

Women's Microfinance Initiative

Annual Factbook
2020

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Introduction

The Women's Microfinance Initiative (WMI) is a microlending organization serving rural villages in East Africa. Since the founding of WMI in 2008, the organization has established loan programs in Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya. It is difficult for women in rural Africa to achieve financial stability within their community due to systemic exclusion from many financial services. WMI's mission is to transition these marginalized women into the mainstream economy and highlight their impact as hard-working, diligent members of society. To accomplish this, WMI provides business loans to borrowers and also provides the necessary training and resources for them to launch and operate successful small enterprises to become self-sustaining members of their community.

WMI collects and maintains extensive records that document the socio-economic impacts of the loan program on borrowers and the community. These records are analyzed and compiled to develop WMI's Annual Factbook. The 2020 Annual Factbook consolidates data from surveys conducted between July 2019 and January 2020. This year's Factbook highlights the demographics of our borrowers, their businesses, and the impact of loans on their lives.

Who We Are

The Women's Microfinance Initiative was founded by a group of American businesswomen in 2008. Our first borrowers were twenty women living in Buyobo, Uganda. During its twelve-year existence, WMI has made nearly 60,000 loans totaling nearly \$8,000,000 to village women. There are currently over 7,000 active members in the loan program. The loan program significantly impacts borrowers and their families by connecting them with the resources they need to harness their potential and bring their entrepreneurial visions to life. All WMI loan hubs are managed by local village women who are leaders in their communities.

The Loan Program

WMI loans are distributed four times throughout a two-year cycle. Borrowers receive a loan every six months with an initial loan of 300,000 shillings (\$80), two 400,000 shilling (\$107) follow up loans, and a final loan of 500,000 shillings (\$133). During each six-month cycle, borrowers make ten repayments to pay back their loan with a 10% flat interest. Interest is added to WMI loans to pay for outreach programs within the community and operational costs on the ground. This model allows WMI's loan hubs to become self-sustaining; each loan program can continue operating indefinitely without receiving additional financial support from WMI, as long as borrowers continue to repay their loans consistently.

Borrowers are divided into solidarity groups of twenty women at the start of their two-year loan period. These women provide support and accountability for one another, contributing to the high success and repayment rate of the program. Continuing trends from previous years, our default rate consistently stays below 2.5%. Borrowers also receive additional business and management training so that they are properly equipped to run a successful business.

Methodology

The data that is analyzed in this report was collected through 800 borrower responses, conducted by a team of regional coordinators who are fluent in both English and local languages. Most of the borrowers who were surveyed are living near our main facility in Buyobo, but there are also survey respondents from other surrounding villages.

The survey was administered at three points in the two-year loan cycle. The first is the baseline survey, which is administered to women upon entrance into our loan program. Baseline data represents a woman's initial living conditions and financial situation. The second is the follow-up survey, which is administered one year into the loan program to check in with each borrower on the progress of her business. This survey reveals the inner workings of the entrepreneurial process and shows the initial impact of the loan. The final is the exit survey, which is completed just after women make their final repayment and graduate from the two-year loan program. Exit data provides critical insights into how our borrowers have developed their homes, improved their personal and business skills, and bettered their lives and communities during the loan program. It also offers suggestions or recommendations to WMI.

Our methodology allows us to examine important macroscopic trends over time; it does not demonstrate the trajectory of any individual woman over the course of two years. There are several reasons why WMI favors a broader scope of analysis. First, many of the questions on our follow-up and exit surveys ask borrowers to compare their pre-loan conditions to their post-loan conditions, including dimensions such as meal improvement, skill development, and healthcare access. This provides insight into the impact on an individual borrower's growth and development over the two-year program. Secondly, since our borrower base is so large and many women share similar experiences with loans and entrepreneurship, it is not practical to analyze the individual details of each borrower's response over time. Thirdly, keeping the data anonymous due to its personal nature helps ensure our borrowers' privacy. Finally, large-scale trends that can be applied to groups of women across time helps us form a more stable representation of our borrower base as we seek to improve our program.

Our Borrowers



A woman with short dark hair, wearing a vibrant dress with vertical stripes in black, red, orange, and light blue, stands in profile facing left. She holds a black handheld microphone in her right hand and gestures with her left hand. In the background, a group of people, including children, are seated on the ground in front of a building with a corrugated metal roof and a wall made of woven reeds or mud bricks. The setting is outdoors on a grassy area.

