



Institute of Policy Analysis
and Research - Rwanda

IPAR Rwanda 10th Annual Research Conference

Theme

***Understanding the Impacts of Covid-19 on Households and
Businesses in Rwanda: Policies to Support Inclusive Growth
and Economic Recovery***

24 November 2022

Park Inn Kigali

Concept Note

Table of Contents

- Background..... 3
- The Conference 3
- 1. Objective 4
- 2. Target audience..... 4
- 3. Structure and Venue 4
- 4. Conference Thematic Areas 4
- 5. The Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR-Rwanda) 7

Background

Post-Covid-19 Economic Recovery Challenges in Rwanda

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with long standing climate change risks and an increase in the cost of living occasioned by supply chain challenges in the oil sector have challenged development planning and economic recovery. Policy and decision makers have to deal with a triple challenge which combines recovery from the medium to long term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic including reversals in poverty rates, lags in education outcomes for children, teenage pregnancies and input supply chain bottlenecks. In addition, policy makers need to tackle prolonged effects of climate change which negatively impacts food production, distribution and nutrition among households. Lastly, policy makers are grappling with imported inflation which has been occasioned due to the Russia-Ukraine war, leading to the rising cost of fuel which increases businesses inputs' costs and the general cost of living within households.

The Conference

In an effort to continually inform policy and encourage a culture of debate on the social economic recovery and inclusive growth in the economic era in Rwanda, IPAR-Rwanda is planning to have a one-day conference that will bring together researchers, policy makers and development partners to deliberate on key strategies that will address COVID-19 effects on the socio-Economic development in Rwanda.

The one-day conference will discuss the findings of research in Rwanda on policies for inclusive and resilient post-covid-19 economic recovery in Rwanda with a focus on businesses and households. A central theme to this conference will be the issue of inclusion (leave no one behind) in the process of economic recovery. The conference sub-themes will entail issues such the impact of covid-19 on households and businesses, the impact of covid-19 policy interventions such the Economic recovery fund and others. Key to the inclusion agenda will be discussions on innovative policy actions for job creation among the youth and women in Rwanda.

Additionally, the event aims to bring keynote speakers from other countries which will enrich the discussions.

The overall aim of the conference is to provide policy makers with the latest evidence on policies and programmes which can assist in achieving inclusive economic recovery outcomes both from Rwanda as well as countries to which Rwanda looks or could look for inspiration.

Speakers will include keynote speeches from high level decision makers and presentations from senior researchers at IPAR-Rwanda and other institutions in Rwanda and beyond. Presentations of will increase information shared with decision makers and enable evidence base policy making.

In preparation of a series of thematic workshops on inclusive economic recovery, IPAR will organise an internal organising committee consisting of a small group of IPAR staff who will

lead the thematic sessions of the conference. This group will make suggestions about the conference topics, suggestions on who should be invited, and to what extent and how it should be open to the public and streamed online.

A call for papers is published in addition to this conference concept note.

1. Objective

The overall objective of the conference is to provide policy makers with the latest evidence on policies and programmes which can assist in achieving inclusive economic recovery outcomes for different segments of the population including large businesses, Small and Medium Enterprises(SMEs), households, the youths, women, the disabled and others using research evidence from Rwanda as well as countries to which Rwanda looks or could look for inspiration.

2. Target audience

The conference is aimed to bring together primarily national policy makers, civil servants from the key development ministries and organisations, other stakeholders (CSOs, development partners, the private sector, the media) and researchers to present and discuss we can achieve inclusive growth and economic recovery during the post-covid era in Rwanda. At the same time, the event aims to shape and prioritise with the target audience the policy recommendations that could inform the future planning process in Rwanda and contribute to bring positive change to improve policy making for inclusive economic recovery in Rwanda.

While the audience is primarily Rwandan, potential speakers reporting on other countries' experiences will bring an international dimension to the event in terms of content as well as participation.

