A Local Perspective of The Vision 2020 Umurenge Program and the Land Tenure Regularization Program

Anna Berglund
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Foreword

How do villagers in Rwanda perceive government policies? That is the question that this report attempts to give an answer to in relation to two successful and large scale government programmes – the social protection program Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme and the Land Tenure Regularisation Programme. Both these programmes are partly financed by Sweden, and this anthropological study was commissioned by the Embassy of Sweden in Rwanda to contribute to the learning about how two programmes work. Hopefully it will inspire a discussion among policy makers, implementers and development partners about how the programmes could be further developed to become more effective.

Why is it of interest to find out how villagers and intended beneficiaries perceive policies? Would it not be more interesting to find out what actually happens rather exploring perceptions? First, let us be clear that this piece of research is not a substitute for monitoring of outputs through registry data indicators or evaluations of impact through rigorous quantitative studies. Still, if one wants to design and implement policies in a way that best addresses the problems of the poor the first one to ask about these policies should be the beneficiaries themselves. They know what works for them, and they know what does not work as well. Hence qualitative perception based studies is an unmatched methodological tool for understanding the more complex social and economic mechanisms which explain why some things work and others do not. A qualitative inductive approach, as the one applied here, is also better suited to discover unintended effects than a deductive approach based on a pre-determined idea about how a programme should work.

As all methods this approach has its limitations. First, it might seem to overemphasise the problems in the programmes researched. As the author of the study explains, it is natural for people to share things they are unhappy with and do not understand rather than talking about things that works well and make sense to them. However, this potential bias is not really a problem from a learning point view since we want to know about the problems in order to learn and improve policies and policy implementation. Second, the perception based approach will sometimes result in descriptions of the programmes that might appear as factually incorrect. For example, in this study you will find a passage in the report saying that ‘the only purpose of the [Ubudehe] categorisation is to know who is in category 1 or 2 and will get their Mutuelle de Santé paid for by the government’. Anyone familiar with the Ubudehe categorisation will know that this incorrect. However, it is correct as an account of how people interviewed perceive the Ubudehe categorisation process. And it is important for policy makers to know how policies are perceived, in order counter-act problems that might arise from incorrect perceptions.

Another limitation is that the research only covers two villages. In these villages no VUP Financial Services beneficiary and very few Direct Support beneficiaries were found, and the only Public Works activity that was taking place was terracing. The small sample gives an opportunity to go into depth in interviews and observations, but the drawback is that the programmes studied might work differently in other villages. However, it needs to be pointed out that there were no connections between the two villages, and there were located in different areas of Rwanda. Some of the findings also correspond with observations from field visits staff at the Embassy of Sweden to Rwanda have made. Hence
the perceptions and behaviours encountered are probably not unique. So even if the findings should be treated with due caution the study contains rich reliable and possibly generalisable information which provides us with a unique opportunity to see the implementation of two government programmes through the eyes of the people in two rural communities.

Kigali October 2012

Joakim Molander
Head of Cooperation
Swedish Embassy, Kigali
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Glossary

Administration in Rwanda - Rwanda is composed of two layers of government (central and local) and of six administrative entities: the Central Government, the Province/Intara, the District/Akarere, the Sector/Umurenge, the Cell/Akagari and the Village/Umudugudu. The Central Government agencies’ responsibilities are mainly in policy formulation, regulation and support to Local Governments through capacity building. Local Governments with the administrative entities are mainly in charge of implementation of government policies and service delivery.

Akagari/Utugari – Cell/Cells. The Cell is the second lowest administrative level in Rwanda, and 2146 Cells are found throughout the country. The Cell Council coordinates activities in the villages constituting the Cell. It also collects and harmonizes basic statistics from the villages for transmission to the Sector.

Akarere/Uturere – District/Districts. Rwanda is made up of 30 Districts, which is the second level of administrative subdivision. The District ensures urban, economic and demographic development, and builds the capacity of Sectors to provide better services to the population. Executive Secretaries in every district collect data from each Sector. The analysis of the data is central to formulate measures to remedy any areas falling short of delivering on the policy objectives.

Intara - Province/Provinces – Rwanda has 5 Provinces, which are responsible for coordinating district development planning with national policies and programs, supervising implementation of the national policy in the Districts.

Mutuelle de Santé – Social health insurance that provides health coverage through voluntary local insurance, with an annual membership payment of Rwf 1500 - 7000 per person (depending on poverty level), and a 10% service fee paid up-front for each visit to a health center or hospital. The poorest individuals, as determined by the community (through the Ubudehe poverty categorization), along with those infected with HIV/AIDS, get their fees subsidized by District and nationally organized solidarity funds financed primarily by the central government and external aid partners.

Travaux d’Intérêt Général (TIG) – A program of community service, given as a legal sentence to genocide perpetrators. These confessed perpetrators take part in construction and agricultural projects in the communities they helped to destroy during the genocide against the Tutsi in 1994.

Ubudehe Poverty Categorization - A community based system that assesses the financial situations of citizens throughout Rwanda. Every Village/Umudugudu evaluates each citizen’s financial/asset situation and places him/her in one of six categories; category one for the poorest individuals, and category six for the wealthiest. The poorest individuals, as identified by the villagers, are considered by the government to be in need of financial assistance.

Umudugudu/Imidugudu – Village/Villages. Rwanda has 14975 villages, which constitute the smallest administrative entity of the country and hence closest to the people. Leaders at the village level are volunteers (elected by the villagers) responsible for mobilizing and sensitizing villagers to collectively define and resolve their economic and social problems, and to
participate in *Umuganda* and other government programs. These local leaders are also responsible for collecting basic data and information from the community and transmit it to higher administrative levels.

**Umuganda** – Mandatory public service from 8 am to 11.30 am on the last Saturday of each month. By law all able bodied persons between the age of 18 and 65 are expected to participate in this community work. *Umuganda* includes activities such as trash pick-up, ditch digging, making roads, planting trees, etc. Each *Umuganda* ends with a community meeting, in which villagers get the opportunity to take up their concerns, and the Umudugudu leaders present information from the *Sector*.

**Umurenge/Imirenge** – Sector/Sectors. There are 416 *Sectors* in Rwanda. The *Sector* is the third level administrative subdivision. The sector committee coordinates all activities of its *Cells* and harmonizes the data collected from the *Cells* for onward submission to the *District*. It sensitizes the population to implement Government programs and to be patriotic.
Executive Summary

Based on a one month’s long ethnographic field work in two rural villages (in Gasabo and Gicumbi District), the purpose of this report is to provide knowledge about and understanding for the local peasants’ point of view of the Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP) and the Land Tenure Regularization Program.

Vision 2020 Umurenge Program

The Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP) is an initiative by the Government of Rwanda in collaboration with development partners and NGOs. The aim is to eradicate extreme poverty by 2020 by creating off-farm employment opportunities and accelerating the process of monetization and formalization of the economy, through three components.

The first component, Public Works, aims to create off-farm employment infrastructure, through paid activities such as terracing, water harvesting, irrigation, roads construction, building of classrooms, health facilities, village settlements, etc. The second component, Financial Services, aims to foster entrepreneurship and off-farm employment opportunities, through credits to diversify/specialize farming/livestock activities and develop off-farm skills. The third component, Direct Support, is an unconditional cash transfer to poor households with no members qualifying for Public Works. The aim is to expand health and education coverage as well as to encourage the development of "appropriate" skills (e.g. handicraft) for the poorest people. At a household level VUP uses the community based Ubudehe poverty categorization together with a number of pre-determined criteria to identify extremely poor households and determine how to assist them.

Most of the informants in the villages studied participate in the VUP Public Works, whereas very few receive Direct Support, and none of them take part in the Financial Services. The type of Public Works provided in the villages is radical terrace making. As terrace making requires a lot of strength, the Public Works is best suited for strong and young people in Ubudehe poverty category 3, according the informants. Weaker people, who are usually very poor, feel like a burden and are intimidated to participate in the terracing, as others in their team have to help them to finish their individual task that is distributed at the beginning of the working day. The supervisor of the terrace making also prefers to supervise a team of strong workers, as he has a budget to keep and many hectares of terrace to complete.

Each participant in the Public Works has to open an account at the sector’s Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO), for a fee of Rwf 8000. The fee has a deterrent effect on people who consider participating as they feel that their wage disappears to account related costs instead of improving their life. VUP’s payment is supposed to take place every 15 days, but is always 5-45 days late, making it hard for VUP workers to plan bigger projects (like buying a goat or iron sheets for roofing). It also makes them dependent on that friends and family can help them out with food until they get paid. Due to the unreliable payments and the physically demanding work, VUP workers do in general not work for more than three days per week. Other days are spent on cultivating for others, to get money in the hand and secure food for the household. However, it is harder to find other types of jobs since the VUP started to make terraces in their area, as most of the land is occupied by VUP workers. This is especially problematic for people in Ubudehe poverty category 2, who depend on
their daily labor and daily pay to be able to eat, and who therefore cannot “afford” to participate in the Public Works.

Every year, each Umudugudu (village) goes through a process of collectively defining which Ubudehe poverty category people in their community belong to. People in the poorest category 1 receive VUP’s Direct Support. In the village in Gicumbi, people in category 2 with labor capacity are the ones who are first offered to participate in the Public Works. However, many of these people turned the offer down. In the village in Gasabo anyone can work for VUP regardless of their poverty level, as long as they are strong enough for the terrace making, which is mostly true for people in category 3. As a consequence, most people participating in the Public Works in both villages belong to category 3. For the informants, the Ubudehe poverty categorization foremost serves to distinguish the ones in category 1 and 2, that get financial support for their Mutuelle de Santé (i.e. Rwanda’s public health insurance). Category 3 seemed to be a very elastic category, in which very poor people as well as people relatively well-off were placed, and does therefore not tell much about a person’s or household’s poverty level.

The people are able to participate in the Public Works have been able to improve their life conditions by repairing their houses, buying clothes, goats and food, and put their children in school. Some workers graduated from Ubudehe poverty category 2 to category 3 within a year, as their neighbors could see that they had acquired a better life with their VUP salary. However, none of these graduates had been able to buy land or provide their children with higher education that would secure more permanent improved living conditions. Therefore, they depend on continuous work for VUP not to fall back into Ubudehe poverty category 2. Paying the Mutuelle de Santé fee of Rwf 3000 per person without any financial assistance is of great concern to people who have graduated from category 2 to category 3, who find this fee unaffordable in spite of their salary.

