholders who participated in the July 2025 consultations. The invitations to participate stated the objectives and meeting schedule and were sent in advance to the Kisoro and Kanungu District Governments for distribution via Community Development Officers, who are familiar with local stakeholders and are therefore well positioned to facilitate broad participation. Direct invitations were also sent to all CSO /NGO partners previously engaged. A few days after the invitations were sent, a summary of the VMGP, including the targets and proposed activities for the next six months of Project implementation, was also distributed to enable informed and meaningful stakeholder engagement. The consultation process prioritized oral presentations due to limited literacy among community participants. Discussions were conducted in Rutwa, Rutooro and Rukiga which is the local language widely spoken by Batwa communities around BINP. The process and outcome were duly documented.

Validation meetings were organised in coordination with Batwa communities and community leadership, ensuring participation from elders, women and youth. Meetings were scheduled in culturally appropriate settings and time, with prior notice of about ten days and were jointly facilitated by representatives of both MWE and UWA. They presented the VMGP revision process and the proposed actions for implementation under the updated VMGP; responded to questions, invited feedback and explained why certain activities suggested during the July 2025 consultations could not be included in the list of agreed actions for the next six months of VMGP implementation.

In fact, some of the issues raised by stakeholders during the consultations for VMGP revision fell outside the scope and capacity of the Project, such as requests related to land rights, existing revenue sharing arrangements, support of the “Batwa experience” trail, and establishment of a Batwa-owned cultural/craft centre, among others. Facilitators clearly explained these limitations to stakeholders emphasizing that while all feedback and proposals were welcome, some could not be accommodated into the revised VMGP due to Project scope.

The validation of the revised VMGP for Bwindi Impenetrable National Park was held on 9th, 10th and 15th December 2025. The meetings included community members from the Batwa settlements of Kihembe, Kitariro, Nkuringo-Kashija, Nyabaremura, Rushaga, and Sanuniro in Kisoro and Kanungu districts, engaging a total of 223 community members. These meetings, facilitated by MWE and UWA staff aimed to align VMGP interventions with community priorities and document feedback for implementation planning. Representatives of 12 local Batwa focused CSOs from Kisoro and Kanungu districts as well as the District Labour officer who represented the District Community Development Officer and the District Tourism Officer were engaged in the separate validation sessions.

Representatives of two local CSOs – BDO and Civil Society Coalition on Indigenous Peoples in Uganda (CSCIP-U) took an active part in the validation exercise and supported mobilization of some communities, supported interpretation during some of the community engagements, and provided clarification to community members during the engagements.

Endorsement during community validation meetings was reached through signing by the chosen community representatives. Once the community reached a consensus on the proposed actions, the Batwa community members who participated in the validation session elected three representatives per community from among themselves (a total of 18 representatives) These chosen representatives endorsed the list of agreed actions on behalf of the community, either by co-signing or by providing their fingerprint as confirmation.

Table 7. Proposed actions for implementation in BINP (under updated VMGP)

Implementable Interventions	Estimated Cost (UGX)	Time Frame	Resp Person	Implementation Status
Target 1: Expanded CRM access for Batwa community members as members and Batwa representation in CRM executive committees as per MOUs				
Strengthen Batwa representation in CRM executive committees: Take stock of Batwa membership in the resource user groups' executive committees to verify if it is consistent with the MOU provisions	Internal exercise	March 2026	Internally by UWA	Completed
As needed, renew the CRM agreements to update resource user group management teams' compositions to include required Batwa members.		March 2026		Completed
Target 2: capacity of CRM executive committees strengthened through training and improved coordination				
Conduct leadership training for the CRM group executives	72,000,000	October- November 2026	Service Provider to be procured by UWA	Procurement of service provider ongoing
Support CRM establish a coordination platform (e.g. WhatsApp group) that brings together all CRM leadership in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.	Desk work			May 2026
Target 3: Improved awareness on CRM among Batwa community members				
Conduct awareness raising for CRM for the Batwa communities	90,000,000	June, 2026	Internally by UWA	Done for only the Batwa community members to encourage them to join CRM
Target 4: Improved access to markets for the Batwa craft products				
Provision of space for the Batwa to market and display their art crafts for sale to tourists in the VIC (Only for the Southern Sector)	No budget	December 2026	Internally by UWA	Construction of VICs is ongoing
Target 5: Improved access to water resources for the Batwa communities (provision of rainwater harvesting watertanks)				
1 – 5,000 ltrs for Bubale Settlement	36,000,000	May 2026	Internally by UWA	All tanks have been procured and installed
1 – 5,000 ltrs for Hakicoma				
1 – 5,000 ltrs for Kashija				
3 – 5,000 ltrs for Bwabutukulu				
3 – 5,000 ltrs for Kitariro (Kanungu)				
3 – 5,000 ltrs for Kihembe (Kanungu)				
3 – 5,000 ltrs for Sanuliro				
2- 5,000 ltr tank for Bishayu				
Target 6: improved livelihoods opportunities for the Batwa community members				

Implementable Interventions	Estimated Cost (UGX)	Time Frame	Resp Person	Implementation Status
New Trainings and support with inputs and or startup requirements: carpentry; hair-dressing / barbering ; sustainable agriculture (Irish potatoe, sweet potatoes growing, peas, beans, maize, cabbage, bee hives and making traditional bee hives), and provide support with inputs for planting seeds for Irish potatoes, cabbage, peas, sorghum and farm tools like hoes; Hair dressing; knitting; tailoring; baking; motorcycle repair; soap making; craft making; weaving	774,000,00	September-October 2026	Service Provider to be procured by UWA	Procurement of service providers is ongoing
Refresher Training: tour guiding, hospitality and customer care, marketing, salon, welding				
Provide livestock support: sheep, poultry, Goats, Cows, Rabbits				
Target 7: improved access to medicinal plants for Batwa community members				
Establishment of medicinal plants demonstration plot in BINP in Nkuringo buffer zone	12,000,000	May 2026	Internally by UWA	Completed, in Nkuringo buffer zone
Target 8: support Batwa communities in recording traditional Batwa knowledge for their use				
Translate phase 1 of herbal medicine inventory into Rutooro & Rukiga languages.	36,000,000	June 2026	Service Provider to be procured by UWA	Translation has been completed, and books have been printed. Distribution is ongoing
Print and distribute 300 copies for each language (Rutooro & Rukiga) for use by the Batwa communities.	54,000,000			
Print and distribute 100 copies (English) languages for use by the Batwa communities when tour guiding.	25,000,000			
Conduct 2nd phase of herbal medicine inventory	140,000,000			
Total cost	1,239,000,000			

