Qualitative research on rural women’s economic empowerment and social protection

Rwanda Vision 2020 Umurenge Public Works

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

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## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CDF</td>
<td>Common Development Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHWs</td>
<td>Community Health Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIP</td>
<td>Crop Intensification Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDPRS</td>
<td>Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EICV 3</td>
<td>Troisième Enquête Intégrale sur les Conditions de Vie des Ménages/Third Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEWS NET</td>
<td>Famine Early Warning System Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoR</td>
<td>Government of Rwanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIMO</td>
<td>Haute Intensité de Main-d'œuvre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINAGRI</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINALOC</td>
<td>Ministry of Local Government, Good Governance, Community Development and Social Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MINECOFIN</td>
<td>Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LODA</td>
<td>Local Administrative Entities Development Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTRP</td>
<td>Land Tenure Regularization Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSRP</td>
<td>Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLDSF</td>
<td>Rwanda Local Development Support Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>RwF</td>
<td>Rwandan Franc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RWEE</td>
<td>Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACCO</td>
<td>Savings and Credit Cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>Sector Development Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>U.S. Dollar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VSLG</td>
<td>Village Savings and Loans Groups</td>
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<td>VUP</td>
<td>Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme</td>
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Executive summary

Background
This report presents the findings from a qualitative research study conducted in October 2014 in Rwanda, the first of a series of country case studies led by the Protection to Production (PtoP) project of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), exploring how social protection policies and programmes can be improved to enhance impacts on rural women’s empowerment. The focus on women’s empowerment is motivated by the development objective of reducing gender inequalities, particularly in rural areas and in the agricultural sector. The study also includes men, as they have a fundamental role as enablers and are integral to social change in support to gender equality.

Starting in 2008, the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP), the Government of Rwanda’s flagship poverty reduction programme, provides a countrywide social protection system through cash transfers, temporary public works employment, financial services, and sensitization to poor households. The focus of the study is the public works component of the programme.

Since 2008, the VUP has expanded at the rate of 30 sectors each year. According to the 2014 VUP Annual Review, in the 2013-14 financial year the VUP public works component targeted a total of 104 310 households across the country (McCord and Shenge, 2014). The most recent figure provided by the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA) in March 2015 shows a total of 130 000 households countrywide. As of 2013-14 a total of 172 sectors across the country were targeted with VUP public works (McCord and Shenge, 2014).

The VUP is not designed with explicit gender equality objectives that intentionally promote the empowerment of women. However, the design of the programme envisages ‘gender parity’ in the selection of public works participants and strongly encourages that women be cosignatories with their husbands of the bank accounts in which VUP payments are deposited.

Research and scope
The three thematic areas covered by the research on the VUP public works component are: (i) the impact of VUP’s public works on the economic advancement of women; (ii) the impact of VUP’s public works on the power and agency of women; and (iii) operational features in the VUP public works scheme, particularly how design and implementation enables gender-equality outcomes.

This report presents the qualitative component of a mixed-method research activity consisting of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The qualitative research was implemented in two sectors in Rwanda: Kayonza sector in the Eastern province, and Gisagara sector in Southern province; the latter site was also where quantitative research was conducted.

The research sampled four VUP villages and a comparison (non-VUP) village in each sector. A total of 34 focus groups discussions (FGD), 19 key informant interviews, as well as two household case studies, were undertaken covering both male and female beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, as well as resource persons.

1Technically, PW was implemented in 180 sectors, however only 172 reports had been received at the time of the VUP 2014 Annual Review (McCord and Shenge, 2014). In eight of the sectors where resources were not requested in time for implementation before the closure of the financial year, beneficiaries did not receive any wage transfers during the 2013/14 year. For this reason these sectors are not included in the VUP 2014 Annual Review.
Key Findings:

Economic advancement

In the areas covered by this study, VUP public works only partially promoted the economic advancement of women as follows:

- Wage transfers were predominantly used to smooth household consumption, with VUP wages having limited effect in economic investment. For only a minority of female beneficiaries, participation in public works acted as a catalyst for investments in economic activities.

- In Ndego sector (Eastern province), a substantial share of wage transfers were used for paying Savings and Credit Cooperatives’ (SACCO) account opening fees and for paying arrears of government taxes. This has greatly limited the effect of VUP wage transfers on improved beneficiaries’ household consumption and economic advancement.

- Wage transfers enabled female beneficiaries to acquire a new ability to enter informal saving associations – or re-enter them – and access credit for consumption smoothing and small economic investments.

- VUP public works in part promoted financial inclusion of women by providing cash wages through financial institutions. This allowed some female participants of public works – both married and female heads of households – to own an individual account with a financial institution for the first time (typically with SACCOs). The potential of the VUP in promoting financial inclusion is however limited by the inability of the majority of female beneficiaries to access formal loans given their low incomes and savings capacity.

- Female participation in VUP public works did not alter the traditional gender division of labour within the household and did not substantially redress gender disparities in time use for domestic and care activities.

- Through public works, female participants gained new technical skills (e.g. digging ditches, levelling roads). However, domestic obligations remained a key barrier for female beneficiaries to market their newly acquired skills and increase their labour market engagement.

- Among some female beneficiaries, VUP wages enhanced women’s ability to manage risks and shocks, enabling investments in cash savings and livestock, and reducing negative coping strategies such as asset disinvestments that increase vulnerability.

- Programme implementation challenges – notably the limited number of workdays available compared to programme objectives and pervasive payment delays – greatly constrained the potential of VUP public works to support beneficiaries’ economic advancement.

Power and agency

VUP public works had positive, but marginal, effects on women’s power and agency across the range of household profiles included in this study:

- For women in male-headed households, relatively small cash wage amounts and programme implementation challenges were among the key reasons for the inability of VUP public works to promote more substantial changes in women’s bargaining power.
at the household level, with key household assets and agricultural production remaining largely controlled by husbands.

- While women’s temporary employment in VUP public works did not alter deep-rooted patriarchal sociocultural norms, there was evidence in this study of heightened awareness and recognition of gender equality because of government’s strong policy commitment to this development goal. Complementarity between ongoing changes in policy environment with VUP public works has good potential for promoting women’s economic empowerment in practice.

- Participation in VUP public works enabled women to save privately in SACCO accounts and use wage transfers for personal and children’s items. For some, it also enabled small economic investments. Increased control over resources resulted in some heightened feelings of self-esteem, dignity and increased ability to make independent choices among female participants of public works.

- The programme catalysed the inclusion of some female beneficiaries – including some belonging to the poorest segments of the population – in social networks for economic collaboration and mutual support, having positive spillover effects on their feelings of self-confidence.

- The programme did not result in women’s increased leadership roles and decision-making power in the public arena, except for a few cases where women were able to access supervisory roles in the programme.

**Operations**

Despite the existence of a favourable enabling environment for the promotion of women’s economic empowerment in policy terms, the design and implementation of VUP public works was not geared towards promoting this objective:

- While aspects of programme design – notably targeting – addressed to some extent women’s access to the programme, the design of programme components that could further enhance the inclusion of women, particularly those constrained by high dependency ratios, have not been given adequate attention.

- Aspects to further enhance women’s empowerment through skills development, financial literacy and sensitization activities targeted to women’s needs and linkages with Mutuelles, have not been capitalized upon.

The potential of the public works component to become a catalyst of women’s economic empowerment has been constrained by programme implementation challenges. In particular by:

- The low number of working days in Ndego sector (Eastern), which resulted in low total value of wage transfer; and pervasive payment delays in Kigembe sector (Southern);
- SACCO account opening fees and government taxes levied on the transfer, especially in Ndego;
- Inability of some households with labour capacity, yet high dependency ratios, to participate in public works; and
- Limited attention to the specific needs of women in project selection and in public works employment, particularly those arising from women’s household and care responsibilities.
In addition, programme design and implementation has insufficiently addressed linkages between the VUP with community-based services and livelihood interventions, which have limited opportunities for female beneficiaries to move towards achieving viable economic livelihoods and graduation.

Finally, weaknesses of the Management Information System, prevents a multi-year monitoring of the impact of public works in improving the welfare, economic advancement, power and agency of both participants in public works (as labourers) as well as all members in beneficiary households.

**Recommendations:**

- To strengthen VUP’s promotion of *women’s economic empowerment and agency*, attention should be given to:
  - ensuring that wage payments are delivered on time and that VUP public works beneficiaries work a minimum number of days in each financial year (e.g. 71 days as outlined in the Social Protection Strategy);
  - reducing or removing SACCO account opening fees and government taxes levied on the transfer;
  - sensitizing VUP female beneficiaries opening accounts with a financial institution for the first time on the importance of holding their own bank accounts as a way of promoting economic advancement, decision-making power and agency; accordingly, SACCO should adopt more gender-sensitive regulations, e.g. lower opening fees, and explore possibilities of providing financial literacy training as well as financial planning, budgeting and management to beneficiary members;
  - exploring how to best develop synergies between the VUP and existing extension services and rural development programmes, such as Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) public works, as well as existing initiatives from NGOs that aim at strengthening women’s empowerment through microcredit, financial literacy and women’s income-generating groups and networks.

- To *enhance women’s voice and bargaining power in household decision-making*, it is recommended to consider:
  - Strengthening the implementation of sensitization activities concerning intra-household gender relations. Building on the existing Sensitization Manual to explicitly address issues related to intra-household power relations and decision-making processes;
  - Enhancing participation in social networks and public life of female beneficiaries from the poorest segments of the population by establishing or extending support to local community spaces, including public work sites, where female beneficiaries can come together to discuss problems, find support and strengthen social relations. Such spaces also could be used to facilitate exchange of information on the VUP between programme staff and beneficiaries and to provide sensitization activities focusing on group formation, economic and livelihoods development.

- To *strengthen design and implementation features* to better support women’s economic empowerment, power and agency, attention should be given to the following:
  - Strengthening the VUP management information system to better reach and follow poor households with available labour and understand pathways to more productive
livelihoods; importantly, and more specifically, developing a monitoring system that enables regular tracking of public works beneficiary households and individuals directly working at public works sites, e.g. cumulative timing and number of days that households/individuals have worked in different projects and phases and include basic indicators that measure programme performance (e.g. value of the transfer per household and poverty status of participating households).

- Including periodic diagnostics that monitor progress in women and men’s economic empowerment, particularly in intra-household decision making. The different thematic areas covered by this research could be used as a starting point for developing this diagnostic.

- Strengthening the programme targeting mechanism to ensure compliance and consistency in implementation; in specific, redirecting those ‘eligible’ public works households with available labour – but self-excluding due to a high dependency ratio (which is often the case of single female-headed households) – to the direct support component.

- Expanding VUP project portfolio to include project activities that can be performed closer to the household, and projects that address priorities and interests of women, together with men’s, such as child care services, health and educational services, construction of water wells, nutrition clubs, providing agricultural labour to labour-constrained households and so forth.
PART A: CONTEXT

1. Background to the study

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Social Protection and Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment research programme falls under FAO’s Strategic Objective 3, Reducing Rural Poverty, and is delivered through two flagship initiatives: the Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment Initiative (RWEE) and the From Protection to Production (PtoP) project. The research seeks to gain a better understanding of how social protection policies and programmes can be improved to enhance impacts on rural women’s empowerment. The research also aims at identifying ways in which social protection schemes or systems can be strengthened towards reducing gender inequalities and improving rural women’s economic and social empowerment, actions which can lead to more sustainable pathways out of poverty.

The Social Protection and Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment research comprises a number of case studies – this study being the first of this series – to analyse the impact of social protection programmes on rural women’s economic empowerment in two domains: economic advancement and power and agency. The case studies will assess both the impact of programme design on the two above-mentioned domains as well as the degree in which gender equality and women’s empowerment are mainstreamed in programme implementation. Finally, to a lesser extent, the studies will assess the synergies that social protection programmes have with rural services and other livelihoods interventions.

To achieve comparability and enable cross-country analysis the case studies use a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods, which will be implemented systematically across countries based on previous methodologies developed by the PtoP.

FAO’s PtoP programme is a multi-country impact evaluation research activity of cash transfers in Eastern Africa, which includes quantitative, qualitative and policy research on social protection impacts in sub-Saharan Africa. The project is a collaborative effort between the FAO, the UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office and the governments of Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. PtoP is funded principally by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the European Union. The PtoP project is also part of the larger Transfer Project in which FAO has joined UNICEF, Save the Children UK and the University of North Carolina in supporting the design, implementation and impact evaluation of cash transfers in sub-Saharan Africa.

1.1 Research on women’s economic empowerment and social protection

Empowerment is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes (World Bank, 2001). Rural women’s empowerment is about expanding women’s assets and capabilities to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives. Women’s empowerment is seen here as necessary to reverse existing gender inequalities, documented already in the literature (FAO, 2011), particularly in the economic sphere and in rural areas. The study is mainly focused on women for this reason; however, it also looks at men with the objective of both comparing women’s status vis-à-vis men as well as recognizing men’s role as enablers or disablers of women’s empowerment.
Social protection has the potential to contribute to the economic empowerment of the poor, and women in particular. It is now widely accepted that beyond its safety-net function, social protection can potentially increase the income of poor households by providing a minimum income, employment, insurance or subsidies. These benefits can potentially allow poor households to invest in productive assets and diversify their income-generating activities, in addition to investments in human capital and food security (Tirivayi et al., 2013; World Bank, 2014). When social protection payments are delivered through financial institutions they have the potential to also promote the financial inclusion of the poor, although the impact of such inclusion is highly dependent on the terms and conditions under which the poor are included.

Social protection interventions, including public works programmes, have a potentially important role to play in promoting women’s economic empowerment as they may reduce women’s vulnerabilities and also provide opportunities in enhancing employment status, controlling incomes, owning productive assets and increasing social networks. Considering that social protection schemes are often targeted at female-headed households and often make women the household’s transfer recipient, these schemes can play a strategic role in enabling and promoting women’s economic empowerment, depending on their objectives and the nature of implementation and effectiveness, as well as the local context.

No single intervention however – whether a social protection scheme, livelihood scheme or service – can tackle all the required elements needed to achieve women’s economic empowerment. As such, it is important to view social protection as an approach comprising varied instruments which, when combined with other measures and initiatives, can contribute to advancing women’s economic empowerment. An integrated system of social protection leading to women’s economic empowerment can have the potential to address gaps in poverty reduction by making the necessary linkages with economically-oriented rural development interventions and rural services beneficial to women, and also to men.

The theoretical framework used in this research on the impact of social protection programmes on RWEE is based on Golla et al.’s definition and framework of women’s economic empowerment (2011). These consider a woman as economically empowered when she has both the ability and the power to make and act on economic decisions, thus: (1) succeeding and advancing economically; and (2) having the power and agency to benefit from economic activities. Both aspects can be understood as underlying or generating outcomes of empowerment through a range of different interventions and processes (e.g. social protection interventions, gender-sensitive policies and laws, rural services and social mobilization). It is only when these processes are combined and work together synergistically that women’s economic empowerment is increased.

This framework is useful for analysing social protection programmes because it makes a clear distinction between these types of programmes’ widely documented impacts on advancing beneficiaries’ access to incomes, which can eventually lead to access to productive assets and services (e.g. education) and outcomes in intra-household power dynamics, which determine control over the decision-making necessary for women’s empowerment.

The present study, the first of this series of country case studies, seeks to understand the impact of social protection benefits from the public works component of the Rwanda’s Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) with regard to the two interrelated areas of empowerment:

1. Economic advancement - the income and asset base – including human, financial, physical and social capital elements – that men and women can draw on to succeed economically, having the skills and resources to compete in markets, as well as having fair and equal access to economic institutions.
2. **Power and agency** - the ability of men and women to benefit from economic activities, to make and act on decisions around those activities, as well as to have control of resources and profits. This also concerns and is strongly linked to levels of self-confidence, influence in household and the public arena, and social network engagement.

It also explores **operational issues**, i.e. how the design and implementation of the social protection programmes facilitate (or impede) women’s empowerment through a programme’s direct benefits, and its indirect benefits through specific features, including notably coherence with other livelihood interventions and community investments.

This report presents the findings from the qualitative research in Rwanda undertaken in October 2014 and is structured as follows: Section 2 briefly summarizes the programme; the research method is presented in Section 3; and the districts, sectors and specific communities where the research was conducted are profiled in Section 4. The findings are presented in Sections 5-7. The study concludes, offering a number of recommendations for enhancing the VUP effects on women’s economic empowerment, in Sections 8 and 9.

### 1.2 Theory of change of public works programmes and the research framework

**Public works theory of change**

Social protection-oriented public works programmes are instruments that provide temporary or ongoing employment to the poor, often in the development of rural community infrastructure and, in a few instances, social services. The labour requirement gives public works a self-targeting mechanism, as only those willing to work receive benefits. Public works represent an opportunity to help households cope with chronic poverty while also creating community assets. Their use as a social protection mechanism has increased exponentially around the world, for example from 62 World Bank funded programmes in 2011 to 85 two years later (World Bank, 2014). Some public works also attempt to promote sustainable management of natural resources (Subbarao et al., 2013).

The ‘theory of change’ developed for this research and presented below in Figure 1 outlines the possible pathways through which public works programmes may be able to stimulate rural women’s economic empowerment. The theory of change is based in McCord’s framework on how public works provide benefits (2012), mainly via three ways: wage transfers, the assets created and the work experience, skills and training transferred.

**Economic advancement**: By providing temporary employment and access to cash through wage payments – in some cases delivered through financial institutions or public works programmes – can contribute to the economic advancement of rural women. Women’s participation in public works can enable savings and investments in productive resources (such as purchase of agricultural inputs or other assets) which further increase women’s capacity to generate income and attain a more sustainable livelihood. Through public works employment and skill development, women can build and enhance their skills to facilitate their engagement in the labour market once the programme ends. Cash wage payments can support women to avoid or minimize detrimental risk-coping strategies, such as withdrawal of children from school or distress sales of assets, while improving their households’ welfare and living conditions, as

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2 For example, the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia has not only reduced food gaps, improved diet quality and increased school grades for boys and girls, but has also reduced soil erosion and improved quantity and quality of water for consumption and irrigation through public works (Hoddinott et al., 2012).
well as breaking the intergenerational transfer of poverty through investments in health, education and housing.

**Power and agency:** When rural women participate in public works, and can control and make decisions on the use of cash that they earn, their bargaining power within the household is strengthened. This can boost their self-confidence and self-esteem and heighten their own sense of worthiness and competence with positive spillover effects on their ability to engage in social networks and participate in decision-making in the public arena. Wage payments that are delivered through financial institutions and directly into women’s accounts can further increase women’s control of cash. Cash injections can stimulate the formation of women-only or mixed groups of mutual support and economic collaboration among public works beneficiaries or within the community at large, thus strengthening social capital and economic advancement. Through complementary sensitization activities, women can also gain increased access to information about a range of relevant topics of their concern through messages delivered by public works programmes or networks of support formed among public works beneficiaries (i.e. family planning, health and nutrition, household budgeting and money management/saving, income-generating opportunities, agricultural technologies and access to inputs, and so forth). Through sensitization, men can also learn more about their role in reducing gender inequalities and empowering women, changing their attitudes towards women’s economic roles.

**Operations:** Public works programmes need to be premised on a robust design and implementation (e.g. regular and predictable transfers, ensuring that targeting criteria and mechanisms are implemented on the ground, while guaranteeing a minimum number of working days at relatively competitive wage rates). These are key prerequisites for programmes to maximize their poverty-reduction objectives. The extent of public works programmes’ impact on rural women’s economic advancement and power and agency is mediated by the operational arrangements of the programme. The potential of public works programmes to catalyse rural women’s economic empowerment can be realized only when programmes are designed and implemented according to initial design parameters, e.g. ensuring timely payments, guaranteed days of employment, appropriate and respected targeting approaches and adequate levels of wages within given context. Women’s empowerment can be further enhanced through programme designs with explicit gender equality objectives and features that intentionally promote the inclusion of women (e.g. establishing women’s targeting quotas or explicitly seeking to reduce existing gender gaps in employment opportunities); are delivered in ways that ensure women’s participation (e.g. facilitating female beneficiaries’ transportation to public work sites or addressing women’s constraints in terms of household and care responsibilities by providing childcare options); and are coordinated with gender-sensitive livelihood interventions and social services.
Figure 1  Theory of Change: VUP public works and Impacts on Women’s Economic Empowerment

VUP Public Works Interventions → VUP design features → Individual-level impact on women’s economic empowerment

- Temporary employment - cash income
- Skills development (training)
- Sensitization
- Asset creation (at community level)

Basic assumptions:
1. VUP household beneficiaries can access sufficient number of work days a year (e.g. 71 days, as required by VUP manual)
2. Public works wage payments are delivered effectively and in a timely fashion
3. Women from beneficiary households are able to directly participate at public works sites

Targeting: gives preference to female-headed households
Design: payments through financial Institution (e.g. SACCO accounts)
Access: implementation ensures equal opportunity for men and women’s participation in public works
Linkages: with other livelihoods interventions and services that have empowerment outcomes

Initial outcomes:
- Increased access to cash
- Increased savings and access to financial services
- Increased employment opportunities
- Increased membership in economic groups
- Increased control over income
- Increased participation in social networks

Impacts:
- Resilience to small to moderate shocks and avoidance of risk-coping strategies
- Increased poverty reduction and food security
- Increased bargaining power in the household and the community
- Increased self-confidence

An enabling environment for women’s empowerment: gender-responsive infrastructure, institutions, rights and markets
Research framework

Based on the above theory of change, a set of three hypotheses will be tested across country case studies to understand the impact of social protection programmes – here, in the specific case of Rwanda with regards to the public works component of the VUP – in each of the three research areas. The hypotheses and the guiding questions\(^3\) are presented in Table 1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Research framework: hypotheses and research questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT HYPOTHESIS:</strong> Social protection programmes will promote the economic advancement of women by increasing their incomes and access to credit and savings facilities. It will also improve women’s skills and employment opportunities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Sources of income and women’s roles in income generation: What are the main sources of income in the household and women and men’s respective roles in relation to these? Have sources of income, their relative importance, and roles of men and women in these activities changed after the social protection programme? Has the social protection transfer provided economic benefits to women specifically?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Time use in productive and reproductive work: In what types of household activities and employment do men/women perform and spend most of their time? Has the programme affected in any way their time schedule and workload? Have workloads and time allocation changed after the social protection programme?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Access to credit and other financial services: What types of credit and financial services, from formal and informal sources, are available? Who in the household is able to access these types of credit and financial services? Has access to financial services changed after the social protection programme?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Access to services and infrastructure: Who in the household has access to and uses different services and infrastructure? Has access to these services and infrastructure changed after the social protection programme?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Resilience: What are the main risks and shocks that people are confronted with? Do they affect men/women and poorer/richer households differently? How do households with varying degrees of wealth cope with and manage risks and shocks differently? Do women/men cope with and manage these risks and shocks differently? As a result of the social protection programme are men and women beneficiaries better able to cope with and manage risks and shocks without becoming poorer? How could the programme better support women/men’s ability to cope with and manage shocks and stresses?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POWER AND AGENCY HYPOTHESIS:</strong> Social protection will strengthen women’s power and agency by increasing their bargaining power within the household and wider community. This will increase women’s self-confidence, their ability to engage in social networks and participate in decision-making in the public arena.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Control and decision-making over productive assets: Who in the household (or outside the household) owns assets and property? Who and how do household members make decisions regarding the use and sale of household assets or property? Does decision-making vary according to the asset/property size or importance? Has this changed after the social protection programme?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Control and decision-making over cash expenditures, savings and transfers from the social protection scheme: How do household members make decisions regarding household cash expenditure, savings and transfers from the social protection programme? How is the transfer spent – is it treated differently than other income? Who in the household uses and benefits most from transfer?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^3\) The above questions have been adapted to the context of Rwanda and not all have been asked during the fieldwork; as such, the analysis presented in the following sections does not cover some of these questions.
8. **Control and decision-making over production and income generation:** How do beneficiaries make decisions regarding agricultural production activities? On starting up a new business? Have processes of decision-making changed after the social protection programme?

9. **Perceptions of women’s economic roles:** What are the general perceptions of women’s abilities to earn and manage money and make economic decisions in the household? Have these perceptions changed after the social protection programme?

10. **Control and decision-making on reproductive matters and children’s education:** Is there family planning in the household? Who decides this? Has this changed after the social protection programme? Who in the households decides when to send children to school? Is decision-making on sending children to school different for girls and boys?

11. **Empowerment, self-esteem and dignity:** Has there been any perceived and/or actual changes in beneficiaries’ sense of self-confidence, self-esteem and dignity since the social protection programme, particularly among women?

12. **Social networks:** Which social networks, formal and informal, exist in the community? Are these mixed or gender-specific? What roles do women/men play in their social networks? Is there a difference based on gender in the importance of those networks? Has this changed after the social protection programme? Has the social protection programme fostered the creation of new networks?

13. **Leadership and influence in the community:** Who in the household participates in public decision-making and speaks up in public on social protection investments? How are community infrastructures or services selected, particularly in public works programmes? Is this process gender equitable? Are women’s needs prioritized? Has this changed after the programme?

14. **Conflict resolution mechanisms:** What mechanisms, formal and informal, exist to resolve conflicts in the community? Are men and women equally aware of the existence of such mechanisms? Are these mechanisms effective and fair? Have there been any changes since the social protection programme?

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**OPERATIONS HYPOTHESIS:** Operational and design features of social protection programmes that provide women’s equal access to benefits and opportunities will promote gender equality and women’s economic empowerment.

14. **Gender-sensitive design of social protection programme:** Is the social protection programme design and implementation promoting gender equality and particularly women’s empowerment? What mechanisms aim to enable women’s empowerment? How are gender issues addressed in the social protection programme? Are these seen as valuable for the success of the programme?

15. **Targeting:** Do both men and women understand how and why beneficiaries were targeted? What is the targeting process? How do both men and women community members perceive the targeting process?

16. **Local Committees:** Who makes up the local committees? Are men and women equally represented on the committees? Does the programme engage with men and women beneficiaries in the same way?

17. **[if relevant to the programme] Access to public work sites and working conditions:** What are the conditions in which beneficiaries access work sites? What are the working conditions at work sites? Are there conditions that affect men and women differently?

18. **Delivery of benefits:** What are the conditions in which transfers have been delivered? Are there challenges that beneficiaries face when collecting transfers? Are these challenges different for men and women?

19. **Skills development and sensitization:** Are there skills development training courses as part of the public works or cash transfer programmes? Who in the household receives...
this training? How are tasks assigned at public works sites? Are tasks gender differentiated? Have the level of skills for men and women after the social protection programme changed? Have there been sensitization events organized by the social protection programme?

20. **Programme communication and grievance mechanisms:** Does a grievance mechanism exist? Are beneficiaries aware of its existence? Do beneficiaries access it and are they satisfied with the outcome?

21. **Access to other social protection programmes:** Besides the social protection programme, what other existing social protection and development programmes are available in the community? How is the targeting among these programmes decided? Are there synergies in the targeting among these programmes? How do these synergies, or a lack of them, affect overall household livelihoods and well-being?

22. **Perceptions of programme sustainability and people’s overcoming poverty (graduation):** What are general perceptions on the sustainability of the programme in the future? What do people think about opportunities for overcoming poverty? Do these perceptions differ based on gender?

23. **Coordination and synergies with other programmes and services:** Does government has a policy on programme linkages? Do livelihoods interventions and services link with the social protection scheme on the ground? How do these synergies contribute to women’s economic empowerment?
2. The Rwanda’s Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP)

2.1 Background to the programme

In recent years the Government of Rwanda (GoR) has embarked on important social protection reforms. Before 2007 social protection was not a strategic component of the first Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The social protection sector lacked a strategic plan and a monitoring framework, had limited fiscal space and existing programmes were small and uncoordinated (RLDSF, 2011). During the Akagera IV Retreat in February 2007, the GoR expressed its commitment to tackling growing poverty and inequality nationwide and redressing the challenges that were afflicting the social protection sector (ibid.).

