

HOW GROW HAS ENABLED FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS TO GROW BUSINESS

By Vision Reporter

The Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises (GROW) project is a government project funded by the World Bank. It is implemented by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and the Private Sector Foundation Uganda in all districts, municipalities and cities.

It aims at increasing access to entrepreneurial services that enable female entrepreneurs to grow their enterprises from micro to small and from small to medium in targeted locations, including refugee-host districts.

At least 1.6 million people, including families, communities, suppliers, service providers and distributors of women's enterprise products, are benefitting both directly and indirectly from the project. Below are some of the satisfied beneficiaries.

ODO FARM GOES DIGITAL
Along Katuna Road, Bernadette Musiimenta, the founder of ODO Farm Ltd, is a testament to resilience and women-led enterprise in Uganda's poultry sector.

She started in 2001 with just 100 birds while working at the Private Sector Promotion Centre under a UN-supported entrepreneurship programme. Musiimenta gradually expanded her business to 1,000 birds. However, in 2012, a fire destroyed 500 of her birds.

"Everything went up in flames," she recalls.

Undeterred, Musiimenta farmed Irish potatoes to fund her return to poultry. Today, ODO Farm Ltd manages two farm units – Katuna Road (4,000 birds) and Rwebikona (5,000 birds) – employing six full-time workers.

She is one of the largest poultry farmers in Kabale district and sources livelihoods for women suppliers across the region.

In 2024, Musiimenta accessed a GROW loan through Post Bank at



President Yoweri Museveni signs a placard during the launch of the GROW Project on March 8, 2024, in Katakwi district. The five-year initiative aims to increase access to entrepreneurial services for women-owned enterprises in targeted locations

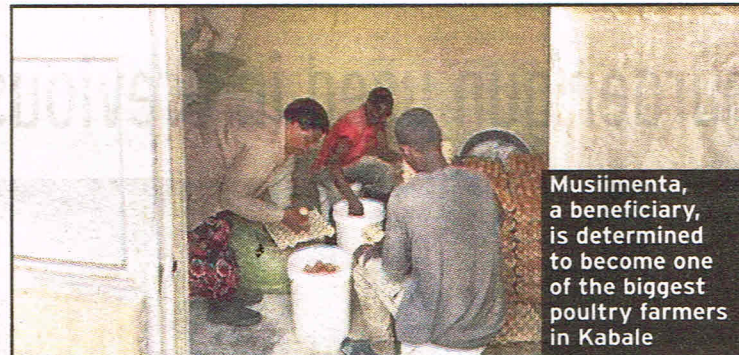
favourable terms. The funding allowed her to bulk-purchase feeds and expand operations. She has consistently repaid per quarter.

With support from the GROW project, Musiimenta also embarked on digital transformation. TikTok and Instagram accounts were set up, and she received hands-on training, with follow-up support planned via her daughter in Kampala.

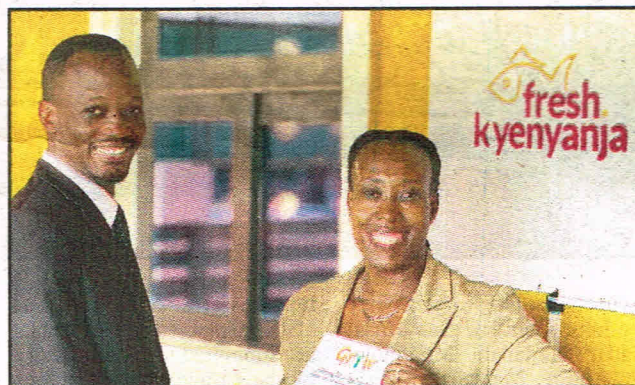
She was connected to mobile money merchant codes and plans to adopt a digital accounting system to manage both farms and reduce occasional losses.

Musiimenta dreams of turning ODO farm into a regional poultry training hub, using digital tools to boost visibility and empower other aspiring farmers. Her journey from tragedy to thriving enterprise demonstrates that, in her words: "If your hands can feed birds, they can build dreams"

FRESH, FAST AND FEMALE-LED
Isabella Katwesigye, the founder of Fresh Kyenyanja, is turning a small fish business into a growing enterprise that combines entrepreneurship, social impact and digital innovation. Fresh Kyenyanja, a sole proprietorship, specialises in dressed wild



Musiimenta, a beneficiary, is determined to become one of the biggest poultry farmers in Kabale



GROW has enabled Katwesigye to provide employment

fish, tilapia and Nile perch, serving an average of 300 households per week. The business employs 12 staff, eight women and four men, reflecting Katwesigye's commitment to inclusive employment.

Beyond her immediate team, she works with over 20 women suppliers across five landing

sites on Lake Victoria, supporting livelihoods and strengthening women-led businesses along the fisheries value chain.

As a first-time borrower, Katwesigye accessed a GROW loan of sh20m from Stanbic Bank Uganda at a 10% interest rate with no collateral. The loan enabled her to expand operations,

Empowering women through WinFash Designs

In Kampala, Winfred Arinaitwe, the founder of WinFash Designs, exemplifies how access to affordable financing can transform a business.

Through support from the 10% GROW loan from dfcu Bank, she strengthened her operations, invested in production and expanded her capacity to serve larger corporate and institutional clients.

This has contributed to steady growth and increased employment. Starting in 1994 with a single sewing machine, WinFash Designs has grown into a garment-manufacturing enterprise employing over 100 workers.

The business has evolved from custom bridal wear to supplying uniforms, overalls and protective garments, supported by a scalable production model.

Additionally, Arinaitwe benefited from digitalisation support under the GROW project, including the development of a professional website, adoption of a digital accounting system and content creation.

These improvements have enhanced efficiency, visibility and customer engagement. With a strong focus on women's empowerment and job creation, WinFash Designs continues to grow competitively.



The GROW loan has contributed to WinFash Designs' steady expansion

purchase additional equipment and strengthen stock management, allowing Fresh Kyenyanja to meet growing household demand and scale the business sustainably.

The financial support was complemented by digitalisation assistance through the GROW project. Katwesigye embarked on a digital transformation journey that included developing a professional e-commerce website, boosting her social media presence on TikTok, Instagram and WhatsApp Business, as well as adopting a digital accounting package for improved financial management.

These interventions enhanced operational

efficiency, online visibility and customer engagement, positioning the enterprise for further growth.

Today, Fresh Kyenyanja combines steady market growth with strong social impact. Katwesigye continues to provide employment, mentorship and business opportunities for women within her team and across her supplier network, fostering skills development and financial independence.

Katwesigye's journey shows how access to affordable financing, combined with strategic support and digital tools, can transform a small business into a thriving, socially impactful enterprise with strong growth potential.