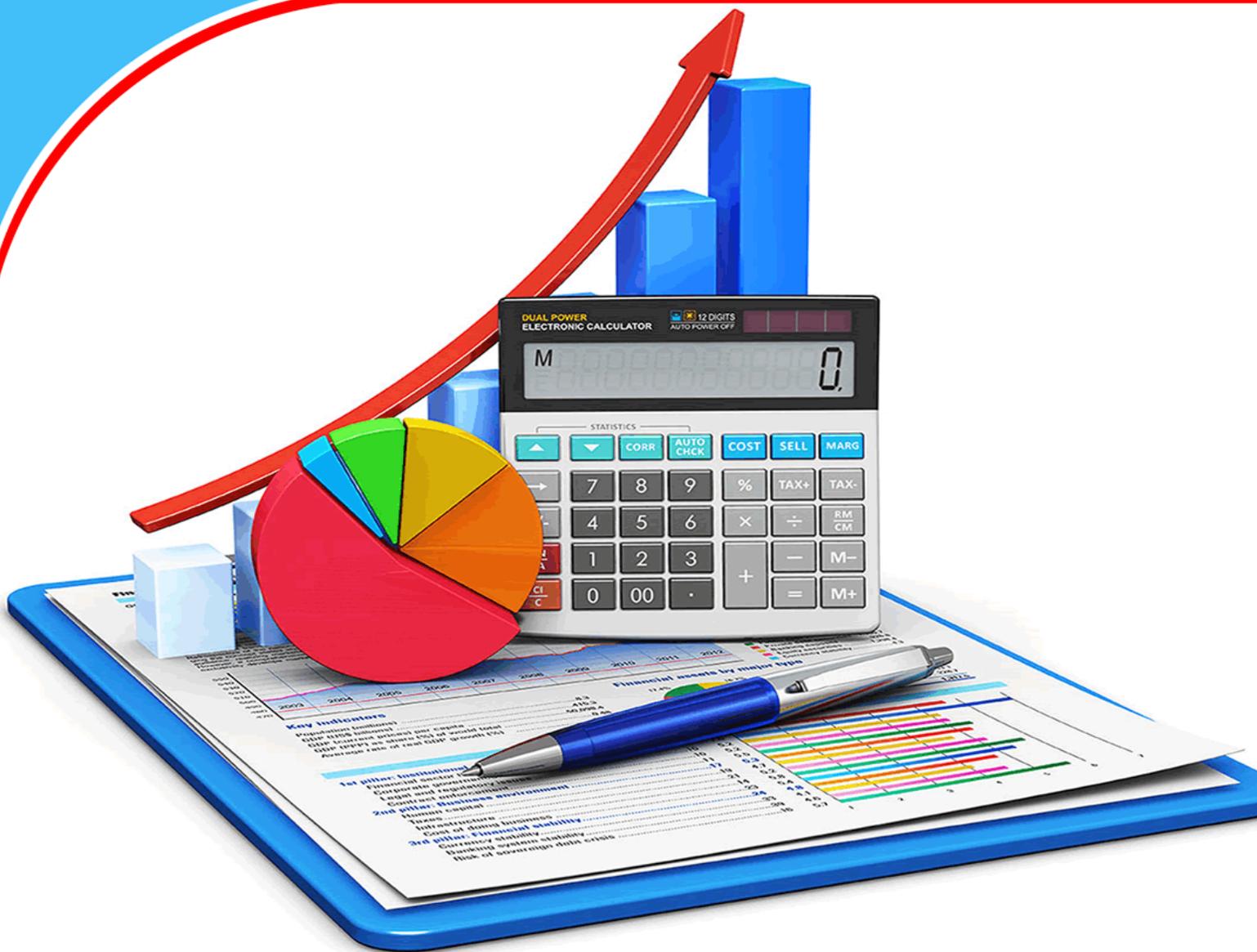


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Microfinance and Entrepreneurial Empowerment of Women: The Case of Women's Microfinance Initiative in Uganda

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Abstract

Purpose: Women have always been underestimated and discriminated in social, economic and political spheres of life. Moreover, the traditional household chores create hindrances in their social and economic empowerment. Entrepreneurship development among women largely focuses on the empowerment of women through developing skills in Small to Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and business ventures by taking risk of making investment decisions. Over the years, various efforts have been made by Government and Non-Government Organisations to promote women empowerment in Uganda and one such effort is through the micro-finance intervention. This Paper attempts to explore the impact of micro finance on the women's entrepreneurial empowerment with specific reference to Women's Micro-finance Initiative (WMI) in Buyobo in North Eastern Uganda.

Materials and Methods: The study adopted an exploratory cross sectional research design. The target population comprised women's microfinance Initiative Laon beneficiaries. A study Sample of 1,380 Respondents were purposively selected. The main Instrument for data collection was a structured Questionnaire and was complemented by Interviews and Focus Group Discussions. The study findings were presented in form of Tables, Graphs, Pie charts and where appropriate and where necessary, quotes or excerpts were used to strengthen the interpretation.

