



**REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Plan  
for the Batwa around Semuliki 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

June 2026

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## ACRONYMS

BDO	Batwa Development Organisation
BIDO	Batwa Indigenous Development Organisation
BIEO	Batwa Indigenous Empowerment Organisation
BINP	Bwindi Impenetrable National Park
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
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
PROBICOU	Pro-biodiversity Conservationists in Uganda
SNP	Semuliki National Park
TSP	Technical Service Provider
UWA	Uganda Wildlife Authority
VG	Vulnerable Groups
VIC	Visitor Information Center
VMGF	Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Framework
VMGPs	Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Plans
VMGs	Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups
WB	World Bank
WRs	Wildlife Reserves

## 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. Semuliki National Park (hereinafter SNP or Semuliki), located in the Albertine Rift, is one of the protected areas included 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 \(VMGF\)](#).<sup>1</sup> 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 Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups (VMG) in the 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, as the Batwa live adjacent to these four Protected Areas (PA). These PAs are shown on the map below.

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

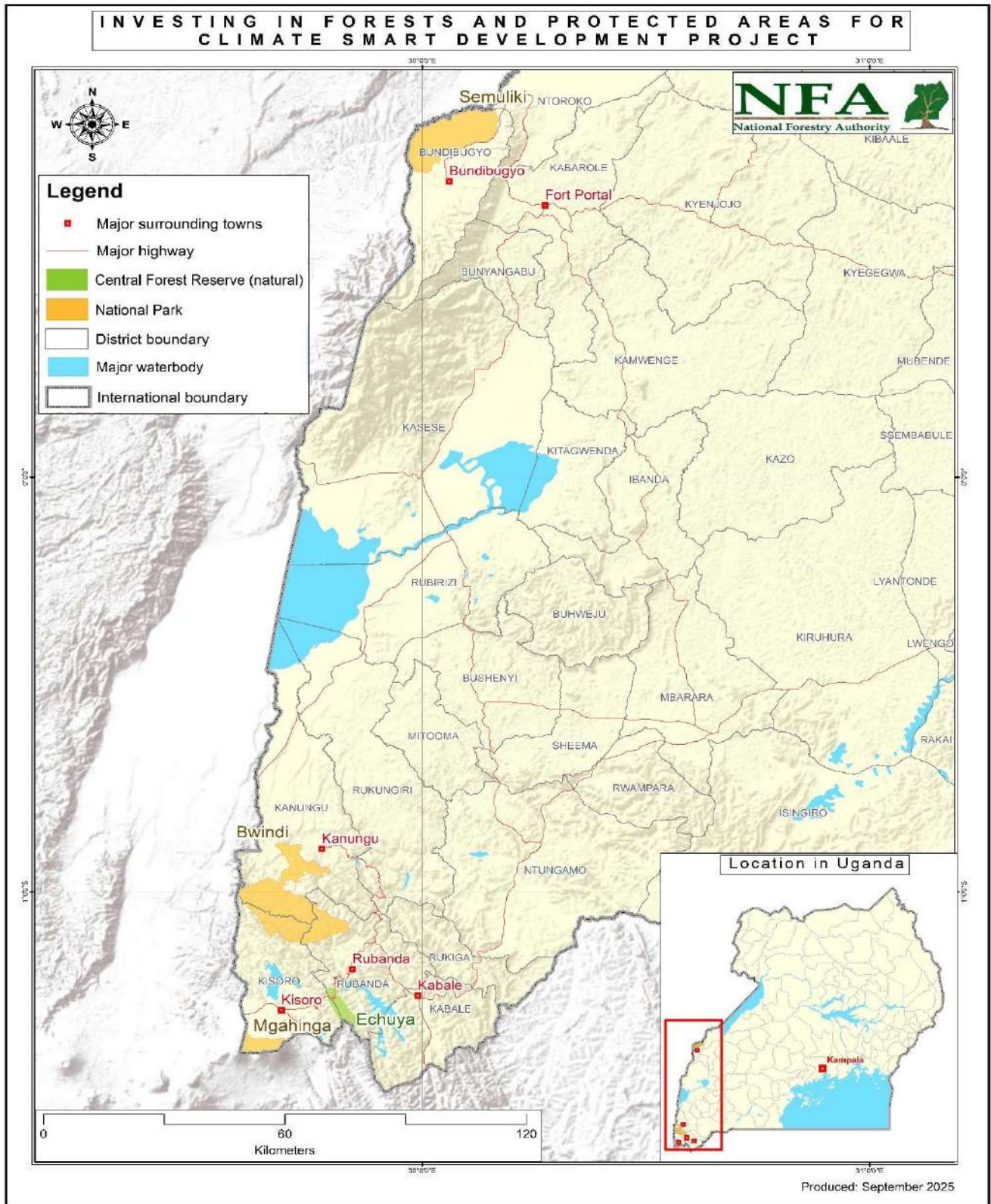


Figure 1 Map showing 4 PAs with Batwa presence

The VMGF highlights the need to develop separate 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 Semuliki National Park (SNP) that has a population of about 160 Batwa living nearby.**

The VMGF and the four VMGPs developed under the Project draw on the use of existing participatory forest / resource 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 SNP.

**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 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 in Semuliki 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 Semuliki, to enable their effective participation in and benefit from the Project. The initial version of the VMGP for SNP was adopted and [disclosed in 2023](#),<sup>2</sup> based on two rounds of dedicated VMGP consultations with the Batwa communities around Semuliki and NGOs and CSOs working with them, 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. 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 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 SNP was informed by engagements during implementation of VMGP activities, additional engagements held in April 2025, consultations carried out in October 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 SNP VMGP can be found in Annex II.

## 3. Project Background

The IFPA-CD project has four components. Table 1 below sets out those Project 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 SNP. There were no activities under the other subcomponents of Components 1 and 2, or

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<sup>2</sup> <https://mwe.go.ug/downloads/ug-ifpa-cd-project-p170466-semuliki-vmgp/>

under Components 3 and 4, that were implemented in Semuliki 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.<sup>3</sup>

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 Semuliki National Park*

Components/Subcomponents	Activities
<p><b>Component 1:</b> Investments to improve the management of forest protected areas.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
<p><b>Sub-component 1.1:</b> Improvement of infrastructure and equipment for the management of forest protected areas</p>	<p>Activities in Semuliki, implemented by UWA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement of UWA staff housing (senior and junior ranger posts) – planned</li> <li>• Investment in logistics and communication equipment (vehicle, motorcycles, binoculars) – completed</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sub-component 1.2:</b> Increasing the involvement of local communities in the management of forest and wildlife areas by increasing their access and benefits from these areas.</p>	<p>Activities in Semuliki, implemented by UWA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for the establishment of collaborative resource management agreements under UWA (some completed, some ongoing)</li> <li>• Livelihood support activities (e.g., Batwa targeted training on mushroom growing, handcraft, beekeeping, horticulture and entrepreneurship and business management) (some completed, more planned as per this VMGP)</li> <li>• Community awareness activities (ongoing)</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> 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>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roll-out of the Earth Ranger monitoring system (planned)</li> </ul>
Subcomponent 1.3: Restoration of degraded natural forests and habitats within Protected Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investments in fire detection and management (fire detection and fighting equipment and facilities; personal fire protective equipment) – completed</li> </ul>
<b>Component 2: Investments to increase revenues and jobs from forests and wildlife protected areas</b>	
Increase revenues and jobs from these forest and wildlife protected areas through targeted investments in tourism and productive forestry	
<i><b>Summary of activities:</b></i> 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.	
<b>Subcomponent 2.1:</b> Investments in tourism	Activities in Semuliki, implemented by UWA
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction of entrance gate structure and associated facilities</li> <li>• Construction and equipping of visitor information centre</li> <li>• Construction of small tourism infrastructure: board walk and bird hides</li> <li>• Construction of multipurpose tourism centre</li> </ul>

## 4. Relevant baseline conditions

### 4.1. Description of Semuliki National Park (SNP)

SNP is located in Bwamba County, a remote part of the Bundibugyo District, in the Western Region of Uganda. The Park lies on Uganda's border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo; it neighbors Rwenzori Mountains in the South-East and Lake Albert in the North<sup>4</sup>. The park lies within the Albertine Rift, the western arm of the East African Rift. The park is located on a flat to gently undulating landform that ranges from 670 to 760 m (2,200 to 2,490 ft) above sea level.

Semuliki was gazetted as a national park in October 1993 and is one of Uganda's newest national parks.<sup>5</sup> From 1932 to 1992, the area covered by SNP was managed as a forest reserve, initially by the colonial government and then by the Ugandan government's Forest Department. In 1992, the Forest Department

<sup>4</sup>Uganda Wildlife Authority (2006). "Semuliki National Park". Entebbe: Uganda Wildlife Authority.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

raised the status of the reserve to Forest Park. It was made a national park by the government in October 1993. The National Park comprises East Africa's only lowland tropical rainforest and is one of the richest areas of floral and faunal diversity in Africa, with bird and butterfly species being especially diverse. The park experiences an average rainfall of 1,250 mm (49 in), with peaks in rainfall from March to May and from September to December. Many areas of the park experience flooding during the wet season. The temperature at the park varies from 18 to 30 °C (64 to 86 °F), with relatively small daily variations.

SNP is a distinct ecosystem within the larger Albertine Rift ecosystem. The park is located at the junction of several climatic and ecological zones, and as a result has a high diversity of plant and animal species and many microhabitats. Most of the plant and animal species in the park are also found in the Congo basin forests, with many of these species reaching the eastern limit of their range in SNP. The vegetation of the park is predominantly medium altitude moist evergreen to semi deciduous forest. The dominant plant species in the forest is the Uganda ironwood (*Cynometra alexandri*). There are also tree species of a more evergreen nature and swamp forest communities.

