



# ECWG

EVIDENCE CONSORTIUM ON WOMEN'S GROUPS

# Protocol for a Scoping Review of the Evidence Base and Gaps Related to Women's Groups in Uganda

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASCA	Accumulating Savings and Credit Association
BMGF	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
ECWG	Evidence Consortium on Women's Groups
FSD Uganda	Financial Sector Deepening Uganda
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
PLA Cycle	Participatory Learning and Action Cycle
PROFIRA	Project for Financial Inclusion in Rural Areas
RCT	Randomized Controlled Trial
SHG	Self-Help Group
SLP	Sustainable Livelihoods Program
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UMRA	Uganda Microfinance Regulatory Authority
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UWEP	Uganda Women's Entrepreneurship Programme
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association

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## Executive Summary

The Evidence Consortium on Women's Groups (ECWG) was developed to strengthen, expand, and disseminate the global evidence base on women's groups and to support the investments of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's (BMGF's) Gender Equality team. To contribute to this objective, the ECWG will conduct several evidence syntheses on the impact, implementation, and cost-effectiveness of women's groups. These evidence syntheses will include global systematic reviews and country-specific evidence syntheses on women's groups in Uganda and Nigeria.

This protocol sets forth the aim, and purpose of one of these evidence syntheses: a scoping review to examine the evidence base and evidence gaps on women's groups in Uganda. Specifically, we will appraise the evidence base on the impact, cost-effectiveness, and implementation of women's groups in Uganda to understand both the evidence that exists and the evidence gaps that remain. In addition, we aim to gather some preliminary evidence on the evidence base related to the pathways through which women's groups can achieve their objectives.

The scoping review will include evidence on a broad range of women's group types. A *women's group* is defined as a group of women who come together to take part in joint activities around a common purpose, such as savings, livelihoods, or health. Although savings and other microfinance groups are the most prominent women's groups in Uganda, Ugandans also participate in various other women's groups that follow many different implementation models, primarily with a focus on health and agriculture. The scoping review aims to examine the following research questions:

### Primary Research Questions

1. What is the available evidence on the characteristics (e.g., eligibility, size, and governance arrangements) of women's groups in Uganda?
2. What is the available evidence on the implementation of women's groups, and interventions implemented through women's groups, in Uganda?
3. What is the available evidence on the impact of women's groups, and interventions implemented through women's groups, in Uganda?
4. What is the available evidence on the costs and cost-effectiveness of women's groups in Uganda?

### Secondary Research Question

5. What is the available evidence on the pathways through which women's groups in Uganda may achieve improvements in economic outcomes, women's empowerment, and health outcomes?

Addressing the primary and secondary research questions will enable the ECWG to explore the breadth of the literature on women's groups in Uganda, to map and summarize the evidence (e.g., through an evidence-gap map that links evidence on specific group types to economic outcomes, women's empowerment, and health outcomes), and to inform future research (e.g., in a learning agenda on women's groups in Uganda). These objectives are aligned with the main reasons for

conducting scoping reviews, which are outlined in a reviewer manual on scoping reviews by Peters and colleagues (2020).

In our analysis of pathways, we will explore the evidence for the five elements that the BMGF Gender Equality team hypothesizes as critical for delivering broader benefits of women's groups, as well as alternative mechanisms identified in various, recent evidence syntheses (Diaz-Martin et al., 2020; Gram et al., 2020). The five elements that the Gender Equality team considers critical for delivering broader benefits of women's groups include the following: (a) pooling savings and sharing risks, (b) group solidarity and networks, (c) participatory learning and life skills, (d) critical consciousness of gender, and (e) access to markets and services (Anderson et al., 2019). While Diaz-Martin and colleagues (2020) argue that women's groups achieve benefits primarily through a platform for delivery of different program activities and less so through interaction among group members, Gram and colleagues (2020) show evidence for a variety of mechanisms that primarily address the individual and collective powers of the target population of group-based interventions to mobilize and take action.

### ***Gender Inequality and Women's Groups in Uganda***

In 2018, Uganda ranked 159th out of 189 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (United States Agency for International Development [USAID], 2017), which measures equality in the domains of health, economic status, and empowerment (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2019; United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2017). Clearly, women in Uganda face many barriers to accessing education, health, and finance and to participating in the labor force and politics.

Women's groups have emerged as an important intervention strategy to improve gender equality, women's well-being and empowerment, and women's access to opportunities in low- and middle-income countries, including Uganda (Anderson et al., 2019). While formal and informal women's groups and collectives have a long history in community development, group-based interventions have only recently become institutionalized and implemented at scale in South Asia and, increasingly, in sub-Saharan Africa. Women's groups encompass a range of implementation models, including small collectives and larger federations of women that serve to improve women's empowerment and well-being and to advance the human, financial, and social capital of their members (Desai et al., 2019).

Savings groups have a long history in Uganda, starting with informal women's associations (Tripp, 1994) followed by investments in programs focusing on financial inclusion and large-scale, government-supported programs that actively work with women's groups. Investments of Financial Sector Deepening (FSD) Uganda have culminated in a National Financial Inclusion Strategy that commits to promoting linkages between savings groups and the formal financial sector in Uganda, enabling savings and other microfinance groups to become the most prominent women's groups in Uganda (Jarden & Rahamatali, 2018). FinScope country reports and primary FinScope survey data also suggest that participation rates in savings groups (specifically, Accumulating Savings and Credit Associations [ASCAs] and Village Savings and Loan Associations [VSLAs]) in Uganda are substantially higher than in Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania (de Hoop et al., 2019b).

In addition to savings and credit groups, women in Uganda traditionally formed small groups that focused on providing food and help to families in exceptional circumstances, such as weddings or funerals (Pickering et al., 1996). In other instances, women's groups shared agricultural labor or gave mutual domestic help in times of crisis (Pickering et al., 1996).

Currently, several large-scale, government-supported programs actively work with women's groups in Uganda, especially with savings groups. These programs include the Project for Financial Inclusion in Rural Areas (PROFIRA), the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF), and the Uganda Women's Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP). The current Ugandan government has also created momentum for the registration of savings groups through the newly established Uganda Microfinance Regulatory Authority (UMRA).

## **Evidence and Evidence Gaps on the Impact of Women's Groups**

Global systematic reviews show mixed but promising evidence that savings groups, self-help groups (SHGs), and other women's groups with economic objectives have positive effects on economic outcomes, women's empowerment, and health outcomes. However, several evidence syntheses, including ECWG's portfolio evaluation of BMGF investments in women's groups, highlight significant evidence gaps on the impact, cost-effectiveness, implementation models, and scalability of SHGs, savings groups, and health groups (Anderson et al., 2019; Barooah et al., 2019; Brody et al., 2015; de Hoop et al., 2019a; Kumar et al., 2018).

Evidence gaps on women's groups are particularly pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa (de Hoop et al., 2019). Current evidence syntheses on the impact of women's groups almost exclusively focus on groups in South Asia. For example, a systematic review on the impact of economic SHG programs on women's empowerment included only two studies about groups in sub-Saharan Africa (Brody, 2015).

Nonetheless, several high-profile studies focus on the impact of women's groups in Uganda. For example, a randomized controlled trial (RCT) by Karlan and colleagues (2017) showed that a program for VSLAs in Uganda, Ghana, and Malawi had positive effects on household business outcomes and women's empowerment. However, the same study did not show positive impacts on consumption or livelihoods outcomes (Karlan, Savonitto, Thuysbaert, & Udry, 2017). Further, an RCT of a program that stimulated the formation of SHGs in addition to providing cash transfers and business training showed larger income gains when cash transfers and business training were combined with SHGs than when program participants received only cash transfers and business training. However, the SHG intervention did not result in increases in consumption that were larger than for women who received only cash transfers and business training (Blattmann et al., 2016). An RCT in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda also showed that the introduction of membership fees for SHG members led to increases in business investments and consumption for households with access to groups with membership fees relative to households with access to SHGs that offer free services. However, the same study showed that SHGs with membership fees may limit participation of the poorest households (Greaney, Kaboski, & Van Leemput, 2016). Each of these studies focused on different interventions with different counterfactuals, which we summarize in Table 1. The table shows that some impact evaluations focus on a single program with a control group in which women do not participate in the program, whereas other impact evaluations focus on the additive impact of additional interventions within a pre-existing group. We will conduct separate analyses for these different impact evaluation types.

**Table 1: Preliminary Impact Evaluation Evidence From Uganda**

Intervention	Control Group		
	No Intervention	Cash Transfers and Business Training Without Self-Help Group	Self-Help Group Without Membership Fees
<b>Village Savings and Loan Association</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive impacts on household business outcomes and women’s empowerment</li> <li>No positive impacts on consumption or livelihoods outcomes</li> </ul>	NA	NA
<b>Self-Help Group, Cash Transfers, and Business Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive impacts on income and consumption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive impacts on consumption</li> <li>No impacts on income</li> </ul>	NA
<b>Self-Help Group With Membership Fees</b>	NA	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive impacts on business investments and consumption</li> <li>Limited participation of the poorest of the poor</li> </ul>

**Methodology**

This scoping review will explore the available evidence and evidence gaps on women’s groups in Uganda, including grey literature. To achieve this goal, we will start with a comprehensive search in academic databases. In addition, we will conduct searches in the library repositories of Makerere University; Uganda Christian University, Mukono; and Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi. A preliminary search suggests that considerable evidence on women’s groups is available from the doctoral and Master theses of Ugandan researchers, suggesting that grey literature is critical for assessing the evidence on women’s groups in Uganda. We will also consult with local and international experts to examine the availability of additional evidence on women’s groups in Uganda.