Their Homes

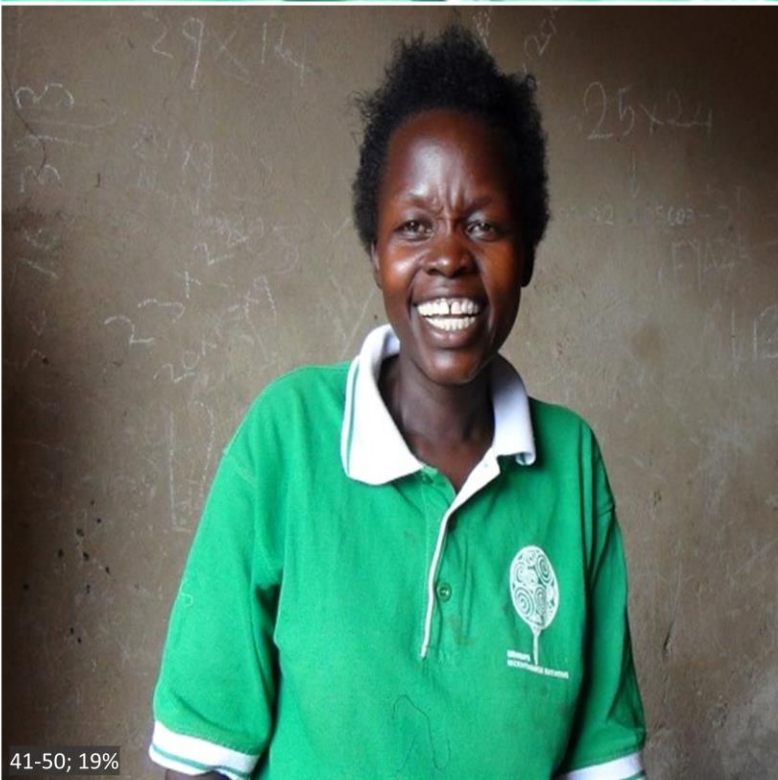
Age of Borrowers



31-40; 33%



21-30; 28%



41-50; 19%



51-60; 15%



61+; 3%

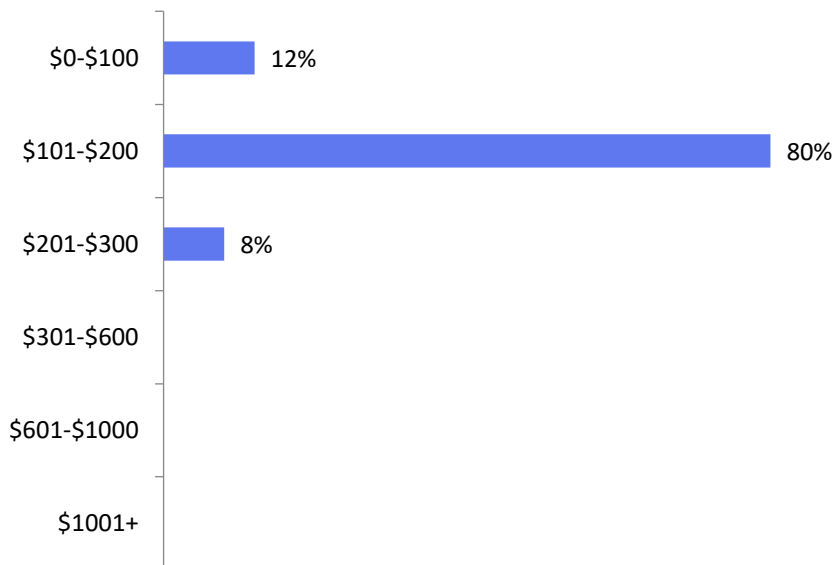
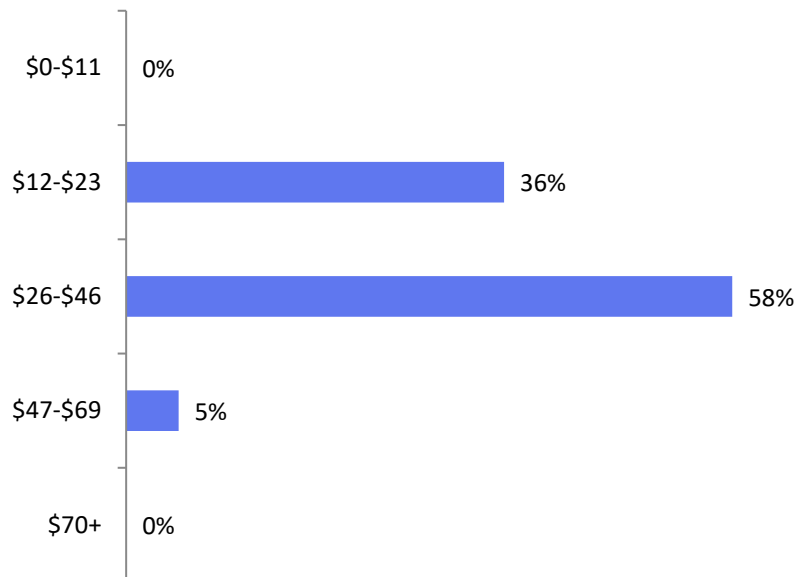


≤ 20; 1%

Monthly Income (Before)

Survey responses from our borrowers before the reception of any WMI loans show that approximately three-fifths of borrowers (58%) have a monthly household income within the range of \$26-\$46. About one third (36%) of borrower monthly income falls in the \$12-\$23 range with the remaining (5%) of borrowers making \$47-\$69. No borrowers report a monthly income greater than \$70 before receiving loans.

Compared to last year’s trends, monthly income before entering the loan program has improved on average. In 2019, a majority of borrowers had an income range of \$0-\$14.

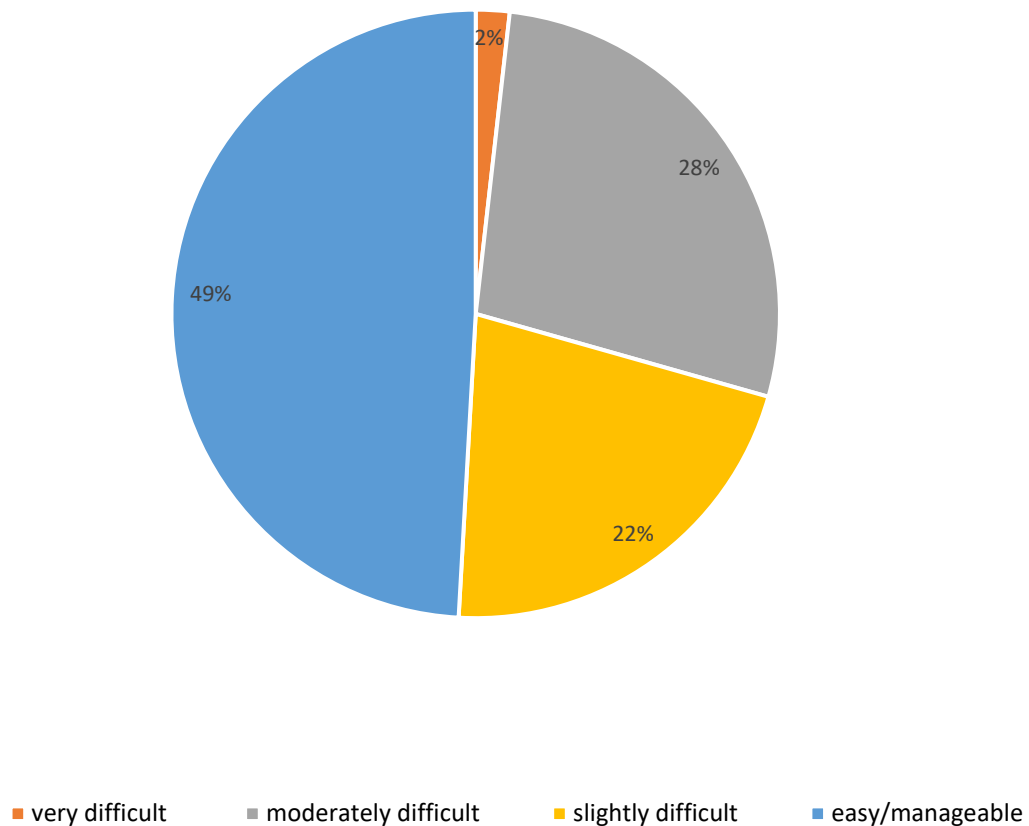


Monthly Income (After)

At the conclusion of the loan program, the majority of borrowers (80%) had a monthly income of \$101-\$200. Just over one-tenth (12%) fell within the \$0-\$100 range, and just below one-tenth (8%) were bringing in \$201-\$300 per month. Significant financial progress has been made for borrowers after receiving WMI loans.