Many villagers had all their farmland and only source of livelihood, turned into terraces, as VUP implemented the Public Works in the area. These landholders did not have any other choice than to start working for VUP, and now depend on the VUP wage for their survival. The terraces that VUP are making will depend on fertilizers for 3 years to come. This is a source of stress for peasants, as fertilizers are expensive and unaffordable for them. They therefore fear to go hungry for the coming years, as crops will not grow well on their sterile plots. The mono-cropping that VUP is implementing is furthermore risky according to the peasants, as there are no other crops to fall back on if the harvest is damaged. Peasants have tried to discuss their fear of starvation with the Umurenge (Sector) leaders, but feel that the leaders show indifference for their wishes and needs. Peasants feel frustration and anger about the political decisions that affect their everyday life, but at the same time powerless and forced to obey the orders from above.

Villagers agreed that the Public Works are good for those who are able to participate, but it excludes a lot of people, in particular the vulnerable. Some informants were upset to see that poor people are struggling with the same difficulties as before or worse since VUP was implemented in their area, whereas ones with better living conditions are getting an opportunity to make more money. Thus there seem to be a difference between the government’s stated intentions of VUP’s Public Works (reduce extreme poverty, enhance development and increase agricultural production), and the peasants experiences of the
outcomes of these policies (VUP’s Public works is best suited for people with some financial back up, and the mono-cropping on the terraces might lead to starvation).

**Land Tenure Regularization Program**

*Land Tenure Regularization Program* is a set of administrative procedures undertaken to clarify the rights of the occupants of land. The landholders are provided long-term, usufruct rights (up to 99 years, depending on land use) that can be sold, passed on to heirs, mortgaged, leased, and used for mortgaging and credit purposes. The land registration started in Gasabo and Gicumbi in 2010. Land registration officers began by conducting land demarcation in the field to identify parcel boundaries, in the presence of land owners and all adjoining neighbors. The boundaries were marked on an aerial photo, and a claim receipt that was issued and signed by all adjoining neighbors. Information from this receipt was displayed publicly. If no objections were raised, the information was formally registered, and a certificate given to the landholder upon payment of a fee of Rwf 1000 per plot.

Land disputes have formerly been common in rural areas. With the registration of land titles such disputes are avoided, as the boundaries and the landholder of each plot are documented. However, due to the registration fee, the distance to the land registration offices and absent and imprisoned husbands who need to sign the land registration certificate when it is collected, the majority of our informants did not have their certificate. This was not a source of concern to them, as they knew that their plots were registered in their name either way.

Even though people are happy to have their plots registered, they also claim that having a plot has lost its meaning, since the only thing you can do legally with it is to grow the government approved crops. The registration makes it difficult to sell of a piece of land (as you have to pay a fee of Rwf 60 000 for a technician to draw new boundaries) in order to build a house, send a child to secondary school, or solve a financial strait. This does not make sense to the villagers. As a consequence, villagers have sold parts of their plots to neighbors, or passed on parts of their plots to heirs, using the traditional way of transferring land with witnesses and a selling contract. New owners and new boundaries have in these cases not been registered.

People are aware that this traditional way of selling plots is no longer allowed, but it is applied in order to solve financial straits. However, this way of selling land make prices drop, as the buyer does not want to pay the full price for a plot that is not officially registered in his/her name. We might see problems related to these deals in the future, as the seller in a situation of conflict might use his/her land registration certificate to claim ownership of the sold piece of land. It might also cause troubles and conflicts when children who are to inherit land discover that their parents’ land registration certificate does not correspond with the settlement that their parents and the buyer has agreed upon. The outcome of the *Land Tenure Regularization Program* might thus be different from what the policymakers had in mind, as the registered land titles in some cases do not correspond to the reality in rural areas.
1. Introduction

Sida has provided financial support to the Land Tenure Regularization Program and Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP) since 2010. Reports and reviews of the programs have been published by the Rwandan government as well as by International NGO’s and donor countries. These reports are often based on quantitative studies with a macro perspective, and lack the point of view of the people affected by the programs. As a consultant for the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), I have conducted a one month long ethnographic field work in two rural villages, in order to grasp the local understanding of the VUP and Land tenure regularization Program.

The purpose of this report is to provide an understanding and knowledge for the local peasants’ point of view. That means that I in this report disregard if my informants’ understanding of their reality and the impacts of the Vision 2020 Umurenge Program and the Land Tenure Regularization Program are ”objectively” verifiable. Instead, the purpose is here to give an image of how locals understand the implementation of these programs, how they feel it affects their lives, what the social consequences are, and their attitudes and reactions to the changes that come along with these programs.

I would also like to emphasize that while asking questions about these programs, people tend to share the things they are unhappy with and do not understand, rather than the things that are working well and make sense to them. The results in this report might therefore seem unbalanced and negative. In order to balance things up, I have asked people to tell me about the positive effects of the programs. These observations are summed up in each chapter.

2. Method

In order to collect material for this qualitative study, I have conducted one-month field work (7 July – 11 August 2012) in two villages (imidugudu), one in Gasabo District (Kigali Province) and one in Gicumbi District (Northern Province). This study is based on an inductive approach, exploring intended and unintended effects of the programs’ implementation as perceived by villagers.

My former experience in Rwanda has apart from the establishment of contacts and close relationship to informants, provided me with knowledge of the country and its culture, as well as basic knowledge in the local language Kinyarwanda.¹

Focus has been laid on the organization of the VUP and Land Tenure Regularization Program, and the locally understood achievements and consequences of them. Conversations about everyday life, about the future and the past, wishes and needs, have also been an important part of the study, as a way of understanding the local reality.

The main underlying questions for the study are:

¹ I have conducted four earlier periods of field work (a total of 13 months) for my Ph.D. dissertation between September 2010 and March 2012. I also conducted a one month long field study in Rwanda for my bachelors thesis in 2004, and 2,5 months long field study for my master’s thesis in 2007.
• What are the intended and unintended effects of the programs?
• How is the selection of beneficiaries (Ubudehe categorisation) and the implementation of the programs perceived – fair and reasonable: why/why not?
• How do the programs affect social relations in the village?
• What role are the local leaders given in the implementation of the programs?
• How do the programs affect the local leaders’ role in the community and the relation between the local leaders and other villagers?
• Though a sensitive subject and difficult to research, it is also of interest to learn about how the programs relate to (affect or are affected by) ethnicity and reconciliation.

2.1 Geographical Areas Studied
The two villages in Gasabo District and Gicumbi District are chosen due to my earlier experience in these areas. Villagers are familiar with my presence since years back, which enable them to speak freely during interviews. My earlier field work has shown that short field studies are not likely to produce reliable results (this is further discussed under 2.4 Obstacles in the Field). Therefore, I decided that this relatively short study had to be done in areas where people trust me and my interpreter.

Gasabo District is situated in Kigali Province. The Umudugudu/village studied is however not situated in an urban setting. It is found deep down in a valley, 40 minutes walk from the nearest mud road. It takes about one hour to walk to the nearest school and market, and the health center is found at about the same distance but in the opposite direction. Apart from people’s houses and fields, you find two small bars in the umudugudu where people gather at the end of the working day drinking locally brewed banana beer, and a small shop where villagers can buy cooking oil, salt, sugar, matches, candles, soap and crops.

The umudugudu in Gicumbi District, Northern Province, is found near a rather heavily trafficked paved road, and villagers have access to all sorts of commodities and bars/restaurants nearby. The nearest primary school is found 30 minutes walk away, and the nearest health center is about one hours walk away.

2.2 Methods in the Field
Most people that my interpreter and I presented the study to were positive to participate. Others were suspicious, especially in Gicumbi, and did not want to be interviewed. The anonymity has been very important to our informants. Therefore I have not specified the Umurenge/Sector, Akagari/Cell or Umudugudu/Village in which the field studies were conducted, and our informants’ real names are not used.

Formal interviews, usually taking place in the informants’ home, have been complemented with informal conversations on the way to people’s houses, in the local bars, and as we have passed people working in the fields. The interviews have been semi-structured; I have had some questions at hand, but followed the turn of the conversation that the informant is taking, and adjusted new questions to his/her answers, trying to grasp what is important and matters to the informant. Each informant has been interviewed on at least two occasions.

I am accompanied by an interpreter in the field, who interprets the interviews and conversations, and help me to understand informants’ behaviors and reactions. I have
always worked with the same interpreter, he is also well known in the area, and he has a good relationship to the villagers.

Our informants are mainly villagers involved in VUP, but we have also interviewed a few people who have chosen not to participate in VUP Public Works. The people interviewed about the VUP, are also interviewed about the Land Tenure Regularization Program. The material from this field work has also been complemented with information about the Land Tenure Regularization Program from an earlier field study, conducted between October 2011 and March 2012.

2.3 Brief Background of the Informants
A total of 45 people are interviewed in this study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gasabo</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gicumbi</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Suspicion from the villagers and rumors spread about our study, caused an unfortunate imbalance between the two villages, with fewer informants in Gicumbi than in Gasabo (read more under 2.4 Obstacles in the Field).

Most people interviewed are 20-40 years old (35 out of 45 informants). That is the typical range of age for participators in the Public Works in the villages studied. Two old men in their 70’s were also interviewed, as well as some men and women in their 40’s and 50’s.

More men than women participated in this study. An explanation to this is that men had more time to spend with us, as women had to take care of children and household chores. Interviews with women generally had to take place late in the afternoon when they were done with the daily chores, and preferably when the husband was not at home, as women tend to stay silent and let the husband answer questions when he is present.

Ten of the eighteen women we interviewed lived alone with their children. Three of these women were widows and had lost their husbands in the war/genocide, twelve of these women’s husbands were in prison, and the remaining three have either been left by their husband or are their husband’s second wife.²

Most of our informants have small plots where they cultivate different crops for consumption (only five of our informants did not have any farmland at all), such as sweet potatoes, beans and cassava. However, many of them are not allowed to grow these crops since their land was made into terraces. On the terraces, peasants now have to grow the government approved Irish potatoes (ibirayi) or maize (ikigori). This change from multi-

² In this context it means that a man lives with his first wife, but has taken a second wife that lives in her own house in the same or the neighboring village. The second wife has children with her husband, and he comes to spend nights in her house on a regular basis. Sometimes he contributes with food or money, and in one case the husband had registered a small plot in his second wife’s name.
cropping to mono cropping is not well received by our informants, who prefer to grow different kind of crops mixed on their plots.

None of our informants, with an exception from a VUP supervisor, has enough land to grow sufficient food for the household. In order to make a living our informants work on other peoples’ land, participate in VUP’s Public Works, construct houses in Kigali or cut stones that are sold to companies.

