

# OSLOMET

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**A critical evaluation of the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) impact on reducing educational poverty and aiding poor children's equitable access to quality education in the Gasabo District of Kigali City, Rwanda.**

**Master's Thesis in International Education and Development**

**Spring, 2022.**

**Faculty of Education and International Studies.**

**OsloMet-Oslo Metropolitan University**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Professor Einar Braathen, my sincere gratitude and thanks go to you for allowing me to do this research and providing invaluable guidance. Einar's dynamism, vision, sincerity, and motivation deeply inspired me. His critical methodology assisted me in carrying out the research and presenting my work as clearly as possible. It has been an honour being under the guidance of Einar's academic knowledge and experience. I thus want to thank him for his friendship, empathy, great sense of humour and patience in working on my thesis, even during holidays. I am incredibly grateful for my partner and son's love, care, sacrifices, understanding and continuing support in completing this study. Special thanks to friends and research colleagues, Dr Andie Ben Brahim, Joe Pepper UK, and Claima and Mathia in Kigali, for their keen interest in completing this thesis.

My gratitude also extends to institutions such as the University of Kigali, City of Kigali, Ministry of Education, Education Board, National Council for Science for Technology, Ministry of Local Government, Local Administrative Development Agency, and National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda for their support during my research work in Rwanda. The staff at the planning and research sections at the local government ministry and the council for science and technology deserve special thanks for the kindness shown while out researching in Kigali. Additionally, a big thank you to the management of the Faculty of Education and International Studies at OsloMet, such as Hege Roaldset and the programme coordinator, Professor Tom G. Griffiths, for their support in completing this thesis successfully. And lastly, I am grateful to all the people who supported me in completing the research work directly or indirectl

y.

## PREFACE

Over the past decades, Rwanda achieved progress in its poverty reduction effort with a fall in the monetary poverty rate from nearly 59 percent to under 40 percent since 2000 and a profound fall in extreme poverty from 40 percent to 16 percent (De Milliano & Plavgo, 2014). Despite this substantial progress in 2000, poverty is still widespread in the country. Recent statistics on living standards between 2010 and 2011 showed that 45 percent of Rwandese live below the national poverty line, with 24 percent of people living in extreme poverty or below the national food poverty line (World-Bank Group, 2015). Statistics reveal that the differences in living standards across education subgroups are high and explain 40 percent of total inequality. Attendance in school remains low and strongly correlated with living standards, with only 11 percent of school children from the poorest 10 percent of households attending secondary education compared to 78 percent for the top 10 percent of family units. Overall, gross attendance in secondary amounts to 40 percent.

This research aims to gain a relevant understanding of the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) impact on educational poverty reduction to generate equitable quality access to education for the most vulnerable children in society. The employment of both qualitative and quantitative research methods acted as the research tools to retrieve data from the VUP beneficiaries and development agencies at Rwanda's local and national levels. Participants in the study were located and approached to participate in schools and neighbourhoods with large numbers of VUP beneficiaries. And key administrative informants were approached for interviews at various development agencies in Kigali City, Rwanda. Contact and responses were sought from more than 70 participants, including household heads in the VUP programme, marginalized youths currently in school, and development and government agencies at various Gasabo districts and sectors in Kigali city, Rwanda. The study aims to gain a clearer understanding of their experience about VUP's impact in reducing educational poverty amongst beneficiary school children to enable them to access the education needed. Based on the study objective, qualitative and quantitative research was conducted in Kigali city to obtain information about the program's contribution to quality access to education amongst the poorest primary and secondary school children in the Gasabo District. The fieldwork also lays out valuable data to enable critical evaluation of VUP's impact on participants' educational access in alignment with this study's theoretical framework for analysing the Rwandese government's VUP development programme objectives in the post-war reconstruction process. The integration and consistency of both strands of research thus guarantee the use of the theoretical

study framework and research hypotheses in the alignment of research tools (interviews and survey questionnaire) to constantly triangulate any fieldwork finding.

The study was undertaken between February and March 2022 in various Gasabo District schools and local administrative offices within the Gisozi, Kinyinya, Rutunga, Kacyiru and Kimihurura sectors of Kigali City, Rwanda. Discussions were held with over 70 participants, which finally yielded about 59 responses amongst those interviewed. The official reported data would be analysed, including several in-depth cases ranging from household living conditions surveys covering multiple beneficiaries and development agencies to best evaluate VUP's impact on beneficiaries at the local and national level of implementation. Statistical data were also strongly analysed to compensate for the lack of several agencies' responses. Especially those connected to community health insurance in the Gasabo district health department and their refusal to grant researchers access to questionnaires, interviews, and reports despite granting a research permit by the national research authority. The data collection process involves approaching and surveying more than 70 participants across various VUP sector cohorts I, II and III (currently enrolled in the programme); and comparable eligible households who became VUP recipients during the Covid-19 pandemic. Standardized qualitative survey questionnaires administered with questions reflecting different participants' positions and links to the VUP.

The survey objectives are to provide baseline information on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the poorest population eligible for assistance, thus expected to validate the initial subjective ranking of household welfare through Ubudehe categorization. Mainly, cut-off consumption levels were obtained for subsequent impact assessment. Secondly, through a follow-up analysis of documented evidence, an evaluation of VUP impact is analysed against key welfare components and its outcomes on school dropout, completion, transition, and attendance rates in alignment to increase resources and quality participatory parity access in education and health care. The survey questionnaires lay out the essential groundwork for an integrated household questionnaire in subsequent years to track education poverty reduction and schooling conditions for the most vulnerable and extremely poor in the Gasabo district of Kigali city, Rwanda. The survey compares changes in a certain period of VUP intervention and critical strategic relevance in beneficiaries' access to essential education services. The developmental aspects evaluate VUP components and implementation strategies, including 1. Prevalence of educational poverty within beneficiary households. 2. Depth of social protection given to navigate the educational poverty gap 3. Level of access to resources offered and its

relevance to narrowing the poverty gap experienced 4. Educational status and school enrolment and attendance rates amongst children whose households are enrolled in the VUP. 5. And what effects does the VUP protection have on beneficiary households to advance poor children's equity and access to education by extension increase their school attendance, completion, and transition rates by reducing dropout rates post-intervention.

This paper will critically evaluate the VUP effectiveness through Nancy Fraser's participatory parity and Amartya Sen's human rights development principles as a critical social welfare protection strategy to improve poor children's educational access and equity to participate in public life. The VUP intervention is an integrated local development program primarily implemented by the Rwandan Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC) through the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA), using the Ubudehe as a strategy to accelerate poverty eradication, rural growth, and social protection, targeting poorest households with limited access to assets and income generation. Ubudehe is a culturally instituted practice to mutually assist people living together in a community and help them overcome or solve socio-economic challenges.

This study aims at assessing the VUP impact in ensuring equitable, inclusive access to quality education on poverty eradication, using the Gasabo District of Kigali City as a case study. A mixed research design was employed which draws upon both qualitative and quantitative methods potentials, thereby allowing researchers to examine diverse perspectives and uncover relationships between the intricate layers of our multifaceted research questions through a triangulated data analysed lens.

## **ABSTRACT**

*This study assesses the Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) impact in Rwanda to ensure equitable, inclusive access to quality education on poverty eradication, using the Gasabo District of Kigali City case study. The VUP intervention is an integrated local development program primarily implemented by the Rwandan Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC) through the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA), using the Ubudehe as a strategic tool to accelerate poverty eradication, rural growth, and social protection, targeting poorest households with limited access to assets and income generation. Ubudehe is a culturally instituted practice to mutually assist people living together in a community to overcome socio-economic challenges encountered. The paper aims to critically evaluate the VUP contribution through Fraser's participatory parity and Sen's human rights development principles as a critical social welfare protection strategy to improve poor children's educational access and advance their participatory equity in public life. The study adopted the mixed research design, which draws upon the potentials of both qualitative and quantitative methods, thereby allowing researchers to examine diverse perspectives and uncover relationships between the intricate layers of our multifaceted research questions. Generally, the study found from respondents that the VUP intervention did reduce the poverty level in households and reduced the level of dropouts, and the Ubudehe ensured participatory representation and inclusiveness in the decision-making process. The project offered some measure of relief to enable access, including free schooling, meals, community participation and free health-care community programmes to the target groups. However, looking at the grassroots implementation impact, the VUP has not provided an equal participatory development outcome for the children in the most marginalized categories.*

**Keywords:** *Poverty Reduction, Social Protection, Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme, Ubudehe Practice, Free Universal Education, Equitable Access, Human Rights, Participatory Parity.*

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
APHRC	African Population and Health Research Centre
AU	African Union
BFP	Bolsa Familia Program
CBHI	Community Based Health Insurance
CIEFFA	International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease of 19
EFA	Education for All
EMA	Exponential Moving Average
EU	European Union
FHI	Free Health Insurance
FMT	Financial Means Testing
FPE	Free Primary Education
FS	Free Schooling
FSM	Free School Meal
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ration
GMO	Rwanda Gender Monitoring Office
GoR	Government of Rwanda
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ICF	Inner City Fund

ILO	International Labour Organization
JSS	Junior Secondary School
KRIBP	Indo-British Rainfed Farming Project
LG	Local Government
LODA	Local Administrative Entities Development Agency
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MFSP	Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program
MINALOC	Ministry of Local Government
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MP	Member of Parliament
NAEP	National Assessment of Educational Progress
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NISR	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSPI	Office of the Superintendent of Public Institution
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
UIS	Institute for Statistics
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA	United State of America



VUP	Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
RCT	Randomized Controlled Trial
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RWF	Rwandan Franc
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SFAI	School Fees Abolition Initiative
SG	State Government
SRL	Sustainable Rural Livelihoods
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1. Background of the Study**

To address the disparities in access to essential services, the Government of Rwanda (GoR) introduced Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) as a strategic measure to reduce extreme poverty amongst the most disadvantaged households nationwide. The National Institute of Statistics Rwanda (NISR, 2008) describes the VUP as an integrated local development accelerated poverty reduction, rural growth, and social protection programme. It is the initiative of the GoR as a collaborative strategy with several development partners and agencies led by the Ministry of Local Government, Good Governance, Community Development and Social Affairs (MINALOC) amid the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN) support (NISR, 2008). The VUP utilises Ubudehe decentralisation practice to leverage existing external technical and financial assistance and accelerate extreme poverty reduction in Rwanda in pursuit of its middle-income knowledge and technology-based economy by 2050. Ubudehe is a culturally based practice for mutual assistance among groups living within a community to help overcome socioeconomic problems collectively (Niringiye & Ayebale, 2012). Historically, Ubudehe is a form of social capital used to assist agricultural activities for timely production and ensure the community's food security is equally distributed to meet all the population's needs. As a by-product, it involves trust and reciprocity amongst the people based on communities working together in burden sharing and problem-solving to maintain social norms, social cohesion, and social control in the community (Niringiye & Ayebale, 2012). The GoR 2000 opted for Ubudehe as a decentralising instrument to implement its poverty reduction policies as an alternative solution to improve governance quality and community mobilisation as defined in the vision 2020 (Niringiye & Ayebale, 2012). Hence, Ubudehe, as initiated by the MINECOFIN and MINALOC, is a local initiative purposely designed to contribute to the VUP poverty reduction course and promote community cohesion and reconciliation in Rwanda's post-genocide reconstruction and state-building process.

As an institutionalised homegrown initiative, Ubudehe practice focuses on local-level governance quality as a mechanism to empower communities whilst aiding the reconciliation process, unity and social cohesion amongst a divided group (Niringiye & Ayebale, 2012). The suggestion is that Ubudehe has enhanced citizens' ownership and appreciation of service delivery by providing planning data and feedback mechanisms at the community level (Niringiye & Ayebale, 2012; Mosse, 2001). By extension, the Ubudehe initiative derives its importance as a locally owned, culturally valued model to solve their community's

socioeconomic problems through participatory mechanisms. As a top-down governance model, the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA), through district and sector administration under the oversight of MINALOC, manages the Ubudehe project. Community projects are thus financed and implemented at the village and household levels to assist VUP beneficiaries in gaining access to relevant services and skills that can improve their living lives and conditions (Niringiye & Ayebale, 2012). To assist stakeholders in strategic project delivery households living conditions must meet Ubudehe social stratification income projection among the selected beneficiary families. Ubudehe utilises five categories represented by letters A, B, C, D, and E; with A consisting of households with the highest income, while E consists of the most vulnerable in the society (Niringiye & Ayebale, 2012; Rutikanga, 2019). For this purpose, this study consulted the NISR dataset to gain VUP beneficiary's baseline information about its poorest population's socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. It is to assist the study in laying out the research foundation for concrete analysis and unbiased theoretical discussion.

The concept of social protection is to aid people's ability to prevent, manage, and overcome poverty-related situations adversely affecting their wellbeing and equal participation in social life (Wilson et al., 2001: 95-109). Social protection features can consist of policies and programs targeted at reducing poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing people's capacity to manage their socioeconomic risks such as joblessness, exclusion, sickness, disability, and old age as means towards advancing equity and equality amongst citizens. Evidence suggests that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) projects and actions lifted over one billion people out of extreme poverty by making inroads against hunger and empowering more girls in the classroom. In turn, these actions opened new and innovative partnerships, galvanised public opinion, and showed the immense value of setting social protection ambition to protect disadvantaged group's rights to equitably participate as equals in social life (Wilson, F., Kanji, N., & Braathen, E. 2001: 95-109).

In the case of Rwanda, social protection is a development tool designed with the aim of reducing educational poverty. This paper, therefore, seeks to critically evaluate if its Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) impact directly reduced educational poverty that enables recipient's children to have access to equitable, inclusive, quality participation in post-conflict Rwanda free education for all. The jury is still out on its free universal schooling supported by the welfare protection program towards poverty reduction. The evaluation of the VUP effectiveness is done through the theoretical principles underpinning human rights and

participatory parity as justice theories as our framework of analysis of the various child-poverty reduction strategies in post-conflict Rwanda. We set out to observe if the VUP increased access to quality education reduces school dropouts, aid school retention and improve poor children's transition from primary to secondary education. Amartya Sen's human rights and Fraser's participatory parity principles of development are utilised as the theoretical framework to analyse (VUP, 2020) social protection effects on poor children's ability to attain inclusion and participatory access in the quality of education relevant to meeting their wellbeing and development needs.

The VUP program centres around three main components. The first stands to revive existing public works programs through community-based participatory approaches that build on community assets to create a modernised employment infrastructure. The second component innovates on credit packages to tackle extreme poverty by fostering entrepreneurship in rural and urban areas and creating employment opportunities. The credit packages utilise scarce public resources with the involvement of the private and financial sectors that provide incentives to improve human productive capacities in aid of human development. The third component is a redistributive welfare protection scheme with unconditional direct and indirect support to improve social services and access for disadvantaged households with conditionalities set by the local district. The third project also expands on support for poor people to equitable access to quality health and education protection coverage. It also supports human capital development for "appropriate" skill sets that enable recipients to access and participate in social service activities and the infrastructures as equal societal members in arrangements and decision-making processes impacting their lives. The Rwandan Ministry of Local Government (MINALOC), through the Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA), is responsible for VUP projects and resource allocation based on the Ubudehe community categorisation process to meet its stakeholder's interests and the needs of beneficiaries.

In such context, VUP utilisation of the Ubudehe categorisation process helps bridge the gap between the beneficiary's living conditions and the process's localised approach in maintaining social norms and cohesion and ensuring social control where everyone's needs are collectively met without stigma. The VUP strategic use of the Ubudehe process is to aid the programme decentralisation approach through participatory actions to improve the quality of governance and community mobilisation and reduce multidimensional poverty towards advancing community cohesion and reconciliation (Mujawase & Center, 2015).

In summary, Ubudehe is a community-based participatory development model for solving socioeconomic challenges through participatory mechanisms to enhance localised policy implementation ownership and appreciation of services delivered through planning data and feedback instruments. As such, its utilisation by the VUP is to help meet the welfare needs of the disadvantaged beneficiaries, including extremely poor families, orphans, children, women, youth, those with disabilities, and widows once identified and categorised as poor locally by the community (Mujawase & Center, 2015).

The main objective of VUP is to support the country's transition from an agriculture to a knowledge-based society with middle-income status pursued as means of poverty reduction in the long term (Lavers, 2019: 95-121). The VUP's effect on education poverty reduction analysed its impact on granting extremely poor children access to equitably participate in the education process, specifically the program's control over school dropout, retention, transition, and compulsory school completion rates. Thus, to contribute further to the ongoing post-conflict Rwandan social protection discourse about the effectiveness of its welfare strategies worth giving preference by policymakers, stakeholders, and future researchers as a possible tool for contextual poverty reduction programs. Worth looking at is the Rwandan welfare protection scheme for poverty reduction and strategies such as free school meals, free health care coverage and parents' and teachers' community participation as tools to improve equitable quality participation in education. The human rights and Fraser's participatory parity approaches as welfare protection strategies are utilised as a framework to critically explore the view that VUP as welfare protection can improve inclusion, learning and participation that supports poverty reduction in education. By implication, the program can positively link its impact on reduced school dropouts, grade repetitions, low transitions and compulsory primary and secondary completion rates. Welfare protection programs play an important role as a strategic tool to tackle poverty (Piece, 2012). The many Sub-Saharan African States like Rwanda 2008 endorsed the provision of welfare protection schemes in alignment with the articulated African Union's Social Policy Framework (A.U.). The U.N. defined *social protection* as a justifiable tool that supports social policies and strategic efforts that enable poor people's access to essential social, political, cultural, and economic services (Piece, 2012). By implication, most developing nations' social protection floors aim to prevent and reduce poverty, unite citizens, and contribute to sustainable development and peacebuilding.

As noted by Wilson et al., social protection programs foster equitable schooling and valuable attainment to improved long-term wellbeing through human capital, human rights, and



redistributive and participatory parity as core drivers for development and reducing inequalities and poverty. It suffices to point out that most social protection definitions, according to Wilson et al., directly or indirectly applied stand to improve poor children's access to quality participation in education on equal terms as their affluent peers. Therefore, the development approach as a social protection tool to reduce poverty does invest in human rights to help improve people's capacity to leverage development opportunities equally. By implication, when developed and excised, human rights can improve wellbeing and growth to positively contribute to social harmony and boost total social capital stock for improved productivity and access. The human rights development strategy in reducing poverty is to ensure that institutions and rights bearers are held accountable and encouraged to address the multiplicity factors causing deprivation, exclusion, and discrimination against the most marginalised from accessing quality participation in education. Proper human rights protection ensures adequate representation in the criterion and strategies used to effectively identify institutional and structural hindrances and duty bearer's obligations in preventing lack of participation and involvement in school. Nancy Fraser's recognition, redistribution and representation protection strategy offers equitable social, cultural, and economic resources supporting the removal of obstacles preventing the poor from accessing and participating as equals in social life.

The analysis of these protection schemes thus requires quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches to data collection processes that consider and advance research ethics in a post-conflict political context sensitive to marginalised informant's safety and wellbeing. Primary and secondary data collection methods seek to explore the effectiveness of VUP social protection schemes for poor children's access to quality education that reduces inequalities and poverty in education. The primary data collection involves interactions with groups comprising both programme implementers in schools and VUP recipient families and their children. The secondary data point critically looks at statistically contextual data to identify and analyse specific development projects' effects on poor families and children's access to inclusive participation and interactions with quality learning objectives set by VUP principles for poverty reduction with education for all.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

Over the past decades, Rwanda achieved progress in its poverty reduction effort with a fall in the monetary poverty rate from nearly 59 per cent to under 40 per cent since 2000 and a

profound fall in extreme poverty from 40 per cent to 16 per cent (De Milliano & Plavgo, 2014). Despite this substantial progress in 2000, poverty is still widespread in the country.

Recent statistics on living standards between 2010 and 2011 showed that 45 per cent of Rwandese live below the national poverty line, with 24 per cent of people living in extreme poverty or below the national food poverty line (World-Bank Group, 2015). Statistics reveal that the differences in living standards across education subgroups are high and explain 40 per cent of total inequality. Attendance in school remains low and strongly correlated with living standards, with only 11 per cent of schoolers from the poorest 10 per cent of households attending secondary school compared to 78 percent for the top 10 percent of family units. Overall, gross attendance in secondary amounts to 40 percent.

In the early 2000s, major consumption growth was concentrated in Kigali City, where only a marginal fraction of the Rwandese poor live and most of the poverty reduction focused on the region. The implication was weak poverty reduction (two percentage points) and increased inequality (World Bank Group, 2015). However, after the 2000s, other subsequent decades saw growth stronger in rural areas than in Kigali City and benefited the poor more than the non-poor. The net result was a strong poverty reduction (12 percentage points) and a sharp decrease in inequality (World Bank Group, 2015). Despite these gains, incidents of poverty still affect two out of every five Rwandese negatively. In addition, UNICEF's (2017) situation analysis of Rwandan children showed that the above mechanisms contribute to the low transition rate and high school dropouts amongst the poorest children from advancing their equities and access to education. Human resources were a notable issue with the education in Rwanda of utilising strategies. For instance, only 69 percent of the registered secondary school teachers were qualified, a slight increase since 2011 (UNICEF, 2017).

In primary education, student-to-teacher ratios were high at 58 to 1, but student-to-teacher ratios for secondary schools reduced markedly from 37 to 1 in 2011 to 28 to 1 in 2016 (UNICEF, 2017). Despite the significant investment put into school infrastructure and the adoption of standards for child-friendly schools, most poor Kigali district schools are inadequate for learning owed to lacking basic facilities and equipment conducive to learning. For example, only 19 percent of secondary and 10 percent of primary schools in poor districts had viable internet connections in 2016 (UNICEF, 2017). For primary school attendance, disadvantaged children and those with disabilities were at 57 percent, below the levels for the general school-age population in Rwanda. Scholers with disabilities face a range of challenges, not least the

significant socio-cultural barriers, fewer special schools and facilities for mainstreaming, and a lack of assistive devices to accommodate the quality educational needs of the child learner (UNICEF, 2017). In the study, issues of gender disparities persist, highlighting girls' low academic performance compared to the boys in the national examinations. Including the higher rates of girls dropping out of upper secondary school and insufficient gender-sensitive sanitation facilities in schools, including gender disparity amongst teaching and management staff as major contributing factors denying disadvantaged girls access to equitable universal education (UNICEF, 2017).

A major gap noticed in Rwandan universal access to primary education for children aged 7 to 12 was that it slightly declined to 88 percent while the attendance for girls rose slightly to 89 percent than for the boys at 87 percent; and increases with children's age, from 69 percent at age 7 to above 90 percent for ages 9 to 12 as some children entered primary school later (UNICEF, 2017). Access is decreased somewhat across the wealth quintiles as inequities in the numbers of children between age 7 to 8 not attending school was at 24 percent for children in the poorest quintile not in regular school attendance compared to just 4 percent for wealthiest quintile children (UNICEF, 2017). The case was noted for the children in families headed by single mothers without education than children in households headed by a parent with secondary education showing above (18 and 7 percent respectively). While the introduction of various social protections and free fee grants increased the overall equitable allocation of educational resources in the system for poor students, the argument was that it did not support the poor adequately. Likewise, the resources allocated to primary education slightly decreased, raising concerns about gaps between policies (particularly the more ambitious and reform-orientated elements) and the level of resources available to archive the inclusive universal equity in education for children in extreme poverty.

To reduce the effects of extreme poverty on poor children's access to universal educational attainment, the Rwandan government introduced a social protection program in VUP as a strategic tool to transform its agrarian-based economy into a knowledge-based system united under one national identity within two decades (Nkurunziza et al., 2017). The development of the VUP was in response to lessons learnt from the evaluation of the first Vision 2020 strategy (2002–2005), which showed that irrespective of the fact that the strategy did indeed provide policies for enhancing development and growth, the chosen implementation was less suited to target the (very) poor. This research aims to critically evaluate the VUP effectiveness through Sen's human rights for education and Fraser's participatory parity principles as a critical social

welfare protection framework to improve poor children's educational access and equity to participate in public life. Under critical analysis are the various VUP child-poverty reduction strategies and efforts designed to target inequalities by addressing issues of school dropouts, low retention and transitional rates and poor students' inability to complete and attain quality education. The main VUP measures under investigation are fees abolition, free school meals, reduced and free health care protection programs and parent-teacher associations (PTA) effects on poor children's ability to attain participatory access in Gasabo district insecure primary and secondary schools.

Inadequate poverty reduction strategy can negatively impact a child's health, social, emotional, and cognitive development, behaviour, and educational outcomes (UNICEF, 2020). Those born into poverty are subjected to various health and social problems, including poor nutrition, chronic disease, and mental health crises. Poverty adds additional strain on the family's social standing, resting on a decline in parents' mental health and relationship and financial problems, as well as substance misuse (UNICEF, 2020). Unaddressed, poverty can increase a child's risk of domestic violence, as evidenced in a UNICEF (2020) report, which found that poverty-induced stressors can contribute to a parent's dysfunctional act of child abuse and neglect. The statistical estimate indicates that roughly 10 percent of the world's children living in poverty frequently encounter corporal punishment daily from their caregivers, and over 1 in 3 young people between 13–15 years are thought to experience bullying at home and in schools worldwide (UNICEF, 2020). Approximately 1 in 4 children under 5, roughly 176 million, live with a mother, often a victim of domestic partner violence. Nearly 3 in 4 children between 2 and 4 years old, around 300 million, are regularly subjected to violent discipline either at places of learning or by their caregivers (UNICEF, 2020).

In summary, poverty makes children's wellbeing and educational growth reductant due to structural, institutional, and economic deprivations of the violence they experience in their families and learning environment (UNICEF, 2020). The general scholarly consensus is that poverty breeds physiological responses to stress, such as high blood pressure and cortisol levels. Thus, prolonged exposure can disrupt brain functioning and ultimately leads to long-term physical and mental health consequences endangering a child's access to quality, inclusive, participatory learning opportunities with increased life chances. In UNICEF (2020) report, unprotection violence against children can significantly undermine a child's social and economic development and those of the community and nation-state reconstruction process. For example, in the UNICEF report, poor children's consistent exposure to poverty violence

damages a child's ability to attain quality and relevant, inclusive education and costs the global economy an estimated 7 trillion Dollars– roughly 8 percent of GDP annually. Thus, increase public expenditure on social protection schemes such as child welfare, special education, and medical and psychological services to boost access to basic services for the victims of poverty (UNICEF, 2020).

The barriers to participatory access in education and public life mean that poor children also lack opportunities to obtain equitable resources to fulfil their full potential and long-term development goals. Because living in poverty not only limits their access to various social protection covers such as health care, food, and housing security, it also leaves them at greater risk of school dropout, feeling lonely, and unemployed in the future. Consequently, lacking access to education can create social and economic inequalities, which exposes marginalised children to multidimensional poverty at the institutional, structural, and economic levels and thus undermine their ability to learn, transition or complete compulsory schooling required to attain equitable social participation resources to improve their wellbeing and development chances. Thus, a post-conflict fragile state-building and reconstruction social protection scheme must provide inclusive learning access to universal education to improve citizens' resilience, capital, and unified development prospects for all to equally participate in public life.

### **1.3 Research Question**

To evaluate the inferred education gaps and the impact of the VUP measures to reduce these gaps and inequalities, the study poses the following questions:

1. What contribution has the VUP made towards reducing educational poverty amongst its beneficiary vulnerable students' education?
2. Are these contributions effective towards increasing quality access to equitable participation in the education process amongst vulnerable students and their families?
3. What perceptions do poor families and their children hold that the VUP provide inclusive representative forums to enable equal access and contribution to education and community decision-making processes?
4. Has VUP implementation helped reduce the poverty barriers and vulnerabilities amongst programme beneficiaries amid several development programmes and affirmative actions to reduce education poverty in families?

## **1.4 Aim and Objectives**

The questions posed aim to assess the impact of the Rwandan Government's VUP program's ability to foster equitable, inclusive access to quality education on poverty eradication in various sectors in the Gasabo District of Kigali City, Rwanda.

- To assess the impact of VUP in increasing equitable access to quality education.
- To assess the impact of VUP in reducing the dropout rate amongst beneficiaries primary and secondary school students.
- To assess the impact of VUP in reducing the lack of resources creating barriers for poor children's access to inclusive quality education as equal amongst their peers.
- To assess the spatial variation of the impact of the VUP programme on poor children's access to quality education across several beneficiary sectors in the Gasabo district of Kigali City, Rwanda.

## **1.5 Study Limitations**

The study has five main limitations in VUP focus on formal education only; small sampling size as related to the total number of beneficiaries from VUP; lack of end line data for VUP from NISR; historical conflict sparking distrust amongst Rwandese; and the current academic divide influencing how and what type of research is performed in Rwandan post-conflict education sector. Firstly, the scope of VUP does not account for the micro-economic benefit of informal education as the efficacy exists of children not undertaking formal education as they are sharpening their skills in the informal education sector and providing a livelihood for themselves and their families. Secondly, due to the availability of resources and time, the study used a small sample size in the same district, which limits the data to the opinion of a few in particle geography to speak for all Rwandese who benefited from VUP. Thirdly, just as NISR provided baseline data in 2008 as a direction for implementation, end-line data was not provided to support project evaluation.

Fourthly, the current inequalities, political, institutional, and educational divides within the Rwandese poverty reduction strategies in the academic community. As an early career scholar studying in a fragile post-conflict research space, the need to appease Rwandan elites, fieldwork access, and the academic community, where the current anti-Rwandan Government norm is more salient, is paramount. Thus, study limitations can arise from the problem of historical memory. Data collection is also problematic in post-conflict settings with the experience of

participants' selective telling and conveying falsehood during interviews, as well as a public narrative instead of personal opinions. As several studies have shown, methodological texts tend to stop here while emphasising how these research limitations may present problems for data accuracy.

Lastly, the academic divide in Rwanda, by implication, may hold significant importance in the future study on Rwanda's institutional poverty reduction and social welfare protection policies that outsiders seek to explore with raise growing concerns, whether in the government or in the general population, who may or not view foreign researchers with suspicion and distrust. This can ultimately lead to a significant drop in access to information on Rwanda as the changing attitude may negatively impact the awareness of the information and knowledge provided on Rwanda stand to limit future researchers and the interested public full understanding of VUP's implication on poverty and education access.

## **1.6 Definition of Terms**

### **1.6.1 Indicators and Measures**

Rwandan VUP social protection strategies like Free School Meals (FSMs), Free Schooling (F.S.), Parent Teacher Association (PTAs), and Free Health Insurance (FHIs) are indicators this study will utilise to measure programme effectiveness on child education poverty and inequalities reduction. These development strategies aim to reduce educational poverty barriers by increasing resources and access to enable equitable quality participation in school via increased school attendance, transition, and competition rates, as well as reduce dropouts and class repetitions (Mugabo, 2018). Rwandan VUP strategies align with its rights-based protection framework embedded in the country's constitution as a policy tool to tackle poverty and inequalities impeding sustainable social inclusion and political stability (Mugabo, 2018). The school fees abolition, part or free meals, health insurance and parent-teacher associations are strategic resources to ensure a reduction in child educational poverty. And, in turn, help promote equitable access to equal and inclusive quality participation and learning in the Rwandan education system amongst its most vulnerable school children and families.

### **1.6.2 Free School Meal**

According to the World Food Programme (WFP, 2013) report, school feeding as *a social protection strategy* is defined as providing school meals to school children. Several types of school feeding programs exist in two main classified groups based on their modalities: (1) in-school feeding, where children are fed in school, and (2) take-home rations, where families are



given food if their children attend school. The report divided in-school feeding into two common categories: (1) meals and (2) high-energy crusts or snacks provided. The WFP report suggested that most countries' in-school meals combine take-home rations as a poverty reduction strategy to help reduce quality learning and participatory gaps and generate quality impacts on school enrolment and retention rates amongst vulnerable students, especially those affected by HIV/AIDS. On this evidence, various modalities inform in-school feeding programmes that a government prefers to assist access to education such as by meals, snacks, or both. However, unless otherwise specified, the operational purpose here is that this research shall evaluate the VUP school feeding programme to mean free or part-paid school meals or snacks provided for in school.

In contrast, many countries' school feeding programs cover pre-primary-, primary- and secondary-school children. The focus of analysing here is free meals provided in Rwandan primary and secondary schools and their impact on equitable access to education amongst low-income school children. The WFP utilised several case studies to illustrate the school feeding program's benefit on school children's health status based on its (2009, Rethinking School Feeding) report cited in its (2013) description. The reasons behind countries like Rwanda implementing school feeding programs often stem from a desire to address social needs and provide a social safety net during crises; to support children's development through improved learning and enhanced nutritional consumption; and to boost the local economy and farmer's incomes through feeding programme anchored on local agricultural production (WFP, 2013).

Guyana's Community-based School Feeding Programme since 2006 provided an important case study to benefits anchored on most countries' development goals. Guyana feeding programme objective is designed to provide a locally sourced, nutritionally balanced meal to feed primary-school students in remote communities in anticipation that it can positively impact their community participation in schools. Consequently, help raise their enrolment and attendance rates with improved nutritional status and learning outcomes. On WFP statistical evidence, over 16,600 children in 93 out of 138 primary hinterland schools received a nutritional lunch. Based on WFP (2013) impact evaluation amid the results from three survey rounds in 2007, 2008 and 2009, in two of the country's poorest regions, there is a significant impact on the poorest student's school attendance, academic performance, classroom behaviour, nutritional status and parent and community participation. The study noted that the enrolment and attendance amongst participants increased by 16 and 4.3 percent, respectively, between 2007 and 2009. And the children who leveraged the programme grew by 0.8 centimetres more than others



attending non-assisted schools simultaneously. The report also highlighted students' behavioural change and its effect on their learning at school owed to participation since reflected by two-thirds of teachers in these schools consistently crediting schooler's positive behaviour. It improved learning resulting in students' higher math scores averaging 8.1 points and 4.2 points higher in English than comparison groups with 1 point. Deducted from WFP, evidence is that VUP free school meal strategy positively impacts poor student's access to quality education, improves their enrolment and attendance rate, and enhances their cognition and achievement through strengthened health status and reduced micronutrient deficiencies (WFP, 2013).

### **1.6.3 School Fees Abolition**

Frederiksen (2009) defined *free education* as pupils or students earning an education and not having to pay fees or contributions previously paid for by parents or guardians. From Frederiksen's definition, tuition-free education means students attend and take courses for free in schools and are not charged to enrol or to collect programme materials. Thus, free education grants students access on merit or the need to participate in the process at no extra cost to their families. Morgan et al. (2012) systemic review on the impact of eliminating school fees in low-income developing countries evidenced that such intervention positively increased school enrolment, grade advancement, re-enrolment, and decreased absenteeism, age at school entry and marriage and childbearing. Although some evidence did, however, report that such interventions can reduce the quality of education offered. The focus here is to evaluate VUP free tuition strategic effectiveness on low-income families and children's access to learn and participate in the Rwandan education process at no extra cost too burdensome for their budget. Emerging from Renaud, M. G., N'da Juliana, K., & Pierre, M. Z. Z. S. (2015) school fees abolition review based on abstract lessons learnt in West African countries. The start of the School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI, 2005) helped accelerate progress and quality education for all children with policies designed to support the removal of cost barriers preventing parents from enrolling and maintaining their children in education. The SFAI ensured universal primary education was archived through support for countries seeking to maintain and accelerate progress with the MDGs and the Education for All (EFA) outlined goals. The initiative helped strengthen and eliminate school fees via targeted exemptions, subsidisations, and incentives to reduce and eliminate education costs that the most vulnerable populations are burdened with (UNICEF, 2006).

School fees are an insurmountable burden on low-income families' stretched budgets; thus, sending children to school and reading books becomes the least of their priorities than eating for survival (Nkurunziza et al., 2012). Several studies have shown that most low-income families educating children is a luxury they cannot afford on a limited budget. As such, the children are made to engage in economic activities to help support the household financially rather than be in school. Circumstances such as this contribute to the cycle of poverty, breeding little or no education to ensure the continuation of low wages throughout an individual's lifetime, thereby reducing their quality of life and social participation as peers (Nkurunziza et al., 2012). However, through SFAI resources at the dawn of the Information Age, policies and strategies to stop a child not attending school due to cost burden can be reduced so every child can have an adequate education. On the strength of UNICEF, SFAI's three operational goals in developing evidence-based lessons learned, providing technical support to countries, and enhancing the global and national policy dialogues. Implementing these measures in most East-African countries like Malawi, Ethiopia, and Kenya has yielded significant successes. For instance, since implementing the SFAI in Malawi, the enrollment rate rose significantly due to school fees removal, with presented evidence finding an increase in school enrollment at 11 percent higher and re-entrance, 81 percent higher for students in the last grade of primary school and 73 percent higher for girls and boys respectively (UNICEF, 2006). Evaluating VUP free schooling strategy comes down to evidence pointing that such an initiative does have a transforming impact on school enrollment insofar as that unleashes latent demand for education and encourages disadvantaged children from low-income families to participate in the education process without the need to prioritise food over education.

