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Integration of Women into the Job Market in Rural Burundi:

The Case of PROMOST Project

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J

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Master's thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of European Interdisciplinary Master African Studies (EIMAS), supervised by Prof. Doctor Helena Vilaça and by Professor Miguel Filipe Vilela de Silva, Mentored by Doctor Elisabeth Hofmann

Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto | Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the
University of Porto

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my parents who sacrificed a lot for me to reach where I am today! And for giving me courage to fight for my dreams especially when I felt like giving up.

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Declaration of Honour

I hereby declare that I am the author of this Thesis, which has never been used in other course units or subjects at this or any other institution. All references to authors (statements, ideas, thoughts, quotes) have scrupulously met the applicable citation rules and are, therefore, referenced in the text and in the bibliographical references, in accordance with the referencing rules. I am aware that plagiarism and self-plagiarism is an academic offense.

Porto, Portugal, 31 July 2023

Joyce KASONI

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Resumo

Confrontados com a crise do desemprego juvenil, muitos países e a comunidade mundial estão agora a voltar-se para a formação técnica e profissional (FETP) como forma de desenvolver as competências dos jovens para aumentar a sua empregabilidade. No entanto, os estudos mostram que muitos licenciados em FETP, especialmente as mulheres, acabam por não ter emprego apesar de terem adquirido competências. Através do estudo do caso do Projeto PROMOST no Burundi, este estudo pretendia descobrir quais os factores que influenciam a entrada das mulheres no mercado de trabalho depois de se formarem em FETP. Além disso, o estudo analisou a qualidade e a sustentabilidade das actividades das mulheres que conseguiram entrar no mercado de trabalho. O estudo utilizou um modelo de estudo de caso para descrever em pormenor as experiências das participantes no projeto PROMOST. Recorreu a métodos mistos, em que os métodos qualitativos foram utilizados para a recolha de dados e alguns elementos de uma abordagem quantitativa foram utilizados na apresentação de algumas das conclusões em quadros e gráficos. Os principais métodos de recolha de dados utilizados incluíram entrevistas a informadores-chave com os participantes e alguns funcionários que foram objeto de uma amostragem intencional, análise de documentos, discussões de grupos de foco (DGF) e observação. A análise dos dados foi efectuada através de métodos qualitativos, ou seja, análise temática, e utilizou o quadro teórico do empoderamento das mulheres para interpretar os resultados. O estudo concluiu que a entrada das mulheres no mercado de trabalho nas zonas rurais do Burundi é influenciada pela pobreza e pela situação financeira da família, pelas normas culturais e de género e pelo nível de educação. A forma como o projeto de empoderamento é concebido e implementado também foi considerada influente na determinação do tipo de emprego no mercado a que as mulheres têm acesso. Além disso, o estudo concluiu que a qualidade do emprego era relativamente baixa e ocasional, enquanto o trabalho por conta própria era considerado uma microempresa de mão de obra intensiva com capital e recursos financeiros reduzidos.

Palavras-chave: Desemprego juvenil, FETP, mercado de trabalho, empoderamento das mulheres, participação feminina

Abstract

Faced with the youth unemployment crisis, many countries and the global community are now turning to Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) as a means to develop youths' skills to increase their employability. However, studies show that many TVET graduates especially women end up not being employed despite having acquired skills. Through studying the PROMOST Project case in Burundi, this study wanted to find out what factors influence the entry of women into the labour market after graduating from TVET. Additionally, the study looked into the quality and the sustainability of the activities of those who succeeded to enter the labour market. The study employed a case study design to give a detailed description of the experiences of PROMOST project participants. It employed the use of mixed methods, where qualitative methods were used for data collection and some elements of a quantitative approach were used in presenting some of the findings in tables and graphs. The main data collection methods used include key informant interviews with participants and some officials who were purposively sampled, document analysis, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and observation. Data analysis was done using qualitative methods i.e. thematic analysis and used the women empowerment theoretical framework to interpret the findings. The study found that entry of women in the labour market in Rural Burundi is influenced by poverty and family financial situation, cultural and gender norms, and level of education. The way the empowerment project is designed and implemented was also found to be influential in determining what type of job in the market, the women had access to. Additionally, the study found that the quality of employment was relatively low and casual, while self-employment was found to be labour intensive micro-enterprise with small financial capital and resources.

Keywords: Youth Unemployment, TVET, labor market, women empowerment, female participation

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms [if applicable]

AfDb	AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK
BDA	BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG'S TRANSFORMATION INDEX
BIF	DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
BTI	BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG'S TRANSFORMATION INDEX
C4EE	UNITED NATIONS
COIP	CAREER ORIENTATION AND LABOUR MARKET INSERTION
DRC	DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO
ENABEL	BELGIAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
FDI	FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT
FGD	FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION
GFP.....	GENDER FOCAL PERSON
IT	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
M&E	MONITORING AND EVALUATION
NGOs	NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
PROMOST	PROMOTING MARKET ORIENTED SKILLS TRAINING
SACCOS	SAVINGS AND CREDIT CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY
SDC	SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION
STT	SHORT TERM TRAINING
TVET	TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TRAINING
UN.....	UNITED NATIONS
UNESCO	UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION
USAID.....	UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
VET	VOCATION EDUCATION TRAINING
VTC	VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE
WB	WORLD BANK

1. Introduction

Country Context

Burundi is a small landlocked country in Eastern Africa, bordering Tanzania in the Eastern and Southern side, Rwanda in the North and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on the western side. It is a country striving to rise from its dark past of prolonged civil wars and political conflicts which have been plunging the country since its independence from Belgian colonial rule in 1962 to 2016/7 (Brachet & Wolpe, 2005; Nkurunziza, 2022). The conflict also made it difficult for the government to concentrate on economic development. As a result, the country was left in a poor social economic situation, making Burundi one of the poorest countries in the world (Brachet & Wolpe, 2005; Nkurunziza, 2018). As stated in the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) (2022), currently Burundi is politically stable, and this is confirmed by the fact that in 2020, following a stability assessment, the United Nations' (UN) Security Council removed the country from its agenda.

Despite attaining political stability, Burundi is still struggling economically, as the country is said to be among the poorest countries in the world. Burundi was ranked 187th out of 191 countries in the 2021/2022 Human Development Index report, with over 70% of its population living below the poverty line (BTI, 2022). The economy of Burundi is highly dependent on subsistence agriculture which contributes to 80% of the country's income and employs about 90% of the country's population many of which are women (BTI, 2022; Cordaid, 2016; Jooma, 2005), the main exports from Burundi include gold, coffee, tea, Coated Flat-Rolled Iron, and Rolled Tobacco.

Inequality among men and women is said to be a significant barrier to socioeconomic development (BTI, 2022). Being a dominantly patriarchal society, equality between men and women in Burundi is still not chieived (Ramanan *et al*, 2021). Women are less favoured than men, making them socioeconomically vulnerable than me. For instance, by virtue of customary laws, in Burundi a woman cannot inherit land from her parents or family. Property inheritance rights are accorded to a male child. The only way a woman can own land, is if she buys it with her own earned money (Hans & Naso, 2023; Jooma, 2005; Ramanan *et al*, 2021; Tchatchoua-Djomo, 2018) In

terms of education and literacy, though the government has made much progress in increasing the number of girls enrolments in primary education, women are still behind men in terms of literacy rate and continuity in tertiary education (BTI, 2022). The Republic of Burundi Education Development Plan document (2012) revealed that among the reasons why girls fail to continue with higher education includes poverty which cause parents to prioritize paying for their male children education rather than female education.

Another economic challenge that Burundi faces and has formally acknowledged in the National Development Plan (2018), is its challenge on how to socioeconomically integrate its bulging youth population. A study by Filipi and Wittig (2020) revealed that by 2019 only 2.5% of the labour force in Burundi was considered skilled and in terms of youth employment, above 50% of youth were unemployed. This means that if the country wishes to rip the benefits of its young population it should invest in the education and skills development.

To remedy the situation the government has come up with measures to address the issue of youth unemployment and socioeconomic integration as well as the issue of gender equality. In implementing what is spelled out in the National Development Plan for Burundi 2018–2027 government efforts are being supported, among others, by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). This agency is funding a youth empowerment project, *Promoting Market-Oriented Skills Training and Employment Creation in the Great Lakes Region* (PROMOST). This project is being implemented by Swisscontact in Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda, with an overall goal of contributing to increased employment and income generation for the rural population in target geographical areas in the Great Lakes Region.

Background of the Study

Youth¹ unemployment is not a new phenomenon. For many years governments and the global community have been in search of a sustainable solution to address this crisis. This issue

¹ There are many definitions of youth, but in the context of this study youth means all people between 15-35 years old.

can be a result of several factors such as labour market slack² or limited resources for self-employment, just to give two examples. In Africa, this problem is more serious especially because the continent has the youngest population compared to other continents (Kuwali, 2022; Kapeni, 2022). In general the demand is not progressing fast enough (in many cases job opportunities in the formal sector are close to stagnation) against intense supply pressure. It is reported that about 70% of the population in Africa is now under 30 years old, and there are projections that for the next twenty to thirty years the population will still be the youngest (Ackah-Baidoo, 2016; Bhoti Phiri, 2022). Studies by Guengant (2017) and Masquelier and Kanté (2017) attribute this African population trend to a decrease in infant and adult mortality rates and the high fertility rate in some African countries. Having a large youthful population can be advantageous for a country as it will have a large labour force. However, in a country with a slack labour market, having a large labour force can become an alarming problem.

Governments and NGOs alike have been coming up with different plans in an attempt to address youth unemployment. Despite the efforts, the youth unemployment crisis has proven to be complex and difficult to solve. Ackah-Baidoo (2016) argues that this is mainly because of financial mismanagement, civil conflict, and political instability among many Sub-Saharan African countries. In the course of various efforts to address youth unemployment, it was realized that the problem is not only because of few employment opportunities or resources but also the lack of skills or skills mismatch among the youth. Lack of skills or having skills that do not match the market needs limits the capability of youth to embrace the available opportunities. Several studies (Staritz & Morris, 2013; Suliman & Mollick, 2009) have further revealed that these are two major problems contributing to the low success of both local investments and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in some African countries.

This discovery has prompted many governments, development agencies as well as the global community to channel their efforts toward youth capacity building, specifically through vocational and technical education. Additionally, as argued by Na (2014) and Talento *et al* (2022), Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) is acknowledged by many countries for its

² A situation in the labour market when the supply of labour force is higher than the available employment opportunities.

high potential in equipping the youth with relevant skills and improving their employability within a short time. This fact has made TVET the best choice for youth capacity building, poverty alleviation, and promotion of social development and stability (Tripney & Hombrados, 2013).

Women and Unemployment

Although unemployment affects both female and male youth, it has been observed that the unemployment rate is high among women. This disparity is said to be caused by the patriarchal gender-based division of labour, which categorises women as caregivers in the domestic domain and men as livelihood earners and providers (Bray-Collins *et al*, 2022; Mayombe 2021). However, over times it has been proven that women also can contribute to the livelihoods of the family and the development of the national at large if they are fully integrated in the labour market (Bui *et al*, 2018). In the light of these considerations, it is important for women to also participate in skills development programs so that they can increase their employability. Despite this fact women are still underprivileged when it comes to access to education and employment.

Furthermore, it has also been observed that women are highly underrepresented in TVET education and career, as technical and vocation related work is commonly regarded as a masculine career. This is because traditionally TVET have been highly focused on courses and skills such as plumbing, welding and metalwork, carpentry, masonry, and auto mechanic, which are predominantly male-based careers in most countries. Consequently, it is common for women who enter TVET to enrol in courses which lead them to careers perceived as suitable for women such as hotel management, culinary arts, hairdressing, tailoring and nursing among others (Williams *et al.*, 2018; Johanson & Adams, 2004). These socio-cultural norms and stereotypes are also cited factors pushing women into these *feminine* and less paying vocations or force them to stop using the acquired skills once they are married to unsupportive spouses and are overwhelmed with domestic and childcare responsibilities.

In his study Opwora (2013) reveals that most of the vocational trade 'reserved' for women usually result in low paid jobs with limited growth prospects. He adds that, women, especially those enrolled in what are considered masculine trades are usually discriminated

against, not just during training but also in the labour market. Female vocational skills graduates are more likely to have difficulties finding jobs. A study conducted in 2000 by Bennell *et al* in Tanzania (2006, as quoted in Haßler *et al*, 2020, p. 208) found that only 22% of female vocational skills trainee who graduated that year were working in an occupation related to their training, the rest found it difficult to utilize their occupational knowledge and skills. A study by Muya *et al* (2006) in Zambia revealed that about 50% of large size construction companies did not employ skilled female craftspeople.

If they manage to get a job, women are more likely to face unfair contracts and less pay than men (Bhatta, 2017; Opwora, 2013). This discrimination and other mentioned barriers faced have made women reluctant to embrace male-dominated vocational training opportunities and activities. This is common especially in low-income countries in Asia and Africa (Rahman *et al*, 2017). The deep-rooted perception that some vocational skills are exclusive for men, have also made many potential female candidates of skill development initiatives in these countries to be reluctant to grab the training opportunities (Williams *et al.*, 2018; Bhatta, 2017). Although We have carried a thorough scan, the question of young men seeking TVET and employment in sectors 'reserved' to women has not been the focus of research in Africa, and this question might not even represent an 'issue' for now as, from our field observation, the female-dominated careers seem unattractive (underpaid and no or little potential for promotion and career development).

The Burundi Case

As we mentioned before, Burundi has experienced intermittent civil wars lasting over 50 years and still faces economic instability. The prolonged conflict impeded effective development planning and execution, further worsening the struggling economy (Brachet & Wolpe, 2005; Nkurunziza, 2018). Additionally, the country has a significant proportion of young people, with approximately 50% of the population under the age of 30. While some of the youths are employed in the agricultural sector, many remain jobless due to limited resources, including scarce land, lack of self-employment capital and a lack of skills (Berckmoes & White, 2016).