8. Applicability of Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

The IFPA-CD project team has consulted with the Batwa communities during project design, with dedicated sessions specific to the Batwa people (for example during the preparation of ESMF and preparation of VMGF) as well as during project implementation. The preparation of VMGF has been entirely dedicated to park-adjacent Batwa communities, and their full engagement has been secured during

this process. Informed consultations through culturally appropriate methods with Batwa communities have been carried out, leading to broad community support of the project, identification of aspirations and agreed actions to address priority needs within the scope and objectives of the project and lessons learnt for adaptive management. The project has thereby applied the standard of meaningful consultations tailored to the Batwa people living around BINP.

FPIC, however, is deemed not to apply to the Project, including in Bwindi. Under ESS7, FPIC is required for specific circumstances that have a negative impact on Indigenous peoples/VMGs, namely when the Project will:

- (a) Have adverse impacts on land and natural resources subject to their traditional ownership or under customary use or occupation;*
- (b) Cause their relocation from land and natural resources subject to traditional ownership or under customary use or occupation;*
- (c) Have significant impacts on their cultural heritage that is material to their identity and/or cultural, ceremonial, or spiritual aspects of their lives; and*
- (d) Use their cultural heritage for commercial purposes*

In this case, project activities have not entailed (and were not expected to entail) relocation of Batwa communities, nor have they caused adverse impacts on the lands and resources traditionally used by them or any significant impacts on cultural heritage material to their identity, cultural, ceremonial, or spiritual practices as provided for ESS7. As noted earlier in this document, BINP was gazetted and the Batwa communities living therein were relocated long before the Project began and, hence, the Batwa also completely lost access to such lands and resources several decades ago (around the 1990s) prior to the IFPA-CD Project. Project activities have neither altered the boundaries of the protected area nor have supported any physical demarcation of boundaries in the areas where Batwa people are present. Adjacent communities continue to physically access forest resources under CRM arrangements or on an ad hoc basis upon request to UWA. The project has not made the terms of access for Batwa or other local park adjacent communities more restrictive than what was previously regulated or agreed upon through CRM frameworks, which the Project seeks to support and scale up. Rather, in this regard, it has further promoted Batwa's involvement in CRMs. These regulated arrangements are based on national law and were already in place prior to the project's inception and continue to allow Batwa communities regularized access to and benefit from resources within the protected areas, including through Project livelihood support activities (as further detailed in this VMGP). In addition, while the Project also provides some limited support to enhanced park management capacity, mainly through provision of few equipment and technical assistance, this was not expected to result (and has not resulted) in losses of livelihoods or increased restrictions to access park resources that could cause material harm to Batwa communities' subsistence or cultural heritage, as they continue to access them under CRM arrangements and on an ad hoc basis, as it was case since the 1990s.

The Project does not support any activities involving the commercial development of Batwa communities' cultural heritage or traditional knowledge. It has also not imposed any restrictions on access to their cultural heritage, which continues to be safeguarded under existing CRM arrangements and park management plans. Importantly, the so called "Batwa experience" trail in Bwindi was established prior to this Project and is neither related to nor is supported by Project activities.

In support of cultural preservation, and as requested by the Batwa communities during consultations, the Project has facilitated the documentation of Batwa traditional knowledge, including the development of an inventory of herbal medicines used by Batwa communities in Mgahinga and other protected areas, with Batwa leadership.

9. Implementation Arrangements

The implementation arrangements for the VMGP are aligned with the IFPA-CD implementation framework and collaborating institutions for implementation participate through a competitive process where needed. The main government bodies with responsibilities in VMGP implementation are UWA and the local governments of Kisoro and Kanungu. UWA is tasked with procurement, contract management, direct implementation for some activities, and reporting on the activities agreed in this VMGP. The local governments of Kisoro and Kanungu Districts, as part of their general government mandate, participate in the ground monitoring and follow up on livelihood activities. The Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE) in collaboration with Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities (MTWA) provides the overall strategic direction, supervision and overall monitoring of implementation of the plan in sync with the overall IFPA-CD project. Implementation of all agreed activities will continue to be guided by the BINP General Management Plan (including the new General Management Plan 2025/2026-2034/2035 once it has been adopted), this VMGP, and the approved Project work plans.