#### **1.6.4 Free Health Insurance**

As a social protection strategy, the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2008) defined *free health protection* as a series of public or publicly organised measures against social distress and economic loss caused by low productivity, stoppage or reduction of earnings, or the cost of necessary treatment resulting from ill health. ILO definition further sets out features of social health protection. Including social health protection as the functioning of the health sector economy. It requires an integrated approach toward the demand and supply of health care, the availability of health infrastructure, the sector's health workforce, employment opportunities and administrative capacity. In this context, the supply side determines people's potential access to the country's quality healthcare services. The ILO investigation found that significant funds for financing health care in developing countries directly come from users' pockets to fund their

care needs. The pay care providers such as health facilities, doctors, nurses, pharmacies etc., for access to insurance and medical care facilities. The opposite tends to occur in most developed countries, with direct taxation and public contributions paying for access to free universal health care. Social health protection provides financial protection and effective access to quality health care. Financial protection addresses the risks of impoverishment from catastrophic health events and lack of financial capacity to afford payment shortfall, including payments to providers required through insurance arrangements such as user fees or co-payments and other payments for health services and goods transport-related costs to access healthcare facilities inaccessible remote areas. Financial protection must prevent people from falling into poverty because of loss of income due to sickness. The ILO definition aims to measure VUP's effectiveness on low-income families' ability to access affordable and adequate health care services like medicines and healthcare commodities without negatively impacting household finance and their children's access to education.

From ILO observation, the share of financially incapable low-income families without adequate health protection is in low-income countries, especially in Asia and Africa. This trend weighs mostly on its poor citizens with a known risk of impoverishment amid catastrophic costs. For example, a low-income family's inability to afford adequate health leads to increased poverty, catastrophic health expenditure and an impact on income generation owed to selling off assets and borrowing resources during medical emergencies (ILO, 2008). Therefore, universal provision of social health protection can unburden users from the financial stressors causing illness by reducing the indirect costs of diseases and disabilities affecting their ability to earn a decent living, support family members, and increase their access to education to socially participate in development (ILO, 2018).

Conversely, the lack of access to health insurance can have significant social and economic repercussions to drive the poor into extreme poverty and out of participatory development socially and economically. Positive impacts of social health protection cover are observable in countries such as Vietnam and Rwanda. In terms of Vietnam's various health services integration approaches to extend coverage, it showed that the student-free health insurance schemes between 2010-2012 resulted in an increased number of health care visits of children by 13.6 percent and 66.1 percent, respectively. Likewise, the Vietnamese health insurance scheme positively impacts the height-for-age and weight-for-age of young school children and the body mass index of its adults (ILO 2019). Revealed by the ILO report is a recent study in Indonesia that found its social health insurance significantly increased health protection

utilisation in maternal health care services. Conversely, a study of Rwanda's compulsory health protection scheme credited for contributing to the reductions in under-five, infant and maternal mortalities; it also provided financial protection to help reduce the annual per capita out-of-pocket spending by about 3,600 Rwandan Francs for low-income families (ILO 2019).

### **1.6.5 Parent-Teachers Community Association**

A parent-teacher association (PTA) is a formal organisation created by parents, teachers and the community to facilitate parental and community participation in a child's wellbeing in school and at home (Laluvein, 2010). According to Brooks (2019), research from the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education: sustained that regardless of parental income or ethnic background, involved parents leads to their children's improved grade, test scores, regular school attendance, social skills, and behaviour to adapt well in the school environment. A systemic review on the role of parents and teacher's community leadership to assist social inclusion noted that because of parents and teacher's responsibilities toward a child's wellbeing development from an infant into young adulthood can lead to greater student success and increased confidence to boost their life chances (Brookes, 2019: Laluvein, 2010). Both authors sustain those diverse agendas typify the relationships between parents and teachers, expectations and priorities, thus requiring them to liaison and negotiate meanings of learning as an expression of social participation. Laluvein posited Wenger's theory of social learning to make the point that the social rather than didactic approach to problem-solving contributes to the improvement of school and teacher-parent focused on educational decision-making positions and thus affect the child's life chances. The parent-teacher partnership, therefore, acts as a locus permitting negotiation and roles interchangeability built upon and towards a mutual engagement in joint enterprise on a shared group characteristic to generate a strong cohesion of commitment and interests that could help transform partnerships over time. Resulting in narratives sharing, interchange of ideas and negotiation of meaning amongst participants to situate cognition perspective where learning essentially becomes a social and cultural phenomenon within community settings via dialogue with others (Laluvein, 2010). In the author's assumption, such partnership, whether formally or informally, constitutes an inclusive enterprise able to develop its being and trajectory to enable its members and practices to grow out of mutual engagement. Shared practices and activities among group members to an extent promote members' sense of inclusion and belonging, leading to Laluvein suggestion that mutual engagement and learning lay at the heart of parent-teacher community practice defined by both its membership and by the practice of including its membership engages. Successful PTA can

promote student welfare in home, school, and community through adequate laws to best protect and care for the child as well as help establish a closer relationship between the home, school and community so that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the educational interest of the child (Brooks, 2019).

In the context of Brooks and Laluevein's definitions, this paper aims to measure VUP parent-teacher community practice effectiveness through the lens of parent-teacher interactions and power relations on whether it allows low-income families to participate as equal community members in the decision-making process and activities to help promote their children's equitable educational access. Like several other studies already attested, early childhood education and care indicate that parental involvement formally and informally contributes to long-lasting development benefits for the child throughout life (OECD, 2006). For instance, the OECD report showed that parental involvement in learning strongly correlates to the child's socio-emotional development, later reading proficiency and academic successes, student engagement and enjoyment of reading, high school completion, and social adaptation. It also recognised that the surrounding community have a role in critically educating the child and function as additional support to parents in creating safe neighbourhoods and a healthy learning environment for their children, from getting involved in a child's daily home activities such as reading, drawing, supervising school progress, and excursions to museums and activity venues. Parents become actively engaged in a child's school life via effective awareness and communication with school administrators, community leaders and teachers about a child's welfare, progress, and behaviour. Engagement can also involve voluntary activities to improve access to services for all in the community, such as assisting with fundraising and road construction projects. Through this papers evaluation, we shall probe to see how VUP parents are afforded participatory parity opportunities either through holding schools directly accountable for the child's learning or influencing the school policies informally (by communicating with authoritative figures at the school or community) and formally (by assuming advising governing role and getting organised with others in the community to influence child's education). Through Ubudehe participatory development, the VUP creates opportunities for parents to engage in community decision-making processes and, by extension, improve protection policies either by burden sharing or voicing concerns about the quality of social protection and access provided by their children in education. Therefore, we shall observe typical barriers against parental involvement in schools, including time constraints among parents; lack of awareness to engage opportunities; decision-making capability to get involved,

power relations and lack of communication between authoritative figures, school staff and parents. It is assumed that the extent of involvement may also differ between parents depending on their socioeconomic status and cultural backgrounds, which may increase education inequities (OECD, 2006).

## **1.7 Chapters Description**

The study assesses the impact of the Government program in fostering equitable, inclusive education on poverty eradication, using the VUP 2020 in Rwanda as a case study. Four (4) research objectives will direct the research. The research is academic; hence, divided into six chapters. Chapter one (Introduction/Background and chapter description); chapter two is the (Literature Review and Theoretical Framework); Chapter three is the (Research Methodology), Chapter four (Findings); Chapter five (Analysis and Theoretical discussions); and chapter six is (Summarized Study Conclusion).

Chapter One of the research is the introductory chapter of the research. The research context is presented from a global to a local perspective, the contextual issue, and the study direction. It begins with the study background, highlighting the poverty issues and the social welfare protection arguments linked to the study in an inductive pyramid from its global to the local perspective. In this research, the background of the study stands to present the issues of access to education, inequalities, and poverty as a limitation to participating and achieving equality in access to education. In addition, the background presented a cursory overview of the VUP 2020 and its impacts on recipients in Rwanda. It also discussed some of the problems linked to the country's education and the challenges experienced and encountered in the sector's implementation of the VUP. Moreover, chapter one of the study shall present the study's aim and objectives before highlighting the study's significance, research scope, contextual limitations, and opportunities.

Chapter two of the research is the literature review. This chapter highlighted the existing literature, policy discourse of different schools of thought, and researchers summarising their findings on the studied matter. The literature review discussed the study's objectives through literature reviews to assist the paper in identifying strategic and policy gaps in previous and current studies that supported this study to further contribute by improving the quality of discourse that help fill the existing literature gap under this study. In addition, the theoretical framework considered by the study to critically analyse VUP social protection objectives towards education and access. As such, these theories provided the guidance needed in

analysing research findings, discussions and conclusions in the research arguments made about the effects of the VUP in providing vulnerable children's access to quality education in the research.

In chapter three, the study presents the research methodology from a robust aspect of the study by presenting the research design, data types, data sources, sampling, sampling technique of the study, data collection method and analytical data method under consideration. In this section, owing to research technicality, this chapter carefully and meticulously presents a detailed step-by-step approach that it intends to take prior, during and after data collection to help avoid misinformation likely to invalidate the integrity of the study and thus jeopardise the research outcome. In simplest terms, the research methodology presents the type of data under consideration for collection, how it was collected and how it can be analysed.

Chapter four presents the data and analysis of its findings therein. Data from the fieldwork and the desk study were carried out in the study presented in the chapter. Chapter five of the study critically discusses and analyse the data in line with the theoretical framework principles and other operationalised tools used to gain a deeper understanding of VUP's effects on poor children's access to education. Lastly, in chapter six, a summary conclusion of the study was made with a rounded understanding of social welfare appreciation at tackling poverty, its implications for the poor in context and areas requiring further studies to aid poverty reduction policies in targeting the poor well as well as attaining its SDG 4 objectives for all in a post-conflict setting.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1. Literature Review**

This chapter critically reviews past and recent findings about several educational policies and strategies toward attaining development and equity in education. In addition, a theoretical framework section sets out the theoretical consideration to grasp the realities of the study.



Regardless of background and circumstances, all children in Rwanda have an equal right to quality and inclusive Education (UNICEF, 2018). In the past 20 years Rwanda achieved significant development progress toward its middle-income status objective and met its MDGs targets with political stability, strong governance, fiscal and administrative decentralisation and zero tolerance for corruption (UNICEF, 2018). Despite the progress, poor children and their families still encounter significant challenges. For example, despite the country's rapid urbanisation, over three-quarters of its population lives in rural areas where poverty is widespread, 39 percent live below the poverty line, and 16 percent live in extreme poverty. Rwandese children are disproportionately affected by poverty and thus prone to experiencing multiple deprivations of their essential needs. Several studies have shown that Rwanda is a top-performing country in education among its sub-Saharan African neighbours, grounded on the premise that 98 percent of its children are enrolled in basic primary school. Nevertheless, these same studies have shown that without external resources to meet the current challenges in the education system, only 71 percent of the enrolled children will probably graduate from primary school (UNICEF, 2018).

Overcrowded classrooms are cited as a significant barrier to education, with an average of 62 students per qualified teacher. Also, only 70 percent of children with disabilities enrolled in basic primary education without consequences against the school's refusal to accept such students or make provisions to enable them to access learning institutions physically. The lack of appropriate classroom learning materials and a lack of understanding in differentiating learning plans and needs have also impeded poor students' access to education. For example, UNICEF (2018) report noted that only 18 percent of poor children are enrolled in pre-primary education with too few pre-primary facilities, insufficient government budgeting, and inadequately trained pre-primary educators resulting in a lack of access to Education in Rwanda. While most studies have highlighted the relatively equal numbers of boys and girls in classrooms, it is the view of UNICEF's (2018) situational analysis of children's education that girls are more likely to drop out of school than boys.

Furthermore, boys significantly outperformed the girls in 26 of Rwanda's 30 districts, evidenced by the report, even though girls are also under-enrolled in technical, vocational, and tertiary education. To address these challenges and gaps in access, the government puts forth its VUP programme as a solution to provide welfare protection to enable disadvantaged citizens to attain equitable participatory parity in education and society at large. Thus, the study evaluates the impact of VUP highlighted strategies to provide equitable participatory parity upon



intervention. However, this study starts by reviewing several tried and tested social protection schemes and policy implications for poverty eradication.

### **2.1.1. Scholarship Programs & Increased Equitable Access to Participation**

The term increased access refers to educational bodies and stakeholders providing additional social and material services to help eradicate potential educational barriers preventing the most disadvantaged students from equally participating in equitable education. Stakeholders reduce barriers by implementing newer technology to assist students in adapting to the global learning space and designing schooling materials to meet various learning needs and styles. Also, mentoring schemes to support low achieving scholars and offering free meals either at school or to the families, as well as situating safe modes of transportation and sanitary facilities to help increase students' school attendance (McGrath & Gu, 2016: 11-21). Failure to provide the most disadvantaged groups social and material services to help expand their access can create serious barriers that can negatively impact their social and economic ability to participate socially and economically in personal and national development. This brings increased costs, which several studies have linked to high rates of school failures and dropouts amongst the most deprived. For example, studies have shown that successful secondary school completion gives individuals better employment opportunities and long-term quality health prospects, factors often cited as key to long-term individual and national economic and social development (OECD, 2012). In effect, a more educated society contributes to building sustainable and prosperous growth to benefit society with increased access to equitable quality education to help advance and modernise societal cultural, political, economic, institutional, and technological practices to benefit both individual and national capitals (Payne & Phillips, 2010: 62-71).

In Cosentino, C., Fortson, J., Liuzzi, S., Harris, A., & Blair, R. (2019) and Braathen et al. (2001: 246-268) analysis of various poverty eradication schemes implemented in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to help increase access to education for the underserved. Insufficient and inequitable access to high-quality education remains a barrier to economic and social development for no programme recipients. In Cosentino et al. (2019) study on the scholarship scheme's effect on increasing disadvantaged student's access to tertiary education, for instance, it was found that the implemented scholarship programme supported the increase in recipient's school attendance and access to advanced and modernised studies which helped to fuel many recipient economies in SSA countries owed to the human and national capitals improvement. According to Cosentino et al. (2019) analytical study, Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program's (MFSP)

objective was to help transform and modernise individual and institutional practices and make them catalysts for societal and economic broader change. Post-graduation, the MFSP was noted for improving individual agency, especially amongst the youth with good academic fortitude and poor leadership potential based on the notion and commitment to positively giving back to society. Some MFSP implementation strategies included financial and non-financial supports to help increase recipients' access and help them succeed in their studies and transition towards post-graduation opportunities. In turn, several means of direct and indirect scholarship programmes were offered. From academic orientation programme offering tutoring and leadership, entrepreneurship, and community service training and activities; to access to financial and institutional networks, resources, and professional preparation for various internships; and the strengthening of ties between SSA diasporas and home recipient scholars would seek to access and acquire advanced technological skillsets that come with being mentored by international students.

MFSP's holistic approach to increasing equitable access for those considered underserved was evidenced to have prepared and empowered participating graduates to become ethical leaders who promoted positive changes in their respective communities. For example, based on Cosentino et al. (2019) study on the MFSP effect since its inception in 2012, over 6,100 undergraduate and graduate students were positively served, with undergraduate scholars making up to 84 percent of tertiary students enrolled. MFSP's impact on increased educational access showed that many programme recipients were enrolled in bachelor's degrees in and outside the SSA continent. Compared to none MFSP applicants, programme recipients were 30 percentage points more likely to be enrolled in a university, 37 percentage points more likely to study for a bachelor's degree program, and 33 percentage points more likely to study at a foreign university outside the beneficiary home country (Cosentino et al., 2019). Cementing the importance of scholarship as a strategic tool to increase equitable access to education and social development is the post-1966 independent Botswana's large-scale social protection investment programme. The scheme was geared to ensure Botswanan rural illiterate population had access to primary education, healthcare, and clean water as the newly discovered mineral resources benefit from and help modernise the country's institutionalised practices. The impact analysis suggests that the large-scale programme facilitated growth in school attendance amongst primary and secondary school-age scholars. A stable democratic regime was established, an uncharacteristic trend often linked to post-independence SSA countries, coupled with an increased employment rate and sound economic planning to support Botswana's rapid social

gains (Braathen et al., 2001: 249-268). These gains not only entail the double primary and secondary school enrolment rates for both genders at an equal level between the 1970s and 90s, literacy and numeracy rates significantly increased as well as improved life expectancy jumping from forty-six to sixty -three years of age once the infant and under-five mortality rates are cut by half (Braathen et al., 2001: 249). With an educational scholarship in both instances presented were aimed to assist and address issues with the low number of underserved students gaining access to quality education, it is, therefore, the case that both the Botswanan and MFSP scholarships ensured sustained, and sustainable political, social and economic growth to reach all sectors of their respective recipient populations. In that sense, MFSP and Botswana social protection regimes can be credited with the qualifying goals which helped to increase access to quality education for underserved selected recipients to enjoy equal participation in self-and national development that they might otherwise not have if not for being selected to both programmes.

However, evidence suggests that both overall programmes' impact varied, not only that the impact of MFSP scholars from the 2015 cohort was much smaller at 33 percentage points than comparable 2014 applicants who could not further their enrolment in universities. The Botswanan social assistance project was also found to have subjected its recipients to social and economic constraints, which resulted in their frustrations becoming less explicit, and voices going unheard in the process (Braathen et al., 2001: 247). It was observed that the agencies responsible for serving the underserved group operated at the fringes of fundamental matters of policy concern. By implication, both schemes just re-enforced the inferior social and educational positions already bestowed on the disadvantaged recipients that the programme objectives claim to want to attain by administrators and policymakers. For example, MFSP's objective was to bring transformative change by developing the next generations of African leaders. By design, MFSP talented grant recipients exceed their financial resources to complete their education by providing financial, social, and academic support to enable these scholars to gain equitable access. The fundamental problem observed is that by selecting promising talents as a criterion for the scholarship, most educationally deprived scholars are excluded from MFSP's strategic planning and implementation process geared toward increasing educational access and eradicating educational poverty. By implication, MFSP selection criteria ignored key significant academic barriers curtailing the talents of the most educationally deprived scholars. As McGrath & Gu (2016: 118-132) studies opined, students' academic performance can be negatively affected by parental background, peer influence, teachers' quality, learning

infrastructure, learning difficulties and disabilities, exclusions, underachievement, and harassment. It, therefore, suffices to argue that several deprived students' access and ambitions to further studies are not only severely restricted by the above factors, but by selecting based on academic performance, the educationally deprived access to increase their participation is further reduced, especially in many developing countries.

As crucial as MFSP goals were, the lack of consideration of the critical structural and institutional barriers will likely decrease the participation of the most deprived recipients access throughout their schooling journey. Since the programme's inception, most female MFSP recipients were more likely than men to join the labour force and less likely to be enrolled in further studies for lack of financial and social support. A similar observation was made with youth growing up in lone-parent households with an increased likelihood of being unemployed and less likely to pursue further graduate studies since family financial constraints and responsibilities further reduced their participation in education (Cosentino et al., 2019). Likewise, Botswana's social assistance scheme had problems with criteria and the poverty definition utilised in strategising what assistance is provided to the deprived. As cited in Braathen et al. (2001: 246-268), Botswana's vague definition was designed to restrict assistance for the 3 percent urban population, yet rural poverty description rather than urban definition was utilised to structure the assistance rendered to recipients. This vagueness is cited as creating broad guidelines that leave the scheme officers an unfettered discretion in deciding eligibility criteria on who qualifies within a fragile context still prone to tribalism, nepotism, elitism, and political conflict post-independence (Braathen et al., 2001: 246-268). Another problem created by Botswana's vague definition in determining a family's poverty status via comparing income with a poverty threshold solely dependent on family size and composition decreased access to education for those in extreme poverty rather than increased access. Four allocation principles were utilised in the Botswana clothing scheme to increase inclusive access and participation. Legality: because some clothing is needed for all people over a certain age; decency for poor people to partake in social life equally; practicality, to enable the washing of items of clothing; and protection to aid the recipients to stay warm (Braathen et al., 2001: 246-268).

Not only is there a three-year lifespan usage to the two underwear, trousers and school tops offered despite no input from recipient's families. The scheme administrators, both at the national and local levels of scheme governance, further viewed poor recipients as best predisposed in the maintenance of clothing items entrusted to them by offering them sewing

needles and threads in case of future preservation needs (Braathen et al., 2001: 246-268). Botswana's protection scheme wants to increase access to social participation, yet the set criteria for the poor to wear the same clothing for three years have by default increased their stigmatisation and exclusion to participate in social life equally and equitably. In the Renbourn (1960) science of clothing hygiene: past and present study, the suggestion is that prolonged wear of underwear clothing can lead to infectious bacteria like yeast infection build-up. By implication, the poor scheme recipient's participation decreased based on potential stigmatisation and exclusion, especially since Botswana was considered a fragile state with a largely illiterate population prone to ignorance at the time. Illiteracy and ignorance on such medical issues and the lack of support received for social and health capital acquisitions long-term can breed reluctance in students seeking the needed treatment, advice or support amongst family members, friends, co-workers, and schooling institutions (McGrath & Gu, 2016: 63-89). Therefore, the MFSP and Botswanan poverty eradication schemes may have increased educational access and participation to boost leadership qualities and literacy rates amongst its intended recipients. The criteria and definitions utilised to offer support did not assist the most academically deprived people whose inputs were never considered. The policy-making process never considered their social and economic conditions and critical barriers stunting their talents. Consequently, both programmes are suggested to have failed in increasing their access objectives because their support benefited very few people rather than the most disadvantaged groups who lack the resources to increase their access, talents and prospects.

### **2.1.2. Education Programmes and Increased Access**

The above finding suggests that, if anything, programmes geared at increasing access to education cannot be unclear, nor should participants be selected on academic performance alone without due consideration to some factors stifling their potential in education. Otherwise, schemes designed in such a manner can reinforce and reproduce educational inequalities making increased access difficult for society's poorest, which both the MFSP and Botswana's education support schemes were created to address. To avoid such failures as well as address the barriers preventing an increase in access have subsequently inspired several countries such as the United States of America (USA), through its Civil Rights Act, educational policies were amended through laws with schemes to strategically tackle inequalities preventing the increase of the poorest to leverage on available educational opportunities. For instance, with the enforced civil rights laws, profound improvement was made in accessing the millions of deprived

students whose opportunities to participate were previously restricted. As a result, many school systems have made educational access easier with the possibilities for students with disabilities and those without English proficiency to effectively attend and participate equally and equitably in regular programs and classes due to the provision of supplementary aids and services. It is now evidenced that since the introduction and enforcement of the civil rights act, over 4 million deprived students have benefited from various schemes to increase their choices and education access (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights since 2011). Therefore, the civil rights laws and scholarship programmes support improved access and opportunities to schools, classrooms, auditoriums, athletic fields, and arenas that previously denied the deprived a desire to become leaders in private and public sector development, or so it may seem.

A significant gap arises in that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) cited data in O'Day & Smith's (2016) study on students' grades in the last 20 years showed advances in key study areas. Including instances of increased 8th-graders math scores with the international TIMSS score (17 points increase between 1995 and 2011) and NAEP (12 points increase between 1996 and 2013). However, what was ignored by such scores was the slight increase recorded in reading and literacy rates amongst the most educationally disadvantaged. For example, evidence suggests that the average graduation rate for the over 4 million scheme first-year students who benefited rose by 82 percent in 2013-14. So too was the reduction in performance observed between white, black and Hispanic students in mathematics and reading comprehension. In addition, between 2000 and 2010, the increase in high school graduation rates for the over 4 million scheme black and Hispanic recipients was two to three times higher than the increase for the white students, reducing the graduation gap. However, this positive trend was undermined by two important facts. The first merely points out that the gap between poor five and the non-poor student was not narrowed substantially despite being the dominant factor in grade differences and overall achievement and differences in education level attained. An indication that other factors might be at play for such an outcome despite scholarships being offered. Second, in contrast to some improvements at TIMSS, U.S. performance has stagnated since its inception in 2003, and only slightly (2 points) in math. It has dropped. This contrast has positive performance dynamics.

They were observed in the United Kingdom (U.K.) by Scott & Mhunpiew (2021) when analysing the impact of U.K. government education policies on international students living in the country. The analysis revealed that most U.K. universities faced financial instability due to the increasingly competitive and mature education market, which heavily relies on the

international student's economy to make up for its institutional deficit. The reliance on earnings of the International Survey exposed the market to dramatic changes in domestic and international political policy to significantly impact business performance. In the impact analysis, U.K. Higher Education Institution (HEI) was closely linked to the U.K. Government's vision and policy promotion. The closed tie ensued some controversial policies bringing about public backlash with universities as unwanted participants though as the recipients of severe economic turmoil. National research caps, Brexit, and government policies on expanding geopolitical conflicts with China have significantly impacted institutional operations. The paper recommended that universities, primarily 4,444 low-table universities, adopt more aggressive strategic turns adaptable to market uncertainty. Institutional specialisation, fluctuating tuition fees for undervalued growth markets, financial support for E.U. students, increased presence in distance learning, and intensive market-wide lobbying by government M.P.s by re-emphasising, this paper has the potential for existing issues and goals to be growth opportunities. The complexity of market conditions and the reduced solvency of many institutions cannot be resolved by a single recommendation or short-term policy but by a complete restructuring and a robust industry-wide initiative. The assumption is that with the collapse of universities and their linked businesses or collapses under financial pressure derived from the market, the overall reputation of the market will be undermined, and the U.K.'s educational institutions as a significant education exporter will be less attractive (Scott & Mhunpiew, 2021). In Asia, Guo Huang & Zhang's (2019) work on China cited the country as an excellent study destination due to its education and development successes that have contributed significantly to improving educational equality, reducing poverty, and improving prosperity in the past decades. However, many problems and questions have arisen, which scientists have extensively investigated in various fields, both in Chinese and international contexts. Of the myriad of research topics, the three priorities are of most significant concern and research: educational profits, quality of education, and fairness. The researchers adopted international research literature and evidence from inside China to discuss educational development issues such as educational profits, quality of education, and fairness and to improve educational development. We propose future directions for research and practice to make it sustainable.

Spren and Vally (2006) examined changes in South African Education rights-based policy framework within the rising inequality and extreme poverty context. It was argued that school progress (or lack thereof) could not be separated from deprivation and its associated



consequences. For instance, in South Africa's education reform, a political framework was considered a factor that helped create tensions between cost recovery and reducing past unprocessed material. In effect, the introduction of user fees and the burden of other costs made the concept of education a "correct" abstraction". Rights-based education extends to include quality of education and educational opportunities. It also questioned the constitutional and legal romance of rights-based discourse and promoted a new concept of human rights in education. Finally, the research considered the resurgence of social education movements related to democratisation, education reform and human rights in South Africa. In Nkurunziza, J., Broekhuis, A., & Hooimeijer, P. (2012) observation, Rwanda established free education in 2003 with the initiative to improve general enrolment rates and attendance for underprivileged children nationally. However, other factors complicate a child's school career and tuition fees. Namely, the shift in attendance was examined through the binary logistic regression of data from an integrated survey of the living conditions of households in 2000 and 2005. While the presented outcome of policy impact indicates a successful mission, so was its failed objective to improve access and attendance rate for children in poor households lacking meaningful resources to leverage policy-free education goals. This was explicitly the case for low-income families who had to trade the direct and indirect costs of schooling their child against the benefits that the child's labour and income could generate for the household.

This highlights that uninterrupted school attendance reduces the family's resources and material wellbeing based on the child's time and income by either working for the family or participating unskilled in the labour market. This argument also resonates with moderately low-income families or parents with land to work on or a business to run yet exhibit deep reluctance to formally school their children, instead opting not to hire external labour because the opportunity costs of time spent at school is high. As shown by Kurunziza et al. (2012) study, poverty and a lack of financial resources present barriers to school enrollment and ongoing attendance even when it is freely available. Additionally, free education policy was shown to strongly influence the position of the child's siblings in the household and the relationship with the household head based on evidence showing that the number of siblings and the sibling position of a child within a household can impede first child's ongoing school attendance due to resource dilution and sibling complementarity. What this implies is that without increased income, an additional child in a household can result in fewer natural household resources for existing members to influence the share of basic needs being met in terms of food, clothes, shelter, and education within the available resources at the expense of the financial means available for education. By



implication, one or more children means that a child is kept away from school to enable younger sibling's enrolment while the dropout is enlisted for domestic and economic duties to support household resources. Orphans and fostered children evidentially do not benefit much from free education objectives.

Furthermore, girls are at a higher risk of dropout prior to completion from cultural, religious, and domestic chores responsibilities impeding their access and attendance. Therefore, free universal education can only be one step toward a more equitable distribution of educational opportunities. However, other complimentary social assistance strategies and processes are required to help improve access and reduce educational barriers leading to school dropout rates.

### **2.1.3. Educational programs & Impact on Primary and Secondary School Dropout Rates**

*School dropout* is defined by De Witte, K., Cabus, S., Thyssen, G., Groot, W., & van Den Brink, H. M. (2013) as a student living compulsory education early without attaining the minimum required credential and diploma post higher secondary school. In earlier chapters, evidence suggests that young adults lacking high school certification risk unemployment, low earning opportunities, social stigma, adverse health outcomes, involvement in crime and the criminal justice system at a higher rate than a certified graduate (Hamil-Luker, 2005). School dropouts, on evidence, tended to become the most prominent social welfare recipients in the form of social benefits, housing benefits, and food stamps, thus becoming a burden on an already stretched family and national resources (Freeman & Simonsen, 2015). Statistically put by Breslow (2012) cited U.S. *Department of Education, dropping out of school costs*: among young people ages between 18 and 24, those living in poverty are significantly prone to dropping out of school at twice the rate of those not socially poor at 30.8 percent to 13.5 percent of at least a bachelor's degree holder. In addition, Bergesson and Heuschel's (2005) report citing the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Olympia, Washington, attested that several students dropped out for different educational reasons. Hence, it can be challenging to anticipate what students may drop out of school. In the report, several linked reasons for dropouts were highlighted, making the development of the dropout eradication program and process somewhat tricky. Opined by the report is that no solid evidence exists for the "best" program and practice that could reduce dropout rates. Similar strategies' implementation varies widely from place to place; thus, results with a similar program could differ. Nevertheless, the results of existing programs can provide valuable insights into the development of intervention strategies. Programs and practices fall into two major categories.

As cited above, failing to graduate from secondary school entails severe consequences for individuals, families, and society. Hence, the "No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)" requires that policymakers and institutions responsible for education refocus attention on increasing compulsory school graduation rates whilst equally making efforts to reduce dropout rates amongst at-risk deprived children (Bergesson & Heuschel, 2005). In the sense that while the dropout problem has spawned research and new programs, dropout rates have remained relatively unchanged for decades at roughly (30 percent). In Bergeson & Herschel's view, students drop out for various reasons. Thus very difficult to know what students will leave school without graduating.

Consequently, in 2005, the Washington State Capitol Building passed alternative bill 1708, observed by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Institution (OSPI), promising the school targeted practices and programs to help reduce premature dropouts nationwide. This report provides information on how to meet this requirement. Specifically, (1) a comprehensive strategy to help prevent high school dropouts, (2) good dropout prevention and recovery programs, and (3) impact on educators and policymakers (Bergesson & Heuschel, 2005). Furthermore, in the UK, Dearden, L., Emmerson, C., Frayne, C., & Meghir, C. (2005) assessed the effectiveness of the needs-based scholarship as a method of stemming middle school students' dropout rates. An initial survey in the U.K. between 1999 and 2000 investigated this issue using matching techniques and a specially developed dataset to make valid piloted and controlled area comparisons. The grant impact was immense, with an initial participation rate between (16 to 17 years old) noted as 4.5 percentage points higher. The author found that full-time participation increased by about 6.4 percentage points a year later because EMA significantly impacts post-compulsory education retention. These effects vary by stakeholder group, with full-paid people having the most extraordinary surge in first attendees and partially qualified people having significantly different effects than the second-year control group of the program. The impact of participation rates is more substantial, especially among boys in the second year, and there is some evidence that these policies helped narrow the dropout rates gap between boys and girls. By default, politics had the most significant impact on children from the poorest socio-economic backgrounds.

A Wilson & Tanner-Smith (2013) systemic literature review on dropout prevention and intervention programs to improve completion rates among school-aged children and youth: argued that, fortunately, prevention programmes exist despite the numerous detrimental consequences linked with dropouts and intellectual poverty. These authors' systemic review

assesses the availability of school- and community-based prevention and intervention programs and their effect on reducing dropout rates among the general population and at-risk students. In the review, dropout programs (152 studies; 317 independent samples) effectively reduced school dropouts or increased completion rates. The random effects of the general programs were 1.72 using the average dropout rate for control groups of 21.1 percent. The mean odds ratio of 1.72 translates into a dropout rate of 13 percent for intervention groups. Wilson & Tanner-Smith's (2013) systematic review indicated that most school-and community-based programs effectively decreased school dropouts. The programmes reviewed included the National Dropout Prevention Centre /Network, which currently lists hundreds of prevention and intervention programme models despite few being considered dropout prevention programmes strictly. Most of them are geared towards academic performance and other risk factors for dropout such as absences or truancy, or indirect outcomes such as student engagement, but may also include dropout reduction as a program objective.

Considering the broad dropout risk description, Wilson & Tanner-Smith (2013) evaluated any programme which prevented dropouts from measuring outcome variables, irrespective of intended billing for dropout prevention or not. Many intervention programmes systemically reviewed were found wanting in that some strategies utilised restrictive inclusion criteria to limit research ability to make confident conclusions about intervention effectiveness to a range of programs with dropout outcomes. Or the potential variation of effectiveness for different program types or participant populations. The authors exemplified this by highlighting a U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse report, which included only 19 programs in the dropout prevention review (What Works Clearinghouse, n.d.). Other reviews on dropout prevention interventions cited were (Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007; ICF International, 2008; Klima, Miller, & Nunlist, 2009; Lehr, Hansen, Sinclair, & Christenson, 2003), which offered us some clues about the characteristics of effective programs, but they firmly focused on relatively small sets of programs. This was further exemplified by the ICF International (2008) review of dropout prevention programs that examined its implementation of quality yet failed at examining the program characteristic for formal moderator analysis. In the cited (Hammond et al. 2007) systematic review, these authors categorised these programs into primary, selected, and indicated interventions describing various risk factors targeted by the utilised program strategies. This approach was functional based on the information provided by selecting programs to suit the student population or setting characteristics. They further highlighted the dearth of these high-quality research on dropout programs and their lack of

crucial outcomes linked to either staying in or dropping out of school during evaluations of prevention programs effect. The assumption was that some of the included programs had positive effects on the students involved, with no specific identified programs that could be linked with being effective or ineffective.

Nevertheless, the focus was placed on programme implementation integrity as a critical variable to emphasise the intervention scheme's vital methodological importance for future research on dropout programs. In conclusion, some of the reviewed programs positively influenced dropout, achievement, and attendance/enrolment rates, with school restructuring programs that utilise the schools-within-schools approach strongly highlighted as the most effective interventions. Also highlighted as an alternative yet effective are programs designed for separate school facilities. Several significant potential moderators were identified in the present review: programmes implementation quality, scheme type, and whether schemes were typically hosted in school facilities or alternative school locations.

However, derived from this systemic review, no single prevention or intervention strategy stood out to address the dropout concerns blighting disadvantaged children's educational poverty head-on. The above findings have demonstrated the various dropout interventionist programme's practical significance when specifically put together with the conclusion on the importance of implementation quality for predicting treatment effects. Thus, policymakers have various choices for prevention and intervention programs to reduce dropout rates if suited to contextual concerns. This was the instanced offered by Wilson & Tanner-Smith's (2013) systematic review result, which highlighted that the programme strategy chosen makes less of a difference in the eventual outcome than when opting for a strategy that the local school can successfully implement, communities and agencies responsible for meeting the local population's educational needs. Another concern raised by all authors was a lack of costs provided. Thus, both authors suggested that rather than policymakers selecting a popular or a dropout strategy, consideration should also be linked to the programme's cost and fitness of scheme to its context and implementation local staff. The notion is that once programs are in place, they become critically focused on implementation quality; benefiting users through higher implementation quality was linked to more extensive effects. Given the minimal variation in effects across program types, all the reviews here have demonstrated that regardless of dropout prevention and intervention strategy applied, any expected effectiveness would depend on solid local scheme choice designed and implemented to suit its appropriate local environment. Thus, despite the relative intensity, most programs reviewed by the various

authors occurred over a significant time and involved considerable changes in the educational settings in which they were implemented. It should not be concluded that less intensive, much less frequent, or much shorter programs not often found in the literature could not be as effective as those reviewed here. This point was proven below by Casey's (2014) study in Mozambique.

Casey (2014) observed that Mozambique, one of the poorest countries, has the least effective basic education systems globally. Therefore, irrespective of access to primary education, most students do not complete the seven-year primary school cycle on offer to understand the characteristics, causes, and effects of early dropouts in children from low-income families in rural areas. The author's survey was focused on a qualitative field assessment in Liverau, a district in northern Nampula province. Theoretically, it analysed the overall concept of the education and development approach and its potential within the Sustainable Rural Livelihoods (SRL) framework to scrutinise the programme outcome. Casey's analytical model incorporates a variety of homely, social, and extrinsic concerns to provide a comprehensive interpretation of the situation best contextually. Given the importance of education in the development discussions concerning the MDGs post-2015 agenda, Casey's study can be considered significant in contributing to a deeper understanding of the role of education in a similar localised context. The author established from a phenomenon examination that the consequences of dropping out of school were mainly characterised by extreme income poverty, strong interaction with extrinsic factors to generate vulnerable livelihoods and poor education quality. Thus, a broader intervention policy may not always capture this aspect. In contrast, a small community-based intervention might be because early withdrawal from school is generally seen as a lack of family resilience to socio-economic shock and a lack of after-school opportunities. Casey's finding also observed the implication of transgenerational effect linked to dropouts to affect future generations likely afflicted by a persistent vulnerability for lacking the capabilities and opportunities to complete schooling.