We will use structured narrative synthesis methods to explore the evidence and evidence gaps on the impact, implementation, and cost-effectiveness of women’s groups in Uganda. We will code each study to determine the specific program that was evaluated, including the implementation model, the beneficiaries’ characteristics, the methodology used for the evaluation, the outcomes, and the pathways through which the group led to change. We will use a comprehensive coding sheet for this analysis, which will also enable us to create an evidence gap on women’s group in Uganda. The coding sheet will also allow for presenting descriptive statistics on women’s group implementation models, beneficiary characteristics, and the outcomes and pathways through which groups led to change. We will triangulate these quantitative data with extractions of qualitative data from the included studies to identify the potential mechanisms through which women’s groups in Uganda may have achieved their objectives.

## Objectives

The primary objective of this scoping review is to summarize the evidence base and evidence gaps on the impact, implementation, and cost-effectiveness of women's groups in Uganda.

The secondary objective of this review is to identify available evidence on the possible mechanisms, facilitators of, and barriers to the impact, cost-effectiveness, and implementation of women's groups in Uganda.

To achieve these goals, we will address the following research questions:

### Primary Research Questions

1. What is the available evidence on the characteristics (e.g., eligibility, size, and governance arrangements) of women's groups in Uganda?
2. What is the available evidence on the implementation of women's groups, and interventions implemented through women's groups, in Uganda?
3. What is the available evidence on the impact of women's groups, and interventions implemented through women's groups, in Uganda?
4. What is the available evidence on the costs and cost-effectiveness of women's groups in Uganda?

### Secondary Research Question

5. What is the available evidence on the pathways through which women's groups in Uganda may achieve improvements in economic outcomes, women's empowerment, and health outcomes?

## Background

### The Problem

Uganda has instituted several policies and legislation to advance gender equality, but many challenges remain. Despite progress in some areas, Uganda ranked 159th out of 189 countries on the Gender Inequality Index in 2018 (USAID, 2017). The Beijing+20 review (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2014) and the Progress of the World's Women report (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women [UN Women], 2015) also acknowledge that increased gender sensitivity in the legal reform sphere has not resulted in the realization of women's and girl's rights in Uganda.

Women in Uganda are more likely to live below the poverty line than men, which may reflect decision-making power of men over productive resources. For example, Ali and colleagues (2016) reported that the yields of male farmers are 20% to 30% higher than the yields of female farmers in Uganda, possibly because women own less land than men. Women also tend to work more in the agricultural sector and to own less land—they constitute 84% of the agricultural labor force and own 27% of registered land—and they are often relegated to subsistence crops while men often produce cash crops (USAID, 2017).

Women participate in the labor force at lower rates than men (46% compared to 60%), and women are paid less than half of what males earn annually (World Economic Forum, 2016). Whereas national employment rates for women and men in Uganda in 2017 were 39.8% and 56.2%, respectively, the rates are lower in Northern Uganda, at 36.3% for women and 49% for men (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS], 2019).

Women and girls also face challenges related to accessing healthcare for childbirth as well as reproductive and family planning services (USAID, 2017). The maternal mortality rate in Uganda declined from 438 to 336 per 100,000 live births between 2011 and 2016, but most cases are still preventable (UNFPA, 2017).

In addition, social norms in Uganda still encourage girls to marry early and have large families (USAID, 2017). For example, according to the 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, 25% of adolescents (ages 15–19) are either pregnant or already mothers. These young mothers are at an increased risk of maternal mortality (UNFPA, 2017).

Nationally, girls and boys of primary school age are enrolled at comparable rates, though there are large regional variations in these rates (USAID, 2017). In 2016 95% of girls and 92% of boys were enrolled in primary school nationwide (USAID, 2017), but a recent study from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium found that between 2013 and 2018 (after the armed conflict), daily attendance rates of both girls and boys in the Lango and Acholi subregions decreased by 20% (Atim, Mazurana, & Marshak, 2019).

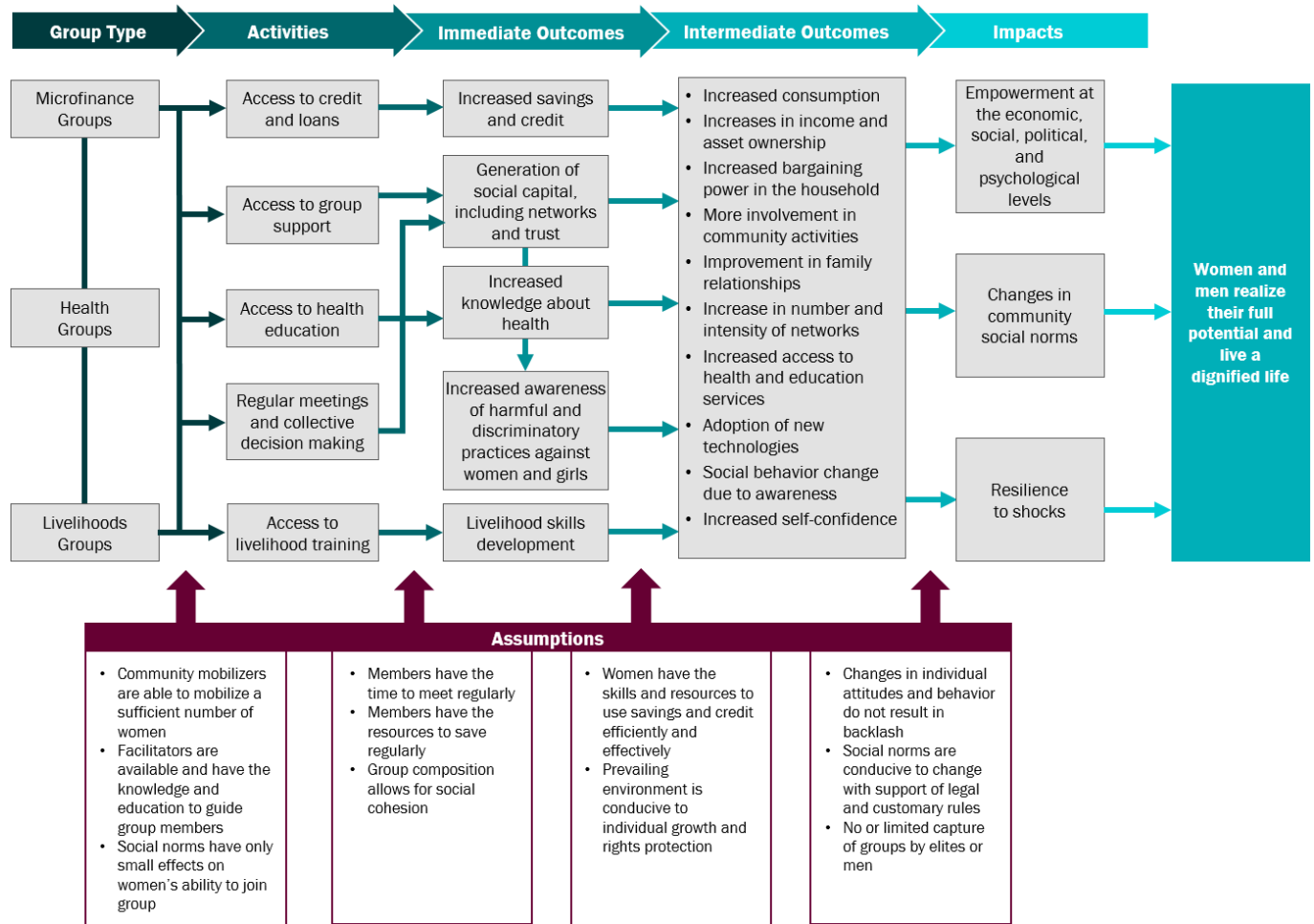
## The Theory of Change of Women's Groups

Women's groups have emerged as an important intervention approach to improve gender equality, women's well-being and empowerment, and women's access to opportunities in low- and middle-income countries, including Uganda (Tripp, 1994).<sup>5</sup> While formal and informal women's groups and collectives have a long history in community development, group-based interventions have only recently become institutionalized and implemented at scale in South Asia and, increasingly, sub-Saharan Africa (Anderson et al., 2019; Desai et al., 2019; de Hoop et al., 2020). Women's groups encompass a range of implementation models, including small collectives and larger federations of women that serve to improve women's empowerment and well-being and advance the human, financial, and social capital of their members (Desai et al., 2019). In Figure 1, which displays the theory of change, we highlight several of the most common types of women's groups in Uganda (microfinance groups including SHGs and savings groups, health groups, and livelihoods groups).

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<sup>5</sup> This section is based heavily on ECWG's learning agenda (Desai et al., 2019).

**Figure 1. Theory of Change**



Microfinance groups, such as SHGs and savings groups, can improve women’s empowerment and well-being through several mechanisms. First, community mobilizers can provide women with the opportunity to come together in microfinance groups. This can enable women to improve access to financial and social capital through individual or collective savings (which are used to facilitate intragroup lending in the case of collective savings), regular meetings, group support, and training. Exposure to this financial and social capital can enable women to increase consumption, income, and asset ownership after increases in savings and credit. Women’s exposure to group support and the accumulation of social and financial capital may also enable women to generate social networks and become involved in community activities. In addition, this exposure could guide women to transform their choices into desired actions and opportunities, potentially resulting in improvements in their economic, social, psychological and political empowerment.