The District Local Government of Kisoro and Kanungu, including the Sub-counties and parishes that make up the Local Council System, play a role in local community engagement, so the Project has put in place some actions for strengthening its capacity. In May 2025 the project supported orientation training of all project District stakeholders on inclusion and non-discrimination with emphasis of involvement of all project stakeholders in decision-making, participation and access to benefits. The project grievance mechanism also uses the mainstream Local Council system, and the project has supported establishment and training of the Grievance Redress Committee for BINP, a District committee and the subcounty committees bordering the park in 2023 and 2025.²⁶

It should be noted that the VMGP has a broad range of stakeholders and partners. Stakeholders' participation in management of wildlife resources should be enhanced through shared roles and responsibilities and ensure equitable distribution and sharing of conservation benefits and/or costs. Wildlife conservation has diverse issues, diversity of stakeholders, and, therefore, needs to increase stakeholders' participation to enhance benefits from conservation. Protected areas are a source of various benefits to local people who need guidance to sustainably access these resources and manage any arising conflicts. In addition to government agencies, there are a number of non-governmental partners with relevant expertise that can be drawn upon. These partners are important for regular engagement under the project. There are several CSOs and NGOs working with Batwa communities around BINP, including those led by the Batwa, such as BIEO, Batwa Development Organization, Civil Society Coalition on Indigenous Peoples in Uganda Nkuringo Community Development Foundation, United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda, Nkuringo Cultural Center, Batwa Development Program, Empowering

²⁶ Training of the Local Council 1 Chairpersons is expected to be completed in early 2026 (see also section 10 below on Grievance Redress Mechanism).

Vulnerable Communities; Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust, , and Batwa Indigenous Development Organization.

Other relevant non-governmental partners in the area include Pro-biodiversity conservationists in Uganda (PROBICO); International Gorilla conservation program (IGCP); Gorilla Organisation (GO); the Institute of tropical forest conservation (ITFC); Conservation through Public Health (CTPH); and Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST).

During the implementation of activities outlined in this revised VMGP for BINP, deliberate efforts were and will continue to be employed to include the Batwa-led institutions or institutions working with Batwa communities in implementation of specific activities especially those targeting Batwa communities, provided that this is possible within the limits of requirements of the World Bank Procurement Framework. The latter has to be complied with by any contractor or implementing partners operating with funding from the IFPA-CD.

Specific terms of reference will be issued for specific activities and requests made. The requests shall be evaluated by the technical teams from UWA before a decision is made. Key considerations will include:

- a. Experience of the applicant working with the Batwa and other vulnerable groups
- b. Membership and group structures (*if any*)
- c. Description of the modalities and direct Batwa engagement in the implementation and/management of benefits from the business activity.

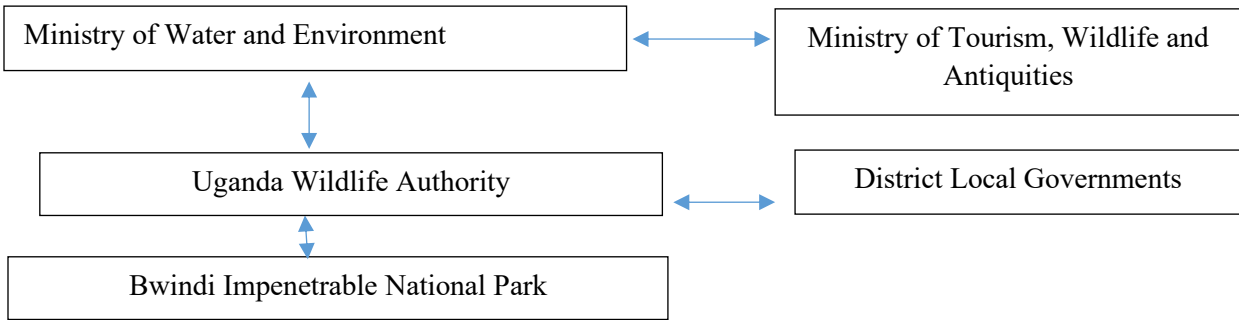
The applicants for support to Batwa groups will include all supporting documents, in line with the call for proposals and terms of reference.

Table 8. Stakeholders’ roles and responsibilities

Key stakeholder	Role in the Implementation of the VMGP
Government agencies	
Ministry of Water and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide strategic direction and monitor overall implementation of VMGP • Overall supervision of the preparation and implementation of VMG Plan for BINP • Participate in the district level meetings in Kisoro and Kanungu districts • Coordinate with other Government Line Departments and agencies such as Ministry of Tourism for ensuring effective delivery of mitigation measures • Make budgetary provisions for implementation of project activities • Provide technical support for implementation of the actions in the VMGP
UWA (Chief Warden and Warden Community Conservation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of mitigation measures for adverse effects as per project components: Component 1 activities to be implemented by UWA in and around Bwindi and Component 2 activities to be implemented by UWA (for tourism-related investments). • Supervision of plans and reporting to MWE
District Local Governments (Kisoro and Kanungu)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting communities in preparation of project activities • Participating in monitoring activities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instrumental in supporting mobilisation of communities, formation of CRMs, following up implementation of plans, including livelihoods and income-generating activities, on the ground provision of technical guidance, and dispute settlement
Non-governmental partners that could be involved in implementation of VMGP activities	
Pro-biodiversity conservationists in Uganda (PROBICO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilise Batwa through Batwa Organizations, carry out training on VMG issues and conservation, strengthen the Batwa Forest Trail, work with Batwa in restoration and planting of indigenous trees in pocket forests, Livelihood, advocacy and revenue sharing management, support Batwa livelihood programs.
International Gorilla conservation program (IGCP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support community development enterprises around the BINP, support problem animal control, support tourism development, field equipment support
Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust (BMCT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Batwa access to land to facilitate livelihood demonstration projects, resettlement programs, and community development.
Gorilla Organisation (GO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem animal control, energy saving technologies, enterprise development
Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation (ITFC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research
Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community health awareness, disease surveillance-human and wildlife
United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocacy for Batwa development, Mobilization of Batwa in BINP, and support for livelihood.
Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research on medical herbs, cultural sites and piloting medicinal gardens, supporting Batwa Forest Experience
Nkuringo Cultural Centre (NCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Batwa to promote cultural Tourism, Batwa Cultural performance, music dance and Drama and Batwa cultural values. Support the establishment of a pilot cultural Centre.
Bwindi Batwa Development Association (Already has an MOU with UWA).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize and mobilize the Batwa to participate in the project and related training programs, strengthen capacity of the Batwa, extend training and maintain the Batwa Forest Experience trail at Nkuringo.
Other Batwa led NGOs, such as Batwa Indigenous Empowerment Programme; BIDO and BDO, among others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobilization of the Batwa, training and capacity building, knowledge sharing, and support of livelihood activities etc.