Lastly, a School Funding and Equity in Rwanda: Final Report from the *Kigali: Institute of Policy Analysis and Research-Rwanda*, cited by Paxton & Mutesi (2012), observed that the country allocated resources to improve equity in the education provided schools with policy implementation aimed to achieve universal and equitable quality access to twelve years of primary education. Despite the feat achieved by such action, massive dropout cases were recorded. The primary school education completion rates were fewer in 2016 (65.2 percent) than in 2012 (72.7 percent). Furthermore, the rate of dropout in the promotion to secondary school has increased, and repetition rates have remained high in primary school, 18.4 percent

in 2015. In addition, it was noted that across our sample, an estimated 15.1 percent of children in rural areas repeated, compared to 14.1 percent of children in urban areas. The difference in repetition rates between wealth quintiles is highest in the 7 to 9 and 16 to 18 age groups. The result of these differences in repetition and dropout rates is that children from wealthier households stay on track much more than those from poorer households (Paxton & Mutesi, 2012). Therefore, VUP strategic intervention must be part of an assistance scheme designed to help reduce a family's financial insecurity, primarily cited in the decisions taken to accommodate short-term economic interest against the child's equitable participation in education.

#### **2.1.4. The impact of an educational and financial burden on child education**

Auguste, B. G., Hancock, B., & Laboissiere, M. (2009) defined *financial burden* in education as the extent of resource load carried when investing money, emotions, and time acquiring or educating another through schooling. The financial burden relates to the resource load cost families bear in educating their child through compulsory schooling, linking primary and secondary school in anticipation of acquiring valuable capital for equal social and economic opportunities and participation with better outcomes. Hence, the impact of finance on education is essential in determining what type and quality of education are acquired. By implication, a child's success or failure to access and attain quality education is greatly affected by proper finance. In this context, Frisancho (2019) examined the excitement about school-based financial education. The researcher first adopted recent experimental evidence. The research considered financial education programs' impact on young schoolers. Second, it complements existing studies by highlighting these programs' potentially adverse unintended effects. Resting on data from a large-scale Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) in Peru investigating any spillover effect of financial education programs on academic outcomes or whether schemes widen initial inequalities originating from their heterogeneous treatment impacts. While delivery models incorporating mandatory course requirements yielded significant and robust impacts on financial literacy, voluntary after-school programs yield meagre effects. Such gains do not come at the cost of pervasive effects on the probability of passing a grade. Additionally, the impact of school-based financial education seems inclusive, as treatment effects seemed uniformly applicable across different sub-samples.

Also, Ajayi and Ross (2020) studied the impact of education on the financial outcomes of young people's use of Kenya's Free Primary Education (FPE) introduction in 2003 as an exogenous

shock to schooling. Our identification strategy compares changes across cohorts and regions with differing levels of pre-FPE enrolment. The research discovered that FPE increased educational attainment with enhanced use of formal financial services specific to mobile banking. The study examines potential mechanisms and the increase in employment rates and incomes but limited improvements in practical numeracy, retirement planning, and subjective financial wellbeing. The results suggest that education primarily increased financial inclusion by raising labour earnings, with little direct impact on financial capability. In addition, Nwoko (2015) reviewed the condition of financing education in Nigeria, including the resource quantity, efficiency, and effectiveness from both domestic and external sources. The analysis was a desk review of international and domestic data, literature, and publications, as well as several interviews with federal and state government officials and donor actors. Despite multiple years of effort, the Nigerian education system remains weak, especially in its Northern region, where statistical poor data quality impedes a more precise analysis of the numbers observed.

Numerous government initiatives since the 1970s achieved moderate gains, including the general increase in the gross enrolment ratio (GER) at the junior secondary school (JSS) level and an increase in both gross and net enrolment ratios for girls. Despite this progress, many children remain out of school. An estimated UNESCO UIS data situate about 8.7 million primary children as out-of-school victims. It is worth noting that the Nigerian government has yet to recognise this number, citing a lack of proper study to raise concerns. Meanwhile, annual school census data in the Kano state indicate significant improvements in access since 2011, but not necessarily quality. On the other hand, UNICEF's data highlight the presence of many displaced schoolchildren in the insurgency-affected north-eastern states of Nigeria. According to reports from the International Organization for Migration, 423,000 (28 percent) of the 1,491,706 people residing in key northern states such as Borno, Adamawa, Gombe, and Yobe are of schooling age.

II. Bottlenecks to progress. These include the demand, supply, governance, and accountability factors. The lack of a clear delineation of intergovernmental roles remains a barrier to progression. While officially mandated to manage primary education, state governments (S.G.s) have failed to allocate adequate resources, relying instead on local governments (L.G.s) resources. Other factors include lack of financial accountability, limited awareness linking education and economic opportunities, religious and cultural barriers to western education, inappropriate coordination among governments, and little impact of donor interventions due to ineffective coordination with the government.

III. State of financing.



Funding for primary education has come primarily from federal and local government resources over the years; state governments have tended to prioritise tertiary education, relying on local governments' resources for primary education.

The general lack of accountability inherent in current practices leads to inefficient use of resources. Officials estimate that these challenges account for 40-45 percent of funds allocated. Recurrent capital expenditure imbalances in budgetary allocations also aggravate the challenges and stifle the provision of education infrastructure. The non-inclusion of performance conditions in the criteria for federal matching grants to state governments on primary education may lead to a lack of incentives for inefficient performance. IV. Opportunities for action. Development actors in state and non-state actors can improve their performances. Federal and state governments must create a reliable and sustainable education database to improve planning and management. The national government should also redesign its matching grants for primary education, making state governments' support for basic education a condition. Other conditions should include releasing funds in tranches to match the present achievement in quality and access targets and providing state governments counterpart funding sources. Agencies that fail to meet standards over time should return their funding to the general pool and receive a special assistance grant for supervised spending towards adequate capacity-building. Finally, donor resources would best support capacity-building to improve governance, create a reliable and sustainable database and improve financial accountability, including routine expenditure tracking. In addition, Rashida (2016) states that educational financing is the provision of money necessary to finance the totality of other resource inputs required in an education system to achieve its objectives maximally. Appropriate financial input is crucial to the success of any education system. Recently, it has been acknowledged that education is not a purely public good provided by the public school; instead, education financing should be concerned with private And non-formal education. Education financing in a country is properly established when the level of provision of educational service is adequate, when the educational resources are efficiently and timely distributed, and when the distribution of educational resources is equitable. This paper examines the crisis in the educational system—problems of financing education in Nigeria- and concludes with possible solutions.

An educational development report by Paxton & Mutesi (2012), school funding and equity in Rwanda, suggested that its schooling system faces significant challenges in terms of fund type being used to address inequality and access to reduce financial burdens on low-income families. They include the need to ensure adequate funding, quality improvements, and more significant



equity. One essential part of attending to these challenges requires an efficient and fair education funding system. School funds are publicly or privately sourced and linked to parental contributions. These parental contributions can either be for indirect costs of schooling, such as uniforms, or direct costs in the form of financial payments to schools. Paxton & Mutesi's review assessed the impact on school funding of the direct financial and parental contributions in two contrasting Rwandan Districts, where one is in a relatively better-off urban area and the other within a poor rural area. The clear difference between the two areas was demonstrated in the wealthier area parental contributions were more than double the schools' non-salary spending.

In contrast, the rural area, voluntary parental contributions had a marginal impact on school budgets. Such findings raise serious concerns about the equity of funding and whether the Rwandan school system can best support the achievement of greater equality of opportunities and outcomes with its funding mechanism. As the research above suggests, schools with pupils with more need are worse funded than schools with less needy pupils. Therefore, the Rwandan funding approach between the poor and affluent areas goes against achieving greater equality of opportunity for a better participatory outcome. It is essential that the issue of schools illegally turning pupils away for parents' inability to financially contribute sufficiently with the funding model set out with noticeable evidence addressing this issue. However, more fundamentally, the government ought to develop a redistributive funding arrangement to allocate extra levelling up a funding mechanism to enable deprived families, children and local schools least able to attract additional parental contributions to access quality education.

They were utilising Nuwagaba's (2013) research on higher education funding cost-sharing approach to ascertain suitability amid examining funding structures such as the use of PPP, tuition fees, bank loans and internally generated funds by higher learning institutions in Rwanda's education sector. Nuwagaba's study found that the cost-sharing approach is a suitable model in Rwanda, but it faced the challenge of using the financial means testing (FMT) approach to identify potential beneficiaries. Most respondents view FMT as unfair in cases involving a lack of financial assistance not reaching those most deserving because of corruption within the system. For example, the other funding methods mentioned above were based on analyses of appropriateness. The conclusion was that a failed higher education system negatively impacts the country's economic development. In addition, if the higher education sector is underfunded, it will also severely impact the quality of the graduates and the education sector.

Consequently, there is a need by the government for policy change towards its higher education funding cost-sharing approach to best serve all. The (ADEA, AU/CIEFFA and APHRC) reports cited by Adesua, V. O., Balogun, B. N., & Adelokun, I. S. (2021) presented the impact of finance to address how funding measures are meeting the education needs of vulnerable and marginalised children, most especially for girls, and children with disabilities and those living in hard-to-reach areas. The report identified several education financing gaps, challenges, and emerging evidence on what education systems in these countries are experiencing because of COVID-19 and persistent funding constraints. A rapid scoping review, evidence mapping, and the team's expert knowledge of health and education issues in SSA were adopted to monitor financing policies and practices and emerging evidence on the issue.

A systematic literature review, reports and data from various online libraries, education databases, and critical institutional, national, regional, and global education stakeholder websites were examined (Adesua et al., 2021). The educational priorities during COVID-19 Synthesis results showed that funding in the 41 GPE partner countries was geared toward four critical interlinked locales:

- Distance education during school closures
- Teacher training on the use of distance education technologies, instructional delivery, and remedial teaching
- Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) materials provision, personal protective equipment, and other resources to prepare learning facilities for reopening
- Support for vulnerable populations, such as special needs children, girls and refugees from marginalised neighbourhoods.

The funding proportion devoted to each priority area varies from country to country and by response stage. While distance education solutions, such as through radio and television, took centre stage during school closures, reopening has recently taken priority as more education systems return to in-person learning. Additionally, to WASH and personal protection measures, some funding for school reopening has assisted the expansion of infrastructure, such as constructing more classrooms. Funding is also needed to support teacher training on distance learning technologies, effective delivery skills, and, more recently, remedial teaching skills. Teacher training has also focused on offering psychosocial support to learners, especially vulnerable populations, in adjusting to "the new normal". Financing for COVID-19 education

responses has also covered gender-sensitive and more inclusive approaches to education, such as better addressing the needs of adolescent girls most at risk of falling behind because of the pandemic. In some cases, financing for existing gendered-focused programs seems to mitigate the adverse effects of COVID-19 on such vulnerable groups. GPE partner countries have also financed gender-sensitive, protective, and preventive approaches to safeguard learners from violence, focusing on at-risk girls who are prone to discontinuing schooling without funding to support them (Adesua et al., 2021).

## **2.2. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework adopted Sen's human rights and Fraser's participatory parity justice principles to theorise VUP strategic actions towards increasing participatory parity and reduce inequalities to access education with dignity and autonomy. These theories' definitions and evolutionary nature to protect the poor entail exploring their strengths and weaknesses. By implication, potential gaps between rhetoric and policy implementation may exist where differences might occur between rhetoric and reality when shedding light to development policies in an underdeveloped context like Rwanda. The attempt here is to grasp VUP impact through these theories as development remedy to increase access and reduce education poverty for the poor.

### **2.2.1 Sen's Development as Protection**

Sen's (2012) conceptual framework underpins the human development paradigm to broaden the existing scope of poverty and human development understanding. In recognising Sen's capabilities approach, most social protection policies and actions tend to emphasise the development of human capabilities at the heart of poverty reduction agendas. Sen's approach is seen as challenging the existing commodity-based poverty understandings by combining philosophy and economic elements into a broadly humanist or ethical social protection paradigm as the deprivation of one or more rudimentary capabilities (Payne & Phillips, 2010: 118-120). These capabilities are vital for individuals to achieve minimum functioning within society and subsequently access resources to meet their basic needs and equitable access to education based on the valued life chosen. In Payne's and Phillips's work, poverty reduction based on human needs seek not to reduce industrialised economic growth importance per se. However, instead, it wants to move the agenda beyond an exclusive growth preoccupied with the material dimensions of development. Entailed in basic need personal protection active is

that human poverty reduction strategies must open opportunities for personal and social flourishing of individuals, improve life chances and aid the realisation of human potentials (Payne, & Phillips, 2010: 120).

Consequently, Sen's development agenda comes from the moral imperative that development strategy gains value by utilising poverty reduction objectives to satisfy people's freedom from poverty through the provision of fundamental rights to resources meeting their needs rather than prioritise aggregate national growth designed only to improve rich people's living standards (Payne, & Phillips, 2010: 120). In that sense, the poverty reduction strategy aims to significantly enlarge poor people's choices and freedoms to improve their capabilities and access to inclusive education. By implication, Sen's development of freedom is a capability approach whereby freedoms are only advanced when several unfreedoms are eliminated through policy and ethical development strategies geared towards improving poor people's participatory parity in social arrangements. Sen posits that development becomes the process of expanding people's fundamental freedoms and access to equitable services like inclusive education, often denied by unequal political, social, and economic arrangements.

It suffices to note that Sen's freedom-centred view implies that freedoms are the means and ends of development because they simultaneously emanate from the social, economic, political, and human rights arrangements and the moral and legal rights to practice them. Thus, development from freedom-centred views leads to an agency-oriented understanding that the poor, through social protections, must be adequately equipped with social and economic opportunities to become the primary agents of development able to satisfy their individual needs (Payne, & Phillips, 2010: 122). As the case may be, it is observable that most developing countries, including Rwanda, which is still fragile in its post-genocide situation, have gone on to implement welfare regimes such as the VUP to help reduce poverty and equalise citizen participation—stipulated by the (W.B. Development Report) as cited in Payne and Phillips literature. Human development strategies ought to be affirmative to improve access and equitable enjoyment of essential services such as quality nutrition, health care, education, and community planning development initiatives and services via direct assistance like cash transfers or a directly enforced quota scheme for the very needy in society.

Supporting a development centred on freedom as capabilities approach is the well documented Brazil's (Bolsa Familia program, BFP) reportedly evidenced that nearly three-quarters of cash transfers from the project reached those in the low-income quintile (Wong et al., 2016). To meet

BFP cash transfer conditionalities not as a punitive measure but rather to give access to otherwise excluded and low-income families in Brazil's healthcare and education systems. The programme beneficiaries must maintain regular health checkups and ensure the children's school attendance goes beyond 80 percent to receive these cash transfers. The programme cited evidence suggesting that BFP conditionalities positively influenced the health status of poor recipients. In conclusion, Sen's capabilities and freedoms as a development approach align with VUP's strategic objectives, goals and values for development, state-building, and citizenship education with no ethnic identification as a means for social cohesion and poverty reduction. By implication, Sen's human development is used as our theoretical framework to critically examine Rwanda's VUP effectiveness towards the enlargement of poor students' access to attain equitable quality education deemed valuable to realising full human potentials and poverty reduction.

### **2.2.2 Social Protection and Amartya Sen's Human Rights.**

Amartya Sen's (2012) global reach of human rights view is that legislation alone cannot eradicate poverty barriers without the application of moral rights norms aspiring to protect citizens from severe impending political, legal, and social rights violations when they occur. Sen's development of freedom theory asserting the dialectical relationship between development and freedom, progress or welfare protection should act as an integrated process to expand the substantive freedoms that people must equal participation with one another. Sen's ethical human rights principles involve five ethics: universality, equality, participation, interdependence, and the rule of law knitted together; otherwise, one without the other is pointless. Thus, these freedoms collectively ensure access to health care, education, political dissent, economic markets, and equality, with each freedom encouraging the development of another as "both an end and a means of development" (Sen 2006). In this context, Sen's rights theory highlights the vital role communities and civic organisations play in the prevailing social norms inherent within a defined situation to impact the discerning impediments and instigators of collective and individual freedom. As such, people are only accessible once they can provide for basic needs and realise their innate abilities upon access to resources and the ability to utilise them towards attaining individualised development and freedom. In this context, Sen's rights approach can provide a fertile base for social protection ideals as the freedom to establish and increase disadvantaged citizens' access to resources that will enable their participatory parity in political, social, and economic matters to advance their equity in societal arrangements. In sum,

Sen's moral rights protection approach can act as a justiciable remedy to equalise participation to aid people's capability in developing the abilities needed to free themselves from the scourges of poverty, inequality, and repression (Sen, 2006; 2012).

Sen's capability approach is, therefore, of the notion that to ensure freedom from poverty is to make available resources to protect, provide and expand people's choices to lead a life they value in the fight to reduce poverty. Such provision is based on the government upholding its obligations to the governed. This is done on the premise that the government is obligated by an agreed social contract, actual or imagined, to aid members' basic needs without precondition to cooperate and sacrifice some freedoms for state protective rights to social benefits (Alderson, 2016). A quick analysis of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's social contract theories and the rights to social protection explains the origins of the government's obligations in protecting their subjects' rights to equitable services enjoyment via meeting their basic needs and development. For instance, several political philosophers have sustained the view that social contracts and the state's obligations to protect citizens' rights originate from human primitive nature and the state of anarchic born.

Nevertheless, for survival purposes, men, rational or not, choose to exercise genuine reason and form a society and a government as a social contract is established (Alderson, 2016). Distinguishing Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, political obligation theories from other doctrines are based on an attempt to justify and delimit political authority on the grounds of people's self-interest and rational consent. Compared advantages between organised government and state of nature, disadvantages asserted in these theories would demonstrate government usefulness in protecting human rights as enshrined within the agreed social contract with its subjects. In conclusion, the various forms of these social contract theories inform the theoretical study framework for analysing the Rwandan government's VUP approach to both fundamental protecting rights with social protection as its duties to citizen's development as expected from a legitimate authority with obligations.

### **2.2.3 Social Protection & Fraser's Social Justice**

Social justice can refer to the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society (Fraser & Naples, 2004). In several cultures, social justice as a concept is the process that ensures individuals' capacity to fulfil their societal roles in receipt of what they due from society. The Brazilian Familia social protection evidence the individual capacity to meet social demands in return for receiving what is due them on a contractual basis. As a social justice

process, the Brazilian social protection obligated families to increase their children's school and health care attendance to help them receive cash transfers to social protection on necessities moving basic household needs. Social justice movements often emphasise breaking barriers for social mobility, safety net creation, and educational and economic justice. The view posited by Fraser & Naples (2004) is that social justice assigns rights and duties in the institutions of society to enable people to receive the essential benefits and burdens of cooperation. Relevant institutions include taxation, social insurance, public health, education, public services, labour law and market regulation for fair wealth distribution and equal opportunity (Fraser & Naples, 2004). There are theories relating justice to a reciprocal relationship and society. However, they are often mediated by political, cultural and economic traditional differences, with some emphasising individual social protection responsibility toward society and others the equilibrium between access to power and its usage of social protection responsibly (Keddie, 2012).

In comparison, modern social justice invokes historical figures like Rawls's reinterpretation of justice as fairness and equality of opportunity to facilitate maximum benefit for those least advantaged in society by inequalities. Fraser's participatory parity as justice approach will guide this paper's framework to critically evaluate the VUP efforts and ability to enable the poor to access quality education based on its affirmative and transformative frames in recognising institutionalised cultural values hindering the appropriate redistribution of equitable resources desired. Therefore, we explore theories and justiciable concepts often informing policymaker's policies and the principles underpinning poverty reduction strategy.

#### **2.2.4 Participatory Parity as Justice**

Fraser, social justice refers to the practical and active processes that challenge the social, cultural, and economic inequalities imposed on individuals on the grounds of differential distribution of power, resources, and privilege (Fraser & Naples, 2004). *Fraser's justiciable aim* is a development process designed with participatory planning and practices to support disadvantaged groups' participatory parity directly and indirectly in society. In poverty reduction, justice as parity arrangements enables people to participate as peers in public life across economic, cultural, and political domains. Fraser sets out principles to guide policymakers' act of just and unjust participatory programs to ensure proper participatory procedures, recognition of minority viewpoints and issues impeding their public life to help remediate the unequal social structures. The intended goal here is to utilise Fraser's framework



as an analytical tool to practice and evaluate VUP's justiciable strategy through examples from its public engagement in PTA's, Health insurance, free school meals and Free universal Education. While no practical tool kit for action exists in Fraser's framework, suggestions are offered by Blue, G., Rosol, M., & Fast, V. (2019) research on justice as parity of participation to guide policymaker's practical application of justiciable agenda to improve access in education. In the first practical instance, an appropriate procedure is in place to ensure recipients in a social protection scheme are represented at the proper scale. Secondly, the marginalised voices are recognised and valued as much as those from dominant groups.

Moreover, thirdly, these social protection strategies must help mitigate the inequitable distribution of wealth and resources for parity to ensue. Developed for political and social policy intervention evaluation, Blue et al. (2019) cited Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation as the popular framework to advance, evaluate, and critique practical instances of citizen participation in a process. The author assumes Arnstein's ladder portrays oppositional relations between a relatively powerful state and relatively powerless citizenry by categorising participation in various levels (nonparticipation, tokenism, citizen power) into eight hierarchical steps ranging from manipulation to citizen control. With an emphasis on the deliberate inclusion of citizens in the decision-making processes for power to shift from the centre (government agencies, experts, elites) to those on the margins, citizen participation is, therefore, an essential empowerment tool to attain power and control. It suffices to sustain that even for Fraser's parity as justice stands when participation entails the redistribution of power; otherwise, the powerless in society might perceive the process as empty and frustrating gesturing.

VUP aims to create education access for disadvantaged students. Closer attention to the strategies and interactive processes used to empower those included in the VUP initiative. The procedures involved, how issues are defined and who defines them, how inclusive and valuable participants' voices to the protection offered and their perception about participation at the local community level. Utilising Arnstein's participatory ladder to support Fraser's justice as parity framework ensures that proper evaluation of the VUP perceived effects is done in contemporary Rwandan contexts and cases. Fraser's justice as parity of participation model, therefore, provides the normative framework from which critical analysis is done to offer an expansive approach combining three interdependent yet distinct dimensions of justice that together ensure parity of participation: redistribution (who is entitled to what), recognition (whose voice gets heard and included), and representation (How do we decide who gets what, and where does this



take place and what effects have these strategies brought to reducing educational poverty and its malice on access to quality education). Unlike Rawls's liberty restriction to aid the poor, in bringing together the economic, cultural, and political dimensions of participation. Fraser emphasised the importance of overcoming injustice by ensuring that institutional, cultural practices and the decision-making process are equitable to enable participatory parity across all social groups, increase access, and reduce educational poverty through consented efforts by all and the well-off. At this juncture, we can assume that Fraser's justice principle requires that social arrangements permit every member of society to interact with one another as peers; otherwise, an arrangement is unjust if structured to deny some members the chance to participate fully in social life, on terms of parity with the others. That can happen, moreover, in at least two different ways.

First, the distribution of material resources can be so unequal as to deny some social actors the resources they need to participate as peers. Fraser's second principle denotes that for justice to prevail in hierarchical institutionalised patterns of thoughts, the cultural value should change to deny some the requisite standing. Society must meet two conditions to eliminate economic obstacles to participatory development. Including eliminating deprivation, exploitation, and gross dissocial protection dissimilarities in wealth, income, and leisure time on the one hand. While also eliminating the cultural obstacles impeding the poor by de-institutionalising the value patterns utilised in denying some of them equal standing on another. Fraser's view is that both conditions are necessary for participatory parity to exist as neither on their own is sufficient. In the first instance, Fraser's concerns stem from the traditionally associated theory of distributive justice because of the economic structure of society and its economically defined class differentials.

Furthermore, in the second instance, the focus was put on the philosophy of recognition of the status order of society and the culturally defined hieratical order. The third principle is concerned with issues of representation. In Fraser's view, representation is (political) from exclusion from the community of those entitled to make justice claims to one another. The proposed remedy comes in three forms: ordinary-political misrepresentation to ensure fairness, trans-social protection transparency", legitimacy, and inclusion- Framing of issues to help broaden participation in defining policy agendas by acknowledging diverse views and forms of cognitive authority, allowing reframing of the issues to advantage marginalised group. Furthermore, to democratise the frame-setting process for protection by recognising and addressing the shifting configurations of power within. In sum, Fraser's justice as parity

mandates that poverty eradication policies must be equitable and fair to enable just access and participation in quality education and, in turn, reduce educational poverty and inequalities impeding the poor through processes of economic redistribution, cultural recognition, and political representation (Keddie, 2012).

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The research design and methodology are tailored to the aim of the research, which is to assess the impact of the Rwandan Government's VUP program's ability to foster equitable, inclusive access to quality education on poverty eradication in various sectors in the Gasabo District of Kigali City, Rwanda. Hence, the research adopted the mixed research design. A mixed research approach permits researchers to collect and analyze quantitative and qualitative data within the same study (Creswell et al., 2011). The mixed research methods draw upon the potentials of both qualitative and quantitative methods, thereby allowing researchers to examine diverse perspectives and uncover relationships between the intricate layers of our multifaceted research questions (Greene et al., 1989). Such methodological integration permits a more complete and synergistic data utilization than separate quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. The quantitative analysis adopted is based on descriptive and inferential statistics, while the qualitative analysis used was the content analysis and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). In addition, because of the research design, data collected from the field were based on qualitative and quantitative data types. These data types are further explored in the next section.

#### **3.2. Data Types**

As mentioned in the previous section, the nature of the research design demands the types of data required for the study of qualitative and quantitative data types. The quantitative data adopted in the study were measured using percentile. Furthermore, the qualitative data obtained

for the study were in the form of reports from crucial informant discussions. The data obtained from the field include.

1. Statistical reports about VUP educational development and progress made across districts within Rwanda.
2. Data on the impact of VUP on increasing equitable access to quality education
3. Data on assessing the impact of VUP in reducing the dropout rate amongst primary and secondary school students in Rwanda.
4. Data on the impact of family's resources and its burden on the child's access to education
5. Data on the spatial variation of the impact of the VUP program in child education across the beneficiaries' regions.

### **3.3. Data Sources**

The research obtained data from both primary and secondary sources.

#### **3.3.1. Primary Source of Data**

Primary data is sourced through surveys and in-depth interviews with beneficiaries and administrators of the VUP programme. Critical informant interview was used to collect data from institutions responsible for delivering the VUP in Gasabo District, Kigali city, Rwanda. These data sources are utilized to dissect VUP's impact and highlight the program's impact on reducing the dropout rate amongst vulnerable primary and secondary school students in the Gasabo district. Including highlighting the impact of the financial burden of households on a child's education and spatial variational impact on a child's education and access across several beneficiaries' regions.

#### **3.3.2. Secondary Source of Data**

On the other hand, the secondary source of data would consist of statistical records of VUP 2020 in Rwanda. The statistical records were obtained from the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda. In addition, other secondary sources consulted are Rwanda's Vision 2020 Umurenge Program Baseline study and Progress Report, reports from government, nongovernment, and civic organizations, as well as journals.

### **3.4. Target Population**

The target populations are middle-income and low-income families of Rwanda with children between primary and secondary school age, most situated in poorer districts of Gasabo district in Kigali city.

### **3.5. Sample Size**

The sample size adopted in the study comprised 50 families from both lower and middle-income class families in the neighbourhood. There were 25 samples representing the lower-income respondents, while the other 25 represented respondents from the middle-income bracket.

### **3.6. Sampling Technique**

The sampling technique adopted is the Quota sampling technique. The quota sampling method is a non-probability sampling, defined as a sampling method to gather representative data from a group (Saunders, C. T., Wong, W. S., Swamy, S., Becq, J., Murray, L. J., & Cheetham, R. K. 2012). The quota sampling application ensures that the sampled group represents specific population characteristics chosen by the researcher. During the study, the quota sampling technique was used in selecting the 25 low-income families with children in primary and secondary school and another 25 families from categorized Ubudehe middle-income households with children in primary and secondary school. In addition, remote sensing of Kigali, Rwanda, was used in identifying low-income and middle-income settlements. The settlements were identified using a technique described in Taubenböck, H., Kraff, N. J., & Wurm, M. (2018), enabling a researcher to utilize building density, orientation, and pattern heterogeneity size and height to identify low and middle-income settlements.

### **3.7. Method of Data Collection**

Prior to the questionnaire construction, consideration of the type of questions (open or close), questionnaire layout, type of survey (e-survey or mail survey), coding, etc. is of paramount importance owing to its influence on the effectiveness of the result that may arise from the survey data (Adam, S., Bonsang, E., Germain, S., & Perelman, S. 2007). Furthermore, an introductory section clarified the study objective by providing the participants with the study intentions and aim of the research background. Also, it offered a statement to ensure the anonymity and confidentiality of participants are included in the introduction. In the

questionnaire, the main body comprises three sections; the initial aspect involves the collection of demographic data of participants, the second aspect includes the use of a 5-point Likert scale to carry out the questionnaire interview with the respondents and the concluding section where the respondents would be allowed to provide opinion on areas of further improvement.

The questionnaire draft was inspected and signed off by three professionals with more than ten years of experience in research fieldwork and on-site project management. For an effective result, a test survey was carried out on 13 professionals to get suggestions and identify possible errors. However, the link to the revised questionnaire went out to the various participants after re-editing in the google form. Lastly, as identified in the "primary source of data", the critical informant interview and in-depth questionnaire survey were used for collecting data at the primary source level. Hence, the in-depth questionnaire survey adopted an elicit response from the elected families, while the vital informant interview aided in eliciting responses from the institutions designated to implement the program.

### **3.8. Method of Data Analysis**

The research employed quantitative and qualitative techniques to analyze the data obtained from the field and then combined both data to obtain relevant conclusions that enabled the development of recommendations. The first data from the questionnaire survey were subjected to quantitative analysis using quantitative techniques such as the descriptive statistical technique. Using descriptive statistical techniques in percentile assisted the study in measuring the respondent's responses to the survey to make a logical conclusion. On the other hand, the research adopted a qualitative technique to analyze the results from the critical informant interview organized as part of the case study. Based on the context, the content analysis was used to extract relevant information from the critical informant interview and secondary data obtained during the study. Then the researchers compared the data obtained from the content analysis with the estimation of responses from the field survey. This aided in drawing a relevant conclusion for the study.

#### **3.8.1. Data Triangulation and strategy.**

In Thurmond's (2001) observation, using mixed methods requires data triangulation to evaluate multiple data sources, ensure strong internal and external validity and reliability, and a comprehensive multi-perspective in the procedures to reduce potential study biases. Decreasing researcher bias through data triangulation offers the study multiple perspectives and methods

to help increase research validity, strength, and interpretative potential in the study's findings. Triangulation as qualitative research and data analysis strategy thus stands to validate a study finding by helping in the convergence of data obtained from multiple sources to ensure comprehensive and informed knowledge is gathered about a phenomenon studied (Flick, 2019: 125-144). In Thurmond's (2001) definition, triangulation as a process utilizes trigonometry in determining an unknown point or location based on employing the position of two fixed points to analyze the known distance apart. In research, Thurmond's triangulation metaphor derives its relevance from the construction, surveying, and navigation at sea principle primed in using two known points to locate the third point through a triangle formation. On this premise, this study method of data analyses utilized the triangulation strategy as a tool to evaluate multiple data sources to gain relevant insight into the phenomena under investigation and, by extension, help strengthen and increase the researcher's ability to interpret the research finding in Rwanda (Thurmond, 2001; Flick, 2019: 125-144). In the study, time, space, and person are multiple data sources utilized to evaluate VUP impact based on the times data were collected, the place or setting and from whom such data derived its meaning. For example, time triangulation for Thurmond indicates that data collection at different times can determine occurrences in similar findings, such that variance in events, situations, times, places, and persons could reveal atypical data or identify potential and similar patterns of information to increase confidence in the research findings (Thurmond, 2001). Using data from multiple sources decreases "deficiencies and biases likely to arise from any single method and as a counterbalance to potential flaws and weaknesses that could be linked to one method upon the strengths of another.

### **3.9. Data Limitation**

The data collection process has four main limitations; small sampling size as related to the total number of beneficiaries from VUP, lack of end line data for VUP from NISR, historical conflict sparking distrust amongst Rwandese, and current academic divide influencing how and what type of research is performed in Rwandan post-conflict education sector. Firstly, due to the availability of resources and time, the study used a small sample size in the same district, which limits the data to the opinion of a few in particle geography to speak for all Rwandese who benefited from VUP. Secondly, just as NISR was contracted to provide baseline data in 2008, which provided a direction for implementation, end-line data was not provided to support project evaluation which will provide this study with a tool for data quality assessment. Thirdly, the current inequalities, political, institutional, and educational divides within the Rwandese

poverty reduction strategies in the academic community have made data collection problematic in post-conflict settings with the experience of participants selective telling and conveying falsehood during interviews as well as a public narrative instead of personal opinions. Lastly, the academic divide in Rwanda, by implication, may hold significant importance in the future study on Rwanda's institutional poverty reduction and social welfare protection policies that outsiders seek to explore with raise growing concerns, whether in the government or in the general population, who may or not view foreign researchers with suspicion and distrust. This can ultimately lead to a significant drop in access to information on Rwanda. The changing attitude may negatively impact the awareness of the information and knowledge provided on Rwanda stand to limit future researchers and the interested public complete understanding of VUP's implication on poverty and education access.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Data Presentation and Analysis**

This chapter presents the fieldwork finding expressed numerically. The presented data analysis finding aims to highlight the implication of the VUP as a poverty reduction tool from which to theoretically evaluate its development goal to increase marginalised children's equitable access to education.

#### **4.1. Presentation and Analysis of Research Data**

Forty (40) copies of questionnaires were distributed to households and students receiving free education programs, out of which a response rate of 100 percent was recorded. In addition, ten (10) copies of questionnaires were distributed to schools and government development agencies with an 80 percent response rate and a 20 percent rate of not responding.

##### **4.1.1 Part A. VUP Beneficiary's Response**

###### **4.1.1.1. Socioeconomic and Socio-demographic Respondent's Data**

Table 1 in appendix A shows respondents' household sizes. It showed that 7.5 percent of the respondents indicated that one person resides in the household; 12.5 percent revealed situating their household size as two; 15 percent reported three in the household. Furthermore, over 20

percent of surveyed respondents suggest having four people living in the household; another 25 percent household size citing five people living arrangement and a further 20 percent host more than five people in the household. The conclusion deduced from these respondents' socioeconomic and demographic data indicates that most VUP beneficiary households size five or more people. In turn, household size has a strong influence on creating educational poverty requiring intervention to protect and provide access to quality education enabling its children to participate in the education process equitably.

Table 2 in appendix A shows the respondents' household nature. Among the respondents surveyed, 30 percent indicated that their household nature was single parenthood, 35 percent were self-dependent, and a further 22.5 percent cited haven siblings residing in them, followed by another 12.5 percent of respondents suggesting that it is hosting extended family members within the household. An indication that household nature firmly influences poverty in education as well as the requirement for social protection measures towards providing access. Observed statistically is that single parents, self-dependents, and households with siblings are overrepresented in the VUP programme compared to those with extended family members surveyed. Statistically overrepresented in the survey are also single parents and self-dependent household structures. An indication that single parents and self-dependent households strongly influence a child's education amid the poverty barriers it creates in preventing access to resources and providing quality education. The implied view here is that most categories E and D households are financially resourced by a single income earner directly or through VUP support.

The table below shows the respondent's breadwinner and household head characteristics. From the responses gathered, 40 percent of the respondents cited having a father as the breadwinner and head of the household. Another 30 percent cited mothers as breadwinners, and 20 percent posited siblings as head of household and breadwinners in the family. Extended family members lead another 10 percent of a household as the breadwinner. In effect, fathers outnumber mothers as the breadwinners amongst the beneficiaries surveyed.

In contrast, several reasons for a father-led breadwinner household overrepresentation in this survey include single fatherhood, younger male, less educated, and extremely poor socioeconomically. The data gathered also observed that the designated male-headed household remains the norm across Rwanda, a pattern consistent with traditional family structures and views on gender roles and their perceived relative economic importance in developing



countries. Thus, female-headed households are typically female-headed by default in this context. Nevertheless, another explanation is that female-headed households are typically more mature than younger male-headed households. Female-headed households were observed to have older adults with fewer young children, therefore, smaller household sizes compared to the less educated and younger male households. Additionally, in the field, it was observed that female-led households were disproportionately urban with better living standards and are considerably higher than in rural areas that host most male-led households. As such, female-led households exhibited a higher living standard than male-headed households measured via per capita expenditures (purchasing power), poverty incidence and caloric intake indicators.

The female-headed living standard is only determined on a relatively short-term poverty model measuring consumption expenditures over 12 months. However, if assets, capacity to borrow and labour resources are considered, female-led households, compared to male-led families, were more vulnerable to political and economic shocks to ensure a decline in long-term living standards. As the surveyed data highlighted, there were no significant differences between every VUP respondent's male or female-led structure seeking social protection to participate and survive. The frequency, percentage, and detailed data show that both genders are equally represented as VUP beneficiaries. Thus, the chart stipulates that equitable access for childing in all surveyed households was vulnerable enough to require social protection intervention irrespective of the breadwinner's gender in the household.