Findings: The study findings reveal that the Micro-

finance has a positive impact in terms of improvement in Business Operations; Diversification of Businesses; Business Skills Improvement; Improvement in Household livelihoods and living standards. The study findings will act as a basis for policy formulation as it will provide empirical evidence for policy makers to formulate relevant policies geared towards enabling environment for enhancing women Entrepreneurial Empowerment in Uganda. The study will further contribute to the struggle to eliminate gender inequality in Entrepreneurial empowerment. The study will further add value to existing scholarship which the future scholars may use to generate further research in the area of Microfinance and Entrepreneurial Empowerment of Women.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy:

The study recommends strengthening and expansion of micro-finance support to resource poor and vulnerable women in other parts of the country through entrepreneurial education and training, provision of access to credit and financial services as well as markets. The study will contribute to critical debates and raise awareness on issues pertaining to Microfinance and Entrepreneurial Empowerment of Women at community level which will help to build initiatives for effective women Entrepreneurial empowerment in Uganda.

Keywords: *Microfinance, Women Empowerment, Entrepreneurship*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality hinders development and dramatically reduces a country's domestic output. Embedded discrimination against women is endemic in the majority of Less Developed Countries (LDC's) in spite of the best efforts of women's organisations worldwide (Touwen, 1996). Young (2002) reveals that despite decades of development interventions to aid women and address gender inequalities, progress is hard to identify and, in some cases, seems to have been reversed. Becker (1999) argues that development initiatives are bound to failure as long as women continue to be excluded and discriminated against. As feminists have long pointed out; for women to ever have the opportunity to develop, they must be empowered in order to have the agency they need to challenge patriarchy and global inequality.

According to MGLSD (1997), Uganda is "a patriarchal society" where men are the dominant players in decision-making, although women shoulder most reproductive, productive and community management responsibilities, many of which are not remunerated or reflected in national statistics. Kabeer (2003) argues that gender relations are discriminatory against women in the vast majority of patriarchal societies, which is manifested in decision making, division of labour, access to resources, freedom of time and of movement where men are clearly dominant. Men have immense control over women because gender relations embody ideas, values and identities; allocate labour between tasks, activities and domains, determine the distribution of resources and because gender relations assign authority, agency and decision-making power. Mukasa et al., (2005) mention the fact that land inheritance is mainly patrilineal means that ownership of registered land is overwhelmingly in the hands of men; women own just 7% to men's 93% which is symptomatic of women's economic dependence on men.

Women empowerment is one of the very important issues in developing countries. As women are integral part of society, their status and participation in decision making as well as economic activities is very low. According to Mukayiranga (2014), accessing loan is the major constraint to women's ability to earn income since most traditional financial systems require physical collateral worth more than the amount of loan requested. The poor women find it difficult to generate significant income from such loans because interest rates are high. Coupled with high rate of illiteracy, women have always been facing unemployment problems compared to men. In order to bridge this gap, Micro finance services have emerged as a powerful tool to reduce poverty and improve access to financial services for the poor women in Uganda. Ashok, *et.al* (2014), mention that Microfinance plays very important role in improving women decision making by contributing in economic activities. In general, this institution receives financial support from western donors, NGO's or commercial banks, who lend to microfinance institutions often against below market interest rates. Many leading public and private sector banks are offering schemes exclusively designed for women to set up their own ventures and as such, even the un-organised sector has been heading in to microfinance movement.

Statement of the Problem

Globally, women make up half of the population and their participation in various activities is therefore remarkable. The full participation of women in economic development process is indispensable as the whole society cannot develop sufficiently without women involvement. Like many African Countries, Uganda is a signatory to global, continental and regional commitments to achieving gender equality such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995; Sustainable Development

Goals among others (Economic Policy Research Center, 2021). In tandem with these commitments, the Government of Uganda has put in place legal, policy, regulatory and Institutional frameworks to promote entrepreneurial empowerment of women in order to enhance ownership of decision-making process. Article 32 of The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995 identifies the women as one of the marginalised groups in need of affirmative action and Article 33 accords women full and equal dignity of the person with men and prohibits laws, cultures, customs or traditions which are against the dignity, welfare or interest of women or which undermines their status. Over the years, various efforts have been made by Government and Non-Government Organisations to promote women empowerment in Uganda and one such effort is through the micro-finance intervention such as provision of Loans through Microfinance Support Centre, Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies, Village Savings and Loan Associations among others.

Despite the above efforts the entrepreneurial empowerment of women in Uganda has not been fully realised. The absence of a robust, effective and meaningful women entrepreneurial empowerment programmes if not addressed is likely to affect the socio-economic lives of the women and their families and eventually affect the physical quality of life of the families in terms of their health and welfare. Whereas a number of studies have been conducted on entrepreneurial empowerment of women in Uganda over the years, there seems to be no study devoted to this field in the context of Women's microfinance Initiative. It is against this background that this study seeks to establish the impact of microfinance on the women's entrepreneurial empowerment with specific reference to Women's Micro-Finance Initiative (WMI) in Buyobo in North Eastern Uganda.

