



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

**Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Plan (VMGP)
for the Batwa around Echuya Central Forest Reserve**

**UNDER THE PROJECT
“Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate Smart Development Project (IFPA-CD)”
(P170466)**

Prepared by the Ministry of Water and Environment and National Forestry Authority

March 2023

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ACRONYMS

BMCT	Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust
CFM	Collaborative Forest Management
CFR	Central Forest Reserve
CFM	Collaborative Forest Management
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
ESF	Environmental and Social Framework
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESS	Environmental and Social Standard
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FIP	Forestry Investment Programme
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent
GoU	Government of Uganda
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
IFPA-CD	Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate Smart Development Project
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTWA	Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities
MUST	Mbarara University of Science and Technology
MWE	Ministry of Water and Environment
NFA	National Forestry Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NP	National Park
PA	Protected Area
PROBICO	Pro-biodiversity Conservationists in Uganda
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
TSP	Technical Service Provider
UOBDU	United Organisation for Batwa Development in Uganda
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USE	Universal Secondary Education
UWA	Uganda Wildlife Authority
VMGF	Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Framework
VMGPs	Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups Plans
VMGs	Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Associations
WB	World Bank
WRs	Wildlife Reserves

1.0 Introduction

The Government of Uganda (GoU) is implementing the “Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate-Smart Development (IFPA-CD) Project”. The project is financed by the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank and GoU. The implementation of the project is led by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), and the National Forestry Authority (NFA). The development objective of the project is "to improve sustainable management of forests and protected areas and increase benefits to communities from forests in target landscapes". One of the targeted landscapes is the Albertine rift, of which the Echuya Central Forest Reserve (CFR) forms a significant part.

During project preparation, the MWE, jointly with UWA and NFA, prepared and disclosed the project specific Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Framework (VMGF)¹ and the Process Framework (PF).² The VMGF and PF were prepared to meet the requirements of the World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) under the Environmental and Social Standard 7 (ESS7) on Indigenous Peoples / Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities and ESS5 on Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement respectively.

The PF was prepared to guide project implementation in case it caused restrictions of access to resources in Protected Areas. It established a participatory process for determining appropriate use restrictions and measures to address adverse impacts on livelihoods that may result from such restrictions.

The VMGF provides guidance to the implementing agency on addressing the needs of **distinct, vulnerable, social and cultural groups** which possess the following characteristics, as defined by ESS7: (i) *self-identification as members of a distinct cultural group*; (ii) *collective attachment to geographically distinct -habitats or ancestral territories*; (iii) *customary cultural, economic or social institutions that are separate from those of the rest of the society*; and (iv) *an indigenous language, often different from the official language of the country or region*. The Batwa around Echuya CFR is such a group that meets these criteria in the IFPA-CD Project area. The purpose of the VMGF is to guide the preparation and implementation of Project interventions that may affect VMGs in the proposed project areas.

The VMGF and PF recognize the importance of rights and interests of the Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups (VMGs) / the Batwa and call for their effective engagement in the design, determination and implementation of the project. It is further advised that the level of engagement of the VMGs should be proportionate to the scope and scale of potential project risks and impacts that may affect them.

Both VMGF and PF draw on the use of existing participatory forest management mechanisms used by the NFA and UWA. Community participatory management models for managing protected areas, which are being promoted by the NFA and UWA, include all categories of community members.

¹<https://www.mwe.go.ug/sites/default/files/Vulnerable%20and%20Marginalized%20Groups%20Framework%20-VMGF%20for%20Uganda.pdf>

²<https://www.mwe.go.ug/sites/default/files/library/UG%20P170466%20Process%20Framework%20for%20disclosure.pdf>

Existing community forest co-management models

- (i) *Collaborative Forest Management (CFM)* - This is an arrangement that is provided for in the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act 2003. By definition, “It is a mutually beneficial arrangement in which a forest user group and a responsible body share role, responsibilities, rights and returns (benefits) in a forest reserve or part of it.” To date, there are over 320 CFM groups in CFRs that are formally established or are in the process of being established.
- (ii) *Collaborative Resources Management (CRM)* - This is an arrangement of management in protected areas managed by UWA. It is based on the result of a negotiated process, whereby protected area management shares benefits, costs, decision-making authority and responsibilities, rights and roles in the management of wildlife resources with local communities and other stakeholders. UWA started establishing CRMs in the 1990s with an objective of increasing support for conservation.

The VMGF highlights the need to develop separate Vulnerable and Marginalised Groups’ Plan (VMGP) for each Target Protected Area that is located in areas inhabited by groups identified as possessing the above characteristics, namely the Mgahinga Gorilla National Park (MGNP), Echuya CFR, the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, and the Semuliki National Park (SNP). This is, therefore, a specific VMGP for Echuya CFR.

The project has four components with subcomponents as summarised in Table 1 below. Components 1 and 2 include activities in Target Protected Areas which are the focus of this VMGP.

Table 1. Project Components and Activities applicable to Target Protected Areas

Components/sub-components	Activities	Project Targeted Areas
Component 1: Investments to improve the management of forest protected areas.	Focus on improving the management of government-owned forest and wildlife protected areas to ensure they can continue to generate revenues and provide important environmental services. Provide support to seven National Parks, four Wildlife Reserves, and up to 28 Central Forest Reserves (CFRs). Implementation led by the NFA and UWA.	
	Summary of activities: Improve management of high biodiversity values of forests and for generating jobs and revenues that can help sustain their conservation and increase benefits to local communities.	
Sub-component 1.1: Improvement	Implemented by UWA and NFA	
	Activities include:	

of infrastructure and equipment for the management of forest protected areas	(i) Provide investments in: (a) grading and maintenance of tracks and trails within protected areas to improve access for park management; (b) boundary planning (including community consultations) and demarcation (using boundary markers); (c) infrastructure (such as gates and fences); (d) equipment and community-oriented activities to manage human-wildlife (e.g. trenches, fences); (e) investments in staff ranger housing; (f) communications; (g) vehicles and equipment and; (h) management plan revisions and updates.	BINP, MGNP, SNP, Echuya CFR
Sub-component 1.2: Increasing the involvement of local communities in the management of forest and wildlife areas by increasing their access and benefits from these areas.	Implemented by UWA and NFA	
	Activities include:	
	technical assistance packages and training aimed at developing the skills at community level to actively participate and benefit from the management of forest and wildlife resources. The technical assistance packages will include targeted support for women to empower them to participate and take leadership roles in natural resources management. At field level, support will be provided for community engagement in the management of forest resources within protected areas. This will include establishment of collaborative resource management groups, collaborative forest management groups and support of livelihood activities with existing groups.	BINP, MGNP, SNP, Echuya CFR
Sub-component 1.3: Restoration of degraded natural forests and habitats in wildlife and forest protected areas.	Implemented by UWA and NFA	
	Activities include:	
	Restoration through natural regeneration (based on enclosure of areas) and, where needed, enrichment planting, including through engaging and employing local communities.	Not Applicable to BINP, MGNP, SNP & Echuya CFR
Sub-component 1.4: Increased forest protection in CFRs and Wildlife Reserves in close proximity to refugee settlements	Implemented by UWA and NFA	
	Activities include:	
	At a small number of locations (e.g. at Bugoma Central Forest Reserve and Katonga Wildlife Reserve), deployment of additional resources to improve protected area management where there are site-specific threats to high value forest assets, either as a direct result of refugee incursion or indirectly by the added commercial demand for forest products arising from their presence.	Not Applicable to BINP, MGNP, SNP & Echuya CFR

	UWA and NFA to engage local communities in resource management efforts, including forest restoration, and strengthen enforcement efforts to better-protect remaining natural forests in these protected areas. Project supported activities include: (a) community livelihood activities (such as beekeeping and wild mushroom growing); (b) removal of invasive species; (c) forest restoration; (d) improvements for basic protected area management (communication and other equipment, vehicles, ranger posts, essential infrastructure); (e) improvements for wildfire management (fire observation towers and equipment); and (f) boundary demarcation.	BINP, MGNP, SNP, Echuya CFR
Component 2: Investments to increase revenues and jobs from forests and wildlife protected areas		
Increase revenues and jobs from these forest and wildlife protected areas through targeted investments in tourism and productive forestry		
Summary of activities: Increase the economic contribution of forests through boosting revenue generation and job creation and strengthening incentives for improved forest management. Investment in tourism infrastructure to achieve continued development of nature-based tourism, and in addition, investments to increase forest industry-based jobs and incomes. Targeted information campaign to narrow the gender gap in the forestry sector, support to women entrepreneurs and women-led producer organizations.		
Subcomponent 2.1: Investments in tourism	Implemented by UWA and NFA	
	Activities include:	
	tourist reception, information and interpretive facilities in identified protected areas	BINP, MGNP, SNP, Echuya CFR
	Infrastructure for new (or improving existing) tourist products and activities.	
Subcomponent 2.2: Investments in productive forestry	Implemented by the MWE.	
	Activities include:	
	Investments to further increase plantation area to reach a critical mass that can meet the demands of the local and regional market	Not applicable in BINP, MGNP, SNP, Echuya CFR
	Investments to support processing and utilization of forest products to produce higher value wood products.	
Component 3: Improved tree cover, forest management and landscape resilience on private and customary land, including refugee hosting areas.		
Encourage establishment of greater tree cover in refugee-hosting landscapes outside protected areas, supporting sustainable forest management and landscape resilience on private and customary land.		
Summary of activities: Activities to be led by the MWE. This is to enhance the productivity of the landscape through improved tree cover, forest management and landscape resilience on private and customary land, including in refugee hosting areas. Support channeled through specialist service providers to work closely with District Local Governments (DLGs) to build capacity and facilitate implementation of agroforestry, small-holder plantation investments, and community forestry. The project will also support an on-farm wood fuels production scheme that will supply wood fuel to target refugee settlements. Activities to be carried out in host communities in refugee hosting districts.		

Districts selected are: in Albert Rift (Hoima, Kagadi, Kakumiro, Kamwenge, Kibaale, Kikuube, Kiryandongo, Kyegegwa) and West Nile (Adjumani, Amuru, Arua, Koboko, Lamwo, Madi Okollo, Moyo, Obongi, and Yumbe).		
Subcomponent 3.1: Increased tree cover on community land in refugee-hosting areas	Activities include:	
	Development of intensive, mixed-use agroforestry systems on household plots, with a strong orientation towards multi-purpose woody species that can provide fruit, fodder, fencing, fuel, shade, and also fix nitrogen, in intensive, multi-layered systems suitable for small areas.	Not applicable in BINP, MGNP, SNP, Echuya CFR
	Support for woodlots on private land. These will enhance the supply of timber, poles, fuel, and other plantation products with seedlings supply from the private nursery network to provide context-appropriate planting material and an extension support mechanism.	
	Enhanced management and protection of natural forests on customary, leasehold and freehold land, through support to establishment of community forests and implementation of activities within them	
	Development and promulgation of Community Forest Regulations, through a consultative process that builds on existing guidelines and experiences, working with legal experts and GoU to secure assent and ensure dissemination and awareness-raising	
	Support for district local governments through capacity building, provision of basic support packages of office equipment, for mobility and operational costs.	
Subcomponent 3.2: Supporting farm forestry for refugee fuel supply	The project will, therefore, set up a program to purchase fuel wood from communities and supply it to refugees. This will simultaneously stimulate farm forestry, provide an energy lifeline to the refugees, and reduce pressure on natural woodlands.	Not applicable in BINP, MGNP, SNP, Echuya CFR
Component 4: Project management support		
Support to overall project management and forest monitoring.		MWE
Summary of activities: Support project management support activities to ensure cost-efficient, timely, and quality delivery of project activities and results.		
Support for fiduciary management aspects, including procurement and financial management safeguards, social inclusion and gender competency development including a project gender strategy/action, and monitoring, evaluation and reporting.		