**Respondents head of house/breadwinner of the family**

Household Head	Frequency	Percent
Father	16	40
Mother	12	30
Siblings	8	20
Extended Families	4	10

Total	40	100
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Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022

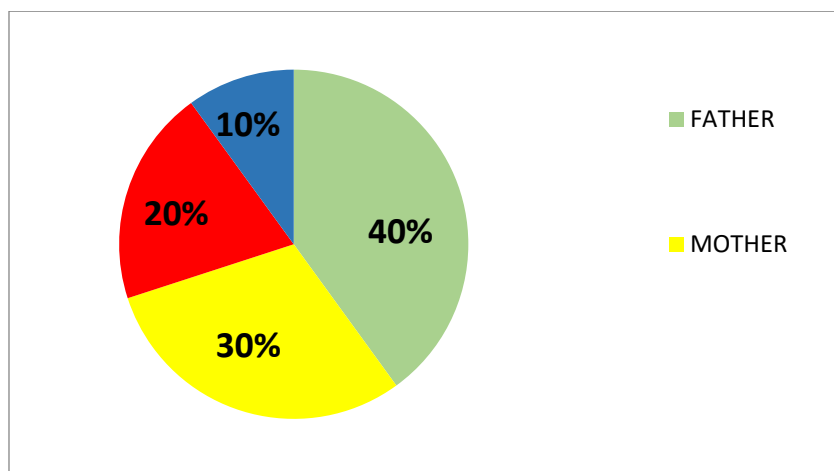


Table 3 in appendix A indicates children's gender and household numbers. Amongst respondents surveyed, 20 percent confirmed having at least one male child at home, 35 percent revealed two children, and 25 percent revealed three male children live in the household. Additionally, 12.5 percent harboured at least four male children in the household, with 5 percent hosting five or more male children. Furthermore, 2.5 percent revealed accommodating more than five male children. The indication is that the average household beneficiary characteristics in the VUP are host to at least three male children. While household male distribution offers little explanation regarding the frequency of tabled and educational poverty, what the percentage does highlight, however, is that many categories of E and D households, on average, are responsible for the wellbeing of three or more children inside the home. Therefore, educational poverty incidences are invariably higher among children in these categories owed to families with more immense size households rationing resources and opportunities to create competition amongst their children and the deprivation of access to less capable education.

Table 4 in appendix A exhibits female children in the respondent's household. 22.5 percent revealed the number of female children in the household was one, 37.5 percent cited that female child in the household was two, and 15 percent posited three female children. In addition, 10 percent revealed having four female children, and a further 7.5 percent answered that five female children reside in the household, with 7.5 percent suggesting living with five or more female children. While the survey shows that, on average, female children number two or more,

the consensus is that the larger a family is, the higher the probability the female children are the eldest due to malcultural practices of male child syndrome. Male child syndrome refers to societies valuing male children as worthy of special recognition with elevated status than a female child; thus, the male child's needs take precedence over that of a female child's education as a norm. It is perceived that a male child sustains the family's lineage as central authority holders and the community's immovable properties with inheritable rights over a female child likely to marry into another tribe in future (Nwokocha, 2007).

The study evidenced that in deprived Gasabo cells, more male-child syndrome perceptions are held than in urban households, which further provides an explanatory proposition that a large family, especially in remote settings, is more likely to access a female eldest child to education will suffer. Other influential factors against a girl child's education cited in Otieno & Ndayambaje (2015) gender students' analysis and enrolment in undergraduate degree programs found that eldest female children consider their gender roles and responsibilities as diverting time and attention away from their access to attain education. Amongst those surveyed, unplanned pregnancy was a factor for increasing a girl child task owed to childcare duties discouraging households from expanding resources to support the female's access to participate in school. Furthermore, the data states that the lower expectation in households significantly impacts a girl's ability to attain higher academically than the anticipation that a male child must achieve higher as a future leader in the family and community.

Consequently, this mindset further leads to some male teachers misbehaving to deny secondary school girls access to attain free education regardless of VUP intervention. In discussions, most high school female students maintained that many male schoolteachers' behaviours made the learning environment toxic and uncomfortable to actively engage or participate in the learning process due to persistent sexual harassment directed at them. In terms of VUP providing resources to enable quality representation, according to the data gathered in the field, we noted that fewer girls cited that they lacked educated and influential female role models in high-level decision-making positions within the community. The lack of representation in corridors of power negatively reinforced the notion that girls are not highly valued and thus should not pursue authoritative positions at home and in society. The finding, therefore, supports the trend that VUP had little impact on the most disadvantaged group participatory access once representation is lacking in crucial powerful positions amongst categories E and D girls despite attaining the necessary qualifications and freedom relevant to pursue authoritative positions privately publicly.

Table 2 in appendix A highlights respondents' family income. Amongst the VUP responding heads surveyed, 60 percent gave the family income as below 175,000 RWF; 25 percent put the income above 180,000 RWF- 600,000 RWF, and 15 percent cited income of 610,000 RWF- 1,030,000 RWF. A sign that the income for many beneficiaries is below 175,000 RWF with a larger household size of more than five persons than those in categories A, B and C with more income and, on average, raising two and three children. Thus, children in disadvantaged VUP households, especially larger families, are significantly prone to experience educational poverty from low-income status averaging below 22,000 RWF per five members in the household. While children from low-income families in the Gasabo district receive free education, free meals in primary schools, and direct cash transfer to aid vocational schooling, low-income households still cited their reservations about the VUP. Reasons include income inequality leading to a vulnerability in their children's disproportionate placement in a learning environment with fewer funding opportunities and fewer resources. The adults surveyed allude to the fact that despite getting direct VUP intervention, adults in category E and D households-maintained a less active role in the children's education because of low lower income, ensuring long and lower waged working hours towards everyday expenditure. Direct and indirect interventions in categories E and D children's access while helpful in the reduction of financial burdens towards essentials and hidden school costs. The concerns raised still highlight that low-income status strongly perpetuates educational poverty and inequalities preventing the most vulnerable children from actively leveraging on inclusive learning opportunities than those in wealthier income homes.

The table below speaks to the respondent's household head occupation. The data revealed that 22.5 percent of household head occupation as farming, 17.5 percent as merchants, 20 percent as civil servants, 12.5 percent as entrepreneurs in trading agriculture products, and a further 12.5 percent cited occupations not listed within the questionnaire framework. In short, most household heads are either entrepreneurs in the agricultural sector or are farmers working in the field, thus an indication that most beneficiaries are employed in the agriculture sector. Umuhire (2016) critical analysis of "Rwanda's entrepreneurship policies:" pointed out that the deficiencies in this sector come from the country's overburdensome taxation system, ensuring to lack of financial resources being made available for people to invest in land ownership and modern technology. In turn, the industry lacks expansion foresight to help farmers and the workers of the agro-business sector leverage on opportunities for their children's education considerably. For instance, the Umuhire study observed that the Rwandan agricultural sector

faces extreme land constraint challenges. Not least from population pressure, poor water management, small average land holdings, lack of public and private sectors capacity, limited commercialisation constrained and poor access to output and financial markets. These constraints show that categories E and D adults are well overrepresented as VUP beneficiaries. Thus, appendix H citation is reflective in that the most disadvantaged beneficiary's capacity to participate equitably is directly tied to the sector's inability to modernise its capital stock, productivity, and lack to attract private and public investments able to boost its local's job prospects.

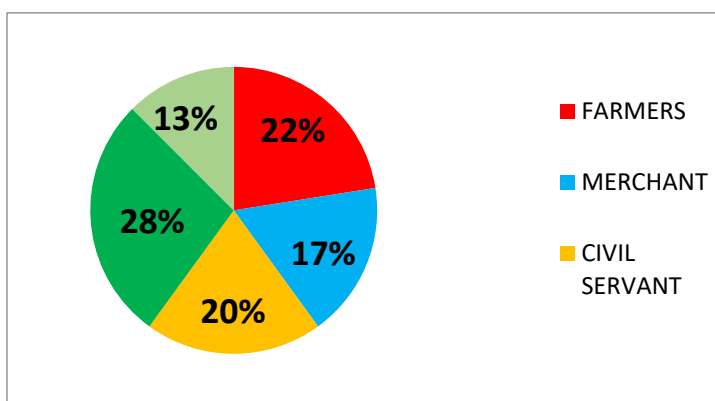
Around 85 percent of Rwandese are engaged in agriculture, reflecting an estimated 32 percent of its GDP, which is responsible for employing 85 percent of the country's population (NISR, 2012; Muyombano & Espling, 2020). The dire situation in categories E and D households, limited literacy comprehension, and lack of access to information directly translates into low efficiency and low productivity in several crops; therefore, most farmers in the agriculture sector are trapped by a vicious cycle of poverty. As it stands, the programme intervention strategies currently do not seem enough to boost households' resources to help increase their children's access to participation in schooling. Several studies have shown that investments in modernised agricultural practices with an enabling business environment can raise farmer incomes, increases food supply, reduces food prices, and provide locals and outsiders with more significant employment opportunities. As such, the lack of strategic consideration by the programme planners to invest heavily in modernising the agriculture industry decreases VUP's impact. Modernised investments in the sector can lead to higher incomes, increasing consumer demand for goods and services and products beyond the agriculture industry (NISR, 2012; Muyombano & Espling, 2020).

**Respondents & Household Head Occupation**

Household Occupation	Head	Frequency	Percent
Farmers		9	22
Merchant		7	17.5

Civil servant	8	20
Entrepreneurship	11	27.5
Other	5	11.5
Total	40	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022



#### 4.1.1.2. The Impact of VUP & Equal Accessible in Quality Participation

The table below shows the respondents' children's perception of their participation in the VUP leading to a feeling of educational equality amongst the other children who do not participate. The data showed that 80 percent of the respondents indicated that their children felt participation increased the feeling of parity in education than the 20 percent who felt participation made them feel inferior. An indication that participating in the programme significantly increased equal participatory perception for most. However, the 20 percent who felt inferior also signifies that the programme failed to address most categories E and D children lack participation amid the external factors creating inequalities and schooling barriers impeding their access and opportunities. This negative perception against the programme was mainly cited as stemming from the culture within the family, gender, social norms, economic status, low academic achievement, parental earnings, and health status, and parental lack of support to reinforce the importance of education. Measuring the programmes in percentage

means accepting that they positively made 80 percent of beneficiary's children feel equal. However, the 20 percent who felt the significantly inferior overall quality of participatory access suggests that the programme centres its success on numbers and not on fully equalising access for all. The study noted that if success is measured based on equal access to resources and opportunities, internal and external barriers should be tackled in the long term, not just in the short term.

For example, while NISR (2014) household income expenditure surveys found that almost three out of four children enrolled in the VUP felt adequately protected via resources made available to households, the unprotected still felt significantly inferior as such lag academically and economically from exclusion. Factors highlighted by NISR are that most beneficiaries live in remote, hard-to-reach communities, resulting in difficulties gaining adequate access to cash transfers and other critical services. Students with disabilities suffered the most and were significantly at risk of feeling inferior and unequal. Women and girls also face specific risks from discrimination which increases their likelihood of experiencing poverty barriers due to unpaid care, which burdens them at different points in their lifecycle and many aspects of life. From the gathered data, some respondents revealed that while most children gained access to free education through the VUP, the methods of service delivery are somewhat disjointed and risk excluding the weakest in communities. Based on the study informants, the government's funding of several protection programs to expand access nationally has meant neglecting contextual household factors and unique differences in development needs. Most student respondents reported that they get inadequate VUP intervention; as a result, they end up in school hungry and struggle to stay focused and learn in class. Bringing the focus back to the 20 percent who felt inferior, the student's evidence shows that the lack of proper protection to deal with internal and external barriers strongly influences how children feel about participation. Thus, a lack of material and parental support can reinforce to a child that they are educationally unequal amongst their peers.

**Respondents Children’s Equality Perception & VUP Participation**

Children perception about VUP participation & Educational Equality	Frequency	Percent
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Yes	32	80
No	8	20
Total	40	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022

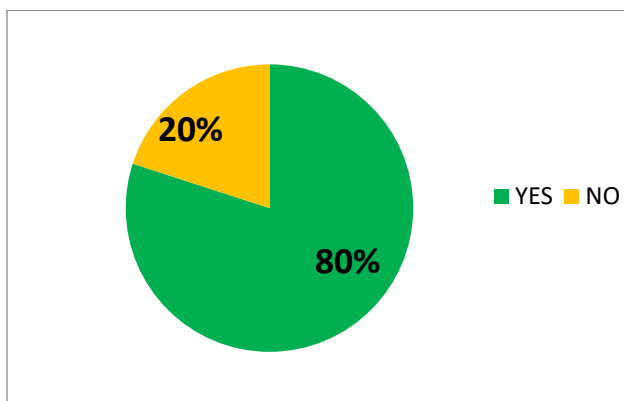


Table 6 in appendix A shows whether the respondent's children complained or not about other beneficiaries excluding them in the VUP programme. The data gathered noted that 27.5 percent of respondents' children complained about facing exclusion from other participating children in the VUP. In comparison, 72.5 percent sustained that no complaints were brought to their attention from the children about feeling excluded by others in the programme. The reflection observed during the survey is that stigma had much to do with some participants feeling excluded by others in the same programme. Stigmas against welfare recipients, according to Chan, S. M., Wong, H., Au-Yeung, T. C., Huo, X., & Gao, Q. (2022); study on the impacts of poverty stigmatisation and its adverse effects among welfare recipients. Means-tested social protection programming can create stigmatisation that discourages recipients from seeking welfare support and thus influences victims' and potential recipients' subjective wellbeing.

Going to Williams, T. P., Nzahabwanayo, S., Lavers, T., & Ndushabandi, E. (2022), VUP' infrastructural power' analysis about the political dynamics shaping the distribution of the programme implementation highlighted by two main findings. In the first instance, despite selecting 'most likely' cases for variation within Rwanda, little evidence was observed to



indicate systematic variation in state capacity and programme implementation between research sites. In effect, the government's uniform implementation across the country may have addressed past variations in the state's VUP institutional implementation, lacking the commitment required to attain participatory fairness. In the second instance, William et al. analysis highlighted that despite relatively high levels of infrastructural power across the implemented sites, significant challenges remained. This led to pressures of top-down performance assessment that prioritises the productive aspects of the programme, which in turn forces local officials into difficult choices undermining VUP's protective role. Collaborating with William et al., fieldwork data, the observation amongst most respondents is that households classified as non-poor are selected for public works, and non-creditworthy participants are pressured to take loans as a strategy to meet the government targets. Therefore, VUP's importance should not rest solely on infrastructural power but on the purposes for which its implementation power is deployed. In effect, the respondents enrolled in several VUP arrangements and administrative procedures, especially amongst those feeling excluded by others in the system; it is the case that there are institutional causes leading to their welfare stigmatisation. Thus, it reduces any educational poverty reduction effect the programme seeks to tackle due to such stigma affecting the quality of their social interaction and the health condition of both the individuals and hoodmold origin to influence all members further subjective wellbeing.

Table 7 in appendix A shows respondents' complaints about teachers maltreating their children for being VUP beneficiaries. According to the survey, 90 percent of the respondents had no complaints from their children against unfair treatment from the teachers bowed to household participation in the VUP. In contrast, 10 percent of the respondents had complaints from their children against unfair treatment from schoolteachers. The picture below shows that most VUP respondents do not have complaints against the schoolteachers for unfair actions against their quality of learning; however, 10 percent do have serious complaints. According to Ulug et al. (2011) study on the effects of teachers' attitudes on students' access, personality, and school performance, it was shown that a teacher's positive attitude affects the student's access to school, motivation, attitude towards school and schoolwork, and their self-confidence which in turn affects their personality development and performance overall. Therefore, the VUP cannot be consciously credited, mainly if the programme is analysed through the eyes of its government's post-genocide development goal to reduce marginalisation and stigma against all groups from classrooms to public life. The 10 percent is simply a reminder of the unfair targeting of the most

marginalised groups, which the state seeks to protect with its development strategy to promote a united approach. Thus, a teacher's negative attitude against poor students reduces access to the participatory development process by increasing educational inequalities and poverty barriers, preventing vulnerable students' educational access from developing.

The table below shows respondents' opinion that the frequency level assumes that the VUP have increased their children's equity and access to quality education. According to the survey findings, 27.5 percent of the respondents posited a very high increase in their children's equitable access to education upon VUP participation; 37.5 percent sustained a high increase in their children's equitable access; followed by 35 percent who thought it moderately increased the children's access to quality education. According to all surveyed, the indication would suggest that, on average, the VUP contributed to a high increase in equitable access to quality education for vulnerable schoolers. These findings speak to the positive influence of the VUP on supporting children's access to quality education. Nevertheless, almost 40 percent experienced a moderate increase in their access to education. It is worth mentioning that 40 percent are young schoolers between 14-17 who get cash transfers for six months to stay and complete their education. Also, the other groups well overrepresented in the moderate category are children from overpopulated households with a single earner or children in single-parent households. The cited reason most respondents gave for the moderate level is that cash benefits offered are not enough to meet all their basic needs to access quality education. Cited evidence in the literature review posted the positive benefits linked to child and family cash transfers as a necessary form of social protection to help vulnerable children access and participate in education equitably via the provision of food security, clothing, access to community health services, immunisation coverage and school enrolment and attendance in Brazil and other countries.

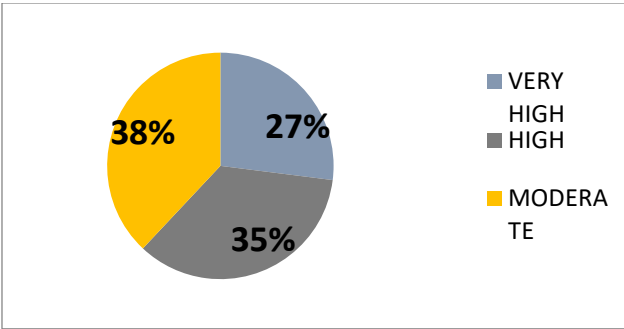
Nevertheless, as already deduced in tables 5.9 and 5.10, the needs of children and families are complex and contextual; thus, cash alone will not always be sufficient to solve them. Furthermore, in the case of most students on the moderate level ladder, what was found was that households' low financial resources coupled with remoteness to adequate social services do negatively influence the equitable access provided regardless of the cash transferred. This means that the government might have to introduce cash transfers and other protection mechanisms to cater to the needs of single parenthood households and young orphans with family responsibilities. The programs should be designed to open the door to additional services such as educational training, maternal and child healthcare, psycho-social counselling, and

nutrition awareness programs to give households the critical information and services plus cash transfers to help increase VUP's moderate influence on children's access educationally.

**Respondents Perception on the VUP Increasing access in quality education**

VUP Contribution & Increase in Children's Equitable Access	Frequency	Percent
Very high	11	26.5
High	14	35
Moderate	15	37.5
Very low	0	0
Low	0	0
Total	40	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022



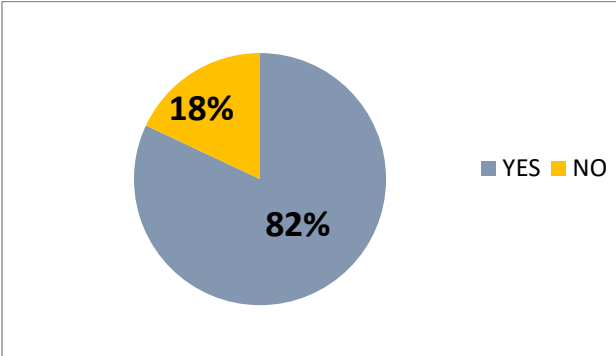
**4.1.1.3. The VUP Impact on Financial Burden Reduction in Beneficiaries' Household**

The table below highlights the respondent's opinion that VUP participation helps to reduce household financial burdens. The table evidenced that 82.5 percent of the respondents thought their household involvement in the VUP was responsible for the financial burden experienced. In comparison, 17.5 percent of the respondents opened up about the VUP not helping to reduce their financial burden to educate their children. The evidence showed that most respondents experienced financial burden reduction by their household participation in the VUP. Nevertheless, for the 17.5 percent who experienced no reduction, it is worth noting that most are in the large household category. Several factors can dictate the low expectation experienced by the minority for whom the VUP contributed little in reducing household financial burden. First, the rate given to each qualified household, as already identified in the income table, is shallow to make any significant difference in a large family. Secondly, while a large portion of VUP respondents works in the agriculture sector, the high cost of living, lack of land ownership and respondents' remoteness to social services presented significant challenges to influencing the programme's impact on the household financial burden.

**Respondents’ opinion on how VUP has reduced financial burden**

<b>Participating in VUP help reduce financial burden</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>81.5</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>17.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Researcher’s Field Work, 2022



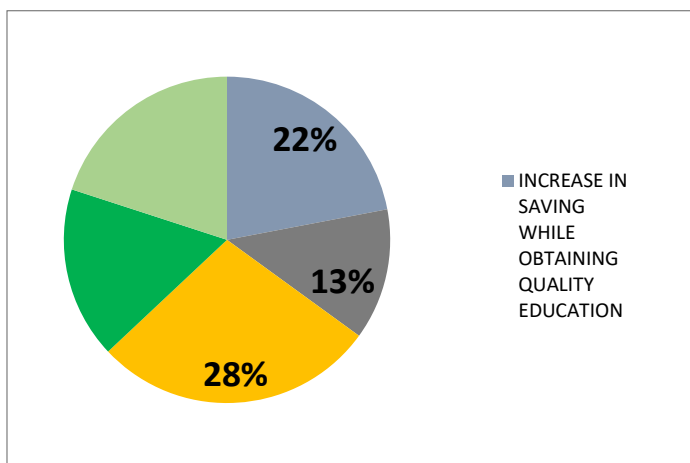
The table below notes the respondent's opinions about VUP participation assisting families financially and the children's access to quality education. The surveyed data highlighted that 22.5 percent of the respondents cited that their VUP participation significantly helped increase their household savings to support their children's access to quality education. Another 12.5 percent revealed that participating in the VUP helped expand their businesses based on their increased savings; 27.5 percent pointed to the fact that their participation in VUP assisted in the increase of the number of children attending schools regularly. Furthermore, 17.5 percent of the respondents revealed that their VUP enrollment facilitated an increase in the number of their children completing primary and secondary schooling, with a further 20 percent stating that participation in the VUP helped increase access to quality education at a reduced cost for their children. On the premise of this data highlighted, VUP positively affects household finances; however, little is saved. The main goal of the VUP is to increase access to education for the marginalised groups enrolled in the programme, and by the respondent's responses, most were offered some form of financial literacy training to manage allocated resources equitably. Moreover, thus support their children's access to education materially.

**Respondents view on different paths the VUP assisted the Family**

<b>Ways participating in VUP helped families</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Increase in saving while obtaining quality education</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Expansion of businesses due to increase in saving</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12.5</b>
<b>Increase in number of my children attending schools</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>27.5</b>
<b>Increase in number of children completing primary and secondary school</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>16.5</b>

<b>Increase in access to quality education at reduced cost</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022



#### 4.1. 2. Part B. VUP Administrators Responses

##### 4.1.2.1. School Administrations Perception of Free Education Programme Impact

This study assesses various Gasabo district schools' organisational perspectives about VUP free schooling's impact on the beneficiaries. Table 8 in appendix A is designed to present these school administrators' perspectives on the influence that the VUP may have had on the beneficiary's school attendance and participation overall. As such, the data presents the duration of free schooling on offer to support access for the recipients. Three schools in the Gasabo districts were surveyed to gain insights into the contribution that free schooling may have had on enrolled students. These three schools consist of primary, secondary, technical, and vocational education and training (TVET). As part of these schools, the TVET colleges assist their students, especially in higher secondary schools to receive education and training related to a specific range of jobs, employment, or entrepreneurial possibilities as part of the government drives to empower marginalised youths and households. Of the three schools

interviewed, the survey showed that 66.67 percent offered free schooling for at least five years, while the other 33.33 percent of schools have offered free schooling programs for more than eight years.

Table 9 in appendix A highlights the significant targets for free schooling programs and schools. Based on the surveyed findings, the assertion is that 40 percent of these schools' primary targets were disabled students, and another 50 percent revealed their targets were children in poorer households and families with disabled household members. In comparison, 10 percent of the schools reportedly targeted all groups for free schooling irrespective of household living conditions. Strong evidence suggests that most developing countries have made significant progress in meeting the MDG universal primary education objective, of which Rwandan education is no exception. However, despite such progress, evidence also suggests that a large proportion of its poor students are often left behind due to disabilities. As such, in VUP categorisation for intervention, disabled children, adults and seniors are considered amongst the poorest and most vulnerable people in households and communities needing VUP interventions to access school, work, or community health care. Because their disabilities tend to include long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, thus, warrant social protection intervention that accurately targets and supports their educational needs and access to participation without social exclusion. Based on RNIS (2014) thematic report on the socioeconomic characteristics of people with disabilities measured on the concept of activity limitations such as (difficulty seeing, hearing, speaking, walking/climbing and learning/concentrating). The report found more than 446,453 persons living with several disabilities between the ages of 5 and above in Rwanda, out of which 221,150 are male, and 225,303 are female. The most significant numbers of disabled poor people were found in the Southern Province (122,319) and the lowest in Kigali City (32,170). Likewise, the number of persons with disabilities is higher in rural provinces than in urban areas. The above data reflects that over 5 percent of the Rwandan population between the ages of 5 and over are disabled and thus enrolled and targeted by several VUP interventions to help reduce exclusions in society.

Nevertheless, as King's research in a sensitive political context attests, getting accurate data on the number of disabled people in learning institutions can be difficult, especially for a country without all the resources to support every vulnerable group's needs. Thus, the number of people with disabilities being excluded in schools is likely higher. A WHO report estimates that approximately 15 percent of any population will have a disability; therefore, any given setting should expect a similar figure or more. NISR C82014) have also found that despite strong

political will and a robust legal framework combined with various VUP strategic components, there remain challenges in the technical implementation of its social protection measures to adequately reduce the barriers excluding the poorest and disabled students in education. For example, the NIRS found that people with disabilities in Rwanda are less educated, less likely to be in employment, and more likely to live in poverty than those without a disability. The most significant issues in preventing the poor and disabled stem from lacking access to education, health, and direct poverty reduction measures. Consequently, the VUP decided to focus on these areas in schools.

In addition, table 10 in appendix A shows that the school administrators surveyed about their sources of sponsorships to fund free schooling programme noted on the table that 100 percent of its patronages either comes from the private or the public sector. The approval comes from the district authority in coordination with the ministry of education for implementation purposes, meeting the Rwandan Government education for all sustainable development goals. According to the school administrators surveyed, students in the TVET category were the most likely to be sponsored by the private sector. Worth posting is that the Rwandan genocide stems from several factors, not least illiteracy and lack of free schooling access. Thus, in 2003, the government of Rwanda introduced free education as part of its development policy to improve school enrolment and attendance, especially for the deprived children to attain quality education. Given its recent history, these administrators asserted that private and public sector free schooling measures must adhere to the country's united development goals by getting approval from the government to ensure that the division that created the pre-conflict situation is not allowed to return via external sponsorships again.

More so, the table below unravels the methods adopted by schools in implementing the free education programme. The study showed that 66.67 percent of the respondents implemented a free schooling programme in partnership with parents and the local government, and 33.33 percent stated that they implemented the program through the introduction of new facilities such as smart and new classrooms, free meals and community engagements for parents to keep track of children's schooling. For example, with education being the Rwandan government's priority, free schooling becomes a social protection tool for raising educational attainment, which is crucial for economic prosperity. As a result, Rwanda has one of the highest school enrollment rates on the African continent.

### **Method of Implementing Free Education Programme**



Method of Implementing Program	Frequency	Percent
Partnership with the parent and the local government	3	66.67
Introduction of modern school facilities	2	33.33
Total	5	100

Source: Researcher’s Field Work, 2022

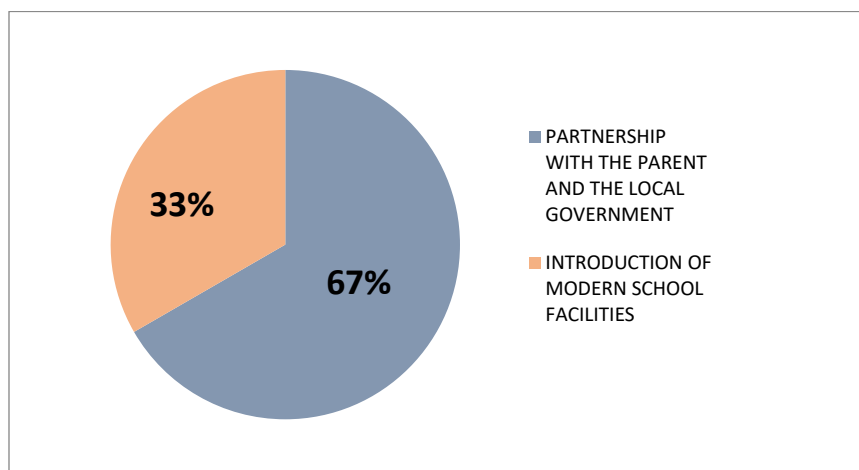


Table 11 in appendix A presents the types of quality education provided to the students by the school. The result shows that 66.67 percent of the school provided educational support to the students, while 33.33 percent provided comprehensive free education. This question was prompted by the fact that 98 percent of Rwandese children are enrolled in primary education in the Gasabo district yet face several educational challenges. For example, nearly every child enrolls in basic primary school. Only 71 percent of these children are likely to complete their education due to classroom overcrowding and lack of qualified teachers. No exception was observed to this trend while conducting fieldwork surveys in these schools due to the lack of teachers and classroom overcrowding. Likewise, evidence gathered in these schools does indicate that only 70 percent of disabled children are enrolled in primary schools in the Gasabo districts, and no penalties exist to compel public schools if they refuse to accept children with disabilities.

Furthermore, the schools surveyed had no facilities to accommodate disabled students. They also lacked appropriate classroom materials to cater to children with disabilities. Some of the teachers interviewed lacked a clear understanding of differentiating learning plans for meeting various students learning needs despite the administrators citing a child-centred learning approach. However, we cannot demonstrate how this is done without reminding the research

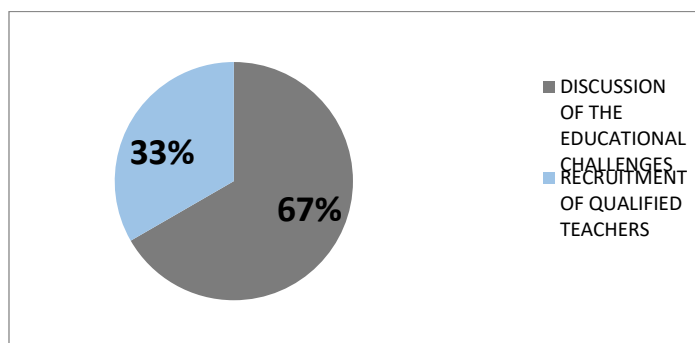
team that in the African context, not enough room and resources are made available to facilitate student-centred learning. These problems seem very pronounced in rural and urban schools where we found too few school facilities, insufficient government budgeting for all levels of education, and inadequately trained educators to provide a student-centred learning free schooling adequate to give full access in education for the VUP enrolled students. While evidence suggests that there are relatively equal numbers of boys and girls in classrooms during the surveys, these schools' administrators indicate that girls were more likely in rural and low-income neighbourhoods to leave school than boys due to domestic tasks and pregnancy. Likewise, boys tended to outperform the girls in Gasabo schools surveyed. They were significantly under-enrolled in the TVET programme, and post-completion for both genders, progression into gainful employment or businesses does not materialise for lack of financially or material supports privately or publicly.

The table below depicts methods to ensure quality education in schools. Our findings revealed that 66.67 percent of schools seek to ensure quality education is offered through the evaluation of challenges with teachers, parents and the students to attain inclusive participation for all. In contrast, 33.33 percent of the respondents noted that recruiting qualified teachers has assisted schools in offering access to quality education in line with the government VUP promises. The data presented in table 5.19 reflects that the school administrators surveyed maintain their closed working relationship with the government and partner's development goals in developing a long-term strategy to foster competence toward a knowledge-based economy in an economy that has been predominantly agriculture-based since independence in 1962. The partnership is thus engaged in social and economic transformation in the collective national effort designed to empower all through inclusive and competency-based quality education, benefiting every child irrespective of social or economic background. Implemented school initiatives cited during the survey include free access to a 12-Year Basic Education. The development of a school feeding programme supported jointly by the community, the districts and civil societies is exemplified in TVET private sector cash transfers programme to assist participants for at least six months. A review of the curriculum (previously aligned to a knowledge-based approach) was transformed into a more competency-based curriculum. Furthermore, developing a structured framework to continuously develop and build teachers' capacity to engage and involve the parents and community with the leaders acting as mediators in the educational development of all children within its cells at the district level.

### **Method of Ensuring Quality Education**

Option	Frequency	Per cent
Discussion of the Educational Challenges	3	66.67
Recruitment of Qualified Teachers	2	33.33
Total	5	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022



The table below displays the affirmation of a reduction in the dropout rate resulting from the free education programme introduction. The responses given by the respondents implied that all schools experienced tremendous reductions in school dropout rates across all gender and socioeconomic groups since the programme's inception. It is worth mentioning that the school administrators, especially those in remote sectors, observed that the schools and community leaders, to keep dropouts low, reserved the right to reprimand parents whose children dropped out. Including punishment of prison terms and withholding VUP support where the parents refuse to engage with the schools and community leaders regardless of grievances. Strategic methods to ensure dropout remains low include a child-focused inclusive learning approach such as inclusive early childhood development, inclusive education, teacher training, parenting education and community inputs at the district policy level. Whilst child-focused inclusive learning reflects the government's SDGs modern trend for improving access and learning for marginalised and hard-to-reach children, the data collected also highlights a worrying trend facing the Rwandan education sector to archive its goals.

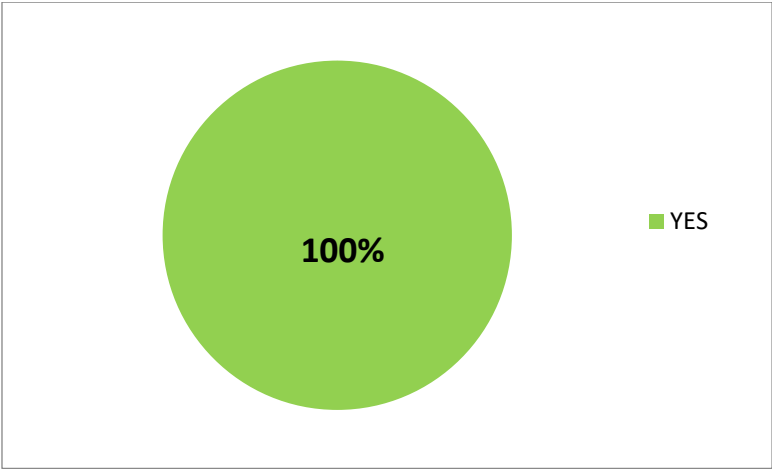
For example, many of those surveyed about the frequency of district officials' visits to monitor free schooling methods and strategies implementation cited that limited implementation and monitoring capacity hindered impact. Especially at the institutional level, where bureaucrats often rely on what community leaders and schools report rather than seeking the direct opinions

of marginalised families and children if no dropout is reflected as reported by others. Asked for precise figures to demonstrate 100 percent no dropout, the surveyed schools could not provide them. Gather data from NRIS (2014) showed that in the Gasabo district, children from VUP recipient households continue to have low completion rates at the primary level of (44.5 percent), especially for those in remote and deprived Gasabo sectors owed to high repeater and dropout rates at (21 percent and 15 percent, respectively). Therefore, the dropout rate on closer inspection may highlight lower transition rates into secondary school levels for large VUP recipient's children due to limited implementation and monitoring capacities reported solely on officials' recollected data without the input of marginalised families.

**Reduction in dropout Rate**

<b>Reduction in School Dropout Rate</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Researcher’s Field Work, 2022



The interview further assessed if the inception of the free education programme has reduced household financial burdens towards educating their children. The table below shows that all the schools interviewed maintained that VUP household and their students had experienced a reduction in family financial burdens. This response shows a disparity between families' and school officials' perceptions about the impact of VUP intervention in reducing household and student financial burdens. While the schools previously cited that children in large homes and

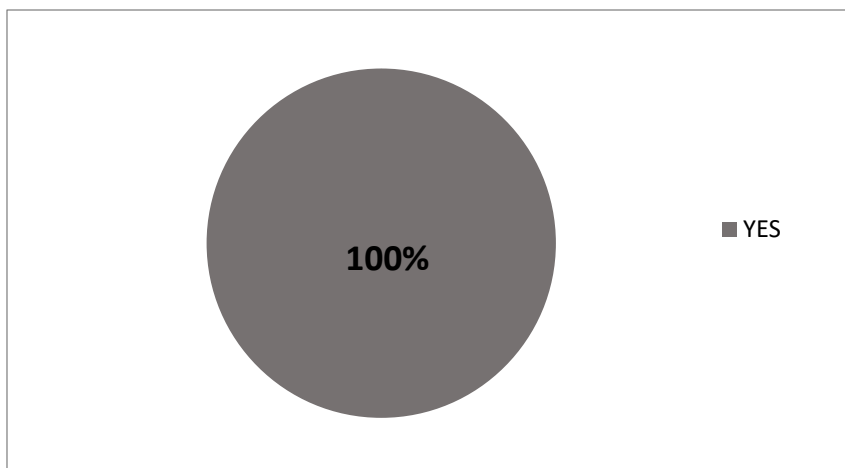
those with illiterate fathers often come to school hungry or are likely to be absent from the classroom, to suggest that VUP contributes to financial burden reduction amongst marginalised students seems to be a discount between the schools and recipients. Because most marginalised students, especially those with some forms of disability, are not well provided for, the cash transfers offered do not adequately cover their essential cost of living. Thus, the programme may have made some difference to basic household survival by providing food and a roof over the family's head. It still does not reduce families' financial burdens, given the evidence that those in large and low-income households are more likely to not attend school due to families lacking resources to enable their children to participate equitably.