These data show a continuation of last year’s trends. Most borrowers in 2020 have an income between \$101-\$200, a significant improvement from 2019 where less than 1% of borrowers had an income exceeding \$100.

Difficulty in Paying Medical Fees (Before)

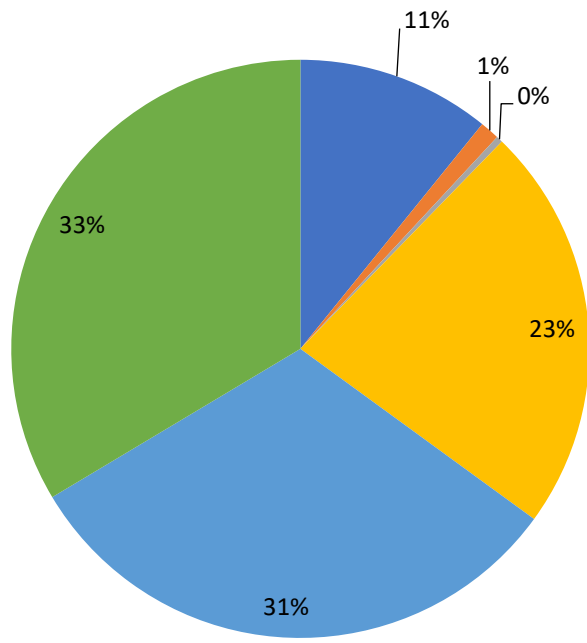


Medical Fees

Before entering the loan program, women were asked how difficult it is to pay medical fees for their household. One-half (49%) of responses characterized the difficulty as “easy/manageable. Nearly three-tenths (28%) said making payments is “moderately difficult”; approximately one-fifth (22%) responded “slightly difficult, and the remaining respondents answered “very difficult”. No one responded “extremely difficult”.

During the loan cycle, borrowers were asked if they noticed improvements in their ability to pay medical fees. **All our borrowers (100%) had an easier time paying medical fees after receiving loans.**

Source of Drinking Water



- Natural Fresh Water Source
- Rain Catchment
- Bottled Water
- Spring
- Shared Well
- Own Tap

To obtain drinking water, one-third (33%) of borrowers have their own tap. Three-tenths (31%) get water from a shared well, Almost one-quarter (23%) from a spring, and one-tenth (11%) from a natural fresh water source. The remaining borrowers (2%) collect water from rain catchment and other methods. This data is drawn from borrowers who have not yet received any WMI loans.

Compared to last year's trends, there has been an increase in use of one's own tap for water, signaling home and sanitation improvements. Well and spring water maintain similar levels of use, while use of bottled water has observed a significant decline.



Their Businesses



BUSINESS BREAKDOWN



Bogoya (bananas), 40%



Shop



Matooke (plantains)



Secondhand clothes



Other Food



Local Beer



Firewood



Other (non-food)



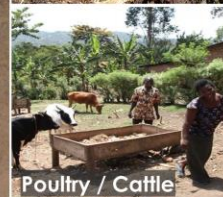
Restaurant



Produce



Charcoal



Poultry / Cattle



Drug Shop



Salon



Timber



Fish



Tailoring



Milk



New Clothes

Clinic

Business Challenges

Our borrowers have experienced a range of business challenges. Just over one-third (35%) of survey respondents say “Competition” is their main challenge. Another one-third (32%) cite “Creditors”; one-quarter (25%) cite “Transport”; one-tenth say “Low Demand” and the remaining responses (8%) accredit their main business challenge to the “Season”.

Competition (35%)
Creditors (32%)
Transport (25%)
Low Demand (15%)
Season (8%)

Plans to Solve Business Challenges

Surveyed borrowers were also asked about their plans to solve business challenges. Three-tenths (31%) of borrowers plan to “Use friendlier language”; another one-third want to “Change means of transportation” (16%) or “Change business” (16%). One-quarter of borrowers plan to either “Change location” (13%) or “Reduce prices” (13%). The remaining respondents answered “Better quality products” (7%) or “Other” (1%). The skills that WMI borrowers learn prior to receiving their loans help to turn these plans into real solutions.

Use Friendly Language (31%)
Change Means of Transportation (16%)
Change Business (16%)
Change Location (13%)
Reduce Price (13%)
Better Quality Products(7%)
Other (1%)

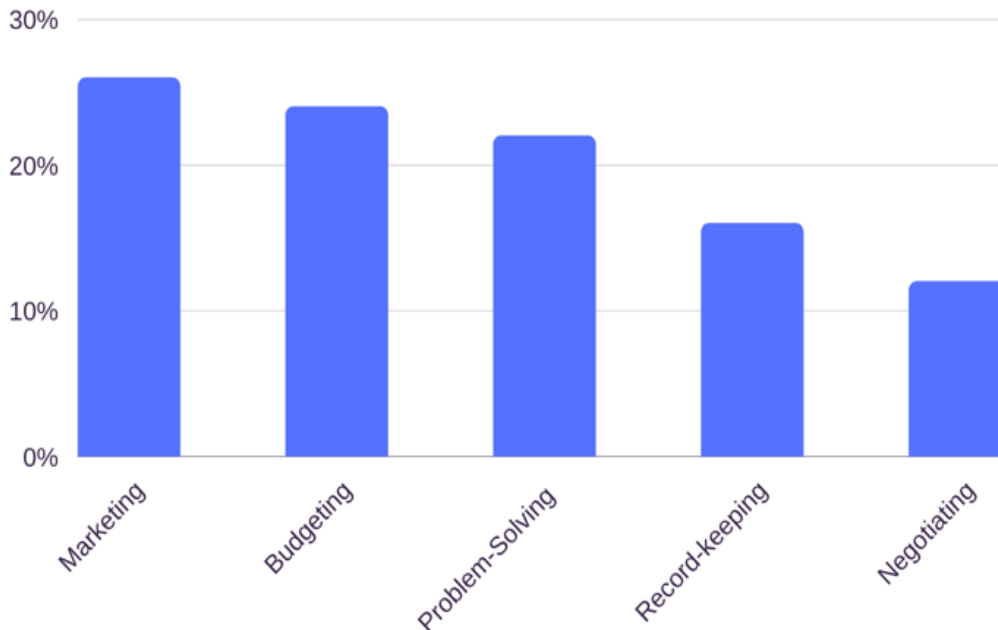


Skill Development

By starting their own businesses and gaining their independence the women of the loan program gain an array of business and personal skills that benefit their businesses, their life, and their community. These skills enable borrowers to lead more successful businesses and lives.