The park has more than 400 bird species, including the lyre-tailed honey guide. Two hundred sixteen of these species (66 percent of the country's total bird species) are true forest birds, including the rare Oberländer's ground thrush (*Geokichla oberlaenderi*), Sassi's olive greenbul (*Phyllastrephus lorentzi*) and nine hornbill species<sup>6</sup>. The park provides habitat for over 60 mammal species, including African buffalo, leopard, hippopotamus, mona monkey, water chevrotain, bush babies, African civet, African elephant, and the Pygmy scaly-tailed flying squirrel (*Idiurus zenkeri*). Nine duiker species are found in the park, including the bay duiker (*Cephalophus dorsalis*). The park has eight primate species and almost 460 butterfly species.

The forests in the park are of great socio-economic importance to the human communities that live near the park. The local people practice subsistence agriculture and use the park's forests to supplement their livelihoods. Some of the products they obtain from the forests include fruits and vegetables, herbal medicines, and construction and craft materials. The fish from River Semuliki (accessed under permits issued by UWA) provides an important economic activity for some of the communities. The local population is increasing at a rate of 3.4 percent per year. The high population density and declining agricultural productivity together with limited alternative sources of income contribute to the local population's reliance on some park resources. The forest also plays an important cultural and spiritual role in local people's lives.

The Sempaya springs are the main tourism attraction in the park. The Male hot spring is about 12 meters in diameter and is called Bintente, while the female in Nyasimbi. Boiling geyser gushes out steam and bubbling water several meters high and can be seen more than 1 kilometer away. Semuliki lacks the large mammals including gorillas of parks such as Mgahinga and Bwindi NP, it is located more remotely and is bordering an area of DRC that has been subject to security instability. For these reasons, SNP attracts few international tourists and has very little park revenue.

SNP is managed according to the General Management Plan; current plan is dated 2017/18-2026/27. 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).

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

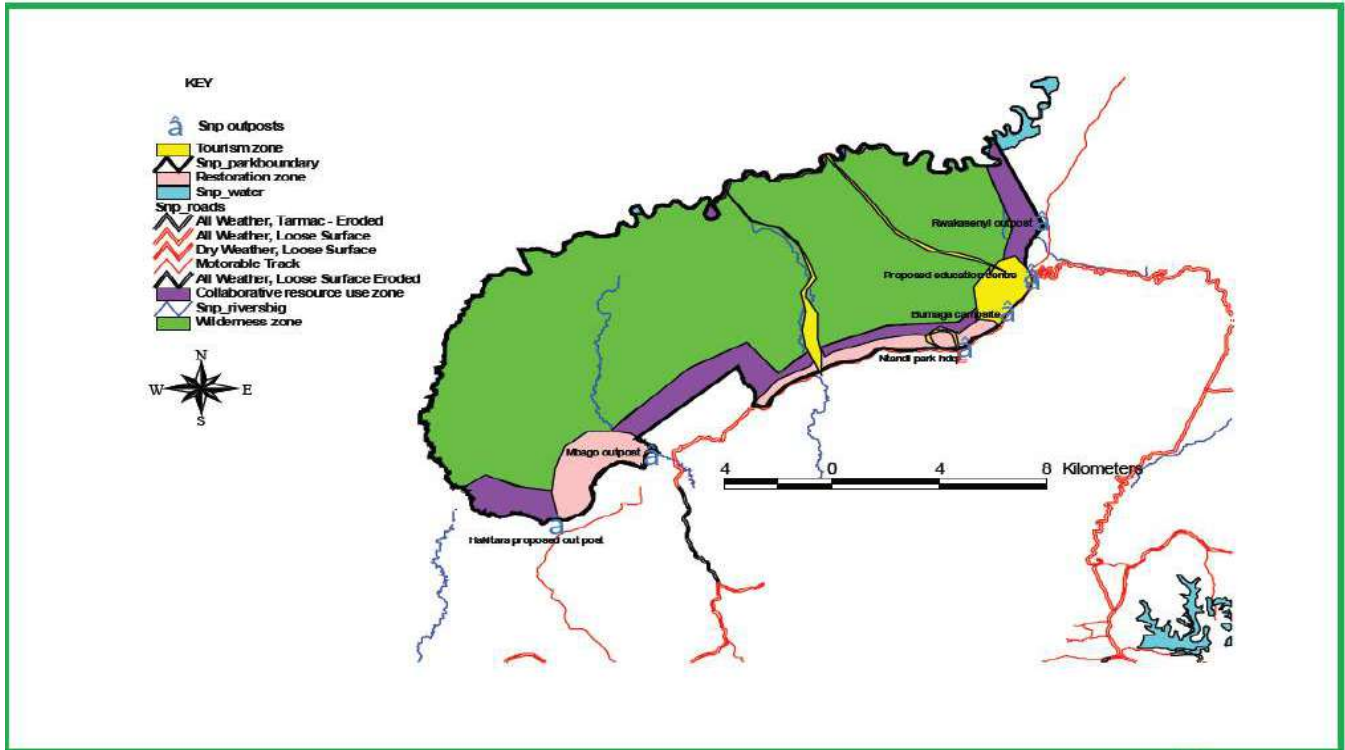


Figure 2 Map of SNP with zoning

## 4.2. The Batwa around SNP

In 1932, the colonial government enacted legislation for the gazetting of forests and game reserves in southwestern Uganda that led to the creation of the Bwindi, Mgahinga, Semuliki, and Echuya forests and game reserves. The Batwa currently live around Protected Areas in the Districts of Rubanda, Kisoro, Kanungu and Bundibugyo.

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. Out of this, it is estimated that less than 200 Batwa community members live adjacent to the SNP. There are four ethnic groups living around the Semuliki NP i.e. Bamba, Bakonjo, Batuku and Batwa, but only the Batwa meet the four cumulative criteria of ESS7. The Bamba and Bakonjo are found in the valley and mountain slopes respectively and both are agriculturists depending on cash crops like coffee, cocoa and food crops mainly Cassava and bananas produced on a small scale. The Batuku who occupy the rift valley floor, north of the park, are pastoralists who depend entirely on cattle products, which they trade in with their neighbours (in both Uganda and DRC).

The Batwa people 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 Congo (Lewis, 2000). They are typical of short stature, are traditionally hunters, and they love ancestral dancing, especially the Rutwa dance. During their forest habitation, they used to wear hides and skins.

The Batwa living around Semuliki were originally hunter-gatherers and belong to the Ituri ethnic group, who historically relied on the Semuliki forest for their livelihood. According to the Batwa from Bundibugyo, their ancestors migrated from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, crossing into Uganda from a location known as Mambiro and settled consecutively in various locations in and around the Semuliki forest. The community later established themselves at Bubukwanga where Karamampaka, father of Hurangame and Inzito I (father of Geoffrey Inzito, the current leader/King of the Batwa in Bundibugyo) died. Afterwards, the Batwa moved to Butwalibo, where they used the fishing ground in the 1950s and 1960s. Subsequently they settled in Hakibale, Mantoroba, Mpurya, and Kirumiya before being evicted and relocated to Bulondo.<sup>7,8</sup>

Semuliki Forest Reserve, located in present day in Bundibugyo district, was created in 1932 and forest villages were evacuated as a measure to control sleeping sickness and yellow fever. In 1993, the reserve was turned into a National Park, with the subsequent removal of the Batwa from Semuliki. They were then placed in a camp called Kabwero along the roadside where they stayed until they were relocated to Bulondo. The Seventh-day Adventist Church Development Arm (ADRA) convinced the Batwa and resettled them near Ntandi (Bundimasoli village, currently part of Ntandi Town Council) in the 1990s in a bid to integrate them into local cultural and agricultural life, though the integration has been rather slow.<sup>9</sup> Currently, Batwa people have regulated access to the park, for access to cultural sites and for park resources, mainly for firewood collection and herbal medicine. A few members of the Batwa community have started cultivation of food crops on a very small scale on community land.

The Batwa people adjacent to Semuliki live as one community in Ntandi Town council / Ntandi trading center, in the District of Bundibugyo (this is the only Batwa community in Bundibugyo district, although, as of recent, living in two locations). There was an estimated 160 Batwa adults and children living in the centre of Ntandi trading centre,<sup>10</sup> on a piece of land that is less than 2 acres in size. In Ntandi they reside in semi-permanent buildings. These Batwa belong to different clans, such as the Babukwanga, Balese, Bandimulaku, Bandihunde, Bambuba, Bandibukusu, Bandibagudde, Bandimbere and Bandikutendyani<sup>11</sup>.

Around 2023, some Batwa community members have moved to Karambi. The Batwa community's settlement at Karambi comprises 42 acres of land purchase by the NGO Fight for the Forgotten sited at a considerable distance from the SNP on a hillside, registered through a Trust managed by Batwa leaders. Fight for the Forgotten purchased this land to provide the Batwa with permanent housing and tenure security. Currently, 13 households totalling 63 individuals live on this land. The settlement pattern is mixed, with some families permanently settled and others moving back and forth, between Ntandi (which is closer to the park) and Karambi. The Prince (Patrick, son of the King) has relocated to Karambi, while his father (the Batwa King Geoffrey) remains in Ntandi.

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<sup>7</sup> Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda 2017: In the Name of Conservation. The Eviction of the Batwa from Semuliki Forest, Bundibugyo.

<sup>8</sup> 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), although this court case does not relate to Semuliki, only Bwindi, Echuya and Mgahinga.

<sup>9</sup> <https://unpo.org/article/2435>.

<sup>10</sup> The population included in this document is based on estimates as provided by the leaders of the Batwa and some key informants. In Bundibugyo, like in Kisoro and Kanungu districts, there have been some fluctuations of the numbers of Batwa in the settlements and communities. For example, the team preparing the VMGP discovered that there are a number of Batwa who move from DRC and join their fellow Batwa in Uganda, when the armed conflict intensifies in DRC. Some then go back when the situation has normalized, but others stay.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with Geoffrey Inzito, leader of the Batwa Community in Bundibugyo, Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2022.

## Socioeconomic organization, land issues and resource use patterns

The Batwa people consider themselves one group with the same history, culture and contemporary socio-economic challenges. Yet, the Batwa community in Semuliki contrasts with those around Bwindi, Mgahinga and Echuya in that both the population number is low and there is a level of agreed leadership under the Batwa “King” and their “Prime Minister” and “Prince”, who provide an entry point in terms of leadership for communicating with the Batwa community close to Semuliki. The Batwa community close to Semuliki also have a different history and some language differences to those further south in Uganda.