Figure 3. Coordination and implementation Structure



10. Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring of this revised VMGP shall continue being part of the overall M&E Framework for the IFPA-CD project. The MWE has the overall responsibility for coordinating M&E and ensuring that data and information are produced on time and of the necessary quality, including reporting on Project performance and results. Monitoring data will be collected at field and agency level by UWA staff and forwarded to UWA and the Project Coordinating Unit (PCU) for consolidated reporting. Implementing Agencies (MWE and UWA) will host and participate in any field monitoring visits.

Alongside the M&E Framework, project reporting formats and feedback mechanisms have been developed for use by UWA, DLGs and the Technical Service Providers (TSP). UWA field staff has received training on stakeholder engagement and reporting templates. Available feedback mechanisms also include the Grievance Redress Committees (GRC) and suggestions boxes installed around BINP.

In the case of the implementing agent for the Batwa or the TSP, the reporting formats will be appended to the Service Contracts. This revised VMGP already highlights key targets and indicators in section 7 above that shall inform the design of data collection tools for effective monitoring of this VMGP.

Monitoring will be the main mechanism through which the implementers of this revised VMGP will get feedback and alerts on any delays and problems. The monitoring framework will help the implementers to measure the pace of implementation of activities. It enables timely responses while providing lessons on implementation strategies. It will also help to ascertain whether the IFPA-CD project activities are aligned with this revised VMGP, the World Bank ESF and national policy and legal procedures that provide for participation of the VMGs (Batwa).

The Project will support the engagement of community Batwa leaders during monitoring visits conducted by UWA/MWE to oversee implementation of the activities agreed in this revised VMGP.

The monitoring activities will result in regular feedback on the implementation of the VMGP, which is shared with UWA and MWE for learning and improvement of implementation modalities. The scope of Monitoring Indicators shall include the following:

- Collaborative resource management
- Livelihoods activities support
- Awareness
- Employment in project funded activities

11. Administrative Reporting and Grievance Redress Mechanisms

The standard record of activities undertaken in each reporting period, along with financial information, will continue to be provided until the Project closes in June 2026. For this revised VMGP, quarterly and annual project progress reports will include a section that details, for instance, the number and type of local meetings held, the number and types of grievances registered and their resolution, and the nature of measures implemented. This will benefit from routine collection of data from activity reports.

The Project Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) in and around national parks, including Bwindi, is structured with four levels of Grievance Redress Committees (GRCs) in addition to the national level: at the Conservation Area, District, Subcounty, and Village levels (existing Local Council LC1). In the case of BINP, the project has established and trained the Grievance Redress Committee for Bwindi Conservation area, the Kisoro and Kanungu District Committees and the Subcounty Committees bordering the park: Nkuringo Town Council, Rubuguri Town Council, Nyanamo (Kisoro District), Ruhija, Ruhija Town Council, Ikumba, Shanjare Town Council (Rubanda District) and Kishor, Mpungu, Butogota, Kayonza (Kanungu District) in 2023 and 2025. Trainings for village leaders (Local Council 1 Chairpersons) in communities bordering the protected areas are ongoing. In May 2025 orientation training was provided to all project District stakeholders on inclusion and non-discrimination with emphasis on involvement of all project stakeholders in decision-making, participation and access to benefits. The GRCs have also been equipped with essential tools, including complaint registers, complaints logs, and reporting templates, which are actively being used.

The composition of the GRCs takes into consideration the diverse stakeholder interest groups in the project areas, including the Batwa communities adjacent to the targeted PAs, as well as the local dispute management models and the involvement of local leaders. For example, the LC1 level GRC is comprised of five members elected by the village, while the Subcounty level GRC includes an NGO/CBO representative. Notably, in the case of Bwindi, there is one member representing the Batwa at Park level GRC. A wide range of channels have been put in place to facilitate access and use of the Project GRM, particularly by Batwa communities and vulnerable groups (e.g., youth and women). These include toll free phone lines, WhatsApp lines and email for submission of project related grievances directly to the MWE or UWA. Suggestion boxes have been distributed by UWA to communities bordering the PAs to allow them to drop in their grievances, including anonymous written complaints. In Bwindi, 20 suggestions boxes have been installed in strategic locations within villages surrounding the PA and at the field office of UWA. UWA field personnel are responsible for collecting the grievances from the boxes on a weekly basis and register them in the PA logbook to ensure that they are properly addressed and recorded.

Information on these channels is disseminated through posters widely circulated to local leaders and communities in the project districts. The posters have been printed in English and translated and printed in the different languages spoken in the project areas, including the local language spoken by Batwa people around Bwindi (Runyoro- Rutooro and Runyakore-Rukiiga).

Within the GRCs, two people (male and female) with reasonable experience and exposure in managing GBV issues are assigned the task of handling GBV, SEA, SH, and VAC complaints issues with the confidentiality it demands. Their main responsibility is referring cases to the relevant government offices, such as the community development office, probation and social welfare office, psycho-social service providers, the police department for child and family affairs, and nearby health facilities for emergency care, contraceptives, and post-exposure prophylaxis to reduce the risk of HIV infection. The GBV committee is also charged with providing psychological support and legal advice for survivors and support reintegration into the workforce and community at large. These complaints are treated with strict sensitivity and confidentiality.

In addition, the Project also has an incident report mechanism for documenting and managing serious events reportable to the Bank and other types of incidents that still need to be duly recorded and handled, including those that may occur inside or nearby the national parks, including Bwindi. This incident report mechanism is further detailed in the Project's Environmental and Social Management Framework.

