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| Title of the project:  | ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OF YOUTHS THROUGH DIGITALIZED VSLA AND SKILLS TRAINING FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT- MPIGI DISTRICT.  |
| Project location /area of operation  | Mpigi District – Uganda  |
| Proposed project duration  | 4 years  |
| Proposed Project start date (DD MM YY) | 1ST October,2024 |
| Total project amount  | 1,610,000,000 |
| Amount requested  | 1,468,000,000 |
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| Name of authorized Signatory  | James Malinga |
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| Bank Details Name of the bank:Bank AddressTitle of the Account:Account Number:SWIFT CODE: | Centenary BankMpigi BranchMountains of Hope Children’s Ministries Limited3100063476CERBUGKAXXX |

# 2. Background and Problem Statement

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| 1. About us

**MOUNTAINS OF HOPE CHILDREN’S MINISTRIES** |
| Mountains of Hope Children’s Ministries is a non-governmental organization empowering marginalized rural communities and addressing the basic needs of vulnerable children and their communities by providing them with skills and resources to develop into healthy, caring and confident individuals Vision: A future where every child in Uganda has access to Education, Healthcare, and a spiritual growthMission; To Empower Children through Education and Vocational training, enabling them to become self-sufficientExperience implementing work similar to that in this ApplicationMountains of Hope has been dedicated to fostering community resilience and empowering vulnerable groups through a series of impactful initiatives. Our commitment to the digitalization of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) is evident as we successfully formed and trained 39 dynamic groups with a grant from Rakai Health Sciences Programme, laying a strong foundation for future digital integration that will enhance financial accessibility and transparency.In addition to this, we have undertaken extensive community-based mobilization to engage young people in meaningful apprenticeship programs. By providing essential skills training, we are equipping the youth with the tools they need to thrive in today’s economy, ultimately contributing to sustainable community development.Furthermore, our initiative to provide farm inputs to households has been transformative, enabling families to increase their agricultural productivity and, in turn, boost their earnings. This multifaceted approach not only addresses immediate economic needs but also strengthens the social fabric of our communities.By combining digital innovation with targeted youth engagement and agricultural support, Mountains of Hope is creating a holistic ecosystem poised for success. |
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| b) The social, economic, and political context related to the project area. |
| Mpigi District, located in the central region of Uganda, serves as a key administrative and economic area. It is bordered by several districts, including Kampala to the north and Butambala to the west, and features a largely rural landscape interspersed with towns such as Mpigi Town, the district headquarters.Administrative structureMpigi District is made up of one county, Mawokota with two constituencies of Mawokota North and Mawokota South. It has 9 lower Local Governments including 3 Town Councils of Mpigi, Buwama and Kayabwe. The Sub counties include; Kammengo, Kiringente, Muduuma, Buwama, Nkozi and Kituntu Sub county, the District has 56 Parishes and 339 villages.Social, Economic, and Political Context of Mpigi DistrictYouth unemployment and underemployment are critical challenges in many regions, particularly in developing nations. As of 2023, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that around 64.8 million young people globally are unemployed, with an additional 126 million in vulnerable employment, predominantly in informal sectors where job security is limited (International Labour Organization, 2023). This