Research Question

What is the impact of Microfinance on the Entrepreneurial Empowerment of women in Women's Micro-finance Initiative (WMI) in Uganda?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The study was guided by Participatory Development Theory by Paulo Freire. This theory roots for active community involvement in development projects that affect their lives. Whereas the theory was not developed to address women's affairs, it inherently promotes inclusivity and gender equality because emphasizes on the participation of all community members in the decision-making processes. This theory underpins the importance of bottom-up planning and involvement of marginalised and vulnerable communities to voice out their concerns in the development process which in turn enhances community awareness and sustainability of development initiatives (Brett, 2003). cause exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination of the women and it is feared that the socio-economic lives of the families in Uganda will ultimately deteriorate. The theory attempts to eradicate community stereotypes on Entrepreneurial Empowerment of Women which leads to exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination of the women in planning, decision making, control and distribution of resources.

Empirical Review

The term "Microfinance" is sometimes used interchangeably with the term "micro credit". However, while micro credit refers to purveyance of loans in small quantities, the term microfinance has a broader meaning covering in its ambit other financial services like saving, insurance etc. as well. According to United Nations (2005), Microfinance refers to loans, savings, insurance, transfer

services, micro-credit loans and other financial products targeted at low-income clients. Menon (2005), defines microfinance or micro-credit as the extension of small loans to individuals who are too poor to qualify for traditional bank loans, as they have no assets to be offered as guarantee. However, according to Christen, Rosenberg and Jayadeva (2004), Microfinance is the provision of financial services to low-income clients, including consumers and the self-employed, who traditionally lack access to banking and related services. The Association of Microfinance Institutions in Uganda defines microfinance as a form of banking service that is provided to low-income individuals or groups who would otherwise have no other means of gaining financial services from formal financial institutions (Understanding the microfinance industry in Uganda 2008). The researcher therefore used the term 'microfinance' to mean small loans that are provided to the low income and or poor people.

A study by Osuji (2014) on impact of microcredit on the performance of women entrepreneurs in Delta state found out that although micro-finance banks impacted positively on the economic conditions of the citizenry. Ashok, et.al (2014), mention that of the 1.3 billion people who live in absolute poverty around the globe, 70 percent are women and for these Women, poverty doesn't just mean scarcity and want. It means rights denied, opportunities curtailed and voices silenced. Empowerment of women means to let women survive and let them live a life with dignity, humanity, respect, self-esteem and self-reliance. This will help them to make their own decisions. According to Malhotra (2002), women's empowerment occurs along multiple dimensions including: economic, sociocultural, familial/ interpersonal, legal, political and psychological. Empowerment means increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make effective development and life choices and to transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes. It is by nature a process and/or outcome (Krishna, 2003). According to Kabeer (1999), women's empowerment is the process to acquire the ability from which those who have been denied the ability to make the strategic life choices. Her emphasis is that ability to exercise choice incorporates three interrelated dimensions: Resources, Agency and Achievements.

The Concept of 'Entrepreneurship' and its perception differs widely from western business literature to development literature. According to Nijkamp (2009), entrepreneurship is correlated with innovation and creativity. However, in a development context entrepreneurship often interrelates with social, educational and work-related environments. According to Schumpeter (1934 in Ocici, 2006) Entrepreneurship is a person's ability to be innovative in terms of production and re-organisation of goods and services. This definition is closely related to Hisrich's (1990, in Ocici 2006) description of entrepreneurship as demonstrating initiatives and creative thinking by turning resources and situations into practice and accepting risk and failure. According to Ocici (2006), Entrepreneurship is an individual's motivation and capacity individually or within an organization to identify an opportunity and to pursue it in order to produce new value or economic success. According to OECD (1998 in Nijkamp, 2009), entrepreneurship is a phenomenon that takes several forms and appears in small and large firms, in new and established firms, in the formal and informal economy, in legal and illegal activities, in innovative and traditional concerns, in high-risk and low risk undertakings, and in all economic sectors.

According to Deakins & Freel (2009), alternative views, such as the entrepreneurial personality approach and the social behaviour approach have been put forward as supplemental views to the conventional theories of entrepreneurship. The former defines an entrepreneur according to certain traits or personality characteristics, but has been criticised for its narrow view of attributing entrepreneurial characteristics as inherent to individuals, thus questioning interventions to encourage

new entrepreneurs to start a business. The latter approach, on the other hand, sees the societal environment and social relations surrounding individuals as powerful influences on their ability to successfully pursue entrepreneurship. This is in agreement with that of Langevang et al. (2012) who argue that the implicit focus on individual behaviours suggested by conventional concepts of entrepreneurship and economic development neglect social relationships that may be vital in shaping the decision to start a business. Scholars such as Ahl (2003) and (Hanson, 2009) have described entrepreneurs as bold, aggressive, calculative, and risk-taking agents, which are features commonly associated with male entrepreneurship. However, (Spring, 2009) mentions that recent development literature has sought to provide insights and definitions to the success and challenges of women entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa, as they dominate the entrepreneurial landscape among micro and small sized ventures.

