Most households enrolled in Rwanda’s flagship anti-poverty program own mobile phones, but many still lack decent housing, clean water and modern cooking methods, according to new government data.

Findings from the 2023/2024 Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV7), released Wednesday by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda, show that 72.4% of households under the Vision Umurenge Program (VUP) own a phone, compared to 84.6% nationwide.

Of the 391,000 households in the program, 62% keep livestock, slightly below the national average of 69.2%. Despite these gains, poverty remains widespread: 41% of VUP households are poor, with 9% in extreme poverty and 32% in moderate poverty. Poverty levels are highest among households participating in classic public works, at 48.5%.

The survey also found that 87% of VUP households have community-based health insurance, though coverage is lower in classic public works than in other categories.

Basic living conditions remain a major challenge. Twelve percent of households still rely on unsafe water sources, while up to 83% live in mud or poorly covered houses. Only between 13% and 29% of households reported having cement floors.

Traditional cooking methods dominate, with 96% of households using firewood and 44% relying on three-stone stoves. Radio ownership is high at 75%, but smartphones remain scarce.

The Vision Umurenge Program was launched in 2008 by the Ministry of Local Government to support citizens in extreme poverty through public works, financial support and social protection.