The working hours for VUP’s Public Works is 7.30 am-1.30 pm. Work done on other peoples’ land is usually performed 6-12 am. After work the peasants go home to prepare the first meal of the day. The meal is cooked over open fire with firewood, and usually made up of Irish potatoes or sweet potatoes, mixed with a few beans. They eat a similar meal again around 8 pm.

The big majority of the villagers live in small houses constructed by bricks that they have made out of soil and grass. They often sleep on grass matts directly on the soil floor. Only half of our informants (23 people) have Mutuelle de Santé, and very few (16 people) send their children to school.

People belonging to Ubuhede category 1 and category 2 without any adult in the household able to do manual work, and hence qualified for Direct Support, are very uncommon in the two villages. We could not get any exact number, but villagers estimated that there were two or three people in each umudugudu belonging to category 1, about one forth in category 2, and three thirds in category 3. Among our informants the distribution is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Ubuhehe cat. 1</th>
<th>Ubuhehe cat. 2</th>
<th>Ubuhehe cat. 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gasabo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gicumbi</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.4 Obstacles in the Field

My earlier research suggests that there is a tendency for Rwandan peasants to reproduce the government’s official discourse, and what they think it is expected of them to say, when talking to “outsiders”.

The answers I got from informants in the early stage of my fieldwork in 2010 were more or less the opposite to the answer I got to the same questions two years later in 2012. I asked my informants to explain the reasons behind their changing opinions. I got answers such as “we just give people the answers we think they want to hear, cause they never do anything to help us anyways. What is the point in revealing our worries and concerns to them? We give them what they want, then they leave” or “It happens that people get punished by leaders for talking, and in the beginning we didn’t know who you would talk to, so we didn’t really dare to tell you how we felt”. Hence, simply asking people in the villages what they think about the government's policies and programs is according to my experience unlikely to produce reliable results. Open criticism of authority seems unthinkable for most poor and ordinary people in Rwanda, in spite of their disagreement of decisions directly affecting their lives. Trust is thus very important for people to speak their mind, and that requires long field studies.
In Gicumbi, where I have spent less time than in Gasabo over the years, and where I have only briefly been in contact with people working for VUP, rumors started to be spread about this study after only a few days visit. One of our informants told us that people feared to get in trouble for talking to us about the VUP. We never found out what they thought would happen to them if they talked to us, other than that authorities could get angry and punish them. After several unsuccessful attempts to talk to people, we decided not to come back to the village. I therefore have more material from Gasabo District than from Gicumbi District.

3. Report Structure
This report is divided into two sections: Section 4 deals with expected and unexpected outcomes of the Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP) in the areas studied, and section 5 deals with the expected and unexpected outcomes of the Land Tenure Regularization Program.

As the local point of view is the point of departure for this report, many quotations from the interviews are used to illustrate problems, consequences and opportunities villagers experience from these programs. Each section ends with a conclusion.

4. A Local Perspective of the Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP)
Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP) is an initiative by the Government of Rwanda in collaboration with development partners and NGOs. It started in 2008, and is financially supported by Sida since 2010. The aim is to eradicate extreme poverty by 2020 by creating off-farm employment opportunities, accelerating the process of monetization and formalization of the economy and thereby facilitating the eventual transition to a modern knowledge-based society, through three components:

1. Public Works aims to create off-farm employment infrastructure, through paid activities such as terracing, water harvesting, irrigation, roads construction, building of classrooms, health facilities, village settlements, etc.

2. Financial Services aims to foster entrepreneurship and off-farm employment opportunities, through credits to diversify/specialize farming/livestock activities and develop off-farm skills.

3. Direct Support is an unconditional cash transfer to the households with no members qualifying for public works. The aim is to expand health and education coverage as well as to encourage the development of "appropriate" skills (e.g. handicraft) for the poorest people.

At a household level VUP uses the community based Ubudehe poverty categorization together with land and labor criteria to identify extremely poor households and determine how to assist them.

4.1 VUP in the Areas Studied
VUP was initiated in the studied Sectors in 2009. Some of my informants have been working since the start, while others have started to work more recently. It is common to work more
intensively in periods, for example when the program’s worksite is not too far away from home, and work less during other periods, such as during harvest time when work has to be done on the own plot.

VUP’s most common type of Public Works is radical terraces making. That is also the only type of Public Work that our informants have participated in. Two of our informants belong to Ubudehe category 2 and have no household members able to work, and have therefore received VUP’s Direct Support. We have not met anyone that has taken a micro credit or loan through the program, even though we asked around for it.

The working day starts at 7.30 am every morning, Monday to Friday, and finishes at 1 or 1.30 pm. Depending on where the terraces are to be made, it takes everything from 15 minutes to 1.5 hours for our informants to reach the work site. Before the work starts each worker shows his/her ID to the supervisor, who makes a list of everyone present. He also controls that there is only one representative from each household per working day. He then distributes individual tasks that have to be completed by the end of the day. Generally each worker is demanded to dig 21 square meters. This can differ if the soil is rich in stones, or if the terrace has to be made very deep.

The people involved in the Public Works are offered to work 5 days per week, but only two people we spoke to work every day. The others work 3-4 days per week, since they find the work very physically demanding. When the payment is late, which is common, people take a break from their terrace making to work elsewhere, to be able to buy food. During the field study, the Public Works had stopped due to the strong sunshine (that makes the soil hard to work), and to give the Umurenge/Sector time to plan the next fiscal year’s VUP activities³. Villagers had therefore been without work for a month when we started the field study, and they were not sure of when or if the VUP work would start again.

The payment of the Public Work increased during 2012 from Rwf 1000 per day to Rwf 1500 per day. This has attracted more people to participate in the terrace making.

4.2 SACCO Account
In order to get paid from VUP, an account in the sector’s Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) is required. To walk to the SACCO takes about one hour, from both the umudugudu in Gasabo and the one in Gicumbi. The fee to open an account is all together Rwf 8000:

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<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening fee</td>
<td>Rwf 4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to SACCO building</td>
<td>Rwf 2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal fee</td>
<td>Rwf 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money that has to be left in the account</td>
<td>Rwf 1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rwf 8000</strong></td>
</tr>
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³ Rwanda’s fiscal year runs from July to June
All informants could specify the costs of opening an account, but they had trouble understanding why the cost is so high. One man said that “the bank is using the money that we save there, yet we have to pay every time we make a withdrawal. The profit is only going in one direction. They make money, and we lose money”. Another woman said that she didn’t understand why she had to contribute with Rwf 2500 to the SACCO building, when her own house is falling apart.

The account costs make people feel like they are working for free for a week for VUP, as they calculate the total cost of opening an account in number of working days.

Clarisse, a 39 year old woman that has worked for VUP since November 2011, explains:

“It is only when you have worked hard for one week, and you start the second week, that you can start to think that you work for money. The first week you don’t feel the motivation, cause you know that it is not your money you work for. It is the bank’s money. When you come to the SACCO to take out money the first time you see it is not even enough to pay back all the debts you had to take to be able to buy food when waiting for the wage”

The cost of opening an account is also contributing to the fact that poor people, usually belonging to Ubudehe poverty category 2, feel that they cannot “afford” to work for VUP4. When they cultivate for others, or work with construction or cutting stones, they are paid in their hands at the end of the working day. That feels more understandable and fair, and working several days for “free” (as the first 6 days of wage would go to the account opening) is just unthinkable for them, as they always have trouble to support their families with enough food. The SACCO fees have also contributed to that people use each other’s ID to work for VUP, instead of opening an account of their own.

4.3 Criteria to Work for VUP

The selection of workers for VUP’s public works looks different in the two villages.

Gicumbi

In order to select workers for VUP terrace making, the umudugudu/village leader organized a meeting in the village, where villagers together had to identify the 25 poorest people with capacity to work. These 25 people were offered to make terraces for VUP, but many of them turned the offer down. The umudugudu leader then tried to fill up the quote by offering anyone interested to work for the program, regardless of their poverty level. As that only attracted a few more people, the leader had to offer people in the neighboring umudugudu to work, to finally be able to send 25 people to the VUP work site. As a consequence, more people from Ubudehe poverty category 3 than from category 2, are working for VUP.

The lack of interest to work for VUP, the villagers explained, was due to an earlier experience with a development program that had hired people to make terraces in the area, but disappeared after some months without paying the villagers for their work. This has created

During the month of June, the next fiscal year’s action plan is validated in the Districts, and distributed to the Sectors.

4 People in ubudehe poverty category 2 do not have insufficient farmland and insufficient food but can work for others to survive. They have shelter but no livestock and they dress poorly.
a general lack of trust for development programs, and people feared that VUP would trick them in the same way.

**Gasabo**

In Gasabo the villagers are not involved in identifying who is entitled to work for VUP. Instead, if you wish to work, you go to the supervisor (*capita*) of the preferred work site, and ask for a job. People’s poverty level is not taken into account, instead the supervisor consider your work capacity. If you are strong enough you get to work. If the supervisor has enough people in his team he can send you to another work team nearby.

Jean-Claude, 27 years old, *Ubudehe* poverty category 2, explains:

Jean-Claude: Anyone can work, as long as you are only one person per household per day. You just go there [to the work site] and tell the supervisor that you need a job. Then you have to open an account in SACCO. If the supervisor has enough people in his team he sends you to another group to work.

Question: But are you guaranteed to get a job?

Jean-Claude: I work hard, so I don’t think the work leader can remove me from the list [of VUP workers].

Question: Is that how they choose people, according to how hard they work?

Jean-Claude: Yes of course! If you don’t have strength you cannot work for VUP. Ask my mother, she cannot work there. We have to dig 3 meters broad and 40 cm deep terraces in one day, and the weak people cannot do that. If they work they cannot finish their task on time, so the strong people have to step in and help them finish up their task of the day.

Question: Can you be denied work because you are weak?

Jean-Claude: Yes that is how it is! If the leader sees you are too weak he will say “I can see that you are not strong enough for this kind of work”. And that person will never dare come back again.

The supervisor of one team confirmed that he needs strong people to work on the terraces, since he has to keep a budget of Rwf 15 million for each hectare of terrace, set by the VUP manager at the Sector. In order to keep the budget each person is expected to dig 21 m² done per day, and that requires a lot of strength.

**4.4 Public Works and Strength**

The majority of our informants that work for VUP (35 out of 40) are not working the 5 days per week that VUP is offering. Making terraces is very heavy for the body. Informants complain about pain in shoulders, back and arms. One man in his early 20’s explains that “you will break if you work there every day. It is just not possible”. Therefore people work approximately 3-4 days per week. The days when they feel too tired to work they send somebody else from the family to work in their place (if there is more than one adult in the household), in order not to lose income to the household.