global crisis is compounded by the digital divide, affecting approximately 3 billion people who lack internet access, thereby restricting their opportunities for education, employment, and essential services (World Bank, 2023).In Uganda, the youth demographic aged 18-30 accounts for over 21.3% of the total population, with a median age of 15.9 years (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Within this context, Mpigi District faces a notable youth unemployment rate of 13.3%, alongside a substantial number of young people engaged in underemployment or working in informal sectors (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Access to quality education in Mpigi is inconsistent, with rural areas experiencing significant shortages in educational resources and vocational training opportunities crucial for youth development.Economically, Mpigi District, like much of Uganda, is attempting to enhance its digital infrastructure. However, only about 24% of the population has reliable internet access, with rural communities, including many in Mpigi, lagging behind urban centers in terms of digital inclusion (World Bank, 2023). This digital gap hampers the ability of young people in Mpigi to access online employment opportunities and educational resources which are vital for improving their job prospects.Politically, the Ugandan government has made youth empowerment a priority through several initiatives. Programs such as the Youth Livelihood Program and the Presidential Initiative on Skilling the Youth are designed to boost employment opportunities and improve digital literacy among the youth (Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2023). However, the implementation and effectiveness of these programs within Mpigi District remain critical for addressing the high levels of youth unemployment and underemployment in the area. The interplay of social factors, economic conditions, and political initiatives will determine the future prospects for the young population in Mpigi.Mpigi District is made up of one County, Mawokota with two constituencies of Mawokota North and Mawokota South. It also has 9 Lower Local Governments including 3 Town Councils of Mpigi, Buwama and Kayabwe. The Sub Counties include, Kammengo, Kiringente, Muduuma, Buwama Sub County, Nkozi Sub County and Kituntu Sub County.  The district has 56 Parishes and 339 Villages. Mpigi district still influences the economy of bigger towns like Entebbe and Kampala the capital city as a partial dormitory, along with other districts such as Wakiso and mukono. Mpigi provides a sizeable workforce to Kampala in terms of Market, labor as well as provision of agricultural products. Therefore, the geopolitical importance of the district gives it competitive advantage over many districts of Uganda. |
| c) Specific problem our proposed project will address, |
| In Mpigi District, Uganda, a significant proportion of youth (estimated at 34,000 according to the 2024 population census) are struggling to find employment opportunities, leading to high levels of youth unemployment. This problem is exacerbated by the lack of available economic empowerment opportunities, including digitalized Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) and skills training programs that could equip them with the necessary skills to succeed.Furthermore, the youth in Mpigi District are not equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills in agri-business, financial literacy, and saving cultures, making it difficult for them to access and manage economic opportunities. This lack of knowledge and skills is perpetuating the cycle of unemployment, poverty, and vulnerability among young people.The consequences of this problem are far-reaching, including increased poverty, social unrest, and brain drain from rural areas to urban centers. Therefore, it is essential to address the root causes of youth unemployment in Mpigi District by providing alternative economic empowerment opportunities, skills training, and knowledge in agri-business and financial literacy to enable the youth to participate effectively in the economy. |