SHGs and savings groups may achieve additional benefits through the inclusion of group-based livelihood promotion and support programs in livelihood groups (Barooah et al., 2019). Livelihoods training may, for example, include an emphasis on business training or training for wage-based employment to develop women’s skills, or grants to provide women with capital to invest in their own businesses (Barooah et al., 2019). Increasingly, women’s groups perform more than a single function, for example, by adding livelihoods components or health education to traditional savings or SHGs. A

portfolio evaluation of 46 BMGF investments in women's groups in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa found that 38 of 57 groups had such integrated programming (Anderson et al., 2019). Training and investment through additional components, such as livelihoods training, may increase women's knowledge and resources, which may enable women to increase their income from self-employment. In addition, women who develop skills to improve their livelihoods may be able to escape poverty traps if they accumulate wealth from a low initial asset stock (Barrett & Carter, 2013).

Women's groups can also improve health outcomes through various mechanisms. In one model, microfinance or livelihoods groups may improve health without a specific health intervention—for example, because of improvements in income or consumption smoothing, or because they address other underlying determinants of health. In the second model, microfinance or livelihoods groups can integrate specific interventions to improve health outcomes, such as health education. This model capitalizes on the existing group structure and aims to target issues shared by the group, typically through structured education modules delivered during group meetings, or by using the group as a delivery channel for existing health communication initiatives. Improved knowledge and sensitization, enhanced by the underlying effects of group membership, can lead to increased preventive actions and empowerment to seek services. In the third model, community mobilization initiatives move beyond closed groups to work with women in communities to identify and address shared problems. Working through participatory learning and action (PLA) cycles to raise consciousness—and to support women in identifying their own solutions—explicitly addresses both individual behaviors and collective action focused on structural issues, such as access to services (Desai et al., 2019).

Regardless of the group type, the effects of women's groups will likely depend on community mobilizers' ability to bring together a sufficient number of women, the strength of the facilitators, trust among group members, women's availability to meet regularly, and resources to save regularly, as well as initial social norms. It is critical to assess the validity of these assumptions underlying the theory of change by examining the implementation models of economic SHGs and savings groups (Desai et al., 2019). First, it is crucial to examine the ability of community mobilisers to gather women in groups. Second, it is important to assess the quality and incentives of group facilitators, as well as the number of groups that facilitators manage. Third, it is important to examine the group composition of SHGs and savings groups and the level of social cohesion among SHG and savings group members. Other critical assumptions for moving from immediate to intermediate outcomes include the need for women to have the skills and resources to use savings and credit efficiently and effectively and the importance of a prevailing environment that is conducive to individual growth and rights protection.

## Why It Is Important to Do the Review

Women's groups have a long history in Uganda, starting with informal women's associations (Tripp, 1994) followed by investments in financial inclusion interventions and large-scale, government-supported programs that actively work with women's groups. Tripp (1994) discusses two major drivers for the formation of women groups in Uganda: (a) interest in fighting for greater inclusiveness in the process of political liberalization, given that women historically have been left out of formal politics, and (b) the deepening economic crisis that has placed greater pressures on women to become key providers within the household, necessitating new organizational strategies. To cope with unprecedented hardship, women have come together to form groups to facilitate income-generating activities, savings, and the provision of social services such as day care (Tripp, 1994).



More recently, investments of FSD Uganda have culminated in a National Financial Inclusion Strategy that commits to promoting linkages between savings groups and the formal financial sector in Uganda, enabling savings and other microfinance groups to become the most prominent women's groups in Uganda (Jarden & Rahamatali, 2018).

Currently, several large-scale, government-supported programs actively work with women's groups in Uganda, especially with savings groups. These programs include the Uganda Women's Entrepreneurship programme (UWEP), Project for Financial Inclusion in Rural Areas (PROFIRA), and the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF). The current Ugandan government has also created momentum for the registration of savings groups through the newly set up Uganda Microfinance Regulatory Authority (UMRA). Further, investments of FSD Uganda have culminated in a National Financial Inclusion Strategy that commits to promoting linkages between savings groups and the formal financial sector (Jarden & Rahamatali, 2018).

The UWEP aims to increase women's financial inclusion and stimulate entrepreneurship by improving women's access to financial services, equipping them with the skills for enterprise growth, value addition, and marketing of services. The program uses a revolving fund approach to distribute funds in order to promote the integration of unemployed women and other vulnerable groups. Specifically, the program does the following: (a) funds interest-free loans to enable women to initiate and manage enterprises, (b) provides credit to women's groups for enterprise development through a revolving fund, and (c) gives basic training in bookkeeping, team building, enterprise planning and implementation, entrepreneurship/business skills, and group dynamics.

The Project for Financial Inclusion in Rural Areas (PROFIRA) was designed by the Government of Uganda and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to increase the income and food security and reduce vulnerability in rural areas. The program aims to enhance the sustainability of Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies (SACCOs) by building their capacity to self-govern, mobilize members and capital, manage their operations and finances, serve their members with appropriate training and products, and plan strategically.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Program (SLP), a component of the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund Project 3 (NUSAF 3), aims to increase the incomes and productive assets of poor and vulnerable households in Northern Uganda. Preliminary evidence suggests the SLP may have increased savings and income among participating women in addition to decreasing reported illnesses at the household level and gender-based violence resulting from arguments over resources (World Bank, 2019).

FinScope country reports and FinScope survey data suggest that participation rates in ASCAs and VSLAs in Uganda are substantially higher than in Kenya, Nigeria, and Tanzania (de Hoop et al., 2020).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> FinScope data come with significant limitations primarily because survey instruments differ across countries. However, FinScope data provide more reliable estimates of savings group participation in Uganda than other data sources. Our estimates of savings group participation in Uganda from FinScope data are based on the following survey questions: (1) *Please tell me which of the following did you use for saving or keeping money you put away in the past 12 months?* (Savings Group/Village Savings and Loan Association); (2) *Did you borrow money from anybody or any institution during the past 12 months?* (Savings Group/VSLA); and (3) *Thinking about the group(s) you belong to, do you belong to a Savings Group/VSLA?* While FinScope data come with limitations, they provide more in-depth, country-specific information about participation in savings groups than Financial Inclusion Insights Data, which suggest much smaller participation rates in savings groups in Uganda than FinScope data. We consider FinScope data to be more reliable because of the in-depth information they provide about savings groups (de Hoop et al., 2019b).

The results suggest that 37% of the Ugandan population participates in ASCAs and VSLAs, while 13% of the Kenyan population, 12% of the Nigerian population, and 16% of the Tanzanian population participates in ASCAs and VSLAs. An examination of the differences between men and women revealed that women are slightly more likely to participate in ASCAs and VSLAs than men. In Uganda, 39% of women participate in ASCAs and VSLAs, while 16% of women in Kenya and 20% of women in Tanzania participate in ASCAs and VSLAs.<sup>7</sup>

## Existing Evidence From Systematic Reviews

This section presents evidence from systematic reviews on the impact of savings groups, SHGs, and other women's groups on economic outcomes, women's empowerment, and health outcomes followed by a discussion on evidence gaps.

### ***Economic Outcomes***

Global systematic reviews show mixed but promising evidence that savings groups, SHGs, and other women's economic groups have positive effects on economic outcomes, such as financial inclusion, asset ownership, income, and consumption.<sup>8</sup> A systematic review by Barooah and colleagues (2019) found that SHGs and savings groups had positive effects on financial inclusion, but found mixed evidence of positive effects on household expenditures, asset ownership, and income. Additionally, there is only limited evidence on the impact of economic SHGs and savings groups on employment and business outcomes, possibly because groups have only recently started to place more emphasis on livelihoods.

### ***Women's Empowerment***

A systematic review and meta-analysis demonstrated that economic SHGs had moderate but positive impacts on women's economic, political, reproductive, and social empowerment (Brody et al., 2015). The same review showed that economic SHGs had larger effects on women's economic and reproductive empowerment when groups included a training component.

### ***Health***

Systematic reviews indicate that women's group interventions have the potential to improve the health and well-being of women, children, and adolescents in low- and middle-income countries (Prost et al., 2013). For example, women's groups that employ PLA with open (rather than closed) groups have consistently demonstrated effects on neonatal mortality and child health in rural settings in South Asia and Africa, including with government health workers (Prost et al., 2013).

## Evidence Gaps

Although evidence is growing, several evidence syntheses, including ECWG's portfolio evaluation of the BMGF investments in women's groups, highlight significant evidence gaps on the impact, cost-effectiveness, implementation models, and scalability of women's groups (Anderson et al., 2019; Barooah et al., 2019; Brody et al., 2015; de Hoop et al., 2019; Kumar, 2018).

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<sup>7</sup> We do not have access to gender-disaggregated data from Nigeria.

<sup>8</sup> This section is heavily based on the ECWG learning agenda (Desai et al., 2019).

Evidence gaps on women's groups are particularly pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa (Anderson et al., 2019; de Hoop et al., 2019). Current evidence on the impact of women's groups almost exclusively focuses on groups in South Asia. For example, a systematic review on the impact of economic SHG programs on women's empowerment included only two studies about groups in sub-Saharan Africa (de Hoop et al., 2019).