Greene et.al, (2007) in Minniti and Naudé (2010)) argue that although the definitions of entrepreneurship seem gender-neutral in theory, the reality sometimes appears differently. It was not until the 1970s that research on female entrepreneurship was given attention and up until the 1990s most of these studies did not test theory but rather considered gender as a variable. Considerations within development literature posit that women bring different features to entrepreneurship. According to Jalbert (2000), entrepreneurship emerges from an individual's creative spirit into long-term business ownership, job creation, and economic security. Women bring commitment and integrity because they care about economic empowerment, entrepreneurial development and innovation. Whereas traditional entrepreneurs create wealth, women use entrepreneurship and the product of their labour for much more by investing in health, education and shelter (Snyder, 2000). According to Clark (1994); Snyder (2000); Kitakule (2010); Otoo et al., (2011); Hallward-Driemeier and Hasan, (2012), these features provide interesting contrasts to the views mentioned in the prior section related to male entrepreneurship.

The phenomenon of women entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa, predominately West and East Africa, has received growing interest and recognition where narratives on women operating in markets or alongside roads have dominated the headlines. Common features in these narratives associate women entrepreneurs with informal markets and activities. They equally describe women entrepreneurs as agents who combine home duties and responsibilities with small income generating activities to ensure family survival and livelihood. According to Morgan (2008), women are business owners engaged in areas of crafts, hawking, personal services and the retail sector, whereas Langevang and Gough (2012) reveal the propensity of hair-dressing and dress-making activities. Amine and Staub (2009) mention that generally, women entrepreneurs are found in lower value-added sectors where competition is high and technological driven products are scarce. According to Zewde and Associates (2002), women tend to be found trading in certain areas of business that are often labeled as 'gendered' or 'feminized' sectors. According to Snyder (2000), micro-enterprises are often related to self-employment and income generation while small enterprises are basically profit and growth oriented. Spring (2009) argues that many informal ventures remain micro-sized as women, in many cases, fail to pay a small fee for rental spaces and other informal licenses.

These activities consequently remain unregistered, unregulated and untaxed. Amine and Staub (2009), further argue that several prejudices exist around women entrepreneurs, including some Sub-Saharan African governments, who regard self-employment as being synonymous with unemployment. Snyder (2000), argues that assumptions exist, claiming that women businesses are too small to matter to the national economy. According to Amine and Staub (2009) and spring (2009), many women entrepreneurs choose to operate outside formal legal frameworks conforming to a

different set of traditional rules and behaviours that are much easier and convenient to navigate through. Yet, being part of the informal system causes much of their economic activity to remain unreported, unmeasured and sometimes negatively perceived.

It is believed that women in Africa have a sizeable potential for economic growth if they are supported (Halkias et al. 2011). Economic empowerment of women gives them the ability to create their own businesses and better employment opportunities for increased income (Mayoux, 2001). Furthermore, increasing women's income also increases overall household income, allowing families to consume items and purchase services that they previously would not have been able to afford. According to Rhyne (2001), economic empowerment concerns the expansion of access to productive assets, including physical and financial opportunities to pursue economic gains. Although this component of empowerment necessarily involves the distribution of capital and income generating opportunities, economic empowerment also entails ensuring that the market and relative prices can enhance the economic agency of citizens. According to Kabeer (2005), a review of microfinance efforts from various parts of the world suggests that access to microfinance has had a positive economic impact as members begin to invest in assets rather than consumption. Kabeer (2005), further reports that the studies of the improving the impact of microfinance on poverty programme in South Asia confirmed that access to financial services improved the economic position of households. The improvement involves; improving asset base and diversification into higher return occupation, promoting the adoption of new agricultural practices, increasing ownership of livestock and levels of savings and reducing reliance on money lenders. According to Muzaale (1994), in assessing the benefits of the credit scheme to the participating grassroots women, it is useful and appropriate to distinguish between expressed benefits and inferred benefits.

Muzaale (1994) further explains that the expressed benefits are those benefits of the scheme that are mentioned most frequently by the beneficiaries themselves during focus group discussions and individual interviews. The inferred benefits are those benefits that are analytically discerned from available facts by the researcher. Expressed benefits include, reduced dependence on husband support, support husbands to pay children school fees and medical expenses, ability to renovate or move to a better house, giving new vitality to a previously declining project, having money to work with and feeling respected while the inferred benefits identified included; a linkage to banking system through depositing loan cheque on their project bank account, expansion of business resulting in a lengthened radius of social and economic interaction, expansion or rejuvenation of income generating project which increases social status e.g. being elected to leadership positions in communities, educational experience through training and new concepts articulated and positive self-image and confidence especially after loan repayment. According to UNESCO (1997), over eight million very poor people especially women are benefiting from different microfinance programmes. Experiences of these programmes show that provision of micro-credit and savings facilities when efficiently utilised, enables the poor to build strong micro enterprises, increase their incomes and participate in economic growth. It also contributes greatly to the empowerment of the poor, especially women and helps raise awareness and aspirations for education, health care and other social services.