BUSINESS SKILLS

These are a few of the business skills the women have acquired through the loan program



Business skills

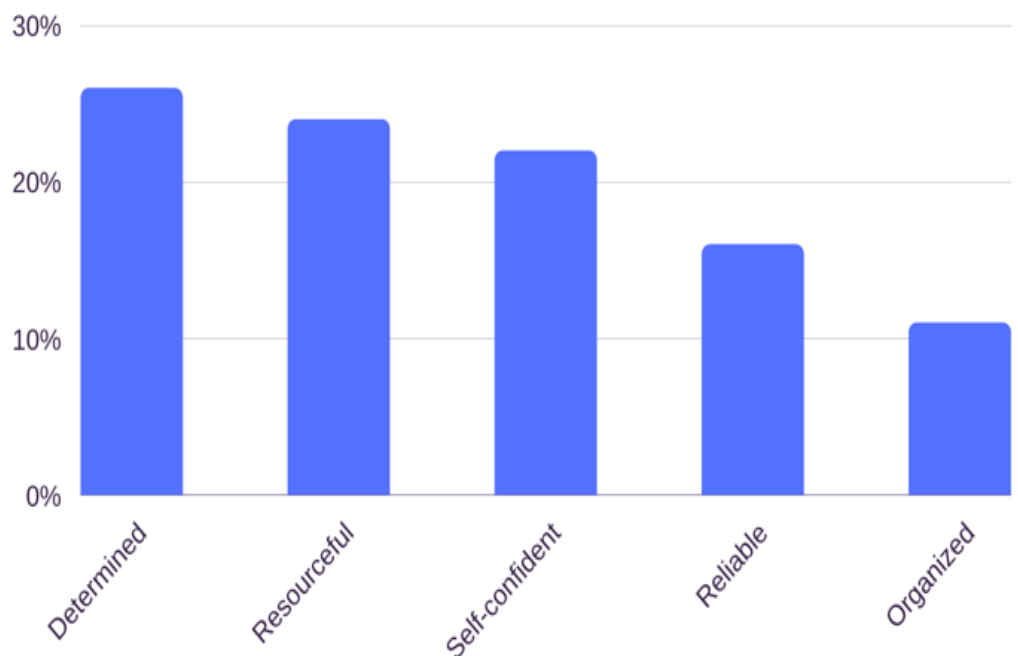
Of the women that were surveyed on their business skills they chose between the categories of marketing, budgeting, problem-solving, record-keeping, and negotiating. Of these categories, 26% of women said they gained skills in marketing, 24% of women said they gained skills in budgeting, 22% of women said they gained skills in problem-solving, 16% of women said they gained skills in record-keeping, and 12% of women said they gained skills in negotiating.

Personal skills

Of the women that were surveyed on their personal skills, they chose between the traits of being determined, self-confident, resourceful, reliable, and organized. 26% of women reported being determined, 24% of women reported being resourceful, 22% of women reported being self-confident, 16% of women reported being reliable, and 11% of women reported being organized.

PERSONAL SKILLS

These are a few of the personal skills the women have developed through the loan program.



The Impact

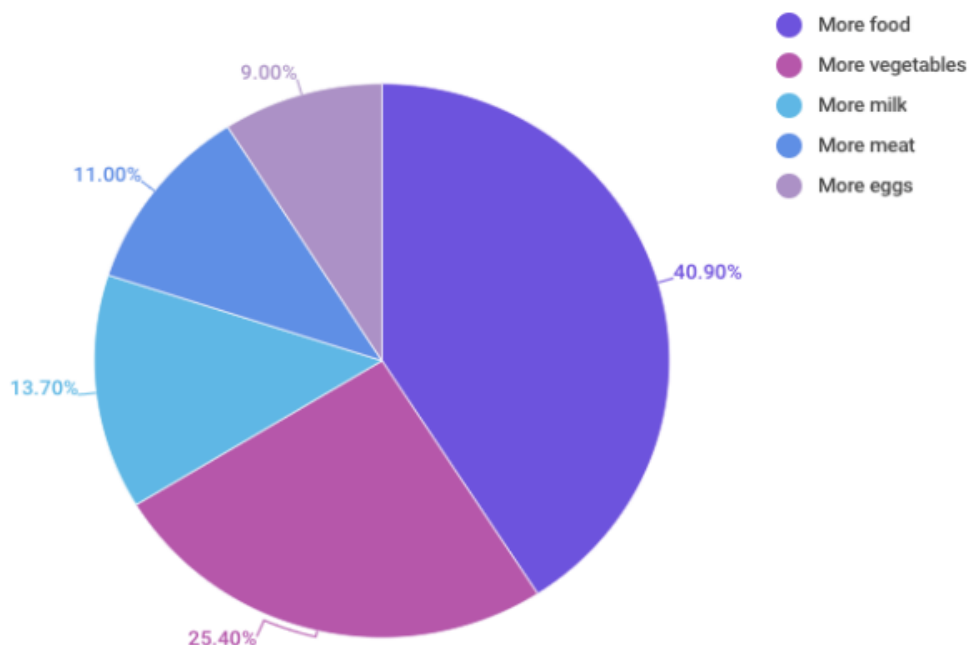
B B
Phone Co
Gutaka N
Wesamoy
Gabire A
Rev T Kiko
Monge Al
Nabudhwa

