

Imagine Her: Women as Social Entrepreneurs and Climate Champions April 2026 Fact Sheet



[Imagine Her](#) invests in young women at the intersection of climate resilience, economic empowerment, and community leadership in Uganda. Working to solve the two biggest barriers to launching and sustaining enterprises — capital and skills — Imagine Her’s participants receive hands-on training in social entrepreneurship using design and systems thinking, access to patient, returnable start-up capital, and ongoing, tailored business development support and mentorship. It places women at the center of innovation ecosystems, addressing systemic inequalities while fostering community-led impact in a green and inclusive economy.

Stella’s Story

Stella first heard about Imagine Her’s Social Enterprise and Innovation Program (SEIP) training during a local mobilization effort by a community coach. At the time, she was navigating the initial stages of running a solar product business in her rural community, but growth seemed impossible without formal training or reliable resources.

In Uganda, solar energy is a lifeline. According to the 2024 census report by the Uganda National Bureau of Statistics (UNBS), of the 10.7 million households, over 3 million (28.1%) rely on solar as their main source of lighting. It is the most commonly used clean energy option, far outpacing other alternatives. Stella's community, like many others in Uganda, depends significantly on solar energy because of limited access to electricity, but Stella noticed a major gap.

"I found out that many of the community members use solar products, but the problem was where to buy them. That informed our business idea (Green Volt) and model of bringing these services to our people," Stella said.

In the SEIP training, Stella learned how to monitor sales, plan inventory, and manage expenses – and she gained funding support that helped her expand her business to more solar products tailored to the needs of her community.

"Most villages don't have electricity, but they still need power for their homes. Our business brings reliable solar solutions closer to them," she said.

Today, Stella serves 10 – 20 customers a day and earns an average of \$30 daily. She also offers solar advisory services, helping customers understand what they need based on their energy usage, budget, and household size. And she employs two permanent staff members and a part-time engineer. Stella's dream is to become the leading solar provider in her region.

"I want to light up more homes, support more families, and show other women that they can do this too," she said.

Understanding the Issue in Context

Uganda is a low-income, landlocked country in east Africa with a population of 50 million people. Half the population is under 18, making it one of the youngest countries in the world. Only 47 percent of Ugandans have access to electricity. Uganda's economic growth has been increasing, but that growth is concentrated in low-productivity and climate-vulnerable agriculture and informal jobs. Unfortunately, those jobs do not offer many opportunities for income growth and upward mobility.

In Uganda, climate change, economic exclusion, and entrenched gender norms create major barriers for young rural women. Nationally, 52 percent of women ages 18 – 30 are "Not in Employment, Education, or Training" (NEET), reflecting widespread lack of opportunity. Climate shocks – including droughts, floods, and erratic rainfall – further threaten agriculture, the main source of livelihood in rural communities. Agriculture employs over 80 percent of the population, and nearly half lack access to electricity, particularly in rural areas. Renewable energy and climate-smart agriculture represent high-potential sectors for inclusive green jobs.

Rural women across sub-Saharan Africa are underrepresented in climate-smart jobs due to limited access to education, training, and productive resources. As primary caretakers dependent on rain-fed agriculture, they are disproportionately affected by climate events, facing restricted access to water,



education, and employment opportunities. This deepens poverty and limits their potential to thrive in emerging green economies.

Women in Uganda's rural Kibuuku district face high unemployment, energy poverty, and limited access to technical training. These women face marginalization due to poverty, the education-employment gap, geographical isolation, and gender-based structures. Climate change disproportionately impacts them, disrupting access to food, opportunities, and clean energy and increasing vulnerabilities and risks like gender-based violence, forced marriage, and labor exploitation. The economy in this area relies on rice farming that is hampered by poor access to energy. This hampers value addition – that is, the rice is not enhanced to make it more appealing to prospective customers. In addition, widespread deforestation due to limited clean cooking fuel access further degrades the environment.

Community-Based Solutions in Action

Together Women Rise's grant of \$50,000 funds Imagine Her's Imagine Green Energy Lab Project, a pilot project that equips rural young Ugandan women with the renewable energy technology skills, resources, and support to become leaders in clean energy and agribusiness. It directly benefits 150 out-of-school young women ages 16 – 35 in the Kibuuku district. The expectation is that 60 of the participants will transition into employment through women-led green enterprises and increase their incomes by 40%.

“Through Imagine Her's Social Enterprise & Innovation Program, I have learned that running business activities requires a plan that guides you through to minimize mistakes. I have also learned to plan and budget for business finances. I haven't been doing this in an organized manner, but with the sessions we have had, I now plan my spending first.”

– Korya, program participant

This initiative empowers young women with practical, hands-on training and start-up funding to launch sustainable enterprises in agroforestry, organic farming, value addition, and renewable energy technologies like solar and biogas.

The project will be implemented in three tiers:

Tier 1: Skills Lab - Technical training – Participants will receive hands-on training in renewable energy technologies (RETs), social entrepreneurship, climate adaptation, and investment readiness. Activities include community sensitization, participant enrollment, a startup boot camp, and developing and testing training modules. Community events will raise awareness of women-led green enterprises and clean energy solutions.



Tier 2: Patient Capital Access – After training, 60 (40%) of the trained participants will be selected through a transparent assessment process to receive patient capital to launch or scale their businesses. (Patient capital, also known as long-term capital, is investment funding that seeks sustained, long-term impact rather than short-term profits.)

