**Cover letter**

**This document consists of a *cover letter*, pp. i–iii (3 pages), and the *application text*, pp. 1-26   
(26 pages)**

We are hereby resubmitting the proposal for the intervention *Integrated Agricultural, Socioeconomic and Awareness Development Project Isingiro*, for which the Assessment Committee rejected the original application, 20-2547-UI-mar, with an invitation to reformulate and resubmit.

The application text has been restructured somewhat to match the application form, which was updated since the original submission. Thus, sections of the original text appear in new places in the new application. Such changes involving only rearrangement of original text and consequential minor editorial modifications have not been marked. Furthermore, some headlines have been modified in accordance with the points of the new application form, and such headline changes have also not been marked.

The Assessment Committee deemed the intervention relevant but pointed out that the three following main aspects must be improved to meet the Civil Society Fund’s guidelines. Below each item we have brief­ly described what [and where] we have changed in the new application to address the particular concern. These changes have been clearly marked by use of red font colour in the application-text and budget files.

1. ***Cost level of the intervention:*** *The budget is assessed to imbalanced with high costs allocated to investments (including vehicles) and procurement of items including substantial input to farmers.*  
   To address this concern we have:
   * Reduced the investments by 44 % to make up 8 % of the total budget instead of 13 % [budget file, main budget item 2]. To obtain this reduction the purchase of furniture for the rented office in Isingiro District and a 4-wheel-drive vehicle on the project budget has been omitted. Instead, MBHU provides the necessary furniture, and transport costs under some activities have been increased moderately to allow for the hire of a vehicle where it is indis­pensable for conducting the activity [application text, section 3.4, p. 17].
   * Reduced the amount of input by omitting the initial six months’ renting of a plot for each of the 60 VIPAT groups to establish their group field, the acquisition of value-addition machin­ery for processing crops, and the production and distribution among the VIPAT group mem­bers of 600 brick stoves [budget file, item 1.4]. Input is thus exclusively supply of agricul­tural input (seeds, livestock, tools, etc.) for the VIPAT groups, and this has been decreased from DKK 2718 to DKK 2315 per group to reflect the 20-% reduction of the average group size following the adjustment of the size of target group 1 (see below), so that the input now constitutes only DKK 138,889, which corresponds to a cutting of 46 % [budget file, item 1.4]. The farmers/groups are expected to fully cover the renting fees as an own contri­bution [application text, section 3.4, p. 18]. Training in value addition has been separated out to a new activity 2.4 *Training in value addition and market access for better prices* with­out input [budget file, item 1.10, and application text, section 3.4, p. 20, and section 3.5, p. 22 (major activities under objective 2)]. Production and distribution of brick stoves have been replaced by demonstration and training of beneficiaries in acquisition, production and use of brick stoves under a new activity 2.3 *Promotion and demonstration of energy-saving brick stoves and their production* [budget file, item 1.9, and application text, section 3.4, p. 20].
   * Increased the budget for strategic activities, including activity 3.1, which has been significantly strengthened and retitled to *Advocacy and human-rights sessions in communities to engage with leaders for better services* [budget file, item 1.12], and the five new activities 1.5, 1.6, 2.3, 2.4 and 3.3 [budget file, items 1.5, 1.6, 1.9, 1.10 and 1.14].
   * Reduced the total requested grant from DKK 1,999,992 to DKK 1,920,637.
2. ***Strategy and expected results of the intervention:*** *The strategy is assessed to be imbalanced with significant service delivery, some of which is not con­sidered to be strategic due to the “input-heavy” nature of the support to the farmers groups.*  
   To address this concern we have:
   * Shifted budget from input and investments to activities like trainings, awareness creation, and building of solidarity chain and strong multiplier effects, which are all strategic and sustainability-focused activities, as explained above. This has been done to make the support less input-heavy and the service delivery more strategic so that replication becomes more likely (as other poor farmers can more easily adopt the same approaches without new external input).
   * Decreased the very ambitious sizes of target group 1 from 1500/4500 to 1200/2400 households in the primary target group and from 10,000 to 5000 households in the secondary target group [application text, section 3.1, pp. 11–12, and sections 1.1 and 3.5 (objective 1), p. 1 and p. 21, respectively]. This includes reducing the solidarity chain to one neighbour household per first beneficiary, and it has been done based on indication from the Assessment Committee and in order to better be able to ensure that everybody in the target group is reached properly and receives strong and focused strategic support.
   * Explained more explicitly how the support to the farmers is strategic and how the (refocused) solidarity chain works to make more farmers self-supporting without extra input [application text, section 3.4, p. 20].
   * Created a new activity 3.3 *Education radio programmes on rights awareness, climate and environment, etc.* comprising the production and live broadcasting of 12 radio programmes with expert panellists on project focus areas such as rights awareness, climate and environ­ment [budget file, item 1.14, and application text, section 1.4, p. 6, and section 3.5, p. 22 (major activities under objective 3)], in addition to the above-mentioned new strategic ac­tivities 2.3 *Promotion and demonstration of energy-saving brick stoves and their production* and 2.4 *Training in value addition and market access for better prices*.
   * Strengthened the retitled activity 3.1 *Advocacy and human-rights sessions in communities to engage with leaders for better services* to include training sessions for a total of 5000 community members (the demand side) on human rights and agricultural service delivery indicators/policies and advocacy tools to enable them to engage constructively with local authorities. It also includes training of 60 sub-county and District leaders (the supply side) in agronomic practices and extension service delivery standards to provide quality extension services to farmers [budget file, item 1.12].
3. ***Phase-out and sustainability of the intervention:*** *The overall sustainability and replication potential of the intervention is assessed to be somewhat hampered by the “input-heavy” approach to supporting the farmers groups.*  
   To address this concern we have:
   * Created a new activity 1.5 *Formation of clusters and federations by groups*, in which four clusters of groups in each of the three sub-counties of the intervention area will be formed, after which these clusters will be organised into three federations and connected to networks like The Uganda Farmers Common Voice Platform [budget file, item 1.5, and application text, section 1.3, p. 5, and section 3.5, p. 21 (major activities under objective 1)]. With this the groups will be networked horizontally and linked vertically to a civil-society structure (farmers’ organisation), thus strengthening their organisation in the civil society and the sustainability of the activities launched within them as the collaboration in these structures will last and be a support for the individual groups even after the project termination. Furthermore, it will facilitate the multiplier effect as broad training and follow-up activities can be conducted through these structures with the participation of invited neighbouring

households, etc.

* + Created a new activity 1.6 *Propagation through solidarity chain and follow-up on multiplier effect*, where households and activities in the solidarity chain will be profiled, exposure events for neighbouring farmers in the VIPAT villages conducted, lead farmers’ launch of VIPAT in new villages monitored, and follow-up done to ensure effective propagation through these multiplier initiatives [budget file, item 1.6, and application text, section 3.6, pp. 23–24]. Through this activity the activation and functioning of the solidarity chain and further spreading of the activities is organised, thus strengthening the replication and sustainability.

A number of additional changes has been made to strengthen the proposal according to other comments from the Assessment Committee and to address the revision of the application form and other updating. These modifications are also marked by use of red font colour in the application-text and budget files and include:

* A brief highlighting of the principal challenges has been added [application text, section 1.1, p. 1].
* A few lines elaborating on the stability of the context have been added [application text, section 1.2, p. 5].
* Status on the COVID-19 situation in Uganda has been added to the context analysis and a risk addressing this has been added to the list of risks and mitigation [application text, section 1.2, p. 5, and section 3.7, p. 25].
* Two new passages elaborating on the objective and expected outcome of the conference involving national and regional stakeholders have been added [application text, section 1.3, pp. 5–6].
* The new question of the updated application form on the response to climate and environmental conditions has been answered in an added new section [application text, section 1.4, pp. 6–7].
* An analysis of gender dynamics and their significance for issues related to representation in group activities as well as an elaboration on the approach to women’s empowerment have been added [application text, section 3.2, p. 13].
* The description of the involvement of target groups and other actors in the development of the intervention and the partners’ legitimacy towards the target groups has been strengthened by the addition of two new passages [application text, section 3.3, p. 14].
* The description of the balance between the elements of the development triangle has been expanded to elaborate on the capacity building leading to sustainability and replication, to better explain the strategic nature of the (reduced/refocused) deliveries, and to clarify how the strategy of bringing local extension officers and government authorities closer to the farmers will improve and sustain services for the communities in the long run [application text, section 3.4, pp. 19–20]
* Keywords in the main purpose of the intervention have been defined and indicators listed [application text, section 3.5, p. 20].
* A few of the selected indicators on the specific objectives have been modified or omitted as they tended to be too ambitious and broad, and the number of listed indicators for each objective has thus been reduced to four [application text, section 3.5, pp. 21–22]
* The approaches to developing new partnerships and opening new financing opportunities have been detailed in order to sketch a plan for MBHU to diversify and scale up funding sources and make it less reliant on SSU and CISU funding [application text, section 3.6, pp. 24–25].
* Expenses for meals and refreshments throughout the activities have been reduced by 23 % [budget file, items 1.1–1.18].

Finally, the start date of the intervention has been changed from the 1st of June 2020 to the 1st of December 2020 as a consequence of the rejection of the original application [application text, section 2.2, p. 9]. Accordingly, the financing plan and implementation timing have been shifted to fit the new project period [budget file, sheet 4, and application text, section 1.1, p. 1, section 3.4, pp. 17–19, and section 3.5, p. 21].

**List of abbreviations**

**Application text**

SSU Støtteforeningen til Selvhjælp i Uganda

MBHU Mend the Broken Hearts Uganda

AEOs Agro-Enterprise Options

F4L Farming 4 Life

FFS Farmers Field School

HDI Human Development Index

LC Local Council

M&E Monitoring and Evaluation

MAAIF The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries

OVC(s) Orphans and Vulnerable Child(ren)

PRA Participatory Rural Appraisal

SILC Savings and Internal Lending Community

UFCVP The Uganda Farmers Common Voice Platform

VIPAT Village Intervention for Participatory Agricultural Transformation

1. **Objective and relevance (the world around us)**

**1.1 Main purpose with the intervention**

The main purpose of the proposed three-year development intervention is to ***improve living standards and ensure sustainability for farmer households in Ruborogota, Nyakitunda and Ngarama Sub-Counties in Isingiro District and empower people in the local communities to obtain the services and freedoms they are entitled to***.

This is expressed more explicitly in the following three specific objectives defined for the project:

*Objective 1:**By January 2023 60 groups comprising a total of 1200 farmer households in 60 villages are operating successfully according to the Village Intervention for Participatory Agricultural Transformation (VIPAT) model and are implicating another 1200 nearby households.*

*Objective 2:**By June 2023 70 Savings and Internal Lending Community (SILC) groups including a total of 2100 households are providing basic financial services for these households and equipping them with savings and investment opportunities that are adequate for their thriving and sustainability.*

*Objective 3:**By the end of the three-year project VIPAT members’ civic competence is built to ensure ef­fective demand and supply of quality extension services as well as enjoyment of rights for everybody in their communities.*

*The principal challenges* that the intervention addresses are low agricultural output and household income causing food insufficiency and poverty; poor capacity for financial management preventing a lasting upgrading of living standards to appropriate levels; and ignorance about rights causing abuse and neglect of service deliveries. The challenges that prevail in the intervention area are detailed in section 1.2.

*Relation to previous intervention*

The proposed intervention is not a direct extension of previous intervention, but builds on concepts developed and refined in the two projects “Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children’s Households Development Project Kanungu” (15-1712-MP-sep, 2016–2017) and “Vulnerable Households Empowerment and Civic En­gagement Promotion Project Kanungu” (17-2126-MI-okt, 2018–2019), accomplished with support from the Civil Society Fund, as well as on novel concepts of agricultural practice, etc. In the present proposal we combine these concepts into an integrated and up-scaled intervention in a new area, namely part of Ising­iro District on the southern border of Uganda. Additionally, we include other aspects that have proved suc­cessful as we have been working with them previously. The familiar concepts from the previous projects in Kanungu in the southwestern corner of Uganda involve income generation and microfinance in self-help groups of vulnerable households and engagement of the local communities in respecting, advocating and claiming rights. The novel agricultural concepts are to a large extent rooted in capacity acquired by the Ugandan project partner Mend the Broken Hearts Uganda (MBHU) through interaction with the Danish NGO Farming 4 Life (F4L), which has successfully introduced a similar concept in Lira.