In January 2011 the Cabinet approved the National Social Protection Strategy, which sets out the government’s vision and commitment to social protection and provides the guiding framework for these programmes, delivered by the Ministry of Local Government, Good Governance, Community Development and Social Affairs (MINALOC) the main government social protection ministry responsible for implementation of the national social protection programme, entitled Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) (MINALOC, 2011a; NISR, 2012). The National Social Protection Strategy is aligned with the second poverty reduction paper, the 2008–12 Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS), where the Government’s mid-term strategy towards the attainment of the national Vision 2020 is outlined. Vision 2020 aims at reducing extreme poverty, accelerating growth and transforming Rwanda into a middle-income country by the year 2020 (MINALOC, 2011a; Devereux, 2012; MINALOC and NISR, 2008; RLDSF, 2014).

2.2 Programme objectives and components

The VUP was launched in 2008 as one of the three flagship programmes of the EDPRS⁴ and it is currently managed by MINALOC through the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA). The programme is jointly financed by the GoR through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN) and development partners (DFID, EU, SIDA, UNICEF, World Bank) (Devereux, 2012).

The overall objective of the VUP is to eradicate extreme poverty in Rwanda by 2020 through (MINALOC, 2009; GOR, 2007):

- releasing the productive capacities of people and offering solutions adapted to their needs;
- improving community livelihood assets and ensuring their sustainable usage; and
- providing more efficient and better-targeted social assistance for the most vulnerable.

The VUP is not designed with explicit gender equality objectives that intentionally promote the empowerment of women. However, the design of the programme envisages ‘gender parity’ in the selection of VUP public works participants as stated in the Public Works Operational Framework and Procedure Manual, specifying that at least 50 percent of participants should be women (Public Works Manual) (MINALOC, 2009: 12). Further, the programme strongly encourages that women should be co-signatories with their husbands of the bank accounts in which VUP payments are deposited.

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⁴ The other two EDPRS programmes are Sustainable Growth for Jobs and Exports and Good Economic Governance.
The VUP is organized around four components: public works, direct support, financial services, and training and sensitization activities. The design of these components is described below. In addition to the public works component, the delivery of training and sensitization activities at public work sites is also a focus of this study and analysed (see Sections 0 and 0). As elaborated in-depth in sections of this report, the findings of this study indicate discrepancies between the design and actual implementation of the public works and training and sensitization components on the ground.

The **Direct Support** component was launched in January 2009 and consists of monthly unconditional cash transfers targeted at extremely poor households without available labour, where no adult member is able to work. The size of the transfer is dependent on the household size, ranging from 7,500 RwF (10.70 USD) for one individual to 21,000 RwF (20.96 USD) for households with five or more members (MINALOC, 2009).

**Sensitization and training activities** are delivered to participants of public works (at public work sites) and beneficiaries of direct support by VUP Managers – civil servants working at sector level, sector authorities and other experts (UNICEF, 2013). The aim of this component is to provide beneficiaries with information, knowledge and skills, such as training in nutrition, hygiene and use of cash wages to enable them to make informed choices about their household living conditions and make better use of cash transfers (grants, wages and loans) delivered through VUP (ibid.). In practice however, training and sensitization activities were found by this study to be delivered irregularly, without following a set structure and were not reaching most VUP beneficiaries.

The **Financial Services** component of the VUP was launched in February 2010 and offers low-interest loans to individuals, groups or cooperatives to stimulate productive investments. Credit can be accessed by households in *Ubudehe* categories 1, 2 and 3, which are the lowest of poverty levels; households in categories 4, 5, 6 can also access it, but only if they are part of groups that include households belonging to one of the lower three categories (Siegel *et al*., 2011; RLDSF, 2011).

**Public works** was the first VUP component programme to be rolled out in May 2008 and receives the largest financial allocation (Hartwig, 2013; Devereux, 2012; RLDSF, 2011). According to VUP documents, this component offers temporary employment for building and rehabilitation of community assets to extremely poor households with at least one adult member able to work (MINALOC, 2009). Nationwide, the majority of VUP projects are geared towards support of agricultural livelihoods and land conservation, including radical terracing, anti-erosive ditches and water resource management. Other projects seek to build, upgrade or maintain physical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, schools, water supplies and, health centres (Devereux, 2012; see also Gatsinzi, 2010 in Siegel *et al*., 2011 and Hartwig, 2013). The design of the VUP envisages that, in order to harmonize the VUP with existing national planning processes, public work projects should be selected from existing Sector Development Plans (SDP) on the basis of availability of financial resources and the labour-intensiveness of projects (MINALOC, 2009). In practice however, project selection does not always align strictly to existing plans and appears to be determined largely by availability of financial resources rather than on labour-intensiveness.

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5 *Ubudehe* is a community-based social poverty mapping used to target VUP beneficiaries, see Section 0
6 According to national guidelines, 50 percent of total VUP financial resources are allocated to this component, 30 percent to financial services and 20 percent to direct support. The financial split by component varies at sector level, according to differences in poverty as reflected by direct support eligible households (RLDSF, 2011).
7 SDPs are developed every five years using a participatory process where communities identify and select projects at public meetings (RLDSF, 2011), see also Chapter 7 for an in-depth discussion.
8 The relative proportion of labour compared to capital.
2.3 Targeting and enrolment of beneficiaries in public works

2.3.1 Targeting criteria

The VUP programme design envisages the use of a community-based poverty targeting approach – the *Ubudehe* system – to identify beneficiary households. *Ubudehe* is a community-based social poverty mapping (based on Rwandan culture of collective action and mutual support to solve problems) and comprises six categories; Category 1: abject poor (*umutindinyakujya*), Category 2: very poor (*umutindi*), Category 3: poor (*umukene*), Category 4: self-sufficient or resourceful poor (*umkenewifashije*), Category 5: food rich (*umukungu*), and Category 6: money rich (*umukire*) (RLDSF, 2014; UNICEF, 2013; personal communication with LODA representative).

At village level households categorized as *Ubudehe* 1 or 2 are eligible for VUP support. A labour criterion is then applied to identify the type of support that they will receive: households with at least one male or female adult member able to work qualify for public work support, whereas those lacking labour capacity qualify for direct support. Eligibility also excludes sick or mentally challenged males or females, individuals unable to undertake even light work, pregnant women in their final trimester of pregnancy and lactating women in the first 10 months after birth (GOR, 2007). Households found to be eligible for public works as per the above process remain eligible for 12 months. Screening for new beneficiaries or re-targeting is to be conducted once a year (around June) prior to the start of the following financial year (MINALOC, 2011; RLDSF, 2011).

Households cannot simultaneously benefit from VUP direct support and public works. However, as confirmed by fieldwork discussions for this study, there are no restrictions for VUP public works beneficiaries to also be included in other governmental social protection or development programmes, such as *Girinka*10, MINAGRI public work projects or the *Ubudehe* programme.11

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9 Before 2011 land size was also used to identify eligible households whereas households in *Ubudehe* 1 or 2, who owned 0.25 or more hectares of land, were considered not eligible for public works or direct support. Given concerns about correlation between land size and poverty, however, this criterion was dropped (RLDSF, 2012).

10 *Girinka* or One Cow Per Poor Family programme is run by the MINAGRI and consists of the provision of a heifer to targeted poor households http://www.minagri.gov.rw/index.php?id=28.

11 The *Ubudehe* programme is run by MINALOC and one of its objectives is to cover *Mutuelles* for households in *Ubudehe* 1 and 2.
The VUP is intended to target households. VUP beneficiary households are registered in the name of the household head. In male-headed households this is typically the husband, whereas in female-headed households it is the woman head. The above is true regardless of who within the household actually participates in the programme, i.e. who works on site. Precisely because VUP public works seeks to target households as a unit and wages are seen as providing a benefit for the household as a whole, family members are given the choice of deciding who works on VUP sites. As such, they can rotate participation among able-bodied adult members, for example, between spouses. Throughout this report, and unless differently stated, the term beneficiary is used to refer to beneficiary households. The term VUP participants refers to individuals, male and female, who have worked on public works projects (see Section 2.4. for a discussion on wage payment).

2.3.2 Number of working days and gender parity in public work participation

According to programme design, the number of days a household can be employed in public works is not fixed but varies according to the eligible population, project type and available financial resources (Devereux, 2012; Hartwig, 2013). The EDPRS2 Social Protection Strategy sets targets for the VUP public works component. By 2014/15 60 percent of eligible households should participate in public works during each financial year and should work a minimum of 71 working days, also per financial year. Since public works projects typically last one to three months and are divided into phases of 15 days each, with workdays of eight hours from 7 a.m. until 2 p.m., this target would ensure that each beneficiary household works for approximately four project phases during each financial year.

If the number of eligible households exceeds the number of jobs available, the sector can decide to either: (i) select a proportion for participation in the available project using household poverty level and distance to work site as selection criteria; or, (ii) rotate workers so that all eligible households can work but for fewer number of days (job rationing) (Devereux, 2012). If the number of jobs exceeds the number of eligible households, participation is also offered to households in higher Ubudehe categories (ibid.).

In practice, reaching both targets – 60 percent of eligible households to participate in public works and 71 working days as the minimum number of days that a beneficiary household should work during each financial year – remains a challenge. This has been noted by other studies (RLDSF, 2011; Ayliffe, 2014) and confirmed by the findings of our study.

Based on administrative data received from LODA (shown in Annex 2), the rate of employed beneficiaries from eligible beneficiaries was 47 percent in the third quarter of the 2013-14 financial year, and 57 percent in the fourth quarter of the same financial year. In the two sectors that were the focus of this research, Kigembe (in Gisagara district in the Southern province) and Ndego (in Kayonza district in the Eastern province), under-coverage of eligible households was a problem. This is discussed in depth in Section 0.

Administrative data from LODA (see Annex 2) shows that across all sectors targeted with public works countrywide, VUP beneficiary households worked an average of 54 days in 2013-14, and as such less than the minimum number of working days set in the target (71 days). According to the 2014 VUP Annual Review – which focuses on the same financial year – the average is lower: 48 days (McCord and Shenge, 2014).

Findings from this study show that the number of days varies widely between the two sampled sectors. In Kigembe the VUP Manager stated that beneficiaries worked between 80 and 135 days (between 5 and 9 project phases) per financial year. This was found to be largely in line

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with the average number of workdays indicated by respondents at community level. It was however much higher than the 40 days average indicated by LODA administrative data for Gisagara (district level) (see Annex 2).

By contrast, the VUP Manager in Ndego indicated that the average number of working days per financial year was 45 (15 days per month, or one project phase, for three months). Community-level discussions in Ndego indicated differently. The majority of our study participants reported having worked only 15 days, or one project phase, during each financial year since the VUP had been rolled out in the sector. Only a small minority indicated having worked for 30 days, or two project phases, in one financial year. Many also stated having worked only once in one VUP project ever for a total of 15 days, or one project phase, since the VUP had been rolled out in the sector. Administrative data at district level (Kayonza) from LODA on financial year 2013-14 (Annex 2) shows an average of 26 days.

A likely explanation for the higher number of working days in Gisagara in comparison to Kayonza could be the different levels of resources allocated to different districts (and sectors) across Rwanda, which is determined largely by submitted district proposals of prioritized projects that are aligned to district and sector development plans and the district medium-term expenditure framework (MINALOC, 2012). As mentioned, VUP design puts emphasis on ‘gender parity’ in the selection of VUP public works participants (Public Works Operational Framework and Procedure Manual (Public Works Manual) (MINALOC, 2009: 12). The Public Works Manual states: “the selection of clients will ensure that at least 50% of participants are women” (ibid.: 12). The terms used in the Manual – “clients” and “participants” – are unclear regarding whether the 50 percent refers to registered beneficiaries (and therefore female heads of households) or to female participants or workers at public works sites (typically married women, with husbands registered as beneficiaries and also women heading households). Although the term remains ambiguous, inclusion of gender parity in programme design suggests participation of females in public works has been seen as important.

Following above, findings from this study indicated that in practice not only half, but the majority of VUP participants in the sample locations were females. As elaborated in the following sections, this was linked to programme implementation features, which made public works employment a largely less attractive and unreliable source of income. In male-headed households with surplus labour, public works employment was most likely taken up by women rather than by men, who preferred working in more reliable occupations (e.g. in the urban economy). Female-headed households with family support sometimes engaged in public works, but those with labour constraints were less likely to take up employment in VUP public works, and also preferred to work in what were perceived as more reliable livelihood sources (e.g. farming their own land).

2.3.3 Organization structure of public work sites

Work sites are organized along a hierarchical structure; a captain leads a cohort of 20-30 beneficiaries or workers, a supervisor oversees five cohorts, the vice-president and president of sites oversee their whole site and report to sector the VUP Manager. Male and female beneficiaries working as captains and supervisors reported having worked for much longer, some up to six months consecutively. This was due to the fact that for these positions the VUP provided short-term training (typically three days) to equip them with the necessary skills to supervise work on site, report on project progress and manage cohorts of workers.

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13 A quantitative survey exploring the short-term welfare effects of the VUP found that the average number of days public works beneficiaries worked in 2009/10 was 69, in 2010/11 was 45 and in 2011/12 42 (Hartwig, 2013). In the sample surveyed by the 2011 VUP annual review the average of working days per household in 2010/11 was 68 days (Devereux, 2012).
2.4 Public works wage rate and payment methods

According to programme design, the daily wage rate paid for public works is set at the sector level. To promote self-selection of beneficiaries without distorting local labour markets the rate should be set with reference to, but not higher than, local market wages for unskilled labourers (working eight hours a day) (Public Works Manual, MINALOC 2009; Devereux, 2012; Hartwig, 2013). In both Ndego and Kigembe sector study locations, the daily wage rate was set at 1,000 RwF (1.42 USD). As elaborated in the following sections however, the daily wage rate was not found by this study to be in line with local markets. In Ndego, this rate was deemed too low when compared to other available wage labour opportunities in the agricultural sector, which offered a daily wage of 1,500 RwF (2.13 USD). By contrast, in Kigembe, this rate was substantially higher than the daily rate for agricultural hired-in labour of 400 RwF (0.85 USD).

When beneficiary households enrol in VUP public works projects the household head is asked to open a bank account, if he or she does not already have one. Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCO)\textsuperscript{14} accounts have become the most popular mechanism for VUP public works wage payments (and cash transfers for Direct Support beneficiaries) with more than 90 percent of beneficiary households being SACCO account-holders (RLDSF, 2011). SACCO and other financial institutions allow the primary account signatory to add a co-signer, such as a spouse, parent, child or grandchild, and grant them access to the account and funds deposited. While it is not a compulsory requirement of the programme for the primary account holder to add a co-signer, the VUP encouraged husbands to have their wives become co-signers; this was promoted through sensitization messages.

According to programme design, wages are to be paid to registered beneficiaries every fortnight, at the end of each project phase or two-week working period, directly into their bank accounts, since no direct cash payments are allowed under the VUP (ibid.; MINALOC, 2011). Therefore VUP wages should be paid every 15 days at the end of each project phase for a total of 15,000 RwF (21.31 USD) per payment. Our findings in Kigembe however pointed to recurrent delays in payments of VUP public works wages. The situation described was that beneficiaries typically worked one project phase after another, but payments for each phase

\textsuperscript{14} SACCOs are member-based cooperatives regulated and supervised by the National Bank of Rwanda. To increase access to financial services in poor and remote areas of the country, the GoR has been supporting the creation of SACCO accounts at sector level since 2009 (RLDSF, 2011).
(15,000 RwF) were spaced out over a long period of time. Some indicated delays of two months, others of six months and others even up to one year. In Ndego, delays in payments did not seem as recurrent as in Kigembe.

2.5 Programme’s management and implementation structure

When the VUP was first launched in 2008, it was a MINALOC stand-alone programme, subsequently attached to the former Common Development Fund (CDF). In 2011 the CDF, VUP, Ubudehe Credit Scheme and the Haute Intensité de Main-d'œuvre (HIMO) programmes were merged into the Rwanda Local Development Support Fund (RLDSF). Together with the Ubudehe Credit Scheme, the VUP was managed by the Social Protection Division of the RLDSF. In early 2014 the RLDSF was replaced by the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA) and the national VUP Management Team currently sits within the Social Protection Division of LODA. The implementation structure of the VUP is in line with GoR’s decentralization policy goals, strategies and system, with lower levels of administrative units, and especially sectors or umurenge, entrusted with key responsibilities for decision-making, financial management and programme implementation (see Table 2). Indeed, the prominence given to sectors in programme management implementation is also the reason why the programme is called Vision 2020 Umurenge.

15 In addition to the Social Protection Division, LODA comprises the divisions of Local Economic Development, and Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Corporate Services.

16 Rwanda is comprised of five provinces (intara), Southern, Western, Northern, Eastern, and Kigali city. Provinces are subdivided into 30 districts (akarere). Each district is divided into sectors (Umurenge); there are currently 416 sectors in Rwanda. Sectors are further divided into 2,148 cells (Akagari) and 14,837 villages (Umugudugu). (Siegel et al., 2011).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NATIONAL</td>
<td>MINALOC</td>
<td>Providing national leadership and coordination on social protection more broadly and overall coordination and supervision of the VUP in particular.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VUP Management Unit at Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA)</td>
<td>Providing overall VUP management and supervision of implementation; developing, reviewing, disseminating VUP polices and guidelines; financial control and coordination with development partners.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISTRICT</td>
<td>Local administration</td>
<td>Overseeing and coordinating VUP at district level including technical assistance to sectors, quality assurance of public works projects, integrating public works projects into District Development Plans (DDPs), and managing budget and expenditure of VUP funds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECTOR (UMURENGE)</td>
<td>Sector VUP Management Team</td>
<td>Overseeing and implementing VUP at sector level including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Disseminating information to lower levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reporting to districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Overseeing targeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Approving public works projects submitted by lower levels as part of SDPs processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitoring public works and conducting sensitization and training activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Managing the budget and expenditure of VUP funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELL (AKAGARI)</td>
<td>Local administration</td>
<td>Liaising between sector and village levels on targeting and selection of public works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VILLAGE (UMUGUDUGU)</td>
<td>Local administration</td>
<td>Implementing the VUP at community level including organizing and facilitating public meetings to target beneficiaries and identifying and prioritising VUP projects as part of the <em>Imihigo</em> performance contracts process, implementing public works projects and reporting to the cell.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MINALOC, 2009 and KII at sector level.

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17 In the longer term, it is envisaged that a revision to this structure will be made, with new government staff responsible for social protection at district and sector levels (McCord and Shenge 2014).

18 *Imihigo* is one of the home-grown solutions (see footnote 43) and a nationwide performance-based management tool aimed at strengthening planning, accountability and service delivery. *Imihigo* is integrated into the national planning framework of EDPRS. Every year, households, line ministries, public agencies and districts are required to sign formal public service agreements – performance contracts – to deliver specific outputs or activities which are derived from SDPs and DDPs (ADB, 2012). When performance contracts are repeatedly evaluated as unsatisfactory district mayors can be fired, whereas high-performing districts can receive special funding allocations for projects (Scher, D. and MacAulay, 2010).
2.6 Programme coverage

The VUP is envisaged as a nationwide programme, targeting all provinces, districts and the 416 sectors of Rwanda, with priority given to the poorest areas and extremely poor households (RLDSF, 2011). Since the programme was first rolled out in 2008, it has expanded at the rate of 30 sectors (one per district) each year, starting with the poorest sectors in each of the country’s 30 districts (ibid.). The first cohort of 30 sectors was launched in mid-2008, the second in mid-2009, the third in mid-2010, the fourth cohort was added in mid-2011 (Devereux, 2012), and so on. As of 2013-14 a total of 17219 sectors were covered by VUP public works (see Figure 3). According to the 2014 VUP Annual Review, in the 2013-14 financial year the VUP public works component covered a total of 104 310 households across the country (McCord and Shenge, 2014). The most recent figure provided by the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA) in March 2015 shows a total of 130 000 households countrywide (see Figure 2).

**Figure 3** Number of sectors targeted with public works from 2009-10 until 2013-14

![Graph showing the number of sectors targeted with public works from 2009-10 until 2013-14](source: McCord and Shenge, 2014)

Until 2011 the identification of the 30 poorest sectors (or one cohort) within districts was conducted by ranking sectors according to five criteria which were used as proxies for poverty status: food security, access to potable water, distance to education facilities, distance to health centres and type of village settlement (RLDSF, 2011). VUP implementation started in the poorest sectors and progressed accordingly. As confirmed by national-level VUP staff however, since the findings of the Third Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV 3) in 2011, the above geographical targeting approach of the VUP has been revised to reflect nationwide findings of the EICV 3 which showed that poverty is regionally concentrated. Targeting of new sectors is now guided by EICV 3 poverty indices in districts and relevant sectors, starting with those that show higher poverty levels (RLDSF, 2012).

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19 Technically, PW was implemented in 180 sectors, however only 172 reports had been received at the time of the VUP 2014 Annual Review (McCord and Shenge, 2014). In eight of the sectors where resources were not requested in time for implementation before the closure of the financial year, beneficiaries did not receive any wage transfers during the 2013/14 year. For this reason these sectors are not included in the VUP 2014 Annual Review.
Figure 4  Map of Rwanda showing VUP sectors, related vulnerability and sectors (Ndego and Kigembe) targeted by the study

Source: Map provided by LODA, 2014.
3. Research Method

3.1 Three-stage geographical sampling

A common methodology is being used across the case study countries to select communities for fieldwork. This consists of a three-stage geographic sampling approach outlined below. A matrix showing key selection criteria for Rwanda is found in Annex 2.

Stage 1

The first step consists in the identification of two of the highest-level administrative units in the country from among those that participate in the social protection programme. This purposive selection is designed to capture two livelihood and vulnerability contexts within the country that are distinct from one another but that are both quite typical of the country’s regions. At least one of the highest-level administrative units of the country should also be included in both quantitative and qualitative fieldwork. This provides opportunity for cross-fertilization of results and outcomes within a mixed-method approach.

In Rwanda, the highest-level administrative unit is the province or intara. The selection of provinces in Rwanda was based on the following criteria: agro-ecological zones considered to be most representative of the country as evinced from the latest Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET) Livelihood zoning report (FEWS NET, 2011); poverty levels as per the EICV 3 (selecting provinces that displayed high poverty levels); provinces where VUP public works projects have provided employment on a consistent basis in the 2013-14 financial year, using the total number of days worked by households in the same financial year (Annex 2 provided this information).

Stage 2

A single district from each of the two identified provinces is selected.

The selection of districts or akarere in Rwanda was based on the following criteria: poverty levels as per the EICV 3 (selecting the district that displayed the highest poverty level); total number of working days in 2013-14 financial year (selecting the highest); and the total number of households who worked in the same financial year (also selecting the highest).

A single subdistrict from among those that participate in the social protection programme is then selected. The selection is intended to reflect the typical characteristics of the district as a whole in terms of livelihoods and vulnerability dimensions.

In Rwanda, this administrative unit is called sector or umurenge. The selection of sectors was guided by a combination of the following criteria; the total number of household beneficiaries who participated in public works projects in 2013-14; the total number of days worked by beneficiaries in 2013-14; the cohort to which the sector belonged – prioritizing the earliest cohorts possible to provide the opportunity to interview beneficiaries who had been enrolled in the programme for a few years; the implementation status of the project according to data provided by LODA (ongoing or completed); and one of the sites overlapping with the quantitative study.

20Data for this criterion was provided by LODA.
21Data for this criterion was provided by LODA.
22Data for all the criteria was provided by LODA.
Stage 3

This third step consists in the selection of three study sites in each district: two treatment and one comparison community. The treatment sites are selected following stratification according to degree of market integration (proxied by distance from the main road) to sample one relatively remote and one relatively integrated community. Within each stratified subsample, communities are then further stratified by number of beneficiary households per community, to select communities with the median number of beneficiary households.

One cell/village in each district is also selected as a comparison community. This community needs to be located in a sector where the programme does not operate, selected with the objective of understanding characteristics of communities without the programme intervention, including households' activities and livelihood strategies, intra-household control and decision-making dynamics.

In Rwanda this third level of geographical sampling has been conducted using the cell or akagari followed by the village or umugudugu.

Selection of provinces

The two provinces selected as per Stage 1 above were the Southern and Eastern provinces. The Southern province was selected because it was considered representative of a large area of the country in terms of ecological, socio-economic and livelihoods characteristics. According to FEWS NET (2011), most of the Southern province lies in the ‘Central Plateau Cassava and Coffee’ livelihoods zone, which is characterized by hilly terrain, relatively abundant rainfall, rain-fed crop production, high levels of population densities and a ‘medium priority’ in terms of food security status (FEWS NET, 2011). In addition, the Southern province contained the districts and sectors that were surveyed by the quantitative component of the research and as such it provided the opportunity for cross-fertilization of the study findings.

The Eastern province was selected because its ecological, socio-economic and livelihoods profile is distinct from that of the Southern province, but also representative of large areas covering the country. Most of this province lies in the Eastern Agro-Pastoral and Semi-Arid Agro-Pastoral Zones, where the lowland areas of the eastern part of the country are found (ibid.). This province is mostly characterized by scarce rainfall and historical high vulnerability to drought, flat and sandy terrains and moderately fertile soils which support the growth of bush shrubs and pasture sustaining crop- and livestock-based livelihoods (ibid.).

Selection of districts and sectors

The districts and sectors within each province selected for the study were:

- Gisagara district and Kigembe sector (Southern province); and
- Kayonza district and Ndego sector (Eastern province).

The identification of Gisagara and Kayonza districts was based on the criteria outlined above. In addition, the selection of Gisagara and in turn Kigembe sector was consistent with the criteria that one site sampled by the quantitative study should overlap with the qualitative study, as Kigembe sector is included in the quantitative study. Having entered the programme in 2009-10 Kigembe sector belongs to cohort 2. The implementation status of the projects that had been rolled out in Kigembe in the 2013-14 financial year was shown, in the data provided by LODA, as completed.

Ndego is a sector that has been within the VUP for a similar length of time to Kigembe, having entered the programme in 2009-10 (cohort 2). According to the data provided by LODA, the implementation status of the project that had been rolled out in Ndego in the financial year,
2013-14 was ongoing. This introduced the potential for comparison and contrast with Kigembe sector, where implementation status of projects was completed.

Selection of cells, villages and comparison communities

The next step was to select two cells within each sector and two treatment villages therein as per Stage 3 above. This selection however was not straightforward and was challenged by a number of factors:

- Remoteness of some of the cells/villages in Ndego which were selected according to distance from the main road criterion. Reaching some of the treatment villages selected as per the above criterion would have taken the research team over five hours from the main road (and additional five hours to return), making fieldwork unfeasible given the limited amount of days available. In line with the above criterion, one relatively remote and one relatively integrated treatment village were nonetheless selected, but in order to ensure feasibility of fieldwork, the relatively remote village selected in both Ndego and Kigembe sectors resulted in fact in being closer to the main road. In the end, the treatment villages sampled in both sectors were not substantially different in terms of ease of remoteness vis-à-vis connectedness. As such and unless specifically stated, the analysis of the study findings in the following sections will not draw out specific differences between the two villages in this regard.

- In a number of the cells/villages selected as per the median number of beneficiary households criterion (as per the beneficiaries’ lists provided by LODA\(^\text{23}\)), the median number of observations was too low and would not have generated a sufficiently large sample for the research. Treatment villages above the median were eventually selected to ensure a sufficient sample.