1.1 Purpose of the VMGP

This VMGP specific to the Batwa around the Echuya CFR was prepared in compliance with the project's VMGF and PF. This VMGP has been prepared as a practical tool to guide the implementation of IFPA-CD project interventions that may affect the Batwa around Echuya CFR. The purpose of this VMGP is to document specific actions that have been identified and agreed with the affected Batwa, as well as measures for avoiding, minimizing or compensating for potential negative social economic impacts on them. This includes appropriate ways of engaging the Batwa to benefit from the project. The measures

are described in this plan with defined specific responsibilities and timelines to ensure that implementation can be monitored throughout the project lifecycle. The VMGP, therefore, highlights actions and strategies that will ensure that the Batwa³ living around Echuya CFR participate in and equitably benefit from the project.

The Plan recognizes the cultural heritage of VMGs / Batwa as one of the key conservation values. This VMGP plan is aligned with strategies and actions prioritized in the Echuya CFR Forest Management Plan 2016-2026⁴, which seeks to recognize the socio-economic and cultural rights of the indigenous Batwa in collaboration with other partners.

The specific activities for Batwa proposed in this VMGP for Echuya CFR will therefore supplement the management prescriptions already included in the General Management Plan for Echuya CFR.

1.2 Description of the target Area (Echuya CFR)

Echuya forest reserve was constituted in 1939 and was first gazetted and declared as undemarcated crown forest of 4,144 Ha in 1941. It was demarcated in 1944 and re-gazetted as a Central Forest Reserve by Legal Notice No. 41 of 1948 with an area of 3,403Ha. Management is vested in the National Forestry Authority (NFA) under Section 54(i) of the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act 2003, while Section 33(1) stipulates rights and privileges of communities.⁵

³The Batwa are one of the recognised VMGs in Uganda that meet the criteria of the World Bank's ESS7 description of Indigenous Peoples / Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities. Some of them live on the fringes of and derive their livelihoods from Echuya CFR.

⁴ Prescription 41.

⁵ Forest Management Plan for Echuya CFR.

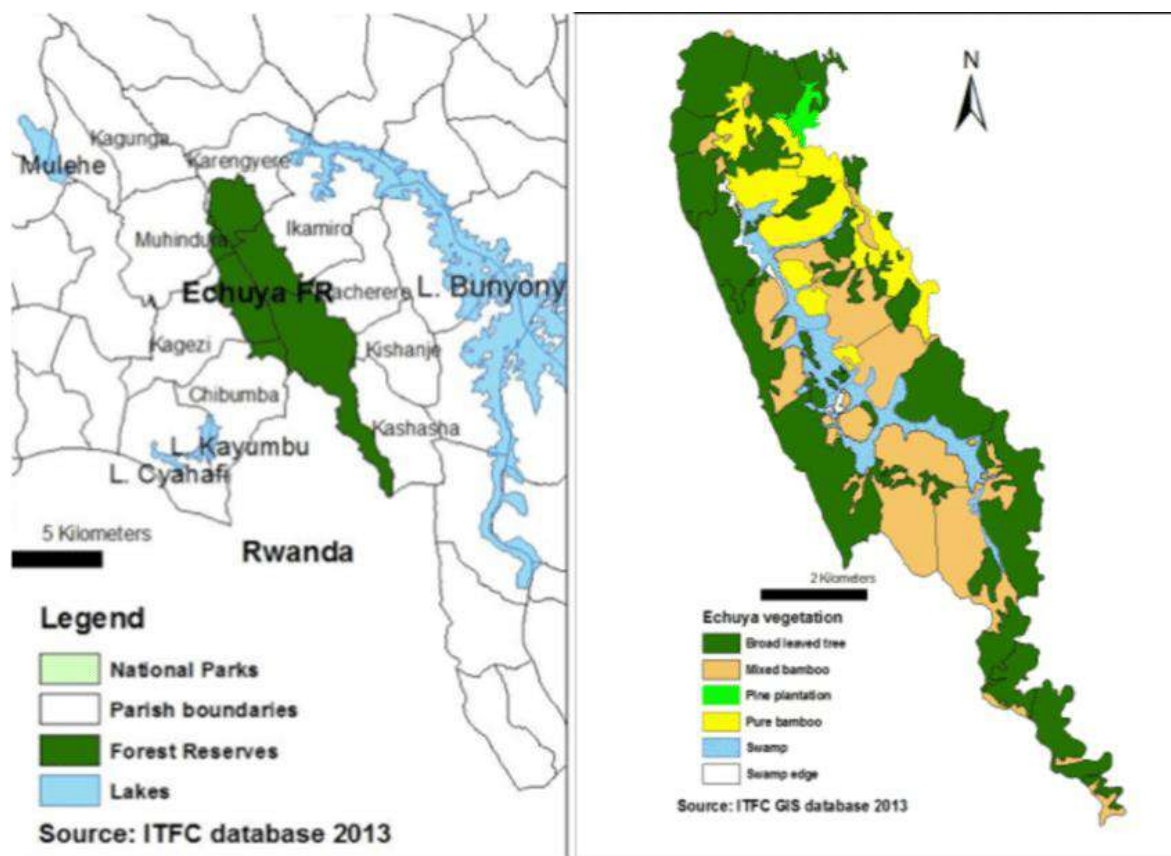


Figure 1 Map of Echuya CFR

20% of Echuya CFR's land is located in Bufumbira County in Kisoro District, and the rest 80% is in Rubanda County in Rubanda District. The southern end runs along Rwanda's northeastern border. It has an area of 34 km² with an altitudinal range of 2,270 - 2,750 m asl. It is located between 1°14' and 1°21'S and 29°47' and 29°52'E. It is located on a high-altitude ridge that runs between Lake Bunyonyi, 5 km to the East, and Mgahinga Gorilla National Park, 13 km to the southwest. It is located 11 kilometers to the east of Kisoro Town. The northern end is traversed by the main Kabale to Kisoro highway⁶.

Echuya CFR lies on a high ridge running between Lake Bunyonyi and Muhavura Lava plains. The Large Muchuya swamp draining north runs in the centre of Echuya CFR. Echuya CFR represents the highest point on both sides of Kabale and Kisoro districts by the fact that from around Rwaburimbe forest station one starts ascending on either side of Kabale-Kisoro Road. The general topographical feature of the area is steep slope, as evidenced by frequent sharp bends along the road.

The vegetation in Echuya CFR is dominated by mountain bamboo (*Arundinaria alpina*) on the northern and north-east.

Echuya CFR has high conservation value of bird species that are endemic, rare, or globally threatened, and is a known birding destination.

⁶ Nature Uganda (2015), The status of biodiversity in Echuya Central Forest Reserve. NatureUganda, Kampala, Uganda.

1.3 Existing community engagement / benefits

Collaborative Forest Management

The National Forestry and Tree Planting Act (2003), Sections 13 and 14 provide for the management of forest resources in a sustainable manner consistent with the purpose for which it was created and highlight prohibited activities within the reserves. Section 15 further calls for collaborative forest management where a responsible body may enter into a collaborative forest management arrangement with a forest user group to manage a central or local forest reserve or part of it per regulations or guidelines issued by the Minister.

The CFM processes around Echuya were among the first sets of CFM agreements in Uganda. As such, their implementation was a learning process by many actors. The processes have been able to enhance improved relations between NFA and the local communities compared to the situation before. CFM created a sense of ownership of the forest among the local community which has driven their interest to continue participating in its protection.

To administer the buffer zone of Echuya CFR, the NFA has agreements in place with four CFM associations:

- Bufundi Echuya Forest Conservation and Livelihoods Improvement Association (BECLA) in Bufundi sub-county;
- Kanaba Community Development and Echuya Forest Conservation Association (KADECA), in Kanaba sub-county;
- Muko Echuya Forest Conservation Development Association (MECDA), in Muko sub-county. This group has the highest number of Batwa CFM members (15 in total) while the other three groups have less than this number;
- Murora Echuya Forest Conservation and Poverty Alleviation Association (MEFCPAA), in Murora sub-county).

As a result of its demand driven approach, CFM has been opened to all segments of society adjacent to CFRs to access resources and to participate in social economic development.

In all CFM groups, people have rights to access forests for cultural values, medicinal herbs, honey harvesting, sand (using manual extraction), water, grass, ropes, and fee-based wood fuel and rattan extraction (with the exception for Batwa, as described above).

Although the CFM agreements that were signed in 2007, for a 10-year period have expired, NFA has commitment to continue their implementation until they are reviewed and renewed (which is a process currently ongoing, with the CFM agreements expected to be signed in April 2023).

According to the draft re-negotiated renewed CFM agreements, the following regulations would apply to cultural sites under these agreements:

- Cultural sites will be recognised, mapped by NFA and protected from destruction;
- The Batwa and any other ethnic group with cultural sites will be free to access and conduct their cultural rituals;

- Descriptive and unlawful practices, such as setting the forest on fire, will not be allowed;
- Cultural rituals involving human and wildlife sacrifice will not be allowed;
- Participants involved in cultural rituals will not indulge in any other activities such as harvesting of the craft materials, firewood, etc. while at the cultural site;
- Cultural leaders should ensure that use of fire is only confined to site and that it should not spread to other parts of the forest;
- The cultural site may, however, be used for tourism purposes, if doing so does not contradict cultural norms.

Further to this, the VMGF supports the incorporation of the Batwa into the CFM groups and associations established around Echuya CFR. To this note, the Batwa were elected to Executive committees in every CFM group, marking a significant step toward Batwa communities' beginning participation in deliberations. On the executive committee of each CFM group, a legally recognized community-based organization, there is one Batwa representative.

As part of preparing for renegotiation and renewal of the CFM agreements, NFA had conducted a participatory situation analysis in September 2022. The participatory situation analysis included a series of consultations at the district and community level, including a specific consultative meeting with the Batwa community.

The continued discrimination and exclusion of the Batwa in CFM arrangements prompted the NFA to suggest development of a separate CFM agreement for Batwa around Echuya CFR. The decision by NFA was subject to consultation of stakeholders in order to get collective support for the proposal. The stakeholders consulted in this included: the Uganda Wildlife Authority staff of Mghahinga and Bwindi national parks, political leaders and technical staff of Rubanda and Kisoro district local governments, and NGOs (Nature Uganda, United Batwa Development Organization) and the Batwa community themselves. All the stakeholders including the Batwa themselves opposed the idea of a separate agreement for Batwa because of the following reasons:

- A separate agreement will cause the Batwa to be more discriminated by the Bakiga and the Bafumbira;
- Batwa people access the same forest area like other tribes, thus a separate CFM agreement for them is bound to cause resource use conflicts between them and other tribes (Bakiga and Bafumbira);
- Furthermore, the agreement will block Batwa from the on-going process of social and economic development and integration with other tribes;
- This will inhibit the realization of the “do no harm principle”;
- Unified CFM agreement on the other hand will help to improve relations between the Batwa and other tribes; build confidence and self-esteem for the Batwa; promote sharing and co-existence; and knowledge and skills transfer among the community groups.

In both Kisoro and Rubanda districts, it was agreed that Batwa should remain and be part of the revised CFM agreements

To promote ecotourism, operationalize and assist the Batwa Trail in Echuya CFR, NFA supports the Echuya Ecotourism Association (ECOTA) as a CFM umbrella organization connecting all the CFM organizations and implementing ecotourism in Echuya. ECOTA and NFA have a Memorandum of Understanding, and the Executive Committee includes two Batwa delegates. In Echuya CFR, the Batwa have established and maintained a tourism trail (albeit informally). NFA has also allowed Batwa community members to harvest a head lot of bamboo per day, an amount that exceeds subsistence needs, so that some bamboo can also be sold for income.