Ten out of the eighteen women we have talked to are the second wife of their husbands, have been left by their husband, have lost their husbands in the war/genocide or have their husbands in prison. These women do not have anyone that they can send in their place to
work for VUP. In some cases they give their ID card to a non-family member, to work for VUP in their name, as a way to give a friend or neighbor an opportunity to get an extra income for a few days. The two people then settle how much money the original VUP worker has to give the person who has temporary worked in her name.

It is well known among the villagers that it is not allowed to work in a non-family member’s name. However, it happens anyways to help neighbors that want to work a few days, but does not want to go through the trouble and costs of opening a SACCO account. Sometimes villagers from the neighboring umudugudu, belonging to a sector where VUP is not implemented, use a VUP worker’s ID, to get an opportunity to make some money they would not be able to make otherwise.

People in the neighboring umudugudu do not understand why they are not allowed to work for VUP, when they are just as poor as people in the VUP sector. The VUP supervisor, who is a villager, is also aware of when a person presents an ID card in the beginning of the shift that does not belong to him/her, but he does not seem to regard this as a problem, as long as the daily task is completed.

The amount of days per week and which periods of the year people work for VUP does not only depend on the hard work the terrace making requires, but also on the distance to the work site and the work that has to be done on the person’s own farmland. During planting and harvest periods, there is generally less time to work for VUP. When the terraces are to be made far from home, people also seem less motivated to work. The interviewed women said they find it hard to both work for VUP and manage the daily chores and care for their children, if the work site is more than one hour away. Pregnant and breastfeeding women find the VUP work hard to do in general, but when the worksite is far away they rarely consider going there.

Monique, 28 years old, with a 5 months old baby and a 2,5 years old child:

“I recently started to make terraces for VUP. Before they worked far away from here, and I was pregnant so I couldn’t go there. It took too long to get there and the work was too hard. I am working for VUP since two months back, and I took the opportunity to work because they are near my place. I needed to repair my house and I couldn’t imagine any other opportunity to get that kind of money. I will use my wage to buy new iron sheets, cause the ones I have are in bad condition and the rain gets in. If VUP continues to work close to my place again after the break, I will try to continue to work, if I am still in good health."

Even though making terraces is hard work, our informants emphasize that they are used to work hard, and that they do not expect to get anything for free. However, now that the pay has increased from Rwf 1000 to Rwf 1500 per day, they feel more motivated to make the terraces.

Celestin, 26 years old, married with two children:

“It was tough in the beginning, cause we worked so hard for Rwf 1000. We were much pressured to finish the work on time, and I got problems with my back and I even had troubles sleeping. I

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5 Cooking a meal over open fire takes about 2 hours. Before the cooking water has to be fetched, and firewood has to be collected, which might take a long time depending on the distance to the water source, and the time spent on fining branches on the ground (it is not allowed to break branches from the trees).
could only work for a few days in a row, and then I had to rest and find another job to be able to eat. It felt like I was falling apart. I even stopped to work for VUP for many months. But now they are paying Rwf 1500 per day, and that is very good money, so I recently decided to go back. And the work is not as hard as it used to be, we work until 1 pm or 1.30 pm, before we could work until 2.30 pm or 3 pm.”

The rise in pay has also attracted people with better living conditions, who were not interested in working for VUP before. Since the wage rise some of the wealthier families send one of their members to the terraces, to get an additional income to their original income, usually coming from farming and livestock. Celestin explains:

“Even the rich ones want to work for VUP now. Even families with many cows and big land send someone in the family to work for VUP; it gives them a good extra income. Then the rest of the family work on their own land and with their cows. You could never see these people working for VUP before. And I know people who have good skills for building houses, who used to go to the city for work, that now stay here and work for VUP. So this has become like a program for rich people”

Some better off peasants that we talked to go to work for VUP themselves, while hiring others (usually from Ubudehe poverty category 2) to work on their own land for Rwf 800 per day, in order both to gain money and to get their land cultivated.

4.5 Poor and Weak People are Excluded

It requires a lot of strength to make terraces, which excludes many poor people that feel intimidated to go and work for VUP. Very poor people, the informants explain, cannot afford to eat enough to be strong and work hard. Yet these people do not have any physical handicap, and do not qualify for VUP’s Direct Support.

When these poor people have gone to work for VUP, they have given up after some days or a couple of weeks. According to the villagers, and the supervisor himself, it is not allowed to refuse anyone to work for VUP because of their weakness. However, since each team has to finish the task distributed for the day, the “strong” people help the “weak” people to finish their individual task before anyone in the team can leave the work site. This makes the “weak” people feel like a burden, and they might even be discouraged to come back by the other people in the team. A group of young men explain:

“If someone is slow, the rest of us have to help that person to finish his task when we are done with our own task. That can take a long time. That person usually feels like a burden to the rest of us, and he realizes that this kind of terrace making is not for him. The weak people never last for long in the terraces”.

On some occasions the team has not managed to finish the task of the day on time. They have then been ordered to return the following day to finish the work without pay, as the budget would break otherwise. The villagers have understanding for this, but do not want to see it happening regularly. This situation is avoided if the team is made up of only strong people, they explain. Another supervisor says that there are easier tasks for the more vulnerable people to perform, such as planting grass on the terraces. However, the general understanding among our informants is that the Public Works are not for “weak” and poor people.
A group of four young men in their 20’s that we met outside the bar one day were very upset, and wanted to talk to us, since they had heard we made a study of the VUP program. They said:

“We have heard that this program is supposed to be for poor people, but poor people cannot work for VUP. Instead the poor ones are having more trouble now, and the ones who are a bit rich, they can get even more money. Is it a program for poor people or not?!”

4.6 Late Payments and Debts

VUP is generally late with their payments, which causes problems for the workers that are depending on their salary to pay debts and secure food for themselves and their families. The late payments are also given as the main reason not to work for VUP, among the five interviewed non-VUP workers from Ubudehe poverty category 2.

Helena, 22 years old, married with one child tell us:

“I cannot afford to work for VUP because they pay late, and I depend on my daily labor to be able to eat and feed my child. The people who work for VUP are the ones who have some kind of backup. They have food in their homes. I need at least Rwf 500 every day, otherwise my child will not eat.”

Helena lives in a very small clay house with her husband and daughter, and they do not have any land. Helena works on other people’s land for Rwf 800 per day, when there is work available. It is not every day she can find work, and the threat of being without food is a source of stress for the whole family. Her husband is trying to find work here and there, sometimes cultivating on other people’s land, sometimes transporting beers and sodas from the market to the local bar on his bicycle. Helena is aware that VUP pays almost the double per day than the work she and her husband perform, but she still says that they cannot afford to wait for the VUP salary for several weeks, or even months. “Think about spending more than a month without getting money, and the only thing you rely on to eat is your daily work”, she explains. She has thought about borrowing money from someone to be able to start working for VUP, but the costs for opening the account, and the thought of not knowing when the money will finally come to the account, made her drop that idea.

“If I would work for VUP, and borrow food and money from neighbors and in the shop until I got the payment, I would have to let those people know when I can pay them back. But no one trusts VUP around here. People know they can never know when VUP will pay, so they don’t want to give you a loan. The man who has the little shop here, he had trouble to run his business after letting so many people working for VUP buy things on credit. He ran out of money and couldn’t go and get new things for the shop, so now he does not let VUP workers buy on credit anymore. Therefore VUP is for people who are a bit rich, with some backup, or young men who don’t have children to feed but who get food from their parents.”

Clarisse who has three plots of farmland describes the situation in a similar way:

“I have plots where I grow cassava and sweet potatoes, and even some beans. During the weeks I wait for VUP to pay me, I can consume what I have saved from the harvest. And when I get paid I take a portion of the money to buy food. But for people without this kind of backup it is not possible to work for VUP. Those people prefer to work on other people’s land where they can get money right away.”
Emile, *Ubudehe* poverty category 3, married and a father of four children, has also dismissed VUP’s *Public works* as an option for income. In order to provide for his family he spends the week days in Rulindo District where he is collecting stones that are sold for construction. Even though that work is very hard, and he has to be far from his family, he feels that it is a better option than to work for VUP. He does not trust the VUP “because they never pay on time”, and he needs to assure food for his family. Working with stones gives money directly in the hand, for every car he fills up.

Emile, Helena and the other three people that cannot wait for the VUP’s delayed payments, said that if there was a guarantee that VUP would pay within the 15 days they are supposed to, they would consider VUP as a good option to make money and support their families.

“If VUP would respect the 15 days between the payments, I would work for them. I know they cannot pay workers every day, but if they could pay every week it would be even better. That would solve a lot of problems. But working for a month without payment like someone in an office, it is not possible for us. Feeding our children is an emergency.”

Everyone working for the program expressed that VUP’s delayed payments is making the planning of everyday life complicated. The longest the public workers had to wait for the payment was 45 days, but in general the payment is about ten days late. When the payment finally comes, they never know how much they will be paid. Clarisse tells us:

“I think that VUP really should start to pay on time. Otherwise we cannot get food and all the things we need, and it stops us from working well. There is a difference to work when you are weak and hungry, and it affects our families. If we don’t have money we can’t get food. The payment from VUP is sometimes so late that some of us have to quit the work out of hunger. One time we had to wait for two months before we got paid. It has improved now, but the payment is still always some weeks late. If it is two weeks late, you expect to get paid for the total of four weeks that you have been working since the last payment, but it never happens that way. Instead you are only getting paid for the two weeks that they are late to pay, and then you don’t know when the next payment will take place. It is very hard to know how much you will find in your account when you go to SACCO.”

Jean Claude and Merkiad are also confused about the sum of money they will get paid.

Jean-Claude:

“Sometimes when you go to SACCO, you might have calculated that you will have Rwf 12,000 in your account, but then you get surprised to hear that you only have Rwf 4000 there, and that you have to leave Rwf 1000 for savings. So you almost don’t have anything to take out, even though you have been working hard for many many days. Sometimes you can’t even pay back all the loans you have been taking in the meantime. This means that we never know how much we can borrow from others, and we never know in advance how much we are going to get paid. So you get confused, and sometimes you look like a fool in front of the person you have been borrowing money from. But now people are getting used not to understand the system of how much and when we are getting paid. When you work for VUP you rely on the payment, but right now we feel that we work for something unreliable. Some of us even think that there will be a day that they will not pay us at all, and we will work for nothing.”
Merkiad:

“We work on a daily basis for VUP, and the work is ok, but the problem comes with the payment. We can wait for the money for 45 days, and when the money finally comes it is just half of the money that you have been waiting for. Between the payments you depend on other people, you have to ask your neighbor, friends and family to help you out with food. And since not all the money comes at the same time it is difficult to do any big project, like buying a goat or something. You only have to make sure that you can pay the money and crops and food you owe everyone. Then almost all the money is gone... And sometimes when you are to be paid Rwf 20,000 you only get Rwf 17,000 or Rwf 18,000 cause they say the money has to go to the SACCO building. We don’t understand these things, and we are never sure about the money we will get.”