# 3. Project Description:

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| a) Our target population? Included is a selection criterion for the target population. |
| Our selection criteria will prioritize the most vulnerable individuals within these categories, particularly adolescents and youth girls from very poor households. The project aims at supporting mostly female youths with 70% of the participants and 30% being male youths inclusive of youths with disability. The selection process will be based on the utilization of the Household Vulnerability Assessment Tool (HVAT 007A) from the Ministry of Gender, Labor and Social Development to ensure that the most at-risk individuals are identified and supported. The target population for the project will consists of unemployed young people who have dropped out of the education system due to various challenges such as poverty, early marriages, poor parenting, drug abuse, and epidemics like COVID-19 and HIV/AIDs. The project will also focus on girls who are victims of teenage pregnancies.  |
| b) Why them (Rational for why we focus on the specified target groups above)?  |
| Uganda has one of the highest rates of teenage prégnances in sub-Saharan Africa, with approximately 25% of adolescent girls aged 15-19 either pregnant or already mothers (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021). This early child bearing is often linked to school dropout, limiting future economic opportunities and perpetuating the cycle of poverty. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, particularly among young people from low-income households. According to the Ministry of Education and Sports (2022), around 30% of students in Uganda did not return to school after the pandemic-induced closures, with many forced into early marriages or labor due to economic pressures. This dropout rate is particularly alarming in districts like Mpigi, where poverty levels are high and access to quality education is limitedFocusing on this group is also supported by Uganda's demographic structure, where youth under 30 years make up approximately 78% of the population (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2021). Given the high unemployment rate among youth, estimated at 13.3% nationally (World Bank, 2023), empowering these vulnerable groups through targeted interventions is critical for promoting economic development and reducing inequalities. Having worked with the youths in our previous projects in Mpigi district, most especially girls’experiences lack of employment, marketable skills, financial illiteracy, limited knowledge on the application of digital skills, poor governance and leadership and gender equity,youths in Mpigi district who lack the above-mentioned skills have been neglected and not involved by the community stakeholders in most social and economic community development programs. |
| c) What will change in their lives (what will be tangibly different for them because of the program)? |
| The program is designed to create tangible, life-changing impacts for the targeted Young people in Mpigi District by addressing critical barriers to their socio-economic well-being. The anticipated changes include :1. Increased Employment Opportunités: Participants Will gain access to vocational training, digital skills development, and entrepreneurship opportunities. These skills will make them more competitive in the job market, leading to high employment rates among the youth. With enhanced employability, participants can secure stable income sources, reducing their economic vulnerability.2. Enhanced Social Inclusion among the community youths:Through targeted interventions that focus on the most vulnerable, the program will foster greater social inclusion. Young people who had previously been marginalized due to poverty, lack of education, or other socio-economic factors will have the opportunity to participate fully in community programs, gaining respect and recognition. 3. Reduced Teenage Pregnancies : As young women and girls gain access to education and economic opportunities; they are less likely to enter into early marriages or experience teenage pregnancies. This shift will promote gender equality and allow them to pursue their personal and professional goals. 4. Financial Independence stability : female youths shall be equiped with marketable skills and knowledge by the program to become financially independent. This intervention Will break the cycle of poverty by enabling them to contribute to their households and communities.5. Better Health Outcomes: The program’s focus on health education, particularly concerning the impact of drug abuse, HIV, and COVID-19, Will lead to improved health literacy and healthier lifestyle choices among participants. This will reduce the prevalence of drug abuse and sexually transmitted infections, contributing to better overall health in the community. 6. Enhanced Community Resilience: the community will benefit more from these youths who will beTrained, educated, skilled, and employed, This will contribute to the development and stability of Mpigi District, fostering a more sustainable and prosperous future of the community.  |
| d) The overall goal (The long-term change we want to see in one sentence |
| To break the cycle of poverty among 8,000 youths in Mpigi District through equiping them with Financial and market ready skills thus creating employment and self reliance among the youths with at least 5600 transitioning into work force. |
| e) Three (3) major mid-term changes we want to see (above 1 year) |
| Employment: The trained youths will have attained employment and increased their incomes, equipped with financial management skills, vocational and entrepreneur development and digital literacy.Mindset Change in community: The ready trained youths and employed ones will now be seen as useful members of the community which was not the case before since they will be contributing to their societies regardless of their gender and economic background.Strengthened Financial Resilience :The digitization of VSLA initiative Will strengthen the Financial management among the trained youths, enabling them to better address socio-economic challenges and support the holistic development of their youth population. |
| f) Five (5) immediate changes we want to see (after activity implementation) |
| 1. Increased number of VSLA groups: we anticipate to have an increased number of digitized VSLA groups among the youths and improve their social networks. That is collaboration, idea sharing and access to financial services.
2. Increased Modern Agriculture: we anticipate to see an increased number of Youths trained in modern agriculture transitioned from subsistence to agri-business program.
3. Awareness and Aspirations:Create awareness among the youths about available opportunities and spark their aspirations among participants. They’ll begin envisioning a brighter future.
4. Increased number of youths enrolled: we anticipate to have an increased number of youths participation and community engagements in the project activities such as meetings, workshops/ Trainings thus increased no of Girls involved into economic enterprising activities.
5. Initial Digital Inclusion: Introducing digital tools and concepts will be an immediate change. participants will learn about digital wallets, online platforms, and data-driven decision-making.
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| g) What activities we will undertake to achieve the above changes? |
| Objective 1:Strengthened community-based mobilization and awareness among the stakeholders.Activity 1: Conduct stakeholder’smeeting. * Conduct a one-day inception meeting for stakeholders to launch the Program targeting 20 officials.