CFM must also generate (monetary and non-monetary) benefits which meet the varying expectations of each CFM group. Based on a review of site-level experiences by Kazoora *et al.*, (2020) some of the benefits / positive impacts of CFM to date include; Enhanced natural forest conservation, increased tree cover, and decreased pressure on CFRs, with some groups and individuals beginning to practice activities adopted in CFM on their own (private) land, e.g., seedling growing and distribution and trees growing, such as the bamboo now being grown by the Bufundi Echuya Forest Conservation and Livelihood Improvement Association (BECLA).

1.4 The Batwa around Echuya CFR

The Batwa are ex-forest dwellers who formerly inhabited the majority of the forested regions in the Great Lakes region, mainly in southwest Uganda, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Lewis, 2000; Beswick 2011). They tend to be small in stature, have been known to hunt, and enjoy traditional dancing, particularly the Rutwa dance. They used to dress in hides and skins while living in the wild. They demonstrated social cohesiveness. Their custom is to provide a dowry in the form of sheep, goats, and honey. Only a small number of people marry other community members. Currently, the Batwa reside near protected areas in the districts of Rubanda, Kisoro, Kanungu, and Bundibugyo.

As of 2014, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics estimates that there are approximately 6,700 Batwa people in Uganda, comprising 0.2% of the country's population.

(a) Social – Economic organization

The forest had been severely encroached upon before Echuya was designated as a CFR. As of now, both Batwa and non-Batwa main ethnic populations engage in some activities including wild hunting, collecting honey, mushrooms, water, and bamboo for creating baskets, building poles, and making firewood and placing beehives. Due to a shortage of other protein sources, Batwa engage in illicit forest hunting. The Batwa place cultural value on the forest and make religious offerings to their deities there. During the Batwa consultative meeting held at the ecotourism site in Echuya CFR on 12th September 2022, it was observed that, following the unplanned displacement, Batwa communities have depended on the work of NGOs who coordinate and support their livelihoods, with little or inadequate consultation of and involvement from the Batwa⁷.

'Instead of stealing, we want to have land to cultivate and other means of income; in this scenario, we may increase our efforts to preserve the forest. We encroach on forests because we have a tiny amount of land and use it exclusively for agricultural. Some people even lack.'– **Male participant during the Batwa consultative meeting held at the ecotourism site in Echuya CFR on 12th September, 2022.**

⁷ Batwa consultative meeting organized and Facilitated by the Consultant on 12/09/22 at Echuya Toursim site.

“The only difficulty that remains is education, but I am delighted that we have this space because we battled for it (referring to the location of the conference). We signed a contract for this location, and you are welcome to give us more land. I want to express my gratitude to all of the partners who helped the Batwa purchase land.” – Comment from female during the Batwa consultative meeting held at the ecotourism site in Echuya CFR on 12th September, 2022.

Accordingly, observations from consultations⁸ with the Batwa revealed that “the eviction from the forest dispossessed the Batwa of almost all their land rights. Most of the Batwa who own land have obtained it from support from NGOs, but even then, the few that have land do not enjoy the security of tenure. As such, they continue to live a life of neglect, begging for food and working as a source of cheap labor.

During similar consultative meetings (in other Batwa sites) held with stakeholders and Batwa NGO leaders,⁹ it was observed that most illegal activities such as poaching, wild honey collection, hunting, and gathering within similar PAs including Echuya CFR, are often blamed on the Batwa by forest managers; yet they are simply hoping to live like their counterparts from other tribes. As a consequence of their eviction, the Batwa have continued to be vulnerable and suffer severe isolation, discrimination, and socio-political exclusion¹⁰. This was also in line with the earlier observations made by Batwa leaders during the consultations with Batwa in the process of development of the VMGF. During these consultations, it was noted that Batwa’s customary rights to the forest lands have not been recognized within Uganda, and they have not been compensated for the loss of their lands and the resultant lifestyle (hunter-gatherers) since their eviction from the forest.¹¹

(b) Batwa Population around Echuya CFR

Echuya CFR is located in the most densely populated area of Rubanda and Kisoro districts. Other than the Batwa, the forest is surrounded by the Bakiga and the Bafumira who comprise a bigger percentage of the population. Their households are scattered in various settlements in villages located adjacent to the forest. The main settlements are located in Birara and Rwamahano Batwa Communities.

In Echuya CFR, the Batwa occupy the following forest frontline communities and settlements in the Districts of Kisoro and Rubanda, presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Batwa communities around Echuya Central Forest Reserve

District	Community /Settlement	Parish	Sub county
Rubanda	Rwamahano	Kamiro	Muko
	Karengyere	Karengye	Muko
	Murubindi	Kacerere	Bufundi
	Kinyarushengye	Kashasha Town council	Bufundi
	Nyakabungo	Kashaha	Bufundi

⁸ Consultation meetings held with the Batwa near Echuya CFR on 12/09/2022

⁹ Consultative meeting by the consultant with Key stakeholders and Batwa NGO leaders held on 11/9/2022 at Manhattan In Kabale Town

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Consultative meeting by the consultant with Key stakeholders and Batwa NGO leaders held on 11/9/2022 at Manhattan hotel In Kabale Town

Kisoro	Kishenyi	Kashasha	Bufundi
	Nyakera	Kacerere	Bufundi
	Biizi	Kibumba	Murora
	Birara	Birara	Bukimbiri
	Kanaaba	Muhindura	Kanaaba
	Gitebe	Kagyezi	Kanaaba
	Rugesi	Kibumba	Murora

Source: Field Data

An increase in Batwa residents has been observed in the area of Echuya CFR. According to Plumptyre *et al.* (2004) and the VMGF (2020), the Batwa made up 1.6% of the population at the time, with Bakiga and Bafumbira making up the bulk. This number has been estimated by some sources¹² to be around 5%, with Bakiga, Bafumbira, Hutu, and Tutsi accounting for a larger portion. The Echuya CFR Batwa homes, however, are dispersed across a variety of towns near the forest.

There is a total of 689 Batwa households in the Kisoro and Rubanda Districts, with a combined population of 2,753 persons (Table 3), according to the most recent indigenous Batwa Population Census conducted by the Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust (BMCT, 2020), 48% of these are men, and 52% are women. Kisoro has an average Batwa household size of 4.1, whereas Rubanda has a size of 3.8. According to the study's analysis of age distribution, the majority of Batwa people (68.4%) are under the age of 25 and a sizeable portion of them 21.3% are youngsters under the age of five. However, the population of Kisoro includes Batwa of Echuya CFR, BINP, and Mgahinga National Park.

Table 3: Population of Batwa in Kisoro and Rubanda Districts

District	Number of Households	Males	Females	Total
Kisoro	516	1,009	1,090	2,099
Rubanda	173	308	346	654
Total	689	1,317	1,436	2,753

Although there is no current specific formal census to ascertain the numbers of the Batwa as of March 2023, there are estimates of the population of Batwa living around Echuya, drawn from consultations with Leaders of Non-Governmental Organizations, working with the Batwa around Echuya.

Table 4. Population Estimates for the Batwa frontline communities/settlements around Echuya CFR

District	Community /Settlement	Parish	Sub county	Number of Household s	Average Household size
Rubanda	Rwamahano	Kamiro	Muko	64	5.9
	Karengyere	Karengye	Muko	31	6.5
	Murubindi	Kacerere	Bufundi	80	7.0
	Kinyarushengye	Kashasha T/C	Bufundi	38	4.3

¹² <https://www.bwindiimpenetrablenationalpark.com/activities/meet-the-batwa-of-echuya-forest>.

	Nyakabungo	Kashaha	Bufundi	18	3.4
	Kishenyi	Kashasha	Bufundi	6	3.8
	Nyakera	Kacerere	Bufundi	15	3.3
Kisoro	Biizi	Kibumba	Murora	33	5.1
	Birara	Birara	Bukimbiri	50	4.3
	Kanaaba	Muhindura	Kanaaba	39	5.0
	Gitebe	Kagyezi	Kanaaba	53	4.2
	Rugesi	Kibumba	Murora	25	6.1
Total				452	

Source: Field Data

(c) Batwa Culture

Evidence from literature¹³ indicates that the Batwa had a distinctive culture that was mostly based on their hunter-gatherer way of life before 1991. In a study by Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST 2020), out of 476 Batwa reached in the study the majority (321 persons or 67.6%) revealed that they were born and raised in the forests. Of these 321, a total of 128 (40.1%) confessed deriving their ancestry from Echuya (LASER-PULSE, 2022). In the same research, more than one-third of the Batwa still claimed the forest as their place of origin. According to these investigations, some Batwa continue to visit the forests for religious and therapeutic reasons under the CFM framework between NFA and community associations.

The Batwa traditionally had locations designated for burials and send-off ceremonies related to the final funeral rites. For instance, graves were typically located close to large trees deep within the forest, and the deceased were interred upright. In the past, the Batwa worshipped, revered, sacrificed, and gave offerings of appeasement to their "deity" in certain locations. However, because they now have limited access to the forest, their cultural practice of worshiping their ancestors was severely hampered when they were driven out of it. The Batwa males were in charge of safeguarding their families and property, as was the case in most traditional patriarchal societies, while the women continued to be in charge of food production and child rearing. Men, on the other hand, were free to use their resources and money in any way they pleased.

The Batwa are convinced that they were born to rule the region as kings (*Batware*)¹⁴. Originally, the ladies worked in ceramics, while the men were hunters. One would first hunt an animal to be respected as a man. While women gathered medicinal herbs for themselves and their children, men would gather medical herbs to give to male children. Men were expected to be warriors and responsible for supplying fire (*gushingata*).

The language of the Batwa is an important aspect of their culture. A third of the Batwa, according to MUST (2020), claimed *Orutwa* or *Rutwa* as their mother tongue and spoke it. Evidence from similar discussions with the Batwa in Karengyere showed that the majority of the Batwa are no longer able to speak *Rutwa*, because they have continuously assimilated other languages used by the local dominant communities such as *Bakiga* and *Bafumbira*. The majority of Batwa can speak *Rukiga* and *Rufumbira*, as evidenced at the consultative meetings. The declining influence of the Batwa culture must be noted.

¹³ Mbarara University of Science and Technology (2020), The marginalization of the Batwa people of Southwestern Uganda, as an indigenous community.

¹⁴ Interview with Gad Shemajere, A mutwa Leader, held on 11th 9 2021, in Kabale District.

Only a few elderly Batwa still speak the Rutwa language routinely; therefore, it is sadly becoming extinct in the community.

(d) Land Ownership, Access, and Utilization

Studies have shown that the Batwa in the area of Echuya CFR are the most landless as compared to other community members, much like in other Batwa settlements. This is attributed, by the LASER-PULSE (2022) investigation, to their marginalization. Inadequate land access is thought to be the main reason for the majority of their vulnerabilities and all associated difficulties. According to research, they do not possess enough land to produce enough food for their needs, to sell, or to build adequate habitats. The Batwa are the only tribe that does not possess ancestral land, but sufficient land may be an issue for the rest of the population in the areas where they dwell. The problems that represent the Batwa's struggles with land ownership and related rights resonate well with discussions held.