This conclusion was well articulated by Williams et al. (2015) analysis of the hidden costs of fee-free schooling programmes in Rwanda, where it was found that primary school enrolment rates were near ubiquity, completion rates stayed low, and repetition rates remained high. However, a study on the impact of the often 'hidden costs of schooling in Rwanda's free-schooling policy is based on focus groups and interviews with 200 participants, including local leaders, school administrators, children, and caregivers. Williams et al. conclusion were that children continue to contend with a range of school-related costs that negatively impact their attendance, performance, and completion. Associated costs such as examination fees, after-school coaching and 'voluntary' parent-teacher association dues seriously hinder the children's educational experience. According to Williams, 'hidden costs' remain a key factor explaining why children do not complete their schooling once enrolled.

**Reduction in financial burden**

<b>Reduction in financial burden</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Researcher’s Field Work, 2022**



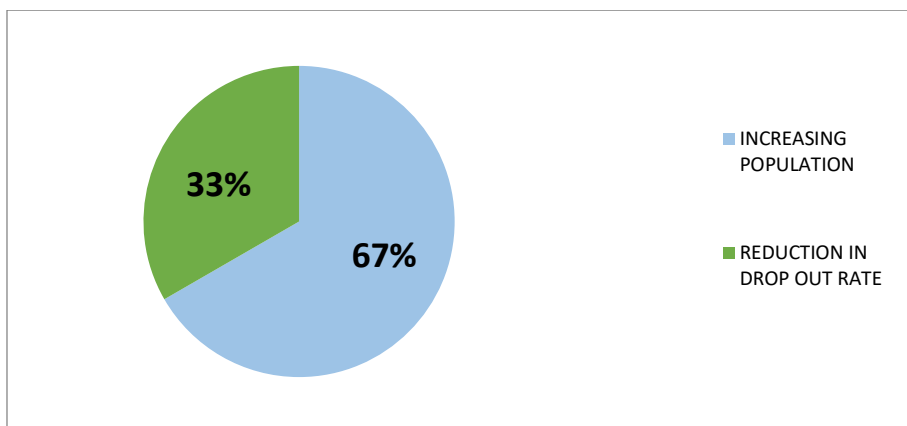
Finally, in the table below, this study examined the school evidence that reductions in respondents' financial burden resulted from the inception of the free schooling programme. The survey shows that 66.67 percent of the respondents agreed that the reduction of financial burdens was due to accessible schooling introduction and measures implemented to assist the student's enrollment process, thus leading to student population increase and more accessible access to education for all. However, 33.33 percent of the respondents thought the financial burden reductions linked to the dropout rate were based on the ease of financing in the education sector through the VUP programme implementation. The data presented here reflect the divide amongst the administrators amid sources of free schooling and funding mechanisms utilised rather than reflecting the parent's and students' perceptions. Given the impact of hidden costs linked to free schooling amongst households in extreme poverty thus, children living in large families on a low income, and the health cost linked to social attitude against children with disabilities. It cannot be feasible to conclude that increased classroom sizes per student will increase access in an already resources-stretched education system for participatory parity to be attained in the education system researched. Likewise, the schools charge extra fees to offer lessons to the most disadvantaged students, which removes the little resources allocated to these families. Therefore, it draws the view that more needs to be done to reduce financial burdens on low-income families, especially towards cancelling the hidden costs of educating deprived children.

#### **Evidence of reduction in financial burden**

<b>Evidence in Financial Burden Reduction</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>

<b>Increasing Population</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>66.67</b>
<b>Reduction in dropout rate</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>33.33</b>
	<b>5</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022



#### 4.1.3. Part C. VUP Development Agencies Response.

##### 4.1.1.3.1 Interviews with VUP Development Agencies

Table 12 in appendix A shows the duration of the academic program; the study reveals that 66.67 percent of respondents stated that students spend at least five years in their academic program, while 33.33 percent of them spend eight years in the academic program. Thus, most students spend at least five years or more in the academic program offered.

The table below shows that the main target of free education programs within the development agencies surveyed revealed that 33.33 percent state that their free schooling programme is meant for vulnerable students only. In contrast, another 33.33 percent of the respondents suggested that the free education programme targets low-income families, followed by 33.33 percent indicating that its free schooling programme is open to everyone. From the development agencies' responses, the implied view is that most of the free schooling for all programs primarily target vulnerable children and families with limited resources to educate their children before involving everyone else's education needs in society.

**Major Target of Free Education Program**

Option	Frequency	Percent
Category E	1	33.33
Category D	1	33.33
Category A, B, C	1	33.33
Total	3	100

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

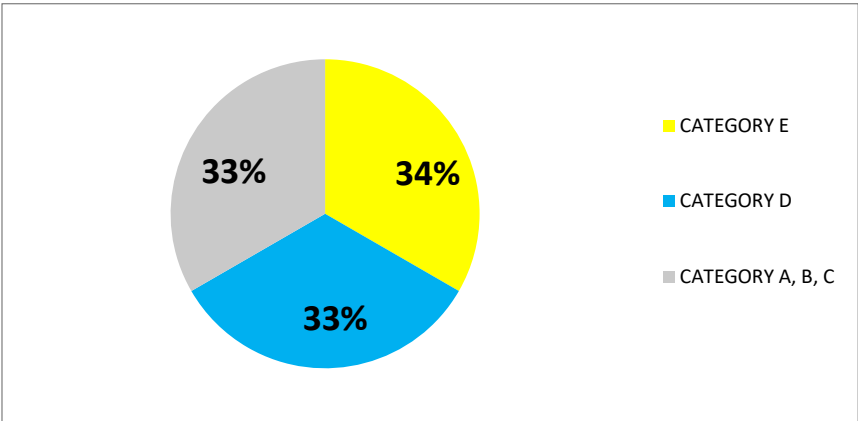


Table 13 in appendix A shows the funding source for free education sponsorship. According to the study, 66.67 percent of the respondents stated that their free education sponsorship comes from the AAE category and 33.33 percent stated their free education sponsorship is coming through the district and sectorial level authorities. The evidence thus presented confirms the government's approach to utilising private and public sector funding models to achieve its education for all goals. This reflects the rationale for most respondents stating that the free education sponsorship primarily comes from the public and private development agencies.



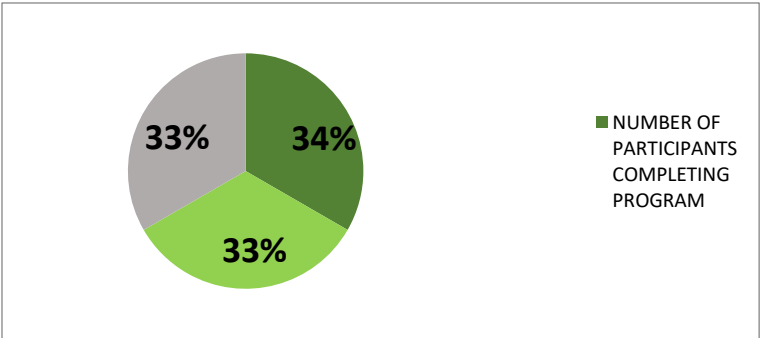
Table 14 in appendix A shows the implementation method of the free education program. 66.67 percent of the respondents revealed that the free education program is implemented through a partnership with the parent and the local government at the sector level. Moreover, 33.33 percent of the respondents posited that free education implementation was done through adequate facilities meeting the educational needs of students and communities served. By all indications, most respondents imply that free education is implemented through a partnership with the parent and the local government.

The table below shows the means of evaluation for a free education program. Of the study respondents, 66.67 percent revealed that the evaluation of the free education programme impact is based on the number of participants who completed the programme. The other 33.33 percent of respondents stated that evaluation is done through weekly visits to the school, while another 33.33 percent of the respondents evaluate free education's effect on how accessible the programme is to the community it seeks to serve. Thus, this study has an equal chance of evaluating free education programs among the respondents.

**Evaluation of free education**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Number of Participants Completing Programme</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>33.33</b>
<b>Weekly Visit</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>33.33</b>
<b>Accessibility</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>33.33</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



The table below highlights the number of free education beneficiaries. According to the survey, 33.33 percent of the respondents stated that about 92 VUP students and households benefited from introducing free education in their sales. Another 33.33 percent of the respondents noted that closer to 30 participants gained from having free education, with another 33.33 percent of the respondents finding that closer to 264 VUP participating students profited from free education programs introduced within its area. According to the study, the Rutunga area of Gasabo District had the most students benefiting from the free education programme. However, all agencies' approaches highlighted that free education benefited the students in its VUP beneficiary households and family equally to some extent.

**Number of Beneficiaries of Free Education**

Option	Frequency	Percent
92	1	33.33
30	1	33.33
264	1	33.33
Total	3	100

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

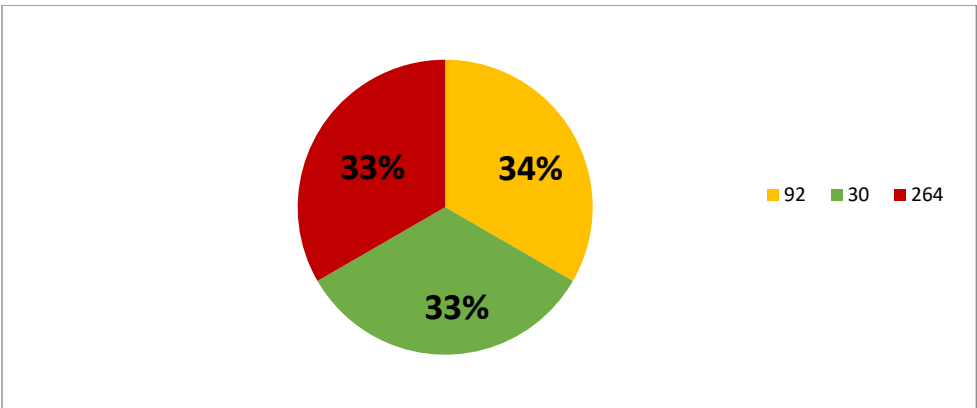


Table 15 in appendix A shows the accessibility of the quality of free education programs. In the survey, 66.67 percent of the respondents that equitable access and quality of free education were archived through the provision of educational support in the community and school.

Furthermore, 33.33 percent of the respondents stated that the access and quality of free education depend on the resources available for those implementing the free education programme. As observed through these responses, accessing quality education is conditioned on the premise of provisional government support in the education system. Thus, most of the respondents, through their responses, imply that educational access to quality education occurs from the provision of support education facilities.

Table 16 in appendix A shows the quality of the agencies' responses to the education programmes. The respondents surveyed show that 100 percent affirmed the achievements of education quality attained for students in the VUP categories without disagreement. Hence the study concludes that the quality of education has been achieved to enable VUP students to attain quality education. Though, it is worth noting that the quality offered depends on sponsorship and students' ability to cover the hidden costs that most VUP category families cannot afford regardless of the extra financial support.

Table 17 in appendix A shows the free schooling attribution to quality of education. When surveyed, the agencies affirmed 100 percent that free schooling is attributable to the quality of education provided to all students, especially to the most vulnerable children in society and their families, without question. The conclusion is that free schooling is attributable to the quality of education to an extent, such as the abolition of fees and, to an extent, covering transport fares for TVET students. However, given the hidden costs and the social attitude and stigma, some vulnerable VUP students, including those with disabilities, HIV/AIDS, and single teenage mothers in school, raise concerns about the attribution of free schooling in such context to the quality of education offered.

Table 18 in appendix A shows how agencies utilised free schooling to achieve quality education. Based on the study observed, 66.67 percent of the respondents stated that free schooling was used to achieve quality education through support in education programs. Moreover, 33.33 percent of the respondents noted that free schooling helped achieve the quality of education through observant evaluation. Viewed from education support, most respondents implied that free schooling helped achieve the development agency's quality of education goal through the education support program. Nevertheless, it was also established earlier that these agencies' data rarely accommodate the students' and patients' insights other than the official's talking point of what constitutes educational support or not. There is also the issue of observational evaluation that involves the agencies observing participants in the VUP projects

record their children's schooling activities, behaviours, emotions, interactions, and themes engaged within the school to help get a sense of how these people experience access to education within the programme. As previously established by the schools and parents, it is rear for the development and government agencies to visit schools and VUP families in vulnerable and remote districts for observational evaluation tasks. It is doubly tasking to request an already stretched school to commit administrative resources to its already exhausted workforce into a further observational task to VUP students as an opportunity to engage them in front of the school when it aims to include them respectfully in the process. From our observation during the survey, educational support was provided as community food support, but the schools or the parents did not confirm the observation.

Table 19 in appendix A shows how agencies ensure quality education in free schooling programmes is attained. According to the observed survey, 66.67 percent of the respondents were able to ensure that the quality of education in free schooling programmes is archived through discussing educational problems and offering solutions with relevant stakeholders, including parents and schools. Furthermore, 33.33 percent of the respondents ensure quality education in free schooling by providing schools and communities with qualified teachers to educate the students better. According to the data, most respondents indicate that the quality of education in free schooling is affirmed via participatory means, which engages the views of schools, parents, and communities when discussing and presenting solutions to students' educational problems. At this stage, the Gasabo district's free schooling approach does rely strongly on the community-led participation model. By implication, the community leaders become vital participants representing the views of parents, the government, and schools. A tasking combination of duties, given that some of these community leaders are themselves heads of the schools they manage, such a power dynamic stand to create a severe conflict of interest in data reporting to the district, allowance of student grievances, as well as focus on specific students for evaluation.

The table below shows a reduction in the dropout rate in school, and the study observes that 100 percent of the respondents affirm that there is a substantial reduction in dropout rate experience in the free education program. Thus, free education has an absolute reduction in the dropout rate in school.

### **Have you experience reduction in dropout rate**

Option	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	100
Total	3	100

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)

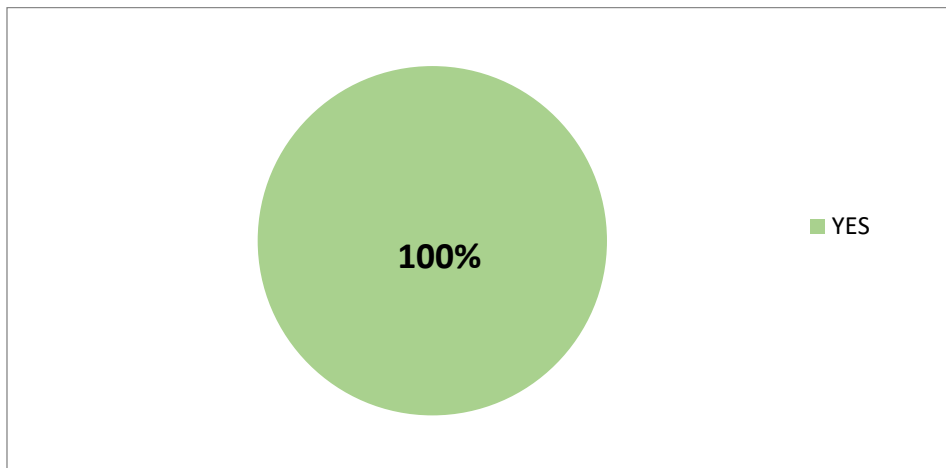


Table 20 in appendix A shows how the implementation helped reduce school dropout rates. The study reveals that 100 percent of the respondents stated that the introduction of free education contributed to a reduction in the school dropout rate in the study area surveyed due to meeting the financial needs of households and families that previously struggled to pay to educate their children. The exciting finding is that the district may have helped remove the burden linked to tuition fees and meals to extent uniforms by offering direct financial support to VUP households. What seems to be lacking is the removal of the hidden costs of schooling and the negative social attitudes often excluding the most vulnerable students from gaining participatory access to quality education. For instance, asked how free schooling links to reducing dropouts, the research team was made aware that because of free schooling, students' lack of food at home became pronounced during lunchtime when it is required to eat at home. With the poorest unable to go home, the government immediately introduced the school feeding programme to help reduce this burden on families and children. However, the concern is that the timing and efficiency of learning when feeding a hungry, disoriented student at lunchtime cannot be of more outstanding quality than if the student had access to the meal in the morning from either school or at home before engaging in classroom study.

Table 21 in appendix A shows the rate of comparison of school dropout rate by revealing that 66.67 percent of the respondents affirm that they can compare the reduction in school dropout as a result of free education while 33.33 percent of them disagree that they are unable to compare the rate of school dropout from free education. It does seem that the dropout rate can be measured by most respondents who posited their ability to compare the reduction rate in school dropouts because of free education in the area. From an outsider observer and given the view that most of these agencies claim that free school is significant to Rwandan development, the lack of administrative oversight of how local leaders directly implement the VUP presents no surprise for the lack of some agency's ability to compare the rate of dropout owed to free school.

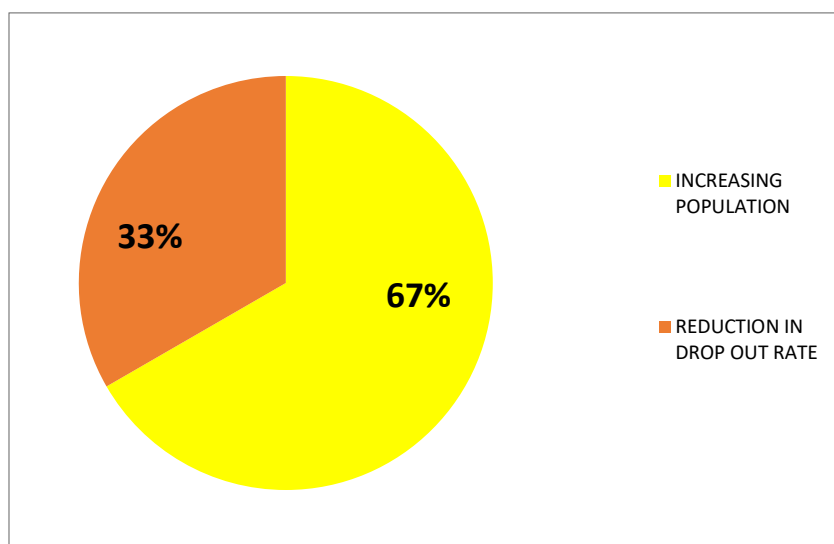
Table 22 in appendix A shows the reduction in financial stress because of free education. The study observes that 100 percent of the respondents affirm that free education has reduced the financial burden on parents in the cost of their children's tuition, reducing school dropouts and improving academic excellence in the area. However, compared to students who participated and graduated from the VUP, it is complicated to sustain the argument that academic or schooling excellence was attained because of a reduction in the family's financial burden experienced by the family given that most lacked the resources to meet their daily survival needs.

The table below shows the evidence of financial burden reduction because of the free education programme. Based on the study conducted, 66.67 percent of the respondents stated that one of the pieces of evidence of financial burden reduction is the increase in the student population attending schools since the introduction of free schooling nationwide. Furthermore, 33.33 percent stated that their evidence relies on reducing school dropout rates amongst the most vulnerable children who were the most likely not to attend school in the past. In contrast, free schooling had more to do with the increase in student population, as most of the surveyed respondents noted in their evidence of a reduction in financial burden in households based on VUP support. It is also worth viewing that the reduction in dropout rate does not constitute access to quality education as most parents and schools surveyed made the research team aware that there are punitive measures against them should their child not attend school.

### **Evidence in reduction in financial burden**

Option	Frequency	Percent
Increasing population	2	66.67
Reduction in dropout rate	1	33.33
Total	3	100

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



## 4.2. Summary Kigali Fieldwork Findings

### Summary of Data in Part A

	Household size	Frequency	Percent
	1	3	7.5
	2	5	12

<b>Respondents Household Size</b>	3	6	15
	4	8	20
	5	10	25
	More than 5	8	20
	Total	40	100
<b>Respondents Household Nature</b>	Household size	Frequency	Percent
	Single parent household	12	30
	Self-dependent	14	35
	Siblings in the household	9	22
	Relative and extended family	5	12.5
	Total	40	100
<b>Respondents head of house/breadwinner of the family</b>	Household Head	Frequency	Percent
	Father	16	40
	Mother	12	30
	Siblings	8	20



	Extended Families	4	10
	Total	40	100
<b>Respondents Male Children in the Household</b>	Number of male children	Frequency	Percent
	1	8	20
	2	14	35
	3	10	25
	4	5	12
	5	2	5
	More than 5	1	2.5
	Total	40	100
<b>Respondents Female Children in Household</b>	Number of female children	Frequency	Percent
	1	9	22.5
	2	15	37.5
	3	6	15
	4	4	10

	5	3	7.5
	More than 5	3	6.5
	Total	40	100
<b>Respondents Family Income</b>	Incomes of Respondent's Family	Frequency	Percent
	175,000 RWF and Below	24	60
	180,000 RWF - 600,000 RWF	10	25
	610,000 RWF - 1,030,000 RWF	6	15
	1,040,000 RWF - 1,460,000 RWF	0	0
	1,880,000 RWF and Above	0	0
	Total	40	100
<b>Respondents &amp; Household Head Occupation</b>	Household Head Occupation	Frequency	Percent
	Farmers	9	22
	Merchant	7	17.5
	Civil servant	8	20
	Entrepreneurship	11	27.5

	Other	5	11.5
	Total	40	100
<b>Respondents Children's Equality Perception and VUP Participation</b>	Children perception about VUP participation & Educational Equality	Frequency	Percent
	Yes	32	80
	No	8	20
	Total	40	100
<b>Respondents Children's Perception and Complaints from Participating in the VUP</b>	Perception & Complaints amongst Children in the VUP	Frequency	Percent
	Yes	11	27.5
	No	29	71.5
	Total	40	100
<b>The Students unfair treatment response against teachers</b>	Complaints from children about being treated unfairly by their teacher	Frequency	Percent
	Yes	4	10
	No	36	90
	Total	40	100

<b>Respondents Perception on the VUP Increasing access in quality education</b>	VUP Contribution & Increase in Children's Equitable Access	Frequency	Percent
	Very high	11	26.5
	High	14	35
	Moderate	15	37.5
	Very low	0	0
	Low	0	0
	Total	40	100
<b>Respondents opinion on how VUP has reduced financial burden</b>	Participating in VUP help reduce financial burden	Frequency	Percent
	Yes	33	81.5
	No	7	17.5
	Total	40	100
	Ways participating in VUP helped families	Frequency	Percent
	Increase in saving while obtaining quality education	9	22

<b>Respondents view on different paths the VUP assisted the Family</b>	Expansion of businesses due to increase in saving	5	12.5
	Increase in number of my children attending schools	11	27.5
	Increase in number of children completing primary and secondary school	7	16.5
	Increase in access to quality education at reduced cost	8	20
	Total	40	100

### Summary of Data in Part B

<b>Free Schooling Duration</b>	<b>Duration of free school program</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
	5 years	3	66.67
	8 years	2	33.33
	Total	5	100
<b>Free Schooling Duration</b>	<b>Target for Free Schooling Programme</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
	Disabled Students	2	40

<b>Major target of free education programme</b>	Poor Families & Disabled Students	2	50
	All Households without Distinction	1	10
	Total	5	100
<b>Means of Free Schooling Sponsorship</b>	<b>Approved Means for Free Schooling Sponsorship</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
	Government of Rwanda	5	100
<b>Method of Implementing Free Education Programme</b>	<b>Method of Implementing Program</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Partnership with the parent and the local government	3	66.67
	Introduction of modern school facilities	2	33.33
	Total	5	100
	<b>Types of quality education</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Types of quality education</b>	Provision of Educational Support	3	66.67
	Free Education	2	33.33
	Total	5	100
	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>

<b>Method of Ensuring Quality Education</b>		Discussion of the Educational Challenges	3	66.67
		Recruitment of Qualified Teachers	2	33.33
		Total	3	100
<b>Reduction in Dropout Rate</b>		<b>Reduction in School Dropout Rate</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
		Yes	5	100
		Total	5	100
<b>Reduction in Financial Burden</b>		<b>Reduction in financial burden</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
		Yes	5	100
		Total	5	100
<b>Evidence of Reduction in Financial Burden</b>		<b>Evidence in Financial Burden Reduction</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
		Increasing Population	3	66.67
		Reduction in dropout rate	2	33.33
		Total	5	100

### Summary of Data in Part C

<b>Duration of school program</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	5 years	2	66.67
	8 years	1	33.33
	Total	3	100
<b>Major Target of Free Education Program</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Category E	1	33.33
	Category D	1	33.33
	Category A, B, C	1	33.33
	Total	3	100
<b>How School Get Free Education Sponsorship</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
	A.A.E	2	66.67
	District and sector	1	33.33
	Total	3	100



<b>How do you implement free education</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Partnership with the parent and the local government	2	66.67
	Introduction of facilities	1	33.33
	Total	3	100
<b>Evaluation of free education</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Number of Participants Completing Programme	1	33.33
	Weekly Visit	1	33.33
	Accessibility	1	33.33
	Total	3	100
<b>Number of Beneficiaries of Free Education</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	92	1	33.33
	30	1	33.33
	264	1	33.33

	Total	3	100
<b>Accessible quality education</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
	Provision of support education	2	66.67
	Free education	1	33.33
	Total	3	100
<b>Can you affirm that quality education has been achieved</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Yes	3	100
	Total	3	100
<b>Was free schooling attributable to quality education</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Yes	3	100
	Total	3	100
<b>How has free schooling help achieve quality education?</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Support Education	2	66.67

	Observant Evaluation	1	33.33
	Total	3	100
<b>How do ensure quality education in free schooling</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Discussing Problems	2	66.67
	Qualified Teachers	1	33.33
	Total	3	100
<b>Have you experience reduction in dropout rate</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Yes	3	100
	Total	3	100
<b>How has the implementation caused a reduction in dropout rate?</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Free education	3	100
	Total	3	100
<b>Can you compare the</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>	<b>Percent</b>

<b>reduction in dropout rate</b>	Yes	2	66.67
	No	1	33.33
	Total	3	100
<b>Has there been reduction in financial burden</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Yes	3	100
	Total	3	100
<b>Evidence in reduction in financial burden</b>	<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequenc</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	Increasing population	2	66.67
	Reduction in dropout rate	1	33.33
	Total	3	100

In summary, the tabled data showed that the VUP successfully influenced the number of respondents whose children significantly gained equitable access to participate in learning courtesy of VUP intervention bringing financial stability in the households. However, evaluating these successes effectiveness to fully sustained reduction in educational poverty to produce and advance equitable inclusive access for all candidates to attain equal participatory outcome in education without wasted materials, resources, time, and energy; the VUP raises more questions than it provide answers. As the analysed data show, rather than breaking down poverty barriers in the poorest households, the programme conditionalities escalate poverty in

education in the most marginalised households. The data evidenced that single-headed homes with illiterate low earners, those living with disabilities, poor children in larger households, families preferencing male children's education over a female child, the lack of consistent oversight of the programme implementation, sexual harassment against female students, issues of local leaders nepotism amid issues of delayed VUP payments and the extra hidden school costs and the extra childcare costs have conspired to reduce the programme's effects in poverty reduction.

The VUP, in relative terms, increased the number of students equitably participating in the classroom once the respondent's family's socioeconomic burdens were reduced. However, its conditionalities made the programme's effectiveness and efficiency doubtful in creating equitable, inclusive access to education for the most deprived students without the family's ability to meet the full conditions set out for qualification. Equitable access in such a situation became severely restricted for the children in households lacking resources due to severe institutional, structural, cultural, social, and economic barriers. Nevertheless, they are burdened by rising inflation, low-income jobs and skills, illiteracy, hidden school costs, local power dynamic restricting their voices, and delayed VUP payments. These barriers further decrease accessible quality opportunities for schooling for deprived students without the extra resources needed to gain equitable access to education. Thus, low-income families' decisions to educate their children despite lacking the resources and their children's exclusions are shaped by a desire to avoid stigmatisation and material fines rather than a desire to assist access to quality education to enable their offspring to graduate out of extreme educational poverty.

Given VUP's development objective set out to improve marginalised groups' rights to equitable development participation and access to education with social protection strategies to reduce inequalities and poverty barriers preventing opportunities. The analysed data above indicates a worrisome prospect for development whereby despite the VUP by number, it significantly impacted most recipients' children's access to inclusive education within the Gasabo district. However, its effectiveness in breaking down poverty barriers among the poorest of households children once thoroughly considered, the programme's overall ability to factually reduce educational poverty at the source to help people graduate out of extreme poverty rarely stands up to scrutiny. A view well captured by the data fact that students in most deprived categorised E and D households face extreme exclusion in education despite VUP allocated resources to protect their families. Fraser's participatory parity and Sen's human rights approach to social

protection as development are now critically discussed to grasp GoR's VUP development rationale.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Evaluation of Findings in line with the Theoretical Framework Principles**

#### **5.1 Critical Evaluation of Fraser and Sen Theories**

The attempt here is to understand VUP's impact through these theories by evaluating Fraser's participatory parity and human rights protection strategies to increase access and reduce education poverty by meeting the needs of the poor.

#### **5.2 Relevant Principles in Fraser's Work**

Social justice can refer to the distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society (Fraser & Naples, 2004). Social justice movements often emphasise breaking barriers for social mobility, safety net creation, and educational and economic justice. The view posited by Fraser & Naples (2004) is that social justice assigns rights and duties in the institutions of society to enable people to receive the essential benefits and burdens of cooperation. Relevant institutions include taxation, social insurance, public health, education, public services, labour law and market regulation for fair wealth distribution and equal opportunity (Fraser & Naples, 2004). Fraser's participatory parity as justice approach will guide this study to critically evaluate the VUP efforts and ability to enable the poor to access quality education based on its affirmative and transformative frames in recognising institutionalised cultural values hindering the appropriate redistribution of equitable resources desired. Therefore, we explore theories and justiciable concepts often informing policy-makers policies and the principles underpinning poverty reduction strategy.

The intended goal here is to utilise Fraser's framework as an analytical tool to practice and evaluate VUP's justiciable strategy through examples from its public engagement in PTA's, Health insurance, free school meals and Free universal education. While no practical tool kit

for action exists in Fraser's framework, Blue et al. (2019) offer suggestions to guide the policy-makers practical application of justiciable agenda to improve participatory parity and access in education. In the first practical instance, an appropriate procedure is required to ensure that recipients of social protections are adequately represented. The second must ensure that marginalised group voices are recognised and valued equally as those from dominant groups. Furthermore, thirdly, these social protection strategies must help mitigate the inequitable distribution of wealth and resources for parity. It suffices to sustain that even for Fraser's parity as justice stands when participation entails the redistribution of power; otherwise, the powerless in society might perceive the process as empty and frustrating gesturing.

Utilising Arnstein's participatory ladder to support Fraser's justice as parity framework ensures that proper evaluation of the VUP perceived effects are done in Rwandan contemporary contexts and cases. Fraser's parity model, therefore, provides the normative framework from which critical analysis is done to offer an expansive approach combining three interdependent yet distinct dimensions of justice that together ensure parity of participation: redistribution (put, who gets what), recognition (who is included and heard), and representation (How do we decide who gets what, and where does this take place and what effects have these strategies brought to reducing educational poverty and its malice on access to quality education). At this juncture, we can assume that Fraser's justice principle requires that social arrangements permit every member of society to interact with one another as peers; otherwise, an arrangement is unjust if structured to deny some members the chance to participate fully in the social life on terms of parity with the others.

In the first instance, Fraser's concerns stem from the traditionally associated theory of distributive justice because of the economic structure of society and its economically defined class differentials. Moreover, in the second instance, the focus was put on the philosophy of recognition of the status order of society and the culturally defined hieratical order. The third principle is concerned with issues of representation. In Fraser's view, representation is (political) from exclusion from the community of those entitled to make justice claims to one another. In summary, Fraser's justice as parity mandates that poverty eradication policies must be equitable and fair to enable just access and participation in quality education and, in turn, reduce educational poverty and inequalities impeding the poor through processes of economic redistribution, cultural recognition and Political representation (Keddie, 2012).

### **5.2.1 Fraser's Three-dimensional justice**

On the one hand, VUP implementation and the Ubudehe categorisation process have been deemed a unifier towards trust building and increasing the human capital stock for advanced productivity, efficiencies, and economic growth. Profiled in households improved earnings, indirect food support, burden and solution sharing practices and increased financial and food security, benefiting everyone engaged in the process. On the other hand, the capital and human rights approaches did not directly advance the equity and access to public goods for the most marginalised researched communities. Clear evidence for this is the issue of girls dropping out of school, single mothers in public work, single teenage fathers struggling to support the family, households in urban Kigali unable to support families, and disabled students being the largest cohort of school dropouts. Addressing these group inequities, Nancy Fraser's (1999) three-dimension theory of justice stipulates that social protection programmes should be remediable to permit all to participate as peers in social life. In that sense, protection must be remediable through actions and processes to assist in overcoming and dismantling personalised, structuralised, and institutionalised injustices impeding poor people's participation and enjoyment as par with others in social interaction. As the Kigali charted table summary revealed, rather than reduce education poverty, Ubudehe categories and VUP implementation process at the district and local level disadvantaged the poorest and created further inequalities being experienced by children with disability, young single school mothers and fathers-headed households, and children in large family sized homes. To change group's disadvantages, Fraser (1999) argues that policies, laws, institutional norms and values must ensure that resources are redistributed (economic), people uniqueness recognised (cultural), and their voices represented (political) to avert the adverse effects impedes on access to equal participation in social life.

In Fraser's recognition paradigm, the focus is on cultural injustice rooted in people's socially constructed identities being positively or negatively valued in status or not by the dominant group which assigned them. The dehumanisation of Tutsis led to them being called cockroaches and conniving tribes by the Hutus political elites, thus contributing to the Rwanda genocide in 94. With that in mind, Mosse's argument puts it simply that so too are needs because they are socially constructed like identities and cultures. Therefore, Fraser's view is that these assigned values tend to come from the dominant structures in society via forms of domination, coercing weaker group members upon a shared horizon of meanings, norms, and values to personalise the devaluation of their status. By recognising the impact of social status, protection programmes not only challenge core issues disadvantaging a group's identity but can also be used to examine institutionalised patterns of cultural values and effects on the relative standing



of every social actor's ability by dismantling the obstacles preventing them from being treated as equal peers.

Conversely, in the distribution paradigm, economic injustice is focused due to being rooted in a person's relation to the market or the means of production (Fraser, 1999). It means that individuals exist in a hierarchically differentiated collective class system whereby the majority class tends to be most overrepresented as poor due to insufficient resources, thus the need for abolishment via transformative policies and programmes to equalise social actors' participation. Hierarchical differentiation stems from institutionalised practices as socially constructed to distinguish between social groups and people. The case of Tutsi's tribal differentiation by the Hutu majority was based on biological, physiological, and cultural differences, which were also used to dehumanise, devalue and discriminate against them as people, culture, tribes and as worthless humans to be genocide (Kings, 2014).

As a result, dominant groups utilise group differentiations to support or deny resources for political, cultural, economic, and educational factors deemed to place a low value on a specific social group (Fraser, 1999). The inferior status assigned to the Tutsis by the Hutus both socially and politically led to Tutsis being denied access to education, healthcare, justice, employment, and representation in public decision-making organs (Kings, 2014). The importance of public organ representation being Fraser's third defined paradigm stipulates that political representation activities make citizens "present" in public policy-making processes based on having the power to act in the group's best interest. Women's political representation in Rwanda has increased legislative protection, enhanced women's rights, changed attitudes towards women as leaders and advanced the diffusion of ideas on gender equality into spheres such as employment, education, homes, community, and the economy. Burnet's (2019) study evaluating the impact of representation observed that women in public life have ensured that Rwanda is the global leader in the expansion and inclusion of women towards promoting and securing women's rights in Africa. A case Burnet pointedly evidence in the 2008 Rwanda election of a female-majority parliament, which was realised through a gender quota system instituted in 2003. Several justifiable approaches were instituted beyond legislating gender parity, including adopting numerous laws since 1995 to promote and enhance women's rights protection. The Instituted laws advanced equal inheritance rights to female children, women's rights to land ownership, and wives' rights to equal land ownership on deeds; criminalised marital rape, domestic violence, and all forms of gender-based violence. Burnet attributed these successes to female representation in Rwandan political and public life. Representation as justice means

enhancing and protecting groups' rights to increased representation through policies, laws, programmes, and participation in public decision-making organs. The mainstreaming of women's issues was used to convince the public to support and change institutional practices with transformative and affirmative actions to recognise equal female status, resource redistribution in education, and public representation as equal in the 21st African decision-making context (Burnet, 2019).