Further details on the project GRM structure and channels for submitting concerns and grievances can be found in the Project's SEP.

12. Budget and Financing Arrangements for the VMGP

According to the project implementation manual for IFPA-CD project, section 3 (the project description), sub-component 1.2 is about increasing the involvement of local communities in the management of forest and wildlife by increasing their access and benefits from these areas. The activities proposed in this VMGP are financed and will continue being financed under this subcomponent.

This subcomponent supports technical assistance packages and training aimed at developing skills at the community level to actively participate in and benefit from the management of wildlife resources. This would include enhancing the adaptive capacity of forest dependent communities for climate resilience by strengthening their coping strategies, diversifying forest management-related employment opportunities and livelihoods, and adaptive planning and management. This comprises technical assistance packages with targeted support for women to empower them to participate and take leadership roles in natural resources management. At the field level, support will be provided for community engagement in the management of resources within BINP. This includes the establishment of new CRM groups and support of livelihood activities within existing groups.

The budgeting arrangements for implementation of the VMGP follow those of the overall budgeting arrangements of the IFPA-CD project, in accordance with GoU budgeting procedures and fiscal year (July-June). UWA has facilitated the development of a work plan with timeline and budget for specific

activities targeting the Batwa in line with this revised VMGP (see section 7 above). This plan has been integrated in the overall annual project work plans and budgets prepared by UWA and approved by the Project Steering Committee, MWE and IDA.

Once funds have been received by UWA, funds for implementation of VMGP activities will be spent in accordance with approved work plans. UWA will work with the TSP competitively selected to execute activities as per agreed terms. TSPs shall report to UWA, and the financial reports shall be integrated into general Annual Reports of UWA.

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Annex I. CRM Groups and Agreements in Bwindi National Park (as of December 2025)

CRM MoUs on resource access/use (number, status & project support)	1	Karangara Parish resource user group, December 14, 2021 (in force, pre-dates the Project; no Project support)	Number of Batwa community members in CRM MoUs	06	
	2	Kashasha Parish Resource User Group, December 22, 2021 (in force, pre-dates the Project; no Project support)		10	
	3	Mushanje Parish Resource User Group, December 22, 2021 (in force, pre-dates the Project; no project support)		09	
	4	Nyamabare Parish Resource User Group, December 22, 2021 (in force, pre-dates the Project; no Project support)		05	
	5	Rutugunda Resource User Group, December 22, 2021 (in force, pre-dates the Project; no Project support)		<i>*Note: there are no Batwa community members on Southern</i>	06
	6	Southern Ward Resource User Group, December 22, 2021 (in force, pre-dates the Project; no Project support)		<i>Ward of</i>	0
	7	Mpungu Bee keeping group, October 23, 2025 (in force, negotiated and concluded with Project support)		<i>Kanungu</i>	05
	8	Buremba-Mpungu Resource Use Group, October 23, 2025 (in force, negotiated and concluded with Project support)			04
Total	8 CRM Resource Access/Use MoU with 45 Batwa members				

It should be noted that there are also tourism-related MOUs/agreements between UWA and Batwa groups that are not connected to the IFPA-CD Project. These are:

- Bwindi Batwa Forest Experience (Batwa-only), renewed MoU signed in 2024 (during the Project period; not project supported)
- Action for Batwa Empowerment group & Batwa Development Programme (Batwa-only), MoU at approval stage by UWA's Top Management (not Project supported)
- Nkuringo Batwa community (Batwa-only); no formal relationship in place. The group has been given a platform to perform for visitors.
- ABEG is one of the selected exclusive Batwa groups that provides cultural entertainment at the Buhoma Visitor Information Centre (VIC), including traditional dance, music, and drama performances.

Annex II: Summary of 2022 consultations meetings with Batwa communities

	BINP Sector	Batwa Settlement villages represented in a consultative meeting	Venue of the Meeting	Date of the Meeting	No. of Participants
1	Southern sector of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park ²⁷	Nyabaremura, Mukungu Byabitukuru, Rubuguri, Kashaija	Rubuguri Town Council	20/6/2022	44
		Kanyamahene, Rushaaga, Bubale	Rushaga	20/6/22	40
		Sanuriro Settlement, Nteko	Sanuriro	21/6/22	43
2	Northern Sector of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest National Park	Bikuuto, Buhoma, Byumba, Karehe, Kebiremu, Kihembe, Kitahurira, Kitariro, Mukongoro Rurangara, Byumba	Buhoma Visitor centre	22/6/22	40
Total number of Batwa people engaged					167

²⁷ A total of 3 meetings with the Batwa were organized in the Southern Sector of Bwindi alone.

Annex III. Summary feedback received during VMGP revision in July 2025

Stakeholder Groups Engaged	Key Issues Raised during various consultations with Batwa CSOs, Batwa communities and UWA in the area of BINP on July 2025	Feedback provided by Batwa stakeholders during consultations
<p>Buniga Forest Trail/Sanuriro Batwa Community 12 July 2025 23 participants (6 male and 17 women)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in participating in tourist accommodation ventures. • Desire for benefits from tourists visiting the area. <p><u>Income generation discussed:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in indigenous knowledge systems • Language and culture documentation • Develop market for traditional items • Use of traditional knowledge for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Organising meetings -Music, dance, and drama as forms of cultural transmission • Sales of crafts from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The Batwa trail -Home-based sales • Proposed cultural centre or sales space • Offering a traditional food experience • Vegetable gardens for selling produce to local lodges • Savings groups support livelihoods (not yet government-registered) but running • Micro-loans at 5% interest, 50% income reinvestment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tailoring ○ Crafts and weaving ○ Catering ○ Customer care and tour guiding ○ Quality control in crafts ○ Marketing and product development
<p>Rushaga Batwa Community 13 July 2025 20 participants (9 women)</p>	<p><u>Training Received:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craft making, beekeeping, BCMT training (craft/weaving) • Shoe polish making, mushroom/vegetable growing (home gardens) • Gorilla carving training - insufficient equipment/materials to complete <p><u>Livelihood Proposals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in Batwa social enterprise with branding/marketing focus • Irish potato farming support, boards for carving 	<p>Request for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • own craft centre • training for cultural performance • kitchen gardens