In response, both the government and international community has initiated several projects³ aimed at developing youth skills. However, most of these initiatives are mainly focused on urban areas, leaving rural areas behind. Swisscontact, different from other interventions, has focused its project activities in neglected rural areas and, as we already pointed out, has implemented a youth skills development project known as PROMOST in rural Burundi, Congo, and Rwanda.

The project seeks to equip disadvantaged young people in rural areas with professional skills while also supporting and strengthening the TVET system to provide sustainable, inclusive, and accessible training to youth in the region. The project also aims to create linkages between training centres, private sectors, and other stakeholders in order to ensure continuity in access to quality training and ultimate insertion of the trainees in the labour market⁴. In Burundi⁵ the project began in 2017 with a target of training 1,800 young people by 2019, with a goal of 50% female participation. Ultimately, the project trained 1,750 young people, of which 730 were female, accounting for 42% of all trained youth. During the following phase, which ran from 2019 to 2022, the project aimed to train 3,800 young people, with a target of 50% female participation. This phase successfully trained 3,356 young people, of which 1,630 were female, representing 49% of all trained youth (Swisscontact Report, 2019, p. 8; Swisscontact Project Plan, 2019, p. 37; SDC, 2022, p. 13).

What is interesting about the PROMOST project is their emphasis on women inclusivity in their intervention. They were not only encouraged to participate in the project, but also encouraged to take training in subjects that are traditionally considered to be masculine. Before being enrolled in training, the young women are counselled and encouraged to embrace courses such as auto mechanic, welding, carpentry, shoe making, brick laying and others (Swisscontact

³ For further information on some of these projects see:

AfDb - <https://projectsportal.afdb.org/dataportal/VProject/show/P-BI-I00-004?cur=ua>

World Bank (WB) - <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2021/06/25/women-and-youth-at-the-center-of-the-world-bank-s-priorities-in-burundi>

USAID - https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00THJR.pdf

ENABEL - <https://open.enabel.be/fr/BDI/1940/p/appui--la-formation-professionnelle-et-technique.html>

⁴ Labour Market in the context of the PROMOST project and this study refers to formal waged employment, as well as formal and informal self-employment.

⁵ See <https://www.swisscontact.org/en/countries/burundi>

Project Plan, 2019). This is being implemented in Burundi, which is said to be a highly patriarchal community, with culture and traditions that prevent women from prospering (Gahimbare, 2012). In Burundi many of them are said to have limited freedom and voice not only economically but also in matters concerning their lives and destiny. In her book *'Femmes en politique au Burundi: Leur nombre, leur influence?'*, Pascasie Minani (2014) elaborates that the patriarchy system is not just predominant and oppressive to illiterate rural women, but even some women who are educated have no control over their earnings. Confirming this notion is a study by Ramanan *et al* (2021) which also add cases of women who had to quit working because of pressure from family members especially the in-laws. Their study adds that, even if their spouses are supportive at the beginning, they will eventually turn against their wives due to pressure from family members.

Also, though women account for more agricultural workers than men, they are less favoured in land ownership in Burundi. Land ownership is governed by customary laws in which ownership of property is transmitted from father to son, excluding women (Hans & Naso, 2023; Jooma, 2005; Ramanan *et al*, 2021; Tchatchoua-Djomo, 2018). It is reported that as of 2008, among the 80% landowners only 17% were women, against 63% who were men (Cordaid, 2016; Hans & Naso, 2023).

Statement of the Problem, Research Objectives and Questions

Interventions that aim at promoting female inclusivity face several challenges in patriarchal societies where gender inequality is prevalent, and there is a dominant masculine culture. The effectiveness of such interventions could be positively or negatively influenced by these challenges, which are further compounded by factors like poverty, limiting opportunities for young women. In light of the PROMOST project's efforts to challenge gender norms by promoting market-oriented skills for young women in rural Burundi, the question is are these trained young women able to access the labour market and be integrated in the market? What is the process? Which constraints do they face? These questions are important because, as seen earlier, in general women find it difficult not only to access vocational training but more in accessing employment and the labour market. This last issue will be our main focus.

In the light of this problematic, the main objective of this study is to explore the factors influencing labour market entry for young women trained under the PROMOST project in rural Burundi. The study was centred around the PROMOST project, its stakeholders and participants and their context. To achieve the study objective, the main objective was divided into three specific ones which are:

i.) to examine the role of cultural and gender norms and roles on the choice of skills and trade the women participated in and how that influenced their entry in the labour market. To achieve this, the study questioned the motivation behind the choice of trades, reaction and attitudes of family members and the community at large towards young women involved in technical and vocational activities as well as the self-perception of women themselves as they strive to make a living in the given contexts. ii.) to examine the PROMOST project design and implementation to see how it influenced and facilitated/hindered female integration in the labour market. The investigation involved examining various aspects of the project, including the people involved, the type of training provided, and the eligibility criteria for participants. Furthermore, the study explored the project's approach to addressing the issue of women inclusion, cultural attitudes toward women in the community, as well as other factors limiting rural women in Burundi, such as level of education and poverty; iii.) to find out the role social economic situation of the participants' family in shaping the choice of trades among female participants and their entry and integration in the labour market. Not only that but also how the social economic situation guarantees or threaten their sustainability in the labour market.

To address the above-mentioned objectives, this study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. In what ways does culture and gender norms influence vocation choices, the entry and success of women in the labour market?
- ii. How does the project design and implementation shape the choices of trade, the integration in the labour market and community acceptance of female vocational training graduates?
- iii. What role does family economic situation and poverty play in influencing the entry and sustainability of women in labour market?

Scope, Justification, and Significance of the Study

Though the PROMOST project was implemented in three provinces: Cibitoke Kayanza, and Ngozi, this dissertation focused specifically on project activities in the province of Kayanza. In the project, both male and female youth received training in various market-oriented skills. However, since studies show that, compared to men, women face more barriers accessing not only training but also the labour market after training, this study focused solely on investigating the factors influencing female trainees' access to the labour market after receiving training.

Many have raised a question, "*Why Burundi?*" The country of Burundi was chosen for this study because there is a little academic literature about Burundi in general. As Curtis (2017, p. 99, 107-108) and Sommers (2011, p.298) elaborate, Burundi has been coined an 'aid orphan' and for years it has been mistrusted and shunned by donors and the international community. Similarly, the media and literature has been painting the country uglily, as a huge percentage of what is written about Burundi is always to do with war, insecurity, dysfunctional and chaotic government, extreme poverty just to name a few (Sommers, 2011, p.299). In terms of discourse about youth in Burundi, there is also scarcity of academic literature about the youth economic participation. This sparked an interest for firsthand experience of the realities of the country and hence the choice of Burundi. The PROMOST project was chosen because of its unique approach to the challenge of youth unemployment as well as its intervention targets the rural youth who are usually neglected by other development actors.

This study will contribute to diminish the scarcity of information and academic literature regarding the entry and participation of women in the economy of Burundi. Currently, the available knowledge primarily relies on project implementation reports from various development institutions that have engaged with young women in the country. However, these reports are limited in scope and may be subject to self-reporting bias⁶. Therefore, this study not only fills a gap in the existing literature but also lays the foundation for future research on women's involvement in the economy.

⁶ See Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002 to understand more about self-reporting bias.

Moreover, this study will provide valuable insights to practitioners who encounter the challenge of navigating the barriers and privileges that women experience in specific communities. By gaining a better understanding of these dynamics, practitioners can develop suitable approaches to make a meaningful impact in their interventions. Thus, this research not only contributes to academic knowledge but also develop recommendations for those working in the field of development and interventions.

The Organization of the Thesis

After the introduction, this thesis comprises five more sections. In descending order, these includes the Case study, in which a descriptive account of the PROMOST Project will be given. This is followed by a literature review which offers a historical perspective on TVET and exploring the involvement of women in this field and the ways in which it has influenced their participation in the economy of their communities. The literature review is followed by a theoretical framework which discusses the empowerment theory and how it relates to the case study and TVET as an intervention. The theoretical framework will serve as an analytical framework for examining the main study concepts and analysing the findings from the case study. Proceeding to the Methodology section, a discussion is presented on the research design, data collection methods, and their rationale. Additionally, a contextual analysis of the study area and population, as well as ethical considerations, are examined. After the methodology the discussion and analysis of fieldwork findings in light of the theoretical framework and the research questions will follow. Lastly, the final section serves as a conclusive discussion that consolidates the main findings and provides new research possibilities based on the outcomes of the study.

2. The PROMOST Project – a Study Case

PROMOST is a youth skills development intervention created by SDC for the Great Lakes Region countries in Africa, i.e., Burundi, DRC, and Rwanda. With Swisscontact on the forefront of the implementation, the project was launched in 2012 aiming at equipping disadvantaged youths in the region with market-oriented skills and competences. The disadvantaged youths, according to the project document, are early school leavers, school dropouts, orphans, ex-combatants, and women especially young mothers and victims of gender-based violence. The skills and competences offered are intended at contributing to an increase in employment opportunities and more income generation among the participants.

To ensure continuity, the project also aimed at strengthening the capacity of the local training centres as well as creating linkages between private sectors, local artisans, vocational training centres and other stakeholders to ensure that there is access to quality skills training matching the needs of the job market but also the integration in the labour market even when the project phases out. The first phase of the project (pilot phase) was conducted only in Rwanda from 2012 to 2015. DRC and Burundi were incorporate in the second phase which started from 2016-2019. However, project activities in Burundi were delayed due to political conflicts and security challenges and started in 2017.

The PROMOST project offers two types of vocational training to the participants: Short Term Training (STT) and Apprenticeship. STT takes 6 months to complete; 3 months of training and 3 months of an internship and practical training. In the case of apprenticeship, it is divided into two types; modern apprenticeship which takes a year to complete and dual apprenticeship which involves theory and practices and takes 3 years to complete. According to the project field officer, the STT is offered to most vulnerable youth especially those who did not have or finish primary school education. These would include young mothers, youth from poor household. Apprenticeship training is given to the youth who are not more than 25 years old and have at least primary school education or more. After initial training, applicants meeting these criteria are recruited for practical training by the enterprise that will be hosting and training them after a month of observation.

PROMOST in Burundi

The project implementation is done in collaboration with stakeholders and partners such as local craftsmen and women, TVET centres, private enterprises, and local village committees with which Swisscontact forged partnership with. With a bottom-up participatory approach implementation, in each commune within a province a *platform*⁷ was established, to conduct activities and oversee the implementation at the grassroots level so as to enhance ownership. Working closely with the Swisscontact field offices within the provinces and main office in Bujumbura, the major roles of the *platform* are, to organise and coordinate community awareness creation activities, give the youth career orientations, and to give entrepreneurship training and advise to the trained youth. The *platform* is also responsible for gender expertise and social inclusion as well as monitoring the project implementation, outcome and result and reporting back to Swisscontact.

Structure and Organisation of the Platform

The *platform* is made up of about 30 individuals representing different project stakeholders grouped into three categories which reinforce each other. The categories are the 'market demand' group, the 'supply' group and 'regulation' group. The market demand group includes representatives of local economic actors such as local businesses needing employees, professional organisations, and civil society organisations. This group also consist of a Gender Focal Person (GFP), a person responsible for Career Orientation and labour market Insertion (COIP), and a Business Development Advisor (BDA) who are responsible for coaching the trainees for employment and entrepreneurship. The general role of this group is to communicate the job market demands to the *platform* so as to ensure that the vocation offered meet the demands of the job market.

As for the GFP, their role is to spread women inclusion awareness to the community, the trainers, and trainees. The GFPs sensitize the community on the notion that there is no vocation that are reserved only for male or female but rather that all learning would depend on the choice

⁷ This is a village/commune committee of various local stakeholders who coordinate the project activities at the grassroots level.

of the learner, his/her abilities, and skills, as well as the opportunities available within the learner’s environment. As seen before in the country context, given the patriarchy nature of Burundi society, this sparks a question on how women, especially those answering the call of choosing to venture in traditionally *masculine* vocation would navigate the labor market. Not only that but also a question arises on how the project design is prepared to respond to anticipated challenges which might come with this change of narratives.

The task of the COIP is to receive the youth interested in participating in the PROMOST project, give them career guidance and accompany them in their chosen vocation throughout the training until they find a job or create their own business. In the case of the BDAs, their task is to give entrepreneurial and finance access skills to the trained youth, guiding them in developing business plans, and advising them towards creation of self-employment. When possible, the BDAs also connect the graduated trainees with enterprises for employment insertion.