Before 1990s many Batwa did not have the concept of land ownership, since they did not settle permanently and moved from place to place, hunting small game and collecting plants, fruits and medicines. During the early 1990’s, the Batwa moved out of SNP. While the Park was the main source of the Batwa livelihood, there was no deliberate government resettlement plan at the time. In addition, there was no alternative land provided to the Batwa outside the conservation area by the Government, although the Batwa around Semuliki were given land by ADRA quite soon after their displacement.

As a result of discrimination, marginalization, lack of land, and other systemic issues such as inadequate access to social, economic, and political opportunities and services, most Batwa around Semuliki live a destitute life and suffer severe isolation, discrimination, and socio-political exclusion, as further described below and in the VMGF. Within this context, land increasingly became a key component of Batwa’s progressive marginalization and vulnerability. During the Batwa consultative meeting held in Ntandi on 2<sup>3rd</sup> June 2022, it was observed that “Following the unplanned displacement, Batwa communities have depended on the work of NGOs who coordinate and support their livelihoods, with little or inadequate consultation of and involvement from the Batwa”<sup>12</sup>. At the community consultation meetings during the preparation of this VMGF held in Bundimasyori<sup>13</sup> (Ntandi Town council) in October 2022, it was noted that some NGOs and government agencies such as UWA have provided support to the Batwa people over the years, including purchase and provision of housing estates and land<sup>14</sup>. Observations from consultations<sup>15</sup> noted that most of the Batwa who own land have obtained it with support from NGOs. Despite this, they continue to live a life of neglect, begging for food and occasionally working as a source of cheap labor.

For example, in 1993, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with district authorities to provide services to the Batwa community by constructing houses for them, but these were abandoned by the Batwa due to the noise on the iron sheets from rain. Allegedly the Batwa have demolished the buildings and sold the roofing sheets to their non-Batwa neighbors.

In 2005, the European Union donated UGX600 million to the Batwa community through Rural Welfare Improvement for Development (RWIDE), a community-based organization. The money was budgeted to procure 16 acres of land in Bundimasoli village, Kasitu sub-county in Bundibugyo district and the resettlement of the Batwa in a homestead comprising 22 semi-permanent structures with roofing sheets. The settlement was also supposed to have adequate sanitation facilities like pit latrines for at least 90 inhabitants. A craft centre where the Batwa women were supposed to sell their crafts and generate income

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Also spelled as Bundimasoli.

<sup>14</sup><https://ugandawildlife.org/explore-our-parks/parks-by-activity/boat-launch/uganda-wildlife-authority-hands-over-land-worth-ugx180-million-to-batwa-community>.

<sup>15</sup> Batwa community consultative meeting on Tuesday 4th October, 2022 in Ntanda, Bundibugyo District.

was also supposed to be constructed at Ntandi cultural village.<sup>16</sup> One piece of land of about 1.5 acres was purchased by RWIDE in Bumagga, in collaboration with Ntandi Subcounty for the resettlement of the Batwa but, when the new Fort Portal – Bundibugyo road was built, the structures were demolished.<sup>17</sup> The consultations<sup>18</sup> with key stakeholders also revealed that, the Batwa were not aware of any compensation made by the Uganda National Roads Authority and there is no further information available from District Local government leaders.

Other funds under the above EU project were embezzled by the NGO leadership, without achieving set objectives.<sup>19</sup> RWIDE is no longer operational in the district. According to one of the Batwa NGO leaders<sup>20</sup>, the land agreements (not yet processed into land titles) for the three small pieces of agricultural purchased for the Batwa people, are held in trust by the Community Development Office to avoid unscrupulous speculations and use by other actors taking advantage of the Batwa. The land in Karambi is owned by the NGO, Fight for the Forgotten, who also have staff on site providing support to the Batwa community members.

According to earlier observations made by Batwa leaders during consultations for the development of the VMGF, Batwas' 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.<sup>21</sup> Although some Batwa have been supported to own land, as noted above, the biggest percent remains landless. The Batwa's desire for hunting, medicinal plants, and religious rituals in the forests still remains despite three decades after they completely left the forest. They have continued to express a desire to access forest resources on an unlimited basis to preserve their culture and traditional livelihoods.<sup>22</sup>

Notwithstanding the numerous problems faced by Batwa, they continue to value their forest-based social system, culture, and traditional practices as an important part of their self-identification, despite many not having ever lived in the forest as they were evicted in the early 1990s. The traditional practices which define their ethnic group as a forest people include hunting and gathering forest resources, eating uncooked food, worshipping gods in the forest, sleeping in caves, guiding forest researchers and tourists, dressing in leaves and animal skins, and making fire using dry sticks.

Through CRMs the Batwa people around SNP have regulated access to the forest, by national law, often escorted by a park warden for their safety and security, mainly for firewood collection, poles, and herbal medicine. These agreements also allow them regulated access to their cultural sites, so they can visit their ancestral burial grounds in Semuliki within the confines of permitted activities – since 1993 they no longer enjoy the freedom to access all parts of the forest when they wish. In addition to the CRMs, there are also

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<sup>16</sup> <https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/3-arrested-for-embezzlement-of-batwa-community-resettlement-funds>

<sup>17</sup> <https://crossculturalfoundation.or.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/In-the-Name-of-Conservation-The-eviction-of-the-Batwa-from-Semuliki-Forest-Bundibugyo-@CCFU2017.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with a Batwa King on Tuesday 4/10/22 in Ntanda, Bundibugyo.

<sup>19</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/200909250093.html>; and <https://ugandaradionetwork.net/story/3-arrested-for-embezzlement-of-batwa-community-resettlement-funds>.

<sup>20</sup> Batwa community consultative meeting organized and facilitated by the VMGP preparation team with Batwa NGO leaders.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> In a 2024 interview with international press, King Geoffrey Inzito – who estimates to be about 65 years old- stated “I pray that the Government will allow us to return to the forest, where my grandparents were from. Where there is shade, and rivers, and fish, and honey. We want to live without diseases, without anyone else, just us, like before.” <https://elpais.com/planeta-futuro/2024-01-12/los-batwa-de-uganda-marginados-en-nombre-de-la-conservacion.html>

informal arrangements between UWA and the surrounding Batwa communities that allow the Batwa to access the park outside the CRM framework, provided they request and receive permission from UWA. Consultations conducted in October 2025 for the revision of this VMGP indicated that these arrangements have been possible because the Batwa community around SNP is small. Also, it was noted that it maintains a positive relationship with UWA.

## **Education**

Batwa communities in Uganda are characterized with poor education. Many studies have alluded to the fact that more than half of Batwa have no formal education at all<sup>23</sup>. The Batwa in Bundibugyo have very low rates of primary and secondary school attendance. A number of Batwa members alluded to this during consultative meeting<sup>24</sup>, and attributed this to lack of funds to buy uniforms, scholastic materials and lunch, harassment by other students, and the lack of basic requirements such as food, clothing and shelter. Although the State has promoted equal access for all to all levels of education, the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme does not cover food and uniforms. No specific measures are currently being undertaken in the UPE schools to ensure access for marginalized children such as the Batwa. In Bundigubyo, the Catholic Parish of Bugombwa has encouraged the Batwa to embrace education.

The Parish has taken the initiative to accommodate the majority of the primary school-going children at the mission school. For example, in 2005, the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church supported Batwa children in Semuliki to attend school at the Ntandi SDA Integrated Primary School. This was initially for the Batwa community but, because of discrimination and teasing, the Batwa children dropped out with the exception of Geoffrey Nzito's brother, who eventually attained Senior Three level of education. Another attempt at education was made by one Pastor in the community but according to respondents, the school had only one class in which old and young alike were taught from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm. There was no reference to the national syllabus, and eventually this intervention was abandoned. The missionary congregation of the Evangelising Sisters of Mary through pastoral work on health and education came into contact with the Batwa community in Ntandi. Although they initially received a hostile reception because they did not offer food or hand-outs, the Batwa were persuaded to take up education again. The church then attempted to establish an adult and nursery school in the community. Together with the community the Parish constructed a semi-permanent church which doubled as a classroom, but the distractions in the slum environment hampered class work, including from frequent visits by tourists and researchers. Pupils would also leave class to go to their mothers, to the market, and to collect firewood.

According to officials from Bundibugyo District Local Government, in 2014, the Parish decided to take 40 children to Bugombwa Missionary School 23kms away. It turned part of its social hall into a dormitory for the Batwa children and allowed these children to study at the nursery and primary school free of charge. For some time, children resisted and kept running away, but they gradually extended their 'stays' from a few days to 2 weeks, leaving in the third week. When asked why they were leaving school to go home they said, they were tired; they needed to generate income, hunt small birds for meat and go to the disco. They also tended to fight among themselves frequently. Initially, the parents also distrusted the parish, fearing that their children would not return home.

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<sup>23</sup> Mbarara University of Science and Technology (2020), The marginalization of the Batwa people of Southwestern Uganda, as an indigenous community, Bundibugyo Mgahinga Conservation Trust (2016) Batwa Population Census Report.

<sup>24</sup> Batwa community consultative meeting on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 22, in Ntanda Bundibugyo District.

This, however, changed with time and when one or two children ‘escape’, the parents now bring them back to school. The schools have initiated activities to keep Batwa children occupied, such as sports and the establishment of a heritage club where they are trained in traditional dances and music which help them keep interest in schooling. Parents visit the children regularly, and during the holidays the children are taken home. Evidence from meetings with stakeholders indicates that there is now marked improvement in the Batwa children’s retention and interest in education. The children fight less frequently and are competing favourably with children from other cultural communities in the school. The Bugombwa Catholic Parish continues to solicit support from well-wishers to provide food and other items, including second-hand clothes that are cut to fit the size of the Batwa children.