## Existing Evidence From Uganda

Despite evidence gaps in sub-Saharan Africa, several high-profile studies focus on the impact of women's groups in Uganda. For example, an RCT by Karlan and colleagues (2017) showed that a program focusing on VSLAs in Uganda, Ghana, and Malawi had positive effects on household business outcomes and women's empowerment. However, the same study did not show positive impacts on consumption or livelihoods outcomes. Further, an RCT of a program that stimulated the formation of SHGs in addition to providing cash transfers and business training showed larger income gains when cash transfers and business training were combined with SHGs than when program participants received only cash transfers and business training. These improvements were driven by informal finance, labor sharing, and cooperative cash cropping (Blattman et al., 2016). However, the SHG intervention did not result in increases in consumption that were larger than for women who received only cash transfers and business training. Finally, an RCT in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda showed that the introduction of membership fees for SHG members led to increases in business investments and consumption for households with access to groups with membership fees relative to households with access to SHGs that offer free services. However, the same study showed that SHGs with membership fees may limit participation of the poorest households (Greaney et al., 2016). Each of these studies focused on different interventions with different counterfactuals, which we summarize in Table 2. The table shows that some impact evaluations focus on a single program with a control group in which women do not participate in the program, whereas other impact evaluations focus on the additive impact of additional interventions within a pre-existing group. We will conduct separate analyses for these different impact evaluation types.

Preliminary grey literature searches also suggest that considerable evidence on women's groups is available from doctoral and Master theses of Ugandan researchers identified in repositories of academic institutions. Consolidating this evidence will help us determine the available evidence and evidence gaps on women's groups in Uganda.

A synthesis of available published and grey literature will help Ugandan policymakers and other key stakeholders make decisions based on consolidated evidence about the impact, implementation, and cost-effectiveness of women's groups. Following the synthesis, a learning agenda can help identify research topics to address evidence gaps on women's groups in Uganda.

**Table 2: Preliminary Impact Evaluation Evidence From Uganda**

Intervention	Control Group		
	No Intervention	Cash Transfers and Business Training Without Self-Help Group	Self-Help Group Without Membership Fees
Village Savings and Loan Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive impacts on household business outcomes and women’s empowerment</li> <li>No positive impacts on consumption or livelihoods outcomes</li> </ul>	N/A	N/A
Self-Help Group, Cash Transfers, and Business Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive impacts on income and consumption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive impacts on consumption</li> <li>No impacts on income</li> </ul>	N/A
Self-Help Group With Membership Fees	N/A	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive impacts on business investments and consumption</li> <li>Limited participation of the poorest of the poor</li> </ul>

## Methodology

The scoping review will provide an overview of the available evidence on women’s groups in Uganda. This overview will enable the ECWG to assess the feasibility and relevance of a systematic review to determine the effectiveness of these interventions.

As recommended by Waddington and colleagues (2012) in their toolkit for systematic reviews of effects in international development, we base our inclusion criteria for the review on the relevance of the population and interventions. We include both quantitative and qualitative evidence to enable the inclusion of a broad range of evidence in order to increase the relevance of the review for policymakers. The inclusion of qualitative evidence will increase the ability of our review to address questions associated with the reasons that particular interventions either work or do not work, in addition to whether particular interventions are effective (Snilstveit, Oliver, & Vojtkova, 2012). Several recent evidence syntheses in international development have shown that including qualitative, in addition to quantitative, evidence can enhance the review’s utility and impact for policymakers (Brody et al., 2015; Chinen et al., 2017; Waddington et al., 2014).

Given that this study is a scoping review, we do not plan a full synthesis of study findings of all included studies. The scoping review focuses primarily on mapping the available evidence. However, we will code and report study findings on selected questions, which will enable a descriptive synthesis based on the research questions defined in the objectives of this review.

## Inclusion Criteria

In line with Waddington et al. (2012), we defined the inclusion criteria for the scoping review based on intervention, population, methodological, and outcome criteria.

## ***Interventions***

This scoping review will focus on *women's groups*, an umbrella term commonly used to refer to different models of economic, health, and community groups with a primarily female membership. Women's groups vary widely in their design and implementation, and in their purpose, governance, and financing. Objectives include promoting financial inclusion and women's economic empowerment, organizing workers in the informal sector, and improving health outcomes among group members and their communities.

While economic or microfinance groups identify by different names, they include SHGs and savings groups, both of which are formed to save and contribute to funds from which members can borrow (Allen & Panetta, 2010). SHGs are typically groups in which female participants physically come together to collectively save funds in the name of the group to facilitate intragroup lending (Brody et al., 2015). SHGs are more often found in South Asia (particularly in India) than in sub-Saharan Africa, but they exist in both settings. However, the implementation model of SHGs differs significantly across settings. For example, SHGs in India are usually linked to banks, which is generally not the case in sub-Saharan Africa. *Savings groups* are defined as "groups of up to 30 people, usually women, that meet on a regular basis to save what money they can in a common fund" (Gash & Odell, 2013). One key distinction between SHGs and savings groups is that SHGs typically support a federated structure, consisting of a set of institutions that operate at different geographical levels and therefore differ in size. SHGs generally populate the lowest level in this structure, with village organizations or cluster-level federations as higher level institutions. While SHGs usually include only women, savings groups in Uganda often include both women and men. However, in West Africa, the original savings group model included only women. In this review, we will include only groups composed of a majority of women members.

Two approaches to women's group interventions directly address the health and well-being of women, children, and the household, such as nutrition, access to health services, and violence against women (Desai et al., 2019). A first model uses women's economic groups to integrate specific interventions to improve well-being, such as health education, sensitization to gender-based violence, and linkages to health workers. This model uses the existing group structure, for example through education delivered during group meetings, or by providing health education to group members. In the second model, community mobilization initiatives work with women in communities to identify and address shared problems. This approach works through PLA cycles to support women in identifying their own solutions. It aims to change both individual behaviors and stimulate collective action focused on structural issues, such as access to services (Desai et al., 2019).

We will also include studies that focus on agricultural cooperatives in which women form the majority of members. The agricultural cooperative aim is to help farmers achieve market power through joint marketing, bargaining, processing, and purchasing of supplies and services. Through these activities, cooperatives can influence economic well-being, empowerment, and the knowledge and adoption of agricultural practices (Lecoutere, 2017).

## ***Types of Participants and Settings***

We will include all studies that focus on women's groups in Uganda. Groups need to have a majority of women (larger than 50%) to be included. We will include groups with adult women and adolescent girls.

**Study Designs**

This scoping review will include all studies that focus on women’s groups and that involve primary quantitative and/or qualitative data collection. We will not exclude either quantitative or qualitative studies. However, studies need to include primary data collection for inclusion in the review.

**Outcomes**

This scoping review will not exclude studies based on the outcome measure. We will include both quantitative and qualitative studies because our research questions focus on the impact, implementation, and cost-effectiveness of women’s groups, as well as the pathways through which they achieve change.

**Other Criteria for Inclusion/Exclusion**

To ensure that we include all studies since the emergence of a gender equality policy in Uganda in 1990, we will include studies in English that were conducted between 1990 and March 2020. We will exclude articles that are opinions or will provide perspectives or theoretical concepts about women’s groups.

**Search Strategy**

We developed a comprehensive search strategy based on the population and intervention criteria in consultation with an information specialist from Makerere University, Uganda. Our search strategy will enable us to identify published and unpublished literature by focusing on relevant academic and institutional databases, tracking citations, snowballing references, and contacting key informants with expertise in women’s groups. For searches of electronic databases, we will use a detailed search string, whereas searches of grey literature and institutional websites typically will rely on simpler, more tailored searches. We present the search terms for the scoping review in Table 3. For more details about the search strategy, see Appendix A.

**Table 3: Search Terms for the Scoping Review**

Key Search Domain	Search Term	
Population or setting	women	female
	adolescent	mother
	girl	Uganda
	teenage	

Key Search Domain	Search Term	
Intervention or nature of the women groups	self-help groups	market associations
	savings groups	lending groups
	SACCO	microcredit
	village banks	advocacy
	Niggina	microenterprise
	community groups	income generation
	village committee	cooperatives
	participatory learning and action groups	life skills training
	microfinance groups	vocational skills
	clubs	financial management training
Time frame	social groups	gender equality training
	farmers groups	entrepreneurial skills
	studies published after 1990	

Based on these search terms, we piloted the study search terms in [PubMed](#), [Wiley Online Library](#), [Google Scholar](#), and [Makerere University Institutional Repository](#).

### **Electronic Sources**

Comprehensive database searches may include the following electronic databases:

1. PubMed (<http://www.pubmed.gov>)
2. Clarivate Web of Science (<https://clarivate.com/webofsciencegroup/solutions/web-of-science/>)
3. Wiley Online Library (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/>)
4. AfricaBib (<https://www.africabib.org/>)
5. International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) Database of Impact Evaluations ([https://www.3ieimpact.org/sitewide-search?search\\_api\\_fulltext=&sort\\_by=search\\_api\\_relevance](https://www.3ieimpact.org/sitewide-search?search_api_fulltext=&sort_by=search_api_relevance))
6. Makerere University Institutional Repository (<http://makir.mak.ac.ug/>)
7. World Bank JOLIS Library Catalog ([https://imf-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?vid=01TIMF\\_INST\\_V1](https://imf-primo.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/primo-explore/search?vid=01TIMF_INST_V1))
8. CAB Abstracts (<https://www.cabi.org/publishing-products/cab-abstracts/>)

We may also search citation databases (Google scholar).