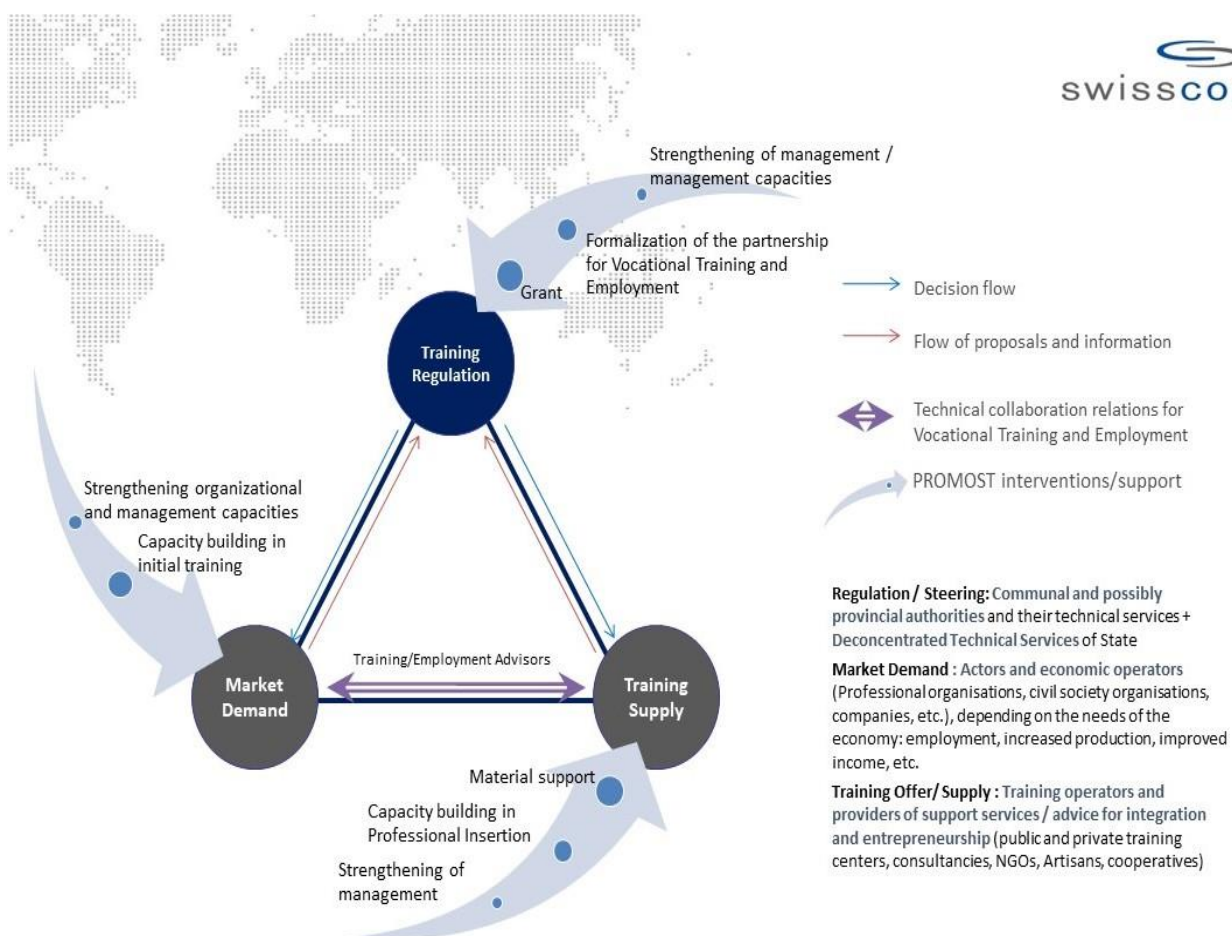


Figure 1 PROMOST Platform (Swisscontact, 2023)

The supply/training offering group is made up of local artisans, public and private training centers, cooperatives, and enterprises. This group is responsible for training and building the skills of the youth. According to Swisscontact Report of 2019, there are only a few Vocational Training Centers (VTCs) in Burundi. For instance, in Kayanza province alone, a province with a population of around 600,000 people, among whom half are estimated to be young people, there is said to be only 9 VTCs which all together can only accommodate about 200 students. In that case, Swisscontact saw it fit to also involve local artisans and enterprises in the project to work alongside available training centers to give training access to many youths.

These artisans, training centers and enterprises received technical and pedagogical upskilling and modern teaching equipment to be able to accommodate the project participants. The artisans host and train youth in their workshops and they normally offer STT and modern apprenticeship training. Training centers offer STT, modern apprenticeship and dual apprenticeship. Enterprises such as hotels, restaurants, furniture workshops and other handcraft industries and cooperatives offer practical training and internship to the youth. Good students are mostly retained to work in these enterprises or in the workshops of the artisans.

The last group is the training regulation group, which is the steering group within the *platform*. It is made up of local government authority within the commune. The regulation group receives information and recommendations from the other two groups and makes relevant decisions based on received information and recommendations. These three groups work in synergy to consult and manage vocational training at the commune level. This in turn helps in the management of skills demand and supply.

Recruitment and Training Process

The recruitment process is initiated by the *platform* through the training regulation body. They organize community mobilization and awareness activities. These activities could be in the form of theatre and organized performances, through community meetings or through radio. In these meetings, the community is made aware of the PROMOST training opportunity, the

criteria⁸ for participation and where to go for registration. The community is also sensitized about the female inclusiveness in the vocations that are commonly regarded as masculine and that women too can excel in those vocations if they are given a chance.

After awareness creation and mobilization, the interested youth who meet the participation criteria visit the office of the *platform* or another designated location and have a consultation session with the COIP. A COIP is required to listen to interested youths to know what skill they want to learn and why. Then s/he will guide the youth in the career they choose. The COIP is not allowed to suggest, convince, or push the youth into choosing a certain vocation. Only after listening to the interests of the youth is when a COIP can give them advice taking into consideration their education background and the available opportunities and labor market demand in the area. For example, if the youth choose a vocation which is not in the list of offered skills training, if they choose a vocation that require higher level of education while they have a lower one or if they choose something that do not have prospects in the local area. In this case the COIP can advise the youth and suggest different options.

The youth are then placed in the training centers and the workshops of the artisans depending on their qualifications. The youth who do not have prior education, and those who did not finish primary school education are enrolled in STT usually in the workshop of the artisan where they will be learning under the experienced artisan for 3-6 months. The youth who are 25 years old and less and have at least completed primary school education are enrolled in apprenticeship training which takes 1 year for modern apprenticeship and 2 to 3 years for dual apprenticeship training. The second group are trained in either the training centers and an enterprise or in an artisanal workshop and an enterprise or just at the artisanal workshop.

Since Swisscontact aims at not only skills development, but also job market integration, the emphasis is put to encouraging the trained youth to also venture into self-employment rather than waiting to be employed. In that case, after finishing their vocational training, the trained youth are coached in entrepreneurship skills, business creation skills and financial

⁸ Be a youth between 15-45 years, school dropouts from primary and secondary school, orphans, refugees and disabled people, women, especially the most vulnerable groups of young girls and adults facing social exclusion and/or victims of gender-based violence.

literacy. These training are organized by the BDAs, who after this training accompany the youth until they are employed or create their own businesses. Training at this stage is aimed at facilitating transition from training to the labor market. To ensure success in entrepreneurship training, Swisscontact have adopted the Coaching for Entrepreneurship and Employment (C4EE) approach. The C4EE approach as elaborated in the figure (Figure 2) below, is a group coaching cycle in which the youth learn from coaches and their peers through cyclical steps. Through the C4EE approach the youth are encouraged to pro-actively explore and engage with enterprises and the labor market to learn how they can best benefit and integrate in the labor market after the coaching. The BDAs are also responsible for assisting trainees in developing business plans and in the loan application processes.

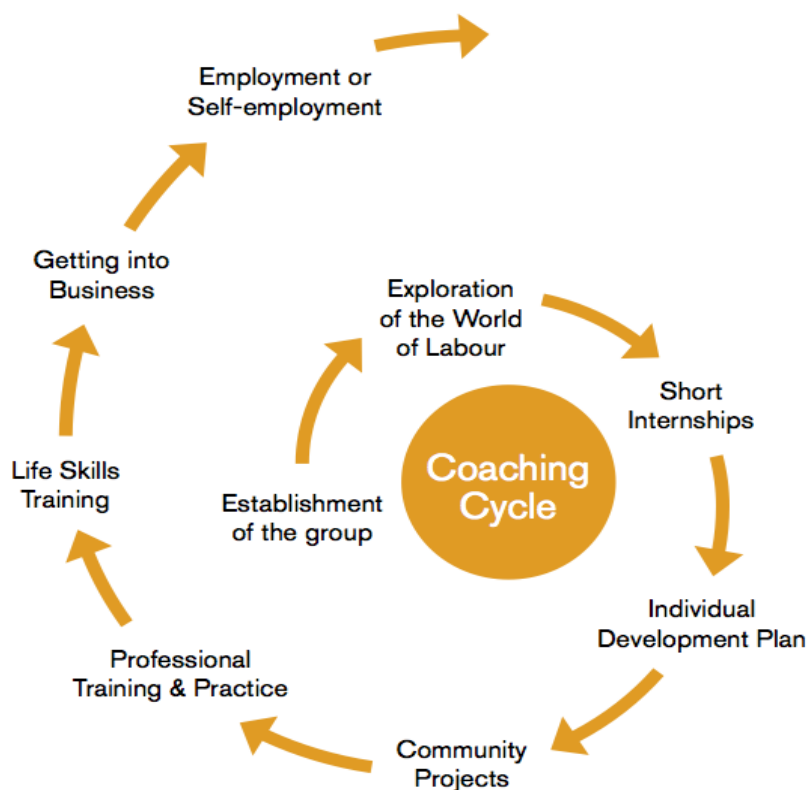


Figure 2: C4EE Coaching Cycle (Swisscontact, 2019)

PROMOST Phase II

As mentioned before, in Burundi the project started during the second phase (PROMOST II) in 2017 in Kayanza province. In this phase the project had a target of reaching and training 1,800 youth between the age of 15 – 24 years old. Ultimately, in this phase 1,750 youth were trained, among them, 730 were young females, which made up 41%. The youth were trained in 26 vocations which are bakery, pastry, catering, juice processing, flour processing, sewing and tailoring, beekeeping, embroidery, shoemaking, leather goods, carpentry, welding, soap making, weaving and basketry, car mechanics, motorcycle mechanics, electronics, domestic and solar electricity, mixed hairdressing, men's haircut, bricklaying and masonry, cobblestone making, and plumbing (Swisscontact, 2019)

Among the trained youth the report revealed that only 798 were integrated in the job market. Although the evaluation report for PROMOST II did not specify how many of the integrated youth were male or female, it informed that there was low rate of women accessing training, women who had access had a high drop-out rate, and the employability rate of women who have graduated from vocational training was also low. This was mainly due to sociocultural barriers, limited gender perspective regarding vocational skills which enforced lower interest of women in TVET. Women also showed a tendency of crowding traditionally feminine technical and vocational skills and as a result had a narrow employment option compared to men (Swisscontact, 2022).

PROMOST Phase III

From 2019 to 2022 the PROMOST project entered its third phase of implementation, PROMOST III, extending its activities to other two provinces of Cibitoke and Ngozi. Taking lessons from phase two, the third phase had a target of training and integrating 3,800 vulnerable youth in the job market, of which 50% were planned to be female. PROMOST III, was hence designed to be a gender sensitive project. Taking special attention in addressing gender issues, the project design included gender analysis, gender sensitive rapid market assessment to elect new, more gender-neutral skills, and sensitizing local labour market insertion counsellors and training providers on the issue of gender equality. The project design also involved an analysis of reasons

for segregation and lower enrolment of women in VTCs and VET as well as identification of barriers for women to join VET, selection of skills and design of gender sensitive curriculum.

In this phase the age limit criteria for participation were changed and extended from 24 to 45 so as to allow many people to gain skills. The youth were planned to be enrolled in two different types of training depending on their choice of skill they wished to attain. Among the 3,800 targeted youth, 3,000 were intended to be trained in STT and the remaining 800 were to be further divided into two: 700 youth for modern apprenticeship and 100 youth for dual apprenticeship (Swisscontact Project Plan, 2019). At the end of phase III in 2022, the evaluation revealed that there was an increase in female access to vocational training, from 40% in the previous phase to 49% in this phase (SDC, 2022).

Table 1: Project Participants PROMOST III (Swisscontact, 2023)

Training Type	Male	Female	Total	Female (%)
Short Term	1,303	1,334	2,637	51%
Modern Appr.	354	238	592	40%
Dual Appr.	69	58	127	46%
Total	1,726	1,630	3,356	49%

In case of labour market integration, concrete information was not provided for modern apprenticeship and dual apprenticeship graduates. According to the project officer over 90% of the apprenticeship graduates are usually retained and employed by their trainers in the workshops or enterprises where they spent their final practical training. The remaining percentage usually start their own micro enterprises. As for the STT graduates for PROMOST III, among the 2,637 trained youth the data says 465 female graduates are self-employed and 500 are employed by other enterprises or their trainer’s workshop.

The data further adds that for male students 399 are self-employed while 542 are employed in other people’s businesses. This makes up a total of 1,906 employed youth, and 731 youth who are without employment. However, it was hinted that, in reality these data fluctuates because situations change over time. A person who is jobless today might be self-employed or

waged employed in the long run while also there is a possibility of the one who is employed today to lose a job or failure of a business for those who are self-employed.

Table 2: Employment Status of Phase III STT graduates

STATUS	Male	Female	(%) female
Trained	1303	1334	51%
Employed	542	500	37%
Self employed	399	465	35%
Unemployed	362	369	28%

As mentioned before, project reports and statistics are prone to falling in the trap of self-reporting bias. While the numbers on the employment status of trainees look impressive, the question remains on the quality and sustainability of these micro enterprises. The same question extends to the employed youth, are their employment sustainable, secure and create sufficient livelihood? It is crucial therefore, to also get to know the personal experience of the trainees with regards to the challenges and opportunities they face in entering the labour market. These and other findings will be discussed further in the findings and analysis section.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the empirical literature review is presented. The empirical review provides an historical overview of TVET and its relations with youth unemployment, and the role of TVET in equipping the youth with skills that facilitate their integration into the labour market. This is then followed by a review of literature that focuses on women's access to TVET and the labour market, after graduating from TVET. The discussion will concentrate on the challenges women encounter as they attempt to enter or stay in the labour market.

A Historical Perspective of TVET and Youth Unemployment.

For many years, TVET has been globally acknowledged as a panacea for the problem of youth unemployment. As argued by Nsubuga (1990) and Oketch (2007), vocational education equips a learner with marketable skills, which help them access the labour market to earn a living. In this way, TVET is said to be a solution to unemployment and poverty problems. Palmer et al (2007) add that, TVET may take place in a formal and informal environment. This environment includes learning institutions such as schools or vocational centres and colleges, on-the-job such as an enterprise or an artisan workshop, or in both training institutions and on-job training. TVET can be within a short time duration of six months or more like a typical three-year institutional course. Also, in different countries, TVET has different forms and classifications. What is defined as TVET in one country would not necessarily be the same in another country.