- In a number of the cells/villages selected as per the median number of beneficiary households’ criterion, the list of VUP public works beneficiaries provided by LODA contained more registered male than female beneficiaries (the latter are typically female-headed households). At the time of selection of treatment cells/villages there was a concern that in those villages the research team would have struggled to interview a sufficient number of male and female public works participants as envisaged by the research roadmap (see Annex 1). Therefore, only treatment villages where beneficiary households’ lists included a sufficient number of male and female beneficiaries were selected. That said, when fieldwork eventually started it was clear that in registered male beneficiaries (typically male-headed household), female family members (e.g. the wife) indeed participated in public works. There were no problems therefore in identifying both male and female public works participants during the fieldwork.

The cells/villages that were ultimately identified in Ndego sector were Kiyovu/Iramiro (selected as the remote community) and Byimana/Busasamana (selected as the well-connected community); whereas in Kigembe they were Gatovu/Taba (selected as the remote community) and Nyabikenke/Uruyenzi (selected as the well-connected community).

Comparison communities

One cell/village in each district was to be selected as a ‘control’ or ‘comparison’ community. According to the sampling protocol, this community needed to be located in a sector where the VUP public works did not operate, selected with the objective of understanding characteristics of communities without the programme intervention, including households' activities and livelihood strategies and intra-household control and decision-making dynamics.

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\(^{23}\) Some of the beneficiaries’ lists provided by LODA included eligible households and not beneficiaries’ households who had actually worked in the project; this was however only realized by the research team once fieldwork had started in the sampled cells/villages.
In consultation with the VUP Managers of Kigembe and Ndego sectors, one comparison cell/village was also selected in each of the districts on the basis of the criteria outlined above. In Kayonza district the comparison cell/village was Cyarubare/Kacyiru in Kabare sector and in Gisagara it was Duwani/Duwani in Kibilizi sector.

The village of Kacyiru in Kayonza district as well as the village of Duwani in Gisagara district share a number of features with treatment communities in terms of agricultural-based livelihoods and exposure to similar risks and shocks. They are also immediately adjacent to the ‘treated’ part of Ndego and Kigembe sectors, respectively. However, both villages are located relatively closer to the main road and therefore displayed a higher degree of integration to markets, according to our criterion outlined above.

3.2 Fieldwork implementation

Methods and Tools

The fieldwork protocol in each of the two sectors followed a roadmap as illustrated in Annex 1 - Fieldwork “roadmap”.

The research used three main qualitative methods: focus group discussions (FGDs), semi structured key informant interviews and in-depth household case studies. Each focus group comprised a semi-structured discussion with approximately five to eight participants around the three research areas. In each treatment location, seven FGDs were conducted with:

- female VUP public works beneficiaries (registered as beneficiaries - typically female heads of households) or participants (typically married women in male-headed households);
- male VUP public works beneficiaries and/or participants;
- female non-public works beneficiaries (including eligible but not participating in public works);
- male non-public work beneficiaries(including eligible but not participating in public works);
- opinion leaders; and
- community members who contribute to VUP implementation.

In each comparison community, a total of three FGDs were conducted with female non-beneficiaries, male non-beneficiaries and opinion leaders.

In-depth household case studies were also conducted (one in Ndego and one in Kigembe sectors) and provided rich narratives of the conditions and perceived changes and experiences brought on by the VUP. Semi-structured key informant interviews selected through a snowballing effect with resource persons were also conducted in each treatment location. Key informants included (but were not limited to): administrative officers (Sector Chief Executives and Social Development Officers at sector levels, Social Development Officers at cell level, chiefs and president of the Ubudehe committee at village level); members of the structures that contribute to the VUP programme (LODA at national level, VUP Managers at sector level); social sector professionals including teachers, health and agricultural extension workers, development mobilizers, representatives of the National Council of Women and of village loans and savings groups and leaders of women’s associations.
Table 3  Participatory tools used in the research study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community well-being analysis</td>
<td>Opinion leaders</td>
<td>Socio-economic status of the community (characterization by wealth groups and what distinguishes them across a range of dimensions as perceived by informants).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to and control over household resources</td>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>Understanding the differences between spouses in terms of their access to and control over household resources, including productive assets, natural resources, family labour, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making matrix</td>
<td>Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries</td>
<td>Examining the differences between men and women in terms of their participation in decision-making at household, group and community levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal calendar and gender division of labour and household activities</td>
<td>Beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries</td>
<td>Exploring how seasonal variations affect the pattern of life throughout the year in terms of the main agricultural and non-agricultural activities and the division of tasks and economic activities among family members, with particular attention on gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization and group profile mapping (Venn diagram)</td>
<td>Non-beneficiaries</td>
<td>Who beneficiaries interact with, and the relative importance of these different people. This tool elicits perceptions of relationships and the strengths of social connections among people in the community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Selection of research participants

As no public works beneficiary list existed at the village level, in Ndego village chiefs compiled and provided lists of beneficiaries in the study communities according to their knowledge of VUP beneficiaries. In Kigembe sector, the VUP Manager provided the lists by selecting beneficiaries from different payrolls and compiling a list that could be used by the team in each sampled village. In the comparison communities, introductions to relevant local administrators were facilitated by VUP Managers at sector level. Respondents were subsequently identified as follows:

- The beneficiary list was separated into lists of males and females. For each focus group with beneficiaries the team made a random selection by picking every nth name on the list from within a single-sex group. Secondly, each name was cross-checked with village chiefs mainly to ensure that selected beneficiaries would be physically able to attend the focus
group (e.g. present in village). The help of village chiefs, who also informed the beneficiaries of the invitation to participate, was pivotal in this selection process.

- For non-beneficiaries the team sought the assistance of the village chiefs to identify either members of similar occupational groups (e.g. traders) or households living in fairly similar conditions to cash transfer beneficiaries – if possible dispersed among the village.
- Key informants were selected either in consultation with the village chiefs or by snowball sampling through other local opinion leaders, based on information progressively collected.

**Analysis and presentation of findings**

A series of activities were undertaken by the team and with external stakeholders to synthesize, analyse, and validate findings from the fieldwork:

- **Daily debriefs** At the end of each day the team reviewed and cross-checked all notes collected, wrote up the outcome of the participatory tools, and analysed thoroughly as a team implications of the information collected according to the key research questions under each hypothesis. This process encouraged team members to query and probe one another, deepening information and understanding of the implications of findings and eventually enabling an understanding of patterns and a general consensus of findings. This probing also revealed knowledge gaps, serving as follow-up points of enquiry for the next day.

- **Community feedback** At the end of the four days’ fieldwork in each community, the research teams conducted a community debrief session to report back to participants and key informants on the preliminary findings. This also provided an opportunity for the community to verify findings and if the picture that had emerged from the research was an accurate reflection of their situation. The participants comprised an average of 20 representatives from people interviewed and met with in the study community.

- **Sector feedback** Results of the research were shared with sector-level authorities, including VUP Managers in both Ndego and Kigembe sectors on completion of the week’s fieldwork in each sector. These discussions were also used to clarify certain issues and gather the reactions, insights and views of sector staff of the preliminary analyses, particularly concerning programme operations.

- **National feedback** On completion of the two weeks’ fieldwork the results from the field were shared and discussed at LODA in Kigali with representatives from VUP staff.
4. District, sector and community profiles

4.1 Eastern province: Kayonza district

Kayonza district is one of the seven districts comprising the Eastern province, and it is subdivided in 12 sectors, including Ndego which was selected as the focus of this study. Kayonza is located in the eastern part of the province and borders with Gatsibo district to the north, Rwamaganato the west, Ngomato the southwest, Kirehe to the southeast and the Akagera National Park, along the border with Tanzania, to the east (see map Figure 1 above). The park is named after the Akagera River which flows along its eastern boundary from Burundi, feeds into several lakes – of which the largest is Lake Ihema – found along the border with Tanzania and enters Lake Victoria in Uganda.

Ndego sector (and Kayonza district) lies east of the only tarmac road that cuts through the Eastern province and which connects Kigali to Rusumo at the border with Tanzania. The district is also located in the southeastern part of Kayonza, at the border with the Akagera National Park.

The district of Kayonza covers an area of 1,954 km² and hosts a total population of 346,751 (DDP, 2012). Ndego sector hosts a total of 9,071 people (FEWS NET, 2011). The area is moderately to sparsely populated (ibid.); with a population density of 179 persons per km², Kayonza’s population density is significantly lower than the national average of 419 persons per km² (ibid.). The district capital is Mukarange town, located along the main tarmac road. In addition to Mukarange, Rukara and Kabarondo are two other important towns and market centres of the district, located respectively north and south of Mukarange (ibid.).

The terrain of the district is characterized by plains, relatively low hills and slopes ranging between 1,400 and 1,600 metres in altitude (ibid.). According to the FEWS NET livelihoods categorization, Ndego falls within the Eastern Semi-Arid Agro-Pastoral zone, where the terrain becomes flatter with shrubs and forests due to its proximity to the Akagera National Park; the soil is “moderately fertile and clay-based” (FEWS NET, 2011: 36). The zone receives an average of 900 mm per annum (ibid.).

The most important economic activity and main source of household income in Kayonza district and Ndego is agriculture, including fishing in the lakes using nets. According to the EICV3 almost 80 percent of the population of Kayonza district is engaged in agriculture (NISR - EICV3, 2012a). The EICV3 classifies households farming land into the following categories: very small cultivators (under 0.3 ha); small cultivators (0.3 to 0.9 ha); medium cultivators (0.9 to 3 ha); and large cultivators (more than 3 ha). The mean size of land cultivated per household in Kayonza district is 0.82 ha, just below the FAO minimum requirement of 0.9 ha (this is the FAO calculated minimum land size for Rwanda to satisfy household nutritional needs (EICV3, 2012a and 2011b). Kayonza falls in the category of small cultivators (EICV3, 2012a).

Fieldwork discussions in Ndego sector indicate that the main crops cultivated include cassava, Irish potatoes, soybeans and maize, predominantly for household consumption. FEWS NET (2011) differentiates between the crops cultivated and consumed by poor and better-off households, with the former cultivating banana, beans and cassava and the latter banana, maize,

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24 The Eastern province is located in the eastern part of Rwanda and borders the Akagera National Park and Tanzania to the east, Uganda to the north, Burundi to the south and the Northern province, Kigali and the Southern province to the west.

25 The other sectors are Kabare, Kabarondo, Mukarange, Murama, Murundi, Mwiri, Nyamirama, Rukara, Ruramira and Rwinkwavu.

26 The Akagera National Park was founded in 1934 and is one of Africa’s oldest parks. The landscape covers alternating hills and plains and a complex system of lakes and papyrus swamps. The park hosts a wide variety of wildlife including wild buffaloes, elephants, giraffes, antelopes and crocodiles.
beans and cassava. Livestock rearing is an increasingly important activity in the area. According to FEWS NET (2011), most households own some livestock; cattle and goats for the better-off and goats and poultry for the poor. A KII with sector authorities in Ndego indicated that small livestock, and particularly easily marketable drought-resilient goats, are increasingly considered by local community members as a financial buffer against drought (see Section 0).

Eastern Province is reported, as of 2010/11, as having the second-highest poverty levels in the country, at 42.6 percent, following Southern province, with 56.5 percent. Eastern province however has the lowest extreme poverty levels among the provinces, at 20.8 percent (EICV3 2011). One of the primary causes of poverty is likable to be climatic. Most of the Eastern province has long suffered from acute vulnerability to drought shocks (FEWS NET, 2011). Indeed, the EICV3 found that 22 percent of survey respondents in the Eastern province stated that drought was their main ‘problem related to environmental destruction’. This percentage is much higher than the national average (9.9 percent), and the Southern province (10 percent) (EICV3, 2011). Within the Eastern province, Kayonza is considered one of the most drought-prone districts, having been repeatedly affected by recurrent rainfall deficits, late rainfall onsets and early rainfall cessations (REMA, 2009).

Using the ‘seasonal calendar and gender division of household labour’ qualitative tool, FGD participants in both Busasaimana and Iramiro villages concurred that Ndego sector is characterized by a bimodal rainfall regime, with two rainy seasons (Igihecy'imvura) typically running from October to December and from March to April, and two dry seasons (Igihecy'izuba) running from January until February and from May to September. Informants at national and sector levels also constantly underscored that rainfall patterns were becoming more and more erratic and dry seasons increasingly long, resulting in recurrent droughts with devastating consequences on local livelihood systems and the well-being of households and individuals (see Section 0 below).

Nearly half (42 percent) of the population of Kayonza district is classified as living in poverty, with 23 percent classified as poor and 19 percent as extreme poor, compared to national averages of 21 and 24 percent respectively (EICV3, 2011a). During FGDs in Ndego, participants identified three well-being categories. As shown in Table 5 below, respondents in Iramiro ‘divided’ their community into poor, medium and better-off households, and felt that the majority of the population (70 percent) fell into the medium category, 20 percent into the poor and only a minority (10 percent) into the better-off category. In the village of Busasamana participants indicated a slightly different population distribution of the well-being categories, using different names as well: very poor, comprising 30 percent of the population; poor, comprising the majority of the population (60 percent); and able, also a minority (10 percent).

Despite different categorization ‘labels’, the characteristics of well-being for each category were in fact similar. The poor in Iramiro and very poor in Busasamana, for example, were indicated as both owning no livestock, no land, and eating insufficient food and sometimes not eating at all. In Busasamana, respondents also added that their meals typically consisted of sweet potatoes and beans with no fresh vegetables. The distribution of the population under each category was also very similar, with the medium and poor categories in Iramiro and Busasamana respectively comprising the majority of village households.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/District</th>
<th>Eastern province/Kayonza district</th>
<th>Southern province/Gisagara district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sector</strong></td>
<td>Ndego</td>
<td>Kigembe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population*</td>
<td>9,071</td>
<td>19,421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severely poor**</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate poor**</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion**</td>
<td>60% Seventh-day Adventist Church,</td>
<td>75% Catholicism,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40% other (including Catholicism,</td>
<td>25% other (including Seventh-day Adventist Church, Protestantism, Islam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protestantism, Islam, Jehovah Witnesses)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VUP beneficiary households ***</td>
<td>Ndego sector: 1,308</td>
<td>Kigembe sector: 1,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kayonza district: 4,025</td>
<td>Gisagara district: 5,613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic agro-physical context*</td>
<td>Flat, moderately fertile and clay-based soils support the growth of bush, shrubs and forests. Scarce (900 mm per annum) and unpredictable rainfall; acute vulnerability to drought.</td>
<td>Landscape comprises alternating terraced hills and cultivated marshlands. Sandy, moderately fertile soils. Between 800 mm and 1,200 mm of rainfall per annum. Low agricultural productivity driven by population pressure, small landholdings, over-cultivation and land degradation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main livelihoods activity</td>
<td>Agriculture-based mixed farming production system. Crop cultivation (notably cassava, Irish potatoes, soybean and maize) predominantly for household consumption practiced along with livestock rearing (mainly cattle and goats); fishing (using nets) in nearby lakes, petty trading and agricultural wage labour.</td>
<td>Rain-fed crop production (notably maize, soybean, potatoes, beans, sorghum and rice) mostly for household consumption. Common cash crops are cassava, coffee and bananas. Livestock rearing (chicken, rabbits, goats, pigs, cows) also practiced, as well as agricultural wage labour, petty trade and wage labour in Huye town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure, public services and institutions**</td>
<td>5 schools: 3 primary, 2 secondary (1 A-level, 1 O-level). 1 health centre, no hospital. No electricity. Solar power only available in sector administration buildings, health centre and in the A-level school. 80% of the population has access to clean water.</td>
<td>5 schools: 3 primary, 2 secondary (1 A-level, 1 O-level). 1 Vocational Training Centre. 1 health centre, no hospital. No electricity. Solar power available in sector administration buildings and health centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic governance-leadership structure****</td>
<td>Decentralized administrative structure. Provinces act as liaisons for coordinating district and sector development planning with national policies and programmes. Districts are responsible for local economic development planning and coordinating delivery of public services. Sectors coordinate delivery of public services and develop planning. Cells, which are composed of villages, prioritize needs and mobilize the community to address them.</td>
<td>Decentralized administrative structure. Provinces act as liaisons for coordinating district and sector development planning with national policies and programmes. Districts are responsible for local economic development planning and coordinating delivery of public services. Sectors coordinate delivery of public services and develop planning. Cells, which are composed of villages, prioritize needs and mobilize the community to address them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Busasamana village

Busasamana is located in Byimana cell in the southwest part of Ndego sector and 38 km away from the main tarmac road that connects Kigali to Rusumo at the border with Tanzania. Busasamana was selected as the well-connected community. From the main tarmac road, the village can be reached through a series of unpaved feeder roads, including the Ndego-Kabare road which was constructed by a VUP project. Those roads are well maintained and in relatively good condition—even during the rainy season (which coincided with the period of fieldwork), making Busasamana relatively easily accessible. Unlike Iramiro, Busasamana village was established long ago; respondents interviewed could not specify the exact settlement date, but agreed that it was before 1995.

Similar to other villages in the sector, there is no electricity in Busasamana and no access to clean water sources. Village residents reported using Lake Nasho as the nearest (unsafe and open) water source that could be reached between 45 minutes to one hour on foot. There are no extension services nor a MINAGRI agronomist based in the village. According to respondents, the agronomist pays infrequent visits to community residents, some mentioning they were only once a year (see Box 2 below). There are no health or education facilities in Busasimana; the nearest primary school and health centre are both found in a nearby village which can be reached on foot in about one hour. Community-level health care is available through Community Health Workers (CHWs), based in the village. CHWs are trained to promote maternal, newborn, infant and children under-five health, as well as to treat adult health conditions and disease.

Crop production and livestock rearing are the main sources of livelihood. Fishing in Lake Nasho was also indicated by some as a livelihood activity for some young and adult males in the village. The main crops cultivated are soybean, sorghum, maize, cassava and green peas predominantly for household subsistence. A few small shops selling basic food (e.g. sugar, salt) and non-food items (matches, soap), tea houses and local beer stands were located in the ‘centre’ of the village where some women were also selling fruit (e.g. bananas) and vegetables (e.g. avocados, tomatoes, onions) during the day. No other trading activities were found in Busasamana.
**Iramiro village**

Iramiro is located in Kiyovu cell, in the western part of Ndego sector and very close (3 km) to the Ndego sector administration buildings. Iramiro is located 48 km away from the main tarmac road and was chosen as the remote community. As with Busasamana, access to Iramiro from the main road was relatively easy, on well-maintained unpaved feeder roads.

KIIs and FGDs at sector and community levels revealed that Iramiro is a relatively new settlement. When the village was initially established in 2006, the majority of the population comprised Rwandan returnees from Tanzania; today, however, many have left the village to migrate to other sectors and beyond. At the same time other individuals and households, including economic and/or drought-displaced migrants have taken up residence in Iramiro. Describing the above demographic dynamics and high rates of in and out migration, a sector authority representative in Ndego stated “the population of Iramiro is in constant flux”.

Compared to their counterparts in Busasamana, residents of Iramiro enjoy greater availability of basic services. There is one primary school in the village and the nearest health centre is found close to the sector administration buildings, approximately 3 km away. Three CHWs also provided community-level health care. Respondents indicated good access to clean water: there were three well-functioning water faucets and a number of water tanks scattered throughout the village used to store water during the rainy season for use during the dry season. Some better-off households were connected to the main water pipeline. There was no electricity in the village but reportedly a handful of better-off families have solar panels installed on their houses.

Similar to Busasamana, subsistence agriculture is by far the most important economic activity. The main crops cultivated also include cassava, Irish potato, sorghum, soybean and maize. Livestock rearing activities are predominantly focused on goats and cattle.

Fieldwork discussions concerning sources of income at the household level revealed that the “muzungu” farm (commonly referred to by a number of FGD participants) offered an important source of all-year round agricultural labour, especially for males. KIIIs with sector level authorities clarified that the “muzungu farm” actually refers to Bramin Farm, a joint venture between Bralirwa, the Heineken Group brewery in Rwanda, and Minimex a leading national maize milling company, which produces maize and soybean through mechanized and irrigated production systems. The farm is located in a valley approximately two kilometres from Iramiro; its red roofs and brick building complexes are clearly visible from the centre of Iramiro. Some mentioned that the farm attracts agricultural labourers who migrate daily from nearby villages or settle in Iramiro on a more permanent basis. The daily agricultural wage rate paid by the farm was indicated at 1 500 RwF (2.13 USD); wages were reportedly only paid directly into labourers’ bank accounts since the farm does not operate through ‘cash in hand’ payments.

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27 In recent years the Eastern province has received repeated waves of Rwandan returnees who had been living in neighbouring Tanzania since 1959 or earlier, and were expelled (e.g. in May 2006 and June 2013) by Tanzanian presidential directives requiring all undocumented migrants to leave or be forcibly removed by the security forces. See: http://www.ifrc.org/docs/apPEals/06/MDRRW00201.pdf and http://appablog.wordpress.com/2014/02/07/iom-aids-rwandan-returnees-from-tanzania/

28 Muzungu is a Bantu language word widely used in Rwanda and other countries in the Great Lakes Region to refer to a white person.

29 See http://www.newtimes.co.rw/PDF_ads/BRAMIN-SAP-NT.pdf.
Table 5  
**Community well-being analysis, Iramiro village (Ndego sector)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor (Abakene)</th>
<th>Medium (Abifashije)</th>
<th>Better-off (Abakire)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor personal hygiene, own only one set of ragged clothes.</td>
<td>Own two sets of clothes, one for working, one for going to the market.</td>
<td>Wear ironed clothes and polished shoes. Good personal hygiene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No livestock.</td>
<td>Own small livestock – pigs, rabbits, sheep, goats and chickens.</td>
<td>Own small livestock and one or more cows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient food – eat once a day if at all.</td>
<td>Eat twice a day – “their food is just enough”.</td>
<td>“Eat as many times as they want”, five or more times a day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to pay for Mutuelle annual premiums.</td>
<td>Only able to cover all household members with Mutuelle if harvest is good.</td>
<td>All household members are covered by Mutuelle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some own small land plots; others have no land.</td>
<td>Own 1 ha of land.</td>
<td>Own 2-3 ha of land for crop production plus 10 ha of grazing land. Able to sell part of the crop production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not own a house.</td>
<td>Own a house.</td>
<td>Own a house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor mindset – think only short term, not in the long term “poverty can be related to material things but also to one’s mindset”.</td>
<td>More receptive to development programmes.</td>
<td>Well aware of development programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children do not go to school, high absentee or dropout rates.</td>
<td>Children are enrolled and stay in school, usually complete primary education.</td>
<td>Children can continue up to university level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have more than 6 children.</td>
<td>Have 4 – 6 children.</td>
<td>Have no more than 4 children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No electricity.</td>
<td>No electricity.</td>
<td>Some have solar electricity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No access to clean water.</td>
<td>Access to clean water from water faucets.</td>
<td>Some are connected to the piped water network.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share of population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share of VUP household public works beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comparison community: Kacyiru village, Kabare sector**

The comparison community of Kacyiru shares some features with Busasamana and Iramiro in terms of agricultural-based livelihoods, but it is closer (27 km) to the main tarmac road and the town of Cyarub are and, as indicated during FGDs, enjoys better agro-ecological conditions. AFGD with opinion leaders in Kacyiru revealed general perceptions that Kabare sector is endowed with less sandy and more fertile soils than its neighbouring Ndego and as such agricultural production is generally better.

Similarly to the research sites in Ndego, the main crops produced are sorghum, Irish potatoes, soy, green beans and maize. Bananas and tomatoes were also mentioned and livestock rearing was indicated as an important livelihood source. The main risks and shocks reported by community members were droughts of increasing intensity and frequency, and related pest
outbreaks, which often led to the loss of all or most of the crop produced, particularly for poor farmers who could not afford to purchase pesticide.

There is no primary school and no health centre in Kacyiru, but they are both easily accessible in a nearby village at 20 minutes walking distance. There is also no electricity, but the village has access to three water faucets, although water cuts were reported as frequent.

4.3 Southern province: Gisagara district

Gisagara is one of the eight districts that make up the Southern province, which bears the most elevated level of poverty and extreme poverty levels consistently among all provinces as reported by EICV (EICV3, 2011). It is subdivided into 13 sectors, including Kigembe which was the focus of our study. Gisagara is located in the southeastern part of the country and borders with Nyanza district to the north, Huye and Nyaruguru to the west, Burundi and the Akanyaru River to the south and east.

Kigembe sector is located in the southwestern part of Gisagara and east of Huye city and the Kigali-Muhanga-Huye paved road, which cuts through Huye before continuing on to the bordering town of Akanyaru and eventually ending in Bujumbura, Burundi. Huye used to be the seat of the Belgian colonial power who named the city Astrida in honour of Queen Astrid of Belgium. Today Huye is the third-largest city of Rwanda and home to the National University of Rwanda, the National Museum of Rwanda and the Rwandan Institute of Scientific Research. The city is a bustling business centre with a vast array of retail and catering shops, hotels and guesthouses, a busy market – open every day except for Sunday – which attracts sellers and buyers from Huye, surrounding rural areas and even beyond, given the city’s proximity to Burundi.

Gisagara district covers a much smaller area (680 km²) than Kayonza but hosts about the same population number, of 322,803 people (ibid.). As the eighth most populated sector in Gisagara, Kigembe sector hosts a total population of 19,421, almost double the population of Ndego (FEWS NET, 2011). At 475 persons per km², population density in Gisagara is indeed very high and higher than the high national average of 419 (ibid.). The district capital is Ndora; other important market centres are Gisagara and Nyaruteja towns (ibid.).

The district’s (and Kigembe sector) landscape comprises alternating hills (many of which are terraced) and valleys comprised of cultivated marshlands (DDP, 2013). Kigembe sector lies in the Central Plateau Cassava and Coffee livelihoods zone according to FEWS NET, which is characterized by “sandy, moderately fertile soils, rolling hills, grassland and bush scrubs” (FEWS NET, 2011: 20). The zone receives between 800 mm and 1,200 mm of rainfall per year (ibid.).

Agriculture is the backbone of the district’s economy. Eighty-six percent of the population is engaged in agricultural activities (EICV3, 2011b). The mean size of cultivated land per household is 0.56 ha (EICV3, 2011b). Gisagara, like Kayonza, also falls in the category of small cultivators as per the abovementioned EICV 3 classification. The mean size of cultivated land per household in Gisagara is significantly smaller than in Kayonza (0.56 versus 0.82 ha). The findings from our study also confirm that, in general, households in Kigembe did own smaller land parcels than households in Ndego sector, as reflected in tables 5 and 6.

30 The Southern province is located in the southern part of Rwanda and borders Burundi and the Eastern province to the east, the Northern and Western provinces to the north and west and Burundi to the south.
31 The other sectors are Gikonko, Gishubi, Kansi, Kibilizi, Mamba, Muganza, Mugombwa, Mukindo, Musha, Ndora, Nyanza and Save.
32 Huye, which is currently the capital of Huye district, was formerly known as Butare, the capital of Butare province that was dissolved in 2006.
Main crops cultivated in Kigembe were mentioned to be maize, soybean, Irish potatoes, beans and sorghum, mostly for household consumption. Cassava, coffee and bananas are also widely cultivated, but mainly for sale. Livestock rearing includes chickens, rabbits, goats, pigs and cows. Kigembe sector was targeted by the Crop Intensification Programme (CIP), implemented by MINAGRI. The programme, rolled out nationwide in 2007, seeks to boost agricultural productivity and enhance food security through three main pillar activities: development of marshland areas – where land plots are owned by different households but all grow one crop which is selected at sector level; improvements of productive inputs (e.g. seeds and fertilizers); and water use (e.g. improved irrigation).33

Small land parcels coupled with high rates of population density make land scarcity an acute problem across the district. This is further exacerbated by soil erosion, over-cultivation, cultivation in steep hillsides without proper soil and water conservation and land degradation, all of which are among the key drivers of low agricultural productivity in Gisagara district and the Southern province more broadly (Musahara, 2006; DDP, 2013). Indeed, the EICV3 found that in the Southern province, over 20 percent of households who mentioned being confronted with problems related to environmental destruction named soil erosion as a key problem (EICV3, 2011). This percentage is much higher than that of the Eastern province (5.4 percent) but lower than the national average (24.3 percent) (ibid.).