In addition, we will review the following targeted sources:

1. Evidence and gap map of evaluations in Uganda
2. Database of Evidence Consortium on Women's Groups (<http://www.womensgroupevidence.org>)

## ***Literature***

To identify additional grey literature, we will consult experts in the field (see Appendix B for a proposed list of experts) and will manually search any other relevant literature in institutions and targeted organizations. Specifically, we will contact experts by emailing them a list of literature encountered during the search and will ask them to provide the research team with any additional, relevant literature. In addition, we will ask the BMGF Gender Equality team to email a list of literature they encountered during their search and will ask these experts to share relevant literature.

We will also make physical visits to targeted libraries, including the School of Women and Gender Studies (Makerere University; Uganda Christian University, Mukono; and Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi) to look for literature that may not be available electronically.

In addition, we will search websites of research and implementing organizations, including the following organizations:

- CARE International, Uganda
- AVSI Foundation, Uganda
- The World Bank Documents and Reports
- Office of the Prime Minister, Kampala
- Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development
- National Bureau of Statistics, Uganda
- USAID, Uganda
- UNDP, Uganda

In all instances, we will search for literature relevant to Uganda.

For grey literature from academic institutions, we will search university repositories using the search string “women groups” and applying the “*t* > 1990” data range. Our pilot of the electronic search shows that this approach identifies potentially relevant studies (see Appendix C).

Tables 3 through 6 show the findings from our pilot of the electronic search in different databases and institutional repositories.



## Databases

**Table 3. PubMed Data**

	Search Terms	Results
1	In Title/Abstract: (Woman OR women OR Adolescent* OR Girl* OR Teenage* OR Female* OR Mother*)	2,413,626
2	In Title: group* OR "Self-help group*" OR "Savings group*" OR SACCO OR "Village Bank*" OR Niggina OR "Participatory learning and action group*" OR "Micro finance group*" OR microfinance OR Clubs OR "Social group*" OR "Farmers' group*" OR "Market association*" OR "Lending group*" OR "Community group*" OR "Village committee*" OR "Micro credit" OR Advocacy OR Microenterprise OR "Income generation" OR Cooperatives OR "Life skills training" OR "Vocational skill*" OR "Financial management training" OR "Gender equality training" OR "Entrepreneurial skill*"	212,419
3	1 AND 2	23,643
4	In Title/Abstract: Uganda OR Kampala	13,993
5	3 AND 4	53
6	Publication date from 01/01/1990 to 03/09/2020	52

Note. Data obtained from <https://pubmed.gov/> on February 3, 2020.

**Table 4. Wiley Online Library Data**

	Search Terms	Results
1	Anywhere: (Women OR Adolescent* OR Girl* OR Teenage* OR Female* OR Mother* OR "young people") AND ("Self-help group*" OR "Savings group*" OR SACCO OR "Village Bank*" OR Niggina OR "Community group*" OR "Village committee*" OR "Participatory learning and action group*" OR "Micro finance group*" OR Clubs OR "Social group*" OR "Farmers' groups" OR "Market association*" OR "Lending groups" OR "Micro credit" OR Advocacy OR Microenterprise OR "Income generation" OR Cooperatives OR "Life skills training" OR "Vocational skill*" OR "Financial management training" OR "Gender equality training" OR "Entrepreneurial skill*") AND Uganda	195
2	<a href="#">From January 1990 to February 2020</a>	189

Note. Data obtained from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/> on February 26, 2020.

**Table 5: Google Scholar Data**

	Search Terms	Results
1	(Women OR Adolescent* OR Girl* OR Teenage* OR Female* OR Mother* OR "young people") AND ("Self-help group*" OR "Savings group*" OR SACCO OR "Village Bank*" OR Niggina OR "Community group*" OR "Village committee*") AND (Uganda OR Kampala)	3,900
2	<a href="#">From January 1990 to February 2020</a>	3,950

Note. Data obtained from <https://scholar.google.com/> on February 26, 2020.

# Institutional Repositories

**Table 6: Makerere University Institutional Repository**

	Search Terms	Results
1	("women OR "young girls" OR adolescent* OR female*) AND (groups" OR "help-self groups" OR nigiiina OR saving OR SACCO OR "savings groups" OR microfinance OR credit) AND Uganda OR Kampala	3,079
2	<a href="#">From January 1990 to February 2020</a>	

Note. Data obtained from <http://makir.mak.ac.ug> on March 9, 2020.

## Screening

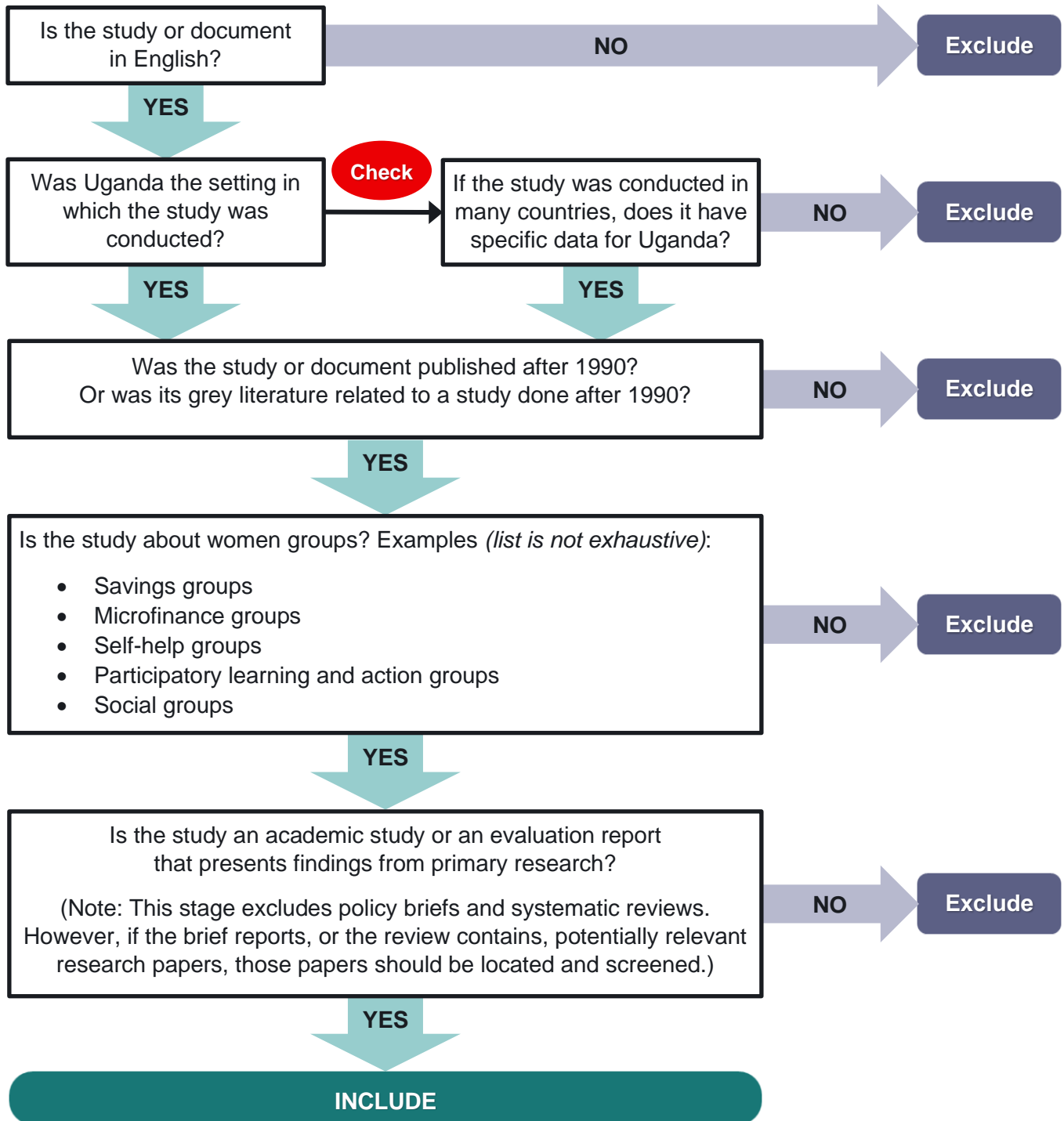
Screening will take place in two phases: first, on the basis of titles and abstracts; then, on the basis of full texts.

### Screening Phase 1

Titles and abstracts of the search results of database, grey literature, and citation searches will be uploaded to the EPPI-Reviewer 4 online system: <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/eppireviewer4>. Duplicate studies will be identified and removed automatically using the “duplicates” feature built into EPPI-Reviewer 4. All titles and abstracts will then be screened against the inclusion criteria outlined above. We will retain potentially relevant studies for screening full texts (Phase 2) after screening titles and abstracts.

We developed and piloted a study screening tool based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The screening tool is illustrated in Figure 2. This tool was developed through an iterative, consultative process with experts in women’s groups, economics, public health, gender and women studies, and evidence synthesis specialists. We then piloted and revised this tool based on discussions among team members. The pilot involved initial screening of 34 studies and a review of the results to identify inconsistencies and associated causes. We resolved inconsistencies by revisiting the original manuscripts and achieving consensus on operational definitions. The screening was further revised based on the findings.

**Figure 2: Screening Schema for the Scoping Review on Women’s Groups:**



**Screening Phase 2**

In the second phase, we will review the full text of all studies that pass Phase 1 screening. Multiple reviewers will independently assess studies against the inclusion criteria, and studies that meet all criteria will be retained for inclusion in the review.