Tier 3: Mentorship and Technical Assistance – Graduates will receive tailored mentorship, including a four-month growth pathway, access to technical experts, business support, and market linkages. Activities involve mentor onboarding, development of mentorship tools, and regular check-ins.



Participants are recruited in partnership with local leaders, and sessions are designed to be hands-on, culturally relevant, and accessible. Peer-led facilitation and alumni mentorship ensure sustained engagement and learning. Imagine Her's work employs a validated, impact-proven, and innovative approach, utilizing a human-centered design methodology at the community level to empower young women as last-mile actors and drivers of their economic independence. Participants lead the process of identifying and developing solutions to pressing community challenges, such as climate change and food security disparities, through impact-driven and sustainable business models.

“Through SEIP, I was linked to Uganda Industrial Research Institute (URI) for mentorship on product development where I learned how to preserve fruits into juice. After learning this, I ventured into organic juice production which has become my major source of livelihood.”

– Jane, Imagine Her program participant

Impact and Transformation

Founded in 2017, Imagine Her empowers rural women and youth in Uganda through its Social Enterprise and Innovation Program (SEIP) and other initiatives. As a locally led, women- and youth-staffed organization, including alumni of its own programs, Imagine Her employs a proven, human-centered design methodology that positions participants as problem-solvers of community challenges such as energy poverty and food insecurity.

Imagine Her has implemented three flagship programs:

- **SEIP**, Imagine Her's central focus, is a three-month MBA-style initiative that has trained over 2,800 individuals to launch social ventures tackling challenges in agriculture and renewable energy. This addresses the root causes of gender inequality by equipping rural women with entrepreneurial skills, resources, and access to capital. This enables them to create livelihoods, challenge traditional gender norms, and become economic drivers in their communities.
- **The Becoming Program** supports girls in completing primary education by providing business and menstrual hygiene management skills – impacting over 6,000 girls and young women.
- **The Career Pathways Program** equips university graduates with workforce readiness and business skills through partnerships with higher education institutions, reaching 50 graduates during its pilot phase.

Imagine Her has improved the lives of thousands of women and the communities in which they live:

- 4,116 rural women and youth have been trained in social entrepreneurship and social venture management.
- 975 small and growing ventures have been launched.
- 3,850 decent jobs have been created.
- 16,000 people have experienced enhanced quality of life through products and services launched and scaled.
- \$500,000 has been unlocked in internal and external investments capital for early-stage entrepreneurs.

- 600% Return on Investment has been achieved, with entrepreneurs earning an average of \$1,800 in six months post-launch.

The Green Energy Lab Project Pilot that Together Women Rise is funding aims to achieve measurable outcomes for rural 150 young women, plus their families and communities:

- **Training** – 150 rural young women will be trained in Renewable Energy Technologies (RETs), social entrepreneurship, and climate change.
- **Education** – 85% of participants will demonstrate increased knowledge in RETs and climate-smart entrepreneurship.



- **Start-up funding** – 60 women will receive patient capital to launch or grow green enterprises, with 30% reporting income increases and 25% showing revenue growth within a year.
- **New and expanded businesses** – 60 new women-led green businesses will be launched or expanded, creating at least one full-time job and two part-time jobs.
- **Green energy adoption** – 500+ households will adopt green energy solutions.
- **Enhanced environment** – An estimated 2,000 tons of carbon offset will be achieved due to cleaner cooking technologies and solar use.



Beyond the funding, Imagine Her's sustainability strategy is anchored in a revolving fund model. Entrepreneurs will receive flexible, grace-period loans either as individuals or in groups, and repayments will be reinvested to support new participants. A nominal \$3 registration fee by participants will partly cover administrative costs. To de-risk access to capital, Imagine Her will partner with microfinance institutions and introduce complementary services like micro-insurance. The project will also establish partnerships with private sector actors and local government, which will provide continuous market access and policy support. Women-led enterprises will promote sustainable practices and act as catalysts for broader community transformation. Ultimately, the project will create a ripple effect that enables young women to become change agents, driving inclusive and climate-resilient development in their communities.

Direct impact: 150 women and girls

Indirect impact: 450+ women and girls

Mission Alignment

Imagine Her's data shows that investing in women leads to meaningful ripple effects for families and communities. Empowering women is key to eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development. Through support for women-led ventures, facilitation of access to finance, and evidence of improved household well-being, Imagine Her demonstrates a deep commitment to creating equal opportunities.

The Green Energy Lab provides practical, hands-on training that leads directly to employment and income growth, while addressing urgent challenges of energy poverty and food insecurity in rural Uganda. Its peer-led and alumni-driven approach ensures lasting engagement and sustainability, and its locally-led model, which is staffed by women and youth from these same communities, embodies authentic ownership and trust. This initiative not only opens pathways to independence and opportunity but also positions women as innovators and leaders in clean energy and agribusiness.

Budget

Item	Description	Cost
Patient Capital	Zero-interest loans for women-led ventures	\$24,000
Project Team	Salaries for trainers and coordinators	\$14,021
Experiential Learning & Business Support	Hands-on activities and fieldwork	\$5,417
Monitoring & Evaluation	Tools to assess impact	\$3,836
Program Resources	Training materials, participant handbooks, local transport for trainers to rural training sites	\$2,726
Total	Total project cost: \$86,000. Rise funding: \$50,000 (approx. 58%)	\$50,000

Learn More

- [Shop! Watch! Read! Listen!](#)
- [Proven Platter](#)
- [Recipes](#)

Source Materials

[Imagine Her](#)

[World Bank](#)

[BBC Uganda Country Profile](#)