A bimodal rainfall pattern was reported by study participants in Kigembe sector. The rainy season (Igihecy'imvura) was indicated as usually running from October to December and from March to May; the second rainy season was therefore slightly longer in Kigembe than in Ndego (where it runs from March to April as shown above). January and February and from June until October were indicated as the dry season (Igihecy'izuba) months. As elaborated in Section 0 below, prolonged dry seasons followed by heavy and destructive rains contributed to soil erosion, loss of crops and fertilizer and were widely considered as the main risks to agricultural production in both Uruyenzi and Taba villages.

Poor agricultural productivity is recognized by the Gisagara District Development Plan as underpinning high poverty rates in the district. More than 60 percent of the population is estimated to be living in poverty; 28 percent is classified as poor and 33 percent as extreme poor. Poverty rates in the district are higher than in Kayonza district and the national average (DDP, 2013) (see Table 4).

The ‘Community well-being analysis’ participatory tool and discussions revealed identical categorization of well-being in both Taba and Uruyenzi villages along three main categories: very poor, poor and able, as shown in Table 6 below. In both villages, perceptions of wealth distribution were similar and in line with the findings of the EICV 3, with the majority identified as poor. Specifically, in Taba 30 percent of the population was indicated as very poor, 50 percent as poor and 20 percent as able; in Uruyenzi, percentages for the same categories were 20 percent, 70 percent and 10 percent%. Characteristics of well-being for the same categories identified by opinion leaders in Ndego (see Table 5) did not differ substantially from those identified by their counterparts in Kigembe sector. However, land plot sizes in Ndego were bigger than in Kigembe and working as hired-in agricultural labourers in land plots of better-off households was a widespread strategy among poor households in Kigembe but less so in Ndego.

4.4 Research community profiles in Kigembe sector

Taba village, Gatovu cell

Taba is the remote village selected in this study, located in the central part of Kigembe sector, reached from the city of Huye on an unpaved road in relatively good condition that leads off the main Kigali-Huye-Akanyaru tarmac road. The distance from the tarmac road (and Huye city) to Taba is 21.5 km – it takes more than three hours on foot to cover the distance. Respondents were not able to indicate the exact year when Taba had been established, but all agreed that it was a relatively old settlement, created before 1995.

Participants reported that more than half of Taba village residents are women, many of them widows; this was explained as being caused by the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The village chief referred to them using the term incike, a Kinyarwanda word coined in the aftermath of the genocide which means to be uprooted or wiped out. The term is typically used (across Rwanda) to refer to elderly widows who have lost all their relatives to violence and have been plunged into poverty. According to the chief, the majority of incike living in Taba are Direct Support beneficiaries, and only a few are public works beneficiaries.

There are no basic services or infrastructure in Taba. There are no education facilities in the village. It takes approximately 30 minutes on foot to reach the closest primary school and one hour to reach the closest secondary school. The nearest health centre is found in the same building complex of the Kigembe sector administration and it takes around one hour to reach it on foot. A number of respondents explained that the health centre was inaugurated approximately one year ago; previously, Taba residents were using the health centre in Kansi sector, located more than two hours away on foot.

During an ‘Organization and group profiles mapping’ tool conducted with male non-beneficiaries, veterinary services were reported as having medium importance for the local community, but not easily accessible. This was mainly because there was only one veterinarian – located in the building complex of the Kigembe sector administration – for the whole sector. He/she was always very busy and difficult to make contact with. Agricultural extension services were reported to be available at sector and cell levels (in Gatovu), but respondents complained of limited capacity and high staff turnover. The nearest market is in Nyaruteja, reported as being located at more than two hours walk away from Taba. Some indicated distance to the market as a major constraint to trading activities in the area. Taba had no electricity and no access to clean water; the nearest water source was a swamp, reportedly located one and half hours walking distance from Taba.

Economic activity was overwhelmingly concentrated on rain-fed subsistence farming. The main crops produced included maize – in the marshland area where the CIP is implemented – soybean, beans, Irish potatoes and sorghum. Cassava, bananas and coffee were among the main cash crops cultivated in the hillside areas. As evidenced in Table 6 below, only people in the ‘able’ or better-off category were reported as having enough surplus to enable sale of relatively small quantities of maize and soybean. Some households in the poor and able category were also engaging in cash crop production. Work as agricultural labour for households in the ‘able’ category was reported a key livelihood strategy for the poor and very poor. Hired-in agricultural labourers were typically paid either in cash or in kind from day to day.
### Table 6  
**Community well-being analysis, Taba village, Kigembe sector (Southern province)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very poor (Abatishoboye)</th>
<th>Poor (Abakene)</th>
<th>Able (Abishoboye)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat one meal a day; small quantities of food. When cannot find work on ‘able’s’ farms may go the whole day without eating.</td>
<td>Always eat once a day.</td>
<td>Eat twice a day, porridge for breakfast and dinner in the evening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own a few hens.</td>
<td>Own a few heads of small stock (goats, sheep, pigs).-</td>
<td>Own small livestock and one or two cows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Either do not own land or if they do the plot is small (0.25 ha) and infertile. Work as hired-in agricultural labour on ‘able’s’ land.</td>
<td>Own plot of land of 0.25-0.30 ha.; cannot afford to purchase fertilizer. Work as hired-in agricultural labour on ‘able’s’ land.</td>
<td>Own more than 4 ha of land and can afford to purchase fertilizer. Hire-in poor and very poor as agricultural labourers. Can sell around 10 kg of maize and 10 kg of soybean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not own a bicycle.</td>
<td>Do not own a bicycle.</td>
<td>Own one bicycle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own one set of ragged clothes; beg for clothes.</td>
<td>Own two sets of clothes: one for every day use and one for Sunday and holidays.</td>
<td>Own up to four sets of clothes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not own a house, “squats in other people [able] houses because he/she cannot afford to pay rent”.</td>
<td>Own one house in fairly good condition.</td>
<td>Own one house in good condition, with good floors made of sand and dung mixes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are usually not enrolled in primary school, but if they are they lack uniforms and school materials.</td>
<td>Children are enrolled in primary school and usually remain enrolled.</td>
<td>Children continue to attend secondary school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not attend public meetings, “the very poor feel excluded, feel as they are not part of the community”.</td>
<td>Attend public meetings, speak up and are listened to.</td>
<td>Attend meetings, “contribute the most with good ideas” and encourage others to attend.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share of population</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Share of VUP households public works beneficiaries</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Uruyenzi village, Nyabikenke cell**

The village of Uruyenzi was selected as the well-connected community, located in the southern part of Kigembe sector, 20 km away from the main tarmac road that runs from Kigali to Huye and on to Akanyaru. Uruyenzi is also not very far from the village of Taba, at around 10 km. According to respondents interviewed in Uruyenzi it takes approximately four hours on foot to reach Huye city and three hours by bicycle. As with Taba, a number of respondents stated that the majority of households in the village are female-headed, many of whom are widows and also attributed this to the same reasons mentioned above. Respondents were not able to indicate the exact year when Uruyenzi had been established, but all agreed that it was a relatively old settlement, created before 1995.

There are no basic services or infrastructure in Uruyenzi. There is no school in the village; it takes approximately 30 minutes on foot to reach the closest primary school and 20 minutes to
reach the secondary school. The health centre used by Uruyenzi residents is located in Agahabwa cell and takes approximately one hour to reach on foot. The village does not have access to clean water and the nearest, unsafe, water source reported was a swamp, located 30 minutes away on foot. During a FGD with women, participants complained that during the rainy season, access to the swamp becomes challenging as the path is very slippery; the quality of water also worsens and “becomes very muddy”. The nearest market to Uruyenzi is also in Nyaruteja, closer than it is from Taba. According to one respondent, “it takes 30 minutes on foot for a man and 45 minutes for a woman with a child on her back [to reach it]”. There is no electricity in the village and solar photo-voltaic panels are only found in households at cell level. Respondents estimated that about half of Uruyenzi residents owned mobile phones, which they charged at cell level.

Comparison community: Duwani village in Kibilizi sector

The comparison community of Duwani has a similar profile to Uruyenzi and Taba in terms of its agricultural-based livelihoods; located at only 4 km away from Huye, it is much closer to the main tarmac road and the bustling urban economy. The close proximity to the city of Huye has positive effects on trading activities and availability of wage labour according to Duwani residents participating in FGDs. As one male respondent starkly put it, “without Huye we would die”.

The main crops produced are rice – in the marshland and as part of the CIP – soybean, green beans, maize, peas, Irish potatoes, bananas and vegetables. Respondents in Duwani indicated crop pests, heavy rains and soil erosion as recurrent risks to agriculture production in the area.

There are no health or education facilities in Duwani. The nearest primary school and health centre are however very close – reportedly at only 10-15 minutes away on foot, and both located at cell level. During a FGD with opinion leaders, participants complained that Duwani is the only village in the cell that does not have electricity and the community has repeatedly petitioned cell and sector administrators for the village to be connected to the main grid. Three water faucets are available in the village.

Table 7 Profile of the study communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Eastern</th>
<th>Southern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Kayonza</td>
<td>Gisagara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sectors</td>
<td>Ndego</td>
<td>Kabare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cells</td>
<td>Kiyovu</td>
<td>Byimana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research villages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Iramiro</td>
<td>Busasamana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Treatment community</td>
<td>Treatment community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Settlement located very close (3 km) to the Ndego sector administration buildings; settlement organized around primary</td>
<td>Relatively dispersed settlement organized around central market area; fields located in surrounding areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance from main road</td>
<td>Far from main road (48 km).</td>
<td>Close to main road (38 km).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population (households/individuals)</td>
<td>167/862</td>
<td>98/400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VUP public works beneficiary households (all cohort 2)*</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main livelihoods</td>
<td>Farming, mainly subsistence crops (cassava, Irish potato, sorghum, soybean, maize); livestock rearing and fishing; limited non-farming activities include petty trade and small-scale catering activities (e.g. tea houses, bars).</td>
<td>Farming, mainly subsistence crops (maize, rice, soybean, Irish potatoes, beans, sorghum) mostly for household consumption, but also petty-trading of crop surplus. Cash crops: cassava, coffee and bananas. Livestock rearing. Non-farming activities: wage labour in Huye city and small-scale catering activities (e.g. bars).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic services and infrastructure</td>
<td>One primary school, 3 well-functioning water faucets, water tanks for water storage, some better-off households connected to water pipeline and solar power, CHWs.</td>
<td>CHWs, limited extension services; primary school and primary health care about 1 hour walking distance; no electricity; no access to clean water sources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures are approximate, as a cumulative list of VUP household beneficiaries who have worked since the roll-out of VUP in both sectors is not available.

Figures inserted here were derived through KIIs at sector level and village chiefs.
PART B: RESEARCH FINDINGS

5. Women’s Economic Advancement

The research explored the effects of VUP public works wages on the resources that women beneficiaries of VUP public works can draw on to succeed economically and specifically focused on the hypothesis: Social protection programmes that promote the economic advancement of women increase their productive resources (e.g. incomes, access to credit, and savings) and can also improve women’s skills and employment opportunities.

5.1 Households economic activities and traditional gendered division of labour

5.1.1 Agricultural activities

The research findings point to fairly rigid gender divisions of agricultural labour at the household level. A number of agricultural production activities, both crop and animal, were viewed strictly as ‘men’s work’ or men’s responsibilities, whereas others as ‘women’s work’. For example, crop planting was widely indicated as predominantly carried out by women, as Table 8 also shows. In Busasamana, a number of female respondents expressed feelings of dissatisfaction with the burden of planting mainly because of the significant strain on their backs that the continuous bending posture caused. At the same time however, they recognized that since men would not get involved in this activity they had no other alternative than to keep doing it themselves if they wanted to harvest and eventually feed their children. As one woman exclaimed, “men do not consider planting as their business, but it is important and it is hard work!”

With regard to crop harvesting, women were widely reported as responsible for winnowing and threshing, whereas men for manually cutting and transporting crops either on bicycles or on their backs from the family field to the house. In households that cultivated cash crops, transport of crops to the market and related sale activities were predominantly carried out by men. Petty trade of fruit and vegetables was indicated a widespread activity in both Ndego and Kigembe sectors, and predominantly carried out by women. As elaborated in the sections below, women’s limited engagement with sales of surplus produce and cash crops was also linked to their domestic obligations, which constrained their mobility and limited their time, as well as to their subordinate role in relation to men, who ultimately retained control over household’s productive assets and cash.

Similarly, livestock rearing activities were found to be governed by entrenched gender roles. For example, across all locations visited by the research team, men were in charge of cutting livestock fodder and milking cows. With regard to the latter, the research found deep-rooted cultural norms against married women milking cows. When asked, female respondents in Taba could not articulate the beliefs underpinning this taboo and simply stated “this is the way it is, there is no married woman in Rwanda who does that”. There were indications that this taboo could have negative financial repercussions on married women without a male present, for example if the husband had migrated. Unable to milk their cow(s) themselves, they were reported as having little alternative than hiring-in a male to milk on their behalf.

Transport of livestock to the market and sales, were typically carried out by men. As shown in Table 10, when compiling the Decision-Making Matrix tool in the comparison community of Duwani men participants allocated three seeds to women and seven to men, pointing to husbands’ greater control over ‘selling livestock’ activity than wives.
Husband or wife participation in VUP public works did not substantially alter the traditional gender division of agricultural and non-agricultural labour at the household level. The findings of our study indicate that households enrolling and participating in public works were typically those who had sufficient labour availability to enable one member to be employed in the VUP while other(s) engaged in other agricultural and non-agricultural activities. This finding is consistent with other research from the region, particularly where payment is low and remuneration unreliable (McCord, 2004; McCord 2012). This strategy was mostly enacted to ensure a steady flow of cash and food for the family to meet basic needs, since the majority of male and female beneficiaries saw VUP publics work as a ‘temporary’, and unreliable labour source (see Operations section).

Despite being widely considered by communities as eligible and vulnerable, many female-headed households who did not have family members who could bring additional income to rely upon or work on the household plot while they participated in public works were self-excluding. In other words, many chose not to enrol in VUP public works and instead opted to work on their land or as agricultural labourers. In the words of one female non-beneficiary in Uruyenzi (Kigembe sector): “female heads of households worry that while they work in VUP no one can farm their land so they don’t register.” This echoes the findings of a recent mixed-method analysis of the short-term welfare benefits of the VUP which also found that eligible female-headed households were significantly less likely to participate in public works than male-headed ones (Hartwig, 2013).

One option that could be taken up by female heads of households with limited labour capacity was to hire-in agricultural labour while they participated in VUP works. However, the cost of daily labour vis-à-vis VUP daily wages made this option unattractive, especially for those with a number of dependents to support. In Uruyenzifor, for example, one young unmarried woman who lived with her elderly father (and had no one else to support) decided to participate in public works; to do so she hired an agricultural labourer for 600 RwF (0.85 USD) a day who was farming the family’s land while she worked on VUP sites for 1,000 RwF (1.42 USD) a day. As such, her wage at the end of the day was 400 RwF (0.56 USD) (and an additional output from the agricultural labourer).

This example shows that even if the VUP public works wage in Kigembe was higher than the agricultural labour wage. Yet poor households, notably poor female-headed households with limited labour capacity, were cautious in their decisions and often preferred not to participate in public works. As discussed below, this was linked to public works wage payment delays which made public works employment a less attractive and unreliable source of income.

5.1.2 Non-agricultural activities

Females were found to be less likely to engage in non-agricultural activities than their male counterparts. This resonates with the findings of the EICV3 reporting that 82 percent of women in the country are involved in agricultural occupations compared to 61 percent of men (EICV3, 2012a). A similar pattern, although not at individual level, is also found in relation to male-versus female-headed households where a staggering 90 percent of female-headed households in Rwanda work in agriculture compared with 62 percent of male-headed ones (ibid.).

While the evidence collected by our study does not point to VUP public works having spurred structural changes in relation to women’s engagement in non-agricultural occupations, there were indications that VUP cash wages had enabled a small number of female public works participants to start non-agricultural, income-generating activities, such as petty trading or brewing and selling local beer. This is elaborated in Section 0 below. In addition, and as discussed in Section 0, employment in the VUP was found to have positively contributed to changing perceptions of women’s economic roles beyond their domestic and agricultural traditional roles, which was driven by a strong governmental policy focus on gender equality.
Wage labour was mentioned as an important consumption-smoothing strategy mostly deployed by young and adult men. In Gisagara district, for example, due to the proximity of the villages that were selected for our study to Huye city, respondents frequently indicated permanent or temporary migration of males to Huye to take advantage of job opportunities that the urban economy offered, including construction work, carpentry, work as security guards and washing clothes. However, as explored in Section 5, for the majority of women, their domestic obligations meant that temporary migration for a relatively short time and to areas close to the homestead was mainly a distress strategy in times of household crises rather than an habitual livelihoods strategy to avail of economic opportunities in non-agricultural sectors.

In addition to wage labour, retail and catering were mentioned as other non-agricultural occupations in the communities visited. While those activities saw the participation of both men and women, tasks and roles were found to be mostly gendered. For instance, most small shops, called *boutiques*, selling basic necessity items (e.g. soap, salt, sugar, biscuits) and bars, typically serving locally brewed sorghum beer, banana wine and *brochettes*, were indicated as owned and managed by men. If women worked in those small businesses, their role was largely limited to ‘helping out’ or providing support, for example in the event of the husband travelling temporarily elsewhere.

### 5.1.3 Changes in time use for agricultural and domestic activities

Research findings indicated strong gender disparities in time use for domestic (e.g. preparing food, cleaning and collection of fuel and water) and care activities (e.g. looking after children, caring for the sick and the elderly). Not surprisingly, these activities are year-round obligations, as shown in Table 8; the onus however, falls chiefly on women (see also RLDSF, 2014). The findings of the EICV3 also found that in Kayonza district, females spent double the hours per week (20 hours) of their male counterparts (10 hours) on domestic chores (EICV3, 2011a). In Gisagara disparities were even more pronounced as females spent 32 hours per week *vis-à-vis* males who spent only 12 (EICV3, 2011b).

Research findings evidenced socio-cultural norms that assigned women a subordinate position in the household; this was found in our study to play an important role in defining and reproducing gender-differentiated time use patterns. For example, during a FGD with female VUP beneficiaries in Iramiro (Ndego sector), informants concurred that men “are not supposed” to do household chores. In the words of one female, “if you make your husband cook it is like wanting to assert your authority over his”. The majority of females and a number of males interviewed in both sectors, as well as in comparison communities, also explained that husbands helped with domestic tasks only in exceptional occasions; for example, if the wife was heavily pregnant, had just given birth or was ill. Female respondents were often keen to highlight that even on those occasions their husbands’ support was largely unreliable. For example, during a FGD with female informants in Uruyenzi one of them explained:

> “Even in the most difficult times, for example when the wife has just given birth and is still in bed, husbands don’t really help; instead they may simply decide to go out and drink with their friends to celebrate [the birth of a new child].”

Group discussions with men however, often revealed diverging opinions particularly in relation to fetching water and fuel, with many affirming that they also undertook those tasks regularly, not only in exceptional occasions. During the community feedback in Taba for example, men and women participants had an animated discussion precisely concerning the extent of husbands’ role in fetching water and fuel and eventually failed to reach an agreement.

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34 Meat on a skewer; a very popular dish of Rwanda.
Children, rather than husbands, were identified as women’s main helpers in household chores, which is a common practice among relatively labour-constrained households participating in public works (McCord 2012). In particular, the presence of older children (typically five years old and above) in the household was found to influence the level of women’s time allocation to domestic activities, as well as their participation in VUP public works, as discussed below.

Table 8  Seasonal calendar and gendered division of household activities with female non-beneficiaries in Iramiro (Ndego sector)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Months of the year</th>
<th>Gendered division of household activities (# of seeds out of a total of 10)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rainy and dry seasons</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rainy season (Igihecy’invura)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dry season (Igihecy’tzuba)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultivation (Ubuhinzi)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Land preparation (Kurima)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting cassava and Irish potatoes (Guterainyumbati, ibirayi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting beans, maize (Guteraibishyimbo, ibigori)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeding (Kubagara)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land preparation for planting sorghum (Kurimiraamasaka)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvesting (Gusarura)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting sorghum (Kubibaamasaka)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling harvest (Kugurishaimyaka)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearing bushes (Gutemaibihuru)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household activities (Akaziko mu rugo)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen garden (Akarimak’igikoni)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child care (Kwitakubana)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning (Gukoraisuku)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooking (Guteka)</td>
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</table>

Participation in VUP public works was not found by this research to have altered female (and male) time commitments to agricultural activities. A key reason for this relates to the temporary nature of VUP employment in Ndego and to payment delays in Kigembe which meant that the majority did not forgo agricultural work on the family’s land plot (e.g. during the planting season) or as labourers to take up employment in VUP public works.
Employment in VUP public works in Busasamana was found to have led to temporary changes in time allocation for care activities – and specifically child care – between husbands and wives, with a number of male and female respondents explaining that husbands would look after children while their wives worked at VUP public works sites. In all other treatment villages however, no changes as a result of VUP works in time allocation for domestic activities between spouses were mentioned. In general, married female public works participants appeared to be balancing competing demands on their time and energy the best they could with some being confronted with heavier workloads when employed in VUP public works – particularly those without older children who could help, and difficult trade-offs.

A number of female public works participants in Taba, for instance, revealed that during VUP public works employment, those with older children would usually wake up at 5:30 a.m. with no change in the time they wake up as they would task their children with carrying out domestic chores, including fetching water. As such, VUP public works participation may have increased the workload of some children, as female public works participants offloaded part of their domestic burden on them. By contrast, female public works participants without old enough children reported either waking up as early as 3 a.m. to fetch water before travelling to the work site or carrying an empty jerry can to the site so as to collect water when returning home. When asked whether husbands helped with collecting water or any other chores while they worked on VUP sites female respondents unanimously agreed that they did not. According to a female beneficiary, “No, they don’t. How can they help if there is no water at home?”

Competing claims on female beneficiaries’ time and inability to carry out some household tasks were also indicated by some female respondents as potentially igniting intra-household tensions; even if female beneficiaries’ participation in public works was widely reported as being a decision taken jointly by husband and wife. In Taba, during a group discussion, one female beneficiary recalled that on a number of occasions while enrolled in VUP public works she did not have time to wash her husband’s clothes, which resulted in quarrels with him. Other participants added that in similar instances their husbands would either react by also starting an argument or would grudgingly wash their own clothes but would not offer to wash their wives’ or children’s clothes.

For some, needing to strike a balance between care obligations and public works employment was found to have given rise to challenging trade-offs. One female beneficiary in Uruyenzi, for instance, explained that while employed in VUP her child fell ill. She tried to negotiate with her husband that he would take the child to the health centre so that she could continue to work. Her husband, however, decided that she had to do it. Between seeking medical attention and caring for her sick child, she recalled having missed seven out of 15 days of work, missing one half of the project phase.

5.2 Education and skills

Despite Rwanda’s sustained progress in primary school enrolment and retention, women continue to have lower education and literacy rates than men, particularly among adults. The EICV3 results indicate that about 83 percent of the Rwandese population aged six and above have ever attended school. This represents an increase of about 6 percent compared to the EICV 2005-06, but overall there is still a slightly higher proportion of women that have never attended school (EICV3, 2011a). Similarly, the 2008 VUP baseline survey found that among people aged 15 years and above, illiteracy was much higher for females than males in both control (39 percent males and 54 percent females) and treatment (26 percent males and 38 percent females) communities surveyed (MINALOC and NISR, 2008). The EICV3 also found that compared to men, women are less likely to be able to perform a written calculation, read a simple note or write a simple letter (EICV3, 2011a). As outlined below, poor literacy skills
were seen as contributing to women’s limited ability to write business proposals to access commercial loans. According to the Public Works Manual, “public works activities will provide opportunities for on-the-job training in one or more specific tasks so as to equip public works participants with technical skills while executing the project on hand” (MINALOC, 2009:15). This echoes the explanation provided by the VUP Manager in Ndego sector in relation to the provision of training courses to a minority of participants who worked in higher positions, such as captains or supervisors but not for the majority of beneficiaries working as labourers in VUP sites:

“the VUP does not set out to provide training courses to all beneficiaries. Labourers acquire the skills needed to do the job on site, they learn by doing [sic].”

In Busasamama one female informant, for example, mentioned that when she was promoted from captain to supervisor she attended a three-day training to supervise road building work. As illustrated in Box 1 below, business development training was particularly valued by those who received it as it opened opportunities to access SACCO loans.

**Box 1 Business development, skills training and access to commercial loans**

A 37-year-old married female beneficiary from Taba, living with four children and her disabled husband, worked as supervisor in a number of VUP public works projects in Kigembe sector. She received training both on project progress reporting and business development planning. She found the latter especially useful. The training was provided by the VUP Manager and other experts at sector level and was conducted over two days in each project phase at the end of the workday from 2-5 p.m. and on the Umuganda Saturday\(^{35}\) from 8-12 a.m. She recalled that the training course focused on business proposal writing skills to facilitate access to commercial loans for agricultural projects or trading activities. A few months ago she drafted a business proposal to apply for a loan from a SACCO to buy pigs. Her application was successful and she was granted the loan. She told us, “When my application was accepted I felt happy and proud, now the pigs are farrowing and I am planning to sell the piglets to earn cash”.

In Kigembe and Ndego sectors, both male and female VUP participants concurred that they had acquired new technical skills thanks to public works employment, including levelling roads, digging ditches and constructing terraces. When asked, the overwhelming majority of females however stated that they did not use their newly acquired skills to find similar jobs elsewhere. Once again, domestic obligations were indicated as representing a key constraint to their ability to market those skills, linked with few viable opportunities available. Only in Uruyenzi one single woman and one female-headed household were reported as having migrated to other villages where they had found employment as supervisors in other VUP public projects.

By contrast there were indications, albeit limited, of male participants having used skills acquired through VUP employment to find jobs. In Iramiro, Ndego sector, for example, one young man stated that he had managed to find a job in a nearby road-levelling project thanks to the experience that he had gained with VUP. In Taba, one woman noted that her husband, with whom she rotated on VUP public works sites, had found employment constructing terraces in another sector and attributed this to the skills that he had gained in a VUP terracing project.

\(^{35}\) The last Saturday of each month is umuganda, a national half day (from 8 to 11 a.m.) of mandatory community service which includes cleaning streets, cutting grass, trimming bushes and repairing public facilities, such as roads, health centres and schools.
5.3 Access to financial services

To increase access to financial services and encourage the use of formal institutions for savings and loans, starting from 2009 the GoR has supported the establishment of SACCO branches in every sector of the country (AFI, 2014; RLDSF, 2011). There is evidence that government support to SACCO has contributed to improving financial inclusion in the country. In 2012, a FinScope survey revealed that between 2008 and 2012 the share of the population accessing formal financial services had doubled from 21 percent to 42 percent and those completely excluded from the formal financial system had dropped by almost half, from 52 percent to 28 percent (AFI, 2014).