## Data Extraction, Coding, and Management

We will code the studies based on the following information domains: bibliographic information, geography, group characteristics, group membership, group meetings and governance, study methods, inputs, activities, outcomes, and any other important details. The coding tool is presented in Appendix D.

A team of four research assistants will use the EPPI-Reviewer 4 system for the coding. Two senior investigators will randomly code 5% of the studies to improve on the internal consistency of the coding. Any discrepancies will be resolved through discussion and consultation with senior investigators on the team (Edith Okiria, Howard White, and Thomas de Hoop). The team that will undertake the coding has been trained by experts from the Africa Centre for Systematic Reviews and Knowledge Translation. The trainers will provide ongoing technical support related to the use of the software during the coding process.

The team members will extract the data based on the coding sheet in Appendix C.

## Critical Appraisal

Critical appraisal will not be undertaken at this stage but is being considered for a future systematic review.

## Mapping and Synthesis

Our analysis will serve to inform the scope of a potential full systematic review. For this purpose, we will recommend research questions that are relevant to policymakers, that are feasible to address in a full systematic review, and that fill gaps in existing systematic reviews. In addition, we will provide some preliminary conclusions regarding the breadth and rigor of the literature on the effectiveness of women's groups in Uganda. For this purpose, we present an overview of the gaps in the existing literature on women's groups in Uganda.

Although the scoping review does not aim to conduct a full synthesis, we will summarize study results along the causal chain of the theory of change of women's groups. Specifically, we will report results and evidence gaps on group characteristics, group membership, group meetings and governance, the impact of groups, and the pathways through which groups achieve these impacts.

To achieve this goal, we will summarize descriptive statistics from the coding sheet in univariate and bivariate analyses. Specifically, we will summarize the number of studies that report on the following: (a) group types and activities; (b) the target group; (c) funders; (d) group size; (e) group linkages with other institutions; (f) group membership criteria; (g) group meetings and governance; (h) outcome measures; (i) pathways through which groups achieve change, along with barriers to these changes; and (j) cost information.

The descriptive analysis will also enable organization of groups by characteristics. Broadly, these characteristics may include (a) membership composition, (b) organizing purpose, and (c) integrated activities (Desai et al., forthcoming). The descriptive information from the coding sheet will, for example, enable us to distinguish between VSLAs with health and livelihoods activities and VSLAs without health

and livelihoods activities. In addition, it will enable us to distinguish between all-women savings groups and mixed-gender savings groups. Importantly, however, it is likely that the coding sheet will have a lot of missing information, because impact evaluations of women's group programming often include only limited details on programming (Brody et al., 2015; Desai et al., forthcoming;).

We will also present impact estimates through a preliminary narrative synthesis of the impact evaluations. This analysis will include a summary of study designs, counterfactuals, and outcomes measured and will combine this analysis with the descriptive statistics from the coding sheet. This analysis will enable ECWG to assess impacts by group type and other group characteristics.

We will also conduct a various bivariate quantitative analysis in which we will explore relationships between important group characteristics. For example, we will examine the relationships between group type and the primary and secondary activities of the group as well as the sizes, the gender composition, and the facilitator characteristics of different group types.

Ultimately, the scoping review aims to inform a theory of change of, and to guide a learning agenda on, women's groups in Uganda. We plan to discuss the theory of change with BMGF stakeholders and then with key stakeholders in Uganda, including government and World Bank representatives. We will also consult key stakeholders for the generation of a Uganda-specific learning agenda. This learning agenda alongside a research agenda the ECWG developed on COVID-19 and women's groups (de Hoop et al., 2020) will identify research topics to address evidence gaps established in the scoping review.

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## Appendix A: Assessment of the Search Strategy

Date: 9 March 2020

Author	Year	Title of Study	Type of Article	Database in Which Article Is Located	Is the Article Found by Electronic Search in This Database? (Yes/No)
Pickering	1996	Women's groups and individual entrepreneurs: a Ugandan case study	Journal paper	PubMed	Yes
Ochwo et al.	1999	Women's association raises a community from a slum.	Journal paper	PubMed	No
Karlan et al.	2017	Impact of savings groups on the lives of the poor	Journal paper	PubMed	Yes
Bandiera et al.	2018	Women's Empowerment in Action: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Africa	Journal paper	PubMed	No
Katabarwa et al.	2009	Community Based Savings Micro Finance And Household Income Poverty Eradication In Uganda: A Case Study Of Busimbi Sub County, Mubende District	Thesis, MakIR	MakIR	Yes
Asiimwe	2010	House Hold and gender Resource Relations: Women in Marketing Arena of Income generating crops in Uganda	Journal paper	Google Scholar	Yes
Kalema	2012	The Roles Of Nigiina Self-Help Projects In Empowering Women In Eradicating Poverty: A Case Study Of Two Women Groups In Kawempe-Division, Kampala District, Uganda, 2001-2010	Thesis, MakIR	MAKIR	Yes
Austrian et al.	2012	Safe and Smart Savings Products for Vulnerable Adolescent Girls in Kenya & Uganda	Project report	Google Scholar	No
Greaney et al.	2016	Can Self-Help Groups Really Be "Self-Help"?	Journal paper	Google Scholar	Yes
Austrian et al.	2014	Can economic assets increase girls' risk of sexual harassment? Evaluation results from a social, health and economic asset-building intervention for vulnerable adolescent girls in Uganda	Journal paper	Google Scholar	No
Blattman et al.	2015	The Returns To Microenterprise Support Among The Ultra-Poor: A Field Experiment In Post-War Uganda	Journal paper	Google Scholar	Yes
Karlan et al.	2017	Impact of savings groups on the lives of the poor	Journal paper	Google Scholar	Yes
Bandiera et al.	2018	Women's Empowerment in Action: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Africa	Book, World Bank report	Google Scholar	No

## Appendix B: List of Experts to Be Consulted

	Name	Affiliation
1	Prof. Grace Bantebya	School of Women and Gender Studies, Makerere University
2	Prof. Josephine Ahikire	School of Women and Gender Studies, Makerere University.
3	Grace Majara Kibombo	CARE, Uganda
4	Suzan Muwanga	Department of Gender, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
5	Enoch Mugabi	UNDP Kampala, World Bank, Kampala
6	Sam Kaisiromwe	Information Officer, Uganda Bureau of Statistics
7	Madina Guloba	Economic Policy Research Centre
8	Maureen Bakunzi	Office of the Prime Minister, Kampala
9	Patricia Munabi	ED, Forum for Women in Development
10	Regina Bafaki	ED, Action for Women in Development
11	Helen Kezie-Nwoha	ED, Uganda Women's Peace Centre
12	Aramathan Madanda	Freelance Consultant
13	Maxine Houinato	Country Director, UN Women
14	Rita Aciro	ED, Uganda Women's Network
15	Monica Emiru Enyou	ED, Association of Women Organisations in Uganda
16	Charles Ocici	Enterprise Uganda
17	John Peter Mujuni	ED, Microfinance Enterprise-Uganda
18	Edith Tusubira	ED, Microfinance Support Centre-Uganda
19	Alfred Lakwo	Virtual University of Uganda
20	Nabacwa Ssonko	Uganda Christian University
21	Mukamana Liberata	University of Rwanda
22	Katarwa Christine	College of Humanities and Social Sciences
23	Mutebi A.	School of Public Health, Makerere University

## Appendix C: Grey Literature Pilot Search

Date: February 25, 2020

Author	Title	Year	Institution
Nanyondo, Janet	1.1 Leadership of Women and Their Economic Empowerment in Uganda: A Case Study of Uganda Women Entrepreneur Association Limited	Nov 2012	Makerere University
Kirabo, Martha	1.2 The influence of Savings Group Membership on Rural Women's Empowerment: A Case Study of Zombo District, Uganda	Dec 2019	Makerere University
Nassali, Sharifar	1.3 Women's Participation in Decentralized Governance in Buikwe District: A Case Study of Nyenga, Najja and Buikwe Sub Counties	April 2016	Makerere University
Nansereko, Victoria Ritah	1.4 The Effect of Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme on The Welfare of Beneficiaries: A Case of Nansana Municipal Council	Dec 2017	Makerere University
Nyanzi, Barbara Nyanzi, Stella Wolff, Brent Whitworth, James	1.5 Money, Men and Markets: Economic and Sexual Empowerment of Market Women in South Western Uganda		<a href="#">Makerere Institute of Social Research (MISR) Collections</a>
Nakayenga, Thereza	1.6 The Leadership Challenges in Micro-Finance Institutions in Empowerment of Women: A Case of Finca Katwe-Butego Division, Masaka District Between 1992 to 2008	2012	Makerere University
Nsangi, Marjorine	1.7 The Impact of Credit Accessibility on Women Welfare: A Case Study of Brac (Busia Branch)	Dec 2014	Makerere University
Ajuna, Albert	1.8 Violation of Women's Property Rights in Post Armed Conflict Areas: A Case Study of Isingiro District	May 2007	Makerere University
Nakaye, Proscovia	1.9 Challenges of Women Ngos in Empowering Rural Women: A Case Study of Acfode and Isis-Wicce	Dec 2009	Makerere University
Odwe, Deogratias	1.10 The Role of The Catholic Women's Guild in Promoting Women's Rights in Amolatar Catholic Parish in Light of Pacem in Terris of John XXIII	2013	Makerere University
Rwenzori, Irene	1.11 A Gender Analysis in Access to and Utilization of Micro Finance Resources: A Case of Kabarole Research Centre, Rwenzori, Uganda	Sept 2009	Makerere University
Nyakaisiki, Sarah Joanita	1.12 Effectiveness of The Group Lending Approach in Microfinance institutions in Uganda: A Case of Pride Microfinance Limited	Oct 2018	Makerere University
Kezaala, Najib	1.13 Factors That Enhance Muslim Women Participation in Community Development: A Case Study of Nakasozi Pre-School	Oct 2010	Makerere University
Namanya, Anaclet Mutiba	1.14 The Impact of Credit Facilities on Women Empowerment: The Case of Finca In Igara County, Bushenyi District	2007	Makerere University