**WOMEN'S MICROFINANCE
INITIATIVE**
SIRONKO DISTRICT - UGANDA

Improvement of meals

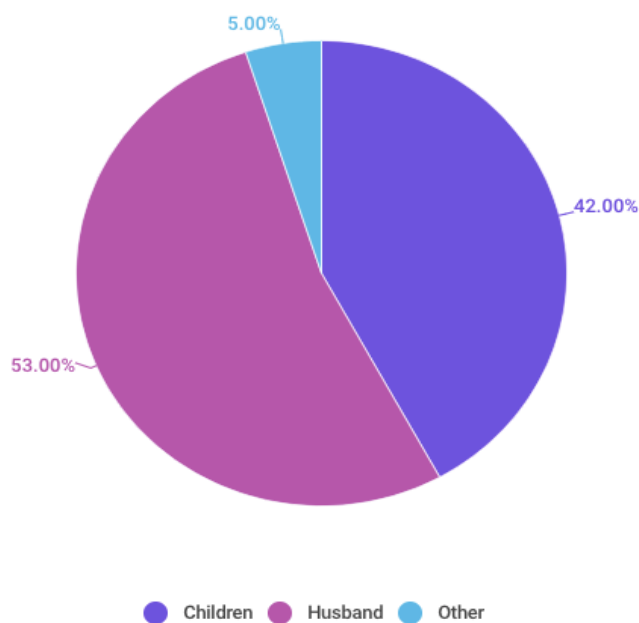
After receiving their loans many women reported an improvement in meals for themselves and their families. About 41% of women reported getting more food in general, about 26% of women reported having more vegetables, about 14% of women reported having more milk, 11% of women reported having more meat in their meals, and 9% of women reported having more eggs. Eggs, meat, and milk are some of the most expensive commodities in rural villages.

Improvement of meals



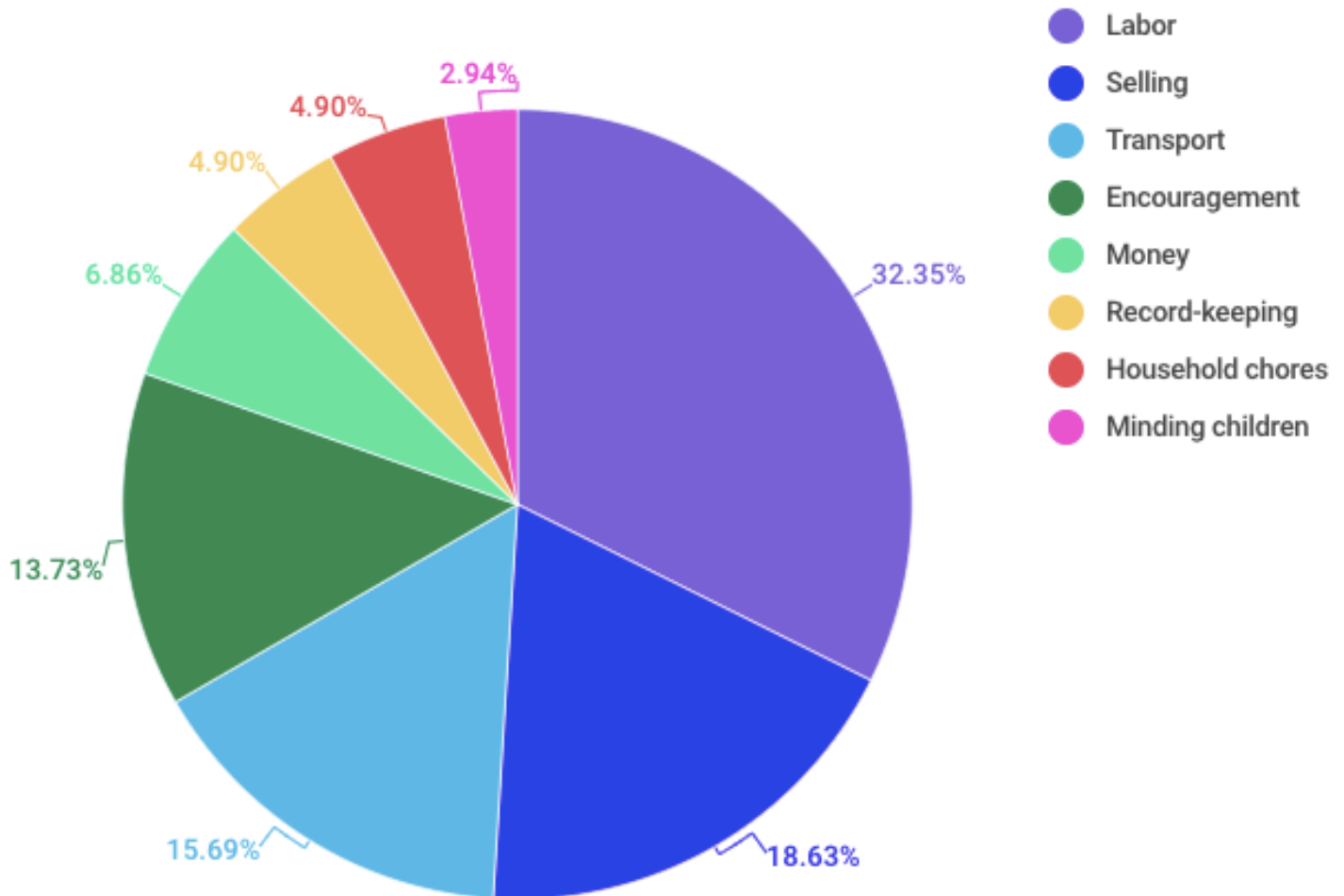


Who in the family helps with business?



Many women require assistance in different parts of their businesses, so they were asked who in their family helps with their business. These were their responses: 53% of women said their husbands help with businesses, 42% said their children help, and 5% said it was someone outside of their family that helped them. Families working together increases the likelihood of the business being successful.