To handle the consequences of the late payments (apart from borrowing money and food from friends and family) people stop to work for VUP for a few days, and look for a job elsewhere so that they can buy food. When they have enough money to support their families for a couple of days, they go back to work for VUP again.

4.7 Terraces and Mono-cropping

People have started to work for VUP for different reasons. Many have seen it as an opportunity to make and save money in a way that is not possible when working for others, as VUP pays better and there is always work available. Other people have started because they did not have any other option, since VUP made terraces and implemented mono-cropping on all their farm land – their only source of livelihood.

The terrace making has not been positively received by the people who had land on the hillsides, for several reasons. First they were not informed in advance about when VUP would come and make terraces on their land. They all had crops growing on the hillsides that were uprooted when VUP’s workers started to prepare for the terraces. This ruined food for many weeks to come, and the time and money spent on the cultivation were in vain. The only option these people had, as their only source of livelihood just had disappeared, was to join VUP themselves, and make terraces on their own plots, uprooting their own and their neighbors’ crops. This made them very sad, but there was no point to protest against this since the authorities, according to the informants, “never listen to them anyways”. Instead they had been told that they should be happy about getting terraces made for free on their land.

Another problem with the terraces is that it makes the soil sterile, as crops do not grow well on the new terraces. In order to grow crops on the new terraces a lot of fertilizers are required. VUP will buy fertilizers for the first crops planted on the terraces, but after that people have to find a way to pay for it themselves. This is a source of stress, as it will take about three years before the soil in the terraces will become fertile, and paying fertilizers for all these years is impossible for the people we interviewed. Renting out the land will also be difficult, since no one would rent a plot that requires a lot of expensive fertilizers, where only one crop is allowed to grow. As the crops selected for the area are maize and Irish potatoes that are to be planted in September, the terraces have been empty for some

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6 The surface of the terrace steps is made up of the layer of soil that was found deep down on the hillside. That soil is sterile and requires a lot of fertilizers.
months. Some informants will have had their plots empty for eight months before the planting starts.

A group of women in Gasabo tells us about how they experience the terrace making on their plots:

“Before we were comfortable, we ate what we wanted and cultivated what we wanted. Then VUP decided to make terraces and uproot all our crops. We saw our food disappearing, and we knew the only option was to uproot our own crops, and make terraces, and get paid by VUP for it. This is what they call development, yet we ask ourselves how we are going to survive. We used to be better off before than we are now. We don’t have anywhere to cultivate now, the soil is dry, the terraces are empty, and VUP has not been around for more than a month. We do not know when they get back again, and we are seriously hungry and worried. We preferred the way it was before. But they are telling us that after 3 years the soil will be good again. But we need to eat during these 3 years. We are having problems to eat right now. Also, we will only be able to eat maize. Who can survive on only maize? And if VUP does not come back here again soon we really do not know what to do. They are the only ones we can rely on now. But we see that there are terraces on almost all hillsides around here, so we are afraid that there will be no work left to do soon”

People that used to survive on their land are now dependent on VUP for their living, and during VUP Public Works’ “break” (June-September), people are left without food and money. Informants that are cultivating for others also find it harder and harder to find work, as more and more land are made into terraces. This is a problem for the very poor people, who are too weak to work for VUP, or who cannot support themselves between the VUP payments.

In September, the public workers will swap from making terraces to spreading out fertilizers and planting the sector approved crops, Irish potatoes and maize, on the terraces. This type of mono-cropping has generally met a lot of skepticism from people. “What we need is diversity that can help us to have food security”, they explain, adding that relying on one single type of crop is very risky; “what will you eat if the harvest is very poor, or if the crops are attacked by insects? We don’t understand, is this development, to risk being without food?”, Jean-Claude is asking. But, Jean-Claude and his neighbors agree, since this is what the leader have decided, they have to endure the consequences, using the Kinyarwanda proverb “Policies are like a heavy stone that you have to carry” (Amatego arusha amabuye kuremera).

In spite of the criticism towards the terrace making and the mono-cropping, everyone we talked to said that many people can profit from VUP, and that it gives people an opportunity to make money in a way that is very rare to find in the rural areas. Even the ones who cannot “afford” to work for VUP say that they think it is a very good opportunity for the ones who can participate in the Public Works, and they do not begrudge their neighbors this opportunity. Landholders hope that VUP’s Public Work will continue for many years to come, they cannot see how they would make it without them as the government’s development policies (mono-cropping and terracing) in their view is making small scale farming impossible to survive on.
4.8 Improved Living Conditions

VUP Public Works enables subsistence peasants to make enough money to plan for bigger projects and realize wishes they have had for a long time. Marianne in Gasabo, who used to be in Ubudehe poverty category 2 but recently graduated to category 3, is one of these people. Her husband, to whom she was the second wife and had three children with, left her some years ago. She lives with her children in a small clay house, and she doesn’t have any farmland. Before she worked for VUP she survived on working for others, but since a year back she is working for VUP.

“VUP is a good start for someone who is trying to change his or her life. Anyone who works for this program can improve their lives, as long as you plan your future well. VUP is the best option for me now, cause I can get money and plan a big project. When I work for others it is just to survive for the day, but now I can plan some bigger projects. We need to expand our house, cause it is so small now. I will use some of my money to buy iron sheets for roofing. I have also been able to buy clothes for myself and my children, and soon I will get Mutuelle de Santé.”

Two other female heads of households agreed that VUP is the only option around to make a real change in your life. Repairing the house and buying clothes is what they primarily use their salary for. When these needs are satisfied they put their children in school, and if they can afford it they get Mutuelle de Santé.

School is very important, they all agree, but the increased school costs trouble them. Even though the school fee is abolished, they have to contribute to the “motivation for the teachers” and school benches, to a cost of Rwf 2500-3000 per child per year. That cost is more than the school fee of Rwf 1500 used to be. On top of the school costs, the required school uniforms cost Rwf 3000 – 4000 per year. The parents have also heard that from next year, school children have to wear proper shoes (open plastic shoes will not be allowed) and bring a proper bag for the school books. This is worrying; even though they work for VUP they do not think they will be able to afford these costs. They work about 3 days per week, and they estimate that they get around Rwf 7000-9000 for each VUP payment. Even though that is more money than any other job provides, they have to save for many months to afford, school fees, clothes, material for the house, and Mutuelle de Santé for the whole family, as most of the salary is spent on food.

Peter, a man in his 50’s in Gicumbi, has worked for VUP for a year. He has a small farmland, but it only provides the family with food for some days per year. Therefore VUP’s Public Works has been very important to him. He has a wife and four children, and the days that Peter is too tired to make terraces, he sends someone else from the family to work in order not to lose any income to the household. As a family they get Rwf 15,000 for each VUP payment. For the wages they have bought a goat, clothes and Mutuelle de Santé, and they eat better and more varied food than before.

Shema, a young man of 23 years, works for VUP since a few months back. His goal is to get married before the end of the year and needs a house to bring his future wife to. He works as much as he can for VUP, and for the wage he buys iron sheets and other things for the house he is building. He hopes that VUP will stay in the area for a long time, as he would like to save up money for a goat, or maybe even a cow, when the house is done. He is very glad that VUP is in the area and that work is available every day. Before he occasionally worked as “aid maison” (constructing houses) in Kigali, but he was never guaranteed job, and many
times he came back from Kigali without money. VUP Public Works is a much safer source of income for him.

4.9 Ubudehe Poverty Categorization

Every year, each umudugudu goes through a process of collectively defining which poverty category people in their community belong to. The umudugudu leader explains the characteristics of each category, whereupon villagers collectively place each person in a suitable category. The umudugudu leader then put up a list of villagers and their category in the local bar, so everyone can control that the categorizations were correctly done.

Villagers described the categories as follows:

Category 1 (Umutindi): People in this category are very poor and do not own any land and in some cases they do not even have a house. They often rely on others for food, and only a few of them are strong enough to work. If they work they cultivate for others. They have almost no clothes, and they cannot afford to put their children to school, nor pay for their Mutuelle de Santé.

Category 2 (Umukene): People from this category have insufficient farmland, but can work for others to survive. They have shelter but no livestock, they dress poorly and can hardly get Mutuelle de Santé.

Category 3 (Umukene Wifashije): If you do not belong to category 1 or 2, you belong to category 3, according to the informants. You would find very big varieties in category 3. Most of the people placed in this category have small and poor shelter and a small farmland with a minimal harvest. Their children can go to primary school, they can clothe themselves but with difficulty, they seldom have Mutuelle de Santé, but manage to have enough to eat. Others in this category are better off, and live in big concrete houses with real windows and doors, have several cows, and can eat and clothe themselves without difficulty.

The only purpose of this categorization is to know who is in category 1 or 2 and will have their Mutuelle de Santé paid for by the government, according to the villagers in Gasabo. Paul explains:

“The poverty categorization is about how much money you can pay for Mutuelle de Santé. If you are in category 1, the government pay the whole cost for your Mutuelle de Santé. People in category 2 pay Rwf 1500 for the Mutuelle de Santé, and people in category 3 pay the whole sum themselves [Rwf 3000]. People who work for VUP are automatically placed in category 3, cause they have a salary to pay their Mutuelle de Santé with”

In Gicumbi, people tell us that the categorization, apart from discern who will get their Mutuelle de Santé paid for, also serves the purpose of discern the poorest ones with strength to work, in order to offer them participation in VUP’s Public Work before people in category 3. In Gasabo, on the other hand, villagers were told at Umuganda that the people best suited for VUP are the ones in Ubudehe poverty category 3.