Our two projects 15-1712-MP-sep and 17-2126-MI-okt proved very successful. They had elements of agricultural and financial practice, and groups of vulnerable households were established in approximately 40 villages in the two interventions. These groups are operating micro-scale agro-pro­jects and are increasing their financial capacities through organised savings and loans structures. In particular, this microfinance element proved essential for obtaining lasting improvements and continuous socioeconomic growth for the households introduced to yield-boosting and other income-gen­erating activities. This element has been in­tegrated into the design of the Village Intervention for Participatory Agricultural Transformation (VIPAT) model, which forms the base for the proposed intervention. See a detailed description of the VIPAT model in section 3.4. Several other elements have proved successful and are included in the new model as well.

However, through our projects aimed at empowering vulnerable rural (farmer) households we have also experienced that some things need further adjustment. While very impressive results were obtained in terms of increased agricultural output and cooperation with the local government, there are still some gaps to close in terms of ownership, impact and sustainability. VIPAT takes this into account as it is more inclusive in its design. The participatory way is emphasised, and it integrates advocacy to a great extent.

As the intervention area is different from the previous interventions, the target groups are too. Furthermore, the new project puts more emphasis on the target-group members being farmers. The specific objectives are different, but there is a certain degree of similarity between the main purposes of the new and previous projects. The strategic approach of the new project is made up by the VIPAT model, which clearly is a novel framework.

It is the intention that the better agricultural practice, knowledge about financial practice and consciousness about human rights introduced by the proposed intervention lead to our target groups experiencing increased profitability, higher financial capacity and less rights violation. It is a particular expectation that these changes will give parents and other caregivers better abilities to provide for their children and comply with their rights. Ensuring permanency of all improvements and even their propagation is fundamental in our approach.

**1.2 Context of the intervention**

The population of Uganda is 44.6 million people[[1]](#footnote-1), and its annual population growth rate has been 3.0 % be­tween censuses in 2002 and 2014. The total fertility rate of the country is 5.4 children per woman[[2]](#footnote-2). Its hu­man development index (HDI) value for 2018 is 0.528, which puts Uganda in the low human development category, positioning it at 159 out of 189 countries and territories[[3]](#footnote-3).

The country has been relatively stable and the economy steadily growing for the last three decades. Between 1990 and 2018, Uganda’s HDI value increased from 0.312 to 0.528, an increase of 69 %3. However, the national poverty level has increased from 19.7 % in 2012–2013 to 21.4 % in 2016–2017, and according to Uganda National Household Survey 2016–2017 3.4 million Ugandans have slipped back below the poverty line, adding to the country’s challenges.

Uganda is divided into four regions, 127 districts and 1403 sub-counties subdivided into 7431 parishes/­wards and 57,842 villages. The project will take place in Isingiro District located in southwestern Uganda. The needs in this part of the country are immense. From participatory rural appraisal (PRA) surveys done in connection with previous interventions we know that major problems often are the following:

* + Community not aware of child rights, causing abuse
  + Low crop yields
  + Low household incomes
  + Low school attendance (much absence and many dropouts)
  + Lack of access to safe and clean water
  + Diseases (malaria and HIV/AIDS)
  + Lack of micro-credit resources
  + Inadequate information flow and sharing

In 2014 the population of Isingiro District was estimat­­ed at 486,3601. Isingiro District is a poor area with a ty­­pical rural setting. It is hilly, and several of its villages can only be accessed by foot or by very powerful vehi­cles or motorcycles. The climate is favourable for crops and animals as it is warm and features seasonal rainfall of about 1060 mm per annum with shorter rains in March to May and longer rains in September to No­vember, which thus gives two harvest seasons. Hence, the area is fertile and has high potential for good agri­cultural productivity. Due to a high population density, however, land is over-used and deforestation, water scarcity and soil degradation are common. Land owner­ship is mostly customary and fragmented and this has been a major cause of environmental degradation. Thus the area is food insecure. The food insecurity was especially high in the last two years as a drought hit, and food security has become a very pressing issue.

Uganda’s Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) is responsible for the agricultural development in the rural areas of the country. The structures put in place to address the farmers’ needs are, however, not work­ing well. Currently, the framework for the Government intervention bases on some strategy docu­ments, i.e., the overarching Uganda Vision 2040, Operation Wealth Creation 2013, and the nation­al Agriculture Sector Development Strategy and Investment Plan 2010/11–2014/15. As Uganda’s economy is based essentially on subsistence farming, the Vision 2040 and the Government through MAAIF considers that the agricultural sector should become the main engine of growth and highlights scarce capital, depleted soil, erosion and lack of technologies as main obstacles to growth. The Operation Wealth Cre­ation contains seven priorities: 1) Provision of planting and breeding materials; 2) Agricultural mechanisa­tion; 3) Provision of micro-finances; 4) Provision of low-cost housing; 5) Provision of water; 6) Overseeing the systematic improvement in the sectors of education, health, energy, communication and others services; 7) Value addition.

Politically Isingiro District is a Local Government, which is governed by a Local Council (LC) 5. Of relevant existing administrative structures, the District has various departments with a production and marketing officer, a principal agricultural officer, a senior agricultural officer, a senior veterinary officer and a veterinary officer, and it has a Cooperatives Department. Through its structures the District is promoting both food and cash crops, in order to address food security and domestic earning from food surpluses as well as foreign-exchange earnings. For food crops, it is important to address the critical issue of availability of good seed and Government’s support of the private sector to develop the industry. For perennial crops,such as coffee, tea and cocoa, the intension of the Government should be to provide high-yielding, good-quality seedlings to create threshold required for export market. However, due to lack of resources, this has a very limited effect in practice.

There are 19 sub-counties in Isingiro District, which are each politically governed by an LC 3. A sub-county typically has one or two extension officers, who are local-government employees working with rural/agricultural development, and they are thus typically agronomists and veterinarians. Extension officers are supervising farmers in agriculture and livestock in their local communities. Their job is to address the farmers’ needs including providing seeds and crops, but the structures are rarely working well. Their means of transport are poor, motivation is low, corruption high, and their skills often outdated, but even for the honest, hardworking extension officers the workload is overwhelming, each professional often covering

more than 15,000 households. There is thus a great lack of capacity here.

Following several successful interventions, MBHU and Danish project partner Støtteforeningen til selv­hjælp i Uganda (SSU) decided to engage deeper in agricultural interventions and to expand and transfer a possible new project to Isingiro District since it has the potential to increase production for food security and household incomes. MBHU is operating in Isingiro and knows the area. Most recently an important health and hygiene project was conducted there (read more about this on [SSU’s webpage](https://selvhjaelp-uganda.dk/aktiviteter/skolepigehjaelp/hygiejneprojekter/)). When selecting the exact intervention area, we wanted to identify an area with both a need for the intervention and an objective possibility for success. It was crucial that there were no organisations already working on the top­ics of food security and rights awareness, to avoid duplication of services and to foster complementarity, as the project seeks to complement other actors’ activities and fill the gaps in the service-delivery pri­orities, goals and objectives of the sub-counties to be targeted. Thus, in July 2019 the MBHU chairman, project manager, and the relevant field officer, who is an agronomist, visit­ed Isingiro District Head Quarter and in­troduced the idea to the LC 5 chairman and chief administrative officer. The idea was strongly welcomed, and they identified three sub-counties with pronounced food insecurity: Ruborogota, Nyakitunda and Ngarama. Each of these sub-counties has an agricultural officer (agronomist, specialised in crops) and a vet­erinary assistant (livestock), which makes up a total of six sub-county extension officers in this intervention area. We visited Ruborogota Sub-County and discussed with the sub-county leadership on the possible fu­ture food-security intervention. We were told that there was no other national or international NGO work­ing on agro-interventions or awareness issues in these sub-counties. We visited groups of farmers under the guidance of an extension officer and discussed with them on food security and challenges met in farm­ing (i.e., we conducted a PRA). Here is a summary of their response:

* Draught killed their crops in the last years and the Disaster Ministry had to intervene
* Substantial insufficiency of extension services to their home gardens and lack of new skills
* Pests and diseases (some not known) are highly affecting production and productivity
* Women are mainly involved in agricultural activities (less labour)
* Lack of clean water (the water in the area was salty water)
* Most produce is consumed in a low form; no further value is added to obtain higher prices
* Lack of new technologies on their farms, i.e., only one farmer was using drip irrigation
* Laziness among the people in the area to work on agricultural interventions
* Poverty levels are high, which was observed in the number of malnourished children

During our visit to the district and sub-counties the leadership of the area received a brief introduction to the principles of VIPAT including the expectations for their contribution. The District experts and extension officers escorting us were excited about the choice of their sub-counties and looking forward to linking up with us in implementing VIPAT in their communities. A very good relationship has indeed been created, be­ing positive for this intervention. We have continued our preparations and kept the close dialogue with the local authorities, and in case the project is realised, we shall work closely together with the existing staff.

Based on the data gathered and in collaboration with the involved representatives from the local authorities, the three sub-counties of Ruborogota, Nyakitunda and Ngarama were thus selected as intervention area for the proposed project. We shall select 60 villages – 20 from each sub-county – to primarily work in. Ruborogota is made up of five parishes with 25 villages, Ngarama of six parishes with 49 villages and Nyakitunda of seven parishes with 109 villages. In total the three sub-counties have a population of 93,875 persons disaggregated as in the table below[[4]](#footnote-4):

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Name of sub-county | Men | Women | Total |
| Ruborogota | 8,628 | 8,935 | 17,563 |
| Nyakitunda | 19,504 | 22,050 | 41,554 |
| Ngarama | 16,911 | 17,847 | 34,758 |
| *Total* | *45,043* | *48,832* | ***93,875*** |

Social structures in the intervention area include different tribes (Banyankole, Bahima and a few Banyarwanda), religions, sex, age, clans and political inclinations. Despite these differences, they face similar challenges and live peacefully together.

In the intervention area there are indeed political, social, economic and environmental challenges, but in general relatively stable conditions prevail anyhow. There is not extreme poverty; however, people are poor, but there are a lot of resources foodwise if the population is given the opportunity, means and know­ledge to put these into use. The intervention is therefore considered to take place in a stable context.

During 2020 COVID-19 disturbed the world, including Uganda, which was, however, affected relatively late as the first case of virus infection was registered on the 21st of March. To date the number of cases and fatalities in the country has not been alarming, but the very harsh restrictions on movement and assembly imposed by the Government have caused serious challenges for especially poor people without agricultural self-sufficiency. The agricultural activities have not been affected by COVID-19 in Uganda and the government has instead promoted agriculture and markets of agricultural products.

**1.3 Strengthening civil society organising to advance social justice**

Awareness about rights will be created in the communities, and the enjoyment of rights will be facilitated through promotion of generation of action plans among the local citizens and influencing of the local authorities and collaboration with them.

A significant part of the advocacy in this intervention relates to service provision. According to the universal human rights and the legislative framework of Uganda, the authorities must provide services (such as farming advice and resource access) that are sufficient to ensure that every household can thrive and support itself. VIPAT has been designed to incorporate advocacy and capacity building at local-government level, as it strongly integrates local authorities. The project is intended to strengthen the social capital in the local communities and organise people in powerful VIPAT groups to enable them to engage with the local government to demand exact compliance with rights and equal access to resources. The groups will be facilitated to form four clusters each with five groups in each of the three sub-counties and then the clusters will be trained and facilitated to form three federations for those producing similar products. These will be connected to popular networks like The Uganda Farmers Common Voice Platform (UFCVP). This hor­izontal networking of the groups and their vertical linking to a civil-society structure (farmers’ organisation) will strengthen their organisation in the civil society. It will help in overcoming limitations of small informal groups, which will further help in increasing the groups’ resources, capacity, bargaining power over their products on the market, and the ability to deal and relate with other civil-society organisations. The clus­ters and federations may also form the base for broad training and follow-up activities that include house­holds invited from the solidarity chains and beyond, thus facilitating and increasing the multiplier effect.