The roots of TVET in Africa can be traced back to the Tuskegee Institute in the United States which provided technical and vocational education to African Americans living in the racially segregated southern part of the country (Brown, 1964; King, 1969; Sifuna & Sawamura, 2010). Booker T. Washington established the Tuskegee Institute aiming to equip black people with agricultural and technical skills that they could use to be self-reliant (King, 2019) It is further argued by Kenneth King (*idem*) that establishing the vocational model of education for black people could have been a mechanism of evading competition with whites in higher skills and the professions.

Other sources, such as those of Nsubuga (1990) Kantor (1986), and Ogden (1990), argue that TVET in the United States started as the Vocational Education Movement, which advocated for the inclusion of vocational skills in schools, to prepare the youth for jobs. Kantor (1986) further elaborates that vocational education was established in United States in the 19th century for two purposes. One was to transform education, which was claimed to be too much theoretical neglecting practical skills required by various industries at the time and the other was to equip working-class and immigrant youths with skills that could expand their occupational opportunities.

Eventually TVET expanded rapidly in many countries globally especially during the mid-20th century. TVET received great attention during this period because many countries were embarking on industrialization hence there was a need to cultivate skilled workforces to support industrialization and economic expansion goals (Anderson, 2009; Mwiria, 2005; Wilson, 2005). In some other countries with support from the World Bank and development agencies from developed countries, TVET was adopted simply to reduce unemployment rate and poverty especially among the countries which were rising from colonialism (Kirpal, 2008; Sifuna & Sawamura, 2010). Vocational training centres and schools were established to equip the youth with various skills and in some cases, people were trained under artisans. In recent years however, TVET programs in many countries are aimed at emancipating and offering an opportunity to people who are considered to be part of the vulnerable groups, such as the youth from low-income families, women and people with disabilities who cannot afford furthering their education in the regular education system (Varma, 2009).

TVET in Africa

In Africa, advocacy of TVET as a remedy for youth unemployment started as early as the 1900s during the colonial administration. Drawing from the success⁹ stories and examples from the Tuskegee black industrial education, the colonial administration -through Christian missionaries- saw it fit to introduce the same to blacks in Africa (Berman, 1972; King, 2019; Sifuna & Sawamura, 2010). The Tuskegee education model, also known as ‘Tuskegeeism’ was

⁹ Industrial/vocational education made blacks in the US economically independent and self-sufficient (Sifuna & Sawamura, 2010)

spread in East West, and Southern Africa. It is claimed by Edward Berman (1972) that by 1902, technical training was mandatory in some places in West Africa. He further added that by 1929, a technical institute was established in Liberia, and it was named after Booker T. Washington, the pioneer of technical training among the black community in the US (Berman, 1972). This, however, came after the establishment of Achimota College in 1927; another notable institute of agriculture and vocational education in Gold Coast (now Ghana). The Achimota College emphasized technical, hand-and-eye training, and agricultural education (Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000). In East Africa, a similar technical school with a Tuskegee training model was established in Machakos, Kenya in the year 1914. The school, Government African School (GAS), provided both general and technical training (Ngure, 2022). Apart from agriculture, the students were also taught vocational skills such as carpentry, bricklaying, masonry, blacksmithing, machine-fitting, and auto mechanics (Sifuna & Sawamura, 2010).

An interesting fact is that in all these schools and colleges the technical training they offered was reserved exclusively for boys (Berman, 1972; Ngure, 2022; Steiner-Khamsi & Quist, 2000). In some countries, vocational skills for women were offered. The courses included home economics, needlework, embroidery, dressmaking, and short secretarial work (Sifuna & Sawamura, 2010). TVET continued to spread in Africa even after countries gained independence in the late 1950s to late 1960s. According to King (2019) from 1969 President Nyerere of Tanzania advocated for vocational skills in primary schools in Tanzania. The skills were to help the youth engage in economic activities and become self-reliant even if they couldn't continue with secondary education. Other examples include the education reforms in Kenya and Ghana in the 1980s, which aimed at introducing a curriculum that would change the attitudes of the youth toward work and engaging in self-employment instead of waiting to be employed in white-collar jobs.

As TVET spread across Africa, the gender stereotype in vocational education from the colonial era also continued. A study by Semali and Stambach (1997) in Tanzania revealed that Nyerere's "Education for Self-reliance" program emphasized the need to develop technical skills in agriculture, home economics, and technical skills. While agriculture was taught to both boys and girls, home economics was taught mostly to girls and technical education was taught to

boys. Home economics included subjects such as housekeeping, general housecraft, cookery, textiles, and dressmaking as well as childcare. They further add that some male teachers felt it was not fit for a female teacher to teach those subjects and not male teachers.

Gender/Female in TVET Opportunities and Barriers

Women in Sub Sahara Africa contribute a large share of the labour force within the society. Apart from the domestic chores and the family care work, which is unpaid, it is estimated that about 40-60% of agricultural work is done by women (Palacios-Lopez et al, 2017; Thabethe & Uzodike, 2013). Despite this fact, women still find it difficult to enter fully in the labour market and get paid jobs or start a sustainable economic activity that generates income. In case of women who have somehow managed to be integrated in the labour market, they are usually confined in low paying jobs which require minimal skills (Opwora, 2013). This is mainly because of their low level of education or lack of skills and opportunities to learn relevant skills.

Studies (Ngugi & Muthima, 2017; Opwora, 2013) have revealed that there is also a low number of women participating in vocational training as compared to men. This low representation of women in TVET is often associated with gender inequality and gender biased division of labour within societies (Bray-Collins et al, 2022). Another cited reason for the underrepresentation of women in TVET as observed by Puyate and Agwi (2017) in Nigerian societies, is said to be a lack of interest from women and girls. This lack of interest comes from absence of support from family as well as societal pressure. Not only that but also the discouraging employment prospects after vocational training have also been seen to be a reason for disinterest.

In event when access to TVET is available, it has been observed that girls tend to select and enrol in trade streams that lead to traditionally feminine jobs, such as tailoring, hairdressing, secretarial work, culinary art, nursing, and home economics which are usually characterized with low-income prospects (Johanson & Adams, 2004; Lahire et al., 2011; Puyate & Agwi, 2017). This however is because traditionally technical and vocational training were commonly male dominated, reserving only limited domestic related skills for women and girls (Ayonmike, 2014; Haan, 2006; Johanson & Adams, 2004). This is the case not only in Africa, but also in Asian

countries. A study conducted in Nepal by Rai & Josh (2020) revealed that Nepali women are mostly trained in specific traditionally feminine occupations. However, men engage in stereotypically non-women occupations such as plumbing, welding, aluminium fabricator, motorcycle mechanic, automobile, electrical, bar bending, masonry, carpentry, bricklaying, mobile repairing and maintenance, light driving, mechanical lathe operator etc.

Women and Labour Market Entry and Participation

As already mentioned, apart from barriers to access technical and vocational training, women also face challenges to gain access to labour market. A 2011 report by UNESCO revealed that usually the gender imbalances that are prominent in education and vocational training are automatically also transferred in the labour markets. Many graduates, especially female graduates, remain unintegrated in the labour market or will attach themselves in informal waged employment or agriculture until they find formal employment. In many instances, after failing to find work or create employment with the acquired skills, TVET graduates tend to abandon the acquired skill and work in something else totally different from what they are trained for. A study conducted in Ghana in 2006 revealed that many graduates of 'employable skills' are not using the acquired skills. The study further revealed that female graduates were highly disadvantaged in finding employment (related to the skills they acquired) as compared to male graduates (Palmer, 2009). According to reviewed literature, it appears that multiple factors impact women's participation in the labour force in African countries. These factors include *vocational training program design, cultural and societal gender norms, individual poverty, and economic circumstances* as well as *low levels of education*.

Vocational Training Program design

The design and management of vocational training projects by the government and other development actors can also positively or negatively impact women's entry into the labour market. In many case the way a TVET program is design automatically push women into the so-called feminine trades. TVET programs with high pay and growth prospects require a certain level of prior education to enrol. In some Sub-Sahara African countries, women have limited access to education compared to men. Many female students rarely get a chance to go for higher

education due to early pregnancies, poverty, or early marriage. Therefore, when opportunity to enrol in TVET present itself, they end up choosing trades with low prospects, because most of these trades are designed to require a lower level of education to enrol compared to trades with high prospects (Filmer & Fox, 2014).

A study by Moser (1989, as quoted in Opwora, 2013, p. 5) found that not only that women are pushed by circumstances into stereotypical female careers, but they are also counselled and guided into occupations that are geared towards meeting their immediate needs rather than those which will meet their longer-term needs. This is evident in most government and NGOs unemployment interventions. Usually when it comes to solving the unemployment issue, the interventions are usually designed to equip the youth with skills that will quickly solve their financial needs. The intervention tends to be compacted, rushed and short term.

Since most vocational skills intervention for unemployment tends to be on a short-term basis, literature shows that the skills acquired are not usually enough for a person to start their own business. Palmer (2009) observed this in Ghana, where graduates of employable skills programs could not start their own business because the training, they received was insufficient. In other instances, graduates will be able to perform only a limited set of activities related to the general field. For example, in tailoring in a short-term timeframe a student might learn how to take measurements and fittings, how to cut and sew some of the clothes but might need to go for further studies to be able to design and tailor a coat. Prospects are better at least for those who would afford to go for further studies after attending the short-term training.

Cultural and Gender Norms and Roles

Patriarch tendencies within the African culture and societies, impose certain expectations on women which limit their fully participation in the economy. Ramanan et al (2021), informed that, in patriarchal societies young women are expected to help their parents in domestic and agricultural work and look after their younger brothers and sisters. In case of women who enter the job market, they are confined by cultural and societal gender norms in domestic duties or traditionally female, lower-paying occupations. As a result, women tend to overcrowd these

fields where they face intense competition for customers while the male dominated trades which have higher pay and prospect are left not fully exploited.

In addition, gendered perceptions of appropriate roles for men and women and a gendered division of labour in developing countries also hinder women's full engagement in the labour market. Research has indicated that many young women drop out of vocational training programs or leave the labour force altogether in order to fulfil gender-related responsibilities, such as caring for their families or performing household tasks. This is truer after the trained young women get married, pregnant or after giving birth. Studies by Filmer et al (2014), Fox et al (2016) and Robinson & Sexton, (1994) add that, when faced with domestic and childcare responsibility, choices of women in the labour market are limited. Consequently, some women may decide not to work, choose to work fewer hours, or they may choose occupations that offer flexible schedules and home-based work. Critics of women empowerment discourse disagree with this idea and insist that even unpaid caring activities and housework should also be regarded as work, because they contribute largely to the overall economy (Elson, 1999). Frida Ekerlund (2013) further argues that there is a great connection between the work men do and reproductive work women do, and this connection serves as a fundamental support for the formal and productive economy.

A study by Rai and Joshi (2020) adds that, in Nepal, women who acquire technical skills that are considered traditionally masculine are confronted with discrimination in the job market. This discrimination is attributed to prevailing social cultural factors and gender norms that regard certain jobs as inappropriate for women. The authors cited cases of women who completed vocational training in areas such as mechanics, IT, and masonry, but struggled to secure employment due to doubts about their abilities based on their gender. The study also revealed that some women were unable to pursue better job opportunities in urban areas due to concerns about safety and morality, as it is not deemed acceptable for single women to live far away from their families.

Poverty and individual's economic situation

Self-employment and starting a business require start-up capital or other tangible resources. Rural women in some African countries and other developing countries are restricted by cultural norms or customary laws to own or control financial resources and other assets such as land. Women are excluded in inheritances and property is passed down through generations to a male child (Gahimbare, 2012). The main reason for this exclusion is the belief that family property will end up in the hands of another family when their daughter is married and move to their husband's household. This in turn has pushed women on the corner as they lack resources to start their own business or workshop due to lack of control over resources. Therefore, many women find themselves working in trades that require minimal financial resources which are mostly unsustainable and offers lower returns.

Additionally, because of poverty, young women are unable to access funds from financial institutions due to lack of assets for collateral and trusted guarantor to sponsor them in loan acquisition processes (Palmer, 2009). This, in many cases has made many women abandon their acquired skills and turn to petty trades in hope of raising money that will help them to start their own business in the near future. According to a study conducted in Ghana by Langevang and Gough (2012), many vocationally trained young women, if they fail to acquire startup capital from family members, they may opt to work for someone else for sometimes to be able to save up for their own business, or engage in petty trade which is different from the skills they acquired for the purpose of raising capital for their own business.

Level of Education

A study by Palmer et al (2007), revealed that level of education also plays a big role not just in facilitating access to vocational education for women, but also it ensures their likely success in starting and maintaining business startups. In their study they found that small enterprises run by women who had at least secondary education were more profitable than those run by women who had lower level of education. This is because there is a significant relationship between education and creativity in business. As argued by Robinson and Sexton (1994, p. 152),

“Education tends to increase one’s sense of efficacy and self-esteem which in turn increases one’s ability to perceive opportunities and pursue them. In addition, highly educated workers are likely to possess more information about self-employment opportunities and are probably better able to assess their chances at success in this sector.”

Unfortunately, the gender parity in education in most African countries, has resulted to a higher rate of illiteracy among women, making it difficult for them to succeed in self-employment ventures as they have limited access to relevant information such as access to fund and how to creatively manage their trade and stay in the market.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study applied the theory of empowerment to better illustrate the concept of women's inclusion in the labour market through vocational training and challenges they face. In the end the theory helps in understanding the factors that influence young women's entry into the labour market. With a focus on the notion of power and how having it influences one's life, the study will look into types of power: 'power to', 'power with', 'power over', and 'power within' and how empowerment interventions such as PROMOST accord the appropriate power within appropriate situation as they attempt to emancipate women.

Empowerment theory

The theory of empowerment is said to have originated from the 1960s with the work of a Brazilian philosopher, Paulo Freire. Through his book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (1968), Freire emphasized the need for the rural Brazilian under oppression to develop a critical consciousness, so that they can become aware of the oppression and their position within their society. The empowerment theory was further developed by other prominent scholars in the empowerment discourse such as Rappaport, Kieffer and Zimmerman (Carr, 2003).