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7 Put into practice, the poverty category did not matter, as anyone was offered to work for VUP since there were not enough category 2 people interested.
Everybody, with an exception of 3 informants, knew what category they were placed in. People in category 1 and 2 felt that they were placed in the correct category. Almost everyone in category 3 thought they were better suited for category 2. They compared themselves to people in category 2, and admitted that they had better living conditions than some of them, but they also saw that their situation was similar to others in category 2, and above all that many people in category 3 was much better off than themselves. In comparison to these richer people in category 3, they thought that it would be more fair if they themselves were placed in category 2. The main reason to why people would like to be in category 2 instead of 3 is to get financial help to pay Mutuelle de Santé, as all of them claimed that it is difficult save up Rwf 3000 for each family member.

For an outsider such as myself it was confusing that a person with a very small house, almost no land and insufficient food, belonged to the same category (3) as a person with 6 cows, a big cement house (looking similar to some houses in Kigali), several big plots that he paid others to work on, decent clothes and even a watch around his wrist. However, category 4, 5 and 6 do not exist according to the villagers. Only one person had heard about these higher categories, but said that these people lived near the Sector center or in Kigali, never in the villages.

Three people in category 2 fear that they will graduate to category 3 for the next round of categorization. Peter from Gicumbi has worked for VUP for more than a year, and has recently graduated from Category 2 to category 3. Even though he thinks the graduation is fair, he is also worried about the costs of the Mutuelle de Santé and about not being able to continue to work for VUP:

“I graduated to category 3 this year. The others in the village didn’t think I should be in category 2 anymore, cause they could see that I could buy fertilizers and a goat. So now I have to pay for my Mutuelle de Santé by myself. Maybe it is not fair that I stay in category 2, but the money I get from VUP is just for surviving. Even the cow I have here is from one cow per family⁸, and I don’t have enough farmland to survive on. The money from VUP is just to feed my family and buy clothes. It is still very hard for me to pay Mutuelle de Santé for all of us. And if I cannot continue to work for VUP [if people in category 2 are prioritized] and my goat dies, I might be back in category 2 next year. That would be a failure for me. Development is about going forward and not falling back. So I really hope I can continue to work for VUP.”

Jeanne, a single mother of four children, has worked for VUP for more than a year, and she also worries about graduating to category 3 this year, as she finds the Mutuelle de Santé unaffordable. At the same time, in spite of the expensive Mutuelle de Santé, graduating to category 3 would be some kind of proof that she is moving in the right direction, as “the goal is always to develop and move forward and not to get poorer”.

Jeanne, Peter and two others we talked to that had graduated from category 2 to category 3, were placed in this category because neighbors could see that they had been able to acquire clothes, iron sheets, or an animal. However, none of them had been able to buy land or give their children a higher education that would secure a more stable improved economical situation. Therefore, in order to stay in category 3 they depend on continuous income from VUP, otherwise they fear that they will fall back into category 2.

⁸ Another government program.
4.10 Direct Support

The only two people we have spoken to that have received VUP’s Direct Support live in Gasabo. We did not manage to find anyone receiving Direct Support in Gicumbi before we decided to interrupt the field study in that district.

Biago, a man in his early 70’s, has received Direct Support for more than a year. He has eight grown up children that have left the house. He lost his first wife in the genocide, and remarried another woman that also passed away a few years after the wedding. He had a daughter with his second wife; she is now 9 years old. They live together in a small clay house. Kagoro, Biago’s son, goes to SACCO in the middle of every month to take out money to his father. VUP pays his Direct Support on time, and they even call to let him know that the transfer is made. He is not sure of how much he is paid each month, but he usually takes out Rwf 10,000 or Rwf 20,000 depending on what he plans to do with the money. The VUP leaders ask him what he has used the money for, and remind him that he needs to use his money wisely. So far, the money has mainly been used for buying food and iron sheets to repair his house, and at one occasion he bought a hoe and a blanket. He also bought a goat some months ago, but it died after two weeks. For the money he got from selling the goat meat he bought 3 chickens that he still has. He feels very lucky to receive Direct Support, and could never have imagined to buy animals before he started to get this financial support. “VUP has saved me” he says.

Kagoro (Biago’s son) suffered from a disease as a child. As a result he is limping and work slower than others, so the VUP Public Work is out of the question for him (both because of the physical strength it requires, but also because of the late payments) but he manages to work for others and survives on that. He is not qualified for VUP’s Direct Support, but VUP got him iron sheets to replace his grass roof (as the government decided to abolish grass roofing), and he also got a cow from the One Cow per Family project. He gets financial support to pay Mutuelle de Santé for himself, his wife and his six children. He has also managed to put all his children in school, as he got a reduction of the fee and only pays Rwf 500 per child and year. “I cannot ask for anything more, really. VUP helped me to repair my house, I have now gotten a cow and my children are in school. They have been doing a lot for me, I had nothing before” he tells us.

Emmanuel, an old man in his late 60’s, gets upset when talking about VUP. He is in Ubudhehe poverty category 1, and he used to live in a small traditional Rwandan house with grass roof. That house was demolished when the government decided to abolish such houses. In connection with this, VUP bought him iron sheets for a cost equivalent of 6 months direct support9. It has now been 1,5 years since his house was demolished, but since he does not have the strength nor the money to build a new house, his iron sheets are left untouched, and he is staying with friends and family. “I am a poor person, but I didn’t get money from VUP. Instead they gave me iron sheets that I still keep somewhere, cause I

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9 He cannot specify how much money that was, but he was told he got the iron sheets instead of six months direct support.
haven’t been able to build a house” he says in an upset voice. He does not understand why he did not receive money that would have been useful to him instead of the iron sheets\textsuperscript{10}.

\section*{4. 11 Relationship to Leaders}

As this report has shown, there are some things that concern people, such as the terrace making, the mono-cropping, the \textit{Ubudehe} poverty categorization and the selection of VUP workers. However, peasants feel discouraged to bring these things up with leaders, as they often are told to be “ignorant”, “backwards thinking” and that they have to embrace the development that is brought to them if they want to improve their lives. “No one listens to us. What is the point in expressing our worries and concerns? Some leaders even laugh at us... Talking to them does not changes anything”, Emile tells us.

“The leaders never take responsibility for the consequences of their policies”, people are expressing in an angry tone when we ask people at the local bar if there is anywhere they can turn with their complaints.

“Leaders are always sure to have food on the table. We know that maize will not grow well here, we know this soil! We also know that it is impossible to survive on only one crop. No one can live from growing one thing. But they [the leaders] just come here and tell us what we need to do, and then they leave. They never think about what we will eat or how we are to survive on empty terraces and only one crop. These people have their security and their salary, but we depend on our land. It is all we have.”

As people feared that the mono-cropping would cause starvation, a group of villagers brought up their concern with the sector agronomist. His reply to this was to start a cooperative down in the village, whose objective was to make sure that everyone followed the policy of mono-cropping on the terraces. The leaders of this cooperative, appointed by the agronomist, stopped villagers from planting sorghum in February. Instead the terraces were left empty. This made villagers angry at the cooperative, at the same time as they had understanding for that they had to stop the sorghum planting, otherwise they would have gotten into trouble with the agronomist and the sector leaders.

After this attempt to influence the leaders’ decisions, the villagers felt discouraged to do anything. “Now that we tried to talk to the agronomist we just got punished for it, by having people down in our own village watching us. We never know what the leaders will do, and they often punish people who try to talk to them. Some even end up in prison. We don’t dare to talk to them, and they don’t care if we suffer”, a woman who passes the bar reveals.

The villagers have never heard about any kind of complaint mechanism for VUP, or anywhere else to where they can turn with their questions and concerns. The VUP supervisor in the village claims that his task is to make sure the terraces are made, and that he cannot do anything to change the things people are not happy with. Bringing up a concern with the umudugudu leader does not make any difference, as he would not bring the complaint up to Cell or Sector level. A group of villagers sitting outside the local bar

\textsuperscript{10} Since I had not read that VUP supports people with iron sheets and school fees I asked both Kagoro and Emmanuel if they were sure that it was VUP that had provided them with this. They both claimed that that was the case.
explains: “We cannot demand him [the umudugudu leader] to do anything for us. Instead, his task is to make sure that we implement the orders he gets from the sector”.

Both the umudugudu leaders in Gasabo and Gicumbi confirmed that their task is to make sure the orders from the sector are followed and implemented at umudugudu level. They regularly have to report to the sector and cell leaders what is going on in their umudugudu. During Umuganda (mandatory community work the last Saturday of each month), when all villagers are gathered, the umudugudu leader informs them of new policies and changes, and how people should follow the government’s instructions. After that he is not interested to hear complaints, since he is not responsible for the leaders’ decisions. He is just as uncomfortable as the rest to bring complaints to the leaders.

This unpaid job is not very rewarding for the umudugudu leader, as villagers often get angry when he is giving them fines for not adapting to new policies, or when he is putting pressure on people to follow the sector’s instructions. “I have lost many friends in the village” the umudugudu leader from Gicumbi admits. The leader in Gasabo has also noticed how people avoid him, but on the other hand he also gets lots of new “friends” that need him to keep quiet for different reasons (if they for example want to build a house or skip an umuganda). Others in the village reveal that their leader is corrupt and that he makes lots of money and gets lots of banana beer to “forget” about fines and accept peoples’ absence at umuganda. If it was not for these kinds of advantages, no one would like to be an umudugudu leader, they explain, as it would only be an additional burden to the already hard peasant life.

Agricultural changes are happening very quickly throughout Rwanda, and villagers feel that they have lost control of their production and their daily routines. Often it is hard for them to adapt to the changes they have to be a part of, as they fear that it would leave them without food. The trust for leaders that the peasants define as responsible for their aggravated everyday life is very low. We often hear jokes about the leaders and politicians, and it seems like the rapid agricultural changes enhance the “us” (the poor peasants) and “them” (the rich leaders implementing policies) thinking in the rural areas.

4.12 Conclusion

The VUP’s main purpose is to move people out of extreme poverty, but villagers’ understanding of the program seem to be different. They often define the public works as best suitable for people in Ubudehe poverty category 3 with financial back up or big harvest, and very difficult to take part in if you are poorer. Some people were upset about this, as they had heard that VUP was a program for poor people. Instead they claim that the poor people are struggling with the same difficulties as before or worse, whereas the ones with better living conditions have gotten an opportunity to make more money.

As VUP’s terrace making requires a lot of strength, the work it is best suited for strong and young people, whereas people with less strength are not able to finish the daily tasks on time. As a consequence, other people in the work team have to help the weaker people out after finishing their own task. This makes weak people (who are often very poor and/or old) feel like a burden and intimidated to work for VUP. The supervisor of the terrace making also
prefers to supervise a team of strong workers, as he has a budget to keep and many hectares of terrace to complete.  