The community members will be empowered through tools including advocacy meetings and training in making petitions and writing action-demand letters. They will thus not only be sensitised about their rights to services, but also be upgraded into activists advocating for the rights on behalf of themselves and their fellow citizens. Extension officers and other staff from the local authorities are encouraged to participate in the VIPAT training activities, and thus capacity and ownership are transferred from the project staff to the local staff. By following this strategy it is ensured that the advocacy idea we spark is carried on, as the extension officers adopt the commitment to advocate for better services for the people they are supposed to serve, but for which task they are presently given far too little resources. In addition to these integrated elements, further advocacy components include Government-level exposure visits and a high-level conference addressing the need for policy changes at regional and national level. The objective of the conference is to influence the Government to increase budgetary allocation for extension services to farmers but also to advocate for programmes to reach farmers, especially the agricultural credit facility to be accessed by small-holder farmers. In the conference as well as during the exposure visits the challenges that limit the extension service provided to farmers will be presented, followed by advocacy for improvements such as an increased number of extension officers per sub-county and the allocation of more resources to properly educate them, provide transport possibilities for them to reach the farmers in their area, and al-low them to do frequent, quality technical visits according to the standards set by national law. The expected outcome is policy changes toward favouring small-holder farmer and adoption of the VIPAT model to be replicated in other districts by Government institutions and uptake of MBHU expertise in this model. This will enhance the partnership between MBHU and the relevant Government ministry.

SSU will contribute to promoting the awareness of human rights by training the MBHU staff in conducting information and dialogue sessions for community members and local leaders on human rights and equality as it has been done successfully in previous interventions. The SSU representatives will furthermore discuss human rights in general and minorities’ rights in particular (advocacy) with leaders and duty bearers from the authorities and broach their responsibilities, and also build capacity on these issues of the project staff and extension officers who interact with the local communities on a frequent basis and are supposed to advise them and help them claim their rights.

It is *expected* that the community members and extension officers who have been trained in VIPAT groups assume a role of advocating for service provision and rights compliance and be able to obtain considerable improvements in these conditions for everybody in the communities, including marginalised groups. Acting as organised groups of many enlightened citizens with strong leaders empowered to engage in dialogues with the duty bearers is *expected* to lead to the extension services of the authorities being im­proved and farmers getting services according to their rights. It is *hoped* that this will eventually eliminate or at least strongly reduce the need for further intervention from the project consortium. In other words, it is *hoped* that the authorities fully support the project and will carry on essential elements of its approach continually after its completion.

It is furthermore *expected* that all community members in the intervention area be aware of human rights and respect and promote each individual’s rights, also for minorities, woman and children. In particular it is *expected* that parents and other caregivers comply with the rights of the children for whom they have the parental rights and responsibilities, and that the number of child-abuse cases decrease drastically.

**1.4 Responding to climate and environmental conditions**

It is necessary to address the changing climate as it can affect the agricultural output, and as the negative effects can have particularly strong impacts for small-scale subsistence farmers relying on only a single crop or a few. Droughts are becoming more frequent and severe and water scarcer at times. It is also necessary to address environmental degradation such as soil depletion, contamination and erosion caused by local human farming and deforestation activity.

Climate-change and environmental trainings at group level will be conducted, and early warning signs and other climate-friendly messages will be communicated widely through radio programmes. The crops and technologies to be applied in the intervention will be based on the current local conditions. To reduce the farmers’ vulnerability to harvest failure resulting from drought, crop diversification and intercropping will be promoted, as will robust perennial crops and quality seeds adapted to the altered climate and thus resilient under the prevailing conditions. Moreover, mulching is one of the techniques that will be taught as a way to keep moisture in the soil, preventing crops from drying up even at prolonged times of little rain.

To respond to soil depletion and risks of contamination and erosion, an organic approach of conservation agriculture will be followed. This strategy will restore the structure of depleted soil, for which organic manure from livestock plays an important role, and farmers will apply new techniques like intercropping, spacing of crops and less tilling, reducing the need of chemicals to an absolute minimum (which is also good for the farmers as these are costly). The farmers will be digging better terraces and be encouraged to plant trees, in particular indigenous species, to prevent erosion. Trees also provide shade for sensitive crops and counteract climate change and deforestation problems. This way, climate-smart agriculture and environment preservation is indeed promoted.

An additional response to the deforestation and climate-change challenges is the introduction and pro­motion of brick stoves that reduce the consumption of fuel, which is typically wood or charcoal obtained from trees. The application of these fuel-saving stoves thus significantly saves trees, besides being a good investment for the farmers as they are cheap, reduce the farmers’ expenses for fuel and expose them to less smoke. Solar-cell plants are another promoted smart investment that is environmentally friendly as it makes it possible to get electricity without diesel generators and light without fires.

Lastly, much of the transport of the personnel during the intervention will be by bicycle, reducing the consumption of fossil fuel.

1. The partnership/collaborators (our starting point)

**2.1 Experiences, capacities and resources of the partners**

In SSU the board members do the administration and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) work, with which they have many years of experience. The chairman works with project management in his professional job and has been responsible for the successful projects 15-1712-MP-sep and 17-2126-MI-okt. The SSU board has great knowledge of the conditions in Uganda through intense contact to the local partner MBHU and frequent visits to the country. In the above-mentioned two Civil Society Fund-supported projects SSU board members contributed to the technical activity too, utilising their backgrounds and minds of equal rights and equal opportunities for conducting capacity-building advocacy sessions on human rights and equality. For this, relevant board members attended a course at The Danish Institute for Human Rights.

MBHU operates from its headquarters in Kanungu as well as in Mbarara, Kabale, Ntungamo, Isingiro and a few other close-by districts, with the purpose of meeting people’s socioeconomic development needs. From its founding in 2004 MBHU’s mission has been to empower vulnerable and marginalised individuals and communities with knowledge and skills to become self-reliant and transformed citizens. Since then MBHU has built a strong track record of implementing complex programmes funded largely by SSU, and today MBHU is recognised as among the top players in the Western Region of Uganda in fighting for the rights of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) and implementing microfinance interventions referred to as savings and internal lending community(SILC) programmes. MBHU’s microfinance programme is thus acknow­ledged as one of the best and most cost-effective ones in western Uganda. One of the keys to MBHU’s success is its effort to ensure strong local ownership and its profound understanding of the intervention areas. MBHU has established good relationships and collaborations with various local authorities and other organisations, where they supplement each other’s services, which is a great strength for the in­terventions and achievements of the organisation.

MBHU has considerable experience working in the community/agriculture sector, as it has since 2009 done small-scale agro-projects partly funded by SSU. However, in recent years MBHU increased its focus on and further built up capacity within conservation agro-projects as food security has become a pressing issue in its districts and a predominant challenge in the country in general. Responding to the needs of vulnerable households, MBHU decided five years ago to widen its work from mostly OVC and SILC program­mes to a pronounced extent of agricultural development. MBHU got valuable experience when implementing the following interventions in Kanungu District:

* “Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture for Income and Food Security”, supporting 500 households to better manage their land and increase their agricultural yields and incomes.
* “Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children’s Households Development Project Kanungu”   
  (15-1712-MP-sep, 2016–2017).
* “Vulnerable Households Empowerment and Civic Engagement Promotion Project Kanungu”   
  (17-2126-MI-okt, 2018–2019).

**2.2 Previous cooperation between the partners and use of experiences in developing the intervention**

The collaboration between MBHU and SSU builds on joint understanding and shared visions and values like democracy, openness, involvement/sense of ownership, self-help, free initiative, unbiased information and respecting of rights. In line with this, SSU and MBHU have carried out a great number of successful develop­ment projects deeply rooted in the local community and with sustainability as target rather than traditional donor–recipient perception. A variety of our joint interventions is described on [SSU’s webpage](https://selvhjaelp-uganda.dk/aktiviteter/). The pro­jects are typically self-help projects involving acquisition of skills that are then passed on to new persons/-groups, making the projects autonomous, sustainable and even propagating, as well as very cost-efficient. Possessing the necessary resources and an excellent local knowledge, MBHU takes care of most of the prac­tical conduction of the projects in the intervention areas. The ideas and initiatives are also mainly gener­ated by MBHU, while SSU may take part in the shaping of the final project.

The project 15-1712-MP-sep worked with 600 OVC households and the whole local community to enhance the wellbeing of OVCs in Kanungu Town Council. It dealt with income-generating household micro-projects, savings and loans activity in self-help groups and rights sensitisation. The sub­sequent project 17-2126-MI-okt aimed at empowering 500 vulnerable households to become self-supporting and building a conscious, actively engaged citizenry in Kanungu Town Council. New aspects addressed included better ag­ricultural practices, information about gender-based violence and legal advice. As these projects were very successful, it was recently decided to actively propagate the approach developed within them to new inter­vention areas. From 2020 this is being done through the “Initiative on Propagation of Sustainable Empow­erment of Vulnerable Households”, funded by SSU with 50,000 DKK per year, enabling MBHU to retain skilled staff, starting up some new groups in neighbouring areas and follow up on groups and activities pre­viously implemented. More information on this initiative and the projects can be found on [SSU's webpage](https://selvhjaelp-uganda.dk/aktiviteter/civilsamfund/).

Through these participatory interventions, MBHU has realised that venturing into food security in a more holistic way is still new territory. We have been working to improve our approach, structure and methodologies, and have hence designed the VIPAT model (see details in section 3.4). Key elements in this are capacity building in the form of agricultural practice and financial empowerment (SILC) to enhance a sustainable agricultural production and increase household income. During 17-2126-MI-okt SSU established contact to the NGO F4L ([www.farming4life.com](http://www.farming4life.com/)) to suggest ideas for improved agricultural practice. After meeting with them in Denmark and agreeing on the perspectives for collaboration, SSU connected MBHU to F4L’s Ugandan office based in Lira in the northern part of the country. A three-day trip with an exposure visit to F4L’s demonstration sites in Lira District was arranged in January 2019. A delegation from MBHU and Kanungu Town Council were introduced to F4L’s agricultural projects displaying the principles and ben­efits of organic farming. The team learnt about the approach “Farming God’s Way”, which has conservation and organic elements. They learnt about and borrowed the concepts of lead farmers and cooperatives as well as value-addition chain in agro-enterprises. This was a strong eye-opener about the potential to in­crease output in agriculture and preserve the environment. Also, good relations were created between F4L, MBHU and Kanungu representatives. This has increased synergies in agro-interventions (mainly in the last half of 17-2126-MI-okt) and this will be further enhanced and strengthened through the implementation of VIPAT. Having learnt new aspects and concepts, MBHU established two demonstration plots in the 17-2126-MI-okt intervention area, and these have acted as class/demo-sites for the groups participating in the project as well as other local farmers to get skills and improved seedlings. 10 people including MBHU staff, extension officers and farmers furthermore received one-week training in a respected organic agro-centre.

In the present proposal the concepts thus learnt have been combined into an integrated and up-scaled intervention in a different intervention area, namely Isingiro District. Additionally, we include other aspects that have proved successful in our previous work. These are the promotion of smart and cheap fuel-saving and smoke-reducing stoves made from bricks, reusable sanitary pads for improved hygiene and opportunities for girls and women, solar-cell lamps to facilitate the doing of school homework and domestic work, and simple water-treatment devices to ensure clean water and thus better health.

Having implemented 17-2126-MI-okt and thence learnt about current standards and methods in food-security projects, networked with other NGOs and Government institutions, and linked up with skilled tech­nical advisors, MBHU is convinced it is prepared to undertake a successful VIPAT-ba­sed project. It is strong­ly believed VIPAT will offer a much more sustainable impact on agro-enter­prise productivity than state-of-the-art approaches. Also, the close collaboration with and involvement of local politicians, policy advisors, and agricultural staff gives a solid foundation to further address and impact duty bearers locally and nation­ally for project propagation and policy changes.