Despite these significant improvements, access to formal financial services remains a challenge, especially in rural Rwanda, also because of the remoteness of some areas. The EICV3, for example, found that just over 37 percent of households in Kayonza district owned one savings account; at 27.2 percent, the percentage in Gisagara is even lower (EICV3, 2011a and b). Both districts are also below national average (39.4 percent) (ibid.). In terms of gender differentials, the EICV3 findings indicate that more men (29 percent) than women (14 percent) nationwide have savings accounts (EICV3, 2012a). Our findings corroborate these data.

5.3.1 Formal and informal sources of credit

In all locations visited by the research team, the overwhelming majority of respondents mentioned SACCO as the most popular formal financial institution in their area and an important source of commercial loans, followed by Banque Populaire. Discussions with focus group participants, also triangulated with a SACCO representative interviewed in Taba, revealed that SACCO granted loans to account holders upon presentation of a loan application, which included a business development plan, providing the following requisites were met: availability of 20 percent of the total amount of loan requested in the current account, availability of collateral assets (land, house and cattle were all considered collateral assets), regular cash deposits (credit history), presence of a guarantor, written consent of the spouse for married individuals applying for a loan.

Even if not officially required, VUP greatly encouraged the opening of SACCO accounts for payments. The SACCO representative interviewed in Taba confirmed that the number of SACCO account holders has gradually risen since the roll-out of VUP public works in 2009. In the study locations, respondents reported that in general women did not typically hold an account with SACCO or any other financial institution. This was perceived as linked to their limited access to cash as a result of their poverty status, but also of gender-based barriers which meant that husbands more than wives typically exercised control over the bulk of household cash. The research indicates that enrolment in public works allowed VUP females, both female heads of households as well as married women, to open an account or be joint signatories with a financial institution – typically SACCO – for the first time. These gender dimensions are analysed further in-depth below.

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36 In addition to governmental support to SACCO, the expansion of bank and micro-finance institution branches, the introduction of agent banking, and the modernization of financial services such as mobile banking, ATMs and mobile money can all be seen as having contributed to improving access to financial services in Rwanda (AFI, 2014).

37 http://www.finmark.org.za/

38 Banque Populaire was indicated as being predominantly used by the better-off largely because of high banking fees and charges, as well as collateral requirements.

39 In the comparison community of Diwanu however, male respondents highlighted that their land plots were very small and as such they were not accepted as collateral. They indicated this as a considerable challenge to accessing credit.
Holding a SACCO account was overwhelmingly indicated by both male and female beneficiaries as very positive, the main reason being that it had the potential to enable access to SACCO loans. Discussions with VUP staff at national and sector levels indicated widespread awareness of this; one staff member, for example, noted that “for beneficiaries, opening an account is a staircase to saving and obtaining credit”. However, only a minority of female public works participants across all locations studied availed of this newly acquired credit opportunity largely because of their limited income from public works or access to other income-generating activities and limited control of physical assets that could be used as collateral.

In addition to SACCO, the VUP financial service component was cited by respondents in Iramiro (Ndego sector) as another source of formal credit in the area. A number of respondents referred to a local women’s cooperative established a few years ago by CARE Rwanda which produced and sold handicrafts and homemade soap to tourists visiting the Akagera National Park. In 2009 the cooperative accessed a loan of 400,000 RwF (570 USD) from the VUP financial services component. Since the past two years however, the cooperative was reported as barely operating, primarily due to difficulties in maintaining viable volumes of sales.

Village Savings and Loans Groups (VSLGs) or Intambwe as they were called in Kigembe, were widely mentioned in both Ndego and Kigembe sectors as the most popular source of informal credit. VSLGs had been established by local communities on the basis of a group model approach introduced by CARE Rwanda around 2010. Membership of VSLGs was found to be both mixed-gender and female-only but there was general consensus that the majority of VSLGs were female-only and that female members significantly outnumbered males in mixed groups. Savings in VSLGs typically functioned as follows: each week group members saved and pooled a given amount of cash with members receiving the money in the pooled fund on a
rotational basis. In addition, VSLGs also offered small loans, reportedly of approximately 5,000-6,000 RwF (7.12-8.54 USD) to members who put forward a request.

Other existing informal lending sources were merry-go-rounds or tontines, as well as borrowing money or food from friends and relatives. In addition, buying food and non-food items on credit from local shopkeepers was a common strategy used both by female and male study participants in Kigembe to smooth household consumption. VUP beneficiaries however, were quick to add that they did not use VUP wages as collateral or guarantee to access this type of credit because of persistent payment delays, as discussed in Section 7.1. These delays caused shopkeepers to consider VUP wages an unreliable source of cash. As one male beneficiary in Taba exclaimed, “if we said that we wanted to use VUP wages to pay back, not a single shop owner would give us credit!”

5.3.2 Men and women borrowing behaviour

Gender was found to be a key determinant shaping borrowing behaviour from formal institutions. FGDs and KIIs interviews indicated that the typical borrower profile from SACCO was male, whereas informal credit sources and VSLGs in particular were the most popular lending sources for females. Men were also widely perceived as taking out loans for larger amounts than women. As stated by a female beneficiary in Taba,

“in general women take out small loans which are easy to pay back, but men take out big loans like of 1 million RwF [1,424 USD], which they use for big projects, for example to build a house.”

There are a number of reasons for gender differences in borrowing behaviour evidenced by our findings.

One reason related to women’s unequal bargaining power vis-à-vis men in the household is that men largely exercised control over household physical capital (e.g. land, house and valuable livestock, such as cows), typically used as collateral. This restricted women’s choices when it came to seeking loans from formal institutions.

Women’s limited literacy skills as well as their limited ‘confidence’ or ‘initiative’ were also frequently reported as contributing factors to women’s risk-averse borrowing behaviour when it came to seeking commercial loans. Loan application processes were often indicated as complex and difficult. Comparing the process of applying for loans from VSLGs vis-à-vis SACCO, female beneficiaries in Iramiro, for example, strongly expressed their preference for the former, which they described as easier to understand and follow. In the words of one informant,

“[in VSLG] anytime you want a loan you ask and you can get it but with SACCO it is more difficult, they ask many things, like having cash in your account or someone that guarantees for you and other things that I don’t know about.”

Furthermore, one requisite for married individuals applying for a loan from SACCO was consent of the spouse. A number of female respondents feared that this would open the door for appropriation of loans by their husbands and misuse of funds, exposing them to high risk of loan default. During a FGD with women in the comparison community of Kacyiru one participant openly stated, “we know that our husbands will waste loans on drinking so we don’t take out loans”.

A small number of VUP male and female beneficiaries in Kigembe reported having applied and obtained loans from SACCO, particularly when the VUP was first rolled out in the sector, during which payment delays were less frequent and in turn beneficiaries were more confident about the programme. During a FGD with male beneficiaries in Taba one participant explained that he had worked in several VUP projects since the roll-out of the programme in the sector.
in 2009, and that in 2010 he had taken out a loan from SACCO to build a house. Similarly, as Box 1 above shows, the woman supervisor interviewed in Taba took out a loan from SACCO and linked this to the business development training provided by the VUP. Also in Taba, a small number of female beneficiaries during FGDs explained that they had applied and obtained loans from SACCO for the first time. For the few female beneficiaries who took them out, loans acted as a catalyst for investment in economic activities, such as purchases of livestock for sales of off-spring and the opening of small businesses, as shown in Box 3 below.

In Kigembe, weekly contributions of VSLGs members were high, at 250 RwF (0.35 USD); at 450 RwF (0.64 USD), they were even higher in Ndego sector. The cost of weekly contributions acted as a barrier to entry for cash-strapped individuals; one woman non-beneficiary during a FGD in Busasamana, for instance, stated “we cannot contribute [to VSLGs], we do not have income we only have food”. Cash injections in the form of VUP wages were found to have helped to remove such barriers, enabling a number of female beneficiaries in both sectors to join VSLGs for the first time and access loans from those groups.

The loans obtained through VSLGs were predominantly used to smooth household consumption and address basic needs, including food, health (Mutuelles annual premiums) and education. For a minority, VSLGs also acted as a catalyst for economic investments. In Busasamana a KII with a supervisor who had worked in two VUP projects for approximately six months in total revealed that she had been able to join a local VSLG for the first time. She took out a loan from the group and started two income-generating activities; crop trading – purchasing crops when the price is low, then storing and selling them when the price goes up – and brewing and selling sorghum beer. At the time of fieldwork she was able to save some money and was planning to expand her small business. In addition, she also reported having been able to set aside some cash to cement her house and build a kitchen. This example shows the potential that could be realized through public works if implemented according to design and with competitive wages. However this case represents a somewhat exceptional example, as the female participant is a supervisor who earned more and worked more than the average work days of VUP labourers. This explains why she was more likely to be able to benefit than others from public works employment and invest in economic activities.

A small number of women public works participants in Taba stated that that they had been able to access VSLG loans after enrolment in VUP projects and were able to start petty trading activities; others mentioned renting a small plot of land of 0.25 ha for 5 000-6 000 RwF (7.12-8.54 USD) per year to expand household agricultural production.

5.4 Access to basic services and infrastructure

5.4.1 Access to primary healthcare

Health insurance in Rwanda is provided through a variety of programmes, the largest of which is the Community-Based Health Insurance Scheme, primarily comprising a social health insurance programme called Mutuelles de Santé or Mutuelles.40 Individuals insured with Mutuelles can access primary health care and available drugs at local health centres upon payment of a 200 RwF (0.30USD) access fee (RESYST, 2014). Payment of Mutuelles annual premiums (approximately 4 000 RwF or 6 USD per household member) is based on household economic status according to the Ubudehe system, with contributions for the poorest segments of the population (Ubudehe 1 and 2) waived by the government (ibid; see also http://www.unitedforassistance.org/activities). The introduction of Mutuelles has contributed

to the achievement of high health coverage across Rwanda; in 2010, 91 percent of the population was estimated to be insured through Mutuelles (RESYST, 2014).

Fieldwork discussions indicated that annual premiums and access fees represented an important barrier of access to primary health care for the poor – especially the latter during times of household stress. Respondents confirmed that Mutuelles for households in Ubudehe 1 and 2 should be waived by the government in theory, but that in practice only a handful of households in those two categories had Mutuelles contributions waived; in Uruyenzi (Kigembe sector), reportedly only three households belonging to these categories had their contributions waived.

In alignment with findings of a recent VUP gender equity assessment (RLDSF, 2014), VUP wages were found to have increased access to Mutuelles thanks to beneficiaries’ improved ability to pay for annual premiums for household members, including participant households from Ubudehe category 3 for which Mutuelles’ cost is not waived. The MINALOC social affairs officer for Byimana cell, for example, estimated that at household level the largest share of VUP wages was used to pay for Mutuelles annual premiums.

The benefits of enhanced access to health care as a result of Mutuelles coverage were widely recognized. One woman beneficiary in Busasamana explained that her son fell ill and that thanks to the newly acquired Mutuelles coverage she was able to obtain medical care at the local health centre and then at the hospital where her son was referred. She admitted that without Mutuelles she would not have been able to afford the treatment and that her son could have died. During a FGD with male beneficiaries in Taba, participants concurred that it is very difficult for uninsured members of poor households to access health care. As private health care is very expensive and therefore inaccessible for the poorest segments of the population, the majority usually tries to seek medical assistance at the local health centre, even if uninsured. Obtaining treatment however was challenging since health staff are reluctant to attend uninsured patients; and if they do, the access fee charged for uninsured patients, covering only consultation and no drugs is 5 000 RwF (USD 7.10); respondents deemed this cost unaffordable.

In addition to VUP public works wages enabling payments of Mutuelles annual premiums, in Kigembe there were indications that the VUP also increased demand for health care services because of beneficiaries’ increased ability to pay the 200 RwF (0.30USD) health access fee. Participants of a FGD with opinion leaders in Uruyenzi, for example, believed that when children fell ill, beneficiaries – and particularly women, who are viewed as the primary caregivers – sought health care more often and more quickly precisely because of their increased ability to afford the cost of the access fee.

5.4.2 Access to primary education

In 2009, Rwanda introduced the Nine-Year Basic Education Policy (9YBE), which aims to ensure nine years of compulsory free education (six years of primary education and three years of general cycle of secondary education) for all Rwandese children (MINEDUC, 2008). Despite free universal education, indirect costs of education such as stationery (e.g. pens, notebooks, etc.), clothing (school uniforms and shoes) and food remain a barrier to access for the poor. Indeed, these costs can quickly mount up, especially in households with several school-aged children. For example, a recent study conducted by Plan Rwanda found that the cost of primary school uniforms ranged between 2 600 and 4 000 RwF (3.70 and 5.68 USD), that of shoes between 600 and 3 000 Rwf (0.85 and 4.26 USD) and of notebooks between 100 and 200 Rwf (0.14 and 0.28 USD) for each notebook (Plan Rwanda, 2013).

In parallel with findings of the VUP gender equity assessment (RLDSF, 2014), the majority of beneficiaries interviewed by the research team in Kigembe and Ndego sectors stated that VUP wages had helped to cover some of the indirect costs of education, including food (see also
Female respondents in both Iramiro and Busasamana villages, in Ndego, also frequently stressed that during their (albeit limited) enrolment in VUP works, they used part of the wages to buy food, which they indicated as having had an effect on school retention because “children don’t go hungry”, as one female beneficiary in Iramiro put it.

Unlike in Ndego, no evidence was found in Kigembe sector of school drop outs, even during shocks. This finding somehow contrasts with the EICV3 findings reporting that net attendance rates in primary school in Kayonza district is higher (92.9 percent) than in Gisagara (87.3 percent), and slightly higher than the national average (91.7 percent) (EICV3, 2011a and b). That said, in Kigembe sector the overwhelming majority of female beneficiaries placed emphasis on school material and food as key VUP wage expenditures.

5.4.3 Access to roads and agricultural infrastructure

VUP public works projects were widely perceived in both Ndego and Kigembe sectors as having increased communities’ access to transport and agriculture infrastructure, specifically to roads, terraces, anti-erosive ditches and water-harvesting dams (see Table 9).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ndego sector</th>
<th>Kigembe sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>• Anti-erosive ditches</td>
<td>• Terraces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>• Water harvesting dams</td>
<td>• Feeder road construction (Agatongo-Gatovu) • Feeder road construction (Agahabwa-Rusagara) • Coffee planting on terraces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>• Feeder road construction (Ndego-Kabare)</td>
<td>• Gravelling of Agatongo-Gatovu and Agahabwa-Rusagara roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>• Feeder road construction (Ndego-Nyankora)</td>
<td>• Terraces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>• Anti-erosive ditches</td>
<td>• Terraces • Coffee planting on terraces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>• Feeder road construction (Ndego-Nyankora)</td>
<td>• IDP Model Village in Ruhuha village, Agahabwa cell • Feeder road construction (Murehe-Akamare) • Feeder road construction (Impinga-Gatovu) • Terraces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: data provided by VUP Managers in Kigembe and Ndego sectors.
The level of community members’ perceived importance of investments in feeder roads cannot be overstated. As one male non-beneficiary in Taba in Kigembe stated, “roads mean a lot to us. Where there is a road, there is development”. Reducing isolation, while improving communication and connectedness, were some of the key gains mentioned by respondents. In the words of one female beneficiary in Iramiro, “we don’t feel as isolated as before. Thanks to the road we now have more cars coming to the village, including yours! [referring to the research team’s car]”.

Several respondents specifically pointed to better access to emergency and primary health care as important benefits conferred to communities by the construction of roads. Ambulances (as well as other vehicles) were indicated as reaching villages whereas before they could not. Female participants in particular highlighted the importance of road access in the event of birth/delivery complications. Before, a patient would have to be carried on a wooden stretcher for over an hour – for example in Uruyenzi – to the nearest health centre.

In addition to emergency services, fieldwork discussions also underscored better access to primary health care. In Uruyenzi, a number of respondents noted that before construction of the Agahabwa-Rusagara road in 2010-11, it took one hour on foot to reach the nearest health centre; today it takes approximately 20 minutes. When asked, beneficiaries in both Kigembe and Ndego sectors also explained that roads were regularly maintained through Umuganda. This is an effective mechanism that communities undertake to sustain investments provided through the VUP and bodes well for the sustainability of VUP public works projects.

When discussing road investments, there were also comments raised concerning current and future economic gains linked to quicker transport of crops, livestock and other consumer goods to and from markets. According to a number of FGD participants in Uruyenzi, the Impinga-Gatovu feeder road, expected to be completed in 2014-15, will bring Uruyenzi and nearby villages closer to the main tarmac road that connects Huye to Kigali. This was perceived as an important development for potential future trade.

A number of fieldwork discussions also pointed to benefits arising from the construction of water harvesting dams and terraces. In Iramiro, Ndego sector, women beneficiaries concurred that since the construction of the dams through VUP works in 2010-11, an increasing number
of people in the area had started to grow vegetables, such as cabbage. They explained that vegetables were now more easily accessible and cheaper as a result.

In Taba, in Kigembe sector, a number of respondents highlighted that before being terraced by the VUP, a cultivated and inhabited area of the village (which they called ntuyenabi) was located on a very steep hill and was prone to landslides and soil erosion. Households, which included public works beneficiaries as shown in Box 3 that used to live in the area, have been resettled to a flatter zone within the village of Taba. As a result of the VUP terracing project agricultural productivity in the terraced plots, which are privately owned and maintained by owners themselves, was reported as having increased because “crops and fertilizer are no longer washed away by heavy rains,” as one male FGD participant explained.

5.5 Risks and shocks: effects and coping strategies

5.5.1 Wealth and gender differences in the event of risks and shocks

Kayonza district, and the Eastern province more broadly, are historically drought-prone. It came as no surprise that virtually all respondents in Iramiro, Busasamana, and in the comparison community of Kacyiru indicated drought as the main shock in the area, followed by malaria, especially during the rainy season, largely as a result of their proximity to the lakes in and around Akagera National Park.

In Kigembe sector, rather than drought, study participants indicated prolonged dry seasons followed by heavy and destructive rains and hailstorms as the main risks in the area. Heavy rains were widely reported as contributing to soil erosion and loss of crops, with detrimental effects on agricultural production. The village chief of Uruyenzi indicated that delicate crops such as beans were easily damaged by rains and that bean production in the village was often severely affected as a result.

When discussing the effects of various shocks, male and female FGD participants in all research communities concurred that everyone was affected, but with different degrees of severity. In general, poverty levels and asset base were identified as key determinants of household vulnerability to risks and shocks. FGD and KII participants in Kigembe, for example, indicated that prolonged dry seasons have detrimental effects especially on poor and very poor households mainly because their main livelihoods source, agricultural labour on farms of the better-off, becomes unavailable as farming activities largely come to a halt. With very limited or non-existent assets and savings, they struggle to meet basic food and other needs during times of stress. By contrast, better-off households were widely seen as better able to withstand shocks because of their savings and resources – in the form of cash, livestock and stored grain. That said, repeated or prolonged shocks were perceived as carrying negative effects even on better-off households who risk falling into poverty. One female non-beneficiary in Taba (Kigembe sector) summarized this dynamic as follows:

“Everybody goes hungry, but at different levels. The very poor go to bed on an empty stomach; the better-off eat a little, thanks to the grains that they manage to store, but the food is also not always enough for them.”

Fieldwork discussions focused on understanding the different effects of these common and recurrent risks and shocks on men and women. There seemed to be general consensus that women were more affected than men largely because of strong gender disparities in household domestic obligations, including care duties, which put greater psychological strain on women than on men. In particular, and as the following quotes illustrate, in times of acute household food insecurity children typically turned more to their mothers than to their fathers when hungry.
“When children are hungry they cry to their mother.” Male beneficiary, Iramiro, Ndego sector.

“Men leave in the morning and sometimes they just wander uselessly; by the time they come home in the evening children are asleep. When children are hungry they cry to us and we have to go and look for food to feed them.” Female non-beneficiary, Busasamana, Ndego sector.

Even if the psychological burden of care, especially during shocks, was indicated as more significant on mothers than on fathers, this does not imply that fathers were unaffected by their children’s distress. As one male FGD participant in the comparison community of Duwani exclaimed, “when my children cry for food I also suffer!”

5.5.2 Wealth and gender differences in coping strategies

Socio-economic factors, particularly wealth and gender, shaped how households and individuals coped with shocks; these features have a determinant role in the type of coping strategies that people adopted.

Distress migration

Across all locations, distress migration in search of food and employment was indicated as the most common risk management strategy among poor and very poor households; this often has detrimental effects on the well-being of family members, and children in particular.

Weakened by insufficient food intake and lacking the resources to travel far, the very poor typically migrated with the whole family to nearby cells, usually to beg for food or work on others’ farms. Children most often drop out of school as a consequence.

Among poor households, migration – typically of both husbands and wives – in search of employment was reported as a common strategy. However, there was considerable difference between males and females in the length of migration and the distance to migration sites, reflecting intra-household gendered patterns of responsibilities and labour. Men were indicated as typically migrating to urban centres (e.g. Huye or Kigali) or to agricultural areas in nearby cells, sectors and districts for weeks or even months. In some cases their temporary migration became permanent as some never returned home. There was evidence that married women also migrated, albeit for a relatively short time and to nearby areas. In Ndego sector, there were reports of women migrating at most for one or two weeks, whereas in Kigembe, including in the comparison community of Duwani, access to jobs in areas closer to home was presumably easier and women would usually migrate on a daily basis, travelling to nearby villages during the day and returning home in the evening. In Uruyenzi a number of respondents also added that youth, mostly boys but also girls, migrated to nearby rural or urban areas during times of household stress.

Distress migration of different household members had negative repercussions on child care. One female respondent in Uruyenzi noted that “it becomes very difficult to look after children”. In Taba respondents mentioned that at times of acute distress if both husband and wife decided to migrate temporarily they would leave their children with better-off households with whom, as one male respondent put it, “they already have a relationship, since they are their employers”. The level of care that those households provided however was reported as highly unpredictable; one female opinion leader admitted, “if they are kind enough they’ll feed them”.

Fieldwork discussions also revealed common strategies adopted by female-headed households in both Ndego and Kigembe sectors influenced by the age of children and of women themselves and if relatives were in proximity. For those with children under five and no other female relatives who could look after them, temporary migration was reported as largely unfeasible as no one would look after their children. If they did migrate, which was not viewed as unusual,
they would typically take their children with them and either settle permanently elsewhere if they were able to earn some income, or return to the village once the crisis was over. By contrast, those with relatives (e.g. an elderly mother) or older children were better able to migrate on a temporary basis as they would typically put older girls or adolescents in charge of younger siblings. In Iramiro (Ndego sector) some said that female-headed households were at risk of sexual exploitation during periods of financial hardship. As one female beneficiary noted,

“In the process of trying to get food for their children they may end up with an unwanted pregnancy or living with a man that they don’t like”.

Elderly female-headed households were reported by the majority of informants as unable to migrate; they typically remained in the village and relied on whatever (usually limited) support they could get. As one woman beneficiary in Busasamana starkly put it,

“when drought comes, elderly female-headed households either wait on God or die of hunger”.  

In Ndego sector there was limited evidence that VUP public works had contributed to reducing distress migration for some female beneficiaries. As shown in Box 2 below, the injection of cash in the form of wages was indicated by some as having reduced the need to leave the village to find work. However, given the low number of work days in the sector, this benefit was viewed as temporary and short-lived. In the villages visited in Kigembe sector there were no reports of VUP employment having enabled changes in distress migration patterns during weather-related shocks. Recurrent wage payment delays were the key reason why VUP wages were widely considered as highly unreliable. In times of household heightened stress, when addressing immediate needs such as food becomes imperative, beneficiaries did not see VUP wages as providing a much needed safety net.

**Box 2**  
**Public works participation: a temporary improvement in well-being**

Pendenca is 30 years old, a single head of household, living with her two young sons and her elderly mother in Busasamana village, Ndego sector. She has benefited from working in one VUP public works project – the Ndego-Kabare feeder road constructed in 2011 – in one project phase for 15 days where she earned a total of 15 000 RwF (21.42 USD). She would have liked to work more, but they would not let her, she explains, as there was no more work available. Her payment came through her SACCO account, which she was required to open when entering the programme as a beneficiary, adding her mother as a co-signatory. Pendenca has never added funds to this account because she earns little money from farming, her only other source of income. She cultivates cassava, sorghum, maize and beans on a 0.5 ha plot of land. The extension officer visits her field, typically once a year. When there is more labour-intensive work to carry out, Pendenca calls for help from members of her rotating labour group, comprised of four women in the village. She sells about one-third of the harvest, while most of it which is used for household consumption. She supplements this staple food with items such as rice, tomatoes, potatoes, banana and oil, when she finds the money – such as from her VUP wages. This was her priority use of cash wages earned from the VUP. She also used the wages on shoes for her boys, school uniforms, pens and notebooks.

She describes the journey to the VUP work site as “a long walk” of about one hour; “this was difficult,” she adds. Fortunately, she explains, she has her mother at home to look after the boys. She described briefly her VUP experience: the daily work usually starts with morning meetings, in order to announce the work tasks for the day and to organize work teams. Many women work on the site she says, more than men. According to her this is because more women than men attended the village meeting to select those who work, which is called by the Village
Chief. During this meeting, workers are selected, but she clarifies, no one is really excluded – her understanding is that everyone who attends the meetings is allowed to work.

Because more women than men have been working on the VUP sites, Pendenca thinks there has been some change in people’s views in the village about women working: “now women go out to work, now women are employed and men know that women can go and get money.” This is positive, she confirms. As for herself, she affirms she feels more self-confident because she was able to improve her well-being. During the period of work, “there was change, we bought clothes, we ate food.” She says her neighbours saw her as “better off, with some new clothes, clean, and with food to eat.” This is a change from the past, when during the very difficult drought periods she was forced to go to her neighbour asking to borrow food (which she paid back in cash after the harvest). The work wages helped her very much, she tells us, but the problem is that the period is too short and does not extend throughout the dry season. She suggests to us that work periods should be longer to allow people to work throughout the drought. When the drought is too long, harvests are poor, food becomes scarce and life is difficult. She is then forced to migrate, “searching for work,” in nearby sectors (sometimes walking three hours) where she seeks out day labour. She typically spends five nights in that sector before returning home. This is “hard work and difficult to travel”; she is not happy with this situation, but many women do the same, leaving their households in search of work. The VUP work has reduced her need to leave to find work, but only for short periods. But despite the few days of work, she is certain more work will come and that the programme will continue – “because it helps people so much.”

Distress sales of assets

In addition to distress migration, a number of group discussions indicated distress sales of land to better-off households as a negative coping strategy of the poor. This eroded their already limited asset base, plunging them further into destitution while undermining their capacity to withstand future shocks.

In both sectors, better-off households were reported as avoiding distress migration by tapping into their assets such as livestock or parcels of land, which acted as buffers against shocks. That said, in the event of repeated weather-related shocks, many better-off households were also forced to sell their assets. As with poor households, such distress sales carried the very real risk of gradually eroding their asset base and eventually forcing them into poverty as well. During a discussion on this topic one male non-beneficiary in Iramiro, Ndego sector specified, “if a family is in the able category and sells most of its livestock, for sure it’ll end up in the poor category”.

VUP wages were indicated by a small number of male and female beneficiaries, and also by non-beneficiaries, as enabling investments in precautionary savings in the form of livestock or in SACCO bank accounts. ‘Savings on the hoof’ included goats, as reported by a number of beneficiaries in Ndego, and pigs, which were more often mentioned in Kigembe. Small livestock purchases were seen as providing a buffer in the face of weather uncertainty because of their easy conversion into cash. There were also reports that such purchases had a protective, compensatory effect on household valuable assets, as they prevented distress sales of, for example, land. As one female non-beneficiary in Iramiro stated, “instead of selling a piece of land, beneficiaries can sell livestock”. A small number of male and female beneficiaries in both Ndego and Kigembe sectors also mentioned having set aside some savings in their SACCO accounts for use in times of need.
6. Women’s power and agency

This section explores the ability of men and women to control and make decisions on economic activities, resources and profits and, specifically, the hypothesis: Social protection strengthens women’s power and agency by increasing their bargaining power within the household and wider community. This increases women’s self-confidence, their ability to engage in social networks and participate in decision-making in the public arena.