## Appendix D: Coding Sheet

Item	Multiple-Choice Option	Response
<b>1. Bibliographic Information</b>		
(1) Title of Study:	Open Question	
(2) Study Author(s):	Open Question 99 = Author(s) not reported	
(3) Funder of Study:	Open Question 88 = No outside funding 99 = Funder unknown	
(4) Publication Year:	Year	
(5) Publication Type:	(1) Book (2) Peer-reviewed journal article (3) Book chapter (4) Dissertation/thesis (5) Working paper (6) Unpublished technical report (e.g., M&E or evaluation report for a donor) (7) Policy brief (8) Other: Define  <i>Note. Policy briefs are excluded unless we are not able to obtain access to the full report/paper.</i>	
(6) Lead Author's or Corresponding Author's Institution(s) of Affiliation:	(1) Ugandan institution (2) Non-Ugandan institution (3) Joint affiliation at Ugandan and non-Ugandan institution 99 = Author not reported	
(7) Co-authors Institution(s) of Affiliation:	(1) All Ugandan institution (2) All Non-Ugandan institution (3) Mix of Ugandan and non-Ugandan institutions (4) No co-authors 99 = Authors not reported	
<b>2. Geography</b>		
(8) Does the study cover all of Uganda?	(1) Yes → Skip 9, 10, 11, and 12 (2) No (99) Unclear	
(9) Does the study cover any area outside Kampala?	(1) Yes (2) No → Skip 10, 11, and 12 (99) Unclear	
(10) Which administrative regions does the study cover?	(1) Central Region (2) Eastern Region (3) Northern Region	

Item	Multiple-Choice Option	Response
	(4) Western Region (99) Unclear	
(11) Which districts does the study cover?	Open question (report all districts reported in text) (88) All districts in the administrative regions (reported in Question 10) the study covers (99) Unclear	
(12) Does the group cover urban or rural areas?	(1) Urban (2) Semi-urban (3) Rural (4) Both Urban, Semi-urban, and Rural (5) Both Semi-urban and Rural (6) Both Urban and Rural (99) Unclear	
<b>3. Group Characteristics</b>		
(13) What is the group type according to the authors? (more than one answer possible)	(1) Self-help groups (2) Savings groups (3) Microfinance groups (4) Livelihoods groups (5) Participatory learning and action groups (6) Health groups (7) Pregnant women's groups (8) Mothers' groups (9) Religious groups (10) Friends' groups (11) Adolescent girls' groups (12) Agricultural cooperatives (13) Other agricultural groups (14) Other: Define (99) Unclear	
(14) What is the gender of the target group?	(1) Women (2) Men (3) Both men and women (4) Unspecified (99) Unclear	
(15) What age group is targeted?	(1) Adolescents (2) Young women (3) Women of reproductive health (4) Elderly (5) No specific age group (6) Other: Define (99) Unclear	
(16) Does the group target any women with specific characteristics (other than age)?	(1) Yes, women with disabilities (2) Yes, pregnant women (3) Yes, married women	

Item	Multiple-Choice Option	Response
	(4) Yes, widowed women (5) Yes, poor women (6) Yes, other: Define (7) No (99) Unclear	
<b>Group Characteristics (Answer these questions for the main group type discussed in the study.)</b>		
(17) Primary activity: What is the group's main activity? (only one answer possible)	(1) Savings (2) Credit (3) Insurance (4) Cash grants (5) Livelihoods grants (6) Livelihoods training with a focus on farm activities (7) Livelihoods training with a focus on non-farm activities (8) Collective action for women's rights (9) Collective action for other purpose: Specify (10) Health education (11) Education (12) Social activity (13) Setting up federations or groups outside village (14) Bookkeeping training (15) Activity related to domestic violence (16) Other training: Define (17) Other: Define (99) Unclear	
(18) Secondary activity: What is the group's second most important activity? (only one answer possible)	(1) Savings (2) Credit (3) Insurance (4) Cash grants (5) Livelihoods grants (6) Livelihoods training with a focus on farm activities (7) Livelihoods training with a focus on non-farm activities (8) Collective action for women's rights (9) Collective action for other purpose: Specify (10) Health education (11) Education (12) Social activity (13) Setting up federations or groups outside village (14) Bookkeeping training (15) Activity related to domestic violence (16) Other training: Define (17) Other: Define	

Item	Multiple-Choice Option	Response
	(18) No secondary activity → Skip 19 (99) Unclear	
(19) What other activities does the group engage in? (more than one answer possible)	(1) Savings (2) Credit (3) Insurance (4) Cash grants (5) Livelihoods grants (6) Livelihoods training with a focus on farm activities (7) Livelihoods training with a focus on non-farm activities (8) Collective action for women's rights (9) Collective action for other purpose: specify (10) Health education (11) Education (12) Social activity (13) Setting up federations or groups outside village (14) Bookkeeping training (15) Activity related to domestic violence (16) Other training: Define (17) Other: Define (18) No other activity (99): Unclear	
	Provide other relevant information on group activities.	
(20) Who funded the start of the group?	(1) Government (2) NGO (3) International donor (4) Other funder: Define (5) No outside funding initially, but since the start, the group has started receiving funding. (6) Never received outside funding. (99) Unclear	
(21) Who brought the group together initially?	(1) Women group members themselves (2) Community mobilizers (3) NGO (4) Governmental agency (5) Other organization: Define (99) Unclear	



Item	Multiple-Choice Option	Response
(22) Who runs the group?	(1) Group members themselves without support (2) Group members in collaboration with external agency (NGO or government) (3) Facilitators (4) Community mobilizers (5) NGO (6) Governmental agency (7) Other organization: Define (99) Unclear	
(22a)	Extract other relevant information on group formation from the study.	
(23) Group size: What is the average number of members in each group?	Average group size (preferred) Range of group size (if average group size not reported) (999) Unclear	
(24) Does the group have a bank account?	(1) Yes (2) No (99) Unclear	
(25) Does the group have any linkages with any other formal institutions (other than the funder, implementer, and bank where the group has a bank account)	(1) Yes, microfinance institution (2) Yes, schools (3) Yes, health centers (4) Yes, health insurance program (5) Yes, other insurance program (6) Yes, farmer cooperative or another farmer organization (7) Yes, buyers of products (8) Legal institution (9) Religious institution (10) Yes, other: Define (11) No (99) Unclear	
<b>Group Membership</b>		
(26) Does the group have any eligibility criteria?	(1) Yes: Specify (2) No (99) Unclear	
(27) What are the eligibility criteria?	Open question (Please describe eligibility criteria as described in paper.)	
(28) Gender composition of group	(1) Only women → Skip 29 (2) Women and men  Please note that papers should be excluded if women do not make up most (> 50%) of the members.	

Item	Multiple-Choice Option	Response
	(99) Unclear, but women do make up the majority.	
(29) Percentage of women members	Percentage (999) Unclear	
(30) Average age of women members	Average age of women group members (preferred) Range of age of women group members (if average age of group members not reported) Average age of full sample of women (if average age or range of ages of group members is not reported) (999) Unclear	
	Extract any other information on group characteristics from the study.	
<b>Group Meetings and Governance</b>		
(31) Self-governed?	(1) Yes (2) No (99) Unclear	
(32) Meetings (yes/no)	(1) Yes (2) No → Skip 33–39 99: (Unclear) → Skip 33–39	
(33) Frequency of meetings	(1) Weekly (2) Biweekly (3) Monthly (4) Quarterly (5) Other: Specify	
(34) Duration of meetings	Minutes (999 = Unclear)	
	Hours (999 = Unclear)	
(35) Place of meeting	Open question (99) Unclear	
(36) Does the group have meeting facilitators	(1) Yes (2) No → Skip 37 (99) Unclear → Skip 37	
(37) Who provides the facilitators?	(1) The group itself (2) NGO (3) Government (4) Community (but not group members) (5) Other community in same district (6) Other community in different district	
(38) Primary purpose of meeting (only one answer possible)	(1) Discuss savings	

Item	Multiple-Choice Option	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(2) Discuss credit</li> <li>(3) Discuss insurance</li> <li>(4) Discuss cash grants</li> <li>(5) Discuss livelihoods grants</li> <li>(6) Livelihoods training with a focus on farm activities</li> <li>(7) Livelihoods training with a focus on non-farm activities</li> <li>(8) Collective action for women's rights</li> <li>(9) Collective action for other purpose: Specify</li> <li>(10) Health education</li> <li>(11) Education</li> <li>(12) Social activity</li> <li>(13) Setting up federations or groups outside village</li> <li>(14) Bookkeeping</li> <li>(15) Bookkeeping training</li> <li>(16) Activity related to domestic violence</li> <li>(17) Other training: Define</li> <li>(18) Other: Define</li> <li>(99) Unclear</li> </ul>	
(39) Other purpose of meetings (more than one answer possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Discuss savings</li> <li>(2) Discuss credit</li> <li>(3) Discuss insurance</li> <li>(4) Discuss cash grants</li> <li>(5) Discuss livelihoods grants</li> <li>(6) Livelihoods training with a focus on farm activities</li> <li>(7) Livelihoods training with a focus on non-farm activities</li> <li>(8) Collective action for women's rights</li> <li>(9) Collective action for other purpose: Specify</li> <li>(10) Health education</li> <li>(11) Education</li> <li>(12) Social activity</li> <li>(13) Setting up federations or groups outside village</li> <li>(14) Bookkeeping</li> <li>(15) Bookkeeping training</li> <li>(16) Activity related to domestic violence</li> <li>(17) Other training: Define</li> <li>(18) Other: Define</li> <li>(19) No other purpose</li> <li>(99) Unclear</li> </ul>	
(39a)	Provide any other relevant information on group operations.	