In light of these achievements, microfinance is increasingly being considered as an important tool for poverty reduction. Meade (2001), in a study of microfinance in the Asian countries found that the borrowers of microfinance tend to make more money over time through profitable investments that eventually lift them out of poverty. This particular study mentions that the members of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) can expect to see their poverty fall by an average of fifteen percent after three years of participation and for Grameen Bank participants, there

is a reduction of poverty by five percent after four years of participation. The same study by also revealed that the micro-credit programmes help borrowers to insure themselves against crises by building up household assets and such assets can be sold if needed or used as security or proof of credit worthiness when dealing with businessmen or more traditional lending agencies. Vonderlack & Schreiner (2001) argue that the success of microfinance has been to supply production loans to women who run tinny business enterprises thereby decreasing their disadvantage in the market and increasing their bargaining power in the household. The same authors further argue that the mere receipt of loans does not empower women financially or socially but expands women's access to economic opportunities and resources. They further argue that these loans must be paid and unless a woman has a business or a job to provide cash for debt service, lenders are unlikely to risk loans for reproductive purposes.

Gaps in Literature

The literature review is a major component of this conceptual framework. The purpose of literature review in research is to situate the proposed research in the context of what is already known in the field. It should be able to provide the conceptual basis for the current work on the one and helps to narrow down the proposed topic on the other hand. Despite the fact that a number of research have been done to explore the contribution of microfinance and women economic empowerment, most of them were carried in other countries. Few studies have been done in Uganda; this study will fill the existing gap left by previous literature.

3.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopted an Exploratory Cross Sectional research design. The study also adopted a quantitative approach to enable generalisation of the findings. The target population consisted of Women operating economic activities who constituted beneficiaries of Women's Micro Finance Initiative (WMI), an International Microfinance institution which targets women as primary beneficiaries through partnering with local Community Based Organisations (CBOs) to operate each Village loan hub. This loan is managed by the Buyobo Women's Association (BWA). A Sample of 1,380 borrowers were purposively selected from Buyobo loan hub which serves women from several hundred villages in the Sironko, Mbale, and Kapchorwa districts of North Eastern Uganda. The main Instrument for data collection was a structured Questionnaire. The questionnaires shall be complemented by Interviews and Focus Group Discussions. The study findings were presented in form of Tables, Graphs, Pie charts and where appropriate and where necessary, quotes or excerpts were used to strengthen the interpretation.

4.0 FINDINGS

Improvement in Business Operations

The study findings indicate that the Women's Microfinance Initiative has improved their business operations through the following ways;

Improvement in Annual Incomes

The study findings indicate that less than one half of one percent (0.35%) of women earned more than \$1559 annually before entering the loan program. However, after 6-18 months in the loan program, over 80% of the women earned more than \$1559 annually, with over 17% earning more than \$2,760 annually. After 24 months in the loan program, over 42% of women earned more

than \$2,760 annually. This increase in women’s income also increases overall household income, allowing families to consume items and purchase services that they previously would not have been able to afford. The Pie Charts (Figures 1 and 2) below depict the annual incomes of the women in the Buyobo loan hub before their entrance into the loan program, during their second and third loan cycles (6-18months) and during their fourth loan cycle (18-24months).

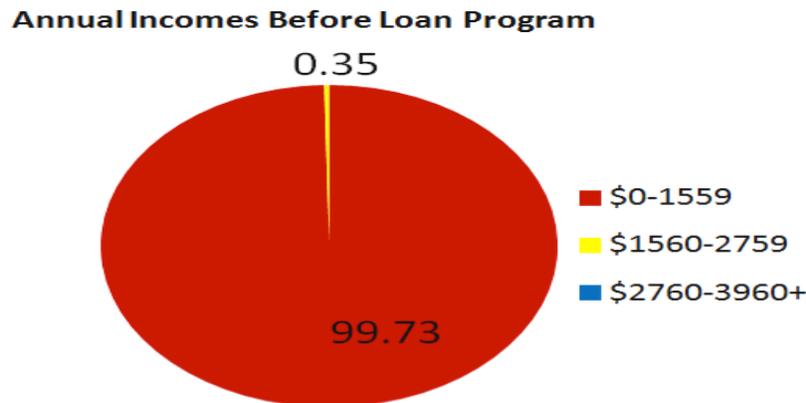


Figure 1: A Pie Chart Showing Annual Incomes Before the Loan Programme

Source: WMI (2015)