Despite the dominant diverge on empowerment as a process vs empowerment as an outcome, majority of scholars of empowerment theory agree on the overall objective of empowerment i.e., to bring power balance by removing powerlessness and inequalities faced by vulnerable and marginalized people. According to Lee (2001), powerlessness could be a result of several factors such as economic insecurity, lack of experience in the political arena, lack of information access, lack of training in critical and abstract thought and other related power depravity stemming from unequal distribution of resources and power. McWhirter (1998, p. 14) defines 'empowerment' as:

“The process by which people, organizations, or groups who are powerless or marginalized, become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, which they exercise without infringing upon the rights of others (...) in their community”.

Women empowerment and empowerment discourse originated as a strategy employed by activists from the global south during the 1980s to challenge the dominance of Northern feminisms. It emerged from the political foundations of social movements such as feminism and black power and has since been utilized as a means of promoting social change and redistributing power (Ekerlund, 2013; Engvall, 2017). It has ever since become a buzzword among feminists and development practitioners from both in the South and in the North.

Women empowerment is primarily concerned with achieving societal structural and systemic change in the social, political, and economic spheres, so that women will no longer be oppressed and will further develop a sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-confidence as a path of claiming power. The goal is not to take power away from men, but rather to achieving a more equal distribution of resources and power among men and women within the society (Turner & Mischi, 2015). In support of this idea Judith Lee (2001) adds that the people being empowered gain access to power in themselves, with each other, and in the social, economic, and political environment. In relation to this study, as it has been established that TVET is a potential gate way from unemployment, equipping women with vocational skills, especially those out of reach to them due to structural and systemic barriers could open doors for women to, not necessarily take over the male dominated career world, but to be able to enjoy the same benefits they lack in lower paying stereotypical feminine jobs.

In theorizing empowerment, borrowing from Rappaport (1984), Zimmerman (2000) proposes that empowerment can be analysed at multiple levels. These levels are psychological level, community level and organizational level. He further added that these levels of empowerment analysis provide a framework of empowering strategies that focus on capacity building for individuals and groups, and creating environments that support the development of empowerment. Similarly, Judith Lee (2001) also suggests the levels approach to the empowerment process. In her case she named the levels differently despite having somehow similar content: personal level, interpersonal level, and political level.

The psychological/personal level of analysis includes empowering individuals with a strong sense of control over their lives, an active involvement in activities that allow them to exercise this control, and a widened awareness of their environment. This also entails cultivating

positive perceptions of self-worth, self-efficacy, and internal locus of control, as well as validating their perceptions and abilities to think critically and influence systems of varying magnitudes (Lee, 2001; Zimmerman, 2000). The second level moves from an individual to a community level, this is analysis at the community level, or interpersonal as Lee (2001, p. 52) would call it. This level of analysis focuses on how the members of a community as a whole can be impacted with skills, and resources to engage in activities to improve community life. The empowerment process at this level is concerned with ensuring that the community works together to effectively identify common needs, develop strategies to address the needs, and perform actions to meet those needs. Lastly it is the analysis of empowerment at an organizational and political level. This entails empowering people with knowledge about organizational or systemic structures of oppression and changing processes so that they can come together and act as a community.

In summary it can be deduced that at different levels inequality and power structure affect people differently. And as advocates of empowerment as a process emphasize, it is best for empowerment process to start at an individual level, so that when individual members of the community have acquired critical consciousness, are aware of their capabilities and have a sense of self-worth they can then join as a community and collectively fight the resist the organizational and political forms of oppression. This collective resistance could involve voting, signing a petition, demonstration, boycotting a product, service, or a policy. As pointed out by Zimmerman (200, p. 53), the community with empowered individuals can go further and mobilize, form alliances, or solicit the help of organizations and other powerful entities so that they can easily achieve their goals.

In relation to the idea of empowerment levels of analysis, recent scholars of power relations and empowerment have further developed the idea of levels of analysis with what is referred to as types of power. These include “power over”, “power to”, “power with” and “power within”. Power over is understood as the ability of individuals or groups to exert control over others or situations. Power to, is the ability of individuals or groups to act and make decisions that affect their own lives and the lives of others. The ability of individuals and communities to work together collaboratively to achieve common goals is referred to as power

with. And lastly, power within is the ability of individuals to recognize and challenge their own internalized beliefs and biases, and to cultivate a sense of personal agency and empowerment.

A deeper look into these types of power shows that “power within” and “power to” closely relate with the concept of psychological and personal level of empowerment. As argued by Pansardi and Bindi (2021, p. 18), power within is understood as a transformation of individual consciousness which leads to a new self-confidence to act. In addition, they elaborate “power to” as the power-to bring about an outcome or resist change. This is similar to the empowerment process in that an individual’s mindset is first transformed and they become self-conscious and aware of their capability, which in turn gives them agency or power and freedom to act. In the same way power resonates with the concept of community/interpersonal empowerment. In agreement with the idea of community/ interpersonal empowerment, Meier (2013, p. 143) argues that “power with” involves leveraging the collective benefits and strengths of individuals by building networks or organizing groups to work towards common goals. This is done with the recognition that sharing power and promoting social cooperation can lead to improved situations for the whole community. “Power with” is a critical component of empowerment because collective action is often necessary to challenge and transform existing power structures.

Unlike the other three, “power over” is always seen as a negative form of power that reinforces existing power structures and perpetuates oppression. It is considered to be patriarchal in nature promoting the dominator/subordinator power relations. In this type of power relation, the power increase in one group or individual automatically leads to a decrease or loss of power of another group or individual (Meier, 2013; Pansardi & Bindi, 2021). However, contrary to the common perception that “power over” express an oppressive and negative connotation, it may also assume a positive character if one were to consider the object of power not as a powerless individual, but rather as an inanimate entity such as resources or hopeless circumstances that impact how individuals operate within their communities. From this perspective, “power over” could signify a positive influence over resources or challenging situations, thereby challenging the traditional understanding of it as an oppressive force. Another good example related to women empowerment would be, giving women a chance to have power over their own destiny.

Considering the fact that women face different types of oppression, on different levels depending on their context and their individual characteristics (educational level, economic level, etc.), it is crucial that the four concepts of power as well as empowerment levels of analysis are applied in the analysis of the empowerment process. The empowerment levels of analysis will guide the development intervention actors to understand from which levels do intersecting forces of oppression emanate. Is it from a personal and psychological level relating to personal history, life experiences or past traumatic events? Is it from the power dynamics within the community at the interpersonal level, how people interact within a given community and the power relations among community members? Do they come from the organizational and political structures such as cultural and societal gender norms, policies, customary laws? Are the intersecting forces of oppression perhaps coming from all levels? Approaching intersecting structures of inequality and oppression in this way, will effectively guide empowerment processes and lead to achieving the empowerment goal.

Regarding the four concepts of power, their application is essential in determining which kind of intervention is appropriate in which situation. A young woman facing psychological and internalized biases and oppressive beliefs such as self-doubt and low self-esteem for example, will require to be equipped with power within before they are given power to or power over. Just as it is argued by Pansardi and Bindi (2021) it is an individual's awareness of her own capacities which motivate their action. In this case, even if a young woman is equipped with all the resources they previously lacked, if they do not have the will and the agency to act and change their oppressing situation, the power they possess will be useless. Similarly, Staples (1990, as quoted in Carr, 2003, p. 19) also acknowledged the importance of identity construction in empowerment processes. In his own words he argued that "self-definition is the foundation, as well as the heart and soul, of any conceptualization of empowerment." In the same way the remaining concepts of power; "power to", "power with" and "power over" should be applied in empowerment processes depending on the type and multiplicity of oppression they face.

Gap in Literature

Although it is a fact that women trained in vocational and technical skills face multiple barriers in accessing the labour market, very few literature explicitly point this out focusing instead on challenges women face to access vocational training. With regard to Burundi, there is limited writings on young women participation in vocational training and challenges they face entering the job market. What exists about youth interventions in Burundi are mostly institutional reports. One of the common features of these reports is that they tend to be more quantitative and general, reporting the immediate impact of the training intervention, such as how many youths were trained, how many jobs were created leaving aside the qualitative and sustainability aspect of the training provided or the jobs created in the long run.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter covers details concerning study population, research design, sample size, sampling procedures, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and ethical considerations before and during the study.

Target Population

In Burundi the PROMOST project phase III, was implemented in the three provinces: Cibitoke, Kayanza and Ngozi. For the purpose of this study only project activities and participants from Kayanza Province will be considered. This is because among the three provinces, the project started in Kayanza in 2017, and later on, from 2019, the project was expanded to Cibitoke and Ngozi provinces.



Figure 3 Map of Kayanza

Little is written about this province. A search in academic sources such as Google Scholar, Elicit, to name just two examples, would generate less than ten search results with little information or a simple mention collectively with other provinces in text. According to Nijimbere et al (2019) and Syabumi (2019), the province covers an area of 1,239 square kilometres and has

a population of around 600,000 people. The population of Kayanza province is predominantly rural, with most of the inhabitants engaging in agriculture. The region is prominent for cultivation of coffee and tea, which are the main cash crops exports of Burundi. Other crops grown in the province include bananas, maize, beans, and cassava. The province also has some mining activities, with deposits of nickel and other minerals being found in the area.

In terms of education, the latest available information, i.e., provided by the Ministry of education in 2018, reveal that primary school completion rate in Kayanza at the time was 68%, and a dropout rate of 15%, while province specific data for secondary education enrolment was not obtained. From the PROMOST project document it was established that the Kayanza province only has 9 vocational training centres (VET) which all together can only accommodate about 200 students. Through the PROMOST project, many youths were able to access vocation training through the workshops of local artisan and enterprises which partnered with Swisscontact, received technical and pedagogical upskilling and improved teaching equipment in order to accommodate the project participants (Swisscontact Report, 2019). Twenty graduates, including self-employed graduates, employed and those without employment, from this province were observed and interviewed to get their personal experience with the PROMOST project and what is it like to gain access to the job market.

Research Design and Approach

A research design according to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), refers to the plans which guide the research methods, data collection and analysis methods in a study, in a manner that will bring relevance to the purpose of the study. The research design includes details on how research data is going to be collected and analysed to answer the research questions. This study employed a case study research design to study the PROMOST Project, in order to understand the factors influencing labour market entry for young women from rural Burundi, who participated in the project. According to Simons (2014), a case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular [case] in a *real-life* context. Bryman and Bell (2019) add that a case study aims at providing a rich description of a subject matter.

This design was chosen because it is case specific, hence allows for an extensive and thorough exploration of a subject matter and in the end provides an in-depth understanding of the case being studied. An extensive focused exploration of the PROMOST project, its participants and their environment in the real-life context helped in learning in depth about the project design and implementation processes and strategies, the culture and gender norms in rural Burundi and how these two factors, together with the economic status of participants' family, influence their vocation choice and ultimately their entry to the labour market. And hence provided answers to the questions posed by this study and unearthed an extra factor: participant's level of education, which was previously not considered as an influential factor for vocational choice and labour market entry.

Case study design is also flexible in terms of approaches. As argued by Simons (2014), Bryman and Bell (2019) and Kumar (2011), though its design is commonly used within a qualitative approach, it can also be conducted through other approaches, i.e., quantitative, or mixed method approach. This study employed a mixed methods approach, where both elements of qualitative approach and quantitative approach were used (Johnson *et al*, 2007). The qualitative approach was used in data collection and analysis, while some elements of quantitative approach were used in presenting some of the data statistically through the use of tables.

Although both approaches were used, the qualitative method is a dominant approach in this study. According to Creswell (2007) and Bryman and Bell (2019), qualitative research approach is a method of studying social realities and people within their natural setting. It involves studying behaviour, values, beliefs, and phenomena, while trying to understand and interpret these realities through the meaning people assign to their social realities. This method was chosen because it allows for a deeper understanding of the case under study from the perspective and understanding of the people living / experiencing the social reality being studied. It is not rigid and fixed. As argued by Bryman and Bell (2019) qualitative research provides a researcher with multiple interpretations and perspectives of the case. This research approach helped in learning about the project and its impact from the perspective of not only Swisscontact

as an implementer of the project, but also from the perspective of SDC, who is the creator and funder of the project, as well as the participants and other stakeholders.

Data Collection Method

By the virtue of relying on people's experiences and interpretation of social realities, qualitative research method poses a danger of falling into biasness traps. In this case, the study employed triangulation strategy to reduce the possibility of falling in this "trap". According to Mathison (1988), triangulation is a strategy for resolving biases and enhancing validity of findings. Triangulation can be done by employing multiple researchers, multiple data sources, multiple theories, or mixed methods. To avoid biases and ensuring validity of data, this study triangulated findings through using various qualitative data collection tools.

These tools included semi-structured interviews, which was chosen because it gives respondents the freedom to give detailed answers to questions. Also allowing the researcher a flexibility of asking probing and follow-up questions depending on the answers provided by the respondent even if the questions were not included in the interview guide prior to the interview (Bryman & Bell, 2019). Participant observation was another method used to collect data, whereby participants were observed while working as well as their working environment and the work of art they produced. Available documentation inside the project was reviewed, including annual reports as well as Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) data. Other reviewed documents were government documents such as: the National Development Plan 2020-2027 and education policies and plans which elaborate policies on youth development. These tools provide detailed data that were useful in making a stronger source critique and a less biased approach on a studied subject.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were used for data collection from some of the project participants and the members of the *platform*. These FGDs were organised by the Swisscontact on 10th, 11th, and 13th of January, for the purpose of a project evaluation taking place at the same time than this study. This evaluation, commissioned by the donor, aimed at learning from the experience of the project participants and the members of *platform*, the success and failure of previous activities and what members think can be done better in the future phases for other

project participants to effectively benefit from the project. There was an average of 6 groups discussions per day and each group consisted of an at least of 5-7 participants. The researcher participated in all the three days and benefited from the discussions. Additionally, the reports from the FGDs were made available by Swisscontact for use in this study.