6.1 Perceptions of women’s economic roles

Across all study communities the research found widespread perceptions of women’s greater ability to save and manage household budget and expenditure allocations – including relatively small amounts of cash – more wisely than men, who often were reported as “wasting money on alcohol”. Male respondents frequently praised their wives’ propensity to save and plan ahead by, for instance, setting aside small amounts of cash or crops for times of financial hardship. One male beneficiary in Iramiro explained that during harvest, while women thresh, it is common for them to set aside and hide small amounts of grains without their husbands’ knowledge for food requirements and cash in times of need.

Discussions around women’s economic roles also revealed widespread perceptions of females being capable of engaging in economically productive activities like their male counterparts, but being confronted with a number of often interrelated gender-based obstacles that constrained their economic opportunities and choices. These obstacles were effects of dominant sociocultural beliefs and value systems biased in men’s favour, women’s weak bargaining power and limited control over key household assets and resources including cash, limited exposure to experiences and interactions outside the village, lack of confidence and self-esteem and limited ability to assert themselves in intra-household decision-making processes.

Notwithstanding these obstacles, several respondents were also keen to highlight changing perceptions of women’s economic and social roles both at household and community levels. There were frequent comments stating that in the past, women’s subordinate status was more evident as women were rarely consulted with on decision-making on household and community-related matters, which rested solely in the hands of men. Since the establishment of the current government however, a strong policy focus on gender equality and sensitization efforts by local authorities on the importance of women’s inclusion and economic empowerment – especially through the National Women Council41 as some noted in Ndego – were seen as contributing to changes in the attitudes of husbands, and people more broadly, towards gender roles and expectations.

Evidence collected in this research indicates that women’s employment on VUP public works was found to have positively contributed to changing perceptions of women’s economic roles. Across all locations visited study participants concurred that more women than men were employed in VUP public works and not only as labourers, but also in higher-level positions, such as captains and supervisors. Virtually all respondents, male and female, saw women’s participation in VUP works as positive, as it enhanced their opportunities to earn and manage cash while also setting a good example for other women in the village, demonstrating the economic potential and capabilities of women (Box 1). The female supervisor interviewed in Busasamana mentioned above, who had worked for approximately six months, had taken out a loan from a VSLG and had started two income-generating activities (see Section 5.3.2). She saw herself as a role model in the community – and indeed represents somewhat of a ‘model’ case – but one that could be replicated by other women. After joining the VUP she indicated

41 http://www.migeprof.gov.rw/?National-Women-s-Council,60
that she had started to provide advice to other women in the village on practical economic matters, such as on how to manage money and generate income and was also encouraging them to join saving groups (such as VSLGs) and discuss issues with husbands. In her opinion, the VUP targeted women “to show that they can do things”. In the comparison community of Kacyiru (Kayonza district) a group of male interviewees believed that if VUP public works were to be implemented in their village it would help to remove some of the obstacles mentioned above and enable women to work, which was also considered a positive step forward in improving women’s welfare. In the words of one participant, “women are less involved in making money now, then [with VUP] they could make money and start small businesses.”

6.2 Intra-household bargaining power, control and decision-making

6.2.1 Socio-cultural norms governing intra-household decision-making

Fieldwork discussions concerning intra-household decision-making and control over household assets, resource allocations and expenditures, including VUP cash wages, typically started with the overwhelming majority of respondents, both male and females, characterizing decision-making as a ‘joined-up’ process, where husband and wife debated issues until common consensus was reached. There was a sense and perception that this was the normative, ‘right’ way in which households should operate. Against this backdrop of harmonious decision-making processes at the household level, however, deeper probing during group discussions and interviews revealed a different set of dynamics which often stemmed from deep-rooted patriarchal and patrilocal sociocultural norms. Evidence collected by the research did not point to any changes in entrenched sociocultural norms as a result of VUP public works participation.

The role of men as household heads and ultimate decision-makers was constantly emphasized by our respondents. Denoting internalization and general acceptance of gendered norms and structures, both male and female respondents frequently referred to the man as the “king”, “chief”, “leader” or “pillar” of the house. By contrast the role of women was often described using expressions such as “following”, “supporting”, “respecting the authority” of husbands. A number of respondents in Kigembe, in both Taba and Uruyenzi villages, used the following traditional saying:

“The woman is the heart of the house and the man is the head of the house.” (umugore niwe mutima w’urugo naho umutware w’urugo.)

Similarly, during a FGD with male beneficiaries in Busasamana, one respondent used the following analogy to underscore men’s decision-making role in the household: “in every meeting there is a leader: in the house it is men that lead and make decisions”. And in Taba one female non-beneficiary concurred, “in the end it is always men who decide and we accept, not to do so would be disrespectful”.

Patrilocal residence patterns were evidenced during several fieldwork discussions where study participants conveyed the idea of men ‘bringing in’ a wife to their house. As explained by a woman beneficiary in Busasamana, “my husband brought me into his house and this is why I have to take care of him in the kitchen”. In Taba, a male non-beneficiary animatedly discussed this issue as follows:

“The house is my responsibility! If for some reason we lose it and we are left with nothing, then what? My wife cannot take me to her father’s home, can she? No, it’s me who will have to take her to my father’s home.”
6.2.2 Control and decision-making over household assets

In recent years Rwanda has embarked on a process of legal and institutional land reform. Beginning in 2007, the government launched the Land Tenure Regularization Programme (LTRP), a national land registration programme that sought to title every plot of land in the country.\(^{42}\) One of its key objectives was to decrease gender inequality in access to land and increase women’s ability to assert their land rights; one of its provisions requires equal ownership rights of spouses over household parcels (Kairaba and Simons, 2010; Ali \textit{et al.}, 2011). In 2011, a World Bank study assessed the short-term impacts of the LTRP and found that the programme had improved land access for legally married women (Ali \textit{et al.}, 2011). The 2011-12 Annual Report of the Gender Monitoring Office of Rwanda also recognized the important contribution of the LTRP to gender equality in land ownership and in enhancing women’s awareness of their land ownership rights (GoR and GMO, 2012).

Notwithstanding the important strides that the country has made in increasing gender equity in access to land, the findings of our study indicate that even if legally both spouses enjoyed equal ownership rights over family’s land (and the family house), women's claims on those assets remained on unequal footing as compared to those of men. Except for a small number of female beneficiaries in Kigembe sector who reported having rented a small plot of land for 5 000-6 000 RwF (7.12-8.54 USD) per year to expand household agricultural production as a result of VUP participation, the evidence collected did not point to substantial changes in women’s exercise of agency over key household assets as a result of employment in VUP public works.

During discussions regarding decision-making around sales of land and house properties or their use as collateral to access loans, respondents stressed near unanimously that land and house titles were indeed in the name of both spouses and as such, in the event of sale the signatures of both were required. There was also general agreement that cases where husbands initiated land or house transactions without informing the wife were exceptional. It was clear from discussions with male and females beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries however that most wives had little bargaining power in those matters and that intra-household gender hierarchies often resulted in decisions concerning assets being taken by the husband. This reflects internalization and general acceptance of the normative status quo despite legal transformation; one female respondent in Taba simply stated: “only men can make decisions on this”.

Aligned with discussions around women’s challenges to accessing commercial loans, respondents explained that unequal decision-making processes at the household level were driven by a number of factors, including sociocultural gendered norms, lack of confidence to propose land/house transactions to their husbands, as well as to negotiate or voice their opinions and assert their rights. Their low literacy levels and limited interaction with the world outside the village restricted their life experiences to the family home and land plot(s) and this was seen by many as underpinning women’s limited power over household assets. Many wives were ultimately simply endorsing their husbands’ decisions to sell or buy properties or use them as collateral (e.g. by signing) without real conviction, discussion or perhaps even understanding.

A number of government representatives at national and sector levels were aware of these dynamics. Sector authority representatives in Ndego for example aptly summarized them as follows:

\(^{42}\) The LTRP has been implemented within the terms set out in the Rwanda’s 2005 Organic Land Law, replaced in 2013 by the Land Law, which provides for equal rights to daughters and sons to inherit property belonging to their parents; protection of women’s property rights under legally registered marriages subject to the provisions of family law; requirements for both women and men to provide consent in the case of sale, mortgage, or exchange of matrimonial property by any of the partners (Gillingham and Buckle, 2014).
“It is much easier for husbands to convince their wives to sign if they want to sell or buy a house or a piece of land. Most married women in the village are illiterate and all they do is take care of the house and of the children. They may not even come up with the idea of doing these things [land and house transactions] in the first place! And even if they did they would have a hard time convincing their husbands. Husbands decide even if wives are not happy, it’s the way it is, this is the culture here.”

In both Ndego and Kigembe sectors, bicycles were also considered an important household economic asset and an indicator of wealth. Bicycles were typically owned by better-off families. They were used mostly by males to transport farm produce or other goods to the market, as well as for reaching public work sites. FGDs confirmed that within households, bicycles were owned and used predominantly by men. Underpinning this was a cultural taboo, which prescribes women riding a bicycle as culturally inappropriate. Respondents in Ndego explained that this taboo applied mainly to married women with husbands present in the household, and less so to female heads of households or unmarried women. In Uruyenzi (Kigembe sector), male non-beneficiaries in a FGD also concurred that bicycles are men’s and not women’s assets; one participant asked: “how can a woman ride a bicycle with a baby on her back?”

6.2.3 Control and decision-making over agricultural produce and livestock

The research findings did not indicate changes in control over agricultural produce and livestock as a result of VUP participation, which were predominantly controlled by men. Fieldwork discussions across all locations visited highlighted that even if planting seeds was predominantly a women’s agricultural activity, in male-headed households it was mostly men who decided the quantity and types of crops to plant. By contrast, in female-headed households decisions on planting were predominantly taken by the female head and this was generally considered as culturally acceptable. In Kigembe, respondents clarified that since the implementation of the CIP in the sector, it fell upon district and sector authorities to decide the type of crops to plant in the consolidated areas. However, on family-owned plots located on the hillsides, decision-making rested predominantly with husbands.

Evidence collected by the research indicates that disagreements between husbands and wives on this matter were common. Women, for example, expressed a general preference for beans and sweet potatoes, which, because of their rapid growth rates, provided a relatively quick supply of food for the household. By contrast men, who were primarily responsible for trading activities, often preferred to plant larger quantities of easily marketable and higher valued cash crops such as banana, cassava or coffee, seen as a valuable source of cash which they ultimately also controlled. When asked, the majority of male and female respondents concurred that in case of disagreement over which crops to plant the husband most often took the final decision. In Uruyenzi female respondents added that in those cases their husbands would refuse to purchase or bring the seeds preferred by their wives, they would threaten them that the family plot would be left unplanted. It is worth noting that Kigembe sector was targeted with the CIP implemented by MINAGRI. As such, the type of crops planted in marshland areas are determined by sector authorities. This may likely be influencing choices, trumping intra-household decision-making processes.

Within better-off households who could afford to sell some of their agricultural produce, decision-making on crop sales were reportedly taken on the basis of intra-household discussions. However, in case of divergences between husband and wife, it was the husband who in most cases made the final decision, particularly on household food crops. Further, during FGDs in Iramiro (Ndego sector) and in the comparison community of Kacyiru (Kayonza district), decreased agricultural production as a result of the negative effects of recurrent drought shocks were reported as increasingly triggering intra-household conflict, with
husbands and wives often disagreeing on the quantities of crops to allocate for sale *vis-à-vis* for household consumption. Sector authorities in Ndegohad observed that in recent years more valued cash crops have been undergoing a noticeable reduction in production and that husbands’ control over these types of high-value crops had become increasingly entrenched.

With regards to livestock transactions, findings suggest that there was general agreement that livestock purchases and sales were typically discussed by both spouses, but ultimate decision-making rested with husbands. When asked, a number of female beneficiaries who stated that they had purchased livestock as a result of VUP wages also indicated that they had discussed this investment and “got approval” from their husbands first. In the words of one female beneficiary in Taba, who had bought a goat and a pig with VUP wages: “you cannot bring in a head of livestock into the house without first agreeing with your husband”.

Similar findings emerged from group discussions in the comparison community of Kacyiru, Kayonza district. One male respondent stressed that his wife would not take the initiative to purchase livestock without consulting him and getting his consensus first and concluded, “I would not come home and find a pig, I would ask her how could you do this without consulting me?”

6.2.4 Control and decision-making over household cash and VUP wages

Findings from the research indicate intra-household inequalities around decision-making processes and control over resources. This was also found in relation to household cash.

In general, men appeared to have wider opportunities for handling and managing cash and for larger quantities than women. In the words of one male non-beneficiary in Iramiro, “most of the time men manage cash”. Gendered divisions of household domestic labour and agricultural activities meant that husbands had more control than wives over household trading activities, such as sales of surplus crops or livestock. When compared to women, men were also more consistently taking advantage of non-agricultural opportunities, for example, trading or working as casual labourers in the Huye urban economy. While some women engaged in petty trade (e.g. of fruit and vegetables), this was an activity that did not appear to be widespread and, for those who took it up, it involved the management of relatively small amounts of cash. In general, perceptions of women’s ability to save and manage money wisely was mostly limited to small amounts of cash, typically for budgeting day-to-day household expenses in correspondence with women’s roles and domestic responsibilities. By contrast, men were indicated as more capable of using their intellectual judgement over the management of larger cash amounts.

With regard to decision-making processes around household cash expenditures, wives were typically in charge of decisions around purchases of low value household food and non-food items (e.g. salt, soap, pots and pans) whereas purchases of higher value assets (e.g. land, house, livestock) as well as house renovations and use of those assets as collateral were mostly controlled by husbands. For example, according to one female non-beneficiary in Taba, a key reason why house renovations were almost inevitably initiated by husbands and not wives, at times without previous consultation, was because husbands controlled household cash and assets. In her own words:

“If I would start renovating our house the first thing that my husband would ask me is ‘where did you get the money from?’ This is something that only he would do, one day I’d just see him starting to repair the roof but I would not ask him where he got the cash from.”

The findings also indicated gender-differentiated patterns in the disposal of income, with females, when earning money, widely perceived as allocating more cash to household expenditures than males. This was recognized both by male and female respondents as
generally linked to their roles as caregivers and their profound concerns for the welfare of children. Women beneficiaries in Iramiro explained this dynamic by using the following example: they estimated that if a man earned 10 000 RwF (14.30 USD) he would use 7 000 RwF (10 USD) on personal expenses, including drinking and settling debts that he had cumulated with friends, and only bring home 3 000 RwF (4.28 USD) for use on household needs. According to them, women would instead use the bulk of money for the benefit of the whole household and be more prudent with cash. In the words of one female participant: “men are greedy, don’t you know they are? If a woman has cash she is more careful.” And another added: “men do not think about their children, themselves and their drinks come first”.

Across all locations, FGDs and KIIs consistently pointed to greater cash expenditures on alcohol by males than females. Aware of this problem, one of the sensitization topics mentioned by the VUP Manager in Ndego related to alcohol abuse, with messages reportedly encouraging beneficiaries (also of VUP direct support) “not to spend VUP cash on alcohol” (see Operations below). Fieldwork discussions also revealed that it was not unusual for wives to give their husbands cash from their earnings or savings – including from VUP wages – as some women beneficiaries affirmed it would be used for alcohol consumption. While discussing his wife’s ability to save, one male beneficiary in the comparison community of Duwani noted, “sometimes she sets aside small amounts of cash without me knowing and she would surprise me by giving me money to buy beer”.

There were also reports that especially at times of financial hardship men’s alcohol consumption habits were a source of intra-household conflict. During a FGD with female beneficiaries in Iramiro, participants explained that in such cases women would typically try to convince their husbands not to use cash on alcohol. They recognized that while some would agree, others would insist and if the wife continued to refuse to give him cash from her earnings or savings, tensions could ensue and husbands could even resort to using physical violence. In order not to enter into conflict participants agreed that, “most of the time the wife will give her husband money no matter how difficult the situation is at home just to keep things quiet”.

Use of and decision-making regarding VUP wages

Despite consistent reporting of payment delays, VUP wages were viewed as a relatively important cash source by communities interviewed particularly in Kigembe sector, largely because of the continuity of VUP employment thanks to the frequent roll-out of projects in the sector. By contrast, in Ndego sector, VUP wages were considered a much less important source of cash income, largely because of the limited number of days per year worked by the majority of beneficiaries. The ‘Organization and group profiles mapping’ participatory tool conducted during FGDs with male non-beneficiaries in Busasamana, revealed perceptions that VUP public works were not important and not accessible in the community, whereas their counterparts in Taba (Kigembe sector) placed the VUP public works among the medium importance institutions in their social circle, and viewed them as relatively easy to access.
At household level VUP cash wages were generally pooled together with other sources of income and included into an expanded household budget envelope. For the majority of respondents, both men and women, cash earned through VUP works was considered no different than cash earned through other sources, possibly also because of the relatively small cash wages amounts. As one male beneficiary in Taba put it, “why would I have to differentiate the money that I earn from VUP from the money that I earn trading bananas?”

In male-headed households the decision of who should work on VUP sites was reported as being generally taken jointly by both spouses, who also often made use of the opportunity to rotate participation in public works between them and/or any other family member, such as able-bodied adult sons or daughters.

How VUP cash wages were used and what expenditures were prioritized within beneficiaries’ households depended on their poverty status and asset base. In general, in both Kigembe and Ndego sectors the bulk of wages were used by the great majority of men and women beneficiaries to help smooth household consumption on basic household needs, namely food, education and health. In Kigembe, several beneficiaries also indicated repayment of debts that they had accumulated with friends, relatives or shopkeepers while waiting for wages to be paid into their account. This was also confirmed by a SACCO employee interviewed in Taba who noted that as soon as wages are paid into beneficiaries’ SACCO accounts the great majority usually withdraws the total amount: “most beneficiaries are not saving because they have debts that they have accumulated while waiting for wages”.

Only a minority of male and female beneficiaries were found to have used VUP wages as a springboard for investment into economically productive activities, with some accessing credit to do so. In Kigembe and Ndego sectors a number of male and female beneficiaries stated that they had used VUP wages to purchase livestock. In addition to functioning as savings as highlighted above, livestock purchases (typically pigs and goats) were also used to start small-scale trading activities to generate cash or serve as a step towards the acquisition of higher value livestock, cows in particular. One female beneficiary in Taba explained that VUP wages helped her to buy two pigs and she then sold the piglets to set aside money to buy a milking cow.
Except for a limited number of cases where female beneficiaries indicated they had given small amounts of their VUP wages to their husbands to drink, the majority appeared to exercise control over the cash they earned. A key reason for this related to the fact that cash wages were not a particularly valuable or attractive resource to elicit husbands’ control; in Ndego they were of relatively small amounts and lacked consistency and in Kigembe were irregularly paid.

Evidence from our research showed that for married women participating in public works, their ability to earn and eventually control the cash that they earned and to hold a SACCO account had enabled a few to better assert themselves, commanding more respect and increased recognition from their husbands of their economic role. During one FGD with female beneficiaries in Taba one participant explained:

“Before VUP I was a co-signatory of my husband’s SACCO account and my only role was to sign when he told me to do so and before he took out a loan. But now it’s different, he knows that I also I earn cash, that I have a SACCO account and that I can help to pay back the loan. Now we discuss who should take out a loan, whether him or me, depending on who has more savings in the account. [sic]”

There were also views expressed that some VUP married female beneficiaries were able to set aside small amounts of cash from their wages to purchase items for themselves and their children without having to ask money from their husbands, with consequent feelings of heightened dignity and self-esteem and as a result, as expressed, increased ability to make independent choices.

Female beneficiaries mentioned igitenge, the colourful printed fabric used by Rwandan women as traditional clothing, as a common expense using VUP wages (also confirmed during a number of FGDs with males). Before employment in public works, some stated that they “had to beg” their husbands for money to buy igitenge. One female beneficiary in Taba explained that it is not uncommon for wives having to put forward such requests to their husbands over and over, since in most families husbands typically buy clothes for themselves first, then for children, including school uniforms, and then lastly for wives. Several female beneficiaries in Kigembe reported having been able to set aside some cash from their VUP wages to buy igitenge independently and without having to ask their husbands for cash. The female beneficiary in Taba cited above also exclaimed, “of course it is much better for women to buy their igitenge with their own money without having to beg!”

Similarly, there were perceptions both by male and female participants that for some female beneficiaries, payment of wages into SACCO accounts had enabled private savings; these savings, derived from VUP wages or any other income sources such as petty trading, could be disposed of as they needed. The following quote from a female beneficiary in Busasamana illustrates this:

“Now that I have a SACCO account I have some small money that my husband is not aware of so if I want to buy something for the children I can do it without having to ask him.”
Box 3  VUP as a catalyst for the start of new economic enterprises and increased confidence

Clementine is a 31-year-old female beneficiary from Taba, Kigembe sector. She is married and has four children. She describes herself as a farmer and owns a small plot of land, a few goats, pigs and one cow, which she bought recently. She used to live in a very steep area of the village that was called ntuyenabi which was extremely difficult to access, especially during the rainy season. The path going down from her house to the village was so slippery that she was forced to lower herself and bring her body closer to the ground and ‘walk’ in this way with the aid of her hands for more than 15 minutes, she recalls. Since the area has been terraced through a VUP project, she has relocated to the village and she and her husband continue to farm on their newly terraced plot, which they also maintain. These days “life is much better,” she says.

She continues to explain that she has worked in VUP projects consecutively for approximately one year, for most of 2012. Starting from the first VUP payment (of 15 000 RwF or 21.36 USD) she decided to set some money aside until she was able to buy two pigs which farrowed twice. She and her husband sold the first eight piglets for 10 000 RwF (14.24 USD) each and the second litter of seven piglets for 8 000 RwF (11.40 USD) each. With the cash earned, she continues, she decided together with her husband to open a bar in Taba to sell sorghum beer and banana wine. They decided to take out a loan of 100 000 RwF (140.24 USD) from SACCO towards this project. She is adamant that she had the idea of opening the bar in the first place and it was she who proposed it to her husband. She felt that it was a good business opportunity “since many people in the village drink regularly but there were only a few bars”. The SACCO loan was taken out in her name and from her account, she clarifies, because she was working on VUP works and her account had more regular cash deposits than that of her husband, who at the time was working on their land, as a labourer in better-off farms and at times brewing and selling banana wine.

The bar is run jointly by her husband and herself. She feels that they both work on equal terms. She explains to us that brewing sorghum beer is a joint process; her husband usually fetches water while she pounds the sorghum. And when she travels to the not so distant Nyanza sector to buy cheap sorghum he attends customers at the bar. Clementine is eager to add that she only started to travel to Nyanza since the start of the bar business and that this is something new for her. As she recounts, “like many women here, before all I was doing was cultivating our land, at times working on the farms of the better-off, cooking, looking after the children and that was it”.

Since earning money through VUP public works and the bar she feels “happier”, more confident and able to assert herself. She gives us this example, “some days when I come back from our field and I see cheap bananas for sale I buy them to make banana wine for the bar with my husband. Before the VUP and before the bar, it was my husband who was buying bananas and sometimes he would spend all the profit earned from sales of banana wine on alcohol.” This is now happening less frequently and according to Clementine it is because “now I have the right to ask for my share of the profit because I have bought the bananas in the first place.”

6.2.5 Control and decision-making over family planning

Findings from the research show that family planning was widely implemented in the research communities. A number of both male and female study participants for example stated that they consciously planned the number and spacing of children. During a FGD with female beneficiaries in Iramiro, one participant noted, “my youngest is now seven years old, I will not get pregnant until he’s 10”. Both spouses, as indicated by the majority of people, took family planning decisions jointly. There were views however in both Kigembe and Ndego sectors, as well as in comparison communities, that in some cases wives would decide to use family
planning methods without their husbands’ knowledge or consent, possibly because they were unable to convince their husbands. This was frequently indicated as a recipe for intra-household conflict. Fieldwork discussions also revealed that while men wanted to be involved in deciding whether or not to adopt family planning, the actual use of contraceptive methods was predominantly perceived as a woman’s responsibility. The key reason for this, according to a number of men interviewed, related to the fact that “it is women who get pregnant, not men”, as one male respondent stated in Taba.

In all research communities, family planning was also increasingly valued. One civil servant interviewed in Byimana cell defined it “a public good”. Both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries however concurred that the increasingly widespread adoption and desirability of family planning practices was not linked to VUP employment or sensitization activities. In Ndego in particular, research participants noted that one key reason for family planning was related to the adverse effects of repeated drought shocks on local agricultural production and food security – this made large families very difficult to sustain. During a FGD in Busasamana one female participant explained,

“because of drought we are keener to use family planning methods because we can’t afford to have many children. Before children were considered wealth but not anymore.”

In the locations visited, awareness messages on family planning were delivered by the Ministry of Health through CHWs, local health centres and other fora such as ‘mothers’ evening’ community meetings. Community members were well aware of those messages; widespread family planning acceptance and uptake was perceived to be linked to those communication activities. Several male and female respondents made specific reference to those messages, with a number of respondents in Kigembe giving almost identical explanations as to why they decided to have fewer children, “We want to be able to feed our children properly, pay for Mutuelles for each of them and send them to school.”

6.3 Leadership and influence in the community

Social networks

Evidence drawn from our research indicated a number of community-based networks of mutual aid and economic collaboration relied upon for support. Substantial differences between the communities visited in Ndego and Kigembe sectors were not evident in terms of social connectedness.

Dutabarane or funeral society was indicated in both Iramiro and Busasamana as a social support organization which has as its primary goal the provision of material support to its members in the event of a funeral – including organization of funeral services, supply of coffins and burial shrouds. An additional service offered by the funeral society was the organization of transport to health facilities for sick people. In order to benefit from the support provided by the funeral society, members reportedly paid regular monthly fees of 200 RwF (0.28 USD) in addition to a one-off joining fee of 500 RwF (0.71 USD). A funeral society was considered a robust and well-established social network. In the words of a female non-beneficiary in Iramiro, “it is very important and almost like a law in our community”. Another example of a community-based network of mutual aid as told by one female head of household in Busasamana was a rotating agricultural group whose main objective was to provide support to its female members with farming land.

In addition to those reciprocity-based networks, in both Kigembe and Ndego sectors a number of informal social assistance mechanisms were mentioned by respondents. In Uruyenzi, for example, the local Pentecostal church was providing a range of forms of assistance to disadvantaged individuals and households. Through mobilization of resources at the local
level, the church organized regular cash collections to support the payment of *Mutuelles* annual premiums; agricultural labour support for households who could not farm their own land (e.g. because of illness); material assistance in the form of temporary shelter provision, construction of a new home or clothes for families who had lost their home (e.g. in case of fire).

Our research findings did not point to any changes in membership or functioning of the above social networks as a result of VUP participation. They did however indicate changes in membership of ‘mothers’ evenings’ (*akagoroba k’ababyeyi*), a community-based network, and the formation of a new network of social support. Both are described below.