It is highly relevant to launch the proposed intervention in 2020, as 17-2126-MI-okt finished by the end of 2019. This means all the capacity is still present within the partner organisations and learning from the previous projects and interaction with F4L is fresh in memory. Synergetic advantages boosting the impact of the new project include immediate availability of qualified staff, local network and capacity, and goodwill from communities, authorities and other stakeholders who are aware of the positive outcome of the recent intervention. Furthermore, the timing of the proposed starting date of the 1st of December is good, since it leaves time to carry out community entry and area mapping before the beginning of the planting season.

**2.3 Contributions, roles and responsibilities of the partners**

The roles and areas of responsibility of each of the two applicant partners in the proposed project are closely related to its competences and prior achievements as described above.

*SSU contributions, roles and areas of responsibility*

* Project administration, monitoring and contact to CISU. The project responsible will be SSU chairman Mikkel Juul Larsen, and three or four SSU board members will take part in a joint steering committee with MBHU management representatives. Monitoring visits in the intervention area are planned, where the SSU representative(s) will inspect relevant activities and places of the intervention, conduct financial monitoring, participate in steering-committee and other relevant meetings, and advise the local partner where necessary. SSU will submit reports and other information to CISU as required.
* Particular monitoring of the implementation of the novel agricultural methods and establishment of contact with experts from F4L if their assistance turns out to be needed. If any external input and/or major corrective acts are required, SSU will take measures towards this.
* Particular monitoring of the implementation of newly developed brick stoves in selected households to be able to collect data that can be used for the quantification of their benefits in the form of wood saving and smoke reduction and for possible product improvement.
* Support for MBHU in conduction of information and dialogue sessions for community members and local leaders on human rights and equality (non-discrimination) in villages and provision of capacity building on human rights in general and minorities’ rights in particular, for the project staff, extension officers, leaders and duty bearers from the authorities. This knowledge transfer is a contribution to the advocacy efforts of the intervention and will be performed in connection with a monitoring visit to minimise costs.

*MBHU contributions, roles and areas of responsibility*

* Daily administration and running of the project. The project will be implemented by the community with the facilitation and management of staff from MBHU, who will be in charge of most of the technical activities.
* Governance/coordination:Respecting the guidelines of the joint SSU/MBHU steering committee, the MBHU executive director, project manager, M&E officer and finance officer will lead the governance, coordination, M&E, advocacy, collaboration and oversight functions.
* Hiring and procurement: The governance/coordination team will hire and train project personnel, hire and oversee qualified consultants for baseline survey, evaluation and auditing, and procure

transport means and other budgeted investments.

* Technical work: The technical team will be headed by the project manager who reports to the steering committee. He will work with a SILC officer and three group supervisors. These officers will train and oversee 12 lead farmers and eight village agents, who will mobilise and train farmers and communities in farming techniques and SILC processes.
* Promotion of brick stoves in the VIPAT groups and of smart investments such as reusable sanitary pads, solar-cell lamps and simple water-treatment devices in the SILC groups.
* Advocacy emphasis: The staff from MBHU will train VIPAT-group and community members on agricultural service delivery indicators/policies and advocacy tools to engage constructively with local authorities, whom they will also involve and train to strengthen their service delivery. For this, daily work will be hand in hand with extension officers and local leaders.
* Organisation of monthly planning and review staff meetings and quarterly stakeholders’ meetings as well as workshops/conferences and exposure visits.
* Reporting: Quarterly progress reports, annual review reports and end-of-project report will be compiled by the project manager and submitted to SSU for M&E and reporting to CISU.

**2.4 Development of the relationship between the partners**

The relationship between SSU and MBHU is already very well developed through more than a decade of successful collaboration. However, we can learn more from each other, as we have done in all previous joint projects where we have been collaborating closely as we intend to do in the proposed intervention. SSU will get much more insight about which approaches work well under the circumstances in question, and MBHU will increase its organisational strength even further. SSU as well as MBHU will further increase their skills in the important field of dissemination of human rights and freedom and equality messages. The joint project will help build the capacity of staff and volunteers to empower people in underdeveloped rural areas with know­ledge and skills on human rights, increase of agricultural production, and microfinance (SILC). The capacity boost will enable MBHU to monitor and maintain relevant parts of the project even af­ter its termination as part of the daily work of the organisation. The gains from the collaboration will enable the partners to successfully carry out other sustainable community development projects together.

**2.5 Strengthening of the partners’ relations to other actors**

The intervention strongly involves a catalysing role of the partners as we shall be working closely with the local authorities and linking them more tightly to the communities. Both partners will transfer capacity to the existing structure in several ways; e.g.:

* In the daily work of organising and training the farmers, MBHU will implicate the local authorities, especially the extension officers, to build their capacity and equip them with tools to engage more effectively with the community. They will be part of the VIPAT activities and invited to grow and develop together with their communities, and they will monitor the project together with the project manager and staff. Experience shows that this approach has a good probability of catalysing significant behavioural change among the agricultural/extension officers as they themselves are empowered to contribute to the village development and their esteem is raised among the population. They will be empowered and committed to work with the farmers in a rights-based way, even after the intervention period.
* MBHU will train the community members and leaders, on the other hand, to engage with the local government to demand exact compliance with rights and equal access to resour­­ces. SSU will promote their awareness of human rights and equality by training local project staff in conducting information and dialogue sessions in villages (training of trainers).
* SSU will transfer capacity in rights and advocacy to various levels of leaders and duty bearers from the authorities as well as extension officers through sessions on human rights and particularly mi-

norities’ rights. This will sensitise duty bearers about their responsibilities and equip local leaders and extension officers with knowledge enabling them to advise the community members on their rights and help them claim their rights.

Besides the building of relations to the local authorities, the project also enhances MBHU’s relevance as a prominent civil-society actor in Uganda. MBHU is increasingly collaborating with other NGOs, and during the recent intervention 17-2126-MI-okt it obtained membership of UFCVP. MBHU actively uses this network and is receiving capacity through it. MBHU intends to invite other member NGOs to work in needy areas of Isingiro District, with the aim that at least one other NGO implements VIPAT within a year.

In Denmark, SSU will strengthen its position as an organisation capable of generating great changes with very high effectiveness and thus be a more attractive collaboration partner for other organisations. It will also promote itself among donors who wish that their funds be used very efficiently and creating the most impact possible.

1. Target groups, objectives, strategy, and expected results (our intervention)

**3.1 Composition of target groups**

The participants in the major target group will be farmers and among the most vulnerable people in the intervention area of Ruborogota, Nyakitunda and Ngarama Sub-Counties of Isingiro District in Uganda. Farmers here are rural, small-scale farmers, who make up about 80 % of the population. They live from very simple means and have a mostly uniform daily life and predictable life cycle. Most of their life is spent within walking distance of their house and small plot of land. Often it is the responsibility of the women to farm the land, while many men work as casual workers. On average, the households have 5–6 surviving children. Their household income fluctuates with the harvest seasons. They can harvest twice a year, but have limited opportu­nities and strategies to store food, save money or invest the income in between. This makes these societies particularly vulnerable to hunger and malnutrition and are reasons Uganda is at the bottom of the HDI. Some of the farmers have finished primary school, but most have less education, and many are even illiterate, especially among the women. Most children go to primary school, but many households must keep their children home for irregular periods when they lack school materials or cannot pay for the uniforms or exams, and many families cannot attain basic healthcare.

An overview of the target groups is seen in the table below, and their compositions are further detailed in the following text.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Target groups | Primary | Secondary |
| Target group 1:  Rural households/farmers | 1200 VIPAT households + 1200 households in solidarity chain = **2400 households** = **12,000 persons**  2100 of these households to be organised in SILC groups | Other households (not in VIPAT groups or solidarity chain): **5000 households** = **25,000 persons** |
| Target group 2:  Extension officers, leaders and other stakeholders | 10 district and sub-county extension officers + 70 political and 20 administrative local leaders = **100 persons** | Extension officers in other sub-counties + district, regio­nal and national leaders and stakehold­ers: **200 persons** |

*Target group 1: Rural households/farmers*

*VIPAT-group members and their solidarity chain (primary target group):*

The primary target group consists of 2400 households. Of these, 1200 VIPAT-group member households are selected as first beneficiaries in 60 villages, and through the solidarity-chain mechanism (see the following) another neighbour will be reached by each group member, which makes another 1200 farmer households. Since a household comprises an average of at least five individuals, the total number of persons and thus beneficiaries in these 2400 households is anticipated to be above 12,000. It is a condition for becoming a VIPAT group member that he or she reach out to one neighbour (solidarity chain) as part of the contribution after the first or second cy­cle (harvest). This involves sharing of knowledge and good seeds and conducting on-site training. This training of trainers multiplies the effect without extra cost. The key to success is to draw up the solidarity chain together with local extension officers from the outset as the participants are selec­ted, so they together with the group supervisor will monitor the farmers to ensure the follow-up.

*Selection of the VIPAT-group members:*

After the project launch at the district level, the first beneficiaries in the form of members of the VIPAT groups must be selected. The process and criteria for this will involve the following steps:

* A community day will be held at parish/ward level in the community, where farmers will be invited to participate and hear about the project – what they can expect to get and what they must contribute in terms of participation and work.
* After the community day farmers can sign up with the group supervisor if they want to participate in the project. This ensures that farmers who sign up are motivated and they must be farmers so they can implement what they learn in their own plot.
* A small selection committee at parish/ward level, including the relevant group supervisor, the extension officer, and representatives from the village governments (LC 1), is formed and agrees on the participants among the qualified. Typically, more can be expected to sign up than can be accommodated. In this case some are chosen and the rest can become part of the solidarity chain.
  + The groups must be a mix of people with most being the average very poor farmer and a few being “wealthy” (by very relative standards). The more “wealthy” farmers typically have better entrepreneurial skills and can strengthen and inspire the group.
  + Women must make up at least half in all groups.
  + Religion or church denomination will not be a criterion for selection – everyone, both believers and non-believers, will be equally qualified. The same goes for any social, ethnic, political or any other affiliation or characteristics.

*SILC-groups members:*

All VIPAT-group members will get the opportunity to join a SILC group after their first or second harvest, and experience shows that more than 90 % take this opportunity. In addition, SILC is offered to other people in the villages, where VIPAT is introduced, which is mainly relevant for households from the solidarity chain. 70 SILC groups with 30 member households in each will be formed by the project, thus comprising 2100 households.

*Farmers outside the VIPAT groups and solidarity chain (secondary target group):*

The secondary target group are farmers not included in established VIPAT groups or the solidarity chain. These beneficiaries include other farmers from the 60 villages with VIPAT group as well as farmers from nearby villages. *Within* the VIPAT villages, the farmers not included in the VIPAT groups or the solidarity chain will benefit from the project as they become inspired by the novel approaches through the open “showrooms” of the farmer field schools (FFSs), i.e., the central group fields where the agricultural training of their participating neighbours takes place. They will be invited to visit the FFSs through dedicated exposure events, which also involve extension officers to assist and counsel. Farmers *outside* the VIPAT villages will be reached actively by lead farmers from the VIPAT groups. Lead farmers are particularly skilled farmers, who will be paid by the project to train farmers in nearby villages (see more below). Furthermore, extension officers eventually equipped with know-how through the project implementation will also spread the technologies in the intervention area and possibly beyond. Through these initiatives (multiplier effect) the farmers in the secondary target group will acquire VIPAT skills and thus a potential for increasing their levels of income and robustness. Not all will of course take advantage of these opportunities, but in principle the technologies and know-how will be made available to all farmers in the villages of the intervention area, reaching indirectly a total of around 5000 households or 25,000 persons.