The first Batwa from Bundibugyo to attend secondary school after successfully completing primary school is a 16-year-old girl. She lives in Kapepepe with the others and is no stranger to her community’s challenges. In a 2024 interview with international press, she held “I want to be a role model for the children in my community -to explain to them that you have to work very hard, that sometimes you have to endure hardship, but that we are just as capable as everyone else.”<sup>25</sup>

## **Health and wellbeing**

In Uganda, Batwa communities have the poorest health. In the trading centre at Bundibugyo, Batwa adults and youth alike are exposed to the influence of drugs and alcohol, uncensored films and immorality. According to respondents, the neighboring ethnic groups believe that if a man has intercourse with a Mutwa woman, he will be healed of HIV/AIDS and backache. There has only been limited effort to sensitise the community and to dispel these misconceptions. Many Batwa women and men have, therefore, been infected, and with the stereotyping and discrimination they suffer from, they lack the confidence to go to the nearby health facility to test and receive treatment. Their limited access to healthcare facilities is also attributed to lack of cash to pay for services, as well as discrimination on the part of staff and patients, when they try to access health care in hospitals.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Batwa CSO representatives believe that their limited access to traditional herbs and medicine from the forest contributes substantially to their poor health.<sup>27</sup> Given their small number, all the respondents met feared that, if the Batwa in Bundibugyo are not supported and removed from this environment, they will soon become extinct.

## **Batwa Culture**

Evidence from literature indicates that the Batwa had a unique culture largely associated with their hunter and gatherer lifestyle prior to 1990s.<sup>28</sup> During their forest habitation, they used to wear hides and skins, and they pay dowry in the form of sheep, goats, and honey. Accordingly, some Batwa community members still go to the forests for spiritual and medicinal purposes under the arrangement of CRM with UWA<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://elpais.com/planeta-futuro/2024-01-12/los-batwa-de-uganda-marginados-en-nombre-de-la-conservacion.html>

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Gad Shemajere, a mutwa Leader at the National Level held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 in Bundibugyo.

<sup>28</sup> Fauna & Flora International (October 2013), Batwa cultural values in Bwindi Impenetrable and Mgahinga Gorilla National Parks, Uganda. A report of a cultural assessment.

<sup>29</sup> 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.

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 area<sup>30</sup>. 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.

A key element of the Batwa culture is their language. According to the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda 2017,<sup>31</sup> Batwa spoke and identified Orutwa (Rutwa / Luswa) as their native language. Evidence from the consultations<sup>32</sup> also indicated that most of the Batwa can no longer speak Orutwa Language fluently as they have continuously adopted other languages spoken by the dominant communities within which they live. The majority of the younger Batwa generations in Bundibugyo district speak Ruwsa or Lubwisi, which are commonly used in public spaces and schools. The Batwa in Bundibugyo, specifically their leader, traditional King Geoffrey Nzito, expressed worry about the loss of their language and culture.

Although most of the Batwa community live in a secluded space within Ntandi Town Council and now Karambi, they interact with the host communities, and some of the negative influences noted above have eroded the self-respect and dignity of many adult Batwa. In the course of these interactions, they have intermarried with the Bakhonzo, Bamba and Batuuku and are now losing their unique features and adopting the cultural ways of these communities. Some respondents<sup>33</sup> noted that some Batwa youth are even beginning to reject their fellow Batwa in marriage. With significant challenges, there is a need for continued engagement and opportunities to preserve their cultural knowledge and identity.

According to the General Management Plan for SNP, the park has numerous touristic vegetation species of unique plants and trees, unique cultural values of the indigenous Batwa and the Bamaga clan. It also explicitly recognizes “access to cultural sites under agreed terms and conditions” among permitted activities. The General management Plan further includes specific actions to promote the knowledge and cultural values of the Batwa people around Semuliki, such as supporting their engagement in cultural tourism, improving the Batwa tourism trail and promoting (lobbying for) the construction of a Batwa cultural centre.

## **The Batwa Trail in Semuliki**

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<sup>30</sup> Interview with Gad Shemajere, A mutwa Leader, held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021, in Kisoro District.

<sup>31</sup> <https://crossculturalfoundation.or.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/In-the-Name-of-Conservation-The-eviction-of-the-Batwa-from-Semuliki-Forest-Bundibugyo-@CCFU2017.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> Batwa community consultative meeting organized and Facilitated by the VMGP team with Batwa NGO leaders on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October, 2022 in Ntanda, Bundibugyo District.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with one of the Batwa Male elders held on Tuesday 4/10/22 in Ntanda, Bundibugyo.

Some of the Batwa with support from UWA (outside of the IFPA-CD project) showcase their cultural heritage to visitors through dance, storytelling and other demonstrations. UWA and the Batwa community have established the Batwa trail in SNP – this trail is not supported by the project, as per project design, as it is developed by UWA and its partners using different programs and funding sources; however, it is not well developed and operational yet. The current General Management Plan for SNP (2017/18-2026/27) envisages erecting appropriate interpretation panels and shelters along the Batwa trail. During the 2022 consultations facilitated and with the participation of CSO stakeholders<sup>34</sup>, these stakeholders expressed that a Batwa cultural center is one of the key infrastructures necessary to supplement on the Batwa benefits from the park. They stated that this cultural center would be used for Batwa handicraft sales and cultural performances, among others.<sup>35</sup>

### **UWA’s Tourism Revenue Sharing Scheme**

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).<sup>36</sup> Under this scheme, 20 percent of all gate fee proceeds are remitted for implementation of community projects in the sub-counties adjacent to the boundaries of the PAs.<sup>37</sup> 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. 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 frontline 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)**

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<sup>34</sup> Batwa community consultative meeting organized and Facilitated by the Consultant with Batwa NGO leaders on Tuesday, October 4, 2022

<sup>35</sup> Based on this, it was agreed that a part of the visitor information center, supported under the project, will be allocated to the Batwa community for marketing of their craft products.

<sup>36</sup> 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*”

<sup>37</sup> The Itanda subcounty, being one of the sub-counties neighboring Semuliki NP, is also benefiting from this scheme.

As explained earlier in this document, SNP is divided into four zones: the tourism zone, wilderness zone (strict conservation zone), administration zone, and the resource use zone / collaborative management zone, which is where community members are allowed access under permission from UWA. According to the SNP General Management Plan (2017/18-2026/27), 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. The park adjacent communities may enter the SNP to gather rattan, firewood, medicinal plants, fish, and other regulated resources within this zone. The zone overlaps with the restoration zone in some parts such as Ntandi and Bumage areas.

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 formalized through a 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 Use Committee of approximately 9 members.

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. The community members accessing the park are always accompanied by the UWA staff, for their safety and security.

### **Permitted Activities in SNP 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

### **CRM arrangements for resource access and use in SNP**

In addition to the current General Management Plan, existing collaborative resource management arrangements in Semuliki 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.

Under the CRM program in Semuliki, user groups, including Batwa members, can access resources such as fishing, firewood, and gathering materials for handcrafts (including rattan cane, spear grass, and phoenix leaves). Fish and rattan are economic activities – as such, access to these is provided to all members of fishing and rattan groups based on paid permits issued by the park authorities at 30,000 UGX (app. 8 USD) per permit per month. They are also permitted to collect building materials (such as reeds and exotic trees or poles), medicinal plants. There is also a user group that can place beehives within the park (through designated beekeeping zones for placing hives and harvesting honey), but Batwa people are not part of this CRM group as this group is not in a location where the Batwa live. Additionally, the Batwa community around Semuliki can also access cultural sites and fish from small streams and ponds within the park at any time, accompanied by UWA staff, based on a verbal arrangement with UWA. This informal arrangement also allows them to collect firewood from the forest twice a week, while other community members under the CRM agreements may do so only once a month.

In Semuliki, there are currently two active Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) for resource access and use, which were negotiated and signed in 2025 with project support. One is a resource access MoU with the communities of Burondo, Sempaya, Ntandi, Bundimasoli, Mpuya, Ntotoro, Nyasolo, and Bugando parishes, as well as the Batwa community, encompassing 125 Batwa members. This MoU extends the scope of a previous (signed in 2012), now-expired agreement to include an additional three communities and a larger park area -expanding the boundary by 3.6 to 5.6 km (2 km wide) and granting an extra 10 km of river access for fishing. The other is a MoU with the Balira Agawe Beekeeping Group in Nyansoro Parish, which does not include Batwa members, as there are no Batwa residents in this area. See also Annex I on CRM groups and agreements in Semuliki.

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 general resource access/use agreement in force in Semuliki has a Resource Use Committee of 14 members and requires that this includes members representing the Batwa people. The Batwa King in Semuliki, Njitto Geoffrey, is among the Committee elected members. The Committee functions include ensuring that resource use harvesting complies with the MoU guidelines; hold meetings to review the impact of resource harvest; sensitize members of the resource use group on the rules and regulations stipulated in this resource MOU; participate in the conservation of natural resources in Semuliki National Park; ensure that all members pay the resource user fees and recommend to be deregistered from the group due to gross malpractices; monitor and collect data on construction and use of energy saving stoves and tree planting on private land; and sensitize resource user group on the penalties provided for in this agreement (as defined in the MoU's provisions).