Villagers agreed that Public Works is good for the ones who can participate, but it excludes a lot of people, in particular the vulnerable. Pregnant women find the VUP work very hard and avoid it during the late period of their pregnancies. Women with children do not go to work if the work site is more than an hour away, as they need to be close to home to care for children and cook food. Poor people from Ubudehe poverty category 2 depend on their daily labor and daily pay to be able to eat. Therefore VUP’s Public Works is not a viable source of income for them; especially not since the VUP payments always are late. People in Ubudehe poverty category 2 also say that it is harder for them to find work since the VUP started to make terraces in their area. Most of the land is now occupied by VUP workers coming from all over the sector, making less land available for others to work on.

The cost of opening a SACCO account has a deterrent effect for people who consider working for VUP, as people feel that their salary disappears in fees that the bank makes a profit from, instead of improving their own situation. Late payment has also been a general problem for VUP’s public workers, especially in Gasabo. The local shopkeeper has stopped to let VUP workers buy food on credit, since he never knows when he will be paid back. People therefore depend on friends and family to help them out with food until the payment. Many of them also stop the work for VUP for a few days to work on other peoples’ land. When they have enough money to buy food, they go back to the VUP terrace making. In spite of the late payment and the hard work, participants see the Public Works as a good opportunity to make money. They have been able to improve their life conditions by repairing their houses, buying clothes, goats and food, and put their children in school. Getting Mutuelle de Santé however, seems to be a rather low priority, and people think the cost of Rwf 3000/person is not affordable, despite their VUP salary.

In Gicumbi, people in Ubudehe poverty category 2 with strength to work are offered to work for VUP before people in category 3. However, many of these category 2 people denied that offer, and people in category 3 were then given the opportunity to work in their place. Therefore more people from category 3 than from category 2 works for VUP in Gicumbi. In Gasabo, on the other hand, VUP does not consider what poverty category you belong to, as long as you have strength to work.

For villagers in Gasabo, the Ubudehe poverty categorization only serves to define who will get their Mutuelle de Santé paid for. Therefore this categorization only matters if you are in category 1 and 2. Many people in category 3 said that they deserved to be in category 2, as they also had trouble to pay the Mutuelle de Santé. Category 3 seemed to be a very elastic category, in which very poor people (who have trouble to get enough food and clothe themselves) as well as people who are relatively well off (who eat three meals per day, wear decent shoes and clothes, live in concrete houses and have livestock) were placed. To

11 Another supervisor emphasize that weak people are not excluded from VUP’s public work, but given easier tasks. However, the villagers agreed that weak people in general feel intimidated to show up for public work.

12 During the short field study in Gicumbi, informants explained that the lack of interest to work for VUP said was due to an earlier experience with a development program that did not pay people. But it might also be relevant to assume that people in ubudehe poverty category 2 in Gicumbi have the same problem as the ones in Gasabo; they need to be paid on a daily basis to be able to eat.
villagers, being in category 3 foremost means that you have to pay your Mutuelle de Santé on your own, and does not tell much about your poverty level.

Some people working for VUP graduated from category 2 to category 3 within a year, as their neighbors could see that they had acquired a better life with their salaries (new clothes, iron sheets, goats, food etc.). However, none of these graduates had been able to buy land or give their children a higher education that would secure more permanent improved living conditions. Therefore, they depend on continuous work for VUP not to fall back into Ubudehe poverty category 2. It is very important for people that VUP stays in their area, especially since many villagers had all their farmland, and hence their only source of livelihood, made into terraces, and now depend on the VUP salary for their survival.

The terraces that VUP are making and their promotion of mono cropping make part of Rwanda’s modernization of the agricultural sector, and subsistence peasants are being commanded to adopt an active role in this modernization. The terraced land depends on fertilizers for 3 years to come, and fertilizers are expensive and unaffordable for peasants. They therefore fear to go hungry for the coming years, as crops will not grow well on their plots. Relying on only one crop is risky according to the peasants, as a damaged harvest would cause starvation.

Peasants feel that their voice is not listened to, and every attempt to object to decisions that affect them negatively is ignored. There is a clear lack of trust of leaders, who seem to be relatively indifferent to the peasants’ “local farming knowledge”, and their wishes and needs. Both the umudugudu leader and the VUP supervisor say that their duty is to implement the wishes of the Sector at the umudugudu level, and then report back up to the Sector on how it goes. The villagers do not have anyone that represent them at the Umurengenye/Sector and Akagari/Cell level and that can speak on their behalf.

Without denying all the positive things VUP has accomplished, the implementation of terraces and mono cropping that peasants have to adapt to, might have negative effects on social relations in the country. Rural peasants, who view themselves as socially very far from the leaders, and who feel that they cannot influence political decisions that affect their everyday life, get frustrated, angry and even humiliated. As part of the discontent over the changes taking place, peasants identify policymakers and leaders as the socially and ethnically Other; the rich and powerful who take decisions over their heads. This enforces the “us and them” thinking in rural Rwanda, which might render the national reconciliation, and well as the modernization and development process, difficult.

Furthermore, there seem to be a difference between the government’s stated intentions of VUP’s Public Works (reduce extreme poverty, enhance development and increase agricultural production), and the peasants experiences of the outcomes of these policies (VUP’s Public works is best suited for people with some financial back up, and the mono-cropping on the terraces might lead to starvation).

There is a need to know about peasants’ experiences – their representations, histories, who they trust and who they do not trust, their struggles, needs, wishes and ideas, in order to understand people’s reaction to development programs such as VUP, and in order contribute to the prospects for national reconciliation as well as poverty reduction in Rwanda. Accessing people’s point of view is particularly important in a country like Rwanda, as research suggests
that peasants feel too intimidated to speak their mind or criticize those in power, and often keep discontent within their own group.

5. Land Tenure Regularization Program from a Local Perspective

5.1 Land Registration in the Areas Studied

*Land Tenure Regularization Program* is a set of administrative procedures undertaken to clarify the rights of the existing owners and occupants of land. The landholders are provided long-term, usufruct rights (up to 99 years, depending on land use) that can be sold, passed on to heirs, mortgaged, leased, and their titles can be used for mortgaging and credit purposes.

The land registration started in Gasabo and Gicumbi in 2010. Villagers had heard information on the radio about it, and a meeting on the subject was held in the *Umurenge/Sector*. Shortly after this meeting land registration officers came to the villages to identify parcel boundaries in the presence of land owners and all adjoining neighbors. The boundaries were marked on an aerial photo and claim receipts were issued and signed by all adjoining neighbors. Information from these receipts was then registered and displayed publicly. In a few cases neighbors disagreed on where one plot ended and the other started. In many of those cases, the boundaries are not yet settled, and the registration is therefore not yet completed. If no objections were raised within a period of public display of at least 2 weeks, the information was formally registered. The land holders were thereafter told to go to the Akagari/Cell office, where land registration administrators were found, to get their formal land registration certificate upon payment of a fee of Rwf 1000 per plot.

The land registration officers administered certificates for a few months at the Akagari office in Gasabo. People who had not gone to get their certificate during this time were told to pay the registration fee at the *Rwanda Revenue Authority* in Kigali. In Gicumbi, the land registration officers also left the Akagari office after a few months, but they came back again the following year (2011) to give people another opportunity to get their certificates.

5.2 Land Registration Certificate

Among the 45 people we talked to regarding the land registration, only 16 had their land registration certificate. Among the 13 informants from Gicumbi, 10 of them had their certificate. In Gasabo on the other hand, only 6 out of 24 had their certificate. Material from earlier fieldwork also shows that only 4 out of 20 members in a peasant cooperative in Gasabo had their land registration certificate. The villagers have defined five major reasons to why they do not have their certificates:

5.2.1 Several Plots

Many peasants have several small plots scattered on the hills, and have troubles to save up money to pay the fee for all of the plots. There are always more urgent things the money has to be used for, such as food and school fees. Some land owners therefore have the

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13 Some examples of plot sizes in the villages are: 700 m², 1400 m², 3500 m², 5600 m². The smallest plot we came across was 600 m², and the biggest was 18,477 m².
certificate for one of their plots, but not for the rest, as they could not afford to spend more than Rwf 1000 during the period that the land registration officers worked in the Akagari office.

5.2.2 Corrections due to Tax

When the land registration officers measured and register plots in 2010, villagers in Gasabo were told that they had to pay an annual tax of Rwf 70,000-100,000 starting from 2011, for the plot they had their house on. Peasants protested and authorities realized that these kinds of sums were unaffordable for subsistence peasants. Hence they have now granted tax exemption for land in rural areas. The land registration officers had to make new registrations to correct this. Some peasants are still waiting for their certificates, as corrections are not yet made for their plots.

5.2.3 Distance to Rwanda Revenue Authority

Many villagers in Gasabo were not able to pay the registration fee during the two months the land registration officers were at the Akagari/Cell office. Those villagers have been told that they have to pay the fee at the Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA) in Remera, Kigali. Few villagers know how to get there, and many cannot afford the means of transport. The nearest bus stop for buses to Kigali is found at a two hours walking distance from the village, and walking to Remera takes about 4,5 hours. Informants also express an insecurity of approaching RRA officers; they do not know who to talk to or what to say when they get there. In Gicumbi, the certificates were collected and paid for at Akagari/Cell level. This might be one of the explanations to why more informants in Gicumbi than in Gasabo had their certificates.

5.2.4 Low Priority

It is not that interesting for peasants to pay the land registration fee and collect the certificate, as they know that their plots are registered in their names either way. The priority is to survive; to eat, clothe themselves, and go to the health center if necessary. The only real reason to have the certificate, they explain, is if they want to sell a plot. However, none of the people we spoke to consider selling their whole plots, as it is their sole source of livelihood.

5.2.5 Prisoners

In order to get your certificate you need to show your national identity card. For married couples, both the husband and the wife have to be present to sign the certificate. Women with husbands in prison (which is quite common) therefore have to wait for the husbands to be released before they can get the certificate. Some former prisoners are still waiting to get their national Identity card, and cannot get the certificate until they have received it. One informant who was released from prison in 2007 is still waiting for his identity card to be issued. He says he will get the card once all TIG (Travaux d’Intérêt Général) prisoners are released, but he does not know when that will happen.
5.3. Clear Boundaries
The land registration is making plot boundaries clear and reduces land conflicts, which has been a problem in the rural areas. Before the registration, people unknown to the villagers could come and claim ownership of a plot. Informants tell a story of an old man that used have a plot near the village, until one day when relatives to a genocide victim claimed ownership of the plot. Witnesses in the village were called to settle the dispute. People confirmed that the former owner of the land was a relative to the people who had come to claim the ownership, so the man had to give up his plot. Today, with the land registration, this could not have happened, as the man would have his land registration certificate. People are also describing that two orphans of some genocide victims almost lost their deceased parents land, as neighbors had occupied it. With a land registration certificate, no one would have tried to cheat these orphans. But even though no one can “steal” your land, the registration does not mean that you have the right to do what you want with your plot. Paul describes the conditions of having your plot registered:

“The land belongs to the government. Even during the registration process they explained to us that the land belongs to the government, we are only users of the land. As long as you use the land that belongs to the government it means that the government can tell you what to grow on that land. First they said that the marshland belonged to the government, but afterwards they went on to claim that the rest of the land belongs to the government too. But people still have their certificate of land ownership, even though it is like that.

