

With lack of available childcare, women may take their children with them when engaged in agricultural work, Huye District.



Making Rwanda's Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme Public Works Care-Responsive

Programmatic notes for Women's Economic Empowerment Policy and Programming

August 2017

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PROGRAMMATIC NOTES

Rwanda's Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP), which comprises cash transfers, public works and financial services, aims to eradicate extreme poverty by 2020. Public works, the focus of the research outlined in this note, provides paid employment for extremely poor households with at least one able-bodied adult. The aim of the VUP is for the very poorest to 'graduate' out of poverty through the programme. This note examines how VUP Public Works can avoid a 'double burden' on working women and instead generate a 'double boon' by providing paid work that empowers women and supports their unpaid care work responsibilities.¹ The research was carried out using a mixed-methods approach in four sites: Muko in Musanze District and Simbi, Gishamvu and Mbazi in Huye District. The focus of this note is on Simbi and Gishamvu in Huye District, where women were participating in VUP. Mbazi in Huye District was used as the control site, where VUP was not implemented.

Successes of VUP Public Works – what promotes a 'double boon'

A key finding of the research is that *women strongly value paid work*. Across surveys and in-depth case studies, women spoke of the wages they earn from VUP Public Works as a valuable contribution to household income and family wellbeing. Around two-thirds of women (65 per cent) said the income they earn from VUP Public Works is 'very important' to them, while a further one in five said it is 'important'. Women spoke of prioritising income-generating opportunities over care work, because 'you cannot live without money.' When asked about their primary reasons for engaging in paid work, women said that being able to pay for essentials and support the family were key motivations.

Paid work is tough but provides money.

Women in Care Body Map exercise, Huye District

Table 1 Sampling

Name of site	Simbi (Huye): VUP	Gishamvu (Huye): VUP	Mbazi (Huye): non-VUP
Number of women surveyed	34	28	18
Number of women interviewed for in-depth case study	9	1	0

Secondly, the research finds that wages earned from VUP Public Works *improve the family's wellbeing*, because wages are used to pay for a range of essential needs, such as food, education, and health-related expenses. This reflects the results of the Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey 2013/14 which finds that public works wages are spent on consumption (food and clothes), farm/animals, and education and health (NISR 2015: 29). Our research indicates that wages are sometimes used for help with care work, or as contributions to savings groups. Women's paid work can have a positive impact on family unity and wellbeing, as husbands and children appreciate the additional income, especially in relation to paying for food

and school costs. Women's daily income helps to smooth household consumption, particularly when men's wages are received only once a month. This is in line with other evidence, which suggests that the VUP 'plays a positive role in improving child well-being and quality of care' (Roelen and Shelmerdine 2014: 3).

When I do the paid work, I am able to support my family in one way or another. I can buy food and solve simple home problems that require money.

Uwere Claudine, Huye District

Finally, women who are able to balance paid work and unpaid care work benefit from family support and sharing of care responsibilities, and the combined income of both husband and wife. In these cases, husbands provide help with care tasks, distributing and easing the responsibility for care slightly away from the women.

Challenges of VUP Public Works – what hinders a 'double boon'

A first barrier to the 'double boon' is that VUP Public Works can intensify the double burden of paid and care work and can increase women's time poverty, with negative consequences for women's physical and psychosocial wellbeing. The majority of women face significant strain in balancing paid and care work, particularly if they are from female-headed households and/or single-parent families. Sole female earners said they had to get up very early to prepare food before work and also had to take their infants with them to work. Women report returning from work very tired, and then undertaking care tasks in and outside the home. Others said they went to work tired as a result of the large amount of time they had to spend on care work.

It is difficult to take care of children if they are still young. If they [women] have to go for paid work, the care for the children is not enough and some [women] might fear to participate [in paid work].

VUP staff member, Huye District

A study by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2016 supports this finding: its report found that VUP Public Works has increased the workload of many participating women and their children, and only partially promotes the economic advancement of women (Pavanello et al. 2016: 22).

Many women find the time they have to travel to work challenging, Huye District.



Sometimes [my mother] works very far away from home and we may spend the whole day without seeing her.

Kayiranga Samson, Huye District

A second barrier pertains to the distribution of unpaid care work. *Cultural gender norms still place the responsibility for household tasks with women*, limiting the possibility of 'redistribution' of care responsibilities within the household. 'According to the culture, women have to deal the home activities', according to Barore Kelly from Huye District. Such gender norms are already in place during childhood with children in Huye indicating that they cannot be seen 'carrying the baby and cleaning because we can be laughed at.'

These findings are in line with an earlier study in 2012, which found that women face much greater care responsibilities than men, with 62 per cent of female respondents describing themselves as the primary caregivers in their households (FATE Consulting 2013: 22).

It's hard to get time to rest and... it's hard because it's not a guarantee to get work to do.

Ineza Alice, Huye District

Finally, the research finds that *the conditions of VUP Public Works – poor pay, difficult labour conditions, and distance from the worksite – all increase the drudgery of women’s work.* Fewer days worked compared to targets, significant payment delays, low rates of pay, limited skills development, and long distances to worksites contribute to women’s feelings of being overburdened. This is supported by a number of other studies,

which find that women are regularly exhausted by VUP Public Works, and that the commute to and from public works sites deepens women’s time poverty (FATE Consulting 2013: 22; Ayliffe 2014: 19). The kind of work provided by VUP Public Works creates health problems, such as headaches and back, chest, arm and leg pains.