Despite the collaborative approach envisaged in the MoU, there is an opportunity to further enhance engagement from resource users in monitoring activities. Participation has been challenged by, *inter alia*, limited understanding and appreciation of the roles of members of CRM institutions (e.g., Resource Use Committees) but also by the fact that, in practice, Batwa community members around Semuliki are granted broad access to park resources, outside the CRM MoU schedule, provided they do not compromise conservation efforts in SNP. Increasing participation in the integrated resource use zone could be achieved by further strengthening awareness of CRMs among Batwa community members as well as by supporting increased Batwa representation in CRM Executive Committees and improving the capacity of these

committees, which will be done as part of the updated VMGP. 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)

As part of the VMGP revision process that concluded in 2025, 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 2. Status of VMGP implementation in SNP as of early July 2025*

<b>Output and Targets<sup>38</sup></b>	<b>Status of interventions carried out under the original VMGP</b>
Strengthening the management of CRM groups in SNP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Batwa are part of the CRM and resource user group of Burondo, Sempaya, Ntadi, Mpulya, Bundimasoli, Ntotoro, Nyasolo, Bugando. Resources to be accessed include firewood, handcraft materials, and fish resource, among others.</li> <li>• There is also a MoU with Balira Gawe Beekeeping Group, Nyansoro Parish, Ntotoro Sub County, Bundibugyo District. Resource to be accessed include placement of beehives along the park boundary. There are no Batwa people living in this area and thus not in the group.</li> <li>• These two MoUs were negotiated and signed with Project support.</li> <li>• Batwa people around Semuliki also have access to park resources outside the scope of CRM, based on a verbal arrangement with UWA.</li> <li>• UWA staff have been trained on how to undertake situational analysis of resource access and negotiate CRM MoUs.</li> </ul>
Conducting 4 specialized trainings for the Batwa in livelihood and enterprise development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 Batwa were organized and trained on identification and management of livelihood improvement projects (weaving baskets and mats, wood carving, making bee wax candles &amp; jelly, perfumes, shoe polish vanish, mushroom and vegetable growing)</li> <li>• 50 Batwa were organized and trained in financial literacy to equip them with knowledge on how to save and make proper use of the money they get from their enterprises, and promote financial sustainability that would reduce their dependence on external support for their livelihoods.</li> </ul>
Working with the Batwa people to take an inventory of all medicinal plants for further research and mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory of herbal medicine used by the Batwa was undertaken under leadership of the Batwa community members in the three national parks (SNP, BINP &amp; MGNP). The activity still continues</li> </ul>

<sup>38</sup> As per the original VMGP.

	using Earth Ranger to geo-reference herbal plants used by the batwa as well as taking original plant photographs for ease of identification.
Conducting project awareness-raising campaigns to local Batwa communities on the importance of sustainable wildlife management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness raising engagements were held with the Batwa communities on sustainable wildlife management (50 participants in Bundibugyo)</li> <li>• The participation of the Batwa in undertaking inventory of herbal medicine created an opportunity for the Batwa to appreciate sustainable use and equitable benefit-sharing of wildlife resources</li> </ul>
Support and training on rainwater harvesting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Batwa communities around SNP have been supported with two 5000lt rainwater harvesting tanks to address water shortage in SNP</li> <li>• Two (2) demonstrations in rainwater harvesting tanks were constructed/installed in the two Batwa settlements around SNP.</li> </ul>

## 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 community around Semuliki 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 SNP 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 current SNP Management

Plan, 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 Semuliki and relevant local stakeholders, including District Local Government representatives, as well as NGOs and CSOs that are led by Batwa or work on Batwa issues and/or SNP 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 Semuliki, along with their respective methodologies, are summarized below. Annex III provides a summary table of all stakeholders consulted for the development and revision of the Semuliki 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), small Focus Group Discussions (no more than five people), and limited virtual or telephone interviews. Discussions were conducted in Kwamba and Rutwa, familiar to both the Batwa communities around Semuliki and the team preparing the VMGP. There was also a deliberate effort to ensure that the FGDs were organized in open spaces to avoid gathering and crowding.

A total of 16 participants, mostly Batwa leaders, attended the focus group meetings and the KIIs. 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 leaders, 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 (October 2022)

After COVID 19 restrictions were lifted, a second round of dedicated consultations were held on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at Ntandi and Fort Portal respectively, with park adjacent Batwa communities, NGOs, CSOs and relevant authorities. In total, 114 people were engaged in this round of consultations, including park adjacent Batwa community members, 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 SNP.** 91 people from Batwa communities around Semuliki participated in a consultation meeting held on October 4, 2022, at Ntandi. During these meetings, participants were guided to prioritize activities and to rank project

issues through an issue-identification exercise based on previous reports.<sup>39</sup> These consultations clarified project objectives, investments and implementation arrangements and were conducted in vernacular (Kwamba and Orutwa) 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 SNP management.

**Some of the key challenges identified** by Batwa community members at the October 2022 consultations included:

- **Social and organisational challenges.** Some stakeholder observed that the Batwa community around SNP remains uncoordinated and there is need to organise people into formal groups and organisations. It was further observed that social ties, including migration patterns and connections with Batwa in DRC, Kisoro, and Kabale, require consideration when planning interventions. Batwa members also considered that preservation of Batwa culture is under threat and called for establishing a Batwa cultural centre to protect and promote traditional music, dance, and drama.
- **Land and livelihood challenges.** Land scarcity continues to be a pressing issue, which was identified as the top-ranked problem by the Batwa in Semuliki. They also regretted the lack of targeted government study on Batwa resettlement. Livelihood insecurity persists, underlining the need to strengthen village loan and savings groups, and to build capacity in crafts production. Stakeholders further noted the need for concerted efforts to secure additional land for the community while also leveraging Batwa-owned land through supporting the establishment of demonstration sites for livelihood activities, including agriculture and beekeeping. Stakeholders also highlighted the importance of training in entrepreneurship and vocational skills, enabling Batwa people to establish micro-businesses and improve incomes. Promoting Batwa cultural-based tourism, including the development of cultural trails, was seen as a promising avenue for generating income and supporting community development.
- **Inequalities in benefit-sharing.** Batwa members noted that distribution of benefits from development activities remains unequal, with women and youth often receiving less support than men. In addition, they said that revenue sharing projects frequently overlook the Batwa, as district local governments fail to include them in such initiatives.

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

- Engage Bundibugyo district local government and other conservation NGOs to encourage and promote domestication of park resources such as medicinal plants onto community farms
- Train the Batwa techniques of growing some indigenous trees
- In order to effectively implement the MoUs between community associations and UWA, awareness program for communities on resource use, especially on the terms and conditions of the MoUs, should be undertaken.

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<sup>39</sup> Specific Area issues, needs and aspirations are already presented in specific Protected Area Reports and Annexed to the project VMGF document.

- Under the CRM Programme, park management should consider regulating access to cultural sites and other forest resources which are important to Batwa's culture including by having separate MoUs for the Batwa, different from other tribes, as many Batwa feel they have been marginalized. The MoUs should aim to empower Batwa to apply their former customary rules in managing their cultural sites and the harvesting of forest resources such as wild honey and wild yam.
- To address the potential risks of fire resulting from the traditional honey harvesting methods, support and train communities in honey harvesting techniques and acquire modern honey harvesting tools and gears.
- Strengthening the involvement of Resource Use Executive Committee members in the monitoring of resource offtake. The involvement of communities in the management of the park would create a sense of ownership.
- Adopt a participatory approach while developing resource use monitoring tools and undertaking monitoring and evaluating resource offtake.
- Liaise with the district local government to intensify water harvesting campaigns during the rainy seasons.
- Develop further tourism products based on the Batwa culture. This would not only help in diversifying the existing tourism package in SNP but would also benefit the Batwa by improving their incomes when they guide tourists to their cultural sites, sell handicrafts and dance for tourists. This should be carried out in a manner that protects Batwa culture from the pressures of the tourism industry. To achieve this, the Batwa should be empowered to actively participate in developing the park's tourism plan, ensuring that their cultural values are managed and maintained in ways they consider culturally appropriate.
- There was also a suggestion that the IFPA-CD Project uses the land owned by the Batwas -3.8 acres of land at Makere in Ntoroko sub-county and 5.8 acres at Karemba- as an entry point to support demonstration sites for improved on-farm practices and micro enterprise development skills training, including, for example, to plant quick gestation crops such as vegetables that are highly demanded by the tourism sector.

**Consultations with CSOs and authorities.** A consultation meeting was held on 5th October 2022 at Kalya Courts Hotel, Fort Portal. This was attended by 23 participants including key project partners and stakeholders such as local UWA staff, Bundibugyo District Local Government representatives (Chief Administrative Officer, District Tourism and Natural Resources Officers), NGOs, community groups supporting Batwa communities around SNP and the Batwa King for the community close to Semuliki.

Participants were purposively selected for their experience with Batwa and conservation work. The following CSOs/NGOs were engaged in this consultation:

- Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda
- Wildlife Conservation Society
- Children Foundation

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

- **Batwa's livelihood needs and preference.** Stakeholders highlighted the need to consider current needs and preferred livelihood options for the Batwa around SNP, such as improved agriculture,

micro-enterprise development, and cultural tourism, as well as related conservation projects that could be supported.

- **Learning from previous interventions.** Stakeholders discussed some previous experiences with interventions and conservation projects targeting the Batwa community to determine what approaches have been effective and which have not.
- **Institutional strengthening and inclusive stakeholder involvement.** Participants provided inputs for strengthening the capacity of local authorities, especially the district Local Governments of Bundibugyo, 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 SNP.

It should be noted that certain challenges and proposals from Batwa communities and CSOs were identified as falling without the scope of the IFPA-CD Project. For example, those dealing with the purchase of land, the 1990s historical relocation of Batwa communities from SNP and the existing UWA revenue sharing scheme, among others, could not be addressed within the Project's scope and be part of its activities. This was also communicated to stakeholders during the 2022 consultations. Nevertheless, these concerns are documented here to ensure that the perspectives of Batwa communities and CSOs are fully and accurately represented in this document.

**Agreed actions for VMGP implementation under the IFPA-CD Project.** Based on the consultative meetings held in 2022, 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 SNP.
- Conducting specialized training for the Batwa people in livelihood and enterprise development, including provision of inputs.
- Working with the Batwa, take an inventory of all medicinal plants for further research and mapping, under the leadership of Batwa communities in SNP and for their sole benefit.
- Conducting project awareness-raising campaigns for local Batwa communities on the importance of sustainable wildlife management.
- Support on beekeeping, including on periphery of the park.
- Developing and market Batwa tourism products, such as crafts.
- Support and training on rainwater harvesting.

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 Semuliki 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 (October 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.

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, ex-NFA and UWA 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 Semuliki VMGP took place in October 2025. In April 2025, under leadership of MWE, an initial meeting was held with the aforementioned 3 Batwa organisations (BDO, BIDO and BIEO).