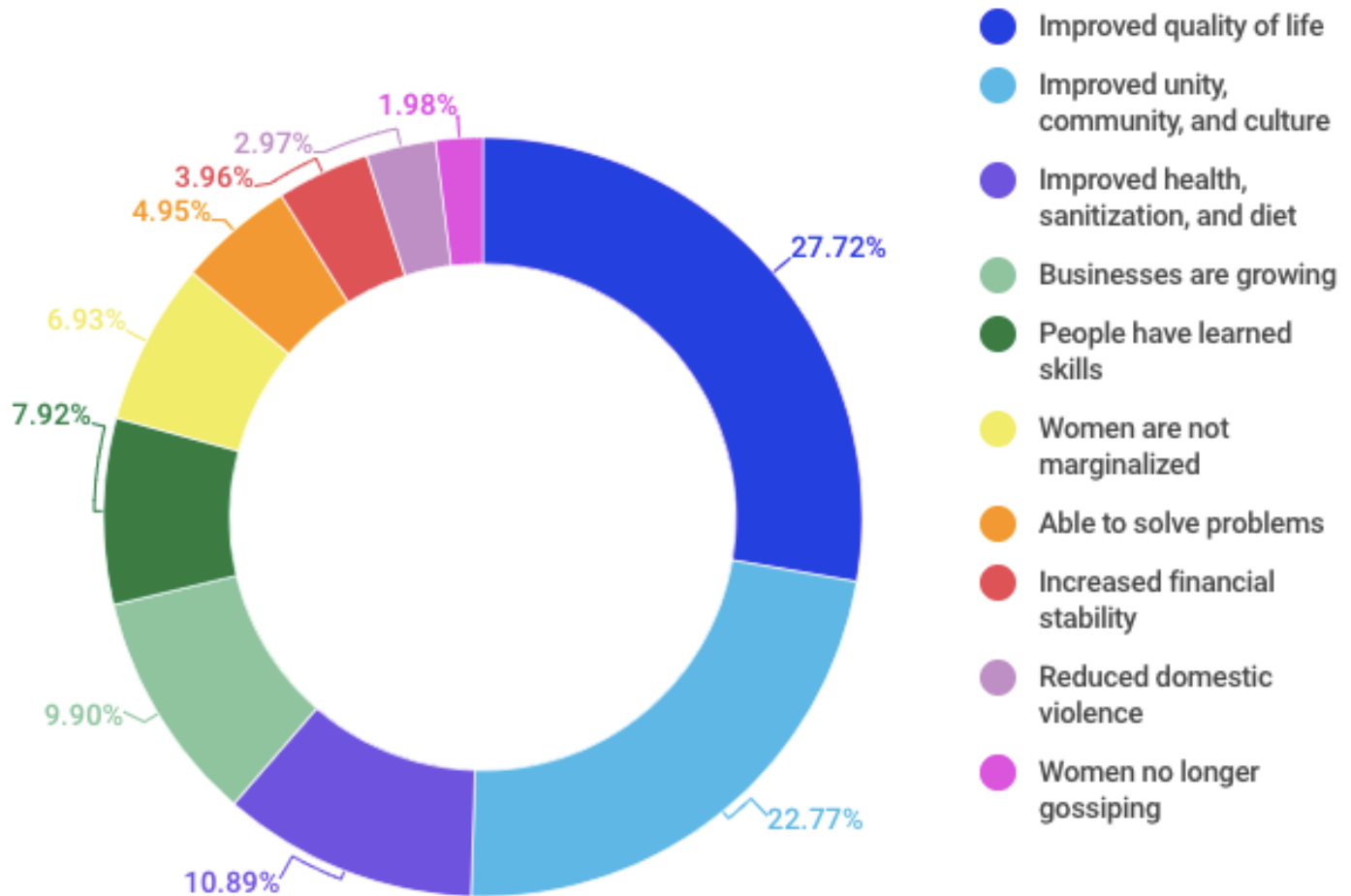
How does family help?



How does the family help?

To further understand how family members help the women's business, women were then asked how does their family help in their businesses and these were their responses. 33% said their family helps with labor, 19% said they help with selling, 16% said they help with transport, 14% said they help with encouragement, 7% said they helped with additional money, 5% said they helped with record-keeping, 5% said they help with household chores, 3% said they help by minding the children. Despite the method of help, borrowers feel more supported and have more time and energy to operate their businesses when their family cooperates.

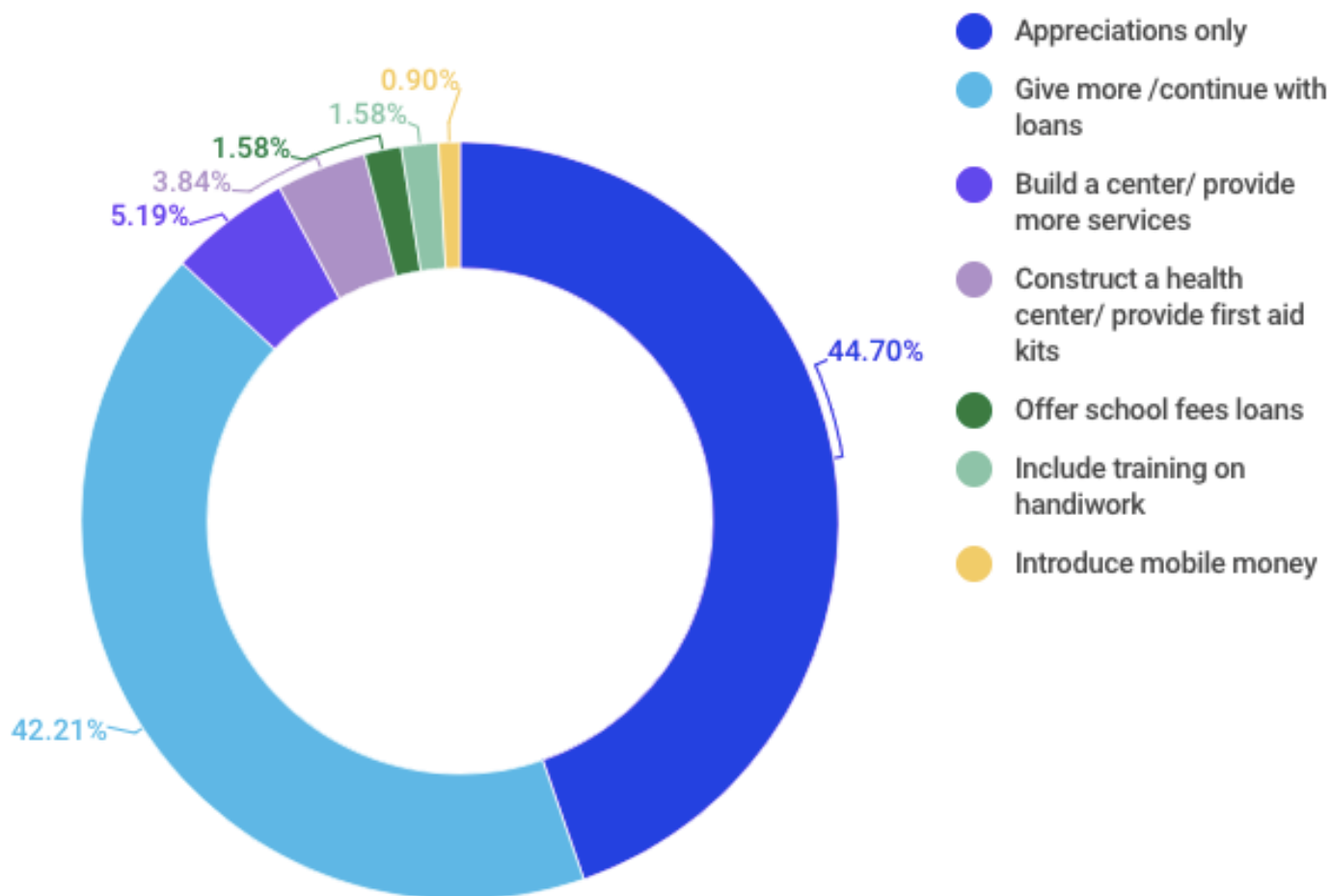
How has the loan program impacted the community?