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheep rearing for manure - revolving credit association requested <p><u>Tourism:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UWA could grant cultural experience concession in forest (no existing trail) • Request for own craft centre, training for cultural performance, kitchen gardens <p><u>Land:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BMCT bought land, but more needed; no formal land agreement 	
<p>Batwa Indigenous Empowerment Organisation (BIEO) 13 July 2025, Rushaga</p>	<p><u>Organisational Priorities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land acquisition and rights • Health access - need to construct clinic • Living conditions improvement • Established ECD centre, school child sponsorship, water tank installation • Advocacy for human rights and community representation • Education priority: 'Batwa can become doctors, lawyers, etc.' 	
<p>Nyabaremura Batwa Community 13 July 2025 21 participants</p>	<p><u>Training:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UWA training in guiding and medicinal plant identification • Additional training: crafts, weaving, vegetables, mushrooms, shoe polish <p><u>Batwa Forest Experience Trail:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.5 km trail from park boundary • Sacred sites located within trail • Few visitors (e.g., 3 in past 3 weeks) • Current arrangement with UWA not working effectively • Non-local Batwa sometimes used for cultural demonstrations <p><u>Livelihoods:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some on BMCT land; others renting nearby • Preservation of Batwa music - elders play traditional instruments from specific trees • Skills exist but materials lacking • No workspaces available • Other women have sales outlets through associations; locals want own Batwa association • Lack of land titles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire for sheep (livestock and manure) • Craft materials • Workspaces • Further support for mushroom growing • Tourism marketing • Medicinal garden

Batwa Civil Society Stakeholders - Kanungu
15 July 2025
BDP, ABEG, EVC

Batwa Development Programme (BDP):

- Active since 1991 in Kanungu and Kisoro; 1,187 Batwa reached
- Land purchase, house construction (interlocking bricks); each settlement has Chair/Secretary
- Seeds supplied but land insufficient; goat farming promoted
- Vocational training: driving, mechanics, hairdressing
- 4 schools supported; 465 Batwa children enrolled (pre-primary to tertiary)
- Healthcare insurance, motorbike transport, social workers, agricultural extension
- 75 staff including 100+ Batwa employed (dancers, cooks, cleaners)

Action for Batwa Empowerment Group (ABEG):

- Founded 2017, registered 2021; 23 mixed Batwa/non-Batwa staff
- Livelihoods and advocacy-focused; over 200 served through economic empowerment
- Land under Church/BDP partnership but not legally owned by Batwa
- Few Batwa employed in park (1 ranger, few porters); not in park decision-making
- Microcredit active but land not bankable
- Has own Batwa cultural group; negotiated UWA access
- Collaborated on energy-saving stoves, mushroom/vegetable growing
- Skills: shoe polish, candles, crafts, basket weaving
- 2 elders in medicinal plant identification; seedling introduction potential
- Interest in modern beekeeping, branding, value addition; want UWA hive permission

Empowering Vulnerable Communities (EVC):

- Partnered with OVD (Italy); broad vulnerable people focus with Batwa activities
- Food security, seeds, agricultural support, seasonal tools

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health: maternal visits encouraged; involved in education, research, student/volunteer activities 	
<p>Kitaliro Batwa Communities 15 July 2025 36 participants</p>	<p><u>Youth Needs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soap-making feasible but underfunded Craft skills (basket/mat making) exist but lack start-up capital <p><u>Housing & Land:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Want to own land and homes Wildlife conflict: baboons/monkeys eat crops; UWA threatens arrest if animals are chased <p><u>Education & Success Stories:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some Batwa children succeeded - owning cars, earning income Children still drop out despite sponsorship <p><u>Forest access:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access for firewood and craft materials Only ~4 have UWA IDs for limited collection; request relaxed rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for current training under BDP Craft materials Beekeeping: lack materials/land; suggested placing hives near forest boundaries
<p>Kihembe Batwa Community 15 July 2025 45 participants</p>	<p><u>Community Needs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land and livestock (goats) needs Lack of housing <p><u>Livelihood Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stove making (sold to other groups), brick making Field labour: UGX 7,000/day standard; UGX 10,500/day for long days <p><u>Representation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Village chairperson; represented on Batwa Executive Committee of BDP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Livestock support Materials for tailoring Support for small shops, palm oil, coffee sales, brick sales and restaurant Interest in chicken, pigs, goats, ducks, basket making
<p>Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) - BINP 16 July 2025</p>	<p><u>Collaborations with NGOs:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Past IFPA-CD collaboration: energy-saving stoves, water tanks (ongoing in Rugali) ABEG training in crafts, candle wax, shoe polish, beeswax oil <p><u>Access to natural resources:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medicinal plants documentation project: botanical consultants, community workshops Some Batwa sneak in for craft materials 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRM structures not well developed due to tourism zonation, lower natural product demand • UWA open to formal requests for traditional forest access <p><u>Economic opportunities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art/craft galleries for tourist sales needed • Rugali Town Council land (allocated to UWA) may be used for Batwa craft sales, shared with UWA office • Beekeeping possible in park but concerns over chemical use from farms; site-specific placement needed • Vegetable production for lodges if infrastructure supported • Mushroom growing has strong potential; spore source at Makerere University 	
<p>Action for Batwa Empowerment Group (ABEG) - NGO Office 16 July 2025</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relations with other NGO and UWA over the Batwa trail <p><u>Planned Cultural Centre:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum with artifacts/handicrafts, learning centre • Youth counselling targeting school dropout and early pregnancy • Youth engagement to reduce dropout, promote positive role models • Entry fee for tourists <p><u>Economic Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Craft sales via U.S. partner; proceeds to community savings account • Visitors Centre with auditorium for tourists unable to walk trail • Herbarium for traditional plant knowledge documentation/conservation • Financial literacy scheme support; some Batwa investing income as role models • Missed forest fishing access; propose fish ponds <p><u>Advocacy:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Batwa projects should prioritise Batwa-led NGOs over external NGOs 	