The formal consultation process for updating the Semuliki VMGP took place between 27 and 28 October 2025. Consultation meetings were held with Batwa communities, Batwa-led organisations and key partners and stakeholders supporting Batwa communities in Semuliki, including UWA field staff, representatives from the Bundibugyo District Local Government, NGOs, and community development groups that represent and assist Batwa communities around SNP. In total, 60 Batwa community members and 2 CSOs/NGOs were engaged for the revision of the Semuliki VMGP. The CSOs/NGOs that participated in this process were Fight for the Forgotten and the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, which are the only two CSOs currently working directly to benefit the Batwa community in this area.

Consultations were conducted with advance notice of more than three weeks, and information was provided to identified stakeholders and Batwa communities in accessible languages and formats. Specific guiding questionnaires were used by those facilitating the engagement with Batwa communities and organizations; and a pre-consultation sensitization session was undertaken for better information of the communities. Meetings with the community were held in local languages (Ruswa and Lubwisi), with translators from a local CSO. 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 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 October 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 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 Semuliki, stakeholders provided valuable feedback on several key areas: the current needs of Batwa communities living around Semuliki, lessons learnt from ongoing VMGP implementation -including both successes and challenges- and proposals for improving the updated VMGP.

**Batwa community, including its leaders (King, Prince, and Prime Minister).** Stakeholders expressed appreciation for the support provided, such as training in mushroom growing, crafts, bee keeping, brickmaking, and provision of water tanks. They stressed the importance of preserving Batwa culture and forest heritage, and the value of engagement through their recognized leadership and UWA focal persons. The Batwa consulted noted their participation in CRM groups and that some held leadership positions. They further noted their access to firewood collection two days a week per arrangement with UWA and while they would like to have this frequency increased, they acknowledged that in practice they are allowed forest access outside and in access of the CRM MoU schedule. The community identified the need for startup capital for Batwa enterprises trained under IFPA-CD, support for women-led initiatives with tools, seedlings, and targeted training, facilitation of land access in Bundimasoli for market and museum development, and recommended the review of forest access MoUs to balance conservation with livelihood needs, promoting Batwa culture through signage, tourism packages, and pavilion development, provision of materials and logistical support for brick-making trainees, and the strengthening of inter-community exchanges between Semuliki and Mgahinga Batwa groups. Participants also expressed a desire for poultry farming, goat rearing, rabbit and duck keeping, piggery, cattle keeping, welding, carpentry, tailoring machines, and fish farming.<sup>40</sup>

**Local district staff:** Local officials identified challenges such as low education, erosion of Batwa cultural practices, and issues of alcohol abuse and HIV. They recommended strengthening Batwa-specific interventions in CRM activities, providing targeted skills training and health sensitization, relocating beehives to accessible areas like Karambi to support Batwa livelihoods, documenting Batwa knowledge, appointing Batwa as guides for tourism, ensuring that Batwa's cultural artifacts are displayed at the visitor information centre.

**CSO/NGOs representatives.** They identified several challenges affecting the Batwa community, including issues of mobility and settlement preference (Ntandi is perceived as better due to easier access to forests); limited focus and persistence among some participants, which impacted the effectiveness of craft-making training, as well as issues of health and alcohol abuse. NGO representatives further highlighted that despite having received training in various enterprises (e.g., mushroom growing, candle making, perfume production), most Batwa lack capital to operationalize these skills. Bee hives were distributed, but only a few remain active. They recommended supporting capital access for Batwa to

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<sup>40</sup> The feedback summarised here includes inputs provided at a community-focused meeting held on 28 October 2025 at Semuliki National Park Headquarters, as well as the insights expressed by community members who also joined a consultation meeting targeting NGO representatives, which was held on 27 October 2025 at Karambi settlement.

operationalize trained skills, strengthening collaboration with UWA on forest access, CRM participation, and tourism inclusion; documenting Batwa medicinal knowledge and invest in herbal gardens and value addition training, sensitizing communities about substance abuse, supporting women's groups through relevant ministries and cultural initiatives; and developing externally managed cultural centres with community revenue-sharing.<sup>41</sup>

**UWA staff.** Participants reviewed the status of VMGP implementation as well as lessons learnt. They also suggested actions such as delivering small grants or capital for Batwa enterprises following training, expedite finalizing MoU for pending CRM groups; enhance marketing of the Batwa Trail to boost local tourism; develop a greenhouse for medicinal plants in Karambi, facilitating Batwa craft sales via the visitor information centre. Participants further expressed the need to support Batwa livelihoods through livestock, tailoring, carpentry, and fish farming and seedlings.

**Lessons learnt from implementation on the VGMP in SNP:** 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.
- Integration of Batwa communities into broad CRM groups fosters learning and reduces stigma.
- Sensitization and livelihood support reduce illegal activities.
- Clear communication and structured support are essential for sustaining Batwa engagement.

➤ **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.<sup>42</sup>
- Historical grievances over removal from the SNP by government remain a factor that affects relations with donor-funded projects.

The revision of the VMGP for Semuliki involved a comprehensive consultation process that encompassed both the stakeholder engagements conducted in October 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.

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<sup>41</sup> The NGOs/CSOs that participated in the consultative meetings of October 2025 for the revision of the VMGP are the Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda and the Fight for the Forgotten.

<sup>42</sup> Provision of additional inputs has now been planned through the project.

## 7. Agreed Actions for the Revised VMGP and Validation

Drawing on the feedback from stakeholders consulted during the VMGP update for Semuliki 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, involving the same stakeholders who participated in the October 2025 consultations. The invitations to participate stated the objectives and meeting schedule and were sent in advance to the Bundibugyo District Government 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 Ruswa and Lubwisi, which are the local languages spoken by Batwa community around SNP. 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 at least two weeks, 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 October 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 trail, establishment of a Batwa museum and/or cultural 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 SNP was held on 17 December 2025. The meetings included community members from the Batwa settlement with a meeting held in Kapepepe (Ndandi community) in Bundibugyo district, engaging a total of 47 community members (27 male and 19 female), including King Nzito, as well as a separate meeting with two local CSOs working with the Batwa. These meetings, facilitated by MWE and UWA staff, aimed to align VMGP interventions with community priorities and document feedback for implementation planning.

Once the community reached a consensus on the proposed actions, the Batwa community members who participated in the validation session elected three representatives for the community from among themselves. 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 3. Proposed actions for implementation in SNP (under updated VMGP)

Implementable Interventions	Estimated Cost (UGX)	Time Frame	Resp Person	Implementation Status
<b>Target 1:</b> capacity of CRM executive committees strengthened through training and improved coordination				
A. Support CRM groups to establish a coordination platform that brings together all CRM leadership in Semuliki National Park	Desk work	March 2026	Internally by UWA	Completed
Create awareness among the Batwa community members on benefits of joining a CRM group.	10,000,000	March to June 2026	Internally by UWA	Completed
Creation of Batwa specific subcommittee for Semuliki Wildlife Scouts Association and Buburongo Integrated Farmers Association	10,000,000	March 2026	Internally by UWA	Completed
Conduct leadership training for the CRM group executives	54,000,000	October-November 2026	Service Provider to be procured by UWA	Procurement of service provider ongoing
<b>Target 2:</b> job opportunities for Batwa community members under Project activities				
Recruit Batwa who are willing to work on project related activities including the civil works in VIC construction.	UWA budget for VIC construction	June 2026	UWA contractor	Batwa employed by the VIC contractor
<b>Target 3:</b> improved livelihoods opportunities for the Batwa community members				
<b>New Trainings and support with inputs and or startup requirements:</b> Training the Batwa in enterprise development; hair-dressing / barbering; mechanics; tailoring; baking; motorcycle repair; tour guiding, customer care, branding, marketing and	225,000,000	October 2026	Service Provider to be procured by UWA	Procurement of service providers ongoing

Implementable Interventions	Estimated Cost (UGX)	Time Frame	Resp Person	Implementation Status
product development; music Dance and Drama				
<b>Refresher Trainings and provision of input:</b> crafts making; tailoring; wood carving; bee value chain system; energy saving stoves; brick-making	243,000,000	October 2026	Service Provider to be procured by UWA	Procurement of service providers ongoing
Provide beehives to the Batwa and place them along the Batwa trail to enhance their access	15,000,000	September 2026	Internally By UWA	Procurement of service provider ongoing
Provide livestock support in Goats rearing	15,000,000	September 2026	Internally by UWA	Procurement of service provider ongoing
<b>Target 4: improved opportunities for Batwa community members in tourism activities</b>				
Ensure that the VIC constructed with project support has space available for the Batwa to market their crafts and other projects	No budget	September 2026	Internally by UWA	Construction of the VIC ongoing
Support exchange visits for the tour guides to Bwindi and Mgahinga	10,000,000x2 visits =20,000,000	May 2026	Internally by UWA	Completed
<b>Target 5: improved access to water resources for household consumption</b>				
Distribution of 5 - 5000-liter water tanks for Kapepepe settlement	10,000,000	June 2026	Internally by UWA	Water tanks to be installed by end of June 2026
<b>Target 6: improved access to medicinal plants for Batwa community members</b>				
Establishment of medicinal plants demonstration plot in Semuliki (Being undertaken by Fight for the Forgotten in Karambi in collaboration with UWA)	-----	Until June 2026	By Fight for the Forgotten.	Completed in Karambi in collaboration with Fight for the Forgotten
Establishment of medicinal plants demonstration	15,000,000	July 2026	In collaboration with CCFU	Engagements initiated with

Implementable Interventions	Estimated Cost (UGX)	Time Frame	Resp Person	Implementation Status
plot on land procured by Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) in Makere will be supported by UWA				CCFU regarding establishment of this demo plot
<b>Target 7: support Batwa communities in recording traditional Batwa knowledge for their use</b>				
Translate phase 1 of herbal medicine inventory into Lubwisi and Ruswa language spoken in the Batwa communities of Semuliki	15,000,000	March 2026	Service Provider to be procured by UWA	Translation completed
Print 50 copies per language (Lubwisi and Ruswa) language for use of Batwa communities	25,000,000	June 2026		Printing completed, distribution ongoing by the field team
Print 50 copies in English language for use of Batwa communities when tour guiding	10,000,000			Printing completed, distribution ongoing by the field team
Conduct 2nd phase of herbal medicine inventory - Ongoing and will continue	100,000,000		Internal by UWA	Ongoing
<b>Target 8. Preservation of cultural heritage for the Batwa communities</b>				
Support printing of 80 copies of the Ruswa language book ( <i>Learning Ruswa: The Language of the Batwa Community in Bundibugyo, copyright The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda</i> ) and disseminate to the Batwa community members and local educational institutions	20,000,000	June 2026	Service Provider to be procured by UWA	Printing done, distribution ongoing by the field team
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>787,000,000</b>			

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

The IFPA-CD project team has consulted with the Batwa communities during the project design with dedicated sessions specific to the Batwa, for example during the preparation of ESMF and preparation of VMGF as well as during project implementation. The preparation of VMGP has been entirely dedicated to Batwa, 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 SNP.