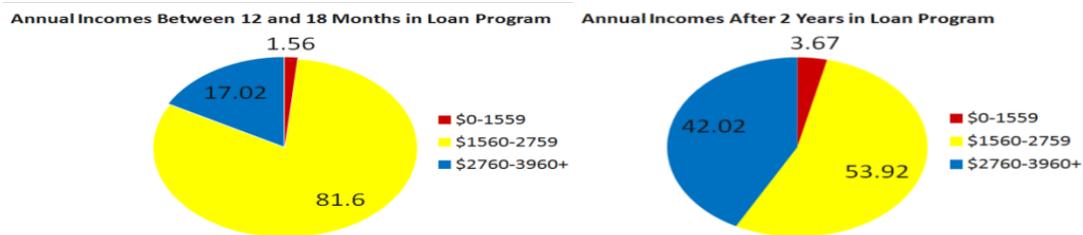


Figure 2: A Pie Chart Showing Annual Incomes After the Loan Programme

Source: WMI (2015)

Improvement in Annual Savings

The findings reveal that over 98% of women were saving less than \$45 per year before working with WMI. After receiving loans from WMI, nearly 80% of the women save more than \$120/ year, with nearly 35% saving over \$240/ year. Additionally, nearly all of the women in the loan program save regularly. 90% of women report saving on a weekly basis, and 8% report saving daily. This substantial increase can be attributed to increased income and business growth as well as financial literacy and personal finance training. This increased savings is significant because savings can help insulate a family against unforeseen emergencies that can stress a family’s finances and push

a family into a downward economic spiral. The findings are indicated in Bar Graphs 3 and 4 below:

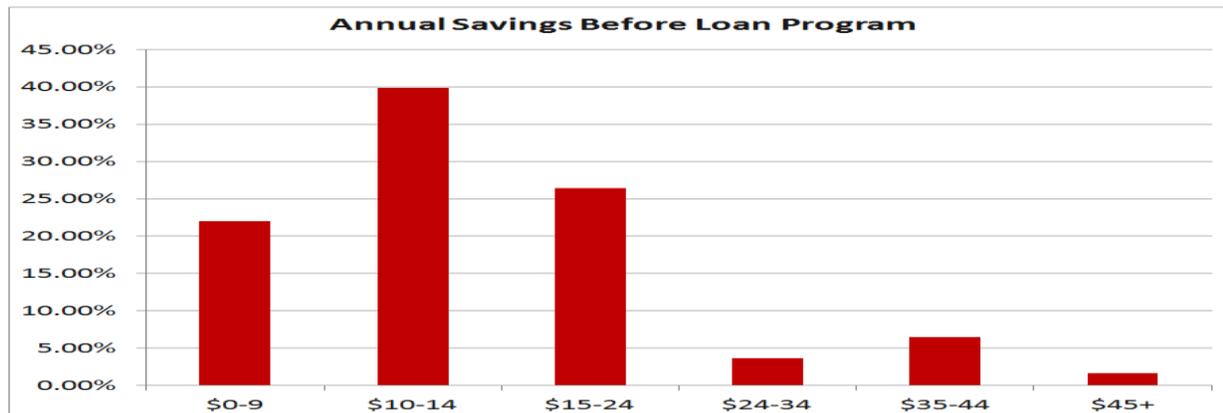


Figure 3: A Bar Graph Showing the Women's Annual Savings before the Loan program

Source: WMI (2015)

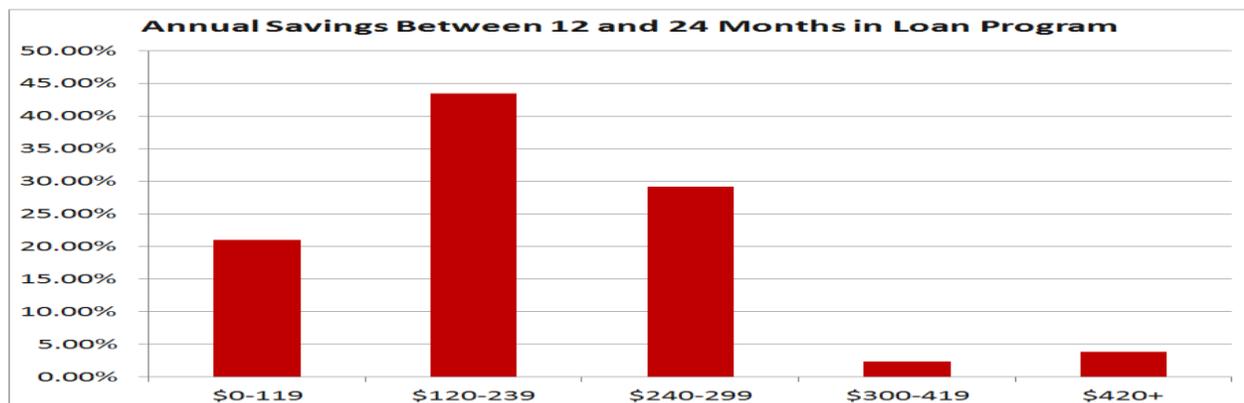


Figure 4: A Bar Graph Showing the Women's Annual Savings between 12 and 24 Months in the Loan Program

Source: WMI (2015)

Diversification of Businesses/Distribution of Business Ideas

The study findings reveal that the most popular initial business plan of the women was to resell “*bogoya*”, a type of banana. However, after 18 months in the loan program, the number of “*bogoya*” sellers, shop keepers and secondhand clothes sellers decreased, while the number of women who sold produce or less common products such as fish, alcohol, or baked goods increased. Additional data collected revealed that 99% of the women experienced significant business growth within 18 months of receiving their loans. Hence women's access to micro-finance services improves the economic position of their households in terms of business diversification and enables them to build strong micro enterprises.