As informed before, this study was conducted in Kayanza province in Burundi. For the purpose of this study, 37 participants were involved. All these participants were purposively sampled. Purposive sampling is a subcategory of sampling techniques under non-random sampling category (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). This sampling technique was used because, in a case study, the focus is specific, hence a researcher needs to be specific and particular in selecting participants / interviewees who are most knowledgeable about the case under study (Kumar, 2011; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). Among the total participants of this study, 25 respondents were sampled from the list of project participants provided by project officials. The choice of participants considered the subject they were trained in, hence a mixture of both participants trained in 'masculine' vocation and those trained in 'feminine' vocations. Among these twenty project participants, there were five male participants who were chosen to create a balance in the narrative.

Additionally, 2 PROMOST project officials from Swisscontact, which is the implementer of the project, 6 members of the *platform*, which is a body of about thirty local people formed to oversee the project activities from the grassroots level, were interviewed. These members of the *platform* included, one Profession Orientation and Integration member (COIP), four artisan who were in charge of teaching skills to the youth, and two Gender Focal Persons (GFP). Other participants included 1 official from SDC, who are the donor of the PROMOST project and 2 government officials with mandate to youth development and vocational Training.

Table 3 List of Study Participants

Number of Participants	Participant Affiliation	Location
25 Trained Youth	5 Males	Kayanza Provinces
	20 Females	
7 members of the <i>Platform</i>	4 Artisans/youth trainers	Kayanza
	1 Profession Counsellor	
	2 Gender Focal Persons	
2 Swisscontact Staff	A Field Officer	Bujumbura
	A M&E Officer	
1 SDC Staff	Project Manger	Bujumbura
2 Government Officials	Councillor in the department of Vocation Training	Bujumbura
	Councillor in the office of the Director General of Vocational Training	

The study was conducted from January 2023 to March 2023 in Bujumbura and in Kayanza provinces in Burundi. Research data was collected from the prior mentioned officials in Bujumbura, through semi-structured interviews guided by a semi-structured interview guide document. As per the participants they were also interviewed in Kayanza province, most of them at their place of work and some at a designated quite place.

This study used thematic analysis method to analyse the collected data manually. Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within data. It involves searching across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning. They further add that a theme is a recurring idea or concept within a data set which captures something important about the data in relation to the overall research question (*Idem*). The thematic analysis method is commonly used for analysing qualitative data (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). In this study, the collected data was first categorized into codes, which helped in identifying recurring themes and patterns in the collected data. The identified themes were used to guide the interpretation of findings.

Ethical Consideration

To ensure that research ethics were followed, before starting the field study, contacts were established with the project funding agency, SDC Burundi, and the hosting organization, Swisscontact, which is also the implementing entity of the project under study. Apart from hosting the researcher, they provided the required information and gave access to project documents. They further allowed for the obtained information to be used in the thesis.

Before entering the country, the research permit was sought, but no document was provided because according to the Embassy official in Dar es Salaam, as a Tanzanian, the researcher did not require a Visa to enter Burundi. Regarding the research permit, the embassy acknowledged that I needed that, although the visa was not required. A researcher should have authorization to conduct research in Burundi, however, he did not know what kind of document to provide. Nevertheless, the researcher was allowed to enter the country and proceed with data collection, while the embassy followed up on the research authorization.

Bryman and Bell (2019) advise that without intending to, the participants may be harmed by the research, if not immediately, maybe in the near future after their participation in particular research. Therefore, shielding participants from any harm that might be caused by their participation in the study, should be a researcher's priority. In that case, the subject was not particularly sensitive, nor in danger of stirring up traumatic memories, etc. After reflection, no particular measure seemed necessary to assure protection of the interviewees. In this study, to

adhere to ethical measures the researcher used a consent form. Before any interview session began, the researcher informed and explained to the interviewee what the study was about and if the person wanted to participate. To show that they agreed to participate, the interviewee signed a consent form. The consent form gave the flexibility for consenting respondents to choose, if they wanted to be directly quoted or anonymously quoted in the final thesis.

6. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

In this chapter the findings from the data collected from field work will be described. The description of findings will focus on the factors influencing labour market access among female project participants. Then the section will continue with the description of the quality of the integration in terms of type, security and sustainability of waged employment and self-employment. The discussion, recommendations and conclusion will follow in the following chapter.

This study aimed at finding out the ***“Factors influencing the integration of female participants in the job market in rural Burundi.”*** One of the main findings was that a high percentage of trainees from phase III, are integrated in the job market as both waged employees and in self-employment. As mentioned before, it was confirmed by a PROMOST project officer that about 90% of graduates from apprenticeship training are employed by enterprises which host them for practical training, while the remaining 10% start their own business. As for the STT graduates, among the 2,637 trained youth 1,906 amounting to 72% are successfully integrated into the job market, leaving only 28% unintegrated. Turning the focus to female participants -the subject of this study - it is noticeable that in phase three of the PROMOST project there was an increase in training access among women compared to phase two. While in phase two only 730 women (40% of all trainees) were able to access vocational training, in the third phase the number doubled. A total of 1,726 women were trained (49% of all trainees).

While it was informed that all women trained in apprenticeship are engaged in the labour market, the exact number of how many graduates from this training category are waged employees or self-employed was not provided. The data provided, for STT graduates, revealed that out of the 1,334 women trained in STT, 965 are engaged in the job market¹⁰ while 369 trained women are without employment. Among those who are employed 465 are self-employed and 500 are employed in other enterprises. This self-employment manifested in three forms; the youth who have individually opened their own businesses, youth who have combined resources and opened their co-own businesses and those who have formed cooperatives which

¹⁰ Pictures of some participants and their work are shared at the end of the chapter.

accommodates anyone wishing to join at a particular entrance fee. These self-employment businesses include small restaurants, carpentry workshops, barbershops, ironwork and welding workshop, tailoring store among others. The graduates who are waged employees, work in local enterprises and workshops in various roles such as masons and brick layers, tailors, mechanics, waitresses, embroiders, hairdressers just to mention a few.

Statistically, this is a noticeable achievement, but questions remain, how hard or easy is it for women to be either self-employed or find employment after training? What is the quality of these self-employment and employment? Are they sustainable? In answering these questions, a field study was conducted in the provinces of Bujumbura and Kayanza in Burundi involving participants as elaborated previously (See Table 3). Having already learned, through a review of project documents and insights from project team officials, the impact of the PROMOST project, the findings below will focus on the experiences of project participants and their impression of the project impacts. This is complemented by responses from interviewed *platform* members, government officials, and the researcher's observation.

The graduate trainees who participated in this study consisted of 5 male participants and 20 female participants. Among the male graduates, three were self-employed: the first operates a carpentry workshop; the second operates a restaurant and the last one operated a welding workshop. As for the remaining two, one is employed in a saloon as a hairdresser and another one is employed in a cooperative of shoemakers. In the case of female graduates, as described in Table 4 below, in terms of the subject they took, among the twenty interviewed respondents, five are not working, nine are employed and four are self-employed.

Table 4 Distribution of female respondents

Subject (A to Z)	Employment Status	Respondents
Carpentry	Employed	2
Embroidery	Employed	2
Food Processing (Porridge Flour)	Not Employed	2
Haircutting (Barber skills)	Employed	1
	Not Employed	1
Masonry (Bricklaying)	Casual labour	2
Mechanics (Auto)	Casual labour	1
	Not Employed	1
Restaurant	Employed	1
	Not employed	1
Shoemaking	Employed	1
Tailoring	Self Employed (Own a workshop)	2
	Self Employed (work in teacher's shop)	2
Welding	Casual labour	1

Labour Market Access for Female Graduates

As mentioned previously, in many African countries female graduates of vocational training are highly disadvantaged in finding employment related to the skills they acquired as compared to male graduates (Palmer, 2009). In the course of this study, we wanted to find out if the case is the same in Burundi. The collected data revealed that project design and implementation and culture and gender norms influence job market entry both negatively and positively. As for the economic situation of the family of the participant, it was revealed that it influences female integration in the job market negatively. Additionally, it was perceived that the level of education also plays a role in dictating the type of vocation a young women can be trained in and ultimately the typology of activities they can perform in the labour market. Below is a detailed description of this *cluster* of findings:

Project Design and Implementation

The study points out that, involving actors who are familiar with the community and those who know what skills are most needed in the labour market has distinguished PROMOST from other similar projects. Through the use of the *platform* members, particularly the GFPs many young women were encouraged to participate in the PROMOST project, doubling the number from 730 young women to 1,726 women. The GFPs have also been helpful in intervening and sensitizing family members who restrict their daughters or spouses from working. A GFP said in an interview, *“As a Gender Focal Person my job is to spread gender equality awareness within the commune, encourage girls and women to enrol in masculine vocation, and if parents or spouses are difficult and reluctant to allow their daughter or their wives to participate in the PROMOST project it is my job to change their mindset and convince them to give permission.”*

The spread of awareness on women's inclusion in vocational training and in the labour market, especially among the artisans who taught the youth, was found to be very effective. Apart from FGPs, the artisans also played a big role in facilitating employment and self-employment among female graduates. Artisans who were interviewed reported that they made efforts to ensure their students are engaged in the labour market after training. All of the artisans have retained some of their students in their workshops. One carpentry artisan informed

that he provides loans to his students so that they can buy tools to start their businesses. Tailoring students who were interviewed reported that their instructor has allowed them to use the sewing machines in her workshop for free until they can be able to buy their own. Another female who was trained in metal work and welding stated that at the beginning she faced discrimination from male colleagues at the workshop, but it was their instructor who stood up for her and gave her more opportunities to prove herself and now she has respect not just from male colleagues, but also from customers.

It was also learned that the bottom-up participatory approach adopted by the project helped to link the trained youth with the job market. The approach also helped the trainers and job seekers know what skills are most needed in the job market to avoid the problem of skills mismatch. These enterprises have also helped host the trained youth for practical training and at some point, ended up employing some of the hosted trainees. A PROMOST project officer informed that about 90% of graduates are retained by these enterprises after finishing their practical training and internships. In support of this claim, interviewed artisans confirmed that they too have retained some of the students in their workshops. A shoe-making artisan for example informed that in his workshop he has retained 27 students, of which 19 are female.

A Vocational Training counsellor from the government office argued that PROMOST has set itself apart by adopting the dual training system in its approach. Meaning that students are learning both in theory and in practice. He argued that this has helped students to obtain practical work skills which enable them to obtain employment, or easily employ themselves even if they fail to get a job from available enterprises. He also added that by partnering with the local artisans, Swisscontact has facilitated the verification of uncertified artisans, upskilling and equipping them with modern and advanced tools which make it easier to train the youth with skills that allow them to get a revenue. These efforts and strategies as part of the PROMOST project design and implementation have played a big role in increasing female access to training as well as entry in the labour market either through self-employment or employment in pre-existing businesses.

Apart from the positive influence of the project design and implementation on job market entry, during the study, it was noticed that the project design was limiting some women from

fully exploiting the labour market. As described before, the program offers STT for people who do not have prior education or did not finish primary school. Many women in rural areas fall into this category as many are forced by a number of reasons (see 3.1.1) to drop out of school. Consequently, the women trained in STT cannot learn a lot about a skill within a short time. For example, two interviewed women trained in masonry and bricklaying said they can only build and lay bricks, but they do not have roofing skills or flooring skills. In this context, they are earning less while if they had further abilities they could be earning more. One of them, further added that roofing and cementing the floor pays a lot more than bricklaying, so if she would have trained in apprenticeship training which takes longer than six months, she would have added these two skills to her bricklaying skills and could have achieved a better wage. Women who trained as barbers also expressed a desire to also learn hairdressing as a complementary skill to haircutting so that they can expand their earning opportunities and fully exploit the market. This issue of limited training in the STT was also raised a lot during the FGDs of the evaluation session, where not only graduates but also artisans and the enterprises hosting the youth for practical training, advocated for a longer training period for STT as six months are too short.

The absence of a start-up kit after training is another challenge related to project design that was found to be an obstacle for the graduates to access the labour market after training. Different from other youth skills development projects, PROMOST does not offer any tools or start-up capital to the youth after they finish training. During the FGDs this issue was hotly discussed and cited to be a barrier to employment of graduates by many participants and artisans alike. It was noticed from the discussions that it is not only female graduates who are affected by this, but male graduates also find it hard to access funds due to a lack of collateral to show the bank. Some respondents informed that they were able to access fund from Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOS) because SACCOS fund don't require collateral to acquire. However, the problem with SACCOS fund is that it is said to be a small amount which is not enough to start a sustainable business, unless it is complemented with another fund. A group of women who co-owned tailoring workshop informed that loans from SACCOS groups helped them combine their funds to start their own workshop.