- i) They were never given land compensation or resettled after being expelled from the forest in the 1990s, which was crucial in helping them rebuild their life. There is a prevalent perception that this has led to their marginalization from society in terms of socioeconomic status, culture, and politics, as well as a loss of identity and dignity.
- ii) Batwa resettlement programs with Mgahinga and Bwindi Impenetrable Forest Conservation Trust and UOBDU projects have been transforming Batwa culture and social setup by integrating their livelihoods with neighboring communities of Bakiga and Bafumbira in Kabale and Kisoro districts.
- iii) The NGOs who help the Batwa in their relocation have largely been at the forefront of efforts to buy land for the community. According to BMCT (2020), practically all organizations maintain the acquired land in trust as a precaution against disputes with neighbors and loss to land speculators. BMCT acquired 93.85 acres in Kabale/Rubanda, resettled the Batwa, and gave them starter kits (seeds, household items, and other inputs). The BMCT's policy is founded on the idea that giving displaced Batwa assets is a critical step in boosting their sense of self-worth, because it was only via owning productive assets like land, a home, and cattle that the Batwa gained respect from the surrounding communities. LASER-PULSE (2022), however, notes that the purchased land is insufficient to house the full Batwa community, forcing the majority of them to live as vagrants and placing them in a more precarious condition where they must beg or rely on other ethnic groups for survival.
- iv) Since there is no evidence to support their claim to ownership, some who obtained land from NGOs (and the government) express doubt regarding their ownership of the property.

“We, the Batwa, all support the Movement Government, or NRM, as it is known. But we're all lagging behind. We don't have a place to live. Others were left behind while some received land. We have been waiting for the land that the government promised us?” **Batwa female participant during consultative meeting organized and facilitated by the VMGP preparation team on 12/09/22 at Echuya Ecotourism site**

Being landless has numerous consequences. Because of the severe food insecurity it has caused, the Batwa have become beggars and wanderers. Overcultivation has drained the small plot of land they have been farming.

(e) Education

Poor education is a defining characteristic of Batwa communities in Uganda. More than half of Batwa people do not have any kind of formal education, according to numerous studies¹⁵. There are more men than women among those who have been able to complete some form of schooling. Only 3% of the Batwa in the area of Echuya have completed at least high school. The main contributing factors to the low educational attainment among the Batwa include poverty, unfavorable attitudes to education, and discriminatory behavior.

For instance, it was noted during the discussions with the Batwa in Rubanda that children from other tribes, such as the Bakiga, do not want to be friends with Batwa children in school and that, it is usual to make derogatory remarks about Batwa children. Other tribes' students typically don't openly exchange educational materials with the Batwa Children. According to the BMCT's Population Census (2020), the out of 476 Batwa, a total of 282 (59.4%) in Kisoro and Rubanda did not have any formal education. The percentages of those with tertiary education were 0.4% in Kisoro and 0.8% in Rubanda District, respectively. It was also observed that women made up a larger proportion of Batwa people who had never completed any formal schooling.

- i) **Poverty:** Despite more people having access to free education under the Universal Primary Education Program (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE), feedback from community consultations with the Batwa suggested that the low educational attainment of the Batwas was caused by a lack of supplies like school supplies and stationery. More crucially, they lack access to food at home and in their neighborhoods as well as at school. It is common for the Batwa children to escape from school when teaching is going on to go and beg for food.
- ii) **Negative attitudes towards education:** Additionally, it was noted that the majority of Batwa continue to show little interest in education and do not recognize its advantages. The Batwa traditional method in the forest entailed elders passing on their knowledge informally to the younger generation, orally and via practice. As a result, the Batwa are not familiar with the mainstream educational system and were not raised in it.
 - iii) Even though authorities and parents punish students who disobey, the majority of kids choose to skip class and disobey.

“Our children do not like schooling, in many instances; they have been given books and other scholastic materials by non-governmental organizations and other well-wishers. But when they leave home to go to school, they end up loitering in trading centres and resort to begging” (Female Batwa leader, during a meeting in Echuya Ecotourism Centre on 12 September, 2022 Rubanda District¹⁶).
- iv) **Discriminatory acts against the Batwa at school:** Reports of discriminatory actions against Batwa students have had an impact on their educational experiences. Yelling and discriminating acts by other tribes against Batwa Children at school have made them hate and lose interest in schooling.

¹⁵ Mbarara University of Science and Technology (2020), The marginalization of the Batwa people of South western Uganda, as an indigenous community, Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust (2016) Batwa Population Census Report.

¹⁶ Batwa consultative meeting organized and Facilitated by the VMGP team on 12th September, 2022at Echuya ecoourism site.

(f) Health and Wellbeing

Aside from the government-supported universal access to health care, it was noted during consultative meetings with key stakeholders working on the Batwa issues that NGOs and civil society have been at the forefront of Batwa health and welfare. The communities of the Batwa are said to have the worst health. This is also consistent with the results of several studies, like LASER-PULSE (2022) and BMCT (2020), which also revealed issues regarding the health of the Batwa. For instance, in a study based on 654 persons as a total population of Batwa in Rubanda District, it was reported that 36.4% of the Batwa in Rubanda district consume alcohol and smoke cigarettes. Men consume more alcohol than women overall. In the same study, the reported HIV prevalence was 5.9%, with a prevalence of 4.5% among males and 6.9% among females. Rubanda district had an HIV rate of 6.2% on average. According to the study, 23% of the respondents did not know their HIV status. Only 38% of Batwa women use maternal health services, including prenatal care. Additionally, half of the Batwa women have their babies in a medical institution, with only 33% reporting to have ever utilized family-planning technique in the past. A latrine was found to be present in only one out of every five Batwa households. In Echuya, the VMGP team's field visit in June 2022 revealed that cooking takes place either in an open space or in peoples' sleeping quarters.

At least one in every four Batwa experienced gender-based violence in just one month. This violence is frequently committed by spouses and is strongly linked to rising alcohol misuse and poverty. At least 30% of the local Batwa have reported experiencing physical abuse. The majority of Batwa women have spoken out against sexual, financial, and emotional abuse. At least one in ten participants reported that the COVID-19 period led to the escalation of all forms of violence. The superstition that sleeping with a female Mutwa (Mutwakwazi) can treat HIV/AIDS and back pain worsens GBV.

1.5 Local social organizations, beliefs, ancestral territory, and resource use patterns

Notwithstanding the numerous problems faced by Batwa, they continue to value their forest based social system, culture, and traditional practices as an important part of their self-identification. The Batwa consider themselves one group with the same history, culture and contemporary socio-economic challenges. They also consider themselves to be the best forest conservationists. The traditional practices which define their ethnic group as a forest people include hunting and gathering forest resources, eating uncooked food, worshipping gods in the forest, sleeping in caves, guiding forest researchers and tourists, dressing in leaves and animal skins, making fire using dry sticks and speaking the Orutwa language.

The cultural values identified from the consultations¹⁷ show that Batwa deeply value Echuya as their cultural heritage. They attach considerable cultural importance to forest resources including rivers, hills, plants and animals. To Batwa, the forests are a source of physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. Before the forests were gazetted as national parks, Batwa depended on forest resources for food, medicine, basketry, firewood, marketable items, house construction, tools, rituals, hunting and recreation. Cultural songs, dances, household implements and tools, local names of people, places, water points, caves, gullies, streams, and hills within the park all reflect a long history of human involvement. Through consultations with the Batwa and review of literature and the FMP for Echuya CFR, a number of culturally significant items and locations were identified and their importance in resource conservation discussed. The summary of items of cultural significance are highlighted in the table below:

¹⁷ Consultative meeting held with the Batwa at Echuya Ecotourism site on 12th September, 2022.

Table 5. Key plant and animal items and their cultural significance

	Valued item	Cultural significance
1	Honey from stingless bees and honeybees	Important in preparing the beer used in offerings and sacrifices to appease the spirits of their ancestors
2	Animals, including, bush pigs, flying squirrels, cane rats, francolins and mudfish	Meat was a staple food for Batwa and was also used in worship. Animal skins were used as clothes and storage bags. Flying squirrels were used as dowry.
3	Plants, including wild yams, mushrooms, fruits like <i>Myrianthus</i> sp. and vegetables like <i>Solanum nigrum</i>	Important food items
4	<i>Rytigynia kigeziensis</i> , <i>Piper guinensis</i> , <i>Ocotea usambarensis</i> , <i>Toddalia</i> sp. and <i>Prunus Africana</i>	Important medicinal plants
5	<i>Ficus</i> sp. and <i>Erythrina abyssinica</i>	Important in acts of worship
6	Bamboo	Building material, material for crafts, fuel wood, and a product for sale

The CFM program implemented by NFA has developed and strengthened community institutions and, to some extent, provided real benefits to the resource users.

However, the Batwa feel they have been marginalized by the Bakiga (the dominant ethnic group) in the existing multiple use program. Due to high population pressure, there is inadequate availability of these resources outside the forest, and this has increased the demand and pressure on forest resources. Batwa communities have special attachment to these resources for many years as a source of community livelihood.

The Echuya CFR FMP 2016-2026 recognizes the socio-economic and cultural rights of the indigenous Batwa in collaboration with other partners. These rights have also been confirmed through the consultation meetings held by the VMGP team with the Batwa and key stakeholders in June 2021 and September 2022 around Echuya CFR and are highlighted in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Cultural Values of the Batwa and their importance in the Management of Echuya CFR

	Cultural values	Importance in Echuya CFR management
1	Beliefs/Indigenous-local knowledge about medicinal herbs	• Sustainable use of forest resources • Use of traditional knowledge in forestry conservation initiatives • Respect for forest resources in terms of human health improvement
2	Spiritual beliefs and practices	• Valuing forest, thus motivation for protection • Contribution to cultural tourism
3	Tourism trails/Batwa forest trail	• Diversified tourism products • Gainful engagement of the Batwa as tour guides, porters etc.

		•Promoting and preserving the Batwa culture and way of life as a tourism product
4	Batwa Music Dance and Drama	• Conservation Communication strategy and awareness raising •Empowering the Batwa community through generation of income •Contribution to community tourism around Echuya

The IFPA-CD project will support some of the management actions, as highlighted in the Echuya FMP and other actions identified during consultations¹⁸ with the Batwa. Such actions include:

- Sensitize the CFM groups to increase membership of the Batwa in the current CFM membership.
- Provide for participation of Batwa Elders in Identifying and mapping out earlier spiritual Batwa sites in Echuya CFR (as part of the Batwa trail development).
- Recruit Batwa youth and build their capacity in tour guiding and tourism.
- Support Batwa music, dance, and drama (as part of the Batwa trail development) .
Develop the Batwa Tourism trail in Echuya (which is currently used for informal tourism only).

An issue that came up during re-negotiation of the CFM agreements is that currently the fee is 100,000 per new entrant which the Batwa say is not affordable to them. A recommendation was made to the CFM groups to reduce the amount of money required as membership fees to join the CFM institution around Echuya. However, the final decision on this lies with the individual groups and is outside of the project scope.

Table 7: Community Based Organizations and NGOs working with and led by the Batwa around Echuya CFR

No	Organization	Key work areas
1.	Batwa Development Organization	community development, human rights, health, education, environmental governance, tourism
2.	Batwa Indigenous Development Organization	community development, human rights, health, education, environmental governance, tourism
3.	Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust (BMCT)	community development, human rights, health, education, environmental governance, tourism
4.	Civil Society Coalition on Indigenous People in Uganda (CSCIP-U)	rights of indigenous people, natural resources conservation, cultural heritage, forestry management
5.	Echuya Eco-Tourism Association (ECOTA)	tourism, collaborative forest management, community development and livelihood improvement
6.	Pro-biodiversity Conservationists in Uganda (PROBICOU)	research, natural resources governance, biodiversity conservation, forestry management, tourism, rights of indigenous people, etc.