*Selection of lead farmers and village agents:*

From the VIPAT groups 12 lead farmers will be selected after the first or second cycle (harvest) to help in training the established groups and in expanding the project to farmers in the secondary target group. They will receive special training and be responsible for mobilising, starting and supervising new groups based on the VIPAT model. These lead farmers will be selected among the farmers based on their capacity to acquire and implement new techniques and technologies in their own field and the way they take responsibility in their respective VIPAT groups. They must have good people’s skills and be able to motivate and organise co-farmers. Each lead farmer will be paid a small motivation to run VIPAT groups under the close supervision of a group supervisor.

Eight people from within or outside the VIPAT groups will be selected to act as village agents, whose task is to form, train and run SILC groups. The village agents will be trained and supervised by the SILC offi­cer. They will be selected based on their special skills/knowledge in basic financial management at community level. Village agents will be paid a small motivation to run SILC groups.

*Crosscutting issues:*

To maximise the cost-effectiveness of the project only one person from each household is included in the VIPAT group, but he or she of course represents the entire household. Other issues like HIV/­AIDS, human rights, and children’s and women’s rights will be integrated in the VIPAT groups, trainings/workshops and in community exposure visits.

*Target group 2: Extension officers, leaders and other stakeholders*

*Local extension officers and political and administrative leaders (primary target group):*

The primary target group includes four agricultural/veterinary officers of Isingiro District and the six sub-county extension officers (three agronomists and three veterinary assistants) of Ruborogota, Nyakitunda and Ngarama. These will be strongly engaged in the project and trained in conservation farming through the FFS activities, workshops and exposure visits. On top of these 10 officers the primary target group also includes some 70 local political representatives from LC 3 (sub-county level), LC 2 (parish level) and LC 1 (village level). Furthermore, it will include some 20 administrative representatives such as the three sub-county chiefs (the heads of civil services at sub-county level) and relevant heads of departments and parish chiefs (who run the daily affairs of the parishes and villages). The primary target group will thus comprise approximately 100 people.

*Nearby extension officers and non-local leaders and stakeholders (secondary target group):*

The secondary target group consists of extension officers in other sub-counties in Isingiro District as well as other stakeholders at local, regional and national levels, including political leaders and officials from the MAAIF. They will be exposed to the project through field visits, workshop meetings and a conference aimed at project propagation and policy changes. District leaders will be invited for quarterly workshops, and a high-level conference will be arranged for national leaders especially from the MAAIF and other government frameworks, regional leaders, district main leaders, and representatives from research institutes, etc. The secondary target group amounts to approximately 200 people.

**3.2 Participation of the target groups and their benefitting**

As food security in western Uganda is a major issue for the majority of poor farmers, this intervention seeks to improve the agricultural methods and food security and create sustainability for farmers in the intervention area. These farmers will receive agricultural training according to the VIPAT model and engage in SILC activities. Some of them will be selected for roles of lead farmers and village agents, where they train others. This is detailed in section 3.1. Women must constitute at least half of the participants. Traditionally men still dominate over women, who do most of the domestic work at home like digging, cooking and looking after children, while most decisions regarding the family finances, production and other developments in homes like joining social groups are taken by men. This project will ensure both women, men and youth are represented into groups, and women will be encouraged to participate actively in group activities like leadership, savings and access to credit so that they can acquire assets. To include at least 50 % women en­sures that the learning from the VIPAT groups and the group fields will be applied in their fields, while the inclusion of men ensures that the project becomes legitimate in the community, and many of these men of course also apply the new technologies and techniques on their own land. The project will especially em­power the women through the SILC groups. Experience from our previous interventions addressing gender issues shows that when women also contribute with income to the family upkeep, they report positive change in the gender balance in the families and more equal relations with their husbands. The approach is believed to lead to a situation where parents will have access to finances to take care of their children’s health and education needs, meaning the children will be able to attend school without interruptions and malnutrition and stunting will drop significantly.

Another target group is local government authorities including extension officers who are supervising farmers in agriculture and livestock in their local communities. The cooperation and commitment from their side is very important to build up long-term capacity and sustainability in the community. The design of VIPAT relies heavily on committed local authorities, and for this reason both the district and sub-county administrative levels are involved closely in the preparation phase and selection of the intervention area. The extension officers and other officials will be part of the trainings, follow the VIPAT groups and participate in the monthly VIPAT meetings. They will not have any formal decision-making power in the VIPAT groups, but they are invited to grow and develop together with their communities and to participate in the monitoring of the project with the project manager and team. This involvement is intend­ed to induce significant behavioural change among the officers and empower them to contribute to the village development and raise their esteem among the population. The integration of local authorities is an impor­tant ad­vocacy part, as local capacity and ownership are transferred to them from the project staff. We also reach out to the extension officers in the other sub-counties of Isingiro District and to other non-local stakehold­ers through exposure visits and workshops to facilitate a discussion among the authorities and extension officers on how they can integrate some of the lessons learned in their work in other communities.

**3.3 Involvement of target groups and actors in developing the intervention and partners’ legitimacy**

A PRA was conducted among the farmers in the intervention area and preparatory visits were paid to the local administration in Isingiro Dis­trict, which is detailed in section 1.2. The target beneficiaries and relevant actors were thus extremely strongly involved in the development of the intervention. This thorough, involving and network-creating preparation – which has gone on since the submission of the original application – is moreover raising the trust in and respect of MBHU among the local beneficiaries. The target groups have thus already exhibited great trust in MBHU for conducting the proposed VIPAT-based community development project 2020–2023, and the farmers encountered on the PRA last year gave us feedback that they were very eager to engage in the intervention. In addition, both the district and sub-county administrative levels, which have been involved in the preparations as previously described, have endorsed MBHU and the intervention and pledged to engage actively in it.

MBHU is a non-governmental organisation registered with the National Bureau of Non-Governmental Organisations as an indigenous NGO with registration number 5050 and is allowed to operate according to the laws regulating NGOs (regulations 2017) with permit number 5454 in Uganda. The organisation hosts the umbrella of NGO/CBO Alliance Against Gender-Based Violence in the Kigezi Region and is also a member of UFCVP, through which the farmers have benefited a lot in form of training and access to market linkages and higher prices. MBHU employs highly skilled and qualified personnel to manage its affairs, and the organisation has built strong relationships with local-government authorities where it operates. It has a track record in collaborating and bringing everyone on board including men, women, children and youth, right from the villages to the national level. The organisation employs human-rights-based approaches that are relevant for communal change. The same holds true for the Danish partner SSU, whose advocacy activities have been very much appreciated by the communities who during previous interventions have participated in them and experienced great positive changes through them.

**3.4 Strategy – implementation methods and balance between the elements of the Development Triangle**

A novel framework model called VIPAT will be piloted as the central constituent of the proposed project. Being based on VIPAT/SILC, the project suits the Government strategy well as it addresses some of the same elements.

*The VIPAT model and its relevance*

VIPAT is a short for *Village Intervention for Participatory Agricultural Transformation*. VIPAT has been devel­oped recently by MBHU to target poor farming communities to improve food security, nutrition and finan­cial access, and to empower communities in a holistic and sustainable way. Experience from previous inter­ventions having components of improved food security and financial empowerment has culminated into putting together several aspects of these interventions and of course looking at other methodologies in other areas to suggest a new model. This model, VIPAT, has been developed through implementation of agro- and caregiver projects by MBHU and SSU with a high degree of involvement of poor rural farmers. The model focuses on agriculture for food security on a bigger scale. VIPAT has been developed to impact not only the farmers, but the wider community to create sustainable change. In the development of the VIPAT model it has been fundamental to address two challenges: why many agricultural development projects in the region generate so little impact on rural farmers, and why so many improved agricultural technologies apply but are not adopted by poor farmers.

*The key elements of VIPAT*

* *VIPAT groups and farmers field schools (FFSs):*Farmers are organised into groups of 15–25 people called VIPAT groups. They are provided with a plot of land (group field), which serves as a kind of “classroom”, where they meet weekly and work on the plot together with a group supervisor (project staff). The group supervisor is a skilled agronomist. The difference from a normal FFS is the way groups must organise themselves. They draft a constitution, select leaders, and they work in a dem­ocratic way to take investment decisions on their field. They reinvest and share profits in the group and in this way transform themselves into a small cooperative. In the process, the group members build trust among each other, mitigating social or ethnic tensions in their community. The VIPAT groups are typical­ly supported for two years or four cycles (harvest seasons). The plot can be pro­vided by the local government, by one of the group farmers, or by a project, with the farmers con­tributing in kind. Most groups contin­ue as independent cooperatives, renting or buying the field.
* *Agro-enterprise options (AEOs):*The crops and technologies in VIPAT are based on local conditions and choices combined with expert agricultural advice. It works this way: the staff (group supervisors) together with the VIPAT groups (farmers) and extension officers (local government) make AEOs. The basket contains up to five different agro- and livestock options; e.g., an existing crop, a new crop, an intercropping option, and two livestock options. Livestock are important for getting organic manure to the fields. The basket must include perennial crops, which can be harvested at different times during the year as this mitigates the challenges with hunger in the lean season. When the AEOs are designed, the VIPAT groups each decide what to cultivate on their group field.
* *Conservation agriculture:* VIPAT is not in itself organic; the framework accepts all technologies. However, we have decided to design an organic VIPAT project due to the Ugandan circumstances especially in Isingiro. As soil is (being) depleted and erosion is a major challenge, the structure of the soil needs to be restored. Farmers must learn new organic techniques like digging better terraces and the principles of intercropping, spacing of crops and less tilling (which is revolutionary and has many health benefits, especially for the women, who can save much work). Organic manure from livestock is important to restore the soil. Normally, it takes 3–5 years to fully restore the soil on a given plot, which is why VIPAT generally recommends that demo-plots are available/­rented for 2–4 years, so farmers experience that soil restoration pays off long-term. Another reason is that the availability of chemicals is very limited and they are very expensive for the farmers.
* *Savings and internal lending communities (SILCs):* All farmers are offered the possibility to join a SILC group, typically after the first or second harvest. This is a key VIPAT element as SILC can further strengthen the self-perpetuating cycle, which has been started by increasing the yield and empowering the participants, so they believe they can change their own situation. SILCincreases opportunities for the business-skilled farmers to invest, it provides saving opportunities for others, and gives income stability over the year to everyone. The method enables even poor farmers to save enough money to buy useful items for the household and/or to invest in the new technologies introduced to them in the *AEOs*. Without SILC the increased agricultural output will in itself improve food security, but not fight the poverty in an effective way. With SILC the VIPAT model becomes more robust and more likely to transform the poor farmers’ ambitions into concrete changes.A SILC group typically has around 30 members.
* *Sustainability:* VIPAT rests on the assumption that own contributions from participants enhance the ownership and long-term sustainability. Thus, all input to the VIPAT groups is only distributed as part of a clear strategy for service deliveries and it all comes with conditions. The input is the crops and livestock in the AEOs and free training and access to the group field. In return, each group member must commit to take active part in the work and repay in kind to other farmers by passing on plant material or animal offspring in a predefined solidarity chain. To be accepted into a VIPAT group each farmer must accept in advance to pass on know-how and material to preselected village neighbours. No per-diems or allowances can be provided to any participants or authorities.
* *Catalytic effect – cost-effective spreading strategy:* VIPAT is designed to spread beyond the primary target group. Many food-security interventions in our districts especially from Government target whole villages and include everyone in the activities. This is an expensive way to target communities. VIPAT groups will target a small portion of the population, typically around 15–30 % of a village, and then the new technologies and techniques spread through the solidarity chain, where each group member must conduct on-site training of neighbours (training of trainers). Also, extension officers are participating at all stages of the project so their knowledge is updated and their effectiveness enhanced in the wider community. Moreover, the local government will organise field visits and community exposure days in the targeted villages together with the project staff to share knowledge. A further spreading to neighbouring villages is done using lead farmers, who are chosen among the most skilled VIPAT members after 1–2 harvest seasons. They are selected and paid a small motivation to mobilise and train new groups under the supervision of the group super­visor of the area. These structures ensure a further adoption of technologies well beyond the pri­mary beneficiaries. Thus the intervention and its staff assume the role of a catalyst for propagation of the ideas and activities. This was very important in the development of the VIPAT model and is an element very much emphasised compared to our preceding interventions.
* *Rights-based approach:* Advocacy is an integral part of VIPAT. Dialogue with local extension officers and government is structured in all phases and they participate in several of the activities, including regular monthly meetings with the VIPAT groups and quarterly meetings with the VIPAT-group leaders at community level as well as some of the fieldwork. As the VIPAT groups are being empowered to engage in dialogue with the local authorities and build confidence, they slowly transform themselves into local advocacy groups, taking up community issues beyond the food security agenda. The groups receive training enabling them to write and launch action plans, and they become strong drivers for change locally and promote a rights-based framework for development. These elements combine to form the foundation for a community transformation, where VIPAT-group members will emerge from poverty through increased farm productivity, new financial opportunities (SILC), and, in the process, unite to stand up for their rights. The VIPAT model is indeed constructed in accordance with the development triangle, linking capacity building with strategic service delivery and advocacy (see more on this on pp. 19–20).