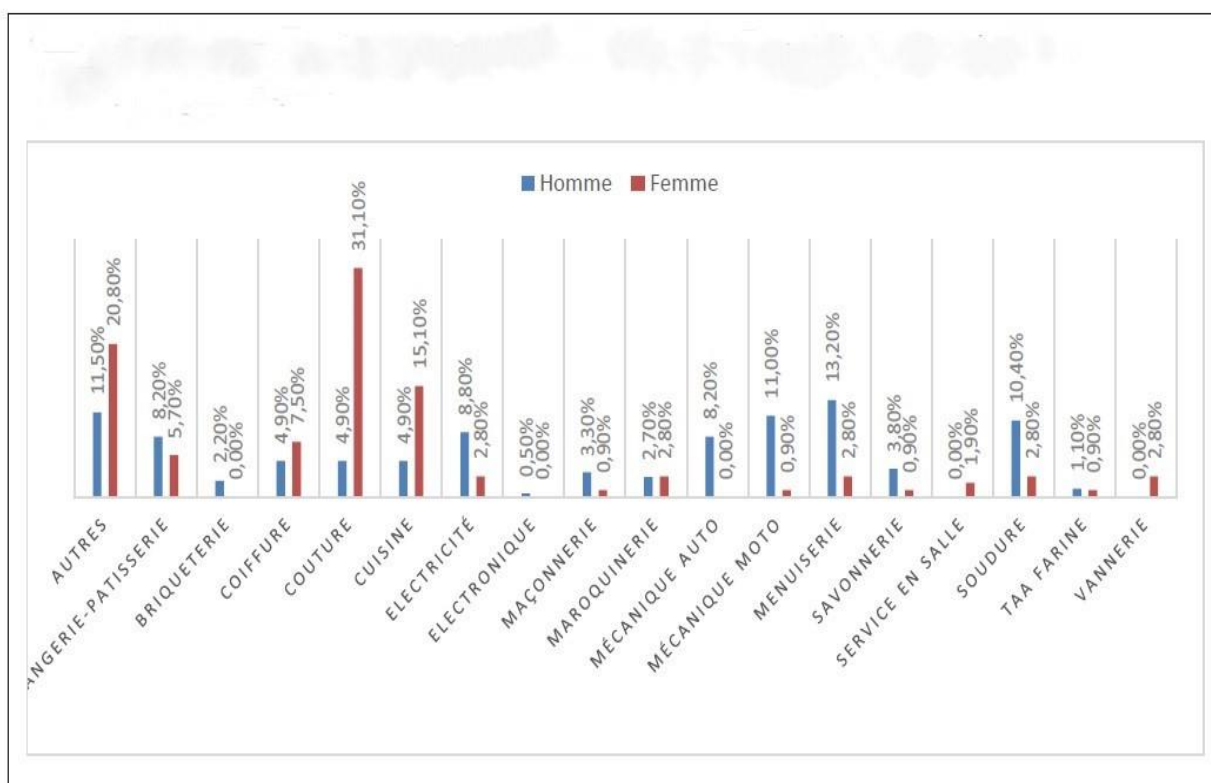
We found it strange that a project targeting vulnerable youth from rural areas, would leave out an important aspect such as post-training support to graduates. A project manager from the SDC, the agency which fund the PROMOST project, was asked why the start-up kit was not part of the project. He responded that, according to experience from other organizations, if a skills development project includes start-up kits or capital at the end it has been observed that the participants do not concentrate on learning, but just attend to get the kits that they end up selling or if it is money, they will spend it not on the intended purpose. He further added that the PROMOST project intentionally left out the start-up kit to attract the youth who truly had intentions of gaining skills and exclude those who would have come in just for what they can get at the end.

The claim about the tendency of some youths to misuse the startup kits was also recounted by the two interviewed government officials and confirmed by the M&E officer from Swisscontact. A study by DeJaeghere and Baxter (2014) in Tanzania and Uganda reported similar case of youth having a tendency of misusing the start-up capital or a profit made by their businesses instead of using the same to expand the business. Literature (Oats & Gumbo, 2019; Palmer, 2006; DeJaeghere & Baxter, 2014; Lamptey & Debrah, 2018) shows that multiple projects exclude monetary or start-up kit after training as a way of fostering accountability on the part of project participants. But this is done in different ways, some organizations only offer vocational training, some give support in terms of loans which youth have to work hard to repay and other, like Swisscontact give post training support in terms of financial access education so the youth can use the given knowledge to access the start-up capital on their own.

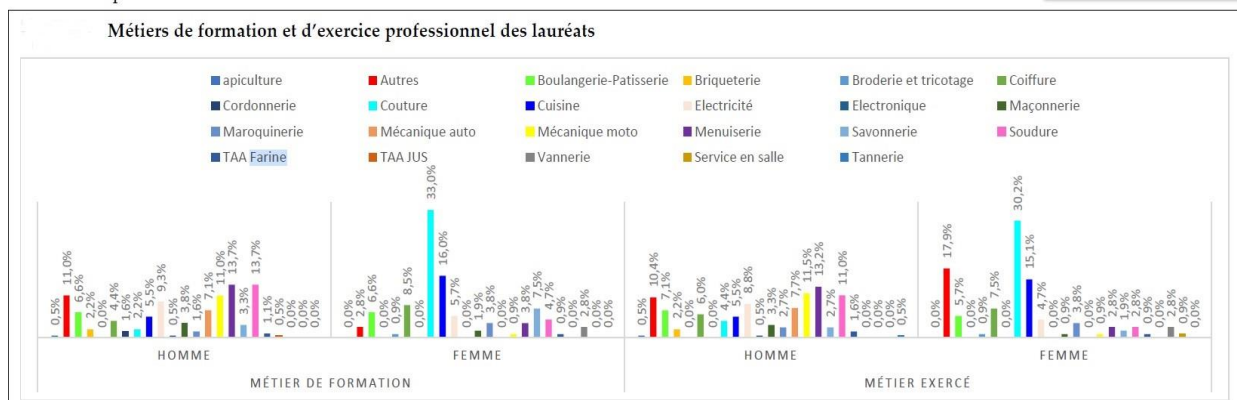
In addition, the SDC project manager, stated that, they would have at least supported youth's loan applications as guarantors, but many youths are not trustworthy. An observation was made which may support this claim. Upon being asked if they can join together in groups and try accessing funds collectively, the interviewed women were sceptical to the idea, showing mistrust among themselves. Also, during the FGDs participants gave experience of when they acquired loans as a group and those selected as group leaders ran away with the money, leaving the group members in debts. To avoid similar situation the Project through the BDAs team from the *platform* could monitor these youth groups and encourage them to open a bank account

which is accessible through multiple signatories including a BDA. Money should only be withdrawn with consent from all group members if there is an activity needing payments. In this case one person can not on their own access the money and leave others in dept.

Despite the projects campaign and encouragement of women to embrace careers that are perceived to be masculine, it was found that women are still concentrated in feminine vocations. Women were present in *masculine* vocation, however the ratio between male and female trainees were not balanced. In agreement with this observation, a report for an evaluation conducted in 2023, revealed that in PROMOST III many women opted to be trained in tailoring and dressmaking, followed by culinary art, and hair dressing.



Graph 1 Ratio between male and female students according to trade. (Source: Swisscontact PROMOST Evaluation report, 2023)



Graph 2 Graph 2: Percentage of trainees in relation to trades they were trained in and what they currently do (source: Swisscontact, PROMOST Evaluation report, 2023)

One of the interviewed councillors from the government department of vocation training said, “We are doing our best to encourage women and girls to venture in male dominated vocation, but very few women are motivated to join. Many women have a mentality that male dominated careers require a lot of physical strength; therefore, they shun away from these vocation”. In addition, a GFP argued that the reason why there is still low representation of women in *masculine* subject despite awareness campaigns is that many women and girls in rural Burundi have self-doubt and low self-esteem, they don’t believe that they too can excel in what men do.

It was also revealed that some women who were trained in *masculine* vocation, even after being employed did not fully engage in the manual part of the vocation, but rather preferred to do finishing work which is less intense. An interviewed artisan for carpentry informed that despite training girls in all carpentry skills and encouraging them to apply all their learned skills, they only prefer working on vanishing the finished furniture as opposed to making them from scratch.



Picture 1 & 2: youth preparing furniture for vanishing.

Cultural and gender norms

Cultural and gender norms were also found to influence the participation of women in the labour market. In some cases, cultural and gender norms allowed smooth entry in the labour market but in other cases, the same became a barrier for women to enter or fully exploit the labour market. For instance, it was revealed that it is easier for women who trained in *feminine* vocations such as tailoring and culinary arts to enter the job market as compared to men who trained in the same. A female respondent trained in tailoring argued that, in reality, it is mostly women who seek tailoring services, and most of them are comfortable being measured for fitting by fellow women. She also added that husbands prefer their wives to be taken measurements by women and not men.

In the case of restaurants, cultural and gender norms were found to be barriers to the full integration of female participants who trained in restaurant and culinary art skills. A male graduate who has started a small restaurant claimed that many female graduates of culinary arts are employed as domestic cooks. He added that women are mostly employed as servers/waitresses because in rural areas most of the customers for restaurants are men, and they mostly prefer to be served by women than by men. In that case, female graduates have an advantage for employment in restaurants (mostly as waitresses) than men. This claim was confirmed by another respondent, a female graduate also trained in restaurant and culinary art.

In recounting her experience, she said she is employed in a restaurant but though she is also trained in cooking she mostly works as a waitress and only cooks once in a while. This tendency conforms to the patriarchal notion which categorises women as care givers and nurturers who have a responsibility of waiting on men. This in turn poses a possibility of women being stuck as a server and lose the opportunity to practice and utilise their cooking skills working as a cook because male customers prefer to be served by women or they feel comfortable ordering to a female server than to a male server. In this case men who have similar skills will also find themselves stuck in the kitchen.

Khan (2021) writes that women are required by perceived sociocultural norms to weigh their educational and career choices against their gender and family obligations. In the end, they will decide based on what will allow them the flexibility of balancing work and domestic duties (Talento et al, 2022). The same was observed in Kayanza, where some women, faced with domestic and family responsibilities were conditioned to choose to train in tailoring for example, because in their case it allowed them the flexibility needed to balance domestic or nurturing responsibilities and their needs to earn a living. Two respondents with nursing babies revealed that, though tailoring is an overcrowded sector with low returns, it was convenient for them as it gave them the opportunity to work carrying their babies. One of them added that sometimes she rents a sewing machine and works from home and there she can alternate between sewing clothes and doing domestic chores. It costs around 10,000¹¹ BIF to rent a sewing machine for a month. She continued to comment that with tailoring skills even if she is pregnant, she can still work - unlike if she picked another vocation such as masonry or welding.

It is also worth mentioning that there is a culture of scorning of women who work in male-dominated spheres. Most members of the community accuse women of prostituting themselves if they happen to be working in a male-dominated environment. A young woman working in a garage informed that, though her family is supportive, the general public is entertaining the idea that she is prostituting herself in the garage. This public scorn and misconception are also influencing spouses and parents not to support the work of their spouses

¹¹ As per 11 July 2023's exchange rate 10,000 BIF is equivalent to about 3 Euros.

or daughters. One GFP recounted that he has dealt with cases of husbands who forbid their spouses from working or those who allow their spouses to work but only for work that is within the same commune. He added that husbands do so because they are suspicious of their wives' fidelity.

Parents are also said to restrict their daughters from working for fear that they might bring shame to the family by becoming morally corrupt if they spend too much time with men, work till late hours or accept work out of town. A girl who trained as a barber narrated, *"I and my two friends were excited to learn haircutting skills and open our own barber shop [haircutting saloon]. But soon after graduating one of us got married and when she became pregnant her husband moved her from here, my other friend was moved by her father to the farms in the mountains because he was afraid that as she work as a barber in a saloon she might get involved with men, get pregnant out of wedlock and shame the family."* She further added that now she is not working because male customers do not allow women to touch their heads due to religious and cultural values in this commune. Now she was in the process of learning hairdressing so that she can at least complement it with haircutting skills and serve female clients.

Concerning cultural and gender norms, the patriarchal tendency in Burundi which puts men at the centre of decision making was also observed to be a barrier for women participation in the labour market. Many women despite receiving training, when they got married even if they are working, will stop if their spouses decide against them working. An instructor for embroidery reported that three young women she trained, abandoned their jobs/training when got married. Other artisans also confirmed that apart from financial reasons the other leading reasons for women to drop out of training or stop working after they graduate is marriage. Interviewed women were asked what they would do if their spouses forbade them to work after getting married, only three out of twenty said they would resist, the rest simply replied that, because the man is above them, they will obey and stop working. Other women were said to quit not because their spouses were against them working, but because after marriage they had to move and follow their husbands in other towns.

Family Financial Situation and Poverty

While in some cases spouses and parents were reluctant to permit their wives or daughters to participate in the project or work, during this study it was acknowledged that poverty was a factor for some husbands and parents to support women's participation in the project and eventually in the labour market. One woman said that before PROMOST she and her husband had a lot of financial difficulties. When the PROMOST opportunity presented itself, her husband was very supportive and encouraging of her participation because it was going to help them increase the family income as both would be working and contributing to the family's livelihood. Female graduates trained as mechanics, masons, iron welders, and barbers for example informed that their families were against their choice of vocation at the beginning, but now that they are bringing in cash to the family, they have full family support.

Nevertheless, poverty was found to be the main reason for not being able to enter the labour market. Most project participants who are not engaged in any activity blame a lack of start-up capital as the reason for their inactivity. As already mentioned, but worth remembering, many interviewed graduates who are employed informed that they do not like working under someone they would like to start their own workshops, but since they do not have financial means, they have to settle for employment which for some of them it was casual. A woman trained in mechanics said in her commune there are few garages so she could not get employment. She added that there is high demand for mechanics, and she would have started her own motorcycle repair shop but since she does not have enough money to buy tools, she does not use her skills. She was observed collecting empty plastic bottles after the FGDs meeting, and when asked what those were for, she responded that she is now making and selling fresh juice to raise money for possibly buying tools for her own garage.

Findings revealed that some participants were conditioned by poverty to choose vocations they did not fancy, just because it was relatively easy to access the labour market with the chosen vocation. A woman trained as a tailor revealed that she has a passion for venturing in food catering business and did not want to work under someone. However, because she does not have the financial means to start that type of business after training, she decided to just settle for tailoring. Another woman, though in her case she said she liked masonry and brick

laying, she stated that she chose this vocation because it did not need expensive tools to start working.

The Level of Education

As already mentioned, because of lower levels of education some youths were limited to access only SST, which limited the scope of their work and also their earnings. The study found that despite going through entrepreneurship training with the BDAs some graduates were still not aware of what a business plan is or how to prepare one. Many graduate respondents also did not have information about existing financial institutions¹² that are designated to help youth access funds at lower interest rates or with zero interest rates.

Those who cited financial constraints as the reason for their inactivity provided generic answers about collateral being a barrier for them to approach banks. However, upon being probed further, it was discovered that they did not even know the procedures nor the needed documents for loan applications from these institutions. The websites of these financial institutions are available in English and French languages or just French language. However, the majority of the respondents neither spoke nor understood French. So, education level is not only a barrier to enter more employable training opportunities, but also to understand the available opportunities to get a loan to start their own business.