Outcome: Approval from the authorities to implement the project in our targeted communities. Activity 2: Conduct Community awareness campaigns on community radios and events 3 times per quarter. Activity 3: Conduct specific engagement dialogues with religious and cultural leaders.Outcome: Increased awareness and community Participation. Objective 2: Enrolment of 8,000 Youths into the program. Activity 1: Conduct a three day’s training for project 40 staffs and volunteers in administering the AVAT.Activity2: Conduct the enrolment exercise for 2000 youths(70% female and 30% male) per year using the AVAT.Outcome: 8,000 youth enrolled and at least 70% transitioning into work by the end of the project.Objective 3: Capacities of cluster member organization strengthened to skill young people. Activity 1:Conduct 15 governance/ leadership trainings to 54 youths in Mpigi district. Outcome:Trained youths will develop skills such as effective communication, decision-making, problem-solving, and collaboration. Activity 2: Conduct 48 trainings among 2,000 young people in trade, gender and entrepreneurship.0utcome: Increased practical skills relevant to their chosen business domain.Activity 3: Conduct 4 viable Trade Marketable skills analysis among 110 key stakeholders in the 8 sub counties of Mpigi district.Activity 4: Developing and delivering a digital and work readiness curriculumOutcome: The youth will have acquireddigital literacy, financial literacy, technology utilization and essential workplace skills.Objective 4: Promote digitalization of VSLAs and Strengthened Businesses.Activity 1: Conduct 41(1200youths) VSLA trainings annually to form 164 new VSLA groups through local partnerships and profile 103 existing groups. Activity 2: Conduct Integrated 67 (2000youths) VSLA trainings annually to equip them with relevant skills for modern markets.Activity 3: Monitoring of the VSLA groupsOutcome: Improved visibility and digital profiles of VSLAs leading to better targeted skill enhancement programs.Objective 5: Appropriate financial services strengthened for young people. Activity 1: Conduct 67 (2000youths) financial literacy trainings annually targeting business to business forums with financial service providers.Activity 2: Conduct5visits to 5 Financial Institutions for data sharing annually.Activity 3: Conduct 5 workshops(40youths and 10 project staff) for capacity building from Financial Institutions annually.Outcome: Strengthened financial institution linkages and partnerships among the youthsObjective 6: Promotion of Local/National Market and business digital skills.Activity 1: Conduct 2 engagement meetings annually with 20 key market players to incentivize users.Activity 2: Train 2000 youths in relevant Market/ Employable skills annually through apprenticeship, agro- enterprise and cottage industrial skills. Activity 3: Procure and distribute start up kits and certificates to the2000 youths after completion of training annually.Activity 4: Certification of Products generated by 67 youth groups annually to expand market opportunities.Outcome: Enhanced employable marketable skills among the 2000 youths annually. |
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# 4.**Risks and challenges**

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| What are some of the challenges (both internal and external) that are likely to be experienced and hinder the implementation this project and how will you address them? |
| Internal * Staff turnover for the project life span, this will be addressed by orienting every new staff which will help to uphold the vision of the program.

External.* A Change in community leadership after engaging them in the program. A continuous updating on the project interventions or activities by sharing timely written reports.
* Dropping out of youths enrolled on Program, this will be addressed by close monitoring, follow ups and keeping track for all enrolled youths, engagement of key stakeholders can minimize the rate of program dropouts.
* High expectations by community, this will be addressed by providing continuous sensitizations and awareness about the intended program interventions.
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# 5. Partnerships and networks:

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| Who are the key strategic partners, whether institutions or individuals, in the broader field in which you work (please include both those you work with or not)? State the need for collaborating with these organizations? |
| * Local government:
* Religious institutions:
* Local community leaders:
* Community Youth supporting NGOs and Groups.
* Key market players, Network operators and financial institutions.
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# 6. Gender, Inclusion and Safeguarding

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| How we will ensure equal participation for all and their safeguarding |
| The selection criteria will be inclusive and transparent thats to say, HouseholdVulnerability Assessment Tool (HVAT 007A) will be used to identify the most vulnerable individuals. This will ensure that the program focuses on those from the needy households and the most marginalized groups, with a specific emphasis on maintaining a gender balance. The program will intentionally allocate 70% of the slots to young women and girls and 30% young boys and men who dropped out of school system, addressing their higher vulnerability, particularly those affected by early marriages and teenage pregnancies. * Establish mechanisms for feedback and grievance redressal to enable participants to raise concerns or complaints in a safe and confidential manner.
* Our team will conduct regular monitoring and oversight of project activities to ensure compliance with inclusive participation and safe guarding principles.
* Assign designated staff members or focal points responsible for monitoring and addressing issues related to equal participation and safeguardingthroughout the projectlifecycle.
* Gender inclusion Policy to be signed by all the staff and volunteers.
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# 7. Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning Plan