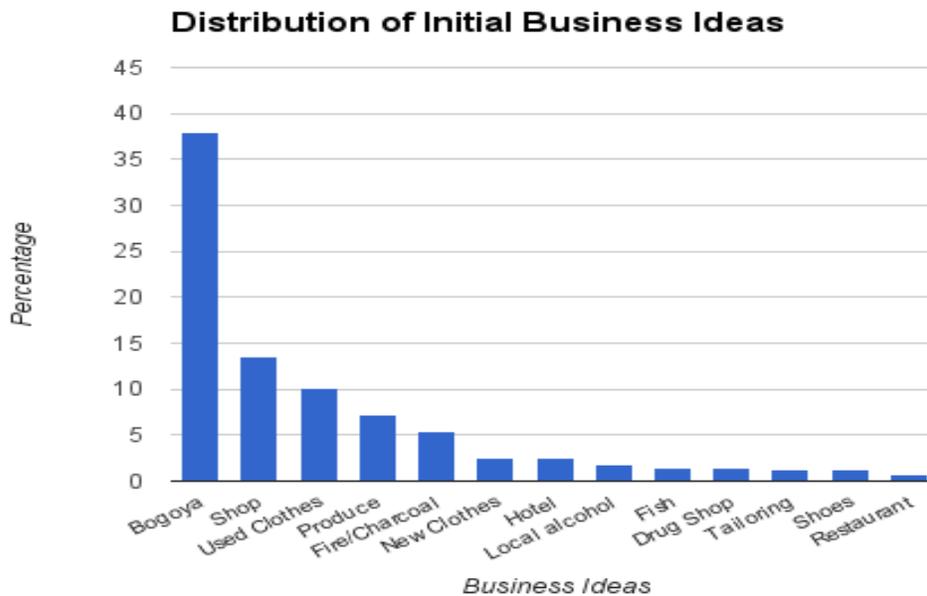


Figure 5: A Bar Chart showing the Distribution of Initial Business Ideas

Source: WMI (2015)

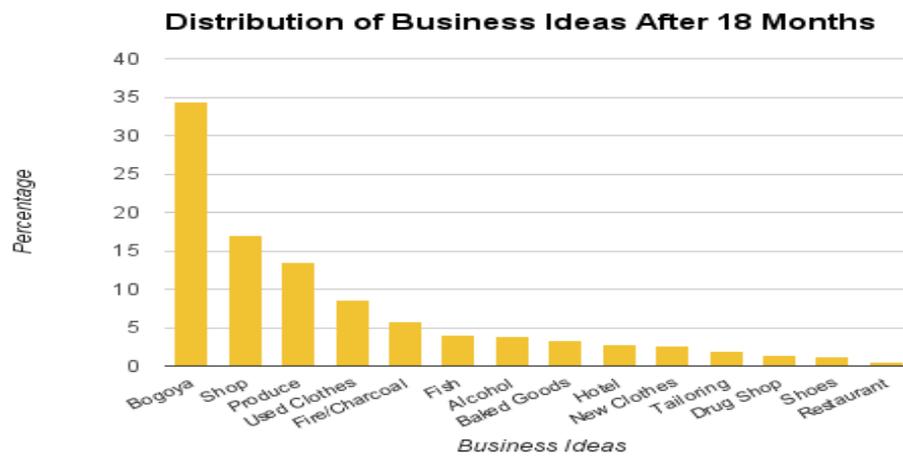


Figure 6: A Bar Chart Showing the Distribution of Business Ideas after 18 Months

Source: WMI (2015)

Business Skills Improvement

The study findings indicate that the WMI loan program provides business skills and book keeping training for all the women before issuing loans. It also provides follow up support as women proceed through the four, six-month loan cycles of the loan program. After each loan cycle, the women are surveyed to gauge the impact of the programme. The findings reveal that over 75% of borrowers' skills in budgeting, problem solving, marketing and negotiation improved after entering the loan program. The business training gives them the skills necessary to operate their businesses

on a sustainable basis and this knowledge transfer is critical since women who successfully operate micro businesses gain self-confidence, independence and a sense of pride in their accomplishments.

Table 1: A Table Showing Women’s Business Skills Improvement

Business Skill	Percentage
Marketing	79%
Problem Solving	75%
Budgeting	74%
Record-Keeping	62%
Negotiating	60%

Source: WMI (2015).

Acquisition of New Household Possessions/Assets

The study findings indicate an increased ownership of the borrower’s capital assets that can provide lasting benefits by improving production or enhancing communications. These assets insure women against crises or used as security or proof of credit worthiness when dealing with businessmen or more traditional lending Agencies. From the findings, livestock was the most frequently acquired new possession, increasing by just over 75%. This is an investment for the family as animals provide a source of food and income through milk or egg production, and act as a store of value to protect against currency devaluation. Notably, there was also a 20% increase in ownership of radios and an 18% increase in mobile phones. It is evident that in addition to spending money on improving their family’s’ livelihoods, the women spent their money on acquiring possessions that would allow them to increase their ability to communicate and engage with the community.