‘Mothers’ evening’ is a national ‘home-grown’ initiative established in 2011 by the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, consisting of regular meetings held at village level. In the research sites they took place on average three evenings a week and were open to all, but were predominantly attended by women. During these meetings, a range of practical social and health issues, including gender-based violence, nutrition, education, family planning and conflict resolution are discussed. In both Ndego and Kigembe sectors, ‘mothers’ evening’ was perceived by female respondents as an important local-level platform for sharing and reflecting on common experiences, peer support and conflict resolution. One female beneficiary in Uruyenzi underlined the value of this public space for communal discussion and personal transformation and stated that through ‘mothers’ evening’, “women get ideas to improve their lives”. As elaborated in the following section, some female beneficiaries in Kigembe had started to join ‘mothers’ evenings’ as well as in other community meetings as a result of their participation in VUP works.

Participation in VUP public works in Kigembe facilitated the creation of a new informal network of reciprocal support. A number of female respondents in Uruyenzi and Taba indicated that while working on VUP projects they had established new friendships with other female beneficiaries from nearby villages. Such friendships were indicated as a new-found source of social and economic support. Women respondents described feelings of an increased sense of social connectedness and a “feeling of being more united”, as one woman in Taba stated, resulting from regular home visits that friends exchanged to “keep in touch and discuss family problems” as well as from the material assistance in the form of small loans or food that that the new network of female friends could provide during times of financial difficulties.

**Participation in public life and leadership positions**

People interviewed in both Kigembe and Ndego sectors, and comparison communities revealed that acute poverty levels and related feelings of exclusion and lack of self-worth were limiting the participation of the poorest segments of the population in the public sphere, such as public community meetings.

During a FGD with opinion leaders in Iramiro, participants agreed that the poor, both men and women, seldom participated in community meetings “because they don’t have time, they are always looking for food and if they attend meetings they go hungry”. This also resonates with views expressed by female beneficiaries in Taba who said the poor were “too busy looking for food or daily work”; this was seen as limiting their time for social interactions, including participation in public meetings. In addition, barriers to attendance were also viewed to be caused by low self-esteem and a sense of exclusion arising from acute deprivation levels. A

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43 In addition to ‘mothers’ evening’, other so-called ‘home-grown’ initiatives include *Ubudehe, Umuganda,* and *Girinka* (all described in the above sections). Started during EPDRS1, those initiatives are founded on national and community values and cultural principles and provide an avenue for citizen participation in community and planning processes.


number of FGD participants explained that poor women often felt ashamed of their old clothes and poor personal hygiene and mainly avoided participation in ‘mothers’ evenings’ as well as in other public meetings for fear of “being laughed at”. Underpinning social stratification patterns as well as lack of confidence and self-esteem, one female participant added that attending and speaking up at ‘mothers’ evenings’ made the poor “embarrassed and uncomfortable” because their employers – members of better-off households for whom they typically work as agricultural labourers – would also be at the meeting and would hear them.

Across all locations women were viewed as attending public meetings more than men – including those related to the VUP targeting process. Two main reasons were often mentioned in this regard: first, the majority of the village population in the communities sampled was female and as such it followed that the majority of attendees were also females; second, men were reported as being less interested in attending meetings. In the words of one civil servant interviewed in Byimana cell, “men are busy doing other things including drinking”. There was also a general perception that ongoing government-led gender equality efforts have encouraged women’s active participation in public life. Many respondents agreed and as one respondent explained in Uruyenzi explicitly stated, today men and women had equal opportunities or ‘rights’, to attend and speak up in public meetings, and that women were increasingly taking advantage of these opportunities. As summarized by a male FGD participant in Busasamana, “men have always had a word, but now women also speak up because of government gender equality campaigns”.

When it came to understanding women’s agency in the public sphere, and particularly in relation to their actual ability in influencing deliberations and voice their opinions on equal footing with men, fieldwork discussions elicited somewhat mixed views.

Some study participants, both female and male, emphasized that women took active part in public meetings without being afraid to express their opinions, and that in turn, their opinions were listened to and acted upon, just like those of men. In Busasamana, a male respondent for example argued that women played an active role in public debates and were not afraid to express divergent views. In his own words: “During the same meeting I may come up with an idea and then a woman may come up with a much better idea which may make my idea look stupid. And it is not a problem.” In Taba, a group of female beneficiaries also concurred that the majority of women in the village led an active public life in that they regularly attended meetings and even chaired some, such as meetings of both mixed-gender and female-only VSLGs. To reinforce this idea, one participant exclaimed “of course women are listened to, if they chair meetings how can they not be listened to?”

On the other hand, a number of respondents believed that women’s participation in the public sphere remained on unequal terms to men. While explaining that only a minority of women typically intervened in public meetings, one male non-beneficiary in Taba added that “for every five men that speak up in meetings there are only two women that do so”. Women’s lack of confidence, a recurrent theme raised, was also viewed by some as a key constraint to women’s ability to intervene during public meetings, voice their views and convey their interests to the audience. Expressions such as “feeling shy” or “the female fear of speaking in public” were used by FGD participants to describe the typical behaviour of the majority of women attendees. Likewise, one opinion leader in the comparison community of Duwani recalled that at home, in the aftermath of a recent farmers’ cooperative meeting which deliberated on the cost of the cooperative’s joining fee, his wife complained that the fee agreed upon was too high. In his own words:

“I told her ‘why didn’t you say this at the meeting? What is the point of complaining now that the decision has been taken?’ But she told me that she was too shy to say it in front of everyone.”

65
Table 10 below captures the views of male respondents in Duwani comparing decision-making power of men vis-à-vis women across three levels: household, community and group. Women’s participation in decision-making processes in relation to a number of community-level issues, such as conflict management, security, Umuganda activities or transport of patients to hospital, was indicated as substantially lower than that of men.

In Kigembe sector, as a result of longevity and continuity of VUP public works employment, there were views shared that VUP participation had had positive repercussions on female beneficiaries’ engagement in public life, due to enhanced feelings of confidence and self-worth. In the words of one female beneficiary in Taba,

“before I was afraid to go to community meetings including ‘mothers’ evenings’ because I had dirty clothes, but now I am clean, I feel better to attend and sometimes I speak up”.

Male non-beneficiaries interviewed in Taba expressed similar perceptions when discussing female beneficiaries’ greater involvement in the public sphere. According to one respondent, “women beneficiaries get exposure to work, they interact with others on the site and are more confident to speak up in public”.

Despite these perceptions and examples, this research did not find evidence of changes in women assuming leadership roles in politics and public life as a result of VUP public works participation.

A number of discussions with community respondents revealed that even if leadership positions, such as village chief, are opened to both men and women and both run for office, women’s chances of winning are slimmer than men’s. During a FGD with women non-beneficiaries in Tabas participants specifically attributed this to perceived differences in the leadership and communication skills of women vis-à-vis men. They stated that they usually preferred to vote for a man rather than a woman because of the confidence that a male candidate inspired; one participant explained this as follows “I prefer a man because I want someone who can represent us – the community – and speak on our behalf”.

Table 10  Decision-Making Matrix with male non-beneficiaries in Duwani village, Gisagara district (Southern province)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of decision</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>At household level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling livestock</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying land</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining a group/association</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending children to school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying for Mutuelle annual premiums</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saving</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>At group level (e.g. VSLG, farmers’ cooperative)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expulsion of a member</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforcing punishment of a member</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining and other fees</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing credit extension to members</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixing annual calendar of activities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring security</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>At community level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community security</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conflict management

In all sites, both males and females almost unanimously referred to a formal process to solve intra-household and inter-household disputes that community members could access. No changes were reported to this process as a result of VUP.

The first point of call for disputes in Ndego sector were referred to as local development mobilizers (Abahwituzi), while in Kigembe it was the ‘10-households leaders’ (Abafasha myumvire). Village security officer, village chief, followed by local mediators and social affair officers at cell and then sector levels, constituted the formal structure reported by our respondents through which conflict resolution could be addressed. FGD and KII participants widely agreed that in cases of violence the police would also intervene and in case of gender-based violence the National Women Council representative at village level would be the first port of call for affected women.

All male and female study participants appeared to be familiar with this conflict resolution process and the overwhelming majority also agreed that the above structures were also easily accessible and credible. In particular, a number of female respondents stressed that in the event of conflict between husband and wife, and especially in case of gender-based violence, wives’ reports were taken seriously and acted upon in an expeditious manner. According to female respondents in Iramiro this was “because the majority of problems are caused by men”. Several also agreed that in case of intra-household disputes the outcome would typically be in favour of the wife. At the same time, there were indications that cases of gender-based violence also went unreported because of women’s reluctance to come forward. To express this point one female non-beneficiary in Busasamana stated that “the abused remain in the house”.

In addition to the formal conflict resolution process described thus far, the research revealed the existence and use of informal mechanisms. Specifically, VSLGs and ‘mothers’ evening’ meetings were two key fora indicated by respondents in Kigembe sector used predominantly by women to solve disputes, especially between spouses. ‘Mothers’ evening’ in particular was perceived by a number of female respondents in Kigembe as a useful and effective means to tackle intra-household conflict where both husband and wife would attend the meeting, present their problem(s) and respective views, and publicly debate possible solutions with inputs and suggestions from other participants. A female beneficiary in Taba explained this as follows:

“Usually couples come to the mothers’ evening meeting angry at each other but after participants give their advice and help out, they can better understand who is to blame and most of the times they accept it and move on.”
7. Programme Operations

In this section we examine the operational issues arising in relation to the impact of the VUP, addressing the following hypothesis: Operation and design features of social protection programmes that provide women’s equal access to benefits and opportunities will promote gender equality and women’s economic empowerment.

7.1 Delivery of benefits

7.1.1 Wage payments into bank accounts

VUP wages are paid into registered beneficiaries’ bank accounts – SACCO for the majority – and more specifically into the account of the household head, who is also the primary account signatory. SACCO and other financial institutions allow the primary account signatory to add a co-signer, such as the spouse, parent, child or grandchild, and grant them access to the account and funds deposited. VUP staff at national and sector levels stated that while it is not a compulsory requirement of the programme for the primary account holder to add a co-signer, sensitization messages explicitly targeted to male-headed households are delivered, also by SACCO staff, to encourage husbands to allow their wives to become co-signers.

In the locations sampled for our study, only a minority of female beneficiaries and only in Ndego, stated that they were co-signers of their husbands’ account. The majority reported having opened their own accounts after joining VUP public works for the first time. A general trend observed in Kigembe, was for female public works participants to open an account after receiving the first payment, without adding their husbands as co-signers. As a number of respondents explained, the decision to do so was taken to ensure full control of the money that they had earned as well as of future earnings. As one female beneficiary in Uruyenzi poignantly stated: “If I wake up early to work on site then I have every right to access that cash!”

In Ndego, some female beneficiaries explained that at the time of registration their husbands had migrated temporarily and therefore they had been registered as heads of households and had opened accounts in their own names. When their husbands returned, the women did not include their husbands as co-signers for fear that doing so would compromise their control over future funds, pointing out that they did not yet have any savings in their accounts at the time. In the words of one participant, “if we added our husbands as co-signers, they’d spend all the money on their own needs, like drinking!” During a group discussion with female beneficiaries in Iramiro, respondents also recalled hearing of a few, albeit limited, cases of women beneficiaries working in VUP public works who were not co-signers and had difficulties in accessing the wages that they had earned as “their husbands were taking them”. The VUP Manager in Ndego also stressed that cases where husbands did not grant co-signatory powers to their wives existed but were very few.

Occurrences of female participants of public works not being able to retain control over the wages they earned was never explicitly raised during fieldwork discussions. As already mentioned above however, typically informants mentioned males would have the final say over revenues earned from public works, particularly larger sums of cash. In addition, females could work as VUP participants without their husbands agreeing on them being co-signers; they would then not be able to access and control the wages that they have earned. The potential for this to happen is demonstrated by the fact that women in the research communities did take steps to safeguard access and control over wages. As such, despite the fact that public works wages were supposed to provide a benefit for the household as a whole, women considered appropriation of these funds by their husbands a high risk.
There was also a general view conveyed, predominantly in Ndego, that the cost of opening an account was very high and not commensurate with the low number of days worked. FGDs and KIIIs in Ndego revealed that the cost of opening a SACCO account was 5 500 RwF (9.23 USD; according to some it had recently increased to 9 000 RwF or 12.80 USD), whereas in Kigembe it was 4 000 RwF (5.70 USD). In both sectors, the fee for opening an account was automatically deducted by SACCO from the first VUP wage payment. In addition, male and female beneficiaries in Ndego constantly complained of deductions from their accounts to pay off government taxes, including payments for community infrastructure, such as the construction of the local school (in Iramiro) or the SACCO building (in Busasamana), as well as Mutuelles annual premiums. Since the daily wage rate was 1 000 RwF (1.42 USD) it is not difficult to see how the bulk of the first (and for many in Ndego, the only) wage payment of 15 000 RwF 45 (21.31 USD) was used up paying SACCO opening fees and other governmental charges. During a FGD with female beneficiaries in Busasamana, one participant complained that most of her first and only payment was used up in this way and added that the money that was left was not even enough to buy food, which she ended up borrowing from friends.

7.1.2 Wage payment delays in Kigembe

A recurrent theme raised during fieldwork discussions in Kigembe was the delays in payments of VUP public works wages. The situation described was that public works participants typically worked one project phase after another, but payments for each phase (15 000 RwF or 21.31 USD) were spaced out over a long period of time. Some beneficiaries indicated delays of two months, others of six months and others even up to one year. Beneficiaries used the following analogies to describe the extent of such delays:

“We plant maize and we harvest it and we are still waiting for payment.”

“I was only a few months pregnant when I started working [on VUP sites], I delivered and I am still waiting for payment.”

The problem of payment delays has been examined in a number of other studies (see RSLDF, 2011 and Devereux, 2012). The recently developed ‘Community Sensitization and Training Manual’ (‘Sensitization Manual’) recognizes that beneficiaries have the right to receive their public works wages in full and on time (no later than 30 days after the end of a 10-day work cycle) (UNICEF and VUP, 2013).

This problem is well known to sector authorities who attribute it to inefficiencies in compiling the payroll list. They explained that the list of workers is compiled on a daily basis at the public works site and the final list – showing the total number of days worked attributed to each beneficiary household – is sent to the district to request disbursement of funds only when the project phase has ended. The district in turn transfers the request to LODA for approval and release of funds. Funds are then transferred from LODA to the district, sector, SACCO and eventually beneficiaries’ accounts. “A very, very lengthy process,” as one interviewee stated. Sector authorities confirmed that steps were in place to address this issue and make changes to the above protocol to ensure that funds (i.e. a proportion) for each VUP project are available at sector level before enrolment of beneficiary households and the start of VUP works. This was actually the same protocol that sector authorities identified as already being in place in Ndego; according to them, this was adopted in the 2011-12 financial year when similar delays were experienced by VUP beneficiaries due to similar payroll-related issues.

As elaborated in-depth in the following section, pervasive payment delays in Kigembe sector acted as a deterrent for poor households from Ubudehe category 1 and 2 and who were

45 15 days, which was indicated as the length of one project phase, was paid at 1 000 RwF per day for a total of 15 000 RwF.
programme intended beneficiaries, to enrol and remain in the programme.

7.2 Targeting and monitoring

7.2.1 Targeting process

Different criteria and protocols were used in Ndego and Kigembe in the selection of VUP public works beneficiary households. This information echoes the findings of a recent VUP gender equity assessment which also found that “overall, the exact [targeting] criteria and process is not uniformly applied in all sectors” (RSLDF, 2014: 37). In addition, findings from this research show that targeting in the two studied sectors was not in line with the criteria and processes established in programme design.

Participants from FGDs and KII in Ndego sector revealed that, since 2011, selection of public works beneficiaries is no longer based on the participatory *Ubudehe* category system in practice. The VUP Manager confirmed this and explained that this was linked to widespread occurrences of incorrect categorization of households in the *Ubudehe* list; for instance household heads who were in the army or in the police force were found to be classified as the poorest of the poor in category 1. Therefore, instead of using the *Ubudehe* list, every time a new public works project is about to be rolled out, the VUP Manager and other sector authorities hold a meeting at sector level to inform cell and village leaders of the nature of the new project and the total number (quota) of workers needed to implement the project. Village leaders in turn organize and facilitate public meetings at village level to present the upcoming VUP project, discuss and compile a list of eligible households on the basis of the following criteria; being poor, able-bodied and willing to work; this is then validated by the villagers attending the meeting and passed on to cell and sector levels.

Participants in fieldwork discussions in Ndego expressed mixed views on the functioning and inclusiveness of this targeting process. Some FGD participants for example stated that if members of potentially eligible households, such as labour-able female heads of households who were widely considered eligible because of their poverty levels, did not attend the public meeting (e.g. in case of illness) and had not been included in the list, they could put forward a request and be subsequently included. One female beneficiary in Busasamana explained that she failed to attend the meeting but was nonetheless included and recalled that the village chief went to her house to notify her. By contrast, other FGD participants complained of not being able to attend the meeting and of having been excluded from VUP employment as a result. One male beneficiary in Busasamana for example was adamant that meeting attendance was key to gaining access to VUP work and stated, “you have to be at the meeting to get a job”.

In Kigembe, research participants explained that the first step before rolling out a public works project was also the organization of a public meeting by village chiefs. Unlike in Ndego, however, the purpose of this meeting was to encourage eligible and ‘willing to work’ households to register at cell level. The list was then filtered at cell level against the *Ubudehe* list – which was last updated in early 2014 according to the village chief of Taba – to select households from categories 1 and 2. Some respondents in Uruyenzi noted that the implementation of this targeting process was becoming increasingly loose since the public meeting was used just to announce the roll-out of a new VUP project and whoever is willing to work simply enrols, regardless of his/her *Ubudehe* category.

7.2.2 Low uptake of VUP employment and inclusion and exclusion errors

In Kigembe sector and in the village of Iramiro the great majority of respondents concurred that since the start of VUP it had always been the case of more VUP jobs being available than eligible households willing to work. Indeed, in both contexts several research participants noted
that targeting was becoming increasingly irrelevant since anyone willing and able to work could usually access VUP employment simply by showing up at the site and asking to work. This resonates with other findings from public works programmes in sub-Saharan Africa on the fact that non-beneficiaries can participate, particularly when local labour supply was insufficient to meet construction demands, with VUP participants being selected on the basis of availability rather than socio-economic criteria (McCord, 2012).

Albeit for different reasons, in Kigembe sector and the village of Iramiro in Ndego, VUP employment appeared to be considered by the majority a ‘second-best’ livelihood source. In Kigembe, both in Taba and Uruyenzi villages, the low uptake of VUP jobs was predominantly linked to pervasive payment delays coupled with relatively low daily wages, which made VUP employment an unreliable and therefore unattractive source of income, particularly for the poorest categories (Ubudehe 1 and 2) which the programme sought to target.

In general, our research findings indicated that households participating in public works were typically those who had labour capacity to allow one member to be employed in VUP – typically females so that they could work in sites relatively close to the homestead – and gain some extra, albeit unreliable income, while others – typically males – engaged in more reliable and possibly lucrative economic activities, such as agricultural work on the family land or wage work in the Huye urban economy.

In Iramiro, one key reason for the low uptake of VUP employment was the availability of more consistent – virtually all year-round – wage work offered by the nearby ‘muzungu farm’, which also paid higher daily wages than VUP public works. The farm reportedly paid agricultural labourers1 500 RwF (2.31 USD) per day and thus 500 RwF (0.72 USD) more than the VUP. This was contributing to making VUP employment in Iramiro a less desirable livelihood source. Indeed, sector authorities confirmed that discussions to increase VUP daily wages from 1 000 RwF to 1 500 RwF (1.42 to 2.31 USD) were underway in light of the wages paid by the farm.

By contrast, respondents in Busasamana mostly felt that there was a scarcity of VUP jobs, with more eligible and willing to work beneficiaries than jobs available. As one key informant from Social Affairs in Kayonza remarked “many poor are left behind.” Different perceptions of VUP work uptake in Iramiro and Busasamana may be partially explained by the presence of the muzungu farm in Iramiro, but not in Busasamana. To provide the work opportunities to a wider pool of eligible households, in Busasamana some informants explained that a decision was made to decrease days worked in order to rotate more eligible households into work. Still, some beneficiaries expressed a desire to work more days, as depicted in Box 2.

FGD participants and key informants revealed that since the start of the VUP in Ndego, projects had been mostly rolled out during the rainy season, when households are typically busy with agricultural activities on their own farms and there is also high availability of agricultural wage labour. As such, short-term and poorly paid VUP employment was not considered attractive enough to forgo longer-term agricultural labour opportunities or work on one’s land. At the same time, respondents did not recall VUP projects being rolled out during the dry season and especially during drought when households most need alternative sources of income, there is a high demand for wage labour and when VUP work would become attractive.

Interviews with VUP sector managers and group discussions with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries indicated that the majority of VUP public works participants in Ndego and Kigembe sectors were from Ubudehe category 3, which according to programme design should not be eligible for public works. This complements findings from other studies which also report that the public works component of the VUP attracts better-off segments of the population (see Hartwig, 2013; Devereux, 2012; RSLDF, 2014).
During a community well-being analysis conducted with opinion leaders in Iramiro, study participants (see Table 5) ‘divided’ their community into poor, medium and better-off households. They then estimated that 40 percent of households employed in public works belonged to the ‘poor’ category (who they identified as largely overlapping with category 1 and 2 of the Ubudehe system); 50 percent from the ‘medium’ category (who they identified as largely overlapping with category 3); and the remaining 10 percent from the better-off category. Similarly, during a FGD with opinion leaders in Taba, participants stated that the great majority of VUP public works participants, a staggering 70 percent, belonged to what they defined as ‘able’ (better-off) category. The remaining 30 percent belonged to the ‘poor’ category, and with no public works participants belonging to the ‘very poor’ category (see Table 6).

A number of research participants in Iramiro explained that the inclusion of households from Ubudehe category 3 in public works was linked to the fact that the majority of households belonging to Ubudehe category 1 and 2 were not included in the public works employment. This was because they were not able-bodied and did not have labour capacity, and many were therefore able to become beneficiaries of the Direct Support component of the VUP. In line with programme design, households could not simultaneously access both types of support. In Busasamana, a number of research participants felt that many of the poorest households (Ubudehe 1 and 2) ended up being excluded from public works because they did not attend the public meeting where the list of eligible households was compiled. The barriers of attendance that underpinned the limited attendance of the poor in public meetings in general, including acute deprivation levels, competing demands on time, low self-esteem and a sense of exclusion, as discussed in Section 0, were found to play a key role in the self-exclusion of the poor in public works, particularly in Ndego.

In Kigembe sector, ongoing payment delays acted as a deterrent for the poorest from Ubudehe categories 1 and 2 from enrolling and staying in the programme. The poorest were widely described as living a ‘hand-to-mouth’ existence with many relying on agricultural work paid on a daily basis, either in kind or in cash, as their main livelihoods source. As the following quotes illustrate, for members of those households, having regular, preferably daily, income was therefore a matter of survival and there was general consensus that it would be difficult for them to wait for payment for two weeks; virtually impossible to wait for months.

“If payments would be on time we would manage, we would wait for 15 days and buy food from shops on credit, but we cannot possibly wait for one or two months or even more, we would die of hunger.”

“VUP is for people who can afford to wait for payment.”

Beneficiaries also dropped out of the programme for the same reason that prevented others enrolling in the first place – delays in payment. Being unable to afford delays – not being paid while working phase after phase – me decided to stop working and take up other employment or simply farm on their land. One male beneficiary in Taba stated that he had worked in several VUP phases, but had recently stopped and was waiting to get paid. In his own words:

“I stopped working, I think of it [pending wage payments] as a credit that I have with VUP. While I wait to be paid I go and work on other people’s farms.”

7.2.3 Monitoring and Management Information System

The findings of this research did not point to the existence of a multi-year monitoring system in place to allow VUP staff to track public work beneficiary households across financial years. VUP Managers at sector level lacked data such as the cumulative number of days that households have worked in the different projects and relative phases, when they have worked or which household members have worked. In turn, beneficiaries’ lists disaggregated by cell
and village and comprising the total number of days that each household had worked were unavailable at village or sector level. The absence of a multi-year monitoring system limits the ability of VUP staff to understand and monitor the impact over time that the VUP public works component is having towards improving the welfare and economic advancement of beneficiaries, and more specifically, at individual level. This is particularly important for tracking women’s (and men’s) economic empowerment.

The only monitoring mechanism found by this research was at public works sites, used to collect and record the total number of days that each beneficiary (as understood, the amount of days of any worker representing the beneficiary household) had worked in each project phase, and in turn, in each project. This information was collected primarily to provide data for payments. Key informants explained that this data was largely available in the format of hard copies of project payrolls at sector level, although it did not seem to be consolidated in more accessible soft copies.

7.3 Communication and participation

7.3.1 Sensitization activities

Training and sensitization is a fourth component of the VUP, aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skill set of VUP participants in public works to enable them to make better informed choices about their household living conditions, undertake steps to change their situation and “make good use of VUP cash payments” (UNICEF, 2013: 2). In 2013 UNICEF, in collaboration with the VUP, developed the ‘Community Sensitization and Training Manual’ (‘Sensitization Manual’), which is intended as a tool and guideline for VUP Managers and other local administration staff when providing information, sensitization and training activities to communities and beneficiaries targeted by the VUP (ibid.). The Sensitization Manual is comprehensive and covers several topics, including HIV/AIDS, nutrition, hygiene promotion, as well as ‘gender and women’s rights’, which includes a focus on government policies to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment, gender aspects of poverty and child rights.

As confirmed by stakeholders at national level and VUP Managers at sector levels, the Sensitization Manual has yet to be disseminated to VUP targeted sectors. In the meantime, sectors continue to organize and provide ad hoc sensitization and training activities, without systematically following a common structure or set of topics. KIIIs with VUP Managers and social welfare officers revealed that, for example, in Ndego sensitization session topics included family planning, HIV, security, nutrition and use of VUP wages. The latter included topics such as the prioritization of education and Mutuelles payments, joint discussion between spouses on use of wages, savings, and use of wages on household needs and not on alcohol. In Kigembe, VUP wage expenditure was indicated as a sensitization topic, as well as communicable diseases and agricultural improvements among others. In both sectors VUP Managers stated that training sessions were delivered by themselves with the support of other sector staff (e.g. an agronomist). They also explained that according to programme design, sessions should be delivered on site on a daily basis for 30 minutes following working hours (7 a.m.-2 p.m.). In reality, informants reported that in Ndego, sessions were typically delivered at most three times a week, whereas in Kigembe once a week.

Across all fieldwork sites however discussions revealed that the overwhelming majority of public works participants had not been reached with sensitization messages. In both sectors, during a number of FGDs, participants did not recall having heard any messages at all, except for instructions on how to do their job on site and work plans for the following day(s). Messages that were found to have reached study participants the most were on use of wages, including
savings and investments in livestock or small economic activities, and joint discussion between spouses in this regard.

7.3.2 Selection of VUP public works projects

In line with the Public Works Manual (MINALOC, 2009), KIIs with sector representatives in Ndego and Kigembe sectors indicated that the process of selection of VUP projects is integrated into the national planning system through the EDPRS Sector Development Plans (SDPs) and District Development Plans (DDPs), both of which are five-year strategic plans.

As sector authorities in Kigembe explained, selection of VUP projects starts at the lowest level of the administrative structure as part of the *Imihigo* performance contracts process. During a public meeting held annually, community members select activities and investments which they consider to be priorities for their socio-economic development. These include investments that can be realized through VUP projects, although during public meetings this is not necessarily explained to participants. Village and cell representatives (e.g. village chiefs, cell executive secretaries) then convene in a sector level meeting to prioritize activities and investments identified during the community meeting, including those that could be implemented through VUP projects. Both meetings should take place ahead of the consolidation of the sector Annual Action Plan, which feeds into SDPs and in turn DDPs. Sector and district-level discussions then ensue which may lead to a different prioritization of activities and investments (including of potential VUP projects) than those proposed by communities in the initial stage. This is to better align investments with sector and district priorities and budgets.