How has the loan program impacted the community?

The women were asked to analyze the impacts their loans and the loan program in general have had on themselves or the surrounding community. These were their answers; about 28% of the women said they have an improved quality of life, about 23% said there is improved unity, community, and culture, about 11% said there is improved health, sanitation, and diet, about 10% said businesses are growing, about 8% said people have learned skills, around 7% said women are not marginalized, about 5% said they are able to solve problems, around 4% said they have increased financial stability, about 3% said there is reduced domestic violence, and about 2% said women are no longer gossiping. All of these changes indicate a positive improvement in the community, and the lives of its residents.

Suggestions for WMI



Suggestions for WMI

In order to recognize areas of improvement, WMI asks the women if they have any suggestions for the program and these are their responses. 45% of women only reported their appreciations for the program, 42% of women reported that WMI should give more and/or continue with the loan program, 5% of women reported that WMI should build a center and/or provide more services to them, 4% of women reported that WMI should construct a health center where they can get access to things like first aid kits, about 2% of women reported that WMI should offer loans for school fees, about 2% of women reported that WMI should include training in handiwork, and about 1% of the women reported that WMI should introduce mobile money.

Community Engagement



Budadiri Girl's School of the Deaf:

WMI began a new initiative this year to support students of the Deaf community at Budadiri Girl's School. The school educates 60 residential students who are hearing-impaired and many of whom are orphans. The school offers scholarships to needy students, which can put a strain on the school's budget. WMI provides financial support to provide students with basic needs like soap, biscuits, sugar, maize flour, and school supplies. Additionally, WMI contributed materials such as fabric, scissors, thread, needles, and towels, to facilitate a reusable menstrual pad program where students can learn how to make pads for their own use. Reusable menstrual pads are imperative for girls to stay in school because disposable menstrual products are scarce and unaffordable.



Staff Support Fund:

WMI's Staff Support Fund operates as insurance for the 50-plus staff members employed by our local partner, the Buyobo Women's Association. The Fund pays for medical expenses due to sudden illness or injury, and for the ongoing management of chronic illness. The Staff Support Fund is a safety net that helps several of our staff members each year when they need it most. Our staff members are the foundation of our effective village-level operations and the Fund helps ensure their health and welfare.

Table Tennis:

Spearheaded by Kevin Mafabi, a professional player in East Africa, whose family is from Buyobo, and his sister, Denise, a rising high school champion in Kampala, the Buyobo Table Tennis Club was launched in 2020. Some goals of this program are: enhanced community ties; recreation and sport for children; and, identifying particularly talented students who could apply for scholarships to secondary school and university. The program has one table tennis table, 20 rackets, 40 balls and 75 enthusiastic children who practice in the WMI headquarters pavilion.



Coach Kevin with table tennis participants



Keep Buyobo Clean:

The Keep Buyobo Clean program is a sanitation initiative born from the lack of waste management services in rural villages in Uganda. The program provides trash receptacles around Buyobo village to encourage proper disposal of trash and to discourage littering. Two staff members, paid by WMI's sister organization, the Buyobo Women's Association, handle the collecting, removal, and proper discarding of waste each day and sweep the streets and walking paths. The initiative has been extremely successful in cleaning up the environment of Buyobo, and has also been implemented in other neighbor villages such as Buweli and Budadiri, where residents voluntarily manage the program.

Village Health Team:

The Village Health Team, a volunteer-led community organization, works tirelessly to improve the overall public health of Buyobo and neighboring communities. They make monthly home visits to promote hygiene, spread public health messages, and through provide preventative medical care, such as vaccines. BWA financially supports the efforts of the VHT with quarterly payments. Currently, the VHT is comprised of 142 local volunteers that serve 71 different villages.



Buyobo VHTs, 2019

Orphan Outreach Program:

In Uganda, when a child loses a parent he or she is considered an orphan, and is frequently sent to live with relatives, as a single parent household is often unequipped to raise young children. Orphans are susceptible to mistreatment, neglect and malnourishment. To combat the challenges orphans face, the Orphan Outreach program was started in June 2018 by WMI summer interns to support orphans of Buyobo and neighboring villages through the provision of educational supplies, basic clothing, and school lunches. Additionally, each December, orphans are invited to celebrate the holidays at the BWA office with a festive party and small presents.



Boys and Girls Group playing soccer

Boys and Girls Group:

Boys and Girls Group is a program run by Buyobo Women's Association in partnership with Buyobo Primary School for children ages 11-17. The group meets every Thursday during school terms, and is facilitated by Teacher Sam and Teacher Susan. They lead weekly sessions on a wide range of topics including sexual health and hygiene, creative expression, and business skills. The program has been on hold due to the pandemic and the lockdown since March, as schools are out of session. At the beginning of the school term, students embarked on writing their own story books related to the culture of the Lumasaba speaking people who live in Buyobo. The Boys and Girls Group was also taught hygiene including hand-washing and how to prevent the spread of Covid-19, prior to their recess in March.



Boys and Girls Group teachers Susan and Sam

Tea & Buns for Teachers:

Right behind the WMI headquarters building in Buyobo is the Buyobo Primary School, which the children of many borrowers attend. Teachers have one of the most important jobs in the community, for which they need to be fully focused and prepared. However, Ugandan teachers are not provided with any meals during the long school each day. To help teachers stay fortified, each morning for the past 9 years WMI has provided a light snack of tea and buns to the 15 teachers at Buyobo Primary School.