Annex IV. Community based organizations, NGOs and other institutions working with and led by the Batwa around BINP

No	Organization	Location /District
1.	Nkuringo Cultural Centre (NCC)	Kisoro
2.	Bwindi Batwa Development Association (BBDA)	Kisoro
3.	Batwa Development Organisation (BDO)	Kanungu and Kisoro
4.	Batwa Indigenous Development Organisation (BIDO)	Kisoro
5.	Civil Society Coalition on Indigenous People in Uganda (CSCIP-U)	Kisoro, Kanungu
6.	Batwa Indigenous Empowerment Organisation (BIEO)	Kisoro
7.	Action for Batwa Empowerment Group	Kanungu
8.	Pro-biodiversity Conservationists in Uganda (PROBICO)	Kisoro, Kanungu
9.	Batwa Empowerment Village	Kanungu
10.	Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust (BMCT)	Kanungu, Kisoro
11.	Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH)	Kisoro Kanungu
12.	International Gorilla conservation program (IGCP)	Kanungu, Kisoro
13.	Gorilla Organisation (GO)	Kanungu, Kisoro
14.	Institute of Tropical Forest Conservation (ITFC)	Kanungu, Kisoro
15.	United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU)	Kisoro, Kanungu
16.	Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST)	Kanungu, Kisoro

Annex V. Summary table of stakeholders consulted for VMGP development and revision

Consultations for VMGP development and revision	
VMGF Validation, 2020	85 persons
Batwa community members - Phase 1 – 2021	30 persons
Batwa community members - Phase 2 – 2022	167 persons
CSO/NGOs representatives (Phase 2 only) – 2022	17 persons
Batwa community members– Phase 3 (VMGP revision) – July 2025	145 persons
CSO/ NGOs - VMGP revision – 2025 Kisoro District	14 organizations* (includes partner engagement for Mgahinga, Bwindi and Echuya)
Batwa community members – validation of revised VMGP – December 2025	223 Persons
CSOs / NGOs – validation of revised VMGP – December 2025	12 organizations** (includes partner engagement for Mgahinga, Bwindi and Echuya)

* Batwa Development Organization, Batwa Indigenous Development Organization, Kisoro Concern for Marginalized People, United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda, Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust, Kisoro District Community-Based Development Organization, Nkuringo Community Development Foundation, Kisoro District NGO Forum, Kisoro Batwa Community Initiative, LOCAL KID NGO, Rushaga Batwa Cultural Resource; Batwa Development Program, Action for Batwa Empowerment Group, and Empowering Vulnerable Communities.

** Kisoro Concern for Marginalized, Batwa Development Organization, Stichting Kyakabi, Nkuringo Community Development Foundation, Kisoro Batwa Community Initiative, Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust, Gorilla Organisation, Kisoro District NGO Forum, KADOLHA, UOBDU, Action for Batwa Empowerment Group, Batwa Development Programme

Annex VI. Beneficiaries’ Selection for Livelihoods Support (2026)

A set of selection criteria were prepared to guide selection of beneficiaries for the livelihoods trainings under this VMGP. Separate criteria were agreed for each type of support, see tables 4.4-4.13. below.

A number of stakeholder engagement sessions were organised in communities adjacent to Echuya CFR in Kisoro and Rubanda districts in April 2026 in order to raise awareness about CFM and to undertake selection of beneficiaries for the project livelihoods support under this VMGP. These sessions were facilitated by MWE; they were attended by a total of 245 participants (see table 4.1. for details of these sessions and table 4.2. for the sessions’ agenda).

Table 4.1. Sensitization and Beneficiary Selection Sessions

Settlement, District	Number of Participants	Date
Kashija, Kisoro District	28	May 5 th , 2026
Rushaga, Kisoro District	64	May 5 th , 2026
Nyabaremura, Kisoro District	34	May 5 th , 2026
Kitariro, Kanungu District	37	May 6 th , 2026
Kihembe, Kanungu District	35	May 6 th , 2026
Mukongoro, Kanungu District	46	May 6 th , 2026
Sanuriro, Kisoro District	15	May 5 th , 2026
Nkuringo, Kisoro District	32	May 5 th , 2026
Total	291	

Table 4.2. Sensitization and Beneficiary Selection Sessions – Agenda

	Agenda item
1	Arrival and Registration of Participants
	Self-Introduction
2	Remarks by Chairperson LC1
	Remarks by the Chairperson CRM
3	Remarks by the MWE and UWA (Objectives, purpose of the meeting and overview of proposed livelihood enterprises under the revised VMGP)
4	Introduction to the selection criteria and identification of beneficiaries for each enterprise
5	Expected contributions from the livelihood beneficiaries
6	Way forward

As an outcome, a total of 336 Batwa community members were selected to benefit from support on livestock keeping; sustainable agriculture; tour guiding, hospitality and marketing; tailoring; hair dressing; carpentry; welding; motorcycle repair; baking; and soap making. See table 4.3. for details.