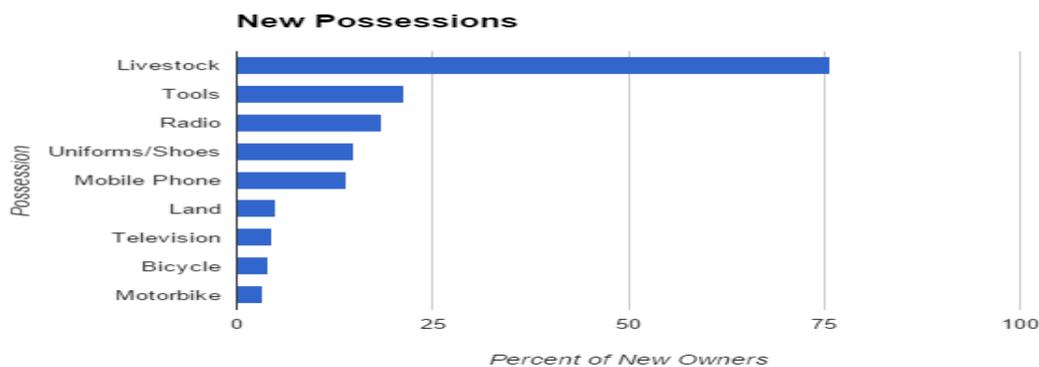


Figure 7: A Bar Chart Showing New Household Possessions

Source: WMI (2015)

Improvement in the Entire Household Living Standards

The study findings show that 98% of women reported an increased ability to pay medical fees. This widespread ability to pay medical fees is monumental. It translates into improved health for the women and their families. This has a secondary impact of decreasing the time women must spend away from their businesses because they are ill or to care for sick family members. The results further reveal that almost 80% of the households had at least one person with Malaria before starting the WMI loan programme but over 90% of the women were able to purchase additional mosquito nets

with their business income. The findings further reveal that that over 95% of borrowers have increased the quality and number of their meals, the health in the Buyobo loan hub as a whole, has improved. Over 30% of borrowers improved their house floors, rooms, roofs, ceilings, furniture, and doors as some major and these improvements have ancillary health benefits. Hence regular and reliable income improves access to food, health and educational opportunities and allows for household planning and access to resources to deal with unforeseen crises.

Personal Skills improvement

The study findings reveal that all the women surveyed indicated an improvement in a range of personal skills namely; literacy and arithmetic, determination, self-confidence, organisation and reliability as a result of the program training and demands of operating a business. These result into expansion or rejuvenation of income generating projects which increases social status such as assuming leadership positions in communities, educational experience through training and new concepts articulated and positive self-image and confidence.

Table 2: A Table Showing Women’s Personal Skills Improvement

Skill	Percentage
Improved Literacy and Arithmetic Skills	79%
Determined	86%
Self-Confident	73%
Organized	64%
Reliable	59%
Resourceful	60%

Source: WMI (2015)

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study on Women’s Micro-finance Initiative (WMI) in Uganda revealed a positive impact on the women’s entrepreneurial empowerment in terms of Improvement in Business Operations (Annual Incomes and savings); Diversification of Businesses/Distribution of Business ideas; Business Skills Improvement such as marketing, problem solving , budgeting, records keeping and negotiating; Improvement in Household livelihoods such as Acquisition of new household Possessions/Assets and Improvement in the entire household living standards and Personal Skills improvement such as improved Literacy and Arithmetic Skills, determination, self-confidence, organisation, reliability and resourcefulness.

Conclusion

The Study Concluded that Microfinance has a positive impact on the Entrepreneurial Empowerment not only on the women themselves, but also on their families as well as their communities in terms of improvements in Business operations and Household livelihoods is helpful in understanding the overall scenario of Women Entrepreneurs of SMEs in Uganda since it will create opportunities for Investors, Promoters and the Government for purposes of planning, decision making and benchmarking.

Recommendations

The study recommends strengthening and expansion of the micro-finance support to resource poor and vulnerable women in Uganda through the following;

Providing access to Entrepreneurial education and training through integrating entrepreneurship-related curriculum across the education system and offering regular seminars and workshops to women entrepreneurs covering such fundamentals as: book-keeping, entrepreneurship skills, time-management, and general business management skills (marketing, human resource management, basic financial management skills, product quality).

Facilitating access to credit and financial services through encouraging micro finance institutions to host regularly scheduled seminars for women entrepreneurs on “dealing with the banker” and requiring them to collect and report gender-disaggregated data on their loan clients. Ensuring access to markets by encouraging Women’s organizations to use existing market information sources to disseminate market-related information to members of their networks and use their organizational websites to show case members’ products and services.

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