¹⁸ Batwa consultative meeting organized and Facilitated by the Consultant on 12/09/22 at Echuya Toursim site, Consultative meeting by the consultant with Key stakeholders and Batwa NGO leaders held on 11/9/2022 at Manhattan In Kabale Town

7.	Nature Uganda	Community development, tourism, biodiversity conservation (including research), livelihoods support
8.	United Organization for Batwa Development in Uganda (UOBDU)	community development, human rights, health, education, environmental governance, tourism
9.	Bufundi Echuya Forest Conservation and Livelihoods Improvement Association (BECLA)	community development, health, education, environmental governance, tourism
10.	Kanaba Community Development and Echuya Forest Conservation Association (KADECA).	community development, human rights, health, education, environmental governance, tourism
11.	Muko Echuya Forest Conservation Development Association (MECDA)	livelihood improvement, community development, human rights, health, education, environmental governance, tourism
12.	Murora Echuya Forest Conservation and Poverty Alleviation Association (MEFCPAA).	community development, human rights, health, education, environmental governance, tourism

2.0 VMGP Development Process and Approach

This VMGP was developed through a series of consultative engagements, it also builds on the information gathered during project preparation, during preparation of the VMGF and the PF, as well as the specific engagements with the indigenous peoples that were undertaken as part of Uganda's REDD+. There were two stages of consultations specific to the development of this VMGP.

2.1 Structure of the Consultations

This VMGP has been developed with inclusive and systematic participation of the Batwa and local level stakeholders including NFA, Kisoro and Rubanda District Local Governments, and representatives from NGOs working around issues of Batwa and conservation of Echuya CFR. The target communities had previously been consulted during the development of Uganda's REDD+ Program and during the development of the VMGF in March 2020. In every engagement (key informant interviews and focus group discussions) the consultations, therefore, built on the same process and started by providing feedback on the status of the project and outcomes of the previous consultation process. The key aspects of the VMGF were highlighted and the participants were reminded of the key issues and aspects discussed during the previous consultations. Some of these issues include:

- The need to ensure that the Batwa communities in general and their organizations/local leaders are not excluded by any means in activities of planning, selection, design, and implementation processes of IFPA-CD project in Echuya CFR.
- Developing arrangements to channel benefits directly to Batwa, including initiation of a system whereby IFPA-CD benefits could directly flow to the community level without going through a very bureaucratic process, which does not effectively respond to their unique needs. They

proposed that setting up a special fund targeted at the Batwa themselves would increase the benefits directly within their communities.

- Strengthening collaborative resource access - across all the groups, currently, the main resource access mechanism in Echuya CFR is CFM. There was a proposal to initiate investments aiming at strengthening organized Batwa groups and associations through skills development for production of high-quality craft products, bee keeping, and confidence building initiatives for the adult Batwa, so as to benefit more from the project.
- Ensuring coordinated interventions to address the needs of the Batwa to achieve conservation and development objectives and to promote culturally sensitive activities that promote/protect Batwa cultures and norms.
- The need for government to effectively communicate and explain its policies and demonstrate how the marginalized Batwa communities would benefit from the legislative and policy provisions. For example, leveraging tourism development for the long-term sustainability of VMG engagement.
- Designing and implementing activities that take into account the need for integrating conservation friendly cultural values of the Batwa people into forest management and conservation planning. Such approach would not only be beneficial for conservation but will also be a good avenue to empower and enforce the affirmative action, which can also spill over into education and employment skills based on indigenous knowledge.
- Creating and providing gender balanced employment opportunities such as tour guides, porters, boundary management, etc.

2.2 Phase 1 of VMGP Specific Consultations (June 2021)

In June 2021, an initial round of talks was held with the Batwa leaders. To stop the Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) from spreading, the government of Uganda had ordered a lockdown and instituted stringent standard operating procedures (SOP) at the time these meetings were held. The COVID-19 circumstances were consequently taken into account during the consultative discussions. As public gatherings were prohibited, the consultation process relied on a few techniques, including Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), one-on-one physical discussions, within the recommended SOPs, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), of no more than five people organized within the framework of SOPs, and virtual or telephone interviews with the leaders of the Batwa. Rutwa, Rukiga and Rufumbira, the local languages used by the Batwa around Echuya CFR, were used for the interviews. These languages were already known to the team preparing the VMGP. Additionally, a conscious effort was made to arrange the FGDs in open areas to prevent crowding and assembling. A total of 15 participants, mostly Batwa leaders, attended the Focus group meetings and the KIIs. A draft of the VMGP was created as a result. However, the evaluation of this draft report revealed some limitations, mostly due to restrictions of the COVID-19 regulations that constrained the breadth and methodology employed in consultations. For instance, given the cultural context of the Batwa, the utilization of techniques like telephone interviews was not highly appropriate. Due to the small number of Batwa who owned telephones, these tactics not only restricted how the Batwa expressed themselves but were also difficult. As a result, only a few chosen Batwa leaders had a chance to participate in the consultations.

There was the need for more discussions to (a) involve more stakeholders and Batwa people in the project area, (b) reach more Batwa people, and (c) produce more baseline data that is site-specific.

2.3 Phase II of consultations (September 2022).

A second round of consultations was organized once most COVID-19 related restrictions were lifted in Uganda. On 12th September, 2022, a special consultation with the Batwa around Echuya CFM was carried out, at the Echuya CFR tourism site. The meeting was attended by 65 people in total (30 men and 35 women), with representation from the frontline communities around Echuya CFR. The goal of consulting the Batwa who reside around Echuya CFR and depend on it for their livelihood was to learn about their concerns and preferences regarding the design and proposed implementation of the IFPA-CD project to give them equitable access to project benefits and minimize any unfavorable outcomes for the Batwa. Their opinions and the issues they presented have informed the finalization of this VMGP.

The participants were then guided to prioritise activities and to rank impact through an impact identification exercise. This was arrived at by making summaries of issues from the consultative reports¹⁹. The Batwa community consultative meeting held on 4th October, 2022, was conducted in Rukiga, Rutoro and Orutwa to enable them get a clear understanding of the project objectives, investments and implementation arrangements as well as to ensure active participation. Prior to holding the community consultative meeting, a communication was made to the Batwa by a telephone call, through their NGO representatives with message highlighting the objectives for the consultations, consultation process, venue and intended outcome/outputs from the consultation meetings. During physical meetings the agenda below was followed:

Agenda of the consultation meeting held on 12th September, 2022

Session 1: Introduction

1. Opening Prayer
2. Communication from a leader of Batwa
3. Remarks from District Local Government Authority

Session 2: Objectives of the meeting and Expectations

4. Presentation about the Project (objectives, investment in the PA/locality, implementation arrangements.
Presentation on likely project impacts of IFPA-CD project on Batwa and measures for mitigating identified impacts; Potential IFPA-CD project benefits to Batwa and implementation and financing arrangements to deliver these benefits; and Opportunities and mechanisms for uplifting Batwa participation in governance of Mgahinga Gorilla National Park
5. Discussion and feedback
6. Closing

The VMGP is structured under guidance of the key components suggested under Chapter Six of the VMGF for IFPA-CD Project, and as such, during the consultative meeting held on 12th September, 2022 the Batwa from communities living around and obtaining livelihood from Echuya CFR were able to identify area-specific issues and actions to inform not only the development of VMGP, but also generated proposals to strengthen VMGP implementation, as highlighted in the following sub-sections. These include:

¹⁹ Specific Area issues, needs and aspirations are already presented in specific Protected Area Reports and Annexed to the project VMGF document.

- Land continues to be a problem (There should be special effort to look for windows of acquiring more land for the Batwa). There is still a threat from scarcity of land, which took the 1st position in the ranking of problems by the Batwa in Echuya CFR
- There are still challenges in distribution of benefits, because women and youth do not benefit as much as men from most development activities
- The CFM groups were registered at a time when the Batwa were not educated and, therefore, underrepresented. There is need to review the membership of CFM groups and leadership to provide for effective representation of Batwa and with educated representatives of the Batwa in leadership structures.
- Urgent need to sensitise the Batwa on CFM and involve them.
- The need to sensitize the Batwa to engage in enterprise development initiatives that can co-exist with the forests. “The Batwa are the first conservationists.”
- Lobbying government to initiate projects with activities that can be done in a forest to generate money, so that we can use this money to buy land and these activities could also be provided for in the CFM agreements.
- The Batwa have very limited involvement in government development programmes and are underrepresented on project committees and in national and local government bodies.

The Batwa highlighted that the IFPA-CD project should support the following management actions:

- Train the Batwa techniques of growing some indigenous trees
- In order to effectively implement the MoUs between NFA and Community associations, carry out awareness program for communities on resource use especially on the terms and conditions of the MoUs should be undertaken.
- Support Batwa to lobby government to initiate projects with activities that can be done in a forest to generate money so that we can use this money to buy land and these activities could also be provided for in the CFM agreements.
- The need to help the Batwa get space where they can collect items of our cultural importance and preserve and display them for tourism.
- To address the potential risks of fire resulting from the traditional honey harvesting methods, support and train communities in honey harvesting techniques and acquire modern honey harvesting tools and gears.
- Adopt a participatory approach while developing CFM agreements and undertaking monitoring and evaluating resource offtake.
- Supporting the Batwa forest trail
- Train the Batwa in Forestry management and conservation approaches.
- Develop further tourism products based on the Batwa culture. This would not only help in diversifying the existing tourism package in Echuya CFR but would also benefit the Batwa by improving their incomes when they guide tourists to their cultural sites, sell handicrafts and dance for tourists.

2.4 Consultations with key stakeholders supporting the Batwa in Echuya CFR

Further consultations and deliberations were held with the key project anticipated implementing partners and stakeholders including local level NFA staff, representatives from the Rubanda and Kisoro District Local Governments (Chief Administrative officers, District Tourism Officers, District Natural

Resources officers), NGOs, and community development groups that represent and assist the Batwa around Echuya CFR. Participants were purposively selected on the basis of their experience and work related to conservation in Echuya CFR and the Batwa. A meeting of stakeholders and NGOs working on issues of the Batwa in Echuya was organized at Manhattan Hotel in Kabale and was attended by 25 stakeholders. The information generated from this stakeholder consultative meeting included the following:

- The current needs and preferred options for livelihood of the Batwa around Echuya CFR
- Previous experiences with interventions and conservation projects targeting the Batwa around Echuya CFR to determine what works and what does not
- Measures to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts likely to affect the Batwa in the project
- Measures to ensure project benefits will accrue to the Batwa around Echuya CFR
- Measures to strengthen the capacity of local authority especially the district Local Governments of Kisoro, Rubanda, and relevant government departments to address VMGs issues
- Involvement of community organizations and development groups from the project area and the expertise from the local authorities and national level
- Roles of the key stakeholders in the implementation of the VMGP for Batwa around Echuya CFR
- The current needs and preferred options for the livelihood of the Batwa around Echuya CFR and the currently related conservation projects that will be supported.

2.5 Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)

The IFPA-CD project team has consulted²⁰ with Batwa during the project design with sessions specific with Batwa, for example during the preparation of ESMF and preparation of VMGF. The preparation of VMGP has been entirely dedicated to Batwa and their full engagement has been secured during this process. At the current stage, FPIC is deemed not to apply, because most of the project activities will be implemented in the park. Therefore, they will have no adverse impacts on land and associated natural resources under customary use or occupation. The project will also not relocate any VMGs and will have no major negative impacts on cultural heritage. However, it is also understood that ESS7 is meant to avoid adverse impacts of projects on VMGs, which calls for informed consultations. Informed consultations²¹ with Batwa were, therefore, carried out and this led to broad community support. Engagement of the Batwa in the consultations, information on the projects benefits and their participation was shared. During the consultations it was observed that a high number of the Batwa community members turned out for the sensitization and consultative meetings on the benefits and risks of the project. The members were keen to benefit from the government projects. There was active participation of the community members during the plenary and open discussion sessions, they asked many questions concerning the project and have demonstrated support for the project.