However, Fraser's participatory parity approach raises significant issues relating to the social and political realities and context. The critic argues that addressing poverty through affirmative and transformative actions to change attitudes can hinder the reconciliation process required to heal divisions in divided societies. It can also replace historical wrongs with new wrongs, undermine disadvantaged groups' achievements on preferential grounds, and encourage fraudulent individuals to misidentify for material gains irrespective of lived conditions. Additionally, it can create a mismatch in opportunities and breed frustration and tension, and the politically dominant few can overshadow the process with their agendas and interests to further personal ambitions over minor fortunate groups' needs and welfare (Garry, 2006). The argument against Fraser's three-dimension theory of justice is lost if we take Burnet's (2019) posting on Rwandan women's political representation impacts since entering parliament, for instance.

In contrast, gender equality and women's rights were enhanced by prominent women's political representation in the current government, including its commitment to gender equality and women's rights to equal land and inheritance rights and access. The case can also be made that the dominant elites in the RPF's party utilise friendly female policies as tokenism to maintain political dominance across the board (Burnet, 2019). This is done on the basis that since Rwandan political parties are "highly unequal in strength," the same applies to their capacity to organise and mobilise support. As a result, the dominant RPF party members with the most financial and intellectual resources set the nation's development agenda to fit into its political ambition rather than matching women's interests.

For Mosse and Fraser, Tokenism is the superficial and symbolic practice designed to recruit and include minorities and underrepresented groups into public domains to appear diverse and equal contextually (Mosse, 20019; Fraser, 2009). Fraser's stand on representational justice by tokenism or not would mean that group size is connected to social experiences, and when the size of the group changes, so do individuals and groups' experiences. Nevertheless, this

argument is too focused on the impact of changing female numbers in an elite leadership position rather than the legislative powers these female leaders (a minority) have and their experiences of social relations with the less fortunate and others it advocates for. Put to Burnet, most female elite leaders in public life come from similar dominant institutional and organisational groupings with influential positions and power as the men. As a result, these elite women's approach to policy decision-making will be dominated by influential insiders of powerful elite interests, thus forgetting grassroots politics and social movements and their interactions with female-friendly insiders. Since the progress toward advancing women's interests in Rwanda is linked to the executive branch's motivations to increase the regime's legitimacy and power, spurring economic growth, and pleasing international donors, it relies on to cover 45 percent of its budgeting needs. Burnet (2019) thus argued that the gender quota and other women-friendly efforts are simply a means to consolidate RPF power. In Burnet's explanation, gender quotas empower women within the legislatures or reinforce party control. As such, RPF's intentional positioning of female representatives makes these women overly reliant on the party's agenda and institutional decision-making processes. In effect, RPF increased female representation act as a token to distract and cultivate a gendered equality front while suppressing their dissent to promote allegiance amongst the party members (Burnet, 2019).

The question of why the Rwandan government acted in such a manner lies in Burnet's argument that the post-conflict regime was incentivised toward potential economic growth because it was heavily reliant on foreign aid, which made up 45 percent of its budget, thus attempting to empower women is to meet this end (Burnet, 2019). Female representation, in essence, is to meet the government's economic development needs, and the government clearly stated in the VUP programming that it expected the empowered feminisation processes and positioning to result in growth and poverty reduction (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013). Is evidenced by single mothers' overburdened impact resulting in empowerment effects as very few impoverished households are lifted out of poverty due to gender equality conflicting with the country's economic goals to disenfranchise female representation gains. Thus, the latter always takes precedent as women must work as a pre-condition to get VUP support for themselves and their children, leading them to struggle to get involved in their children's education journey. Also highlighted in the Kigali data collected is that GoR consistently discounts subsistence agriculture and care work, often noted as the two highly gendered occupations that engage many women in the country. Equally, the need for economic growth means attracting foreign

investments and capital with modernised policies to promote a market-oriented maximum-productivity logic without consideration of gender dimensions which (Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013: 1122) noted as hurting female prospects nationwide. For example, while agricultural activities make up a third of Rwanda's GDP and more than 70 percent of Rwandan women actively participate since childhood, they are yet to have equal access to land, production inputs, finance, or markets as the men despite having a significant female representation in government (Burnet, 2019, Debusscher & Ansoms, 2013). Consequently, most female farmers are relegated to subsistence roles while their families rely on them for sustained nutritional food security. The lack of quality agricultural inputs and technology, therefore, reduces their ability to diversify the yield of crops produced, thus negatively impacting the family's nutritional food security (Burnet, 2019).

These specific gendered obstacles such as the lack of land access, finance, markets, agricultural training and education, suitable working conditions, and unequal treatment significantly disadvantage most female landless farmers prior to sowing a seed, thus the biggest roadblock to their land rights. Also, the fact that Rwanda receives significant foreign assistance to make up for over 45 percent of its budget for Debusscher and Ansoms (2013) and Burnet (2019) means that gender equality has become a trendy issue to appease international aid donors as a motivation for economic goal. This is akin to why the government consistently emphasises utilising measurable and readily marketable qualitative initiatives, including affirmative and transformative actions, to present its efforts towards the representation of women in public decision-making organs nationwide (Abbott & Malunda, 2016; Burnet, 2019). Lastly, the gendered nature of organisational life serves to exclude women from the male inner circles of power and influence and to obscure from them and other outsiders the intricate details of how things work. For instance, Burnet argued that while progress has been made for women to hold privileged positions within inner circles of power; however, these positions are said to be 'masculinised' and constructed around male norms. Female representatives find themselves in a context marked by masculine rationality controlling its centre premise to the country's decision-making process, often designed with competitive masculinity intent, thus influencing these representative experiences (Burnet, 2019). Given Fraser's argument that work is gendering, both genders learn social processes of gender construction and familiarities with gender differences throughout life. Then at the top of political hierarchies comes the nature of relationships between women, and the gendered nature of their social contexts is a fundamental element in organising leadership learning (Burnet, 2019). On an interpersonal level, patriarchy

can be considered a complementary social process between genders. Therefore, women are complicit in the patriarchy through the social practices of their silence or facilitation of policies advocating for male rationale economic norms. As Burnet's pointed out, within this context female political elite cannot escape the RPF patriarchy agenda-setting norms, even by climbing to elite status either by marriage or career promotion, as she will modify her subordination only at the expense of that of other women. Consequently, the dominant party elites (men) get to promote gender parity and women's rights aspects likely to advance economic growth with its control of development agendas and members' selection on a pledge of allegiance to the party's policies (Burnet, 2019).

### **5.2.2 Evaluation of Fraser's Principles on VUP Implementation**

Fraser's defined participatory parity necessitates a group's ability to interact on a social level with peers as equal. Simply asking people to categorise themselves as mandated in the Ubudehe practice means groups cannot rationally represent their thoughts and interests appropriately. The consistent grievance against the VUP implementation approach facilitates Fraser's suggestion that equitable representation means that, Ubudehe practice must ensure that the group's identities, norms and concerns are recognised and considered valuable to affect change institutionally. Furthermore, these tools must be transformative for marginalised groups to equal participation in future decision-making (Fraser 1999). That means participatory parity involves three dimensions such as economic, cultural, and political. The VUP ensures recipients interact on an equal basis in social arrangements around the three dimensions via the implementation of affirmative or transformative laws, processes, policies, and programmes towards advancing the equity of disadvantaged groups. As Evidenced derived from Devlin & Elgie's (2008) face-to-face interviews with women representatives in the Rwandan parliament suggest that female representatives contemplate themselves as having greater empathy with grassroots politics. The interviews showed that within policy agenda orbit, women's issues are easily and frequently raised to gear more robust advocacy toward women's inclusion across public and private decision-making organs. For example, the Rwandan government mandated in its 2003 constitution for gender equality to be mainstreamed into every government policy resulting in gender quotas across the board and the introduction of a gender-responsive budget to ensure women are well and equally represented at the national, district and local levels of public governance (Abbott et al., 2018). The introduced land and inheritance laws advanced women's rights to land ownership, girls' rights to inherit assets equally as boys and married women to co-own enterprises and properties as husbands (Abbott et al., 2018).

According to Rwanda Gender Monitoring Office (GMO, 2019), these land laws tremendously contributed to women's financial credit access and provided them with control over productive resources and loans by utilising titles and deeds as collaterals. Consequently, land contributed 38 percent of women's access to financial and loan credit facilities in 2017. In essence, Rwanda's financial inclusion approach means that 87 percent of women are financially included and 91 percent of men, with a relatively low overall gender gap of 4 percent. A significant improvement from 2008 and 2012, when women's inclusion was at 26.8 percent and 39 percent, respectively (GMO, 2019). Significant progress was also made in public decision-making organs, as women made up over 62 percent of the parliamentarians in Rwanda's governing structure (Abbott & Malunda, 2016; Gupta et al., 2019). The same trend is observable in the Kigali data and several other education works of literature, which have found that the number of girls and boys enrolled in primary and secondary education stands almost equal. This is an indication supporting the view that parents now value the education of both girls and boys equally, contrary to the previous beliefs that devalued girls' education (GMO, 2019). Also evidenced is the removal of basic education tuition fees enabled more children, especially the boys and girls in beneficiary households, to enrol in primary and secondary education. A supportive indication that female representation in government can empower future generations of girls to realise their full potential equally and contribute to the country's social and economic development. An approach credited with reducing adult illiteracy significantly advanced future generations' current standing at 22.5 percent and 30.6 percent for males and females, respectively (GMO, 2019).

In health, both male gender's access to health insurance slightly increased from 73.5 percent in 2014/15 to 73.9 percent in 2016/17. Based on the gender justice approach taken by the government, health insurance coverage for female outpaces men's (74.5 percent versus 73.4 percent, respectively). As a result of the community health insurance (Mutuelle de santé), support has been provided to vulnerable people through VUP's targeted effort to enable special needs groups' contribution and access to the extensive health insurance coverage in Rwanda. The recognition, redistribution and representation of women's unique issues and interests, according to Janvier & Andala's (2021) research, explored the relationship between female girls' education policies and academic performance via structured questionnaires, interview guides and reviewed documents targeting over 283 respondents to gain policy influence insight. The study noted that 53.1 percent of respondents strongly agreed that the country's recruiting and training gender sensitive teachers improved educational attainment, 86.4 percent agreed that

further provision of alternative education for girls could encourage more girls into education, and 80.0 percent agreed that these transformative policies encouraged girls equal participants in public decision-making organs. Fraser's participatory parity approach to social protection on the above evidence does demonstrate the impact that affirmative and transformative actions can have in raising the number of minorities in the public domain in order to help influence and address institutional and historic wrongs brought about by structural injustices to impede on equal social life participation amongst all.

However, critics' sentiments are also accurate, given that the advances made by women seem to benefit women already in the same political and influential power position as the men in politics. For example, all evidence points to gender parity in legislative representation as successful in achieving additional gender-focused policy initiatives in Rwanda. Contradictory evidence gives critics credence in the knowledge that having many female representatives in power does not guarantee that equal participatory parity rights shall be prioritised or observed. As Burnet's study consistently demonstrates, most female parliamentarians hold political positions, yet; most are card-carrying members of dominant RPF party members and its coalition partners for economic growth. The implication is that since the elected female representatives got nominated via instituted quota system reserved explicitly for women, they were vetted and selected by RPF political organisations or delegations. This, in turn, means that they owe allegiance not to their constituencies which elected them but to RPF's influential core party members who nominated them. In essence, the power dynamic does not favour female politicians since they must adhere to the RPF ideology most shaped by its masculine competitive norms in the global economic race. Thus, little room is left for female representatives to influence the agenda-framing process. Instead, they are more likely to support and advocate for dominant groups' economic development agenda to progress to retain political capital (Burnet, 2008). A scenario displayed in that with all its women representation, the women's movement in Rwanda has been set back, according to Burnet, for three main reasons.

The first is that the inclusion of so many professional and career-driven women at all levels of government has led to the most vibrant female leaders in civil societies moving mass to take up positions within the government. Thus, creating a brain-drain situation within the gender equality movement whereby the departure of highly educated and professional women from one country, economic sector, or field for another boils down to them seeking a pay rise and better living conditions (Burnet, 2008). A situation deemed to have created a vacuum in women's leadership. Those who stepped into leadership positions were not considered qualified



enough to advocate for contentious women's issues (such as land rights). Instead, they were more interested in personal gains, particularly those who stepped into well-paid staff positions, given that poverty reduction as a development strategy was at the heart of Rwanda's social protection schemes and its *Ubudehe* practice to meet its selection criteria within the community. Critics are, therefore, within remit to point out that some of the most marginalised cultures and traditions were sidelined in favour of younger, educated, degree-holding elite females replacing their older and influential counterparts in the vacant positions rather than disadvantaged groups. An advocate of Fraser's parity approach may argue that it is within the realm of the educated and enlightened to promote the interests of disadvantaged women. According to Burnet's study, it was observed that despite their educational advantage, the educated female representatives lacked the critical experiential knowledge of how to lobby a non-democratic government and negotiate the levers of power. It was the case that most of these women in civil societies and government positions were RPF cadres more interested in implementing policy rather than influencing it (Burnet, 2019).

Women were transitioning to occupy government positions negatively impacted the gender equality agenda privately and publicly. The movement became self-destructive as most of its 'old-guard' prior to the genocide resigned in large numbers to join the government in early 2000, while others went back to school (Burnet, 2008). It was also the case that self-interest amongst key female figures clamouring for women's equal rights also led to the destructiveness, especially when a new female executive secretary in women's affairs embezzled funds by taking credits in the organisation's name without being noticed. This resulted in several women empowerment organisations losing their funding source to pay workers, and creditors seized civil society properties to recoup their money (Burnet, 2008). Another problem cited is that the equality movement hardly unified around an issue in the proclamation of the post-land laws despite its contested nature of tenure and usage being considered amongst the most volatile political issues posing a risk of widespread violence in Rwanda. From a critic's point of view, this situation should mandate female legislatures to promptly rally around such an issue, given that most Rwandese women are subsistence farmers and that women, and female-headed households, are among the most vulnerable group likely to lose access to land. However, Burnet observed through his study that most influential civil society women and representatives within government refused to define land as a women's issue but instead termed it an all-Rwandese issue, which meant that rural women faced substantial obstacles attempting to actualise their inheritance and land rights. An observation confirmed by the parallel report from the UN



Committee on eliminating discrimination against women in 2017 noted that existing challenges since the implementation of land and inheritance laws significantly increased intra-household inheritance disputes over land and disproportionately impacted women's equal rights (UN, 2017). Most Rwandese men resisted these laws on the familiar ground that they perpetuate injustice against men, given that women can inherit from their father's and husband's clans, yet boys can only inherit from a father's clan (UN, 2017).

The implied view is that these new policies distort Rwandese culture by taking away land rights from men under women inheriting and taking such property to another family through marriage yet having rights to claim land rights in that clan. An expression confirmed that Rwandese woman's rights are only traceable through the man's father, brother, husband, and in-laws in case of the husband's death (UN, 2017; Burnet, 2008). Therefore, the volatile nature of the land issue can be a factor behind female representatives' reluctance to clearly define land as a women's issue to avoid conflict with the interests of the RPF political agenda. Burnet further noted that for most women, the land is a life and death issue for the rural poor women. The primarily middle-class women's civil society organisations and their urban elite membership may not have perceived land as a women's issue because such an issue has no direct relevance to their leaders. An indication that the failings of the women's movement in Rwanda, as the land bill demonstrates, shows the limited impact that increased female participation in governance can have on generating participatory parity in social arrangements. By design, female representation in Rwanda is purely symbolic, as women cannot change the masculine ideology without the approval of its dominant male members sanctioning it. This becomes even more problematic to Fraser's equality agenda, given that most female representatives subscribe to RPF interests over their constituents. Thus, it is an illusion to suggest that more women or disadvantaged groups are represented, and so too their power to influence the policy outcome. As evidently displayed by Burnet et al. discussions, the more represented a group are at the top, the more self-interested some become and, by default, can take advantage of weaker members to silence their issues while advocating for interests in line with their own political party's economic interests.

The negative impact of such acts on women's economic empowerment is that legislative reforms and female representation alone do little to erase old forms of discrimination against disadvantaged women. Instead, they create circumstances by which new forms of inequality emerge, and some old discriminatory practices persist in further influencing disadvantaged women's productive lives. One unintended consequence can be linked to Ubudehe categories

and VUP direct payment and direct household payment going mostly men as head based on categories prioritising male economic condition over that of a woman. In practice, it reduces female decision-making ability as they become inferior to the men once their wellbeing is dependent on a categorisation deeming men as only capable of being household heads with needs in the community and supported by VUP payment. Given Rwanda's important cultural perception, a good wife is patient and must abide by her husband's decisions regardless of her stand. Mechta (2016) pointedly noted that such social construction of femininity implies the silencing and submissiveness of women who, in turn, choose to stay quiet over inheritance and land transaction matters to avoid being tagged as bad wives. Another implication is that these women's silence is bought on the premise that they have a low bargaining power since arriving empty-handed into a man's household. Thus, they are not entitled to jointly own properties or decide on household finances on equal terms (Mechta, 2016). The use of Ubudehe categories by the VUP, therefore, provides critics with a position to argue that power dynamic rather than recognition put women in an inferior position as they bring nothing meaningful into the patrimony. They have an inferior claim to land, inheritance and VUP protection by default. Despite legal reforms, a perception created and reinforced by husbands, wives, and communities (Mechta, 2016) is evidenced that some females reported letting their male relatives inherit after them as justification to reduce familial conflicts. This approach, therefore, ensures that a woman entering a man's household empty-handed leaves her bargaining power diminished and could fall prey to an increased risk of gender-based violence (Mechta, 2016).

Another unintended consequence linked to the equality parity approach in Mechta's (2016) evaluation lies in the decision-making and joint control rights over land in Rwanda. While legally married women remained hindered by cultural beliefs and social expectations despite having the legal powers to lay equal claims to joint land ownership and controlled usage. However, for women outside a legalised union, roughly 17 percent in co-habiting monogamous or polygamous relationships live in a vulnerable situation defined by the extent of acknowledgement that a male partner can bestow on them (Mechta, 2016). This is a significant proportion of the female population who live in precarious situations defined by the whims of their partners, who in turn may resist formal marriage to escape the rights and responsibilities that follow the land and inheritance law reforms. Going by Fraser's logic, Mechta's proposed strategy to reduce the incidence of such unions would be to sensitise couples on the benefits of legalising them. The problem with such an approach is that women lack the bargaining power to demand formal marriage may deter most men from formalising their unions.

Furthermore, formally legalising informal monogamous unions with a legally acknowledged timeframe of cohabitation as adopted in Tanzania would violate both genders' rights to decide the type of union best fit their ambition and future. Mosse (2001) described this scenario as a uniquely placed power dynamic whereby affirmative actions aim to include everyone regardless of the right to participate equally in the spheres of justice. Nevertheless, such endeavour ignores how the need to achieve political consensus can also be used to breed groupthink. Creating a process ripe for exploitation by the active representatives' opinions and claims likely outweigh alternate courses of action as the capacity to speak out and be heard is unevenly distributed (Mosse, 2001).

These different levels of power at the community and national decision-making levels were cited by some VUP beneficiaries (summarised by Kigali research) and most interviewed female representatives (Burnet, 2019) as a reason for overriding groups' need for material and political capital. A fact demonstrated by VUP beneficiaries' strong link to local leaders romantically or biologically translating into immense reward with the distribution of resources to some, and those lacking the same connections are excluded. However, no mobilisation to protect against such injustice occurred amongst the women who benefited from the process. Self-interest rather than group contributed to the absence of female parliamentarians mobilising on behalf of rural women during land policy debates in the early 2000s and, in turn, compounded the plight of the most marginalised Rwandan women who happened to be farmers. The silencing of disadvantaged groups' interests despite being appointed to represent all women's interests comes from an essential gap between women in parliament and women in greatest need. For example, women with institutional powers often emerge from a similar power base to institutionally hold power like the men from similar cohorts, predominantly urban-focused, Anglophone, and Tutsi, as the case of Rwanda highlights. This partially explains the lack of parliamentarians not acknowledging the gendered dimension of this issue when framing the topic of rural poverty as one for 'all Rwandese by overlooking the profoundly gendered nature of rural land politics, where most women are subsistence farmers.

### **5.3 Relevant Principles in Sen's Work**

Amartya Sen's (2012) global reach of human rights view is that legislation alone cannot eradicate poverty barriers without the application of moral rights norms aspiring to protect citizens from severe impending political, legal, and social rights violations when they occur. Sen's ethical human rights principles involve five ethics: universality, equality, participation,

interdependence, and the rule of law knitted together; otherwise, one without the other is pointless. Thus, these freedoms collectively ensure access to health care, education, political dissent, economic markets, and equality, with each freedom encouraging the development of another as "both an end and a means of development" (Sen 2006). In this context, Sen's rights theory highlights the vital role communities and civic organisations play in the prevailing social norms inherent within the defined situation to impact the discerning impediments and instigators of collective and individual freedom. As such, people are only accessible once they can provide for basic needs and realise their innate abilities upon access to resources and the ability to utilise them towards attaining individualised development and freedom. In summary, Sen's moral rights protection approach can act as a justiciable remedy to equalise participation to aid people's capability in developing the abilities needed to free themselves from the scourges of poverty, inequality, and repression (Sen, 2006; 2012).

### **5.3.1 Sen's Human Rights**

*Social protection* as a fundamental human right is enshrined in core UN instruments, reinforced, and reflected in national legislation to advance people's equity and equal rights to adequate living standards, food, housing, education, and the highest health standard in context (Kaltenborn, 2020; Alderson, 2016). In VUP's desire to promote a rights-based approach, the (Ubudehe) community practice was introduced for collective burden and solution-sharing in the decision-making process to equalise social interactions. The Ubudehe is a collaborative community practice designed to help advance equity and promote equal human rights to tackle social and economic insecurities and power imbalance and ensure that scarce resources are distributed equally and non-discriminatorily (Mujawase & Center, 2015). The crucial factor that led to the Rwandan genocide, as established by King's (2014) literature, stems from the lack of scarce resources, discriminatory government policies and institutional practices amid ethnic power imbalance between ethnic groups. The reintroduction of the Ubudehe process to redistribute VUP's resources aim to address such power imbalance through community-driven development efforts and solutions to address the problems faced. As a rights-based approach, the VUP poverty reduction strategy is anchored into a system of rights and corresponding obligations established by law. The VUP Ubudehe practice must promote and empower (rights holders) rights and interests in the decision-making process publicly and privately in policy and programme formulation with the ability to hold duty bearers (local leaders) accountable to act equitably in advancing their interests lawfully (Ezeanya, 2015).

For Alderson (2016), the community decision-making process can respectfully promote social harmony and mutual understanding without suppressing active protest injustice, oppression, and destruction. An equitable Ubudehe practice will help policy-makers recognise vulnerable groups' lived realities, in turn, take actions to resolve issues impeding their access to participate rightfully. The Ubudehe community participatory principle can act as a platform to alter the power dynamics shaping unequal social interaction used to undermine vulnerable groups' present status as people with rights and a voice in social life. Through participatory development, rights in four planes of social being are identified in the forms of bodies in material relations with nature, interpersonal relations, social structures, and inner being. These rights are natural because they guarantee and advance citizens' full participation as societal equals. The physical plane of social being centres on the premise that almost all rights are embodied physically and violated if people are denied food and shelter, physical freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and protections from abuse and arbitrary detention (Alderson, 2016). A rights-respecting Ubudehe participatory development must honour VUP recipients' bodies by attending to their basic needs for nutritious food and clean water. Otherwise, hunger and thirst may lead their children to lack concentration and participation in education. Alderson's citizen education argument posited that rights-respecting schools cannot expect active learners or children to stay still for hours on end in cramped classrooms or punish them with detentions. Instead, learners' needs must be attended to, and space and time are given to them to revel in their energetic selves. Respecting the worth and dignity of poor learners is to use the Ubudehe principle to address the barriers impeding participation by nurturing and providing adequate resources to improve their physical and mental wellbeing (Alderson, 2016). Community rights-respecting practice can advance active intellectual exploratory learning through physically embodied practical activities in public participation in seminars and meetings concerning every community development concern. This includes developing poverty reduction programmes to address poor people's lack of participation concerns and needs. Aldersons offered up the example of a meal being arranged so that a few students enjoy a four-course dinner, most have smaller two-course meals, and over a quarter have just a spoonful of boiled rice as ways to promote global justice in an open participatory forum to solve world hunger. Through such discussion, the participants' physical–moral sensations and emotions about hunger and injustice became enlightened about the implications of unfair distribution of resources and their impacts on marginalised members of society. The second plane of social being, interpersonal relationships, unavoidably expresses rights in verbal and body language when each respects or disrespects the other, for example, in

the way in which teachers either demand respect or actively work to deserve it and in how individual's question, resist or submit to oppressive relationships. In the second plane, Alderson asserts that learners, or participants (VUP beneficiaries), learn how to become democratic, responsible citizens through critical questioning, challenging, and actively protesting injustice and damage to their natural rights via citizen participatory practices such as in Ubudehe community. This platform allows citizens to voice their concerns and protest threats to their rights publicly and freely without feeling powerless or fearing retribution.

In the third plane, rights exist through enduring and partly physical social structures inscribed by national law assigning entitlements to services such as health, education, child protection, benefits, and systems of law and order. Access to essential infrastructures and services enables citizens to communicate and exercise their rights and freedoms through tax systems crucial to promoting and advancing development and justice through wealth redistributing. Alderson's fourth plane is the inner core of a person's political self and the driving impulse for freedom and justice on four basic principles such as non-maleficence (not harm); autonomy (respect everyone); beneficence (promote each person's best interests); and justice (equality, non-discrimination, and fairness). These principles inform and drive people's agency to promote their and others' concerns. In this case, Ubudehe community practices can act as the ethical architecture necessary in solving the needys concerns by providing them with excellent social protection to improve their standard of living and access for their children in education. The process can be used to respect everyone's dignity through structures of accountability, equity, an independent rule of law, and a framework for greater justice between the rich and poor. In effect, a proper respecting Ubudehe community participation can empower the poorest through knowledge, resources and awareness and institutional mechanisms to exercise and respect the rights of others.

Rwanda's social protection measures utilise measures such as cash transfer schemes, public work programs, school stipends, unemployment or disability benefits, social pensions, food vouchers and food transfers, healthcare, education and services subsidised and fees exceptions to advance groups' equities and rights to participate in social life (Payne & Phillips, 2010: 98-110). For example, in the Rwanda National Social Protection Policy (2018) overview, *social protection* is defined as "all public and private income transfer schemes, social care services, livelihood support and insurance schemes that, together, ensure that all impoverished and vulnerable people have income security, and a dignified standard of living. As a rights-based approach, the VUP is well equipped through its Ubudehe practice to advance vulnerable groups'

rights amid its moral desire to fight against the multidimensional poverty impeding their access to participation in society. Thus, a well-implemented VUP rights-based approach can promote active citizenship and empowerment on the core human rights principles and values such as universality, self-determination, non-discrimination, and equality. They guarantee that all equally participate in their community planning and implementing social protection policy processes. The impact of the VUP rights-based approach is in the programme's ability to meet marginalised recipients' human rights needs and respect its core principles of equality and non-discrimination in all stages of the programme, from the selection to the scheme's delivery to the beneficiaries chosen.

Furthermore, priority must be given to the most disadvantaged sector of society. The importance of these core principles for Alderson (2016) is that the participatory development process in the community gives people the competence, confidence, and rights to participate equally. Participating in a community-led process expresses visceral embodied human needs and an integral moral desire in human relationships. It is a robust legal structure to prevent and remedy wrongs and work as enduring high standards and aspirations to reduce marginalisation and poverty in society (Alderson, 2016).

According to the NISR (2018) report, Rwanda operates a decentralised social protection system whereby beneficiaries are identified, selected, and categorised at the community level (*Ubudehe categorisation process*). The Ubudehe category is based on households' economic standing and utilised as a baseline tool by policy-makers to identify, select, categorise, plan, and implement intervention programmes. This practice was evidenced by those surveyed who posited that they could improve their household living standards due to the respondent's ability to partake in group saving and investment practices at the community level as a measure to protect against the risk of food security. The conclusion of Niringiye & Ayebale's (2012) study is that the Ubudehe community process is broadly relevant and consistent with the policies of fighting poverty and developing the country's economy. Because of Ubudehe effectiveness, an estimated 1.4 million people (the lowest estimation) directly benefited from the VUP. Among them, 95 percent confirmed improved haven income. Within that figure, about 71 percent considered that their income doubled, and 22 percent had tripled their income because of community categorisation (Niringiye & Ayebale, 2012). The study's social impact analyses further revealed that close to 89 percent of answers of those sampled asserted a "great" and even a "very great change" was experienced in social cohesion. From an efficiency standpoint, evidence suggests that despite some difficulties in financing sustainability, the practice of Ubudehe categorisation



remains instrumental in helping improve access to healthcare and education for the poor and reduce inequality in communities. In support is Ezeanya's (2015) study on the impact of the Ubudehe categorisation towards providing equitable access to community healthcare services in low-income families. The study found that from a low 7 percent of citizens signing up in 2003 to benefit from Rwanda's community health insurance scheme, a record high of over 92 percent of citizens who signed up in 2012 post appropriate categorisation bracket. The successes recorded under the community health insurance scheme have since been tied to the Ubudehe categorisation process adopted to improve poor household access in 2011.

This success further extends to what Ezeanya claimed resulted from enacting a 2007 law that established the Ubudehe health insurance coverage as a compulsory scheme to protect all citizens. Hence, the law categorised community health insurance payments in line with the Ubudehe practice of protecting vulnerable households according to the household head's ability to afford it. For example, in 2011/12, 24.8 percent of the population was placed into CBHI category E, the poorest group, and 65.9 percent and 0.04 percent were placed into categories 2 and 3, respectively. The study evidenced that in the first year of implementation between (2011–2012), the scheme achieved an enrolment rate of 90.7 percent. The success was attributed to the Ubudehe categories, which provided more citizens with the opportunity to pay the scheme's annual premium based on the local community perception and recognition of the household economic plight reached in the decision-making process (Ezeanya, 2015). The Ubudehe community practice of perception categories further gained credence by improving the inclusion of poor students' access and affordability in public institutions. For example, in 2013, student tuition fees payment was introduced, and payment was determined by categories stipulated on the household's head income. That meant students from certain income thresholds paid all fees according to the community's perception of the particular household head's economic situation. Some covered parts of the fees, while others in the lower-income households were subsidised partly or entirely with bursaries and grants from the government. The categorisation impact led to students in the C and D brackets partly covering 50 percent of their fees at approximately RWF300,000 (.US\$450), and the rest subsidised by the government. The study also noted that the students in A and B high-income Ubudehe categories were financially well-off to cover their tuition fees without government subsidies. The implied view is that Ubudehe categorisation protected the poorest access by reducing inequalities in access and resources. Access to the poor in health and education means that without community participation, vulnerable members would not have had a platform to voice their concerns for



rights to resources to attain quality healthcare insurance and inclusive education services for their children.

However, Mosse's (2001) study on generating knowledge about social relationships in community-led participatory projects development found that the relationships of power tended to set the conditions for participatory development in communities. It is instanced by the power relations and interactions within communities, which determine whose concerns are expressed, who gets access to new resources, and who can adopt new public roles. Furthermore, those with power get to influence the process and progress of external programmes, not the weakest. Thus, Mosse's warned against relying on community-led categorisation as reflective of local people's knowledge (Vulnerable groups) because the local and external power brokers can easily influence their concerns. The impact of the latter may not necessarily be directly on the surface. Development projects' benefit can reach poorer households but only happens once such schemes have gone through the patronage networks, at which point community leaders with influence have already exerted and sometimes continues to extend their privileged control over the resources at stake. A view Mosse's further posited that community projects and staffs themselves are powerful social actors with the power to influence vulnerable groups' participatory choices in the development process (Mosse, 2001). Thus, it is not farfetched to conclude that Ubudehe community practice designed to include the poorest voices in development planning can also be used to undermine, exclude and discriminate against their interests in community planning and decision-making. For example, to observe "people's knowledge from household categorisation, we know this would also be used to advance and legitimise the protection project's development agenda, or to even negotiate its participatory approach with funders, technical consultants, and senior management with productivity, efficiency and economy growth in mind. Thus, the planned criteria and information gathered are used to set an agenda and scientific standard to meet donor and other development agencies' development objectives rather than those of vulnerable groups concerned.

Already evidenced with the side conversation summarised note, the use of community perception surveys deployed to gain an insight into a household economic situation tended to exclude vulnerable groups' opinions of their own experiences, especially for those who lack a solid connection to the local leaders who wield substantial data collection and reporting influence over the community. Additionally, several studies have shown that the poorest households lack access to technology, skills and intellectual awareness to complete the detailed perception surveys without seeking interpretations from the community leadership or

programme experts to comprehend their participatory choice. Therefore, the reliability of the data; representativeness (especially concerning accessibility, gender inequality and representation); interpretation of the complexity of findings; different types of biases; understanding that perception surveys measure perceptions only; and accountability means that programmes deploying Ubudehe practices are significantly likely to exclude and discriminate against vulnerable groups in the decision-making process. By extension, they are excluded from participating as equals in society. For example, in the deployment of Ubudehe, community perception surveys tend to occur during office hours. At the same time, most heads of households are either working on farms or, as the case of single parenthood is a concern, are working far from home. Such a situation already ensures that most deprived household heads are likely not to participate in the perception survey, and by extension, the community leader wields substantial influence over the categories assigned to such households. In such a context, the advocate of Ubudehe practice as means of respecting vulnerable groups' rights in social protection planning and implementation cannot sustain that such process democratises power in programme decision-making. Instead, the programme perpetuates power imbalance to amplify the existing social, political, and economic inequalities often influenced by the power of donor agencies, local leaders and programme implementors with resources and intellectual influence over the development processes and projects.

### **5.3.2 Evaluation of VUP and Human Rights**

Gathered from human rights advocates is that protection programmes must be underpinned by participation, accountability, non-discrimination and equality, empowerment, and legality to ensure everyone actively participates in the decision-making process. It means that Individuals and communities need to understand their rights and participate in developing policies that affect them in the participatory process. Furthermore, these rights must be legally enforceable and in line with domestic and international legal rights. Rwanda VUP protection in its SDGs commitments has therefore legally constituted its citizens' rights into law to meet its domestic and international obligations.

Analysed from a critical realist perspective, Alderson (2016) situates that if the VUP follows four primary areas of a human rights-based approach, poor people's equities will advance on equal terms as every respected member of society. The areas of human rights programming include the bodies in material relations with nature, interpersonal relations, social structures, and inner being. These rights are violated if food and shelter, physical freedom of expression,

association, peaceful assembly, and protections from abuse and arbitrary detention are denied. From the historic Ubudehe practice, a realist human rights-based community approach would suffice that its reciprocity contributed to the protection of vulnerable households' rights and improved income opportunity in households' capacity to afford necessities and reduce hunger and food insecurity in the community. The study analysed survey data and other national studies about Ubudehe collaborative practices' impact on preventing food insecurity and found that regardless of the number of people in a household vis-à-vis the farm size. Ubudehe community nature of work unites communities into working and finding solutions affecting the community together and ensuring that all farmlands within the community are jointly cultivated before planting season. In return, Ubudehe mandates that the poor and vulnerable societal members, including childless aged people, infirm, orphans, widows and the disabled, are adequately protected (Ezeanya, 2015).

By all indications, the approach also brings decision-making and services closer to aiding the local community's development needs through equities and equal rights advancement. Thus, a community-led participatory development is being used by the VUP to create an equal platform and climate to address and help the poorest community members mitigate against shocks and future risks blighting their access to participation. An impact since observed in the Gasabo study, where several respondents suggested that the VUP helped advance their financial and time management skills and contributed to group savings and investments practices in farmland purchases and community infrastructure projects to help reduce future risks and insecurities. Such impact is not only evidenced in the work scheme. For instance, because of the Ubudehe practice, students from low-income households were categorised as needing VUP support, and in turn, their school attendance and transition rates significantly increased to access this support. This was not feasible without a community engagement in categorising vulnerable households' conditions for allocating adequate resources to support its student's rights to free meals, education, health insurance, and heads rights to enrol in leveraging development projects opportunities. Alderson's position supports Sen's human rights approach that a community-led approach such as the Ubudehe can support the facilitation of access to newer resources and development projects and help improve marginalised group's lives in the community through the democratised decision-making process, which increases equal participation to advance the equity of all in the process.

On the other hand, Alderson's argument is not substantiated by the fact that Ubudehe programmes can sometimes be used to manipulate the process and disadvantage the vulnerable

groups it claims to empower by the projects, donors, community leaders and project staff (Mosse, 2001). In a critical realist view, Ubudehe practice assisted communities in overcoming and solving their socio-economic problems through trust and reciprocity to maintain social norms and cohesion. However, this view ignores that the public nature of the Ubudehe participatory process to gain local knowledge is also being used by several external agencies to influence and control the poorest citizens' choices and their development outcomes. For example, in Mosse's (2001) people's knowledge, participation and patronage study in rural development projects. It found that due to the public nature of these consultations, external agencies with resources, knowledge, and skills tend to collaborate with the local leaders to help influence the development agenda, plan and project implementation in favour of project efficiency and productive outcome rather than empower the poor community's development goals. The very act of consulting Ubudehe community perceptions categories creates a process that Mosse defined as the researching and planning of local knowledge towards providing a development plan for a specific problem. The knowledge and perception researched tend to explore people's lived experiences, tested over centuries of usage adapted to the local culture and environment (2001). By extension, local people's knowledge is the knowledge that the local populace has, and outsiders do not help inform the decision-making process and project outcomes suited to local needs. However, our survey summary established that before development projects enter any community, external development agencies tend to be aware of local issues via research with local leaders who often report back without consulting vulnerable community members' local knowledge and opinion of the topic. Thus, using the Ubudehe community approach to establish vulnerable people's knowledge means that the process is skewed in favour of external agencies and local leaders' research agenda. These leadership groups tend to wield research knowledge and technological resources to significantly influence local decision-making and development outcomes, especially in a divided society like Rwanda; social cohesion, unity and reconciliation are paramount to reducing poverty and the recurrence of conflict.

