

WMI Borrower Interview

Potato and Onion Farmer



While WMI only gives loans to women, our loan program touches entire families. This is the case for Mary and Alex. Together they have been able to expand their business, take on new opportunities, and improve their family's quality of life.

This is their story.



WOMEN'S
MICROFINANCE
INITIATIVE

Mary and her husband have been in business for nearly 20 years. For 16 years they operated a banana business. They live in Zesui, but sell their products in Kyibokko, a neighboring village with a larger market. Selling bananas is a highly competitive business in Kyibokko, leaving Mary with low profits. Her family was living day-to-day, never having enough money to save for the future.



In 2016, Mary and Alex heard about WMI's loan program from other borrowers already in the program. Mary's acceptance to the program was the catalyst they needed to transition their business from bananas to something more profitable. Alex had noticed that there was a high demand for Irish Potatoes in Kyibokko and not enough supply. He and Mary concluded that switching their product to potatoes could maximize profits.

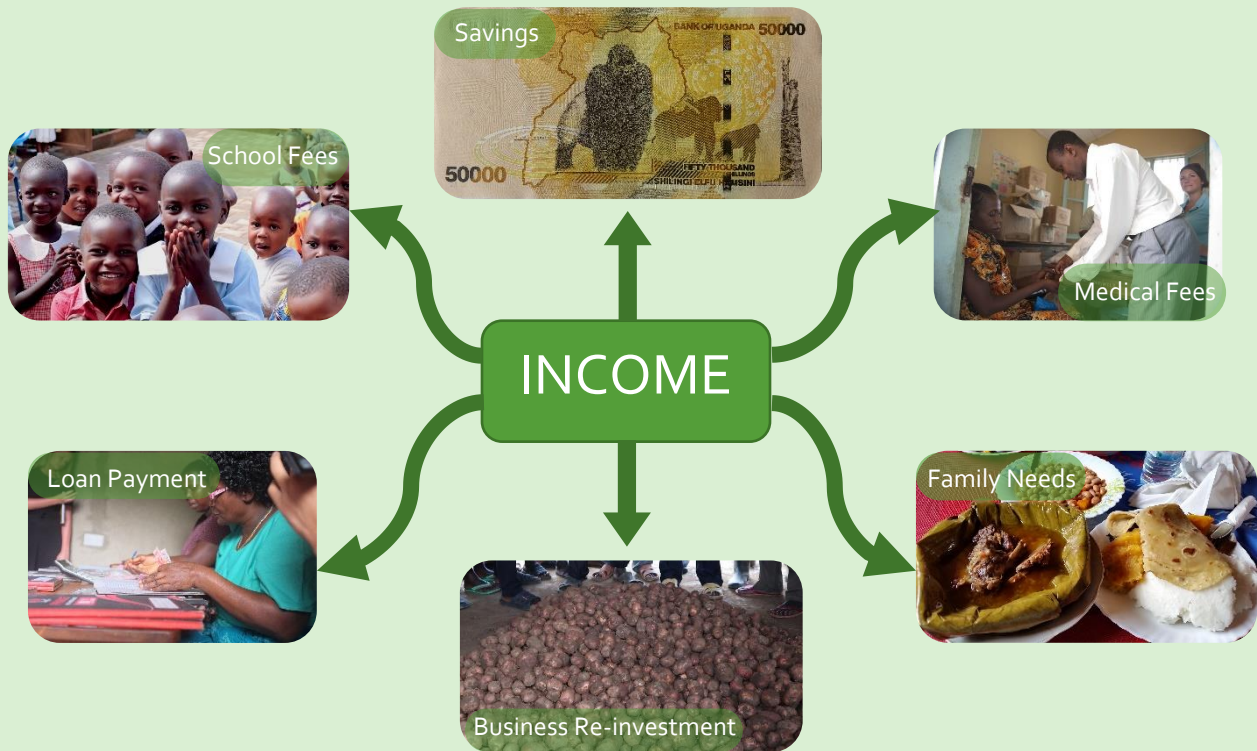
Mary and Alex began to grow potatoes, and shortly thereafter, added onions to their business as well. When they first switched products, it was challenging for them to find customers, since they were new to the business. Yet, the high demand ultimately helped them to find some initial customers. From there, their high-quality product and good customer service helped build their reputation and customer base.



Mary and Alex grow as much produce as they can on their land, but also purchase produce from local farmers so that they can meet the high demand. On a typical day, Alex goes out to different farms to purchase the best potatoes and onions they have. He then brings the produce to the market, where he meets up with Mary, who is selling their home-grown produce. Now on their fifth WMI loan, Mary and Alex have been so successful that they were recently able to expand to open a small shop as well.



Since Mary entered the WMI loan program and changed her business, their family has been able to pay the required medical and school fees, something that was not possible prior to the loan. Mary and Alex now make almost \$550 each month and can save \$40 each month. They support their family and reinvest much of their income into their business to help it continue to grow. The WMI training taught Mary how to save, which makes paying back her loan easy.



Alex expressed gratitude for the WMI loan program, since it has given him and Mary the ability to educate their children and improve their lives. When asked if men or women are better at repaying loans, he answered that it was clearly women. Alex explained that women are much more reliable at repaying loans and using the money for their businesses. His conclusion was that WMI should continue giving loans to women, and only women. Men also benefit because most borrowers share a family business with their husband, but it is best to have the loans in the women's names.