School Lunch Program:

Attending school is not free in Uganda, and neither is receiving a school lunch. If parents cannot afford the fees the children do not attend school or attend without any lunch. A school lunch is especially important for Primary-6 and Primary-7 students who have longer school days to prepare for their Primary Leaving Examinations, which they must pass to advance to Secondary School (High School). To ensure the P-6 and P-7 students are prepared for their studies, for the past 5 years WMI and BWA have provided school lunches for every student in these two grades at Buyobo Primary School.

Buyobo Primary School Music Program:

Last year, Buyobo Primary School was eligible to participate in several music competitions after the start of the Buyobo Primary School Music Program. It began with Teacher John Paul and Teacher Susan completing training in musical instruction, and with WMI summer intern Grace Collins, who has spent her life playing the trumpet and now specializes in choral singing, volunteering as an instructor. The students were taught English choral music, and instrumentation for the competition. Additionally, with grant money from Princeton University's Class of 1978 Foundation, 7 adungus, 2 tube fiddles, 3 xylophones, 5 wooden flutes, 6 windpipes, 5 shakers, 2 long drums, and 7 regular drums were purchased for the school. Buyobo Primary School's new music program will continually impact the hundreds of children who will join the program and fill their community with music.



A xylophone from the Buyobo Music Program

In Kenya

BeadWORKS:

WMI partners with BeadWORKS, which helps pastoralist women in northern Kenya translate their traditional skills into much needed income. Like WMI, BeadWORKS is geared to rural women who need to access program services in the villages where they live and manage their households – their lack of mobility frequently isolates them from participating in outreach programs.

Solar Power:

At Lewa Conservancy, WMI partnered with Karl Klontz and the Lewa staff to install solar power at the maternity clinic on the conservancy, which serves many of the village women in the loan program. We also continue to work together to ensure the system continues to work properly.



Mental Health Counseling:

WMI is funding ongoing mental health counseling services for women in the loan program in the villages surrounding Lewa Wildlife Conservancy. For the third year we are bringing counselors and programs to local village businesswomen. The counseling sessions help women deal with changing priorities and expectations set by their husbands by giving them tools to frame fruitful discussion instead of simply arguing. Others were overwrought by the educational and career choices of their children and the sessions helped them learn how to listen and respond constructively to their children's concerns. Our team was struck by the universality of the women concerns, the anxiety created by family arguments, and their relief in finding constructive ways to handle the stress.

Customer wearing face mask at the Mnada (market).



Food Pantry:

WMI has provided a grant to the Oiti Self-Help loan group in the Masai Mara to purchase maize, beans and other staples for the women in the loan program and families in the local community as they face food insecurity brought about by the government lockdown orders issued to combat the Covid-19 virus. Because we have a strong local network on the ground we are able to ensure that food is distributed in a fair and effective manner to help the community through this crisis.

In Tanzania



Adult Numeracy and Literacy:

Though women still have traditional lifestyles in rural Tanzania, cultural changes are clearly underway, with more women wanting access to educational opportunities and business training. The women in the loan program are empowered by owning a business - it has reduced the anxiety of poverty. Some of the women receiving loans were finding it difficult to maintain records without having had the benefit of primary school education so WMI is supporting adult numeracy and literacy classes in their communities.

Electrification of Rural Clinic in Tloma:

In Tloma, Tanzania our partner women association, Ganako Women Community Organization (GWOCO) undertook the electrification of the local dispensary. It is the only local health care provider in Karatu District and serves 40 patients per day, playing a critical role in life or death situations. Doctors and nurses are stationed there 24/7 and are responsible for community health services. During its past 11 years of operation, the dispensary has never had a power source. This made it difficult to improve care and complicated treatment, particularly at night for mothers who are delivering babies. The GWOCO staff budgeted costs, researched legal requirements, and located a trustworthy electrician to evaluate the plan before installation. Using revenue generated by the loan program, GWOCO financed and supervised the installation of a reliable electrical power supply. The ladies continue to monitor the system operation and are looking to continue to input the dispensary ability to offer improved health care services in the surrounding villages.



Health Outreach:

In addition to funding loans and training, for the past three years WMI works with its local partners in Nainokanoka and Naiyobi wards to expand health services for women and families through a participatory Health Education Program, run by local female and male Maasai leaders from the community, including our trained medical staff. The program includes information and discussion around: nutrition, hygiene, sanitation, sexual health, domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, FGC (Female Genital Cutting, locally called female circumcision), child marriage and gender equality. Using drama, songs, films, visual aids and follow up discussions, the program involves the whole community in working toward health goals of reducing infant mortality, FGC, and child marriage while improving pre-natal care, access to birth control and childhood vaccinations.

2020 Interns

Summer-Beginning June 2020- End July 2020



Cindy Matsiko is a rising sophomore at University of Maryland Baltimore County and lives in Germantown, Maryland. She is studying Psychology and Africana studies and pursuing a certificate in Elementary education. A few of the things she is involved in on campus are the Food Recovery Network that combats food waste on campus and Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. She has visited Buyobo several times and has met a few of the borrowers in the past and even though the plans were diverted this summer she looks forward to visiting in the near future. She also excited to be a part of the remote internship this summer. She chose WMI for her internship so she could learn more about where her family comes from and more importantly how big of an impact micro loans can have on the women as individuals as well as the community as a whole.

My name is Luke Baxter and I am from Haddonfield, New Jersey.

I am an upcoming second-year undergraduate at Princeton University. My major is currently undecided, but I intend to concentrate my studies in economics with a certificate in finance.

On campus, I am a member of the Lightweight Rowing Team as well as the Peer Academic Advisor and Sophomore Leadership committees. Through my internship with WMI, I am excited to

learn more about microfinance, and I hope to use the knowledge I gain to contribute to future financial development in rural communities.

Although this year's interns are working remotely due to Covid-19, I am still looking forward to seeing Ugandan and Buyobo life through the lens of a nonprofit organization (and have the hope to visit Buyobo in the future). I am also excited to observe how non-profits and loan programs positively impact and

empower women and their families.



Contact us

Stay in touch with us. Use any of these avenues of communication to learn more about our mission, to receive updates from WMI on our programming and operations, and to find out how you can help.

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