Question: So the land does not belong to the people with certificates?

Paul: Yes the land belongs to them, but it is more like they are renting it from the government, or possessing it for a while. But the government can tell us to grow whatever they have planned. People cannot grow what they want, because the leaders want to make a sample village (agasozi indatwa) here, in which only one crop should grow to the extent that it is obvious to every visitor that there is only one crop around here. You cannot rebel against this, then they take the land away from you... The leaders want us to grow maize and other crops that they choose, cause it will improve the country’s economy, and bring development. That is why they don’t want us to grow sweet potatoes, vegetables and sourgum, even though we used to make money on that. You don’t know the power of leaders. If they tell us not to cultivate something we have to obey, they are in power over us.”

All the villagers have heard that if you do not grow the government approved crops on your land, or if you do not respect the planting and harvest season that are to be done collectively, the sector agronomist can give somebody else the right to cultivate your land. People have also had their crops uprooted as they tried to grow other crops than the Sector had decided. In that sense, peasants feel that they have less rights of how to use their plots, in spite of the fact that their name is on the certificate.

5.4 Incorrectly Registered Plots
At first the land registration fee was Rwf 5000 per plot, but later reduced to Rwf 1000 per plot. In the beginning of the registration process people were worried about how to afford the expensive Rwf 5000 per plot and tried to find a solution to reduce the cost. Parents, who had distributed plots to their grown up children, decided together with their children to register all the plots as one big plot under the parents’ names, and pay registration for only one plot. The children therefore do not officially have their land registered in their names.
If a path is dividing a plot belonging to one person, it is counted as two plots. In order to avoid double fees, some people would let the person on the other side of the path register his/her plot as well, as one bigger plot. People who applied this strategy to avoid double registration fees, thought that once they had money, they could change the registered boundaries and re-register them under the correct owner. To their despair they learnt that the cost of drawing new boundaries is Rwf 60,000, plus the technicians’ transport (which they do not know the cost of). That is unaffordable for peasants, and they are afraid to reveal their mistake to the authorities. As a result plots are in some cases registered under the wrong owner’s name. Helena explains that this is likely to create problems later on:

“This might cause conflicts between those neighbors and relatives. Someone will say ‘this plot is in my name now, so it is mine’, the other person will say “no we only did this to save money” and then the fight will starts.”

Paul bought a piece of a plot before the registration, but was not able to pay the whole sum of it before the registration process started. The former owner therefore registered the whole plot, including the piece that Paul had started to pay off, in his own name. Paul still has Rwf 40,000 to pay before the plot is his (the total cost of the plot is Rwf 90,000 for a pot of 5600 m2). On top of that he has to pay Rwf 60,000 if the plot is to be registered in his name. It is very unlikely that he will come up with that kind of money he says, especially now since he cannot plant different kind of crops to sell at the market.

5.5 Parallel Systems and Potential Conflicts

On the one hand people are happy to have the certificate; it is a proof of the value of the land and it protects them from land disputes. On the other hand people feel that they have lost control of what they can do with their land. Not being able to give a piece of land to their children, or sell a part of their plot to solve financial problems, without paying a fee of Rwf 60,000 (plus transport for the technician) is of great concern to people. The subject is discussed in a group of peasants:

“Emile: The land registration has made some things difficult for us. We cannot sell a part of our plot without problems. And if we want to give our children a piece of land it is also a problem. Before, when we wanted to give a piece of land to a son, we just made a boundary by planting trees. But now we have to pay a lot of money [Rwf 60,000] which might be more than the piece of land itself it worth. Imagine that you buy a plot that is registered in the name of the person who sold it to you, just because we didn’t have enough money to pay for re-registration... If you have a big land, and you are building a house, but you cannot afford to finish it, you sell a piece of your land to be able to complete the house; that is what everybody would do. But nowadays it is no longer possible. Practically for us, it means that we cannot do what we want with our land. For us, the land registration doesn’t mean that we have more right to the land, but more restrictions.

Paul: Our hands are tied. This policy is tying our hands...

Emile: Imagine you are not allowed to give your child a piece of land. You cannot give him all the land; you need some for yourself too, but you can give him a piece. But the problem is that it would still be registered in my name [due to the expensive fee of re-registering the boundaries]. The day I am in quarrel with my child I will take it back. So they child will always be afraid of a conflict. This is going to affect us much, cause we are used to be able to give our child a piece of land.
Augustine: No one has ever dared to call the technician cause it is very expensive. So what happens is that you are left with the choice of selling off the whole plot, or you choose to trust someone to buy a small part of your land but it will still be registered in your name. This is risky, because if you ever have a problem the former owner of the plot can say ‘it is no longer your land, it is registered in my name’.

Paul: It is impossible for us to afford the technician to come here and draw new boundaries. We cannot even give a piece of land to our child officially. It is as if he is renting it, and that was not what we intended. It is like kwatira umuntu (giving someone the right to use the land, but not to own it).

Paul and Emile: There was a woman who had a huge plot, but it was made into terraces, so she had nowhere to cultivate. She was wondering what to do, cause she had nothing to eat. She wanted to sell a part of her plot, but since the procedure was tricky and expensive, she decided to sell the whole plot instead. So she had to leave this village and go to another place to buy a piece of land where there were no terraces. Many people prefer to leave their land. It is problematic to find someone who can buy your plot for a good price, the land on the terraces is not so attractive since the mono-cropping started. Either you have to move and find land elsewhere, or you have to try to find work somewhere else in the country and bring money back home to your family. The land registration and terraces have made life difficult for peasants.”

As the cost of new boundaries has been a problem for poor peasants, they have sold and bought land from each other using their traditional system: a group of villagers are called to testify the deal and the signing of contracts, and then they all share a “beer for witnesses” (Inzoga y’abagabo). These witnesses are called in case of a land dispute, and formerly they used to testify in court. But villagers are now insecure if these witnesses would have anything to say in a land dispute today, or if the land registration is the only thing that counts. Therefore, when you sell a piece of land using the traditional system, you get less money for it than you would have gotten before the registration. A plot that recently was sold for Rwf 80,000, would have been sold for Rwf 200,000 before the registration. Since it is impossible to pay the cost of drawing new boundaries people turn to the traditional selling practices to be able to solve their financial situation or improving their lives.

If you sell a piece of land you might be able to send your child to secondary school so that he or she can get a good job, villagers explain. But now, having a plot has lost its meaning, since the only thing you can do legally with it, is to grow the government approved crops. Augustin has a suggestion on how this could be solved:

“I want to suggest that a team comes once every year to look up the selling contracts we have made between us, and the land that we have given to our children, and then write up the new owners, and register them for free. I think it is unfair that we have to pay Rwf 60,000. That means that they [the leaders and policy makers] do not know their own people. We are unable to get that kind of money! That money cannot come from us. We don’t have that kind of money for a technician; we cannot be the ones paying this. We did not make the registration happen.”

5.6 Land as a Guarantee for Loans
Most, but not all informants, know that they can use the registered plot as a guarantee for taking a loan in the bank. This does however not make a difference to them, as none of our informants have considered taking a loan. To take a loan you need to be able to pay back, and peasants do not have a regular income to rely on. Taking a loan with the plot as a
guarantee is a big risk to take, as their land is all the peasants have. Jeanne also explains that having a plot registered is not enough for taking a loan:

“I know that I can use my plot as a guarantee in the bank. But here in the countryside that seems impossible. If you look at the criteria to take a loan, you will not get a loan just because you have a plot. It is one of the criteria, but it is not all. You need a bank account and you need money in your account. You need money that comes in, and money that is withdrawn, so you need to be a frequent client at the bank. But for people who just use money to buy food, taking a loan is not possible. When you are not able to pay off the money, they [the bank] will sell your land, and you are left with nothing.”

Some villagers explain that even if they wanted to take a loan, it is not possible as their plots are registered in the parents’ name (see the example on page 34). These (grown up) children can therefore not use their plots as a guarantee in the bank.

5.7 Conclusion
People generally think that the land registration in itself is good: it serves as a proof of who the landholder is and it clearly defines the plot boundaries. This reduces land disputes that have been common in rural areas. However, other regularizations, such as not being able to sell a part of your plot (without paying a fee of Rwf 60,000 for a technician to draw new boundaries) to solve financial straits, does not seem to make sense to the villagers. One woman in Gasabo wanted to sell a part of her plot (as she could no longer live from her land since it was terraced and mono-cropping implemented), but she found the process difficult to understand, and the cost too high, so she sold off the whole plot. She had to leave the village to find land to buy elsewhere. Others have sold parts of their plots to neighbors or passed on parts of their plots to heirs, using the traditional way of transferring land; with witnesses and a selling contract. The new owners and the new boundaries have in these cases not been registered. It is commonly known that this way of selling land is no longer allowed, but in an attempt to gain control over their situation and solve a financial strait, peasants apply this system that they are familiar with.

Selling land according to the traditional system makes the prices drop, as the buyer does not have any official legal guarantee for the plot. As long as the seller and the buyer are on good terms with each other, conflicts will not appear as a result of the deal. However, in a situation of conflict, the seller could claim ownership of the land, referring to the land registration certificate. The heirs of the seller might also claim right to the buyers plot, as the heritage on the certificate will not match with the settlement the seller and buyer has agreed upon.

Fear of reprisals renders this parallel system a well-kept secret among villagers, and not something to leak to leaders. It is likely that plots will continue to be registered in the wrong owner’s name until a real conflict among villagers is drawing attention to these locally made selling contracts. The outcome of the Land Tenure Regularization Program might be different from what the policymakers had in mind, as the registered land titles in some cases do not correspond to the reality in rural areas.
**Documents Reviewed**

Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Local Government. *Administrative Units*.


Republic of Rwanda, Ministry of Local Government. *Community Development Policy 2008*


www.cdf.gov.rw/vup.html