3.0 Specific issues for the Batwa around Echuya CFR identified during consultations

3.1 General aspirations, and needs of the Batwa in Echuya CFR

From a number of consultations, a number of general needs and aspirations were identified by the Batwa. These include:

²⁰ Consultations with the Batwa in Echuya in June 2021, consultative meeting held on 12th September, 2022 at Echuya.

²¹ Ibid.

- Provide land to the Batwa for them to carry out agriculture
- Recruitment of qualified Batwa to work as NFA officers, tour guides, and porters in Echuya CFR.
- Seed supply for food crops other than only sorghum that will be planted as cash crops and consumed by the tourism industry. Some of the Batwa who own a few tiny plots of land should be encouraged to produce fast-growing crops like vegetables that are greatly desired by the tourism industry.
- Enhance the Batwa Community and forest trail upkeep and promotion in Echuya CFR. Develop an MOU between NFA and the Batwa regarding the trail around in Echuya.
- The Batwa would need assistance in creating and maintaining marketing tools like a website due to their lack of marketing expertise.
- Work with NFA to incorporate cultural tourism and strengthen Batwa cultural tourism activities at the forest centre (with its musical, dance, and dramatic expressions).
- Encouraging apiaries and working with NFA to provide the Batwa permission to keep bees near the forest boundaries, and in some regions of the forest. Additionally, they may move wild bees from Echuya to inhabit the beehives along the forest border.
- Implement livelihoods support program for the Batwa
- Increase the participation of Batwa in CFM – leadership, decision making, planning
- Support the Batwa to develop tourism products based on Batwa culture, for example, creating music and dance groups

It was explained to the participants of the consultations that a number of issues, like purchase of land, are beyond the project scope; however, cognizance of such issues is useful to other partners formulating their support to the Batwa.

3.2 Potential positive impacts of the project to the Batwa in Echuya CFR

In series of consultative meetings with the Batwa that took place on i) June 2021 at Echuya, (ii) 12th September, 2022, at Echuya CFR Ecotourism site and iii) meeting of stakeholders and NGOs working on issues of the Batwa in Echuya organized at Manhattan Hotel in Kabale on the 12th September 2022, the participants observed that the implementation of the project will likely result in a number of positive impacts such as:

- Increased protection of the VMGs' rights to access the forest resources and receive livelihoods support through CFM arrangements such as collection of non-forest products including mushrooms, medicinal plants, wild fruits and beekeeping to local communities around forest
- The Batwa will also be able to get employment opportunities from the project, including those for invasive plant species removal, tree restoration planting, ecotourism prospects, tour guiding, and temporary labour during construction projects.
- Increased awareness education on importance of sustainable use of Echuya CFR resources
- Increased capacity arising from training of CFM, community committees, women and youth groups, elders' groups and community-based organizations, in sustainable use and monitoring of forests
- Increased knowledge and awareness to the Batwa and local communities on the importance of sustainable forest management
- Documentation of specific cultural values, spiritual beliefs, Batwa dance and drama

- Strengthen the management of CFM groups in Echuya CFR and increased protection of Batwa people's legal right to use forest resources such as bamboo and get assistance with their livelihoods under CFM agreements
- Gain from enhanced tourism infrastructure and the subsequent rise in visitor numbers, which will provide more job possibilities in the industry and boost their earnings and long-term quality of life. This involves giving the Batwa people access to markets for their handcrafts as well as other tourism-related goods like Batwa-managed routes.
- The improved standard of living for Batwa communities as a result of easier access to the specified areas inside the Echuya CFR
- Increased support to Batwa CFM group to establish bamboo and Eucalyptus livelihood woodlots along the forest boundary.

3.3 Specific interventions to enable the participation of the Batwa around Echuya CFR that are planned to be supported under the IFPA – CD project

According to consultative meeting²² with the Batwa and other key stakeholders such as NFA, the envisaged specific activities that can be supported under the project, in line with the project scope and budget, include the following:

- Conduct sensitization sessions for the CFM groups aimed at strengthening their governance structures and at incorporating more Batwa members
- Conduct research to document the Indigenous Batwa Knowledge and resources (as part of the development of the Batwa trail)
- Support the further development and maintenance of Batwa community trail around Echuya CFR
- Conduct training for Batwa tour guides

3.4 Measures to strengthen the capacity of local authority and relevant government departments to address VMGs issues

The District Local Governments of Kisoro and Rubanda are key stakeholders for protection of Echuya CFR. At the Lower Local Government Level, the mandate of the District Local governments is implemented by Sub-counties and parishes through the Local Council System. All the authorities have roles to play to ensure that the Batwa are catered for in planning and implementation of projects. The District Local Government has a number of roles. These include:

- Mobilization of Batwa Communities
- Organization and formalization and registration of Batwa Groups and Associations
- Identification and prioritization of livelihood needs through the district planning and budgeting processes
- Monitoring and evaluation of development and nature conservation activities
- Protection of forests on community and private land and common resources through developing district guidelines and bylaws.

²²consultative meeting held on 12th September, 2022 at Echuya.

To enable them to perform their roles, there will be specific strategies put in place under the project to strengthen district local Government of Kisoro and Rubanda to support the project. These activities will be supported by the MWE and NFA as part of broader engagements with the local governments and routine project monitoring activities. These include:

- Organizing specific awareness programs/meetings for the District Authorities to understand their roles, project issues of importance to the Batwa
- Sensitize local governments on World Bank social standards
- Include the selected District respective offices such as District Community development office, natural resources office, tourism office in monitoring missions for the project, as appropriate.

3.5 Involvement of community organizations from the project area and the expertise from the local authorities and national level

Echuya CFR has a number of stakeholders and partners. Stakeholders' participation in management of Forest resources should be enhanced through shared roles and responsibilities and ensure equitable distribution and sharing of conservation benefits and/or costs. Forest conservation has diverse issues, diversity of stakeholders, and, therefore, needs to increase stakeholders' participation to enhance benefits from conservation. Echuya is a source of various benefits to local people who need guidance to sustainably access these resources and manage any arising conflicts. Networking and co-ordination will be geared towards exchange of information and expertise through meetings, field visits, workshops and online for efficient conservation of forest resources, and avoiding duplication. There are a number of stakeholders that are envisaged to support the implementation of this VMGP. These are listed in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Key stakeholders and their roles in the Implementation of the VMGP

Key stakeholder	Role in the Implementation of the VMGP
Ministry of Water and Environment	• Provide strategic direction and monitor the overall implementation of VMGP • Overall supervision of the preparation and implementation of the VMGP for Echuya • Participate in the district-level meetings in Rubanda and Kisoro districts, as appropriate • Coordinate with other Government Line Departments and agencies such as the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities for ensuring the effective delivery of mitigation measures • Make budgetary provisions for the implementation of project activities. • Provide technical support for the implementation of the actions in the VMGP
NFA (Forest Supervisor in Echuya CFR)	• Implementation of mitigation measures for adverse effects as per project components- Component 1 activities to be implemented by NFA- in and around Echuya CFR and Component 2 activities to be implemented by NFA

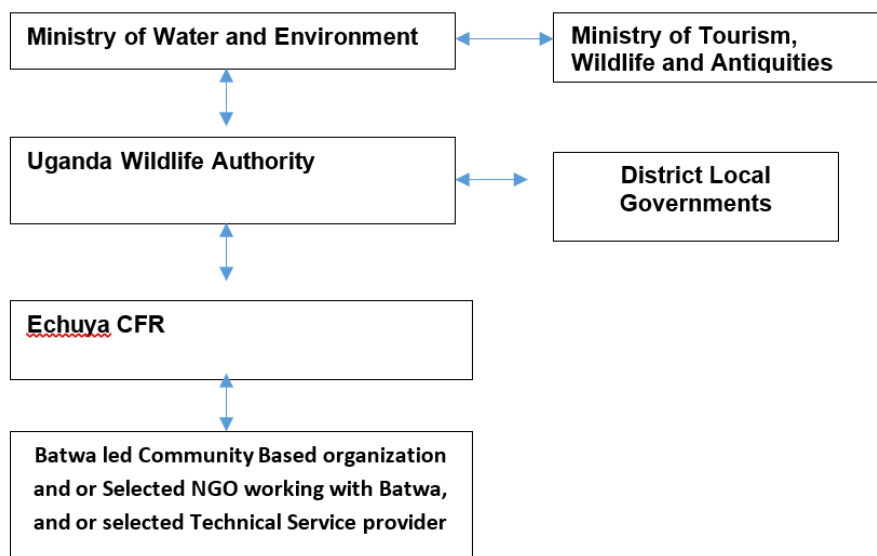
	• Supervision of plans and reporting to MWE
District Local Government (Rubanda and Kisoro)	• Supporting communities in the preparation of project activities. • Participating in monitoring activities. • Instrumental in the mobilisation of communities, formation of CFM, following up the implementation of plans, including livelihoods and income-generating activities, on-the-ground provision of technical guidance, and dispute settlement

Selection of implementors for the VGMP activities would be guided by the World Bank procurement framework. However, a number of non-governmental partners has relevant expertise that can be drawn upon. These partners are also important for regular engagement under the project.

Nature Uganda	• Research, conservation projects, livelihoods, ecotourism support
Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust (BMCT)	• Support Batwa access to land to facilitate livelihood demonstration projects, Health, education, resettlement programs, and community development.
	•
Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST)	• Research on medical herbs, cultural sites and piloting medicinal gardens
Echuya Ecotourism Association (ECOTA)	• Organize and mobilize the Batwa to participate in the project and related training programs, strengthen the capacity of the Batwa, extend training and maintain the Batwa Forest Experience trail
Batwa Development Organization	• Mobilization of the Batwa, training and capacity building, knowledge sharing, and support of livelihood activities
Pro-biodiversity conservationists in Uganda (PROBICOU)	• Mobilise Batwa through Batwa Organizations, carry out training on VMG issues and conservation, strengthen the Batwa Community Trail, work with Batwa in restoration and planting of indigenous trees in pocket forests, Livelihood, advocacy and revenue sharing management, support Batwa livelihood programs.
Other Organizations such as: Bufundi Echuya Forest Conservation and Livelihoods Improvement Association (BECLA), Kanaba Community Development and Echuya Forest Conservation Association (KADECA), Muko Echuya Forest Conservation Development Association (MECDA), Murora Echuya Forest Conservation and Poverty Alleviation Association (MEFCPAA)	• Collaborative forest management, livelihood improvement, community development, human rights, health, education, environmental governance, tourism, forest conservation and restoration, sustainable forest-based activities such as apiary

3.6 Implementation and collaboration arrangements for the VMGP

Figure 1: Coordination and implementation Structure (**Arrows:** Coordination and communication channel)



3.7 Activity implementation arrangements by the Batwa and participation of collaborating institutions

During the Implementation of activities outlined in this VMGP for Echuya CFR, NFA and partners shall ensure a deliberate effort to include the Batwa-led institutions or institutions working with the Batwa in implementation of specific activities especially those targeting the Batwa, within the limits of requirements permitted under the World Bank Procurement Guidelines.

Specific terms of reference will be issued for specific activities and requests made. The requests shall be evaluated by the technical teams from NFA and MWE before a decision is made. Key considerations will include:

- Experience of the applicant working with the Batwa and other Vulnerable groups
- Membership and group structures (*if any*)
- Evidence of ownership of the proposed activity by Batwa
- Description of the modalities and direct Batwa engagement in the implementation and/management of benefits from the business activity.

The applicants for support to Batwa groups will include all supporting documents.

An appraisal visit consisting of Forestry Manager and District community Development Officer, Natural Resources officer (Kisoro and Rubanda Districts) will be conducted to the applicants to appraise proposed applicants and other information provided in the application form, among others.