Informants in Kigembe and Ndego sector did not recall labour-intensiveness as a criteria for VUP projects selection, although this is an important criteria included in the Public Works Manual (MINALOC, 2009), promoting greater opportunities for work/labourers on projects. In general, VUP project selection appeared to be based on communities’ and authorities’ prioritization within the overall *Imihigo* process and budget availability. Budget was specifically indicated by the VUP Manager as the reason behind the limited number of projects rolled out in Ndego sector and the low work days offered to beneficiary households.

In general, community members interviewed in research locations appeared to have a lack awareness or understanding that selection of VUP projects is part of the *Imihigo* process. In some cases chiefs were also unable to articulate the above selection process. The widespread majority of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries appeared to be under the impression that they had not participated at any stage in the identification and selection of VUP projects and that the projects were selected by the sector and only communicated in a top-down fashion to communities. This reflects communication gaps between VUP programme implementers as well as possible adaptations of the programme guidelines at sector level and communities.

7.3.3 Appeals and complaint mechanism

There is very limited description of the functioning of the VUP appeals and complaint mechanism in programme documents. A 2011 document states that in 2010-11 the VUP had introduced and piloted in five sectors a mechanism which used existing local administration structures and processes to manage complaints and that it would be rolled out to all VUP sectors in 2011-12 (MINALOC, 2011). No follow-up on this mechanism is available in project documents. The Sensitization Manual recognizes the right of a community member to make an

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46 See footnote 18
appeal or lodge a complaint and receive a response in no less than six weeks from when the appeal or complaint is formally submitted (UNICEF, 2013).

Male and female beneficiaries overwhelmingly viewed the organizational hierarchy structure at public works sites – captain, supervisor, vice-president and president of the site – as the means by which they could raise complaints. There were also widespread reports in both Kigembe and Ndego sectors that both male and female beneficiaries used this structure to raise complaints. Key informants at sector and national levels, confirmed that at the end of each working day, presumably when sensitization activities do not take place, 30 minutes are allocated to plan the work for the following day(s) as needed and to allow beneficiaries to raise any complaints they may have. In the words of the VUP Manager in Kigembe, this allowed issues to be dealt with and, if possible, solved “quickly and on site”.

With regard to the effectiveness of this complaint mechanism, however, there were mixed findings. In Uruyenzi, for example, a female beneficiary recalled that one VUP beneficiary used the above structure to complain about the captain in her cohort who was not accurately recording working days. Reportedly the issue escalated to the president of the site and was resolved. In Kigembe sector, several beneficiaries however stated that they had often raised the issue of late payments to captains and supervisors, but had received no information as to why this was happening or when the next payment would be made. One female participant of public works in Taba noted that when she asked the captain on site about this problem he replied: “I am also waiting for my payment!” She did not follow up on this issue any further. In Uruyenzi, a female beneficiary expressing frustration and disappointment about recurrent payment delays remarked, “I feel hopeless because I do not know where to go to solve this problem”.

7.4 Programme support to sustainable livelihoods growth

The ‘Guidelines on VUP Targeting, Exit and Graduation’ (‘the Guidelines’), developed in 2012, presents the programme vision for attaining the overarching goal of supporting people to move out of extreme poverty in a sustainable way, stating: “graduation is seen as a process where households have improved their economic and livelihood status and are able to maintain themselves out of poverty for the medium to long term without VUP assistance” (RLDSF, 2012:12). According to the programme, VUP beneficiaries who have moved to Ubudehe categories 5 or 6 (non-poor) are considered as having strengthened their livelihoods without the likelihood of falling back into poverty and, as such, have effectively graduated (ibid.).47

For poor households with able-bodied members – those capable of engaging in economic activities – which are the primary target households in the public works component, the VUP has high potential for broadening productive choices and supporting sustainable livelihood growth. The VUP training and sensitization component can strengthen their livelihoods and resilience, for example, through skills development which can enhance employability and engagement in economic enterprises. The VUP has also been shown to strengthen self-confidence. These aspects are relevant and particularly pertinent for females of labour-deficient households who have unlocked potential to undertake economic activities.

Programme implementation challenges described in this report however limit VUP potential to support sustainable livelihoods growth and women’s economic empowerment, which both remain unrealized.

In Ndego, the potential of the VUP to provide a “staircase out of poverty” (RLDSF, 2012: 5) was found by the research to be compromised mostly by limited workdays available. Requests

47 The Guidelines also clarify that exit refers to the process of a beneficiary household leaving the VUP because they no longer meet eligibility criteria and as such have moved from Ubudehe category 1 or 2 into Ubudehe category 3 or 4 (RLDSF, 2012).
for more projects and more workdays, especially during the dry season, so that people could access more work when needed were a leitmotif in discussions.

In Kigembe, pervasive payment delays in particular underpinned the exclusion of the households that the VUP intends most to target – the poorest in *Ubudehe* categories 1 and 2 – and resulted in the programme having limited effect in fostering sustainable livelihoods growth. One non-beneficiary in Uruyenzi explicitly stated:

“We know of people who no longer work in VUP, not because their situation has improved, but because their wives and children were going hungry while waiting for payments, so they stopped in order to take up jobs that are paid daily.”

A number of beneficiaries also stressed that uncertainty and unreliability of payment dates, coupled with the fact that arrears of different phases were not paid at once in a lump sum, made planning and investments in economic activities difficult. As such, relatively small amounts of cash wages (of 15 000 RwF or the total wage amount of one project phase) were spaced out over a long period of time and when they were eventually delivered to beneficiaries, the bulk ended up being used on immediate household needs and settling debts, greatly limiting the potential for savings, accumulation of assets and investments in economic activities. One opinion leader in Uruyenzi estimated that when beneficiaries eventually receive their wages, out of 15 000 RwF (2.31 USD) they may need to use 10 000 RwF (10.42 USD) to cover basic needs and debts that they accumulated, and may be left only with 5 000 RwF (7.23 USD). He concluded, “5 000 RwF cannot end poverty”.

Expressing frustration with ongoing delays, one female beneficiary in Uruyenzi affirmed, “instead of helping people to progress, the VUP makes people hungry”. A number of beneficiaries in Taba referred to VUP sensitization messages on investing VUP wages to improve households’ welfare, including livestock purchases, savings and planning ahead on the use of wages. They complained however that they could not “achieve what they had set in mind”, as one participant stated because of delays. One male beneficiary recalled that he had planned to work continuously in different VUP projects to be able to purchase a milking cow; because of wage delays, however, he struggled to save and only managed to buy one goat and one pig. He concluded, “if we were paid on time, the VUP could change our lives”.
8. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations presented in this study represent the qualitative findings from the two sectors sampled in this research. They are intended to provide insights into programme impacts at community level and are representative of Ndego and Kigembe sectors, but may not apply to all sectors targeted by the VUP.

The aim of this study is to analyse VUP public works impacts and identify areas that may increase women’s economic empowerment. The main objective of the VUP is reducing poverty and not promoting rural women’s economic empowerment as such. That said, recommendations presented below are suggested to enhance the potential of VUP public works in fulfilling this development goal.

Women’s economic advancement

The research addressed the hypothesis: Social protection programmes will promote the economic advancement of women and increase their productive resources (e.g. incomes, access to credit and savings) and will also improve women’s skills and employment opportunities.

The research findings indicate that more women than men participate in VUP public works. Participation in public works, however, only partially promoted the economic advancement of women. By providing employment and access to cash through wage payments delivered through financial institutions, VUP public works have promoted female VUP participants’ financial inclusion while enabling savings and investments in productive resources for a minority of female (and male) participants. Through VUP public works employment, female VUP participants have gained new technical skills, but domestic obligations remained one key barrier for the ability of women to market their newly acquired skills to increase their insertion in the labour market. Programme implementation challenges – particularly the deduction of a substantial part of wages to cover SACCO account opening fees and arrears of government taxes in Ndego; the limited workdays available in Ndego; and the pervasive payment delays in Kigembe – have greatly constrained the potential of the VUP public works component to support women’s economic advancement.

Research conclusions show that participation of females in VUP public works:

- did not alter the traditional gender division of labour at the household level and did not substantially redress gender disparities in time use for domestic and care activities. It may have increased the workload of some children, especially those old enough to help with domestic chores, as female participants of public works offloaded part of their domestic burden on them;
- enabled them to acquire new technical skills (e.g. digging ditches, levelling roads) but which were not highly transferable and did not result in enhanced employability;
- allowed them to hold an account with a financial institution (typically SACCO) for the first time but this had limited effect on the ability of the majority to access formal loans, given women’s limited income earned and savings capacity;
- enabled wage transfers to be used predominantly to smooth household consumption, and for a minority of female beneficiaries wages also partially acted as a catalyst for small investments in economic activities due to marginal increases in income;
- enabled some female participants in public works to enter informal saving associations (typically VSLGs and merry-go-rounds) and access credit, enabling some of them to pursue economic investments;
• contributed to improvements in household welfare resulting from increased ability to afford food, clothing, health and education-related costs, although on a short term basis;
• increased VUP communities’ access to transport infrastructure and some community members also benefited from land terracing and water dams, improving agricultural production as an outcome of VUP projects; and
• marginally contributed to enhancing their ability to manage risks and shocks by enabling investments in cash savings and livestock, which were factors in reducing negative coping strategies such as asset disinvestments that increase vulnerability.

Women’s power and agency

The research addressed the hypothesis: Social protection will strengthen women’s power and agency by increasing their bargaining power within the household and wider community. This will increase women's self-confidence, their ability to engage in social networks, and participate in decision-making in the public arena.

The research findings indicated that the public works component of the VUP only marginally increased women’s bargaining power in the household by enabling private savings, use of cash for personal and children’s items and economic investments. Relatively small cash wages and programme implementation challenges were among key reasons for the limited effect of the programme in enhancing women’s power and agency at the household level.

Female’s participation in VUP public works did not alter deep-rooted patriarchal sociocultural norms. Nonetheless, there was evidence of ongoing changes in the enabling policy environment for promoting women’s economic empowerment, contributing to increasingly positive perceptions of women’s capabilities and economic roles evidenced at community levels. VUP public works catalysed the inclusion of some female beneficiaries particularly from the poorest segments of the population in social networks, which stimulated economic collaboration and mutual support with consequent feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem. However, these changes did not result in women’s increased leadership roles and decision-making power at community level.

The research concluded that participation of women in VUP public works:

• did not result in substantial changes in their exercise of agency over key household assets and agricultural production in male-headed households, which remained largely controlled by husbands;
• enabled them to earn, manage and control small amounts of cash; for some this partially enabled private savings, use of cash for personal items (such as igitenge) and economic investments, contributing to heightened feelings of self-esteem, dignity and increased ability to make independent choices;
• to some extent, facilitated their inclusion in social networks for economic collaboration and peer support (VSLGs, ‘mothers’ evenings’, and newly formed friendship networks), which in turn enhanced feelings of confidence and self-worth;
• did not provide opportunities to change women’s roles in community leadership and public life; and
• contributed to changing perceptions of women’s capabilities and economic roles, which is being driven by ongoing national policy efforts concerning gender equality.
Programme Operations

The research addressed the hypothesis: *Operational and design features of social protection programmes that provide women’s equal access to benefits and opportunities will promote gender equality and women’s economic empowerment.*

The research findings indicate that, despite the existence of a favourable enabling policy environment for the promotion of women’s economic empowerment, the design and implementation of the public works component of the VUP were not geared towards the achievement of this objective. While aspects of programme design – targeting in particular – have given attention to ensuring women’s equal access to benefits, the design of programme components that could further enhance the inclusion of women, such as skills development and financial literacy, sensitization activities targeted to women’s needs and linkages with *Mutuelles*, have not been adequately addressed.

The potential of the public works component for becoming a catalyst for women’s economic empowerment has been constrained by a number of programme implementation challenges, including the low number of working days resulting in the low total value of wage transfer in Ndego and pervasive payment delays in Kigembe; SACCO accounts opening fees and government taxes levied on the transfer, especially in Ndego; weaknesses of the Management Information System, which prevent a multi-year and individual level monitoring of the impact of public works on improving the welfare and economic advancement of beneficiaries.

Research conclusions show that the VUP public works component:

- stimulated female participants of public works, both married and single female heads of households, to open their own bank account which ensured control over their wages, despite this not being a programme requirement and despite high opening fees;
- was negatively affected in its impact by pervasive payment delays – specifically in Kigembe, which threatened gained achievements, undermined both social safety net functions as well as the potential for economic initiatives, while also limiting the ability to target and retain the very poor in the programme;
- was not consistently implemented using targeting criteria and processes envisaged in programme design: the targeting mechanism risks excluding the poorest and most vulnerable households, particularly those with high dependency ratios (e.g. female-headed households) and those who are not able to attend VUP meetings;
- was not backed by a multi-year monitoring system across financial years to track public works beneficiary households or those who specifically participate directly in public works with their labour; it also does not track progress being made towards improving the welfare and economic advancement of beneficiaries and women’s economic empowerment;
- was not reaching most of VUP beneficiaries with sensitization messages, which were delivered irregularly and without following a set structure; and
- was affected by communication gaps between programme implementers and communities, reflected in limited understanding of the selection process of VUP projects, as well as VUP programme procedures overall, such as targeting and employment availability for beneficiary households (e.g. number of days and phases work), thus limiting households’ ability to better plan expenditures and investments and manage shocks.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research theme</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Conclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic advancement</strong></td>
<td>Social protection programmes that promote the economic advancement of women will increase their productive resources (e.g. incomes, access to credit and savings) and will also improve women’s skills and employment opportunities.</td>
<td>Partially confirmed. The VUP only marginally promoted the economic advancement women. Temporary employment in VUP public works has supported female VUP participants’ financial inclusion while enabling savings and investments in productive resources for a minority. Domestic obligations have remained a barrier for female VUP participants’ ability to market their newly acquired skills to increase their participation in the labour market. Implementation challenges have constrained programme potential to support women’s economic advancement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power and agency</strong></td>
<td>Social protection will strengthen women’s power and agency by increasing their bargaining power within the household and wider community. This will increase women’s self-confidence, their ability to engage in social networks, and participate in decision-making in the public arena.</td>
<td>Partially confirmed. VUP public works only marginally increased women’s bargaining power in the household by enabling use of small amounts of cash for personal and children’s items and economic investments. The limited effect was mostly due to relatively small wage amounts and implementation challenges. Increasingly positive perceptions of women’s capabilities and economic roles were found at community level, driven by national policy efforts. Public works catalysed the inclusion of some female VUP participants in social networks. This generated feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem. It did not result in women’s increased leadership roles and decision-making power in the public arena.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operations</strong></td>
<td>Operational and design features of social protection programmes that provide women’s equal access to benefits and opportunities will promote gender equality and women’s economic empowerment.</td>
<td>Not confirmed. Potential to catalyse women’s economic empowerment is compromised by design and implementation features. Some design aspects support women’s equal access to benefits (e.g. prioritizing female-headed households) but some features pose constraints for women’s participation (e.g. ensuring inclusion of women who cannot participate in community meetings). Implementation weaknesses limiting women’s economic empowerment included: low number of working days resulting in low wage transfer values; payment delays; SACCO account opening fees and government tax levies on the transfers; lack of measures to increase women’s skills development and financial literacy; lack of a Management Information System with multi-year monitoring of impacts in improving the welfare and economic advancement of beneficiaries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommendations

- To strengthen VUP’s promotion of women’s economic empowerment and agency, attention should be given to:
  
  o ensuring that wage payments are delivered on time and that VUP public works beneficiaries work a minimum number of days in each financial year (e.g. 71 days as outlined in the Social Protection Strategy);
  
  o reducing or removing SACCO account opening fees and government taxes levied on the transfer;
  
  o sensitizing VUP female beneficiaries opening accounts with a financial institution for the first time on the importance of holding their own bank accounts as a way of promoting economic advancement, decision-making power and agency; accordingly, SACCO should adopt more gender-sensitive regulations, e.g. lower opening fees, and explore possibilities of providing financial literacy training as well as financial planning, budgeting and management to beneficiary members; and
  
  o exploring how to best develop synergies between the VUP and existing extension services and rural development programmes, such as the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) public works, as well as existing initiatives from NGOs that aim at strengthening women’s empowerment through microcredit, financial literacy, and women’s income-generating groups and networks.

- To enhance women’s voice and bargaining power in household decision-making, it is recommended to consider:
  
  o strengthening the implementation of sensitization activities concerning intra-household gender relations, and building on the existing Sensitization Manual to explicitly address issues related to intra-household power relations and decision-making processes; and
  
  o enhancing participation in social networks and public life of female beneficiaries from the poorest segments of the population by establishing or extending support to local community spaces, including public work sites, where female beneficiaries can come together to discuss problems, find support and strengthen social relations. Such spaces also could be used to facilitate exchange of information on the VUP between programme staff and beneficiaries and to provide sensitization activities focusing on group formation, economic and livelihoods development.

- To strengthen design and implementation features to better support women’s economic empowerment, power and agency, attention should be given to:
  
  o strengthening the VUP management information system to better reach and follow poor households with available labour and understand pathways to more productive livelihoods; importantly and more specifically, developing a monitoring system that enables regular tracking of public works beneficiary households and individuals directly working at public works sites, e.g. cumulative timing and number of days that households/individuals have worked in different projects and phases and include basic indicators that measure programme performance (e.g. value of the transfer per household, poverty status of participating households);
  
  o including periodic diagnostics that monitor progress in women and men’s economic empowerment, particularly in intra-household decision-making; making use of the
different thematic areas covered by this research as a starting point for developing this diagnostic;

- strengthening the programme targeting mechanism to ensure compliance and consistency in implementation; in specific, redirecting those ‘eligible’ public works households with available labour – but self-excluding due to high dependency ratio (e.g. single female-headed households with low adult labour capacity) – to the direct support component; and

- expanding the VUP project portfolio to include project activities that can be performed closer to the household, and also address priorities and interests of women, along with men’s, such as child care services, health and educational services, construction of water wells, nutrition clubs, providing agricultural labour to labour-constrained households, and so forth.


District Development Plan (DDP). 2013. For the period 2013/14 to 2017/18. Gisagara District, Southern Province, Republic of Rwanda


Musahara, H. 2006. Improving tenure security for the rural poor, Rwanda country case study. Support to the Legal Empowerment of the Poor (LEP) Working Paper number 7. (Workshop for sub-Saharan Africa) Kigali and Rome, National University of Rwanda and FAO.


Resilient and Responsive Health Systems (RESYST). 2014. Covering the informal sector. Report from a workshop on expanding access to health services and financial protection for people outside the formal employment sector, in collaboration with the University of Rwanda, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, School of Public Health (UR/CMHS/SPH) and the Health Financing Unit at the Ministry of Health in Rwanda.


## Annex 1: Fieldwork “roadmap” schedule, by sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 1</th>
<th>Village 1 (sub-team 1)</th>
<th>Village 1 (sub-team 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introductions with village leaders</td>
<td>Introductions with village leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 FGD with men/women opinion leaders (Community well-being analysis)</td>
<td>1 FGD with men/women opinion leaders (Community well-being analysis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 FGD with community members who contribute to VUP implementation</td>
<td>1 FGD with community members who contribute to VUP implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plan fieldwork and FGD/KII participants for next three days</td>
<td>Plan fieldwork and FGD/KII participants for next three days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evening debrief</td>
<td>Evening debrief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 2</th>
<th>Village 1 (sub-team 1)</th>
<th>Village 1 (sub-team 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 FGD with male public works participants/beneficiaries (access to and control over household resources)</td>
<td>1 FGD with male public works participants/beneficiaries (access to and control over household resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 FGD with female public works participants/beneficiaries, access to and control over household resources</td>
<td>1 FGD with female public works participants/beneficiaries, access to and control over household resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 KIIs</td>
<td>2 KIIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evening debrief</td>
<td>Evening debrief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 3</th>
<th>Village 1 (sub-team 1)</th>
<th>Village 1 (sub-team 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 FGD with male non-public works participants/beneficiaries, organization and group profiles (Venn diagram)</td>
<td>1 FGD with male non-public works participants/beneficiaries, organization and group profiles (Venn diagram)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 FGD with female non-public works participants/beneficiaries (seasonal calendar and gender division of labour)</td>
<td>1 FGD with female non-public works participants/beneficiaries (seasonal calendar and gender division of labour)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 KIIs</td>
<td>2 KIIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evening debrief</td>
<td>Evening debrief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 4</th>
<th>Village 1 (sub-team 1)</th>
<th>Village 1 (sub-team 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 FGD (optional participants and use of one of the tools as needed)</td>
<td>1 FGD (optional participants and use of one of the tools as needed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 KIIs</td>
<td>2 KIIs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 in-depth household case study</td>
<td>1 in-depth household case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community feedback session</td>
<td>Community feedback session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evening debrief</td>
<td>Evening debrief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY 5</th>
<th>Village 1 (sub-team 1)</th>
<th>Village 1 (sub-team 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 FGD with men/women opinion leaders using community well-being analysis</td>
<td>1 FGD with men/women opinion leaders using community well-being analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 FGD with female non-public works beneficiaries/participants using access to and control over household resources</td>
<td>1 FGD with female non-public works beneficiaries/participants using access to and control over household resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 FGD with male non-public works beneficiaries/participants using decision-making matrix (one of the two FGDs with non-public works participants may be conducted without a tool, as the research team sees appropriate)</td>
<td>1 FGD with male non-public works beneficiaries/participants using decision-making matrix (one of the two FGDs with non-public works participants may be conducted without a tool, as the research team sees appropriate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sector level</td>
<td>Sector level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback sector level</td>
<td>Feedback sector level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAY 6</td>
<td>Team consolidation and synthesis day</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Annex 2: Administrative information: VUP Public Works 2013-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical area</th>
<th>Poverty level/EIVC3</th>
<th>Population 2012</th>
<th>% of ben out of total 2013-14</th>
<th># of ben 2013-14</th>
<th>Average days per hh ben</th>
<th>Q3 PWs Payments</th>
<th>Q4 PWs Payments</th>
<th>Q3 Rate of employed ben/eligible ben</th>
<th>Q4 Rate of employed ben/eligible ben</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bugesera</td>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>6,694</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>- 7,570,739</td>
<td>- 0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Plateau</td>
<td>Southern GISAGARA</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>322,506</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>6,563</td>
<td>262,418</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>97,364,642</td>
<td>262,418,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Plateau</td>
<td>Southern HUYE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>328,398</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1,506</td>
<td>99,095</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>2,156,400</td>
<td>118,914,185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Plateau</td>
<td>Southern KAMONYI</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>340,501</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4,371</td>
<td>200,034</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35,235,837</td>
<td>205,855,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Plateau</td>
<td>Southern MUHANGA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>319,141</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3,664</td>
<td>219,747</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>35,579,237</td>
<td>67,189,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Plateau</td>
<td>Southern NYANZA</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>323,719</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4,061</td>
<td>238,533</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>241,978,498</td>
<td>242,996,757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Plateau</td>
<td>Southern RUGANGO</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>319,865</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1,756</td>
<td>129,678</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>10,919,000</td>
<td>130,294,400</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central-Northern Highlands/Eastern Congo Nile</td>
<td>Northern RULINDO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>287,681</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4,322</td>
<td>199,802</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>71,182,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central-Northern Highlands/Eastern Plateau</td>
<td>Northern GICUMBI</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>395,606</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4,521</td>
<td>284,350</td>
<td>63</td>
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<td>284,349,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Agro pastoral/Eastern Plateau/Central Northern Highland</td>
<td>Eastern NYAGATARE</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>465,855</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2,820</td>
<td>97,288</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16,978,150</td>
<td>137,655,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Highlands</td>
<td>Northern GAKENKE</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>338,234</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2,080</td>
<td>228,909</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>83,894,000</td>
<td>228,908,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Congo Nile/Western Congo Nile</td>
<td>Western NGORORERO</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>333,713</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3,571</td>
<td>228,981</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>253,030,130</td>
<td>228,980,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Congo Nile/Western Congo Nile</td>
<td>Southern NYAMAGABE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>341,491</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>5,582</td>
<td>144,058</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43,419,150</td>
<td>145,007,292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Plateau</td>
<td>Kigali GASABO</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>529,561</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>3,230</td>
<td>114,547</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>47,335,600</td>
<td>151,561,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Plateau</td>
<td>Eastern GATISOB</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>433,020</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2,958</td>
<td>97,314</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>7,539,000</td>
<td>123,700,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake Kivu/Western Congo Nile</td>
<td>Western KARONGI</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>331,888</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>2,018</td>
<td>100,250</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58,881,500</td>
<td>103,342,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Kivu/Western Congo Nile</td>
<td>Western NYAMASHEKE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>381,804</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>11,788</td>
<td>478,139</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>180,466,850</td>
<td>478,138,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Kivu/Western Congo Nile</td>
<td>Western RUSIZE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>400,858</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1,324</td>
<td>118,429</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>42,385,546</td>
<td>118,429,267</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lake Kivu/Western Congo Nile</td>
<td>Western RUTSIRO</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>324,654</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>5,224</td>
<td>261,699</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>248,495,640</td>
<td>192,165,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Highlands/Northwest Volcanic</td>
<td>Northern BURERA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>336,582</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3,779</td>
<td>185,786</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>128,330,150</td>
<td>185,786,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern Volcanic/Eastern Congo Nile/Western Congo Nile</td>
<td>Western NYABIHU</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>294,740</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>80,510</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>48,332,274</td>
<td>80,509,707</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwestern Volcanic/Lake Kivu</td>
<td>Western RUBAVU</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>403,662</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>41,622</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>61,527,150</td>
<td>51,436,480</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwestern Volcanic/Northern Highland</td>
<td>Northern MUSANZE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>368,267</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2,854</td>
<td>98,449</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16,792,926</td>
<td>98,449,214</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not zoned</td>
<td>Kigali KICUKIRO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>318,564</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>1,133</td>
<td>37,247</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43,556,000</td>
<td>74,494,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not zoned</td>
<td>Kigali NYARUGENGE</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>294,561</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>946</td>
<td>42,037</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>13,706,000</td>
<td>73,557,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeastern Plateau/Bugesera</td>
<td>Eastern NGOMA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>336,928</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3,401</td>
<td>165,987</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>112,020,820</td>
<td>191,639,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeastern Plateau/Eastern Plateau/Eastern Semi-Arid Agro pastoral Zone</td>
<td>Eastern KAYONZA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>344,157</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>5,497</td>
<td>140,465</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>70,075,000</td>
<td>158,863,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeastern Plateau/Western Semi-Arid-Agro Pastoral Zone</td>
<td>Eastern KIREHE</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>340,368</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4,452</td>
<td>251,670</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>84,973,518</td>
<td>259,556,921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Congo/Eastern Congo Nile</td>
<td>Southern NYARUGIRU</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>294,334</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4,168</td>
<td>285,876</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>248,976,498</td>
<td>285,876,377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>350,140</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>3,421</td>
<td>165,218</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>85,315,233</td>
<td>167,254,363</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>336,582</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>3,486</td>
<td>142,261</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58,881,500</td>
<td>148,284,344</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own calculations based on LODA administrative data, FEWS NET 2011, and EIVC3. Note: Q3 and Q4 refer to third and fourth quarter respectively.
FAO, together with its partners, is generating evidence on the impacts of social protection on poverty reduction, food security, nutrition and resilience and is using this to provide related policy, programming and capacity development support to governments and other actors. Countries include Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, Senegal, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

For more information, please visit FAO’s social protection website: www.fao.org/social-protection