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| How we will ensure that the implementation of our activities is tracked and progress measured/ What data we will collect. How often we will you collect data.  How often we will analyze data. How we intend to use the data |
| Tracking Implementation and Measuring Progress :1. Establish a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework :Develop an M&E Framework at the outset to systematically track activity implementation and progress. 2. Regular Monitoring :Implement regular check-ins and progress reviews to ensure activities are on track. Data Collection :Quantitative Data :1. Participant enrollment numbers. 2. Training completion rates. 3. Post-training employment rates. 4. Income levels. 5. Gender participation metrics. Qualitative Data :1. Participant satisfaction surveys. 2. Feedback on challenges faced during the program. 3. Assessments of immediate changes in skills, knowledge, and behavior. Frequency of Data Collection :1. Quarterly Data Collection :Collect data quarter to capture ongoing trends and make timely adjustments. 2. Frequent Collection for SpecificActivities : For certain activities, such as Attendance tracking during training sessions, collect data more frequently to ensure active participation. Frequency of Data Analysis:1. Biannual Analysis :Analyze the collected data bi-annually to assess mid-term outcomes, such as changes in employment status and income levels. 2.OngoingAnalysis for Immediate Adjustments:Conduct ongoing analysis where needed to identify and address any immediate issues. Use of Data:1. Decision-Making:Utilize data insights to inform decisions, adjust activities, and improve program implementation. 2. Reporting to Stakeholders : Use data to report progress and outcomes to stakeholders, ensuring transparency and accountability. 3. Program Improvement: Incorporate lessons learned from data analysis into future program designs to enhance effectiviness.  |

# 8. Sustainability:

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| Change: How the change envisioned by our project will be sustained in the future Organization: Structures and plans that are in place to ensure our organization’s sustainability in the future – including plans to strengthen the organization’s leadership, management and financial health – over time? |
| To ensure the sustainability of the change envisioned by our project, we will implement several strategies:1. Capacity Building and Empowerment:We will prioritize capacity building among beneficiaries, equipping them with skills, knowledge, and resources to sustain their livelihoods independently. By empowering individuals with marketable skills and entrepreneurial capabilities, we aim to create a sustainable pathway for economic self-sufficiency and community development.
2. Stakeholder Engagement and Partnerships:We will foster strong partnerships with local stakeholders,including government agencies, NGOs, community-based organizations, and private sector entities. Through collaborative efforts and shared resources, we will create a supportive ecosystem that continues to promote and support the initiatives introduced by our project.
3. Institutionalization of Practices:We will work towards the institutionalization of project practices within existing community structures and institutions. By integrating our interventions into local systems and programs, such as vocational training centers, schools, and health care facilities, we aim to embed sustainable practices that endure beyond the project life span.
4. Knowledge Transfer and Peer Learning:We will facilitate knowledge transfer and peer learning opportunities among beneficiaries, enabling them to share best practices, lessons learned, and innovative solutions. By fostering a culture of continuous learning and collaboration, we aim to promote self-reliance and collective problem-solving within communities.
5. Monitoring and Evaluation :We will establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the long-term impact of our interventions and identify areas for improvement. By regularly assessing out comes and adapting strategies based on feedback and data analysis, we will ensure that our efforts remain relevant, effective, and sustainable over time.

Organizations Sustainability Plans : Our organisation iscommitted to ensuring its long-term sustainability through the following measures:1. Leadership Development :We invest in the continuous development of our leadership team, providing opportunities for training, mentorship, and professiona lgrowth. By nurturing strong leadership capabilities within our organization (cluster), we ensure effective decision-making, strategic planning, and vision alignment.
2. Management Systems and Processes: We maintain robust management systems and processes to streamline operations, enhance efficiency, and maximize impact. From financial management to program implementation, we adhere to best practices and standards to ensure transparency, accountability, and effectiveness.
3. Financial Health:We diversify our funding sources and revenue streams to mitigate financial risks and ensure financial sustainability. Through prudent financial management, resource mobilization efforts, and strategic partnerships, we aim to maintain a stable financial position that supports ourorganizational growth and resilience.
4. Strategic Planning and Adaptation: We regularly conduct strategic planning exercises to assess our organizational priorities, strengths, and areas for improvement. By staying agile and responsive to changing
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7. Cost of the project

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| Total project cost in local currency & US dollars  |
| 400,000 USD 1,460,000,000 UGX |