*Strategic strengths of the VIPAT model*

In achieving the purpose of improving the livelihood of farmers in rural sub-counties in Isingiro District in a sustainable way, three things are essential: First, agricultural output must be increas­ed to improve food se­curity. Studies show that more than 40 % of agricultural production is lost during post-harvest handling, so post-harvest handling strategies should be improved, and farmers must have better access to markets to sell surplus foods as they apply new technologies and techniques. Secondly, farmers must have access to financial services, which let them save, invest and grow first their own finances and in turn the economy of the local community. Financial services are crucial to break the vicious cycle of poverty. Finally, the govern­ment structures in Isingiro are very weak, and any intervention should strive to build capacity to enable the local government to provide relevant quality services to the population. The VIPAT model is perfectly suited for Isingiro as it addresses exactly these three key challenges for rural farmers in an integrated manner.

Based on our experience of combining elements of agricultural and financial practice as well as in­volv­ing the authorities, we are confident that our approach will lead to improved food security, nutri­tion and standard of living. As we have planned SILC within the VIPAT model, we are convinced that VIPAT can be­come a game changer in the way we approach and work with farmers and the communities. VIPAT strongly integrates advocacy as the local government is part of the entire pro­cess, it is participatory, and it is inclu­-sive and adaptable; e.g., the AEOs consider local conditions. These are all important factors, which enhance ownership, impact and sustainability of the project.

This project will introduce and sustain VIPAT in three sub-counties of Isingiro District, and it is likely to be a showcase for rural food-security interventions and propagated into other areas. The project combines a strategy of activities and training and a process-intervention strategy (advocacy).

*Staff and other contributed resources*

The project staff will be recruited and trained and major equipment procured within the first three months of the project (M1–M3).

The project staff will comprise nine persons, of which five are fully employed by the project. These latter are the project manager, a SILC officer and three group supervisors. They will be supported by the other four staff members, who are the MBHU executive director (10 % paid by the project), M&E officer (50 %), finance officer (60 %) and a secretary (50 %). The group supervisors will over­see a total of 12 lead farmers, while the SILC officer will oversee eight village agents. These 20 people are basically skilled and dedicated volunteers who receive small monthly allowances to spend some of their time on training others. Some of the roles of the staff and volunteers are given in section 2.3. For six of the nine employees, MBHU already has qualified candidates at the time of application. Five of these six persons are female.

MBHU does not have an office in Isingiro District and there is thus a need to rent an office with 2–3 rooms from where to operate. Whereas the rent is included as a local administration cost in the project budget, MBHU will cater for the furnishing at no cost to the project as MBHU has local incomes from brick sales and other sources to cover this expense.

Suitable means of transport are also needed to carry out the project. As the intervention area is very hilly and has extremely poor dirt roads, only a pow­erful four-wheel-drive vehicle and special motorcycles can do the job of transporting project staff and materials over far distances to the remote villages of the intervention area. Four strong motorcycles will therefore be purchased and insured under the project and used by the field staff and management team in their daily work, while a suitable vehicle will be hired to carry out the activities for which this is needed. The motorcycles are also an important capacity building of MBHU, as they will allow the organisation to do follow-up in the intervention area after the project and to initiate other related interventions on its own. The lead farmers and village agents will each be equipped with a bicycle, which is appropriate to cover their need of daily transport to and from nearby households.

*The five phases of the intervention*

• *Phase 1 – Preparation of the ground (M0–M1):*

VIPAT relies on close cooperation with local government and farmers who are willing to contribute hard work and time to succeed. Therefore, the preparatory dialogue with stakeholders is very im­portant. Part of this phase has already been carried out, and this has created trust and good relations between MBHU and the local government, and the farmers have been involved in trainings and exposure visits in a very inclusive and participatory process. All stakeholders appear to be ready to launch the project. Another impor­tant activity in this phase is initiation of a baseline study.

• *Phase 2 – Launching and training of the first VIPAT groups (M1–M9):*

Shortly after the launch of the project 20 VIPAT groups will be formed and group fields for them lo­cated so that these groups are ready for the planting season in February–March2021 (M3–M4). The group fields are very important for the VIPAT concept and serves several purposes. Firstly, the plot is an FFS, where the group supervisors train farmers in conservation agriculture techniques and introduce new technologies. The plot also serves to knit the group together in a democratic structure, nurturing democratic values and building social capital among the group in the process. Thirdly, the group becomes a small cooperative as they make investment decisions together and share the profit from the plot. (Part of the profit the first year will go to get households in the solidarity chain started.) Finally, the plot serves as demonstration site to the whole village. Normally the location will be close to a public space, where people can pass by and see how new methods are applied, creating awareness beyond the immediate beneficiar­ies. This phase involves local community leaders and extension officers too. They will be involved in the selection of group members and take part weekly in the activities to monitor the project together with the group supervisors. In the process the extension officers grow a strong ownership and take pride in creating tangible results, while they also learn the principles of VIPAT and con­servation farming. This cooperation or even teamwork between the group supervisors and exten­sion officers ensures the intervention is deeply rooted in the local com­munity, builds up local ca­pacity, and spreads knowledge and application beyond the VIPAT villages to the area covered by the extension officers (sub-county level). This process-intervention strategy is the key advocacy component as it builds capacity locally, facilitates dialogue between the VIPAT groups and the village and commune leaders/administration, and strengthens social accountability in the community.

VIPAT groups are formed with an intended existence period of three years so that the farmers can re­ally appreciate the improvement from each new harvest cycle as conservation agriculture re­stores the soil and increases the output progressively. During this period it is important to enforce the democratic culture and make the farmers appreciate the added value from doing business to­gether. The groups are followed closely, weekly the first year, then less and less, typically every 14 days the second year, and monthly or not at all the third year depending on the group perfor­mance. The group field must be provided by the group itself as an own contribution, and it is expected the farmers can pay the rent themselves from the income they get after their first harvest.The groups are introduced to post-harvest and market-access strategies and some slowly transform themselves into strong, independent co­operatives. The groups will typically buy or extend the rental agreement for the plots and continue to work together after the three years.

Finally, an important component is the monthly meetings with extension officers and quarterly meetings with local leaders. As they develop together in their groups, their confidence grows to en­gage village and sub-county leaders in discussions and constructive dialogue about public services and responsibilities with topics going well beyond agriculture.

• *Phase 3 – Implementation of SILC (M7–M28):*

When the VIPAT groups are formed and have completed the first or second cycle, SILC is introdu­ced into the groups and the wider community. SILC has the potential to vastly boost the self-per­pe­tuating cycle initi­ated by the VIPAT groups and the increased agricultural output. SILC serves each family well as it allows them to save or invest depending on their needs and preferences. For most of the farmers such basic financial services are very transformative and help stabilise income throughout the year and save for family investments. Secondly, SILC helps allocate capital in the community to the most productive or entrepreneurial farmers or business people. This is critical to create sustained growth.

The SILC officer will select, train and supervise eight village agents who will each form 4–5 groups per year for two years creating 70 groups in total. The first groups will be formed in June 2021 (M7) around the time of the first harvest. Typically, a SILC cycle is nine months, where the group needs supervision and grad­uates at the end. MBHU’s experience is that more than 90 % of the groups continue SILC by themselves.

During the training of the SILC groups their trainers (village agents and SILC officer) will empha­sise the need for the participating households to spend some of their generated income on school fees for their children and basic necessities such as clothes, medicine and some nutrition for all family members, and an­other part on savings within the group. The SILC group members will be encouraged to use some of their savings or small loans on wise investments that bring huge bene­fits to the household members. Among such investments with high return/effect are: Smart and cheap stoves made from bricks (save scarce and costly wood and reduce harmful smoke), reusa­ble sanitary pads (improve school attendance and opportunities for girls and women), solar-cell lamps (facilitate school homework and domestic work after dark), and simple water-treatment de­vices (ensure clean water and thus better health; see <https://solarsack.com/>). The brick stoves have recently been developed by SSU and MBHU in collaboration (see project on [SSU's webpage](https://selvhjaelp-uganda.dk/aktiviteter/haandvaerk-og-erhverv/kogestedsprojekt/)), and there is some experience on production and application, but their full potential needs to be further documented by implementa­tion on large scale in many households. A small budget is available for making this demonstration possible under this intervention. As for the reusable sanitary pads, MBHU has great existing ca­pacity and experience, since it has provided vulnerable schoolgirls and young women with such pads (AFRI­pads) for several years (see initiative on [SSU's webpage](https://selvhjaelp-uganda.dk/aktiviteter/skolepigehjaelp/)).

• *Phase 4 – Consolidation and spreading (M8–M36):*

VIPAT and SILC have been introduced and the cooperation is going well, with the group supervi­sors, the lo­cal community leaders, and the extension officers getting comfortable with the set-up. The regular VIPAT meetings with local leaders have found a good *modus vivendi*, where meetings are held in an open and re­spectful atmosphere. Lessons from the first cycle (M2–M8) have been collected through evaluation sessions with all stakeholders, and the project design has been ad­justed where appropriate. This is then the time to expand the reach of the project. Lead farmers can be selected and trained, and other 20 VIPAT groups are formed by July 2021 (M8), and yet another 20 by January 2022 (M14) (the timing must be 1–2 months before the planting season). As the VIPAT technologies extend to new villages via the lead farmers, so does SILC. Each group su­pervisor can supervise six groups in the first cycle (M2–M8), seven additional groups in the second cycle (M8–M14), and another seven groups in the third cycle (M14–M20). This works because the lead farmers are trained and assist in implementing the new VIPAT groups, so that each additional group is run primarily by a lead farmer and supervised closely by the group supervisor. This makes spreading quite flexible, and the numbers can increase further at very low cost if the talented farm­ers and commitment from local authorities are there.

In this phase, exposure visit for stakeholders coming from the province and national level will also be conducted. Such visit will serve partly as a showcase to share our experience and results, partly to gain insight from the visitors as they will bring in different expertise and an outsider’s views on our work. Further­more, awareness of human rights and responsibilities will be promoted among leaders and community members through information and dialogue sessions, and the capacity of the VIPAT-group members to en­gage constructively with local authorities will be strengthened.

• *Phase 5 – Evaluation and documentation of results (M34–M36):*

The project will be evaluated by an external consultant within the last three months. The report will be pre­sented and discussed in a joint session including representatives from MBHU, Isingiro Dis­trict and possibly SSU. Next steps depend on the evaluation and the recommendations.

*Balance between the elements of the Development Triangle*

In its design the project has taken inspiration from the development-project approach, creating dy­namic links between strategic deliveries, organisational capacity building, and advocacy. By incor­porating the linking of the elements of the development triangle in theclear structure of the VIPAT model, it is our belief that a self-perpetuating cycle will be created. Care has been taken to limit input and only include service deliveries that are truly strategic to create a good balance between the elements of the development triangle and ensure high replication prospects.