Quality of Employment and Self-employment

Employment quality is a complex concept to define as different criteria and scales are used by different entities to measure quality. There exist multiple frameworks for measuring the quality of work, but they are not official indexes or universally applicable criteria for measuring quality (Gammarano, 2020). It is even harder to define what quality work is in Burundi a country whose economy depends heavily on the informal sector (Swisscontact, 2019). In this study quality of work will refer to job security, level of income, and stability of started business. In the end, these

¹² [BIJE](#) - Banque d'Investissement pour les Jeunes (Youth Investment Bank), [PAEEJ](#) – Programme d'Autonomisation économique et d'Emploi des Jeunes (Youth Economic Empowerment and Employment Program) and [BIDE](#) - Banque d'investissement et de Développement pour les Femmes

three measuring units will help to predict the sustainability of the gainful employment or self-employment established.

Employed Graduates

In the course of the study, it was discovered that the quality of employment for employed graduates varies. Some graduates are indefinitely employed, and most of them are employed as casual laborers and day workers, being called to work whenever there is work available. These youth have dreams and aspirations of having permanent jobs or starting their own business but due to financial constraints, they settle for casual labour. A respondent trained in ironwork and welding and one trained in masonry and bricklaying stated that they are not permanently employed they are summoned to work whenever there is work available. Concerning payment and work compensation it was revealed that casual laborers are paid depending on the work done. Though the compensation amount was not disclosed, it was generally hinted to be lower and not enough to save for possible self-employment in the near future. A respondent trained in tailoring shared that a sewing machine costs from 400,000 BIF to 500,000 BIF, with what she earns now if she wants to save to purchase a sewing machine, it will take her two to three years to have enough money to buy her own sewing machine.

Self-employed Graduates

Regarding self-employments, it was detected that the majority are in the form of labour-intensive micro-enterprises, lacking capital to be more competitive. One of the graduates, Claude, who now operates a small restaurant near the Rwanda-Burundi border said "One of the problems I am having is I do not have better utensils for serving and storing food to preserve the heat. If I had enough money, I would have bought bigger hotpots and China plates and bowls. I also wish to have a bigger and better place with ovens and microwaves." His restaurant is one medium size room, with a counter which has a glass cupboard, and, for customers, he had two tables and four wooden benches where customers would sit facing each other.



3 Claude leaning on the sign board for his Restaurant, Claude at his restaurant entrance.



2Picture 5 A tailoring workshop co-owned by 3 female graduates



4 Jules in front of his Carpentry Workshop



5 Jules working inside the workshop.

The other two interviewed young women who were trained as tailors claimed to be self-employed though they did not own any sewing machine or tailoring workshop. Together with other three female graduates they were allowed by their teacher to use the machines available at her workshop for free. The workshop had about 10 sewing machines. One of the respondents, Claudine said, “Whatever money we earn is ours we keep it. We only contribute a small amount once in a while for servicing the sewing machines.” The other young woman lamented that one of the challenges of that working arrangement is, that whenever their teacher receives new students to teach, all the sewing machines are occupied, in this case, they have to wait until a teaching session is over for them to continue with their work or alternatively if they have urgent orders and they cannot wait, they hire a sewing machine from. For these graduates, regardless of their working environment and situation, they consider themselves self-employed, because they do not share their earnings with the workshop owner.

The graduates who are running their own small businesses were asked how they were able to employ themselves while others find it challenging. Claude responded that he grew up seeing his parents running a restaurant and he had a dream of also managing his own restaurant one day and surpassing his parents’ legacy. He never wanted to be employed, therefore, through working other jobs, even before he enrolled for PROMOST and during the training period under the PROMOST project, he was saving up some money for starting his business later on. Jules’ story is a bit similar. He answered that his father is a carpenter and since he was passionate about this activity, he chose to also receive training in carpentry. He was able to secure a loan from his teacher and also from a youth SACCOS group. He has taken his father in now they and work together. As for the young women who co-own a tailoring workshop, they credited their success to loving what they do as well as having self-determination and self-confidence. They added that it is very difficult to access funds and bank loans, but through joining their savings and securing loans from SACCOS groups they were able to rent a place and started working on rented sewing machines and later on bought their own.

Another self-employment arrangement was noticed during the study. One young woman trained in leather work and shoe making informed that after she graduated, together with their teacher and some other graduates decided to form a cooperative. In this cooperative whatever

income, they generate belong to the cooperative and whenever they made profit it is distributed equally depending on the work an individual did. To be part of the cooperative one has to pay a joining fee, which was not disclosed. This workshop was better in terms of quality and working tools as compared to other observed workshops. An interview with the chief artisan of this workshop revealed that operating under a cooperative has helped them to access funds easily from financial institutions. He further added that their cooperative has diversified business by also buying land where they operate a cooperative farm. Again, just like the earnings in the workshop, the earnings from the farm harvest are also equally distributed.



6 The leather work and shoe making artisan with his students (Source: Swisscontact, 2023)

Pictures of other Participants and their work



7 Janeth employed as a tailor at her instructors' workshop.



8 Judith work as mason/bricklayer she is a casual labourer employed by her instructor.



9 Claudine preparing a customer for a haircut (customer gave photo consent)



10 Claudine, employed in a local salon as a barber.



11 Women weaving baskets and traditional gift containers (Source: Swisscontact, 2023)



12 Semi-finished weaving products (Source: Swisscontact, 2023)

7. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the previous chapter field work findings were presented in two parts. The first part described factors influencing the entry of women in the labour market after vocational training and the second part described findings related to what the youth are doing after training and the quality of their employment. In conclusion this chapter will give a summary of findings. The summary will reconcile the findings in relation to other similar studies in literature as well as the empowerment theoretical framework. After, the conclusion will be given, followed by recommendations for further research.

As discussed in the previous chapter findings have revealed that, the PROMOST project intervention has facilitated the engagement of many women in the labour market in rural Burundi. However, women integration in the labour market is still influenced by multiple factors that are interconnected. These factors include project design and implementation, poverty, cultural and gender norms as well as level of education. This validates the claims of Calvès (2009) that economic autonomy and ability to meet '*basic survival needs*' are not enough in women empowerment efforts, but rather women empowerment can truly be achieved through radical transformation of economic, political and social structures that limit women. In relation to the PROMOST case, despite the project's efforts in helping women attain economic freedom, there are still structural rooted factors such as culture and poverty which limit them. This demonstrate that empowerment efforts should go hand in hand with breaking the systemic barriers to women inclusion.

Nevertheless, as Zimmermann (1995) argues, empowerment is a process. Not necessarily a linear process but a developmental process containing a series of experiences from which individual learn and grow progressively towards having individual or collective agency. Looking at the PROMOST in the same lenses of empowerment as a developmental process we argue that to an extent the project was able to help women gain skills and engage in economic activities, it was also able to break the cultural barrier for women, as some women, although fewer, managed to train and enter male dominated vocation. The success of this small group may in the long run inspire more women to embrace masculine careers. There is also the possibility of a community

wide change of mindset towards women working, something which was not widely seen before the PROMOST project. It can be simply said that PROMOST planted a seed of change.

Inability to access fund from financial institution was one of the recurring response in the course of the field study. Despite government's efforts to put available accessible finance for the youth, many youths seem to lack the information of these institutions. Additionally, although the youth received the post training entrepreneurship and finance access training, majority of interviewed participants claimed to not know how to prepare a business plan and they seemed to just settle on the idea that finance access is for those with collateral assets and guarantors. What this tell us is, the post-training support was weak or insufficient to enable the youth to not only know of the options available out there but also on how to access them. This echoes similar findings by Palmer (2009) in Ghana, where many graduating youths lacked the capacity to engage in economic activities due lack of or weak post-training support. Since the PROMOST project design exclude the start-up kit at the end of vocational training, it could instead invest more in strengthening the post-training entrepreneurial and financial access education to the graduating youth. More so to women, who in the Burundi contexts are financially insecure as they are restricted by customary laws and traditions to inherit assets from family.

Fensterbusch and Van Wicklin III (1987), conclude that beneficiary participation contributes to project effectiveness. They refer to participation not just in planning and implementation, but the participation in ensuring that the project outcomes are effective and sustainable. In relation to the PROMOST case, this is to say the trained youth also have a part to play in their empowerment process, ensuring that the skills they acquired yield effective and lasting impacts. Receiving training and not making personal efforts and initiative to use the skill is problematic. For instance, two women who graduated with skills to make Porridge Flour said that in their class of 20 people, all of them are not working because they lack capital and tools. When asked what kind of tools they need, they mentioned common tools which can literally be found in their own household such as a cooking pot, a washing basin, a bucket, a mat, a flour sieving device etc. When they were asked if they don't have those at home, they said they have but they are small. From this information, I argue that there might be another undisclosed reason for the indifference of these participants. Nevertheless, since project effectiveness also

depends on the participation of project participants even post implementation, the PROMOST team ought to find out the really reason why an entire class is not active.

Gahimbare (2012) reports that there is an ongoing '*handicap*' of aid dependency among the Burundi local community. The culture of dependency is said to originate from the prolonged humanitarian aid during the period political instability in the country, which lasted for over 50 years. I assume that this could be the reason why some youth lack self-initiative and the entrepreneurial spirit. Although an absence of a start-up kit may seem strange at face value, looking at this decision from an aid dependency perspective, I argue that removal of free post training start up kit is beneficial for building individual agency and curing the dependency syndrome. However, just as I proposed earlier, before releasing the graduates into the labour market, Swisscontact should ensure that the graduates are well and sufficiently equipped with entrepreneurial skills and financial access information.

I have also figured that the indecisiveness, unwillingness to work or lack of self-initiative among participants, especially female participants, could be emanating from lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem among wgaomen who grew in a patriarchal environment like rural Burundi. Bénabou and Tirole (2005), suggests that a higher self-confidence enhances an individual's motivation to act. Meaning that when individuals have confidence in their abilities and efficacy, they will be motivated to undertake more ambitious goals and persist when they are faced by challenges. A similar idea is echoed by Charlier and Caubergs (2007).

In relation to the concept of power in empowerment process we conclude that many female graduates lack '*power within*'. A power which is related to self-awareness, self-esteem, identity and assertiveness. Not only that, but lack of confidence and agency to use their skills to change their economic situations resulted in some of them not being able to exploit the resources¹³ available to their disposal to change their lives. This is a clear example of lacking '*power to*' which relates to an individual's ability to make transformative decisions and problem-solving skills. Mistrust among most participants and reluctance in joining and working as a group demonstrate that the youth did not have the '*power with*', which is associated with the ability of

¹³ Funds provided by the government at lower interests and without requiring collateral as well as household items which could temporarily be used as start-up capital

a person to act collectively with society or community members to influence change. In this case, I argue that in addition to developing the vocational skills of female participants, it is also important for a project with women empowerment aspect to invest also in developing and boosting the confidence among female participants.

In conclusion, I recommend that future empowerment projects in similar areas like PROMOST should consider the contextual structural systems that could negatively affect the project outcomes. They should also ensure that post-training support for participants, even if it is not in-kind support, it should be effective and sufficient in helping graduates in navigating through the financial access processes. Lastly, I recommend that youth who have been for a lifetime subjected into environments that foster their vulnerability, should also receive appropriate training to boost their self-confidence, or help them develop an agency to act individually or collectively to exact changes and positive transformation in their lives.

Worth mentioning in this conclusive remark are the limitations encountered during the study, which might in one way, or another have an implication on the results and findings of this study. During the course of the fieldwork, I encountered the following challenges and limitations:

- Language barrier. Since the fieldwork involved people from rural Burundi majority of whom speak only Kirundi and do not speak English, French nor Swahili, the interviews were conducted with a help of a translator, in this case many valuable information might have lost in translations.
- My positionality as a researcher from European Universities, and brought on site by a PROMOST project officer, might have influenced the responses from participants, especially those who might have perceived the interviewer to be some kind of a rescuer or a potential way out to challenges they faced in their economic activities.
- On the side of Swisscontact, some information especially statistical data on the number of employed participants in apprenticeship training was not concretely provided, but information provided was based on assumptions from project officers.
- Time constraints. There was a lot to unpack in the experiences of participants but due to time limit only few participants were involved in the study. Consequently, the findings might not represent the reality of all female participants of the PROMOST project.

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Appendix (Appendices)

Interview Guide

Questions for the youth

- What skill did you acquire in this program? What motivated you to choose to learn this skill and not others?
- What was your immediate family reaction to your choice of vocation?
- How would you describe your integration in the labour market?
- What made it easier or difficult for you to start working?
- How do you see yourself in five years?

Questions to the PROMOST Project Officer

- Burundi is said to be a very patriarchal society, what are the challenges you encountered during the implementation of the project with regards to increasing the number of female participants?
- I heard in the FGDs that the PROMOST Project does not give startup kit or capital to the youth after training, what measures are you putting in place to make sure that the graduates are integrated in the labour market without having startup capital?
- With focus on Kayanza where the project has been present for longer time than in other provinces, how would you rate the impact of the project?
- How many youth are integrated (employed and self-employed)

Questions for Government Officials

- How would you describe the PROMOST Project? How is it different from other projects from development partners?
- How does the government support PROMOST's efforts?

- What are the government efforts in stimulating women participation in the labour marke?

Questions for Artisan and Skills instructors

- How many youth did you train and how many of them are women?
- How would you explain the motivation and ability of women in learning and performing tasks as compared to male students?
- How many of the students you trained employed or self employed?
- What do you perseave to be the challenging or influencing factors for your students to get employed or start their own businesses?

Questions for the members of the Platform

- What is your role in the platform?
- What would you consider your achievement in your role with regards to women empowerment and intergration in the labour market?
- How would you describe the community transformation regarding women participation in the labour market before and after the PROMOST project?