The Ubudehe participatory processes also involve public selection, identification, planning, and implementation via group workshops or meetings. Mosse's (2001) position is that these participatory methods only serve powerful groups' interests over vulnerable groups' voices because public workshops and meetings tend to amplify the voices of those who already express them loudly, weighting more heavily the opinions of dominant individuals in the community. In turn, vulnerable groups like women and minorities get to participate less, and thus their

voices and views are not considered or heard in the process. Ansoms's (2010) examination to understand why vulnerable groups lack representation in many Rwandan pro-poor growth policies. It found that policy-makers desire to transform the agricultural sector into a professionalised vehicle for economic growth via its strategic elements of rural policies (professionalisation and modernisation) significantly favoured competitive and commercial farmers over the local people. The approach undermined the ability of small-scale peasants to compete. As the surveyed data shows in this study, most respondents also highlighted their struggles to expand their businesses due to a lack of external support but are expected to compete against large-scale investors. As Ansoms's study underscored, policy-makers vision to upgrade rural life through "modern" tools and concepts into local practices seems to mask the true extent of poverty and inequality shaping community participation.

Given that most poor members lack the capacity to introduce modern terms and technology without first addressing their lack, it can undermine their ability to participate and create a feeling of powerlessness through a process that ignores their interests. This means that Rwanda's transformative development agenda from the highest to the lowest level into a goal-oriented society cannot be about the poor if the result, as Ansom's put it, has resulted in the agricultural sector becoming a "survival of the fittest" race or a "survival of the largest" scenario. Those disregarded by the new policies face uncertain employment prospects despite being empowered with skills in the community participatory development process. The poorest in this situation are hindered by their inadequate knowledge, skills, and resources to leverage modernised pro-poor technological growth by external actors (Ansoms 2010).

In Ansoms conclusion, these pro-poor growth policies in collaboration with local elites only advantage influential donor's interests while adversely affecting poorer peasants' ability to participate in the process. Adding extra weight to Ansoms's conclusion is Mosse's observation that community-led participatory methods produce a "peculiar local knowledge," transformed by outsiders' interventions to change and shape local expectations of what they need. Since local needs are socially constructed, outsiders learn about the local reality, while the locals are left to learn and adapt their knowledge and make their reality and needs compatible with outsider projects' knowledge, language, and perceptions (2001). The effectiveness of Ubudehe in serving disadvantaged groups' education and health interests have also faced criticism and accusation that the process is marred with nepotism and elite exploitation. On this ground, it suffices to sustain that Ubudehe citizen participation methods in and of themselves might not be enough to ensure that all households are placed in the correct categories. Their rights may

not be acknowledged due to being excluded from the meetings. The example of the single-parent head of households working far from home without the opportunity to engage in their children's education highlights how some are excluded from participation. Their absence allows influential solid members with the knowledge and education at the decision-making categorisation level to hijack the process based on power relations. As Mosse acknowledged, participatory research emphasises local knowledge amongst the community with limited scientific knowledge, giving rise to the possibility that some strong, skilful and respected individuals can authoritatively present their interests as community interests (Mosse 2001).

Consequently, these participatory Ubudehe methods are not only embedded in local contexts imbued with power but are also products of broader power relations as the knowledge produced reflects the relationships (Mosse 2001). Thus, it can reflect local leader's knowledge as a source of data reported back to the VUP district head and given that local needs, knowledge and project agenda are socially constructed and controlled by outsiders and strong local leaders, this can create a witch-hunt to deter the poorest members from voicing their displeasure (Mosse, 2001). The challenge is to institute a system of checks and balances to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable are protected from the rich and powerful and that the tyranny of the minority does not overshadow the majority's interests. This is not always the case in a country like Rwanda, whose post-genocide history discourages acts of dissent. Overcoming the disparities between researchers and communities and equal contribution to "all phases" of the research process shall remain elusive if participation is tokenistic and an instrumental way to legitimise external interventions and increase community visibility. In that sense, community involvement is limited to a passive role in the decision-making process; thus, poor people's participation in the Ubudehe process is pre-set from project topic, goals, and budgeting to selecting communities. By extension, the participatory process ensures VUP efficiency and productive economic growth by external agencies and implementers privy to its knowledge and expertise not locally available, nor can local participants produce it. The community practice has since led to the exclusion of most marginalised groups in education, with social protection not covering the disadvantaged group due to wrongful categorisation by influential local leaders and implementing staffs who focus on efficiency in reporting rather than poverty reduction success.

## Chapter Six

### Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

#### 6.1. Study Evaluation Summary

This research aimed to identify VUP impact on eradicating educational poverty via Ubudehe categorised national, regional, and localised actions designed to protect the most disadvantaged households within the community. The research was thus conducted using a survey questionnaire to collect data from several sources, including programme beneficiaries and implementers such as parents, students, schools, department heads and development agencies responsible for delivering the VUP. As the only district currently managing the VUP, the several sectors and cells in the Gasabo district in Kigali city, Rwanda, were provided with the research contexts for the study. The triangulation data analysis approach was deployed to systematically discuss and evaluate VUP impact and increase the research finding's scope, depth, and consistency. Sen's human rights and Nancy Fraser's participatory parity as development are used in evaluating VUP impact on creating equitable participatory access in education and eradicating educational poverty and inequalities socially.

Firstly, the VUP intervention scheme was positively perceived by most as aiding the reduction of poverty by giving impoverished households access to essential services via the ability to extract social, political, and economic resources through community participation, public work or direct cash transfers. However, the living conditions faced by most categories E and D households blunt any potential impact on improving the most disadvantaged children's access to school. From Sen's human rights and Fraser's participatory parity principles, access to community participation can positively impact a family's access to resources and, by extension, provide opportunities for their child to attain inclusive quality education. According to this study's triangulated data, most beneficiaries and students have at some point leveraged the access provided through VUP free schooling, free meal, and reduced healthcare costs provisions and programmes. Thus, it confirmed that school dropouts, repetitions and low transition rates amongst beneficiaries' children drastically reduced while school attendance, transition and graduation rates significantly increased since VUP's establishment. However, the scheme's inability to anticipate the negative influence of its public work on household heads' to provide not only material resources but also supervisory, emotional and psychological support for their child is telling. For instance, due to adult members' reliance on low-wage agricultural sector



occupations as labourers, not landowners, most household heads were limited in the opportunities they could leverage due to lacking the modernised technological skills required. Thus, most heads of households in categories E and D lacking the resources prioritised the family survival over educating the child.

Assessed through Mosse's viewpoint, public work intervention increases household resources, but the criteria utilised in deciding eligibility and access also marginalise the community's poorest members. Eligibility to participate is pre-set through the collected local knowledge to inform programme planning and implementation approach. Thus, access to participation is denied to the weakest regardless of Ubudehe public assessment in producing a specific local knowledge type used to transform intervention by outsiders without meeting the local's basic expectations for equal participatory input in the decision-making process. From this standpoint, using Ubudehe public assessment methods to decide eligibility risks being hijacked by local elites with project knowledge to serve their interests. By default, the process becomes a source of marginalising the poorest households' voices and their children's educational access. In the triangulated data analysed, VUP public work helped increase households' resources; the process also overburdened inferior household heads in categories E and D with care duties owed to community wrongful perceptions in deciding their eligibility to the scheme.

Sabates-Wheeler et al. (2015) study measured graduation challenges in Rwanda and noted that Ubudehe characteristics helped reduce inequalities in education between the poor and non-poor. This has been demonstrated in studied triangulated data showing a significant increase in school enrolment at 96.5 percent amongst all students. Nevertheless, the process also produced wrongful categorisation by ignoring that most locally sourced perception knowledge is influenced by those with the power to silence disadvantaged groups' participatory needs without input. Furthermore, the representation discourse also shows that disadvantaged groups' knowledge can be silenced by the elites whose interests tend to guild local development policies.

Produced from an end-to-end conversation with categories E and D respondents, delay in VUP cash transfers can take months. The perception amongst beneficiaries across the board is that the VUP offers only emergency cover for food and to pay back borrowed debts. An indication that while some categories of E and D children may have access to education via VUP eligibility, the delay in transferring resources into households becomes a source of jeopardising their participation in school.



Another observation from categories E and D respondents is that their child's educational access requires extra payment to offset the hidden costs associated with education. These costs are related to exams, books, uniforms, meals and sometimes school excursions. Given Ubudehe means testing method to decide eligibility, families in categories E and D amid the poverty barriers faced indicates that the VUP development model lacks poverty eradication logic. Nevertheless, the programme utilises Ubudehe community participation to save cost and boost its bureaucratic efficiency and accountability at no extra cost to implementation. By standardising eligibility, the VUP undermined impoverished households by using local people's knowledge to implement bureaucratic methods to advance its project legitimacy to serve outsiders and local elite interests.

Utilising local knowledge as a scientific standard to measure impact meant that VUP, through Ubudehe, created a protective democratic shield against inequalities. Analysed data all point to the fact that participation in the VUP allowed all citizens to exercise their rights to free schooling and free meals for those in categories E and D to prevent severe deprivations to hunger and malnutrition, excluding the poorest children from attending school.

However, the evidence also highlighted that rather than democratising access, it created an unequal situation whereby it deploys the same level of resources nationally without contextualising the individual development needs and poverty challenges encountered. A category E child in the Kigali metropolis might struggle to effectively eradicate educational barriers because of the extra geographical costs of living in the city than a poor rural schooler with little village expenditure to exercise similar rights in access. The VUP ignored the fact that while rural beneficiaries may live in free shelters built on tribal ancestry land without incurring utility costs, those on low incomes in the cities must pay significant housing and utility costs to exercise the same rights afforded them through the programme (Wilson et al., 2001: 239). An indication that recognition and redistributed resources offer no guarantee that poor people's need to reduce poverty can be addressed once treated similarly to others. A fact highlighted in Rwanda's female representation is doing little to reduce the poorest girls' concerns about their lack of role models to emulate since most female parliamentarians act according to its political group ideology over rural poor women's land concerns.

Also, VUP allocates more significant resources to remote schools than vulnerable schools in urban deprived neighbourhoods of Kigali, ensuring a lack of coordination across several affirmative actions to advance vulnerable children's education. Nevertheless, regardless of

funding source, school subsidies made little difference in access amongst those who felt inferior to eradicate the barriers preventing their inclusion and participation. The lack of inclusion despite free universal education means that continuous schooling does not increase access amongst the excluded.

The evidence from almost every beneficiary interviewed, not the development experts and schools, cited rampant nepotism as a significant concern impeding adequate representation and resource allocation. During conversations, most respondents perceived that the closer a beneficiary is to a local leader, the greater their needs and interests are recognised, categorised, and represented to attain sufficient resources to sustain access without checks and balances at the district level. An indication that access to VUP resources, despite project bolster to create participatory parity opportunities, has ignored the influence that connections between internal and external agencies and communities over time can create a robust foundation and unique power dynamics for nepotism to thrive (Mosse, 2001). Long-term connections, as evidenced in the most female political class in Rwandan parliament being hand-picked to serve political group ideology rather than representing the interests of all women. The gender parity argument has also shown that female representation and excising rights anchored on a participatory framework reduce the weakest groups' "voice and choice" under different parity schemes. A fact supported in Rwanda's budget relies on 40 percent of its income from external donor-fundings and development projects with gender parity strings attached to a culture not accustomed to such. The government community participation concept viewed this way becomes nothing more than legitimising gender equality in public but privately, the donor's bureaucratic efficiency and cost-saving priorities superseding VUP participatory goals (Mosse, 2001).

Most VUP beneficiaries are entitled to attain free to 80 percent subsidised healthcare insurance and free groceries based on community perception in problems shared solution approach. The health insurance scheme assists the poor attain medical and nutritional assistance through contributed subsidies. On evidence, the scheme reduced stress for 80 percent of families enrolled in it, as demonstrated by data showing a reduction in child and maternal mortality rates across all socioeconomic groups in Rwanda since the VUP rollout (Sabates-Wheeler, R., Yates, S., Wylde, E., & Gatsinzi, J. 2015). This indicates that both Fraser's and Sen's theory's applicability hold weight as the recognition ensures rights to access resources protected many programme beneficiaries in healthcare and nutrition at school and community. However, the issue most cited by key respondents and not programme managers is that access to free and

subsidised healthcare is subject to local leaders' recognised disposition on qualification and outsiders' bureaucratic objective arrangements.

Such nepotism led Mosse to suggest that participatory projects can lack critical oversight without the active involvement of disadvantaged households. The analysed dataset highlights that in some community participatory platforms, local leaders and influential participants satisfy their hidden agendas by falsely utilising the insufficient transparency and trust amongst social actors resulting from the existing power dynamic to manipulate the desired outcome. This highlights that deploying eligibility criteria through local elites whose interpretation goes without oversight outside its nepotism sphere of knowledge can reduce the weakest people's voices and agencies participating in the health insurance scheme. In turn, unequal power dynamics imposed from the top continue to reproduce unequal access to health insurance. This lack of voice and agency to right unequal community participatory wrongs ensures that a starving child comes to school tired and struggle to focus on the learning process. Adolphus et al. (2013) on breakfast impact on student learning and performance found that a child not eating breakfast before starting school cannot concentrate in the classroom with a long-term effect impairing the child's psychological and physical ability negatively. Consistent, long-term hunger leads to poor children's proneness to repeating grades and the risk of dropping out of school altogether due to their inability to retain and process the information needed for progression in tasks. An indication that the most marginalised remain excluded from accessing health insurance. Because, if poor students' needs and voices were not excluded or stigmatised at the local knowledge bank community level, VUP planners might have picked up on the fact that the provision of lunchtime meals added no equity for children already excluded by others stigmatising their participation in the programme. For instance, the data collected at the district level cited that hunger is a big problem in classrooms, while schools reportedly found that students either privately or government-funded meal programmes only attended school to feed their hunger rather than engage in the learning process. Observed throughout the data gathering in several schools and communities is that the hungriest children are either engaged or have older siblings engaged in child labour due to parental poverty. While the lack of private sector contributions meant schools' inability to feed students, inadequacy in the government feeding programme meant that the local leader also had significant influence in assigning resources to eligible households. By going door to door, most single parents, especially extremely poor single mothers, felt powerless to challenge their ineligibility to support a child's access to a free meal without sexually engaging with the community leaders.

This abuse of power is only possible as Mosse (2001) puts it; village elites, rather than act as a father figure and stick to their traditional resources redistribution these elites become greedy individuals utilising the process to accumulate resources at the expense of its weakest members. Such acts are not held accountable by the villagers because the project interests legitimise the leaders' conduct on the premise that it serves the project's bureaucratic planning and implementation methods for efficiency and cost saving to boost impact and visibility statistically. Rwanda's silencing of dissent and Ubudehe practice in the hands of the local elite's interests in its delivery of VUP healthcare and free meals strategies without engaging local members' actual development concerns at the household level gives credence to Mosse's argument. An unclearly defined project eligibility methods and bottom-up oversights are subject to exclude the interests of the weakest members while being used to magnify the interests of elites and the project.

An indication that the VUP bureaucratic efficiency and statistical impact visibility to save time and cost were prioritised over addressing the participatory needs of poverty barriers preventing household access to the project. Rather than equalise access, the project becomes another tool to perpetuate power and inequality that shapes community interactions, thus spilling over into the criteria used in the recognition process and resource distribution.

## **6.2 Study Recommendation**

- Poor families should be provided access to equitably participate in the community decision-making process at the implementation level as hypothesised by the VUP intervention scheme and the Ubudehe community initiative.
- The VUP skill training and wage employment facilitation components should provide the most inferior household heads with current-skilled capital to afford the material resources needed in the programme to provide and maintain their child's access to participate equitably in education.
- The VUP should establish an independent Technical Working Committee (TWC); every stakeholder should be represented, with measures and indicators that will ensure beneficiaries checks all eligibility criteria and community leaders at the local level do not exert excessive power to influence the selection process for any individual purpose. This will also ensure that the Ubudehe operationality is effectively checked to provide for valid community participation and equality.

- GoR should engage the NISR to provide an end-line survey that will compare indices from the baseline survey to serve as a scorecard for VUP and a baseline for future programmes.
- The GoR should ensure its development programmes infuse sustainability components from programme design to implementation and evaluation. The VUP intervention does not have a close-out strategy for its beneficiaries to ensure programme achievements are maintained if not improved.
- The VUP intervention should recognise the economic contributions of the informal education sector in human capital development and poverty alleviation, as craft persons also contribute to a country's wealth and growth.

### **6.3 Study Conclusion**

The VUP as a development project was set up to reduce poverty in the most deprived households and increase participatory education access for beneficiaries' children. Statistically speaking, the project offered some relief to enable access, including free schooling, meals, community participation and free healthcare community programmes. These were leveraged by most households, with evidence showing that more than 80 percent felt good about their participation in the programme. Assessed through a rights-and participatory lens, in numbers, VUP succeeded in recognising and representing the rights and needs of many households to enable them to attain adequate resources required for equal representation in the participatory development process of their child's access to education. Evidence supporting this conclusion stems from the reduced dropout rates, high school attendance, high transition and completion rates, and more families engaged in public work to improve local facilities and household income to meet necessities. By extension, more students in categories E and D school attendance, including grades, improved. In terms of representation, more girls are in school than at any time in Rwanda's history, and the VUP played a majority through its affirmation programmes and direct financial assistance for households. Outside its education focus, more women are now visible in the public decision-making circle than at any time in the country's history, as many such schoolgirls aspire to follow in that direction.

However, analysed through Mosse's participatory tyranny lens, both primary and secondary data gathered and the following theoretical discussions suggest that the VUP has not provided an equal participatory development outcome for the children in the most marginalised categories. This conclusion stems from a project utilising remote beneficiaries' needs to

determine access and eligibility nationally. Such an act created an unequal power relation in whose interests get to be represented and the level of resources it can attract to help solve participatory development issues and give education opportunities. And by omission, the project excluded the voices and agencies of the urban poor as means to prioritise its bureaucratic project agenda than addressing the redistribution of the unfair resources to help advance equity in education. Another prime example supporting Mosse's point of conclusion is evidenced in household heads' work participatory conditions and the criteria utilised to draft them into it. That an abled adult, regardless of their physical and psychological state and the burdens associated with caregiving duties, are drafted into the programme as a mandate to get VUP intervention. Given that all theorise and fieldwork data evidenced above shows that the community recruitment practice adds no resources and access values to deprived households, the process is also cited as creating an environment whereby a significant number of poor children yet to attain 16 years are engaged in child-labour activities to reduce parent poverty.

On evaluating the several theoretical points and evidence, it becomes difficult to conclusively ascertain that VUP, with its community development practice, is sufficiently set up to tackle extreme poverty in categories E and D households. For instance, while the programme improved resources access for those in poverty, the fieldwork observation highlights that these were beneficiaries. If all assets are accounted for, including landownership and advanced technological skills and capital, they would not be eligible to access the VUP. Yet, single-earning households with multiple children are mandated to work to offset the significant childcare and hidden school costs with very little support amid delayed payments pushing the weakest households into extra poverty. Also, the programme made no allowance to support impoverished households the capacity to help their disabled children participate equitably in school owed to lack of voice and silencing institutional attitude with stigmatisation without consequences.

On merit, the programme, for the most part, advanced poor children's equities in school if numbers in free meals, education and health care programmes are taken at face value by most remote respondents as likely to describe VUP interventions as helpful in the reduction of educational poverty. But, if access is assessed not in number but in quality of completion and graduation away from categories E and D households, then the project has not been designed to tackle the deep-rooted concerns of impoverished households' needs and capacity to educate their children. This is evidenced by the number who attend school to eat yet do not learn. The number of poor girls avoiding schools because of sexual harassment. The lack of ambition due

to no representation at the local decision-making corridors. And the constantly delayed payments to ensure most female beneficiaries cannot participate in healthcare arrangements leads to this study concluding that VUP. At the same time, it may have supported access for many, but its participatory process has lacked a clearly defined implementation agenda. As a result, its measurable objectives are being hijacked by local elites to exclude the poorest in the community from the participatory development process capable of reducing the barriers hindering their children's access to leveraging Rwandan free education for all.

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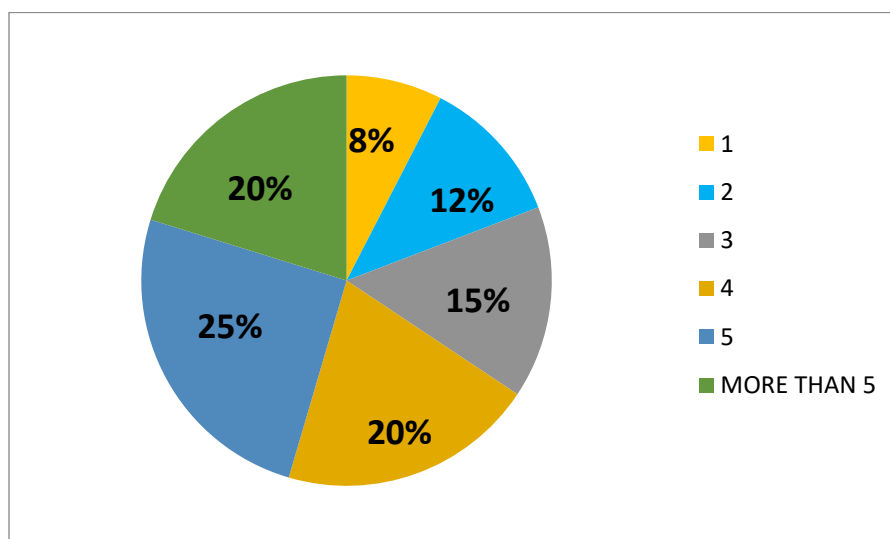


**APPENDIX A  
TABLE AND FIGURES**

**Table 1. Respondents Household Size**

Household size	Frequency	Percent
1	3	7.5
2	5	12
3	6	15
4	8	20
5	10	25
More than 5	8	20
Total	40	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022

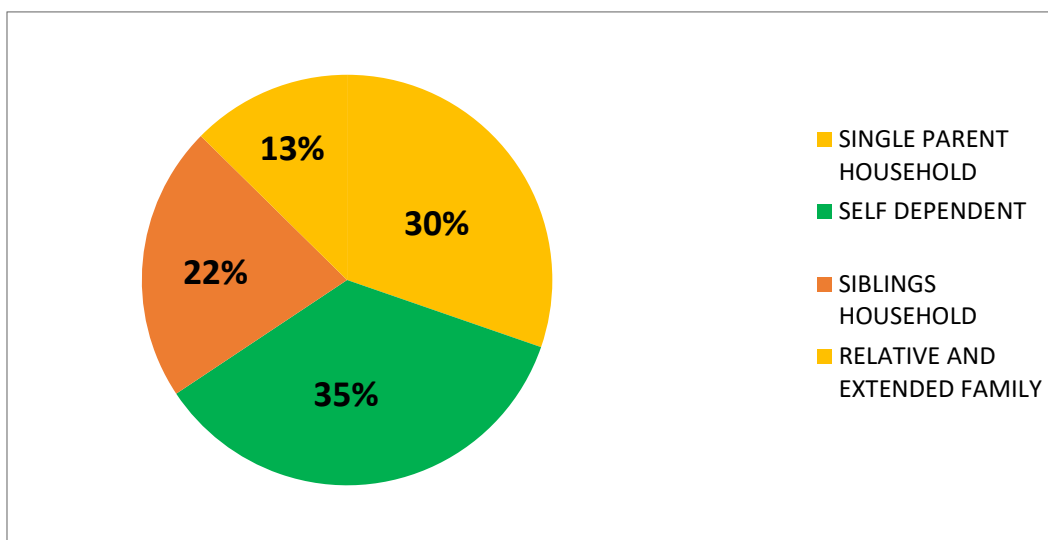


**Table 2. Respondents Household Nature**

Nature of household	Frequency	Percent
Single parent household	12	30
Self-dependent	14	35
Siblings in the household	9	22

Relative and extended family	5	12.5
Total	40	100

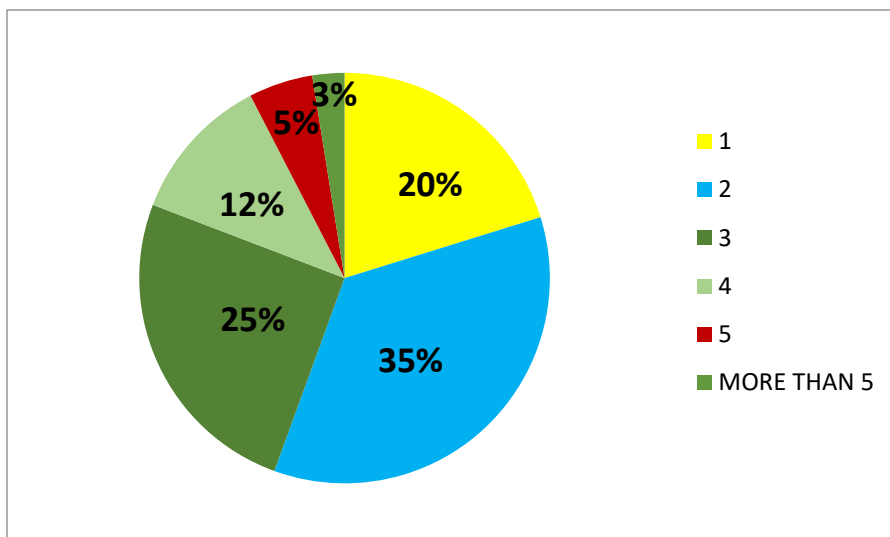
Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022



**Table 3. Respondents Male Children in the Household**

Number of male children	Frequency	Percent
1	8	20
2	14	35
3	10	25
4	5	12
5	2	5
More than 5	1	2.5
Total	40	100

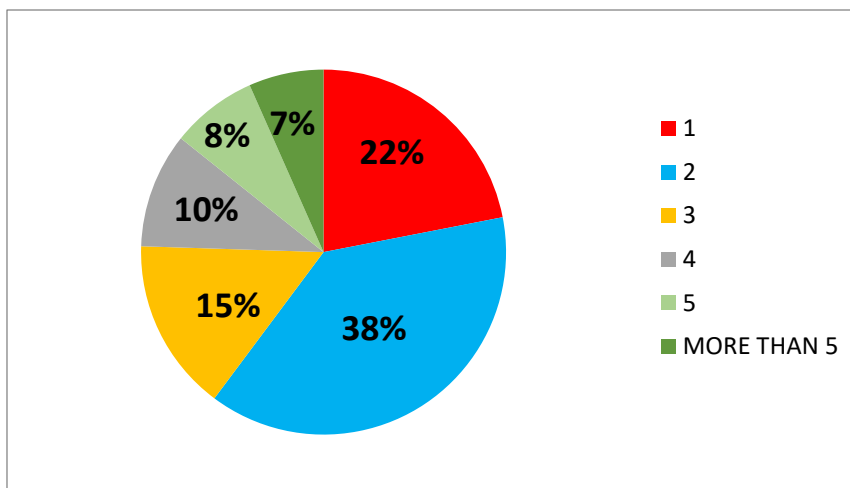
Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022



**Table 4. Respondents & Female Children in Household**

Number of female children	Frequency	Percent
1	9	22.5
2	15	37.5
3	6	15
4	4	10
5	3	7.5
More than 5	3	6.5
Total	40	100

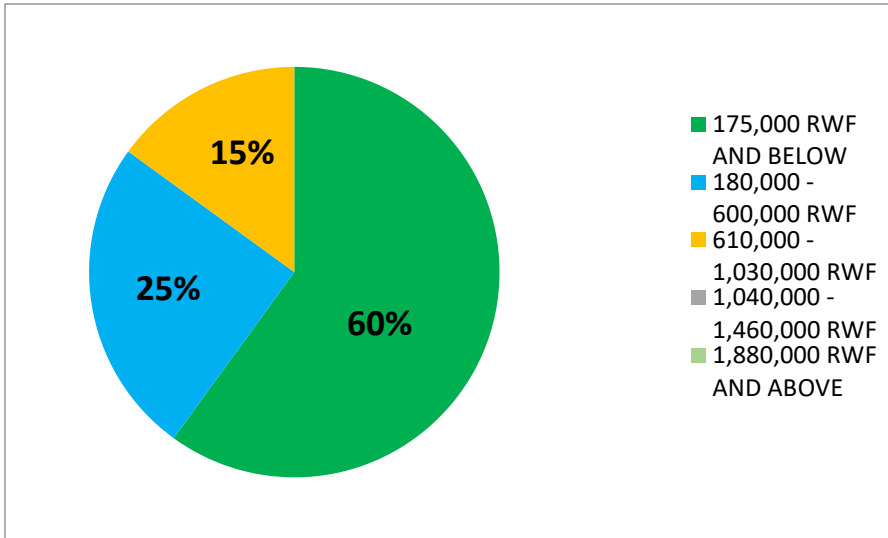
Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022



**Table 5. Respondents Family Income**

Incomes of Respondent's Family	Frequency	Percent
175,000 RWF and Below	24	60
180,000 RWF - 600,000 RWF	10	25
610,000 RWF - 1,030,000 RWF	6	15
1,040,000 RWF - 1,460,000 RWF	0	0
1,880,000 RWF and Above	0	0
Total	40	100

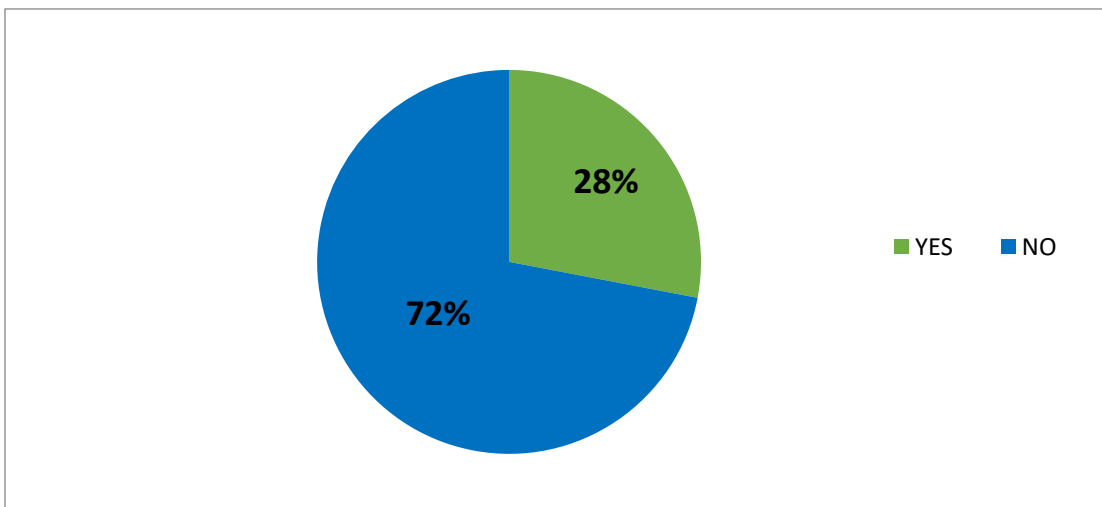
Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022



**Table 6. Respondents Children’s Perception & Complaints from Participating in the VUP**

Perception & Complaints amongst Children in the VUP	Frequency	Percent
Yes	11	27.5
No	29	71.5
Total	40	100

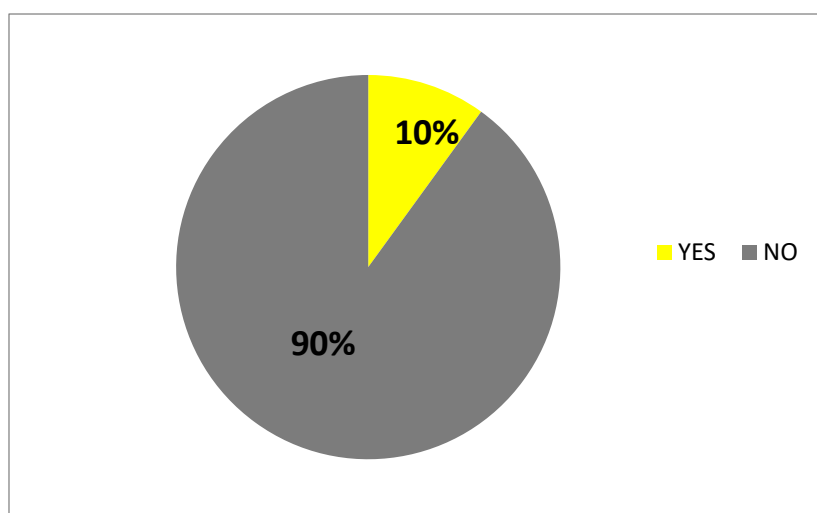
Source: Researcher’s Field Work, 2022



**Table 7. The Students unfair treatment response against teachers**

Complaints from children about being treated unfairly by their teacher	Frequency	Percent
Yes	4	10
No	36	90
Total	40	100

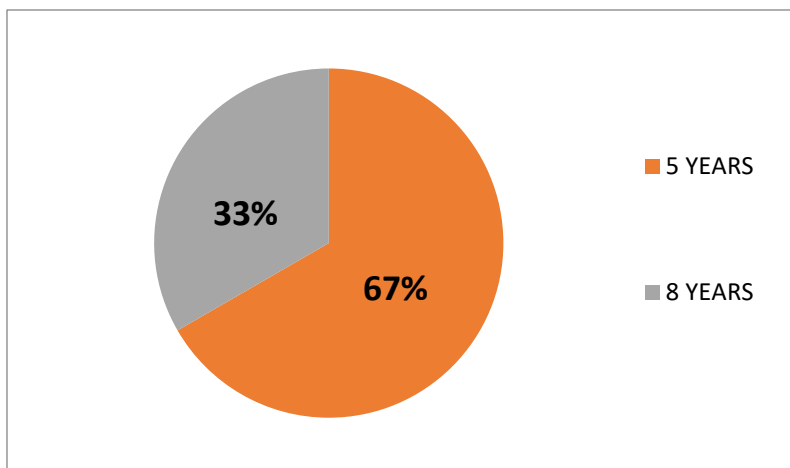
Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022



**Table 8. Free Schooling Duration**

Duration of free school program	Frequency	Per cent
5 years	3	66.67
8 years	2	33.33
	5	100

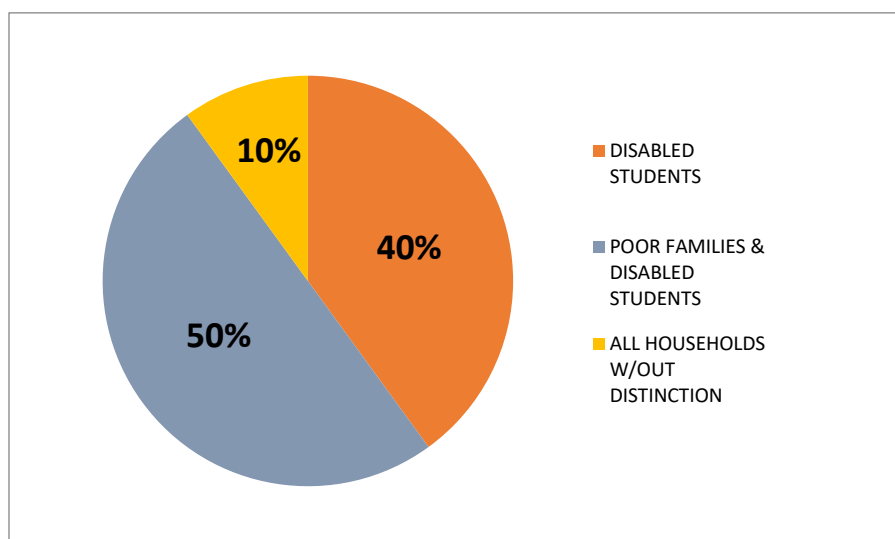
Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022



**Table 9. Major target of free education programme**

Target for Free Schooling Programme	Frequency	Per cent
Disabled Students	2	40
Poor Families & Disabled Students	2	50
All Households without Distinction	1	10
	5	100