[As a result of] VUP activities in the road, we feel back and arm pains and get headaches.

I get problem mainly when my baby cries while am working in VUP, carrying... her on my back and then she cries for breastfeeding which affect usual works.

I suffer constant sickness due to overworking.

Umutoni Liliose, Huye District

Women, Huye District

CASE STUDY

Mukamanzi Grace

Huye District, Rwanda

Mukamanzi Grace, a divorced mother of two children, is a beneficiary of the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP). She works on VUP Public Works, constructing and rehabilitating roads and terraces. She takes her youngest child with her to the VUP worksites, which are located far away from her home.

She combines VUP Public Works with other paid work, usually digging for landowners. She is paid immediately upon completion of the other work, which helps smooth her consumption because the VUP Public Works only pays her on a monthly basis.

As Grace is a single caregiver, her children help out with undertaking care tasks when she is engaged in paid work. They are happy to do this and thereby contribute to the family’s wellbeing. However, they also say they feel bad about their mother working so hard and having little time for them.

Female-headed households with small children are particularly vulnerable to the double burden of paid and care work. Women who are the sole caregivers of children find that their work opportunities are limited. When they do secure paid work, they feel the need to sacrifice childcare at the expense of income generation.

Steps towards a double boon under VUP

A key priority for VUP Public Works is to expand its range of projects and make them more sensitive to the facts of unpaid care work and women's heavy burdens. This is already in train, as the Government of Rwanda is implementing an expanded public works programme which provides work with flexible hours that is less physically demanding and located closer to beneficiaries' homes (Ayliffe 2015: 4).

Considering these research findings, alongside the wider implications of other recent assessments of Rwanda's VUP, there are a number of steps that the Government of Rwanda and VUP can take to empower women and families:

- Recognise that female-headed households and sole-caregiver households are uniquely exposed to risk and vulnerabilities, and are most likely to suffer as a result of the 'double burden' of paid and care work. These households may be prioritised for VUP direct support (unconditional cash transfers) as opposed to public works.
- Expand the *ubudehe* credit scheme to be more inclusive of women, taking on board the research findings, which demonstrate women's desire to be productive farmers, and to start or expand businesses. Women clearly articulated that they would appreciate regular workshops and training on farming techniques to increase productivity; provision of seeds and fertilizers, domestic animals and veterinary services; feeder roads to get their produce to markets; and sustainable measures to control soil erosion.
- Consider the national rollout of childcare facilities at worksites and at home following lessons from current United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) pilots. Women interviewed said that care for children was the most difficult task to handle in combination with paid work. Availability of childcare facilities would allow for leaving children in safe and capable care when women are undertaking paid work, either as part of VUP or otherwise.
- Prioritise public works projects in Simbi and Gishamvu that provide better access to clean water and sources of energy for clean cooking. Women in this study repeatedly spoke of the time spent in securing clean water and firewood for cooking. Key informant interviewees indicated that the provision of improved stoves, use of biogas, and provision of piped water and water tanks could reduce the drudgery that women face in carrying out these tasks.
- Raise the wage rate across all public works projects, and pay participants more promptly. Women reported in interviews that they felt they were paid too little for labour on public works, and that they wanted to be paid more promptly: within three days of the work being carried out. Adequate and regular pay helps to plan the need for any additional work and therefore management of time.
- Prioritise the inclusion of indicators on care and gender-disaggregated data in VUP's monitoring and evaluation framework.

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Credits

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Notes

1. Further details of research findings underpinning this brief can be found in Rohwerder *et al.*, forthcoming.

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Balancing unpaid care work and paid work carried out qualitative and quantitative research in India, Nepal, Rwanda, Tanzania across 16 sites. This research explores how women's economic empowerment policies and programmes can take unpaid care work into account, in order to enable economic empowerment to be optimised, shared across families and sustained across generations. It focusses on the social

organisation of care in low income households, and at the role of families, state, private sector and not-for profit sector.

Ultimately it aims to identify measures that can lead towards a 'double boon', creating paid work that empowers women and provides core support for their unpaid care work responsibilities.

The Balancing unpaid care work and paid work project explores the successes, challenges and lessons for Women's Economic Empowerment programmes and policies.

Creating and sharing new knowledge on the balance between paid work and unpaid care work

Advocating for decent paid work, providing support for unpaid care work responsibilities and removal of barriers to entry and retention in paid work

Resulting in women's economic empowerment that is optimised, shared across families and sustained across generations

LOW PAID WORK

RWANDA



Research was undertaken in 2016 in four sites in the districts of Musanze and Huye in Rwanda:

📍 Muko (Musanze District)

📍 Gishamvu (Huye District)

📍 Simbi (Huye District)

📍 Mbazi (Huye District)

PROJECT LEAD:



Institute of Development Studies

RESEARCH PARTNERS:



BRAC REU

Data in Rwanda were collected by BRAC REU team, led by Dr Jenipher Twebaze Musoke.

UPTAKE PARTNER:



ActionAid

For more project background information, publications and access to datasets and case studies, visit interactions.ids.ac.uk/wee

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