FPIC, however, is deemed not to apply to the Project, including in Semuliki. 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, SNP 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 (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. Specifically in SNP, Batwa people are not required to be part of a CRM group and agreement to access park resources, as in practice UWA permits their access through a flexible verbal arrangement, as explained earlier in this document. Thus, 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 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 trail" in Semuliki 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 Semuliki 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 government of Bundibugyo. UWA is tasked with procurement, contract management, direct implementation for some activities, and reporting on the activities agreed in this VMGP. The local government of Bundibugyo District, as part of its 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 SNP General Management Plan, this VMGP, and the approved Project work plans.

The District Local Government of Bundibugyo, 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 LC system, and it has supported establishment and training of the Grievance Redress Committee for Semuliki, a District committee and the subcounty committees bordering the park in 2023 and 2025.<sup>43</sup>

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

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<sup>43</sup> Training of the Local Council 1 Chairpersons is expected to be completed in early 2026 (see also section 10 below on Grievance Redress Mechanism).

relevant expertise that can be drawn upon. These partners are important for regular engagement under the project.

There are a number of CSOs and NGOs working with or led by the Batwa around SNP, such as Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, Wildlife Conservation Society, Children Foundation and Fight for the Forgotten. Other relevant non-governmental partners in the area include Pro-biodiversity Conservationists in Uganda (PROBICOU) and Arcus Foundation.

During the implementation of activities outlined in this revised VMGP for SNP, 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.

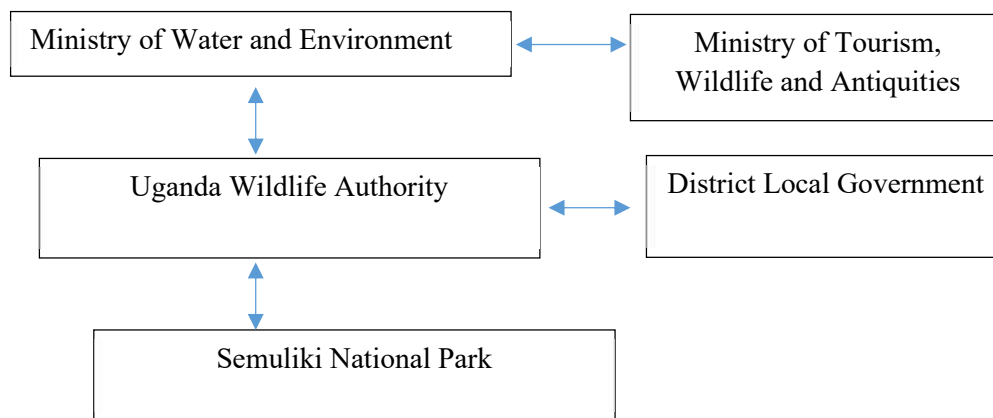
The applicants for support to Batwa groups will include all supporting documents, in line with the call for proposals and terms of reference.

*Table 4. Stakeholders' roles and responsibilities*

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

(Bundibugyo)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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</li> </ul>
<b>Non-governmental partners that could be involved in implementation of VMGP activities</b>	
Pro-biodiversity conservationists in Uganda (PROBICOU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul>
Arcus Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research, Support Batwa access to land to facilitate livelihood demonstration projects, resettlement programs, and community development</li> </ul>
The Cross- Cultural Foundation of Uganda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research and heritage preservation, cultural preservation and protection of cultural values, cultural rights and development</li> </ul>
Other Batwa led NGOs, such as Batwa Indigenous Empowerment Organization, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobilization of the Batwa, training and capacity building, knowledge sharing, and support of livelihood activities, etc.</li> </ul>

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 TSPs. UWA field staff has received training on stakeholder engagement and reporting templates. Available feedback mechanisms also include the GRCs and suggestions boxes installed around SNP.

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/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 Semuliki, is structured with four levels of Grievance Redress Committees (GRCs): at the Conservation Area, District, Subcounty, and Village levels (existing Local Council LC1). In the case of SNP, the project has established and trained the Grievance Redress Committee for Semuliki Conservation area, the Budibugyo District Committee and the Subcounty Committees bordering the park (Burondo, Ntandi, Ntotoro and Tokwe) in 2023 and 2025. Arrangements for training 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 of the Local Council one (LC1) committee elected by the village members. The GRC training targets only the Chairperson LC1s with the hope that he/she will pass on the acquired skills to the rest of the committee members. The Subcounty level GRC includes Subcounty officials and NGO/CBO representatives. 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. In addition, 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 Semuliki, 10 suggestion 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 Semuliki (Lubwisi)

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 Semuliki. This incident report mechanism is further described 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 SNP. 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 in partnership with mandated officials from the DLG of Budibugyo 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 Semuliki National Park

CRM MoUs on resource access/use (number, status & project support)	1	Burondo, Sempaya, Ntandi, Mpulya, Bundimasoli, Ntotoro, Nyasolo, Bugando Parishes and the Indigenous Batwa Community, August 15, 2025 (negotiated and signed with Project support)	Number of Batwa community members in CRM MoUs	125
	2	Balira Agawe Beekeepers, May 25, 2025 (negotiated and signed with Project support)		0 <i>*There are no Batwa communities in this area</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>2 CRM Resource Access/Use MoU with 125 Batwa members</b>			

As of December 2025, UWA has also reported that negotiations are ongoing for reviewing and signing 6 MoUs corresponding to Bubukwanga, Mampongya, Humya, Bundinyama, Buhanda, Kisuba, Hakitara, Bubomboli and Busoru Parishes; a process that is also being supported under the IFPA-CD Project.

## Annex II. Summary of feedback received during VMGP revision in October 2025

Stakeholder Groups Engaged, Date and place	Key issues and suggestions raised during various consultations with Batwa CSOs, Batwa communities and UWA in the area of SNP on October 2025
<p><b>Bundibugyo District Local Government</b></p> <p><b>10:00 27th October 2025</b></p>	<p>Batwa exclusion and persistence of unmet community needs</p> <p>Declining Batwa population in Semuliki (estimated 130-170 individuals) due to natural mortality, intermarriage with other tribes, and raised HIV prevalence</p> <p>Harmful cultural beliefs: some people believe sleeping with Batwa women can heal back pain, creating serious risks of sexual violence and HIV/STD transmission</p> <p>Educational challenges: limited concentration, low motivation, frequent conflicts, and lack of focus among Batwa children</p> <p>Settlement challenges: Karambi location is remote (30km from park), dry, with poor road access, limiting economic opportunities and tourist visits</p> <p>Historical land insecurity: Batwa previously had nowhere to bury their dead as landowners refused burial on their land</p> <p>Alcohol abuse concerns and reports that some Batwa sell donated food items to purchase alcohol</p> <p>Lack of materials, tools, and capital to sustain production after training programs</p> <p>Need to support Batwa-specific CRM group and relocate beehives to accessible areas like Karambi</p> <p><u>Suggested actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen Batwa-specific interventions in CRM, skilling, and health sensitization.</li> <li>• Relocate beehives to accessible areas to support Batwa enterprise development.</li> <li>• Document Batwa knowledge and store it in community learning centers.</li> <li>• Appoint Batwa guides for the Batwa Trail and support cultural exhibition spaces.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a food and nutrition security plan tailored to Batwa needs.</li> <li>• Engage Fight for the Forgotten and UWA to obtain HIV prevalence data and support targeted health interventions.</li> <li>• Share VMGP outcomes with district stakeholders during upcoming budget conferences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>NGO - Fight for the Forgotten. Karambi Settlement</b></p> <p><b>13:45 27th October</b></p>	<p>Settlement challenges: high temperatures, poor soils hindering agriculture, extreme heat, and isolation from the park</p> <p>Mobile settlement patterns: families move back and forth between Ntandi (closer to park) and Karambi, making consistent service delivery challenging</p> <p>Poor road infrastructure limiting economic opportunities and market access</p> <p>42-acre site chosen because land is scarce and expensive in the region</p> <p>Community fragmentation with some members permanently settled and others moving between locations</p> <p>Community appreciates Fight for the Forgotten's support including land purchase, housing, goat revolving fund, vocational training, health services</p> <p>Plans welcomed for cultural pavilion centre and greenhouse for medicinal herbs from NGO support</p> <p>Interest expressed by this NGO in collaboration with government agencies and development projects</p> <p>Despite training in various enterprises (e.g., mushroom growing, candle making, perfume production), most Batwa lack capital to operationalize these skills. Bee hives were distributed, but only a few remain active.</p> <p><u>Suggested actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Batwa access to startup capital to operationalize trained skills (e.g., small grants or revolving funds).</li> <li>• Strengthen collaboration with UWA on forest access, CRM participation, and tourism inclusion.</li> <li>• Document and preserve Batwa medicinal knowledge through the planned cultural pavilion and intergenerational training.</li> <li>• Address social risks through targeted sensitization on substance abuse, sexual exploitation, and harmful myths.</li> <li>• Explore partnerships with Ministry of Gender and MDD to support women's groups and cultural programming.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider infrastructure support (e.g., road access, water systems) to improve service delivery in Karambi.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Members – Karambi</b></p> <p><b>14:15 27th October</b></p>	<p>Traditional knowledge: Extensive medicinal expertise for treating back pain, heart conditions, fertility, childbirth, and hunting medicines; participated in creating plant identification catalog with UWA</p> <p>Park access: Generally able to access Semuliki for medicinal plants (daily, unrestricted); hunting not permitted. Firewood is limited to 2 days/week under CRM. They collect firewood and medicinal herbs with permission and on a flexible schedule.</p> <p>Training received: IFPA-CD training in shoe polish, mushroom collection, oil making, candle production, perfume, basket/mat weaving, eggplant growing, beekeeping</p> <p>Capital needs: Requested startup capital for poultry (chickens), small businesses, rabbit rearing, ducks, pigs, cattle; more seeds/seedlings especially for cocoa</p> <p>Vocational interests: fish farming, tailoring, bedding production</p> <p>Opportunities (some outside project) Pavilion for Batwa products in Karambi, expanded forest of medicinal herbs, support for women/girls in crafts, collection of raw materials from park, music program expansion</p> <p>They are aware of CRM groups, and some serve as leaders (King, Princess, Speaker, Prime Minister).</p> <p>They participate in tourism activities when invited by UWA.</p> <p>They requested household items (mattresses, nets, bed sheets) and capital for small businesses.</p> <p>Their long-term vision includes utilizing Rwamabale as a market and building permanent homes.</p>
<p><b>Uganda Wildlife Authority</b></p> <p><b>4:15 PM October 27, 2025</b></p>	<p>More support, materials, or capital needed for Batwa to scale up production and develop sustainable income-generating enterprises</p> <p>Five newly established CRM groups under IFPA-CD have not yet signed MOUs; negotiations ongoing</p> <p>Batwa people do not require CRM membership to access park resources; access is granted regardless of group affiliation.</p> <p>The Batwa have a flexible schedule for firewood collection and are supported by FFF with transport when needed.</p>