Item	Multiple-Choice Option	Response
<b>Study Type and Methods</b>		
(40) Quantitative or qualitative approach	(1) Quantitative → Skip 42 (2) Qualitative → Skip 41, 44 (3) Both quantitative and qualitative	
(41) What sampling strategy was used for the quantitative research?	(1) Census (2) Simple random sampling (3) Multistage random sampling (4) Purposive sampling (5) Snowball sampling (6) Other convenience sampling: Define (7) Other: Define (99) Unclear	
(42) What sampling strategy was used for the qualitative research?	(1) Simple random sampling (2) Multistage random sampling (3) Purposive sampling (4) Snowball sampling (5) Other convenience sampling: Define (6) Other: Define (7) Not defined	
(43) Did the quantitative study use a comparison group?	(1) Yes → Skip 51 (2) No → Skip 44–50	
<b>Quantitative or Mixed-Methods Studies With a Comparison Group</b>		
(44) What was the intervention studied through the experimental or quasi-experimental design? (more than one answer possible)	(1) Full group intervention (2) Savings Intervention (3) Credit Intervention (4) Livelihoods Intervention with a focus on farm activities (5) Livelihoods intervention with a focus on non-farm activities (6) Health education (7) Other health intervention (8) Intervention with a focus on collective action for women's rights (9) Intervention with a focus on collective action for other purpose (10) Setting up federation or groups outside village (11) Bookkeeping training (12) Other training (13) Activity related to domestic violence (14) Request a fee for participation in group (15) Other: Define	
(45) Provide a narrative description of the intervention in line with the paper	Open question (describe intervention as discussed in study)	

Item	Multiple-Choice Option	Response
(46) How was comparison group selected? (If applicable)	Open question (define selection of control or comparison group as discussed in study)	
(47) What quantitative study design was used for studies with a comparison group? (more than one answer possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Randomized controlled trial</li> <li>(2) Instrumental variables</li> <li>(3) Propensity score matching</li> <li>(4) Regression discontinuity design</li> <li>(5) Natural experiment</li> <li>(6) Other case control study</li> <li>(7) Cohort study</li> <li>(8) Other difference-in-difference analysis</li> <li>(9) Other quasi-experimental design</li> <li>(10) Interrupted time series with a comparison group</li> <li>(11) Other univariate correlational or regression analysis</li> <li>(12) Other multivariate correlational or regression analysis</li> </ul>	
(48) What methods of data collection were used? (more than one answer possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Survey</li> <li>(2) Administrative data</li> <li>(3) Direct observations (including lab experiments, and field experiments to measure behavior as well as group meeting observations)</li> <li>(4) Focus group discussions</li> <li>(5) Diary studies</li> <li>(6) Other: Specify</li> </ul>	
(49) Outcome measures (more than one answer possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Women's economic and social empowerment (decision-making power, mobility, autonomy, networks, social support, etc.)</li> <li>(2) Women's political empowerment, political participation, and ability to engage in collective action</li> <li>(3) Women's psychological well-being, psychological empowerment, and/or self-confidence</li> <li>(4) Women's and household's credit, savings, and other outcomes related to financial inclusion</li> <li>(5) Household's and women's asset ownership</li> <li>(6) Household's and women's consumption, income, income, and consumption smoothing, including agricultural productivity, sales, and profits</li> <li>(7) Women's labor force participation and time use</li> </ul>	

Item	Multiple-Choice Option	Response
	(8) Use of agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers) and crops grown (9) Group-level outcomes (10) Children's and women's health and nutrition outcomes, including food security and dietary diversity (11) Health behaviors (12) Gender-based violence (13) Education outcomes (14) Other: Define	
(50) What is the study sample size for the quantitative study?	Total sample size	
	Treatment group	
	Comparison group 1	
	Comparison group 2 (if applicable)	
(51) What other quantitative study design was used? (more than one answer possible)	(1) Before/after study (2) Time series analysis (3) Social network analysis (4) Study to explain determinants of participation in women's groups (e.g., using regression analysis, logit model, or bivariate comparison) (5) Study on descriptive characteristics of women's group members (6) Descriptive study on savings in groups (7) Descriptive study on credit in groups (8) Experimental economics study on behavior of group members (9) Other: Define	
(52) Provide a narrative description of the quantitative study design	Open question	
<b>Cost and Cost-Effectiveness Data</b>		
(53) Does the study provide any information on costs and/or cost-effectiveness?	(1) Yes (2) No	
(54) Provide a description of the information about costs/cost-effectiveness.	Open question	
<b>Qualitative and Mixed-Methods Studies</b>		
(55) What activity/project or activities/projects does the study focus on?	(1) All activities in the group (2) Savings project/activity (3) Credit project/activity (4) Livelihoods project/activity with a focus on farm activities (5) Livelihoods project/activity with a focus on non-farm activities	

Item	Multiple-Choice Option	Response	
	(6) Health education project/activity (7) Other health project/activity (8) Project/Activity with a focus on collective action for women's rights (9) Project/Activity with a focus on collective action for other purpose (10) Project/Activity to set up federation or groups outside village (11) Project/Activity focusing on bookkeeping training (12) Project/Activity focusing on other training (13) Project/Activity related to domestic violence (14) Project/Activity requesting a fee for participation in group (15) Other project/activity: Define (99) Unclear		
(56) What qualitative study design was used? (more than one answer possible)	(1) Comparative qualitative analysis (2) Ethnography (3) Rapid appraisal (4) Process evaluation (5) Formative evaluation (6) Needs assessments (7) Formative study (8) Other: Define (99) Unclear		
(57) What methods of data collection were used? (more than one answer possible)	(1) Survey (2) Interviews (structured and unstructured) (3) Panel discussions (4) Focus group discussion (5) Most significant change stories (6) Life histories (7) Narratives (8) Photo voice (9) Diary studies (10) Social mapping (11) Ripple mapping (99) Unclear		
<b>For Qualitative or Mixed-Methods Studies</b>			
	<b>Options for Qualitative Themes</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Extract More Details About Your Response</b>
(58) Themes as reported in the paper	(1) Pooling saving and sharing risks or nonpayment and embezzlement undermine economic sustainability of the group.		

	Options for Qualitative Themes	Response	Extract More Details About Your Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(2) Group solidarity and networks or distrust of group members or women outside the group</li> <li>(3) New or shared experiences or knowledge or limited learning in groups</li> <li>(4) Critical consciousness around gender, agency, and norms or men continue to dominate decision making</li> <li>(5) New or additional access to markets, services, or limited access to markets</li> <li>(6) Political/social bargaining power through numbers and collective action or group members have no say in community decisions</li> <li>(7) Group is inclusive of all women, or exclusion of women with certain characteristics.</li> <li>(8) Participation of men in groups</li> <li>(9) Barriers and facilitators to participation in groups</li> <li>(10) External agency supports groups, or groups are not sustainable after support ends</li> <li>(11) Women's groups provide social protection or links to social protection programs, or groups are not able to gain access to social protection</li> <li>(12) Formalization of groups through registration or other means, or groups largely remain informal</li> <li>(13) Groups are formed and united against their social exclusion and subordination to their male counterparts, e.g., gender-based violence groups, and groups to promote women's property rights</li> <li>(14) Individuals and groups benefit from training and other capacity-building programs, or groups have too little access to training</li> <li>(15) Groups go beyond financial literacy and financial inclusion; such activities could include social campaigns; securing safe water, food, fodder, medicine, shelter, clothing; etc.</li> <li>(16) Groups integrate livelihoods activities or limited access to livelihoods training</li> <li>(17) Groups include health education or limited health benefits from groups</li> <li>(18) Other: Define</li> </ul>		
<b>Other Information</b>			
(59) Any other useful notes	Open question		





# ECWG

EVIDENCE CONSORTIUM ON WOMEN'S GROUPS



The Evidence Consortium on Women's Groups (ECWG) is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and aims to address evidence gaps on how groups and collectives can contribute to achieving women's empowerment and well-being as well as understand their implementation models and cost-effectiveness. The consortium is co-led by the American Institutes for Research and Population Council, with partners from the University of Washington, Stanford University, the Campbell Collaboration and Makerere University. To learn more, please visit <http://www.womensgroupevidence.org> or email [info@www.womensgroupevidence.org](mailto:info@www.womensgroupevidence.org).