*Capacity building*

The intervention builds on some of MBHU’s core competences in mobilising and empowering the rural pop­ulation and creating SILC groups, but at the same time challenges the organisation as food security and the VIPAT model covers new territory. For this reason, the introductory phase has been longer than usual to build up capacity internally as well as externally in terms of new net­work and new potential partners. Part of the success of the preparation has been the ability to carry out PRA and gain valuable experience from visits to the local administration in Isingiro Dis­trict, which has raised the professional credibility of MBHU, making it a trustworthy and respected partner. We plan to add on our capacity in VIPAT during the prelimi­nary stages of the project im­plementation. MBHU will furthermore increase its skills within dissemination of human rights and freedom and equality messages as SSU will help build its organisational capacity here through ad­vocacy training of staff and volunteers. Training of lead farmers, village agents and other project staff and stakeholders, including extension officers, is a deeply integrated constituent of the strategy. Acti­vation of the solidarity chain and equipping lead farmers and extension officers to propagate VIPAT to new villages is a key activity of the project.

*Strategic deliveries*

VIPAT has been developed with the particular aim to strengthen the link between strategic service deliveries and building government capacity, while engaging in dialogue with local authorities to encourage them to take on responsibility to provide social services. Service delivery in the intervention is strategic in its character as a large part of it deals with training; e.g., training in value addition and market access to obtain better prices and training of beneficiaries in acquisition, production and use of brick stoves. Only input that is necessary for the farmers to launch their income-generating activities is provided; no money will be given to the farmers, and the input strictly serves its strategic purpose. Input is provided only as a booster to a farmer according to a clear agreement between group members and the project. The 1200 farmers select­ed as first beneficiaries will be trained and provided with input to boost their farming activities, especially seeds or animals depending on the selected enterprise. Every farmer will consent to identify one neighbour who must receive an offspring of an animal or an equal quantity of the inputs that he/she initially received as part of the support from the project. The solidarity-chain members will also receive training as they wait for the revolving products from the first beneficiaries. Through this revolving method members in the solidarity chain are reached without extra input and helped to become self-supporting too. The strategic input to the local area like providing new and/or improved seed varieties and better livestock and training in VIPAT group fields helps create better conditions for the target group and serves as entry point for the dialogue with the local administrations. VIPAT has created a clear structure to engage with them around the service deliveries in a way where they become both part of the project and are given due credit for the re­sults, and at the same time they are engaged in advocacy sessions by the farmers as they demand increas­ing social accountability from the government. If the extension of­ficers are committed to spreading the principles of conservation agriculture to the whole constitu­ency, they will be able to make a huge differ­ence with no or very limited extra costs.

*Advocacy*

The duty bearers will be integrated in activities and empowered along with their con­stitu­ency (the rights holders/farmers), which gives a good foundation for a strong advocacy com­ponent. Through the activities including exposure visit, extension officers are equipped with tools allowing them to take on responsibility and be more effective in government services. This awareness and strong capacity building will encourage local-government authorities to continue the extension services beyond the project and replicate its strate­gy. Be­sides targeting the responsible extension officers, case stories will be shared at political level. One of the main reasons to have a district- and national-level dialogue is to come up with an action plan and influence the Government to increase budgetary allocations for extension services and improve supervision of extension services by district and national leaders. All in all, this advocacy is expected to lead to improved extension service resulting from more skilled ex­tension officers, more frequent visits, and higher quality of advice and input, which will be a great change to achieve. This kind of process-interven­tion advocacy is ap­propriate forMBHU and SSU and will give valuable experience to the organisations for future interventions.

**3.5 Objectives, activities, expected results and indicators**

The overall development objective (main purpose) of the proposed intervention is:

***To******improve living standards and ensure sustainability for farmer households in Ruboro­go­ta, Nyakitunda and Ngarama Sub-Counties in Isingiro District and empower people in the local communities to obtain the services and freedoms they are entitled to****.*

Improved living standards can be defined and measured by increased agricultural output and food security. Sustainability can be defined and measured by access to financial services that allow for investments to cover immediate needs and secure future income. Services and freedoms are to be understood as compliance with human rights and the obligations they imply.

In the table on the following pages the three specific objectives are presented together with some selected indica­tors to measure their achievement and means of verification for these indicators. A number of the most important expected outputs associated with each of the specific objectives is also listed to­gether with the major activities planned in order to achieve them. More detailed descriptions of ac­tivities are given in section 3.4. A thorough work description and an implementation plan with details such as schedules and responsible persons for each activity have been prepared too, but could not be enclosed.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Objective 1: *By January 2023 60 groups comprising a total of 1200 farmer households in 60 villages are operating successfully according to the VIPAT model and are implicating another 1200 nearby households*** | |
| **Selected indicators:**   * Farmers from 1200 households participate weekly in the FFS training * 60 VIPAT groups have monthly meetings and share experiences with nutrition, kitchen gardens and crops * Extension officers participate regularly in FFS and in monthly and quarterly VIPAT meetings * At least five new villages are implementing VIPAT technologies (reached by lead farmers and extension officers)   **Means of verification:** Reports from group supervisors, participants lists, minutes from workshops, pictures, survey data compared with baseline | |
| **Expected outputs** | **Major activities** |
| 1.1: VIPAT implemented in 60 groups in the three sub-counties of the intervention area | * Conduction of community days (entry meetings) and selection of beneficiaries * Formation of 60 VIPAT groups, each with an average of 20 households * Design and approval of agro-enterprises and establishing of group fields * Provision of input to establish and support agro-enterprises and other activities such as implementation of brick stoves * Group-level training in VIPAT methodology and other areas such as pest and disease control, market access, value addition, post-harvest handling * Introduction of vegetables and kitchen gardens, education on nutrition by food demonstrations, referral of malnourished children to health centres * Formation of 12 clusters and three federations |
| 1.2: 12 lead farmers graduate training and VIPAT spreads | * Activation of the solidarity chain to target another 1200 households * Selection of 12 lead farmers among the VIPAT members and training them in conservation agriculture, mobilisation and running of VIPAT groups |
| 1.3: 10 extension officers and agricultural officers implement VIPAT technologies and conservation agriculture throughout the three sub-counties | * Capacity building of extension officers and District agricultural officers through special trainings, workshops and visits to the VIPAT group fields * Integration of extension officers in the regular training and supervision of the VIPAT groups and involvement in their group meetings * Conduction of monthly project meetings and quarterly stakeholders’ meetings where extension officers and District agricultural officers are always invited |
| **Objective 2: *By June 2023 70 SILC groups including a total of 2100 households are providing basic financial services for these households and equipping them with savings and investment opportunities that are adequate for their thriving and sustainability*** | |
| **Selected indicators:**   * 70 SILC groups have approved constitution and elected management-committee members who are trained * Monthly meeting attendance in the 70 SILC groups is at least 95 % of the member households * 90 % of the members in the 70 SILC groups have made savings of minimum UGX 500,000 (DKK 926) * 70 % of the members have taken loans to invest in small business, home improvement or education   **Means of verification:** Reports from group supervisors, survey data compared with baseline | |
| **Expected outputs** | **Major activities** |
| 2.1: 70 SILC groups established and 2100 households equipped with adequate savings and investment opportunities | * Training of project staff and extension officers, etc., in SILC * Selection, training and certifying of eight village agents in SILC * Formation of 70 SILC groups * Training of the groups in SILC methodology and democratic procedures (selection of management committee and adoption of group constitution) * Conduction of end-of-cycle action (auditing and graduation of members into self-sustaining groups) |
| 2.2: All members of the 70 SILC groups introduced to useful high-benefit household investments | * Promotion of, e.g., brick stoves, reusable sanitary pads (AFRIpads), solar-cell lamps, and simple water-treatment devices (SolarSacks) * Training in applying these investments for the great benefit of the household members, especially women and children * Training in value addition and market access for better prices |
| **Objective 3: *By the end of the three-year project VIPAT members’ civic competence is built to ensure effective demand and supply of quality extension services as well as enjoyment of rights for everybody in their communities*** | |
| **Selected indicators:**   * 85 % of VIPAT members report better dialogue with agricultural/extension officers on services * Duty bearers at local-government level act according to their responsibilities by providing VIPAT-like service * MBHU staff and extension officers advise local communities on their rights and help claim them * VIPAT members aware of human rights and actively engaged in promoting them for neighbours   **Means of verification:** Interview, testimonies, survey among non-VIPAT farmers, pictures, report from visit and evaluation, attendance lists, report from conference, articles/radio/TV from conference, meeting programme | |
| **Expected outputs** | **Major activities** |
| 3.1: Duty bearers and extension officers engage professionally and dedicatedly with the farmers in providing extension services | * Training of the 60 VIPAT groups on agricultural service delivery indicators/­policies and advocacy tools to engage constructively with local authorities * Capacity building of 60 sub-county and District leaders in agro-practices and extension service delivery standards to provide farmers with quality services * Involvement of local leaders and extension officers in quarterly meetings |
| 3.2: Capacity of project staff, extension officers, local leaders and community built to make human rights known and respected in the intervention area | * Capacity-building advocacy sessions by SSU on human rights in general and minorities’ rights in particular for leaders and duty bearers from the authorities and for the project staff and extension officers * Conduction of information and dialogue sessions for community members and local leaders on advocacy and human rights and equality in selected villages * Live broadcasting of 12 educative radio programmes with expert panellists on rights awareness, climate and environment, and other main focus areas |
| 3.3: More than 60 high-level stakeholders exposed effectively to the project activities and results | * Organisation of an exposure visit to group fields in the project area for 30 key stakeholders at district and national (MAAIF) levels, etc. * Organisation of a conference for 60 national leaders, regional leaders, district main leaders, and representatives from research institutes and relevant NGOs to present and discuss results from the VIPAT intervention * Follow-up meetings with at least three stakeholders after the conference |

**3.6 Lasting improvements for poor, marginalised and vulnerable target groups and of partners’ capacities**

*Ensuring sustainability and lasting improvements for the target groups*

Households relying on farming will be organised in groups that will be guided through an agricultural transformation to improve their yields, income and livelihood. Savings and loans opportunities will be established within household groups, which will provide a means for the farmers to soundly manage their generated income and a possibility to make investments that can further increase their socioeconomic level.

The VIPAT model to be applied in the intervention has been designed for implementing sustainable food-security projects and transforming rural communities. It aims at improving the poor farmers’ food se­curity, nutrition and financial access, and at empowering communities in a holistic and sustainable way.

VIPAT is an approach with clear guidelines on how to organise the farmers and involve the local author­ities to build their capacity and equip them with tools to engage more effectively with the community. This means that VIPAT aims higher than just fighting hunger and food insecurity.

The purpose of VIPAT is to accomplish the following:

* Enable farmers to increase their output from their fields and make this the first step in a self-per­petuating cycle, which enables them to escape poverty.
* Provide financial opportunities to the community to facilitate even higher yields.
* Ensure a cost-effective spreading of the technologies to the wider community through a solidarity chain and further multiplier effects (i.e., training of trainers).
* Empower local authorities and extension officers to work with the farmers in a rights-based way.
* Emphasise women empowerment by ensuring they make up min. 50 % of the participating farmers.

As seen from these points, VIPAT fights low socioeconomic standards through agricultural as well as financial intervention and creation of awareness of rights.

Through the project vulnerable farmers will acquire new farming skills, which they will implement in their fields. This will add value to their produce and thus increase their level of income. It will also significantly decrease their vulnerability as they increase the diversity and robustness of crops and livestock and thus reduce the risk of failed harvest and production. The farmers will engage in savings and internal lending activity organised in SILC groups. Hence they save part of the income from their production and ensure funds are also available in the periods between harvests, further reducing their vulnerability. Moreover, the group’s combined savings are available for its members as loans for investments. The loaning opportunity further strengthens the farmer households as they can acquire materials and other prerequisites to boost agricultural activities and launch new initiatives to increase their yield. They will also do other wise investments that bring huge benefits to the household members and further raise their livelihood and thriving.