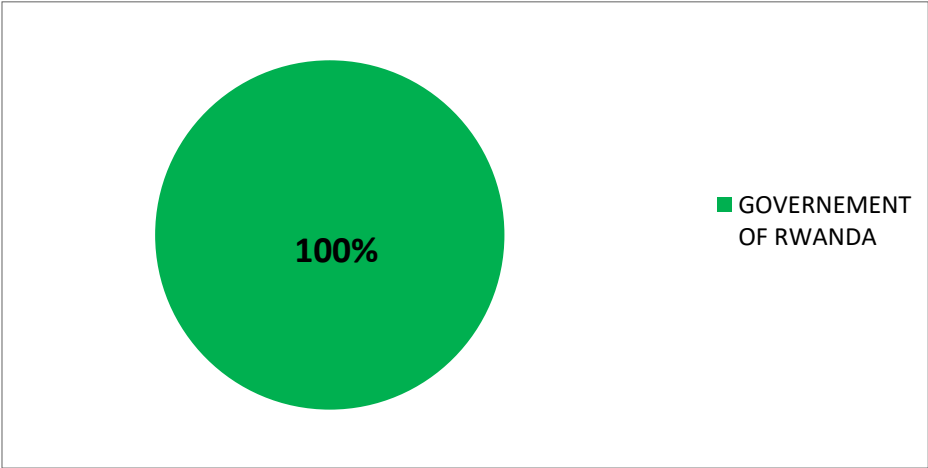
Source: Researcher's Field Work, 2022



**Table 10. Means of Free Schooling Sponsorship**

Approved Means for Free Schooling Sponsorship	Frequency	Per cent
Government of Rwanda	5	100

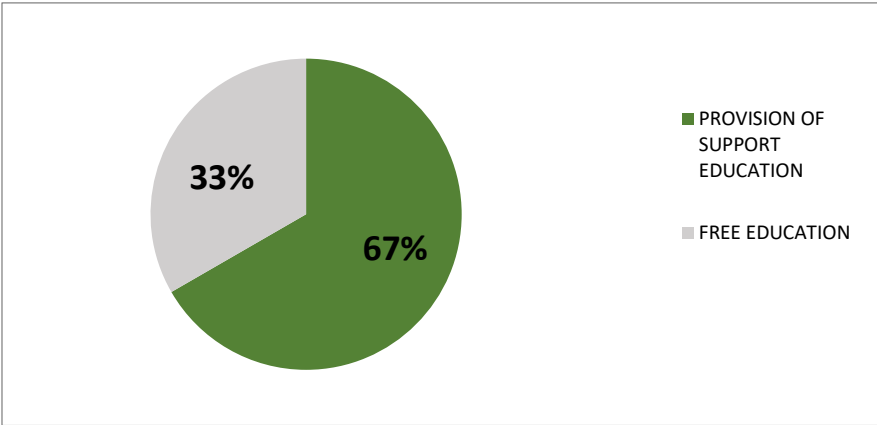
Source: Researcher’s Field Work, 2022



**Table 11. Types of quality education**

Types of quality education	Frequency	Percent
Provision of Educational Support	3	66.67
Free Education	2	33.33
	5	100

Source: Researcher’s Field Work, 2022

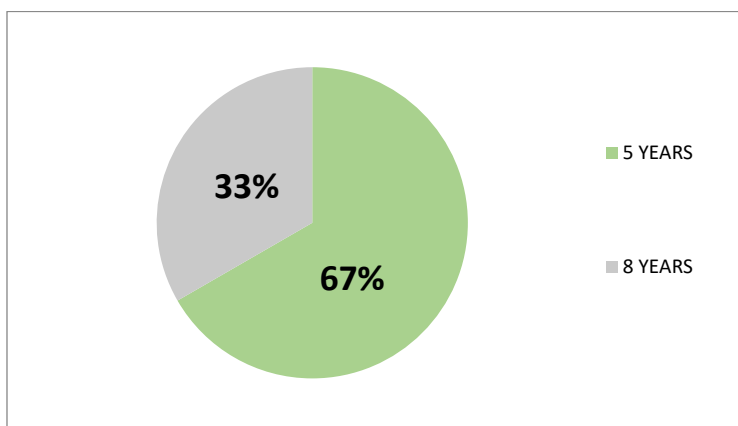


**Table 12. Duration of school program**



Option	Frequency	Percent
5 years	2	66.67
8 years	1	33.33
Total	3	100

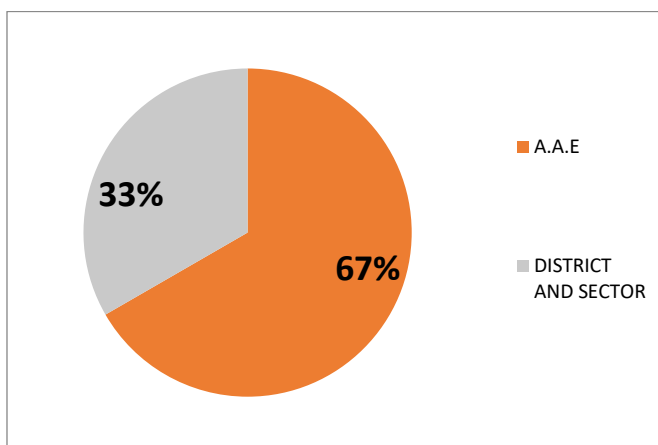
Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



**Table 13. How School Get Free Education Sponsorship**

Option	Frequency	Per cent
A.A.E	2	66.67
District and sector	1	33.33
Total	3	100

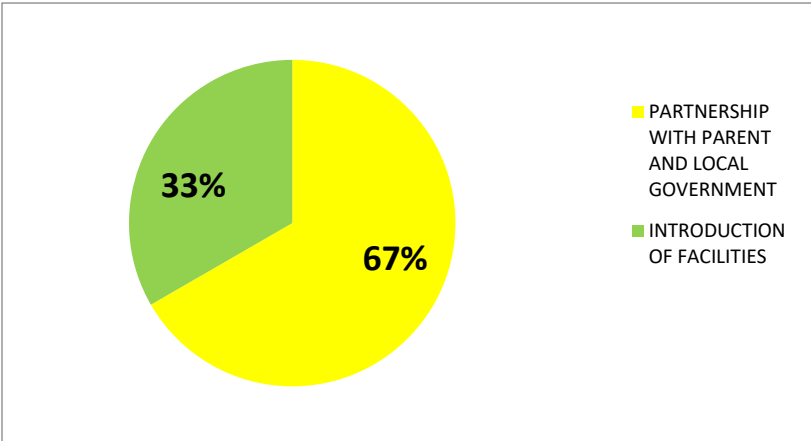
Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



**Table 14. How Free Education is Implemented**

Option	Frequency	Percent
Partnership with the parent and the local government	2	66.67
Introduction of facilities	1	33.33
Total	3	100

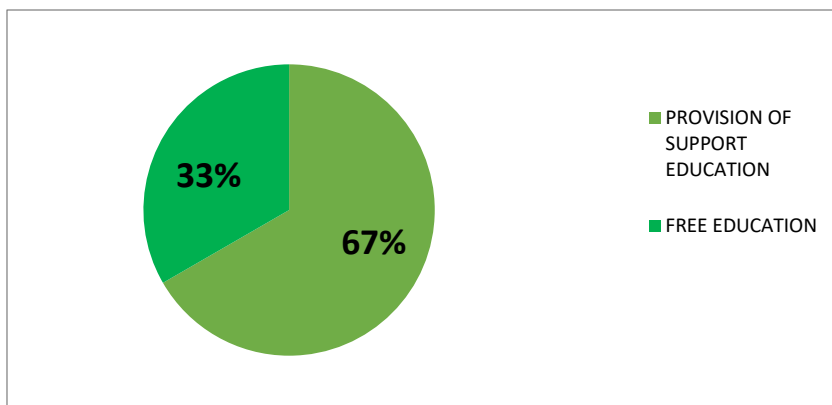
Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



**Table 15. Accessible quality education**

Option	Frequency	Per cent
Provision of support education	2	66.67
Free education	1	33.33
Total	3	100

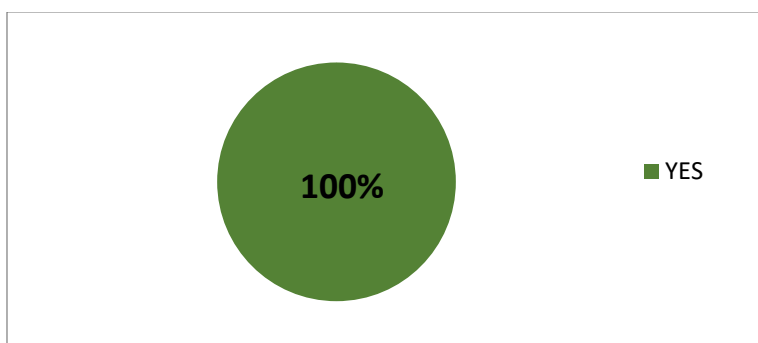
Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



**Table 16. Affirmation that quality education has been achieved**

Option	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	100
Total	3	100

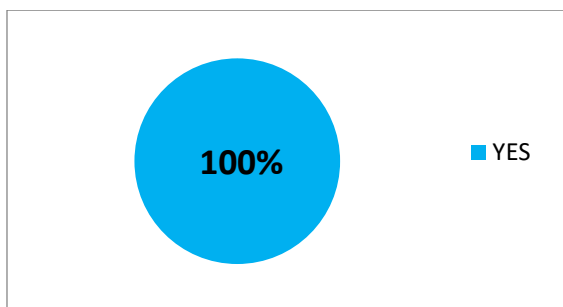
Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



**Table 17. Was free schooling attributable to quality education**

Option	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	100
Total	3	100

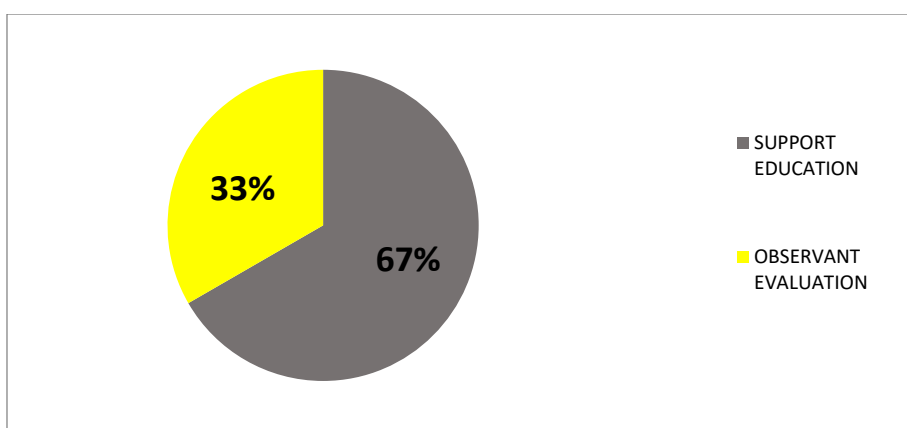
Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



**Table 18. How has free schooling help achieve quality education?**

Option	Frequency	Percent
Support Education	2	66.67
Observant Evaluation	1	33.33
Total	3	100

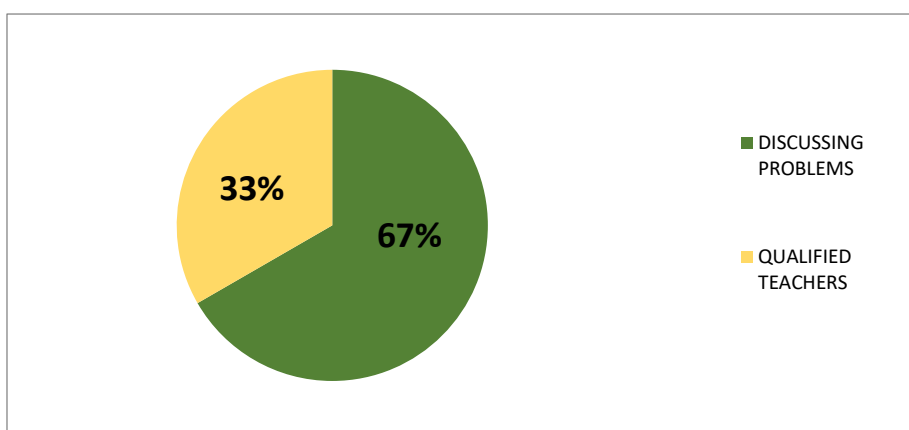
Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



**Table 19. How do you ensure quality education in free schooling?**

Option	Frequency	Percent
Discussing Problems	2	66.67
Qualified Teachers	1	33.33
Total	3	100

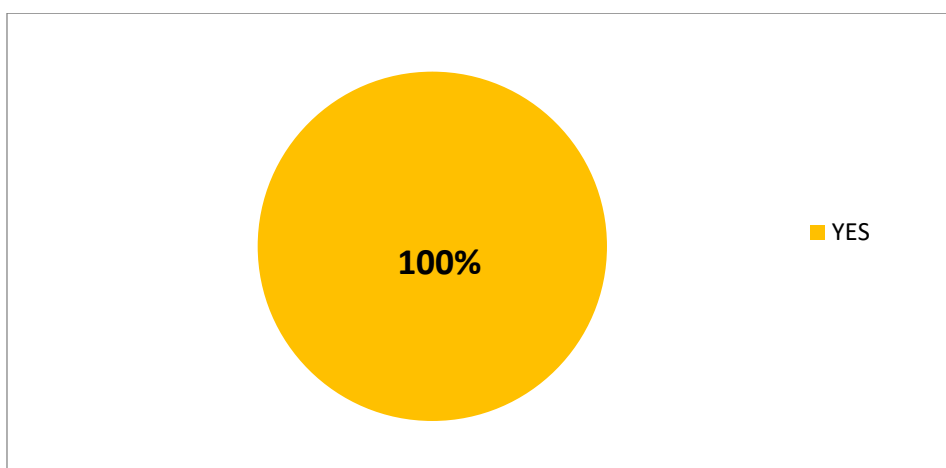
Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



**Table 20. How has the implementation caused a reduction in dropout rate?**

Option	Frequency	Percent
Free education	3	100
Total	3	100

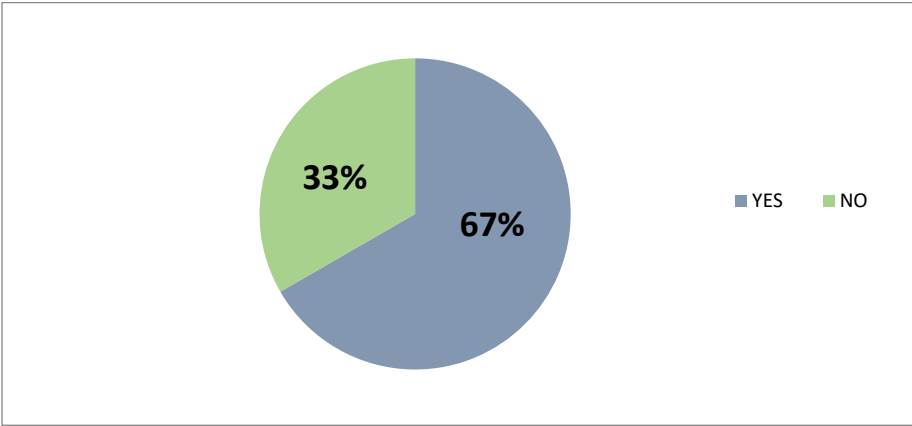
Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



**Table 21. Can you compare the reduction in dropout rate?**

Option	Frequency	Percent
Yes	2	66.67
No	1	33.33
Total	3	100

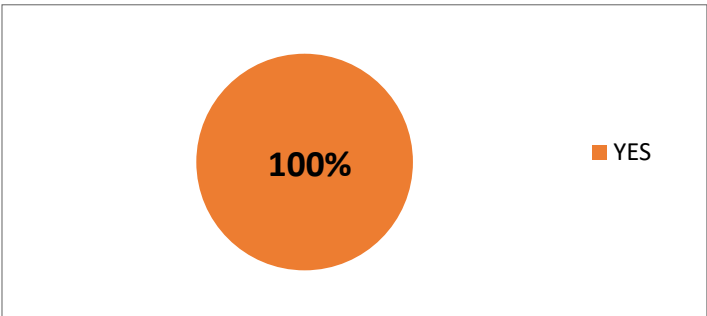
Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



**Table 22. Has there been reduction in financial burden?**

Option	Frequency	Percent
Yes	3	100
Total	3	100

Source: Fieldwork, (2022)



**APPENDIX B**

**GOVERNMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Assessment of the impact of Government Programme for Fostering Equitable Inclusive Education on poverty eradication; a study of Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme in Rwanda**

**Questionnaire Survey of Government Agencies who are Beneficiaries of Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP)**

Section A: The impact of VUP in increasing equitable access to quality education

1. What is equitable access to quality education by your school's standard?

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2. Can you affirmed that the VUP has aided the achievement of equitable access to quality education?

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3. How has implementing the VUP helped school achieved equitable access to quality education?

---

12. How do you ensure that schools properly implement VUP to ensure equitable access to quality education?

---

13. How evaluate the progress of VUP in ensuring equitable access to quality education amongst students who are participants of the program and those who are not?

---

Section C: The impact of VUP in reducing dropout rate amongst primary and secondary school students in Rwanda.

13. What is the current rate of drop out during the implementation of the program and before the implementation of the program

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14. How has the implementation of the VUP reduced the dropout rate of students from middle and lower income families?

---

Section D: The impact of VUP in reducing the financial burden of families in child education

16. Has the implementation of VUP helped low and middle income families save more?

---

17. How can you show that the VUP has helped to reduced families financial burden?

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18. How has the program increased employment amongst older siblings ?

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19. How has the program aided families’ nutrition ?

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Section E: The spatial variation of the impact of the VUP in child education across the beneficiaries’ regions.

20. What is variation of the VUP impact across beneficiary regions ?

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**APPENDIX C  
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FAMILY OF VUP**

**Assessment of the impact of Government Programme for Fostering Equitable Inclusive Education on poverty eradication; a study of Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (VUP) in Rwanda**

**Questionnaire Survey of Families who are Beneficiaries of Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme**



## **Section A: Socio-economic and Socio-demographic Data of Respondents**

1. What is the household size?

1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( ) 5 ( ) more than 5 ( )

2. What is the nature of household?

Single parent household ( ) Self-dependent ( ) Sibling house hold ( ) relative and extended family ( )

3. Who is the head of house/breadwinner of the family?

Father ( ) Mother ( ) Sibling ( ) Extended families and relatives ( )

4. What is the number of male children in the household?

1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( ) 5 ( ) more than 5 ( )

5. What is the number of female children in the household?

1 ( ) 2 ( ) 3 ( ) 4 ( ) 5 ( ) more than 5 ( )

6. What is the incomes of the family?

175000 RWF and below ( ) 180,000 RWF -600,000 RWF ( ) 610,000 RWF -1,030,000 RWF( ) 1,040,000 RWF– 1,460,000 RWF( ) 1,880,000 and above ( )

7. What is the occupation of the head of household/breadwinners?

Farmers ( ) Merchant ( ) Civil servants ( ) entrepreneurship ( ) other ( )

## **Section B: The impact of VUP in increasing equitable access to quality education**

8. Do your children feel that participation in VUP make them feel educationally equal with children who are not participating in VUP?

Yes ( ) No ( )

9. Do you have complained from your children about being ostracized by other children due to participating in VUP?

Yes ( ) No ( )

10. Do you have complained from your children about being treated unfairly by their teachers because they are beneficiaries of VUP?

Yes ( ) No ( )

11. How has VUP increased your children equitable access to quality education?

Very high ( ) High ( ) Moderate ( ) Low ( ) Very low ( )

**Section C: The impact of VUP in reducing the financial burden of families in child education**

12. Has participating in VUP helped your family in reducing its financial burden?

Yes ( ) No ( )

13. How has participating in VUP helped your family's financial burden?

Increase in saving while obtaining quality education ( )

Expansion of businesses due to increase in saving ( )

Increase in number of my children attending schools ( )

Increase in number of children completing primary and secondary school ( )

Increase in access to quality education at reduced cost ( )

**APPENDIX D**

**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OF VUP  
Assessment of the impact of Government Programme for Fostering Equitable Inclusive  
Education on poverty eradication; a study of Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme in  
Rwanda**

**Questionnaire Survey of Secondary Schools who are Beneficiaries of Vision 2020  
Umurenge Programme (VUP)**

**Section A: Socio-demographic Data of Respondents**

1. Sex of respondents?

Male ( ) Female ( )

2. Age of respondents?

11-13 years ( ) 14-16 years ( ) 17-19 years ( )

3. Level of education?

Junior secondary school ( ) Senior secondary school ( )

**Section B: The impact of VUP in increasing equitable access to quality education**

4. Do you feel that participating in VUP make you feel educationally equal with children who are not participating in VUP?

Yes ( ) No ( )

5. Do you feel socially ostracized by other children due to participating in VUP?

Yes ( ) No ( )

6. Do you feel unfairly treated by your teachers because you are beneficiaries of VUP?

Yes ( ) No ( )

7. How has VUP increased your equitable access to quality education?

Very high ( ) High ( ) Moderate ( ) Low ( ) Very low ( )

**Section C: The impact of VUP in reducing dropout rate amongst primary and secondary school students in Rwanda.**

8. Do you still feel the economic pressure to drop out of school despite being a beneficiary of the VUP?

Yes ( ) No ( )

9. Has the program reduced the need for you to drop out of school?

Yes ( ) No ( )

10. Has the program led to progressive graduation of student from secondary education?

Yes ( ) No ( )

**Section C: The impact of VUP in reducing the financial burden of families in child education**

11. Has being a beneficiary of VUP helped your family in reducing its financial burden?

Yes ( ) No ( )

12. How has participating in VUP helped your family's financial burden?

Increase in saving while obtaining quality education ( )

Expansion of businesses due to increase in saving ( )

Increase in number of my children attending schools ( )

Increase in number of children completing primary and secondary school ( )

Increase in access to quality education at reduced cost ( )

## **APPENDIX E**

### **SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH AIM & JUSTIFICATION**

This study aims to critically evaluate the significant barriers preventing poor children's access to equitable and meaningful participation in inclusive quality education in the Sub-Saharan African state of post-conflict Rwanda, with the jury still out on its free universal schooling supported by the Vision 2020 Umurenge (VUP) welfare protection program towards poverty reduction. This is important to assess the post-conflict Rwanda programme towards communal, economic and social development and consider the inclusiveness of marginalised and disadvantaged Rwandese in the decision-making process and resource allocation. To evaluate VUP's effect on poor children's access and participation to attain quality education, a critical analysis of VUP's strategic effects on school dropout, retention, transition and compulsory school completion rates is ensured. Thus, to contribute further to the ongoing post-conflict Rwandan social protection discourse about the effectiveness of its welfare strategies worth giving preference by policymakers, stakeholders and future researchers as a possible tool for the post/conflict contextual poverty reduction program. In the Rwandan welfare protection scheme for poverty reduction, there are strategies such as free school meals, free health care coverage and parent and teacher community participation as tools to improve equitable education participation. It is articulated that welfare protection programs can play an essential role as a strategic tool to tackle poverty (Piece, 2012).

Disadvantaged children, such as those with social, political, economic, cultural, physical and psychological deprivations and ethnic and sexual minorities, tend to lack access and, as such,

are educationally marginalised (UNICEF, 2021). Gender was considered another factor that plays a critical role in access to education. For instance, girls' opportunities to get educated are often structurally and institutionally linked to constraining their access in most developing countries. As evidenced by UNICEF (2021) data, only 49 percent of the developing countries achieved gender parity in primary education compared to developed nations' 95 percent in 2018 (UNICEF, 2021). These structural and institutional constraints that harm girls' opportunities also affect boys severely. For example, studies have shown that the low status of women not only restricts the women's opportunities and freedom to contribute to personal and national developmental concerns due to less involvement and interaction with their male peers.

Consequently, males and females in a constraint system have fewer opportunities for independent behaviours, restricting the transmission of new knowledge, technologies and innovations. Thus, it damages both genders' self-esteem, self-expression and united vision for what a nation's development could be (UNICEF, 2020). Also, parents' low educational status, skillsets and gruelling long working hours and conditions can contribute to their lack of involvement in the children's education (UNICEF, 2021; McGrath & Gu, 2015: 78-85). Conflict environments also affect poor children's access to quality schooling, with several studies indicating that millions of children are denied schooling due to conflict. UNESCO (2020) hinted that the number of children out of school globally has fallen, from more than 60 million in 2008 to 57 million in 2011. Yet children affected by conflict have not gained the universal education promised either in MDGs or SDGs 4 (Smith, 2005). Deprived of resources and opportunities even before the conflict, it stands to reason that these poor children face more significant barriers to accessing education even after the conflict in a divided society.

These are the justifications for the researcher's interest in evaluating the effect of the Rwanda VUP 2020 on its intended targets, the Ubudehe categories D and E households. Despite Rwandan education sector progress and the political will amassed to this effect, its universal education effects still harbour a lack of equitable access and quality challenges. Matters of concern include the education system's lack of quality input regarding trained teachers and learning materials. The sector's liberalisation has outpaced the government's welfare protection capacity to provide the corresponding resources. Over the past decades, Rwanda has achieved progress in its poverty reduction effort with a fall in the monetary poverty rate from nearly 59 percent to under 40 percent since 2000, and a profound fall in extreme poverty from 40 percent to 16 percent (De Milliano & Plavgo, 2014). Despite this substantial progress in 2000, poverty is still widespread in the country. Recent statistics on living standards between 2010 and 2011

showed that 45 percent of Rwandese live below the national poverty line, with 24 percent of people living in extreme poverty or below the national food poverty line (World-Bank Group, 2015). Statistics reveal that the differences in living standards across education subgroups are high and explain 40 percent of total inequality. It is observed that attendance in school remains low and strongly correlated with living standards. Moreover, only 11 percent of children from the poorest 10 percent of households attend secondary school compared to 78 percent for the top 10 percent of family units. Overall, gross attendance in secondary amounts to 40 percent.

In the early 2000s, significant consumption growth was concentrated in Kigali City, where only a marginal fraction of the Rwandese poor live and most of the poverty reduction was focused in the region. The implication was weak poverty reduction (two percentage points) and increased inequality (World Bank Group, 2015). However, after the 2000s, other subsequent decades saw growth stronger in rural areas than in Kigali City and benefited the poor more than the non-poor. The net result was a substantial poverty reduction (12 percentage points) and a sharp decrease in inequality (World Bank Group, 2015). Despite these gains, incidents of poverty still affect two out of every five Rwandese negatively. In addition, UNICEF's 2017 situation analysis of Rwandan children showed that both the above mechanisms were evidenced to link the low transition rate and high rates of school dropouts amongst poorer children from equitable access to education. This justified why the researcher selected Kigali City as a case study. Despite the significant investment put into school infrastructure and the adoption of standards for child-friendly schools, most poor Kigali district school environments are inadequate for learning owed to the lack of essential equipment and electricity. It was found that only 19 percent of secondary schools and 10 percent of primary schools in poor districts had possible internet connections in 2016 (UNICEF, 2017). For primary school attendance, disadvantaged children and those with disabilities were at 57 percent, below the levels for the general school-age population in Rwanda. Children with disabilities face a range of challenges, not least the significant socio-cultural barriers, fewer special schools and facilities for mainstreaming, and a lack of assistive devices to accommodate the quality educational needs of the child learner (UNICEF, 2017). Issues concerning gender disparities persist as evidenced by girls' low academic performance compared to the boys in the national examinations. There are higher rates of girls dropping out of upper secondary school, insufficient gender-sensitive sanitation facilities in schools, and gender disparities among teaching and management staff. These all deny disadvantaged girls access to quality education (UNICEF, 2017).

This research aim is to assess the impact of the Rwandan Government's VUP program's ability to foster equitable, inclusive access to quality education on poverty eradication in various sectors in the Gasabo District of Kigali City, Rwanda. The evidence posited by Ornnert's (2018) inequalities in Rwanda study exploring the relationship between inequality, exclusion and poverty based on quantitative and qualitative datasets observed that inequality measured by financial indicators (income/consumption) rose between 2000 and 2005-06 but declined from 2005-06 until 2013-14 in Rwanda. Despite the decline, Rwanda's inequality remains the highest in East Africa when measured by the Gini coefficient and Palma ratio (Ornnert, 2018). When measured by access to essential services such as health, education, water, sanitation and electricity, improvement was shown over the past two decades with access to health and health outcome improving for many disadvantaged groups, yet rural and regional disparities persist. This research will add to the educational materials in Rwandan education society and serve as a decision-making tool for the Rwandan government, policymakers and influencers, development partners, and citizenry. This study will torchlight the impact of VUP in increasing equitable access to quality education by reducing the dropout rate amongst primary and secondary school students. Furthermore, the reduction in the lack of resource burdens on low-income families in their children's access to quality education and the spatial variation of the impact of the VUP program on child access to quality education across the beneficiary's district.

Beloff (2017) found that studying in a post-conflict divided nation comes with limitations of research space. Post-1994 Rwandan Genocide engages political, development and social academics and researchers in an authoritarian regime context amid its divided and fragile community and history itself is a strong influencer in the development projects of a nation. As an early career scholar studying in a fragile post-conflict research space, the need to appease Rwandan elites, fieldwork access, and the academic community, where the current anti-Rwandan Government norm is more salient, is paramount. Mosse's (1995) People's Knowledge and Participatory Patronage KRIBP project noted that gaining research access to local knowledge through elites might help reveal the existing local power relations as an essential medium through which local perspectives are identified and expressed. Therefore, to observe growing changes in Rwanda-poverty reduction efforts and children's access to quality educational attainment would mean introducing the significant divide within Rwanda. Including narratives negatively interpreting Rwandan poverty reduction policies on human rights to maintain President Kagame and his RPF political party's control.

The current academic divide often influences scholarly work on how and what research is performed on Rwandan post-conflict education access, which may affect the perceptions held by potential Rwandese participating in the study on a foreign researcher's intentions. This can ultimately lead to a significant drop in access to information on Rwanda, which stands to limit future researchers and the interested public complete understanding of VUP's implication on poverty and education access. King (2009) posited that data collection is problematic in post-conflict settings owed much messier processes within its context fragility to create hesitation amongst participants to grant interviews, especially within a divided society such as Rwanda. Thus, study limitations can arise from the problem of historical memory. The second limitation was linked to selective telling and how participants conveyed falsehoods in interviews and public narratives instead of personal experiences or opinions. However, this study would go with King's view that what many consider faults with data are essential data. It can illuminate the research milieu and contribute much to its analysis of Rwanda's welfare program's effort on poverty reduction and equitable access to participation in education. Her illustration of the applicability of her reinterpretation of challenges as opportunities examines how the societal insights or data gathered through what appeared to be data problems shed light on the challenges confronting post-genocide history teaching. Had she not confronted the deviations in historical memory, varying group experiences by region and class, or the salience of selective telling along ethnic lines, she might not have recognised the magnitude of the challenge of creating a history curriculum acceptable to most Rwandese.

The limitations linked to the study on post-conflict Rwanda and another fragile context thus reveal that the specific challenges to conducting interviews in these divided societies remain unrecognised by most methodological literature. As King acknowledged. While divided societies differ enormously, people's historical, environmental and economic experiences attest to the importance of context. This article aims to illustrate the research and ethical dilemmas associated with broaching sensitive policy arena in Rwanda and highlight the myriad research opportunities that come with engaging in the study of Rwandan child-poverty reduction strategies. In turn, the study contributes to the ongoing public discourse on VUP's impact on multidimensional poverty reduction for poor children in Kigali city and aids future universal research and implementation for development in a similar context.



## **APPENDIX F.**

### **SUMMARY OF RWANDA & GASABO DISTRICT RESEARCH CONTEXT**

Rwanda is not a democratic state, according to Freedom-House's (2022) latest report since President Paul Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) ousted the forces responsible for the genocide and ended the civil war in 1994. The government has since maintained political stability and economic growth yet is allegedly accused by western intellectuals and development agencies of engaging in political dissent suppression with pervasive surveillance, intimidation, and suspected assassinations globally (Freedom-House, 2022). At the same time, in Sub-Saharan Africa, Rwanda enjoys the status of being the most politically stable country with low-level insecurity and low corruption level and high liberal legal frameworks to advance human and gender equal rights toward a socioeconomic development built to advance knowledge and the technology-based economy as it pursues a middle-income status for 2050. Alongside having weak opposition since governing after the genocide in 1994, the ruling RPF party have dominated the political landscape with complete authoritative, tightly controlled reconciliation, reconstruction, and state-building process amid the magnitude of traumas inherited from the country's ethnic and tribal divisions ushered in prior and posted 1994 conflict. Therefore, it is unlikely that any significant political and social unrest will occur in the foreseeable future (Freedom-House, 2022). It is alleged that defectors are not tolerated as the president and his inner circle of top aides maintain political and social control in the development process, whereby the ruling team is kept together by RPF rebel doctrine for unquestioning discipline and allegiance since attaining power. This approach has left little room for power-sharing and freedom of expression to dissuade potential ethnic and tribal divisionism externally and internally. For example, administrative structures function throughout the country such that the territorial administration was strengthened to exercise strict control over the populace, with the state's role also increasing to oversee the economy (Freedom-House, 2022).

The government generally pursues liberal fiscal and market policies; however, it was alleged by Freedom House that a cluster of privileged enterprises within the army and the dominant RPF party control had expanded their influence on the market. Based on NISR (2019) demographic characteristics for the 2019-2020 agricultural year, the average household size was 4.5 persons, and the total population living in an agricultural household was estimated at 10.5 million, 52.5 percent of members were women and 47.5 percent men. According to Freedom House, the state economically controls agriculture and its workers through

cooperatives managed by local administrations politically loyal to the RPF party. While Rwanda's economic growth has been somewhat higher than in other East African Community (EAC) states, it was also insinuated that this was primarily due to Rwanda's over-reliance on large sums in foreign aid to help budget development expenditures. Fact: The development of industry, foreign direct investment (FDI), and tradable nonstate services have functioned below expectations in the past decades. The country remained closely guided by "Vision 2020," a strategic goal to transform Rwanda into a middle-income country and an East African hub with modernized agriculture, knowledge-based industry, and services (Freedom-House, 2022; NISR, 2019; Rutikanga, 2019; Burnet, 2019). Thus far, Rwanda has met its MDGs commitments in education, health care and curbing population growth. Rwanda's economic growth exceeded 10 percent in 2019, driven by significant public investments in implementing its national strategy for transformation due to the solid economic growth expected in 2020. Inequality decreased at the community level and across the ethnic divide amid the high dependency on foreign aid. But, Rwanda's continued structural defects have resulted in a constant deficit in the balance of payments and increased foreign debt owed to little industrialization. In addition to the country's small formal sector, high unemployment, or underemployment estimated at 40 percent of the labour force, insufficient progress in labour-intensive enterprises and an increase in the inequalities have disadvantaged the poorest children's access to essential services, including education and healthcare (Freedom-House, 2022).

According to NISR (2012) survey, the Gasabo district between 2010–11 is composed of roughly 500,000 people, representing 45 percent of the total population in Kigali City and 4.5 percent of Rwandese. Females make up 51.6 percent of the Gasabo district population, and figures show that youths are in the majority within its population, with 86 percent of the population still under 40 years of age. Gasabo district has 106 females per 100 males, which is considered below the national average of 111 females per 100 males. Thus, the Gasabo district ranks fifth lowest on this indicator above Kicukiro, Kirehe, Nyagatare and Bugesera sectors. The NISR (2012) report also showed that the average household size in the Gasabo district is 4.8, the same as the national average despite Gasabo being an urban district with the expectation that it should have a smaller average household size, yet it came above most rural districts. Other districts of Kigali city are not exempted from this trend, given that the other two districts of Kigali City, such as Nyarugenge and Kicukiro, have an average household size of 4.7. However, there is the assumption that such may be due to some semi-urban and rural areas being administratively

included in these urban districts for development purposes. For administrative purposes, Rwanda uses the household consumption per adult below the minimum food consumption basket as a guide to judge the required number of calories required for anyone involved in extreme physical work, along with an allowance for non-food consumption before they are in poverty. An extreme poverty line is therefore set as the cost of buying the food consumption basket if nothing was spent on non-food; thus, such line corresponds to the government required RWF 83,000 (\$80.00) with the poverty line corresponding to RWF 118,000 (\$110.00).

Based on provided data, Gasabo district ranked fourth lowest (26 percent) of all Rwandan districts by percentage of its population currently living in extreme poverty categories, with only Kicukiro (8 percent), Nyarugenge (10 percent) and Musanze (20 percent) below it. In turn, the Gasabo district host an estimated 74 percent of people identified as non-poor, 12.8% as poor and only 13.2 percent as extreme-poor. Compared with the other districts of Kigali City, the Gasabo district comes last after Kicukiro and Nyarugenge districts, which have 2.8 percent extreme-poor, 5.5 percent poor, and 91.7 percent non-poor, respectively and 3.6 percent extreme-poor, 6.5 percent poor and 89.9 percent non-poor respectively (NISR, 2012). The introduction of VUP has centred on the government's acknowledgement that Rwanda's education suffers from severe deficiencies in terms of trained human capital in anticipation that its development goals can help create a knowledge-based and technology-led economy for which comprehensive human resources development is one of the necessary pillars to reach the country's middle-income status by 2050. Thus, Rwandan education has since focused on its access to education rather than other areas of interest such as pupil/student performance and the quality of services delivered by the education system. As such, necessary data is lacking for a comprehensive review of these significant areas of interest.

Nevertheless, the limited data presented by NISR schooling and literacy figures showed that the percentage distribution of individuals aged six and above that had attended school by district, Gasabo district is ranked third with 89.6 percent of individuals aged six and above having at some time attended school. The best performing district in Kigali city is Kicukiro at (94.4 percent) and Nyarugenge at (90.7 percent) with all other districts ranging from 78.4 to 86 percent. Thus, Gasabo district, despite hosting the most affluent neighbourhoods and citizens, including key government institutions and infrastructures, is also said to host the most extreme poor population of other districts in Kigali city on average.