3.8 Monitoring and evaluation requirements

The implementation of this VMGP shall be in accordance with the overall M&E Framework for the IFPA-CD project. The MWE has the overall responsibility for coordinating M&E and ensuring that data and

information are produced on time and of the necessary quality. Monitoring data will be collected at field and agency level by NFA and DLGs, and User Departments and forwarded to NFA and the Project Coordinating Unit (PCU) for consolidated reporting. The PCU will conduct periodic field monitoring visits, on a case-by-case basis, purposely to verify information received from the monitoring reports.

The MWE is responsible for the overall monitoring and reporting on Project performance and results. The MWE will be supported by the PCU. Implementing Agencies, User departments and Technical Service Provider (TSP) will be responsible for collecting and analyzing monitoring data using an agreed format and availing this information to the PCU for action. Implementing Agencies (MWE and NFA), TSPs and User Departments will host and participate in any field monitoring visits.

Alongside the M&E Framework, project reporting formats and feedback mechanism will be developed for use by NFA, DLGs and the TSPs. In case of the implementing agent for the Batwa or the TSP, the reporting formats will be appended to the Service Contracts. The VMGP already highlights key targets and indicators that shall inform the design of data collection tools for its Implementation.

(a)Day to day Monitoring

Monitoring will be the main mechanism through which the implementers of this VMGP will get the feedback and alerts on any delays and problems. The monitoring framework will help the implementers to measure the pace of implementation of activities. It enables timely responses while providing lessons on implementation strategies. It will also help to ascertain whether the IFPA-CD project activities are complying with this VMGP, the World Bank ESF and National policy and legal procedures that provide for participation of the VMGs (Batwa).

The implementation of this VMGP will rely on a participatory monitoring and evaluation process which will ensure monitoring of the effectiveness of mitigation measures to improve Batwa's standards of living. Monitoring will involve the Batwa leaders, so that they have first-hand understanding and appreciation of the process. Their views on the positive and negative impacts should also be considered. The project will support Batwa and other affected communities so that they are able to monitor the following:

- (a) The status of adverse social impacts (e.g. restricted access to forest resources inside the project-supported forests, forest reserves etc.) and the effectiveness of mitigation measures outlined. The project will have to ensure that communities are aware of the potential adverse impacts to monitor; also, specific indicators to ensure effective monitoring of each impact.
- (b) The implementation of agreed activities.
- (c) There will be efforts to ensure participation of Batwa Leaders in monitoring structures and systems.

The monitoring activities will result in regular feedback on the implementation of the VMGP. The scope of monitoring Indicators shall include the following:

- Collaborative forest management
- Awareness
- Employment in project funded activities
- Application of the Batwa indigenous knowledge
- Tourism products' development.

(b) Socio-economic Monitoring

This will focus on the following changes to income levels, livelihood changes and standards of living of the Batwa. For areas in the vicinity of Echuya, there is already baseline socio-economic information included in this VMGP and the FMP. As part of the VMGP implementation, the project implementers will use this detailed baseline information, to monitor the planned activities and changes over time.

Follow-up assessments will update the data for the purpose of monitoring and evaluation of the implementation and impacts of Echuya CFR management plan, community forest resources management arrangements, other project specific Action Plans. The specific monitoring indicators have been outlined in the Action Plan and log frame in Table 9.

3.9 Administrative Reporting

Under this, the standard record of activities undertaken in each reporting period, along with financial information, will be provided. This will cover routine project activities reporting, equipment needs, and other administrative concerns (e.g., additional studies needed). For this VMGP, semi annual project progress reports will include a section that details, for instance, the number and type of local meetings held, the number and types of grievances registered and their resolution, and the nature of measures implemented, as well as the findings on the socio-economic monitoring. This will be benefiting from routine collection of data from activity reports.

4.0 Logical Framework for VMGP activities in Echuya CFR

The table below presents a sequence of activities, targets, assumptions etc. proposed in line with consultations with the Batwa held on 12th September, 2022 at Echuya, in Rubanda District.

Table 9. Logical Framework for Echuya VMGP

Output and Targets	Specific activities for Batwa participation	Objectively verifiable indicators	Source of information
At least 100 Batwa being able to access Forest Resources under CFM	• Sensitize CFM groups on importance of including Batwa as their members and leaders of the groups	• Number of Batwa participating in key decision making positions in CFM groups (Number of the Batwa in the committee) • Number of the Batwa in CFM groups	• Activity reports • Training reports • Attendance
Document the Batwa indigenous knowledge conservation practices	• Conduct research to document the Indigenous Batwa Knowledge and resources	• A research report containing Batwa indigenous resources, as an input to the development of the Batwa trail	• Activity reports
At least 10 Batwa are trained in Tour Guiding	• Conduct training for Batwa Tour Guides	• Number of Batwa trained as tour guides • Number of trainings held	• Training reports • Activity reports
Strengthen Batwa forest Trail to realize 50 tourists annually	• Support the further development and maintenance of Batwa community trail around Echuya CFR	• Number of tourists visiting the Batwa Echuya trail	• Visitor register • Activity reports
At least 20 Batwa youth, men, women are able to participate in removal of and control of invasive species and restoration planting	• Create partnerships with the Batwa on control and removal of invasive species and restoration planting	• Number of Batwa participating in the project activities (as paid workers)	• Activity report

5.0 Budget Allocation

Table 10. Project Budget for Echuya CFR VMGP

Management Action	Institution Responsible	Estimated Budget (UGX)	Timelines in Years				
			1	2	3	4	5
Component 1. Investments to improve the management of Echuya CFR (Focusing on improving the management of Echuya CFR) to ensure it continues to generate revenues and provide important environmental services.							
Sensitize CFM groups on inclusion of the Batwa	NFA	10,000,000	XX				
1. Component 2: Increased revenues and jobs from forests and wildlife protected areas							
2. Conduct research to document the Indigenous Batwa Knowledge and resources	NFA,	20,000,000					
3. Support the further development and maintenance of Batwa community trail around Echuya CFR	NFA	50,000,000		XX	XX	XX	XX
4. Conduct training for Batwa Tour Guides	UWA, NFA	10,000,000			XX		

5.1 Financing arrangements for the VMGP

According to the project implementation manual for IFPA-CD project, section 3 (the project description). Sub-component 1.2: is about increasing the involvement of local communities in the management of forest and wildlife by increasing their access and benefits from these areas. The activities proposed in the VMGP could be financed under this subcomponent.

This subcomponent will support technical assistance packages and training aimed at developing skills at the community level to actively participate in and benefit from the management of wildlife resources. This would include enhancing the adaptive capacity of forest dependent communities for climate resilience by strengthening their coping strategies, diversifying forest management-related employment opportunities and livelihoods, and adaptive planning and management. This comprises technical assistance packages with targeted support for women to empower them to participate and take leadership roles in natural resources management. At the field level, support will be provided for community engagement in the management of resources within Echuya CFR. This includes the establishment of new CFM groups and support of livelihood activities within existing groups. During the development of Annual work plans, special attention should be paid to the inclusion and development of specific Batwa Institutions to gain the CFM status.

5.2 Preparation of Activity plans, Budgets and Reporting

The budgeting arrangements for implementation of the VMGP shall follow those of the overall budgeting arrangements of the IFPA-CD project and shall be in accordance with GoU budgeting procedures and fiscal year (July-June). NFA in partnership with mandated officials from the DLGs of Kisoro and Rubanda shall facilitate development of annual work plans and budgets for specific activities targeting the Batwa. These plans and budgets shall be guided by the VMGP and shall be integrated in the overall Annual work plans and budgets to be prepared by NFA by March 31, to be approved by IDA by April 30 of each year. This budget shall also be integrated in NFAs annual budget for the project. This shall be approved by the Project Steering Committee and thereafter by the MWE and the World Bank.

Once funds have been received by NFA, funds for implementation of Batwa activities will be spent in accordance with approved work plans. NFA will work with the TSP competitively selected to execute activities as per agreed terms. TSPs shall report to NFA, and the financial reports shall be integrated into general Annual Reports of NFA.

5.3 Arrangements for Reviewing and updating the VMGP

The MWE and key partners such as NFA, in collaboration with DLGs and a selected Batwa-led institution, agent or technical service provider shall carry out a review of the implementation of this VMGP which will be aligned with the midterm review of the overall IFPA-CD project.

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Annex 1. Report of consultative meeting with Batwa in Echuya CFR

Report and Field Notes taken during the meaningful consultation of the Batwa vulnerable and marginalized group who live and derive their livelihoods from in and around Echuya Central Forest Reserve

Project Name: Investing in Forests and Protected areas for climate smart project (IFPA-CD)	Location of the Consultation: Echuya CFR – Ecotoursim Site
Assessment Type: Projects where Abatwa “vulnerable and marginalized groups” are not the sole beneficiaries	Participants: Members of the Abatwa “vulnerable and marginalized groups” of Echuya (Men, Women, Young men, Young girls and children)
No. of Target Participants: 65 Male: 30 Female: 35 Infants: Not counted No. of other Participants: 3 Male: 2 Female: 1	List of Facilitators: • Paul Twebaze, Consultant • Gad Shemajere- Batwa Leader • Muyambi Ellady, PROBICOU • Oscar Akatuhurira PROBICOU
Report prepared by: Paul Twebaze, Consultant	Date: 12 th September 2022

1. Introduction

The Government of Uganda has designed the Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate-Smart Development (IFPA-CD) Project (the Project) that will be financed by the International Development Association (World Bank) and Government of Uganda (GoU). Preparation of the project was led by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities (MTWA), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), and the National Forestry Authority (NFA).

The project’s development objective is to improve sustainable management of forests and protected areas and increase benefits to communities from forests in target landscapes. The project’s geographical focus is on selected priority areas in western and north-western Uganda. Project target landscapes include Albertine Rift (within Albert Water Management Zone (WMZ), the refugee-hosting districts of West Nile Region, and Lawmo district (within Upper Nile MWZ) (see annex in the combined report for project area map). The project has four components as follows:

- Component 1 will focus on improving management of government-managed forest and wildlife PAs to ensure they can continue to generate revenues and provide important environmental services.
- Component 2 will increase revenues and jobs from these forest and wildlife PAs through targeted investments in tourism and productive forests
- Component 3 will encourage establishment of greater tree cover in refugee-hosting landscapes outside PAs, supporting sustainable forest management and landscape resilience on private and customary land. The project will work in clusters of districts, based on the boundaries set as of July 1, 2010. This will allow the project to benefit from the technical capacity of DLG staff in the original districts while securing continuity in cases of creation of new districts. These districts either host refugee settlements or are within 5 km of a refugee settlement boundary. This component will be wholly funded by the IDA18 RSW and IDA grant, supporting project activities in 17 districts
- Component 4 will support overall project management and monitoring

The proposed project activities are expected to generate positive environmental and social impacts that will outweigh negative ones. However, investments under Components 1, 2 and 3 are likely to generate negative environmental and social risks and impacts, albeit site-specific and temporary, that could arise mainly from the proposed forest restoration and management activities, infrastructure development in and around protected areas, and livelihoods support activities. Such risks may include potential gender discrimination and marginalization of some vulnerable groups in the region. To address potential negative risks, the government of Uganda has prepared an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) that contains a set of mitigation measures following Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) mitigation hierarchy for each anticipated impact in order to avoid, minimize or reduce the risks and mitigate effects of the anticipated impacts.

This document contains the record of the meaningful consultations with the Abatwa vulnerable and marginalised group who live and derive their livelihoods from in and around Echuya Central Forest Reserve. The proceedings of the meeting will inform the finalisation of a Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Plan for Echuya. The Batwa were identified early in the design of IFPA-CD project as beneficiaries and as communities who are present in, who have strong collective attachment to the project area and who needed to be fully consulted about, and be given opportunity to actively participate in, project design and the determination of project implementation arrangements. Previous consultations with the Batwa of Echuya was done during the preparation of the national REDD+ Strategy, the ESMF, and the Draft VMGP.