The farmers participating in the project will train other neighbours and pass on resources to them in a mechanism referred to as solidarity chain, thus increasing the number of beneficiaries and propagating the impact of the project. As the agricultural training of the participants will take place in central group fields constituting agricultural “classrooms”, even more farmers from the village will be inspired by the novel ap­proaches and thus acquire potential for increasing their levels of income and robustness. This can be re­garded as a passive multiplier effect. Multiplier effect is also actively pursued through the training of partic­ularly skilled lead farmers, who will be paid to train farmers in other nearby villages, and through equipping communal extension officers with know-how to conduct spreading of the technologies in the area.

It is *expected* that all farmer households included in the trained groups be able to sustain themselves before the end of the project. This means they can perpetually provide basic necessities such as good nutrition, medicine and clothes for all family members and school fees for all children. This is a great improvement from the pre-project circumstances, where many children of the poor farmer households do not go to school, and where children are ill with or even die of malnutrition. It is also *expected* that more than 90 % of the households that become members of SILC groups stay members of these after the project ends.

It is *hoped* that most of the neighbours in the solidarity chain trained by group members and of farmer households in other villages reached by lead farmers and extension officers will eventually reach the same level of self-support. This will involve inclusion in SILC groups, which are thus increasing and propagating.

From our experience in three projects implemented in similar areas we have realised that success and long-term sustainability does not come easy when working among impoverished people. How­ever, working through a methodology of self-help groups/SILCs has proved to be successful in im­proving the sustainability of food-security projects and financial access, and we believe this VIPAT–SILC approach will be too. As the target groups are trained, organised and enrolled into savings and loan (SILC) groups, the experience is that they will continue to work together as it promotes the co­hesion in the local community. The participants are empowered so they can take responsibility for their own development, and the various stages and elements in the project work together to create a self-perpetuating cycle, which ensures that they will not be dependent on strategic input after the ini­tial delivery. This is the best guarantee for them not to be left in any kind of dependence. Input is limited and delivery is mainly in the form of training in farming, propagation, SILC and wise investments. This will be passed on by lead farmers and participants to create sustaina­bility and replication potential through the solidarity chain and organised propagation to nearby areas, to which resources are dedicated in a separate activity. Further­more, the extension officers have been empowered, had their relations to their constituency im­proved and their technical knowledge updated, which will all serve to improve their effectiveness and their sense of obligation to the community.

By the end of the intervention participants will have learned new methods and techniques which signif­icantly increase the yield from their fields. During selection of enterprises we shall also identify and pre­qualify private service providers to connect to the groups for quality services, which will help groups acquire quality products as inputs for their agricultural enterprises. As an example, our experience shows that beneficiaries get higher yield/out­puts in soybeans, beans and onions. In 1–2 cycles farmers who planted 20 kg of beans on one hec­tare of land have harvested between 90 kg and 110 kg. Furthermore, the mortality of domestic ani­mals has also been reduced by 40–50 %. As has been emphasised all through the ap­plica­tion, the VIPAT model is designed to prepare the communities for the exit. In this sense, the exit strategy is quite clear: Within the three years, the VIPAT groups have received sufficient training and learned-by-do­ing, so they are able to sustain the good practices, and even develop further together in the best and most dynamic groups (cooperatives). In addition, the government structures and the lead farmers are based lo­cally and have skills, which remain in the communities. More than 90 % of SILC groups can stand alone after the first graduation and will continue to be an important financial asset for the farmers. So, at the most basic level the project is sustainable if the implementation is conducted with the usual high standard and professionalism of MBHU. Farmers will continue to prac­tice what they have learnt, supported by commit­ted extension officers where necessary. They can continue to be members of SILC groups, and their families and children are better off in many ways like health care, access to primary education, and nutrition. They are much less vulnerable to ex­ternal shocks as they have access to loans and savings and have a strong net­work locally through the membership of SILC or VIPAT groups where members help take care of each other.

With respect to advocacy impact, our intervention aims at building capacity of beneficiaries and ex­ten­sion officers especially in the rights framework and build their civic competence to hold leaders accounta­ble. This will help to change the culture of corruption, which is prevalent in many public of­fices and among some extension officers. The VIPAT-based project will definitely prepare farmers to rise to the challenges and engage in dialogue with local authorities to claim their rights from institu­tions, which at times do not think much of the people they were trusted to govern. Extension officers will be engaged and equipped with skills to expand the advocacy. We find some very interesting dy­namics in VIPAT that make us believe we can achieve more than we and others have done before in poverty impact, advocacy and sustainability, and we are eager to introduce and pilot this approach.

*Strengthening of partners’ capacities after the intervention period*

MBHU breaks new ground with this project in food security. We diversify our portfolio ofexpertise, and ex­pand our network, which will strengthen MBHU in various ways including theability to attract funding from new sources. Through the planned national-level conference both state and non-state development actors will be invited for partnership and replication of the model into other areas, which will possibly generate more funding opportunities from major potential partners in the country. Currently, we hope the MAAIF and district production departments will contact MBHU to share experiences in food security interventions to improve the lives of rural poor. We hope the project management will be invited occasionally to contrib­ute in the technical working group on food securityin the Government and will also use these channels to share our experiences and impact Governmentpolicy. The new partnerships that will be developed through the project will help MBHU in mobilising and combining resources, which is a strategy that already helps the organisation; e.g., it has existing cordial relationships with organisations such as Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment, which trained two researchers from MBHU in research methods; Abantu for Development Uganda, which helped connect MBHU to legal resource persons who gave advice in the previous projects; Baptist Agency for Development Uganda, which like MBHU helps needy orphans; UFCVP, which helps in training of the farmers at little or no cost; and F4L, which trained our project staff and volun­teers in farming methods. The development of relationships will be taken care of during quarterly meet­ings, exposure visits and the national-level conference – plus participation in external events.

The majority of MBHU’s full-time project staff is hired specifically for the intervention, and MBHU does thus not depend on further support from SSU/CISU for their remuneration after the project period. It is im­portant to note, on the other hand, that key members of the project staff have been with MBHU for many years and will stay part of the MBHU staff after the project, by which the generated experience will be kept within the organisation. Knowledge sharing among staff is high priority. Another strategy that MBHU uses is volunteer engagement, in which it increases its network of volunteers who do not require salaries but keep the capacity/skills in the community. Moreover, the volunteers help give advice to the clusters and federa­tions of groups, which can become members of the organisation for further advice and training and can contribute membership fees to the organisation after the project termination. Normally, after graduation of the groups and termination of the project, groups pay a small amount as an annual membership fee, which facilitates further engagement with the groups and operation of the organisation. At institutional level, MBHU plans to assign one of the volunteers as an assistant officer in charge of organisational mem­bership and this will increase membership. The organisation already has 80 groups with 1600 members and the project may add more 60 groups with 1200 members.

Furthermore, some demonstration sites with crops or animals will be established in the project and maintained by MBHU after its termination, through which the organisation may acquire some income from sales of products.

SSU will also be taken to another level after successful implementation of the project. Through the dis­semination its position as an organisation capable of generating great changes with very high ef­fectiveness will be strengthened, and it is likely to attract more donors and collaborators, which will further increase its capacity.

**3.7 Risks and mitigation**

Through our long preparation phase, we have created a good relationship to the local authorities at the dis­trict, sub-county and village levels, and the people who can take decisions regarding the project and the cooperation with MBHU are well known. Expectations from both the sub-counties and the farmers seem to be balanced and realistic from all sides.

Uganda is in a multiparty dispensation and the country will hold party elections in 2020 and general elections in 2021. This seems a risk factor, but it is a very low risk, because the country is still sta­ble and normally experiences risks associated with elections, but they turn out to be manageable by the legal systems in place.

Also a risk is corruption in Uganda with many people trying to benefit from their positions in various ways. We shall probably encounter this throughout the project, but as we have quite a broad base of people to work with, we shall not depend on one or two officials who could turn out to be corrupt and turn against the project when realising we shall not engage in bribing or similar practices.

In addition, there is shrinking space for advocacy and claiming of rights by groups of people, but this will be mitigated by collective efforts of all group members who stand together and by engage­ment of all stakeholders in the project activities.

To mitigate the risk that some members of SILC groups may turn out to be defaulters after taking loans, groups will be trained on minimum requirements to get a loan from the group; e.g., one must have savings or anticipated dividends that can compensate the loan in case of defaulting.

The risk of lack of concrete skills and capacities of group supervisors, lead farmers and village agents to train farmers is reduced as thorough training in a two-round workshop with follow-up is scheduled to impart the real skills needed to ensure compliance with project standards.

Spreading of COVID-19 might hinder some of the activities, which thus risk being rescheduled or postponed. The risk will be minimised by having all members observe the standard operating procedures developed by the Ugandan Government (like keeping a distance of two metres, wearing facemasks, and washing hands) in all activities, whether in group meetings or other gatherings.

As for the intervention and the partnership between SSU and MBHU, we know each other well and are confident that we will be able to fulfil our respective obligations.

**3.8 Monitoring and collection and use of experiences**

A baseline survey establishing benchmarks of the situation before the intervention will be carried out within the first four project months. This baseline and its indicators will be followed up at rele­vant intervals; yearly as a minimum. The project manager and M&E officer will receive re­ports from the group supervisors, who will also conduct quarterly progress and evaluation sessions with their VIPAT groups. The village agents will be used to track the performance in SILC activities, and based on field-data reports proper follow-up will be done. Exchange visits will be arranged, and staff and leadership will meet to exchange ideas.

As this is the first time VIPAT will be implemented in Uganda by MBHU, all stakeholders are keen to monitor the project closely and learn from the experiences. Project staff from MBHU will meet regularly with the local authorities.

Besides monitoring activities such as field visits and workshops with key staff, financial check-up (using Mango Health Check and Accountability Dialogue Tool) will be conducted. Steering-commit­tee members from SSU will visit the intervention area a couple of times during the project to moni­tor (technical, administrative and financial issues), train and advise on the implementation.

Progress reports will be submitted quarterly to the steering-committee members of SSU in Den­mark. An internal review will be made after the first year, in which we shall evaluate the progress and implementation after the first two VIPAT cycles. This will include collecting feedback on experi­ence from the VIPAT groups (farmers), the local authorities, extension officers, MBHU field staff, and local leaders, etc. The findings will be shared and discussed in a half-day workshop with all stakeholders, and next steps will be planned based on resulting recommendations.

Finally, an end-of-project evaluation by an external consultant and a stakeholders’ meeting to dis­cuss the results and perspectives are planned.

1. Intervention-related information work in Denmark

The project progress will be disseminated by SSU through its newsletters sent directly to its mem­bers and publicly available on its webpage. The project will also have its particular webpage sec­tion outlining the project and being updated with its status and results as well as follow-ups on its impacts. The final report from the external consultant will be published here. Presentations of the project and its results as well as experiences from project-related travels will be given in the SSU annual meetings. Such presentations may also be given in public fora by SSU steering-committee members whenever opportunities arise. Printed in­formation material may be produced, or other media may be utilised in order to disseminate information on the project and the importance of the work being done.

The purpose of the information work is not only information about our activities, but also to engage people in the fight for inequality and show them that change is possible despite difficult circum­stances. This project is no different, and we also want to expose our target audience to global chal­lenges and dynamics using concrete and real stories from this intervention. Therefore, we plan to produce both pictures and small narratives as well as a series of small video snapshots, which will be published primarily on Facebook.

The target group for the information activity will be our members, but also our wider constituency and network. We have a potential target group among our members of some 325.

An amount of 10,000 DKK (0.6 %) for this project-related information work is being requested. This could cover expenses for printing, media dissemination and participation in external events.

1. Supplementary financing

The proposed budget contains a small own financial contribution from MBHU of 29,667 DKK cover­ing the mandatory National Social Security Fund contribution for employees constituting 10 % of their salaries. This own financing is secured by MBHU’s equity. It is, however, not an absolute pre­requisite for implementing the intervention, as it could be carried out with correspondingly lowered manpower – at a correspondingly lower activity level of course.

1. National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) 2014 (the most recent survey) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Uganda Demographic Health Survey 2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. http://hdr.undp.org/en/data [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Figures extracted from National Population and Housing Census 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)