Table 4.3. Selected Beneficiaries for Livelihoods Support

Enterprise	No. selected
Livestock keeping	65
Sustainable agriculture	57
Tour guiding, hospitality and marketing	53
Tailoring	32
Hair dressing	25
Carpentry	23
Welding	22
Motorcycle repair	21
Baking	24
Soap making	14
Total	336

BENEFICIARY SELECTION CRITERIA

Table 4.4. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Livestock Keeping

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park boundary in Kisoro, Rubanda or Kanungu District
2.	Must be a member of CRM group or willing to join
3.	Must provide written endorsement from the LC1 Chairperson
4.	Must demonstrate willingness to participate fully in the organized training and follow-up activities
5.	For applicants below 18 years, written parental or guardian consent must be provided
6.	Must have access to land and space for animal housing
7.	Household must have access to water for livestock
8.	Must be willing to attend livestock training for the entire duration

Table 4.5. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Sustainable Agriculture (Irish Potato, Beans, Maize, Cabbage, Sweet Potato, And Sorghum)

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park boundary in Kisoro, Rubanda or Kanungu District
2.	Must be a member of CRM group or willing to join
3.	Must provide written endorsement from the LC1 Chairperson.
4.	Must demonstrate willingness to participate fully in the organized training and follow-up activities.
5.	For applicants below 18 years, written parental or guardian consent must be provided.
6.	Must have access to farmland suitable for growing crops like maize, beans, or sweet potatoes
7.	Must have access to water or irrigation resources
8.	Must be willing to adopt sustainable agriculture practices taught by the project
9.	Must have basic farming experience (optional)

Table 4.6. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Tour Guiding

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park boundary in Kisoro, Rubanda or Kanungu District
2.	Must provide written endorsement from the LC1 Chairperson.
3.	Must demonstrate willingness to participate fully in the organized training and follow-up activities.
4.	For applicants below 18 years, written parental or guardian consent must be provided
5.	Must not have received identical livelihood support under the same project phase (unless justified based on expanded support needs)
6.	Must demonstrate basic literacy and communication skills
7.	Must be willing to participate in organized tour guiding training
8.	Must demonstrate ability to interact respectfully with visitors

9.	Must be available for training schedules and field exposure
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Table 4.7. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Tailoring

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park boundary in Kisoro, Rubanda or Kanungu District
2.	Must be a member of CFM group or willing to join
3.	Must provide written endorsement from the LC1 Chairperson
4.	Must demonstrate willingness to participate fully in the organized training and follow-up activities
5.	For applicants below 18 years, written parental or guardian consent must be provided
6.	Must be interested in learning tailoring and design skills
7.	Must have basic sewing skills, such as using a needle for hemstitching
8.	Must be willing to attend all training sessions for tailoring
9.	Must be able to attend the training consistently for the required duration

Table 4.8. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Hair Dressing

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park boundary in Kisoro, Rubanda or Kanungu District
2.	Must be a member of CRM group or willing to join
3.	Must provide written endorsement from the LC1 Chairperson
4.	Must demonstrate willingness to participate fully in the organized training
5.	For applicants below 18 years, written parental or guardian consent must be provided
6.	Must demonstrate interest in salon and hairdressing
7.	Must have some basic prior experience (not necessarily commercial, can be private experience)
8.	Must be willing to attend training for the entire duration

Table 4.9. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Carpentry

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park boundary in Kisoro, Rubanda or Kanungu District
2.	Must be a member of CRM group or willing to join
3.	Must provide written endorsement from the LC1 Chairperson
4.	Must demonstrate willingness to participate fully in the organized training and follow-up activities
5.	For applicants below 18 years, written parental or guardian consent must be provided
6.	Must demonstrate interest in carpentry/woodwork
7.	Must have basic tool handling experience (hammer, screwdriver)
8.	Must be willing to attend full training sessions
9.	Must be able to consistently attend scheduled training
10.	Must be interested in learning carpentry and woodworking

Table 4.10. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Welding

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park boundary in Kisoro, Rubanda or Kanungu District
2.	Must be a member of CRM group or willing to join
3.	Must provide written endorsement from the LC1 Chairperson
4.	Must demonstrate willingness to participate fully in the organized training and follow-up activities
5.	For applicants below 18 years, written parental or guardian consent must be provided
6.	Must demonstrate interest in carpentry/woodwork
7.	Must have basic tool handling experience (hammer, screwdriver)
8.	Must be willing to attend full training sessions

9.	Must be able to consistently attend scheduled training
10.	Must be interested in learning carpentry and woodworking

Table 4.11. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Motorcycle Repair

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park boundary in Kisoro, Rubanda or Kanungu District
2.	Must be a member of CRM group or willing to join
3.	Must provide written endorsement from the LC1 Chairperson
4.	Must demonstrate willingness to participate fully in the organized training
5.	For applicants below 18 years, written parental or guardian consent must be provided
6.	Must demonstrate interest in motorcycle repair
7.	Must have basic mechanical skills (know how to use a screwdriver, hammer, etc.)
8.	Must be willing to attend training for the entire duration
9.	Must be able to consistently attend scheduled sessions

Table 4.12. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Baking

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park boundary in Kisoro, Rubanda or Kanungu District
2.	Must provide written endorsement from the LC1 Chairperson
3.	Must demonstrate willingness to participate fully in the organized training and follow-up activities
4.	For applicants below 18 years, written parental or guardian consent must be provided
5.	Must demonstrate interest in baking
6.	Must be willing to attend full training sessions for the entire duration of the training
7.	Must be able to consistently attend scheduled training

Table 4.13. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Soap Making

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park boundary in Kisoro, Rubanda or Kanungu District
2.	Must be a member of CRM group or willing to join
3.	Must provide written endorsement from the LC1 Chairperson
4.	Must demonstrate willingness to participate fully in the organized training and follow-up activities
5.	For applicants below 18 years, written parental or guardian consent must be provided
6.	Must demonstrate interest in carpentry/woodwork
7.	Must have basic tool handling experience (hammer, screwdriver)
8.	Must be willing to attend full training sessions
9.	Must be able to consistently attend scheduled training
10.	Must be interested in learning carpentry and woodworking