2.Objectives / Purpose of the Consultations with Batwa vulnerable and marginalized group who live and derive their livelihoods from in and around Echuya Central Forest Reserve

The purpose of consulting the Batwa vulnerable and marginalised group who live and derive their livelihoods from in and around Echuya Central Forest Reserve was to obtain their concerns and preferences with respect to the design and proposed implementation of IFPA-CD project with the view of providing them with equitable access to project benefits and minimising any non beneficial outcomes to the Batwa. Their Views and Issues raised will inform the finalisation of the VMGP for Echuya.

3.Approaches and Methods used during the consultations with Batwa vulnerable and marginalised group who live and derive their livelihoods from in and around Echuya Central Forest Reserve

Generally, the Batwa in Echuya were contacted through their representatives, Civil and community organisations which they are affiliated;-

- A schematic programme for the consultations was prepared and shared with their representatives. Specifically, the Batwa vulnerable and marginalised group were contacted through BDO (Batwa Development Organisation) which is a vice chair of the Civil society Coalition of Indigenous Peoples of Uganda (CSCIPU) and through the NFA – Echuya Office. A request for the meeting was sent one week before and the venue was proposed as the NFA Echuya.

Table 1: Schematic Meeting Programs during Batwa Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups consultations

Time	Agenda Item	Person responsible
9:30 a.m.	Arrival and Registration of participants	Gad Shemajere
	Prayer by Mutwa Leader	Batwa
10:00 a.m.	Welcome Remarks	NFA Representative

10:15 a.m.	Opening Remarks and objectives of the meeting	Twebaze Paul - Consultant
10:30 a.m.	Presentation of the IFPA-CD project	Twebaze Paul – Consultant
11:30 a.m.	Discussions and feedback	All
12:30 a.m.	Way forward	Twebaze Paul
1:00 p.m.	Conclusion and Departure	All

- At the end of the meeting the facilitation team held a short de-briefing on site of the meeting to contextualise the meeting proceedings and to provide additional information on actions other actors are undertaking.

4. Proceedings of the Meeting during the consultations with Batwa vulnerable and marginalised group who live and derive their livelihoods from in and around Echuya Central Forest Reserve held on 12th September 2022 at the Ecotourism site at the Near Echuya Forest Station (Rubanda District)

Introduction (Session- moderated by Robert Baganda Tumwesigye)

- Mr. Haruna welcomed the Batwa and all the participants in the meeting. Apologized for any delays but noted that it was a pleasure that the team had finally arrived.
- Requested that the meeting starts with a prayer – from any volunteer participant. Prayer led by Norah Kyabazaka – who thanked God for providence, protection and requested for Gods guidance through the meeting.

Communication from the leader of the Batwa - Mr. Gad Shemajere

- Mr. Shemajere Extended appreciation to Mr. Twebaze and PROBICOU, Government, and all the stakeholders for support. Observed that institutions like PROBICOU, Nature Uganda, UOBDU, BMCT, and others have been instrumental in promoting the plight of Batwa.
- Observed that although the Batwa boast of this support, they still have a number of challenges. These challenges have been aired out in a number of meetings and consultative forums – and most of these relate to livelihood of the Batwa and access to resources in the forest such as Medicine.
- He observed that the Batwa have tried to also do some work and that the support from the partners does not start from Zero- *“We have tried some hand work, crafts and can also have our own products”* He observed. He noted that they however still need support because they were still needy.
- He observed that the Batwa have also been assisting in conservation – saying the Batwa understand conservation of forests more than any other communities and have this at their heart. They could not be compared with others such as the Bakiga.
- Observed that this was a follow up on earlier consultations done by the Same team aimed at finalizing the VMGPs.
- Noted that the project had already started although, the Voice of the Batwa needed to be heard and their issues addressed by finalizing the VMGPs.

Communication from HARUNA – representative of NFA

- Welcomed the Residents (All the Batwa) and requested them to clap and welcome the visitors
- Noted that as NFA they have been working with residents and other community representatives through CFM Groups. Noted that there are 4 in Rubanda, 2 in Kisoro and the Batwa are

represented in these institutions. He observed that there was an affirmative action to involve and increase participation of the Batwa.

- Observed that since their eviction, NFA has closely worked with the Batwa to protect the forest. For example they assist in responding and controlling fire outbreaks. They have exhibited a good heart for conservation – a reason they were granted access to the forest for firewood collection on a daily basis when the Bakiga are not. Firewood collection is done on a daily basis – because we are aware that they are needy.
- Noted that he had earlier even proposed to his bosses in NFA to allow the Batwa plant and own their bamboo especially in the boundary of the forest
- Observed that he also proposed that the Batwa be given a chance and be given a portion of land where they would place their bee hives to allow colonization and later on shift the colonized bee hives and rear bees and or be allowed to place be hives in specific designated parts of the forest.
- Noted that as long as the Batwa are still vulnerable, the forest can never do well. There are also proposals to give them seeds and also help the with self-help projects so that they earn livelihood.

Communication from PROBICOU- Twebaze Paul- Consultant

- Mr. Paul Twebaze welcomed the participants. He extended appreciation to the Ministry of Water and Environment and all the key stakeholders including NGOs and District Local Government of Rubanda for their support to interventions that promote peaceful co-existence of the Batwa and the Forests.
- He observed that PROBICOU was still committed to work with the Batwa and other partners to support the Batwa and ensure that forests – as areas of social and ecological importance are conserved for the benefit of both the current and future generations
- He reminded the Batwa that the meeting was very important because it provided an opportunity for the Batwa to hear and share an update from government on the plans for interventions aimed addressing most of the conservations challenges they have been raising overtime.
- He also observed that he had earlier taken leadership in consultations and that their views had informed the development of the Draft Vulnerable and Marginalized Groups Plans. He noted that a number of issues both for men and women were generated and these were submitted to Government in VMGPs and that the meeting provided an opportunity to hear about progress but also interact directly with responsible government ministry.
- Noted that as a rejoinder to the previous process/meetings Government again requested for more views on how the project can further ensure the participation of the Batwa.
- Requested them to pay attention, follow with ken interest and above all participate actively in the meeting.

Session 11. : Presentation About the Project

- Mr.Twebaze–Thanked the Batwa and the members for turning up for the meeting. He introduced the members of the team (*Refer to the Registration form*). He noted that the Government of Uganda has designed the *Investing in Forests and Protected Areas for Climate-Smart Development* Project aimed at improving sustainable management of forests and protected areas and increase benefits from forests in target landscapes.
- Observed that the project had been launched, and is being financed by the International Development Association (World Bank) and Government of Uganda (GoU). Implementation of the project is led by the Ministry of Water and Environment (MWE), Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities (MTWA), Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), and the National Forestry Authority (NFA).

- He noted that as part of the project requirements, consultations were key in order to seek more views for finalization of the VMGPs.
- Noted that the purpose of the meeting therefore was to seek more views from the Batwa around Echuya on how to participate and further get involved the implementation of the project, Consult them to understand the likely effect of the project activities and whether the planned activities will bring about peaceful co-existence and sustainable management of the Forest Resources and protected areas. He also noted that, the meeting was also to consult the Batwa and know whether they bless and support the planned activities – and or seek input for proposals to improve the project.
- He noted that opinions were needed in three key areas;
 - (a) Protection and sustainable management of forest resources – Including Collaborative Forest Management (CFM)
 - (b) Development of tourism and Tourism products
 - (c) Support for refugees from the Neighbouring Countries in relation to access to and use of Forest Resources
- He also highlighted the specific program activities for Echuya Forest. These included the following;-
 - (a) Collaborative Forest Management – Noted that this would involve renewal and rejuvenation of CFM groups and work
 - (b) Development of Sustainable Tourism activities and products
 - (c) Look after, protect and conserve the Forest for future generations
 - (d) Open and strengthen boundaries and ensure demarcation with stone marker and poles

“We therefore want to hear more of your views on how you need these programs to run. How do you want them to be?” Twebaze Asked

Comments/Observations and views from the Batwa/meeting (Discussion and Feed back

1. Sustainable management of Echuya (CFM)

- **Mr. Gad Shemajere** started by raising concerns. We as Batwa think that we could benefit from the CFM and also the proposed project. However, these CFM groups were registered at a time when the Batwa were not educated and therefore under represented. There is need to review the Membership of CFM and leadership to provide for effective representation of Batwa and with educated representatives of the Batwa in leadership structures.
- There is also a need to provide for specific CFM groups for the Batwa because these generalised CFM institutions do not cater for the interests of the Batwa. Sensitise the Batwa on CFM and involve them.
- Harmonise revenue sharing issues in CFM.
- Ms. Kyabazanga norah extended appreciation “I am happy for this place because we fought for it (Referring to the site where the meeting took place) I am happy that we being given this place, the only challenge remains education. There is an agreement for this place which we signed, you could also add us more land. I want to thank all those partners that were able to buy land for the Batwa”.

- Nyabera Grace- ‘All of us the Batwa support Movement Government” – referring to the ruling NRM. But we are all backward. We do not have where to reside. Some were given land and others left behind. Government promised us land and we have been waiting since. Have you come to show us land now?”
- **Nora Kyabazanga**- I wanted to see the CFM agreements. There is another one at church. Are all these in one agreement. Follow on the agreements so that we know which is which and who made the agreements.
- **Gad** – I am not against government and I am not saying we need to go back to the forest. We only need government to tell us those things we can do so that we co-exist with the forests. “The Batwa are the first conservationists. We need to know why we do not benefit from revenues generated yet tourists bring in a lot of money”.
- For example the other parts of Echuya were degraded, it’s only this area which we the Batwa have been protecting that is still intact. We have conserved than many other people and yet we are not rewarded. We need government to put in place interventions that can help us live as we also protect the forest”.
- We want to have land to cultivate and also also other interventions to help us earn a living than go stealing – in this case we could step up the effort conserve the forest. The reason we encroach the forests is because the land we have is small and that where we do all the cultivation. Others don’t even have.
- Government needs to initiate projects with activities that can be done in a forest to generate money so that we can use this money to buy land and these activities could also be provided for in the CFM agreements.
- Learning from the experiences of CFM, there are those sections of the population who do not like conservation. They encroach the forest at night armed with pangas and spears. We have even previously arrested some and handed them over to police but these are later released. We do not know how such cases end because we have never been invited to testify against them in the courts of law. Are the CFM going to provide for security and will there be a provision for lawyers to provide legal assistance?

Tourism development

- Tourism is very important and benefits all of us. We are all supportive of development of sustainable tourism activities in the forest. When the tourists come we get money.
- We already wrote a letter to the District Tourism office proposing for a Batwa Tourism trail/Experience to strengthen tourism – we welcome this.
- We need to train the Batwa Guides
- We also need to help us get space where we can collect items of our cultural importance and preserve of display them for tourism. We also need address – could be a small house like here at the forest centre where we could be displaying items.
- Offer permits to tourists to visit the forest
- Help the Batwa register an association at the district level

5. Debriefing Discussions with the facilitating team

Key observations that need immediate attention

- Formalise/register an association for the Batwa around Echuya to take care of Batwa's tourism interests. Review CFM and provide for more inclusiveness and participation of the Batwa even in Leadership structures.
- Map key stakeholders working with Forestry conservation and Batwa – to share information – plans and find areas of joint work- e.g. NGOs.
- Reduce the subscription fee for the Batwa because every Mutwa is expected to pay 50,000 to join CFM. This is not affordable and thus prohibitive
- The Batwa could Join through as a sub-group for the CFM in which each member can pay 10,000
- Support the development of Batwa Tourism cultural Trail – trail already has 12 Activities. This can generate funds for the Batwa