	<p>Enforcement of MOUs is handled by UWA’s law enforcement team. Non-Batwa without MOUs are subject to police action; Batwa are sensitized and stopped without force.</p> <p>Batwa trail not actively marketed, resulting in few visitors; only Ntandi Batwa typically used for tourist visits</p> <p>Revenue-sharing funds flow through District Council and have not been distributed smoothly</p> <p>Distance of Karambi from park limits tourism opportunities despite UWA efforts to include them</p> <p>Relationship: UWA described relationship with Batwa as good, though more support needed</p> <p>Documentation achievement: Book completed on medicinal plants of the Batwa and herbs in Semuliki Park</p> <p>UWA is open to supporting a greenhouse in Karambi to cultivate these species, with seedlings sourced from the park.</p> <p>Batwa request support for poultry, goat rearing, rabbit and duck keeping, piggery, carpentry, tailoring, and fish farming.</p> <p><u>Suggested actions</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support post-training enterprise development through small grants or capital inputs.</li> <li>• Expedite MOU signing for pending CRM groups and clarify enforcement protocols.</li> <li>• Enhance marketing of Batwa Trail to boost local tourism and cultural appreciation.</li> <li>• Develop greenhouse initiative for medicinal plant cultivation in Karambi.</li> <li>• Facilitate Batwa craft sales through the Visitor Information Centre and tourism platforms.</li> <li>• Ensure timely disbursement of revenue sharing funds and support Batwa-led project proposals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Meeting with UWA and Batwa Leadership,</b></p>	<p>King Joffrey's priorities and views: "Keep and protect Batwa culture" for next generations; protect both forest and Batwa culture; appreciation of training Batwa in livelihood activities; reaffirmed Batwa commitment to forest conservation.</p> <p>Good relationship with UWA</p>

<p><b>Visitor Centre, Semuliki</b></p> <p><b>(including Batwa elders, youth, women)</b></p> <p><b>28<sup>th</sup> 10:00am, October 2025</b></p>	<p>Land needs: current land is small; need hoes, tools, seeds.</p> <p>Training effectiveness: All training valued (beekeeping, medicinal plants, cultivation eggplants, mushroom growing, and craft-making, among others); primary issue is lack of sufficient capital/materials after training, not quality of training.</p> <p>Firewood access - requested daily collection or at least four days. Currently they have access twice a week under MoU. However, Batwa are not stopped when accessing the forest on other days.</p> <p>Medicinal plants: Requested clarification - UWA confirmed these can be collected every day without restriction</p> <p>Inter-community relations: Speak different languages but sometimes in touch; visited other Batwa communities frequently</p> <p>Clear preference for business support grants through UWA rather than local government</p> <p><u>Suggested actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial support to operationalize trained skills</li> <li>• Access to raw materials not found in the forest</li> <li>• Land in Bundimasoli for a Batwa market and museum</li> <li>• Carpentry training for youth</li> <li>• Support for women farmers (tools, seedlings, capital)</li> <li>• Marketing of Batwa culture in Karambi (signposts, tourism promotion)</li> <li>• Review of forest access MOU (willing to adhere to 2-day schedule if livelihood support is provided)</li> <li>• Construction of a Batwa museum and market in Bundimasoli to showcase crafts and culture</li> <li>• Brick-making support</li> <li>• Seedling access to grow medicinal herbs outside the forest with support from UWA.</li> <li>• Support inter-community learning (Batwa from Semuliki visit Mgahinga Batwa to learn craft-making and cultural preservation)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cross Cultural Foundation for Uganda</b></p>	<p>Dramatic drop in Batwa population and significant language loss</p> <p>Batwa people face discrimination in hospital access, affecting health outcomes</p>

<p><b>(CCFU), Nkombwe</b></p> <p><b>Date: October 28, 2025, 1:30 PM</b></p>	<p>Land use challenges: Batwa have rented their allocated land to local farmers rather than farming it themselves; premature harvesting disrupted bee production.</p> <p>Batwa trail organized but now poorly staffed due to population shift to Karambi, reducing tourism income</p> <p>Competition between NGOs working in area complicates coordination efforts</p> <p>Limited alcohol interventions implemented despite identified need</p> <p>CCFU's assessment of priorities: decided to invest in schools as primary intervention; education and capacity-building remain central</p> <p>Disputes over language used in published materials.</p> <p>Educational achievements: 13 Batwa in secondary school; 45 total enrolled; 40 with CCFU sponsorship; 196 children total (all groups) benefit; none finished secondary yet but some expected to finish this year</p> <p>Cultural programs: heritage clubs at schools for music, dance, drumming; language book produced</p> <p><u>Suggested actions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in a cultural center near the forest, managed externally but benefiting Batwa.</li> <li>• Support resource management training.</li> <li>• Continue alcohol sensitization campaigns.</li> <li>• Explore herbal garden development in Ntandi, Kapepepe, and Makere.</li> <li>• Teach value addition for medicinal herbs.</li> <li>• Address challenges in cocoa farming and apiary management.</li> <li>• Strengthen education pathways beyond Primary 7 through partnerships.</li> <li>• Strengthen coordination among NGOs to avoid duplication and improve impact.</li> </ul>
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## Annex III. Summary table of stakeholders consulted for VMGP development and revision

<b>Consultations for Semuliki VMGP development and revision</b>	
<b>VMGF Validation, 2020</b>	24 persons
<b>Batwa community members - Phase 1 – 2021</b>	16 persons
<b>Batwa community members - Phase 2 – 2022</b>	91 persons
<b>CSO/NGOs representatives (Phase 2 only) – 2022</b>	23 persons
<b>Batwa community members – Phase 3 (VMGP revision) – October 2025</b>	60 persons
<b>CSO/ NGOs - VMGP revision – 2025 Bundibugyo District</b>	2 organizations (Fight for the Forgotten and the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda)
<b>Batwa community members – validation of revised VMGP – December 2025</b>	47 Persons

## Annex IV. 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 4.3-4.11. below.

A stakeholder engagement session was organised in the Kapepepe Community, Bundibugyo District, on May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2026, in order to raise awareness about CRM and to undertake selection of beneficiaries for the project livelihoods support under this VMGP. The session was facilitated by MWE and UWA; it was attended by 61 participants. See table 4.1. for the session’s agenda.

*Table 4.1. Sensitization and Beneficiary Selection Session – Agenda*

	<b>Agenda item</b>
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 61 Batwa community members were selected to benefit from support on soap making; baking; livestock keeping; hair dressing, craft making, and weaving; welding; tour guiding, hospitality and marketing; cook stove and brick making; bee keeping; and motorcycle repair. See table 4.2. for details.

*Table 4.2. Selected Beneficiaries for Livelihoods Support*

<b>Enterprise</b>	<b>No. selected</b>
Soap making	4
Baking	6
Livestock keeping	18
Hair dressing, craft making and weaving	9
Welding	6
Tour guiding, hospitality and marketing	4
Cook stove and brick making	4
Bee keeping	8
Motorcycle repair	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>

## BENEFICIARY SELECTION CRITERIA

*Table 4.3. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Soap Making*

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Semuliki National Park boundary in Bundibugyo 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 4.4. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Baking*

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Semuliki National Park boundary in Bundibugyo 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 4.5. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Livestock Keeping*

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Semuliki National Park boundary in Bundibugyo 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
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*Table 4.6. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Hair Dressing / Crafts / Weaving*

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Semuliki National Park boundary in Bundibugyo 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, and crafts and weaving
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 4.7. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Welding*

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Semuliki National Park boundary in Bundibugyo 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 4.8. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Tour Guiding*

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Semuliki National Park boundary in Bundibugyo 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

*Table 4.9. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Cookstove and Brick Making*

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Semuliki National Park boundary in Bundibugyo 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 4.10. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Beekeeping*

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Semuliki National Park boundary in Bundibugyo 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 not have received identical livelihood support under the same project phase
7.	Must have land suitable for apiary establishment
8.	Must have basic knowledge or willingness to learn beekeeping
9.	Must be willing to attend organized beekeeping and honey processing training

*Table 4.11. Beneficiary Selection Criteria – Motorcycle Repair*

S/N	CRITERIA
1.	Must be a Mutwa (Batwa) residing within 5 km of the Semuliki National Park boundary in Bundibugyo 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