3. Structure and Venue

The conference will revolve around one day of presentations and panel discussions. It will involve several speakers, some of which will deliver keynote presentations, as well as around 100 participants from Government Ministries, department and Agencies, local government representatives, development partners and other IPAR's stakeholders. A detailed agenda will be shared with participants closer to the event. The event will take place at Park Inn Hotel in Kigali, on 20th October 2022

4. Conference Thematic Areas

Conference Thematic focus 1: *Re-aligning and monitoring of national development priorities to get medium to long term development priorities back on track during the post-covid 19 era*

The government of Rwanda has established a number of frameworks to monitor progress with respect to achieving National development targets by 2024 as enshrined in the National Strategy Transformation NST1. These include the evaluation of the performance contracts which is done annually, mid-term and end line evaluations of development frameworks such the NST and the Vision 2050. However, uncertainties occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic have led to re-prioritization within some government programs with aspects such as

vaccination and health care taking the forefront as opposed to other development programs that had been planned at the initiation of the NST1.

In addition, domestic resource mobilization has been affected due to measures that have been implemented to contain the pandemic including movement restrictions between districts, curfew hours for business operations and others. Reductions in domestic resource mobilization have been coupled with delays disbursements from development partners (who face uncertainty in their own economies) and increased borrowing developing countries in order to cover budget deficits occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, the pandemic has led to a slowdown in the assumptions such rates of economic growth, rates of employment and rates of poverty reduction that had been envisaged while setting initial targets within national development strategies such as the NST 1. This implies that some of the original targets could be missed if not well monitored.

As part of this conference policy makers will determine which indicators are lagging behind, which indicators have had reversals in terms of progress, what impact have these reversals had on peoples' livelihoods and businesses, and what measures the government has adopted in order get on track with achieving the NST planned targets by 2024.

Conference Thematic Focus 2: Understanding of the Impact of Public Policies and Interventions towards enabling Inclusive Business Recovery.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, findings from studies, IPAR is conducting show reduction in business revenues, profits and employment with a number of SMEs closing altogether. A number of policy interventions including the Economic Recovery Fund, the Manufacture to Rebuild and Recover, loan restructuring, VAT receipt repayments, tax delays and others have been implemented to enable business recovery. However, it is not clear what impact these interventions are having on enabling business recovery within the private sector. In addition, it is not clear to what extent these interventions are meeting the needs of businesses in an environment where purchasing power is low and economic recovery slow. Continued progress will require major shifts in its development Rwanda's model where government will continue to act as both a delivery agent for development and as an enabler of private sector development, most notably through establishing backward and forward linkages between local and international private sector actors.

This conference will engage policy makers in order seek answers to what more can be done in order to promote faster business recovery within the private sector in Rwanda within the short, medium and long terms. Findings from the IPAR-Rwanda panel surveys conducted among SMEs within the City of Kigali and the six secondary inform the discussions rate of and nature of business recovery and impact of implemented government policies on business and economic recovery in Rwanda.

Conference Thematic Focus 3: Leveraging ICT Technologies to Promote a Resilient knowledge based economy and Business Recovery in Rwanda

One of the key medium to long term ambitions of Rwanda is to become a middle income knowledge based economy. A number of investments in ICT infrastructure have been made by the Government of Rwanda to attain a knowledge based economy. Findings from the preliminary desktop research show that Rwanda has taken progressive steps to becoming an innovation hub which is beginning to attract big technology companies. This has been achieved through investments in both ICT infrastructure and also investment in a conducive business climate giving the lessons for other African countries.

One thing innovators and technology entrepreneurs find as they build out their companies and solutions is the lack of necessary infrastructure across many African countries. The Rwandan government has made a commitment to investing in digital infrastructure which is a major incentive for anyone in the business of innovation. In 2011, the government completed a nationwide 2,300-kilometre fibre-optic cable connecting Rwanda to the outside world and providing fast internet access to a wider range of broadband services. Despite the numerous ICT innovations, it is not clear how the new ICT start-ups in the private sector have utilized and benefited from ICT innovations to improve productivity and profitability of their businesses in this Covid-19 and post Covid-19 era. In addition, the role of ICT in terms of business sustainability, impact and scalability in order to create new jobs for new labour market entrants is not clear. During this conference, policy makers, researchers and the private sector will assess how the private sector is taking advantage of the ICT innovations and new digital technologies in order to drive the knowledge based economy agenda in Rwanda. In addition, the role of ICT in taking advantage of continental trade initiatives such as the AFCTA and ecommerce will be discussed during the one-day conference

Conference Thematic focus 4: Policies for the Empowerment of Youth and Women in Rwanda during the Post-Covid-19 era: Policy actions for Employment Creation among youth and reduction of Unpaid care work among women.

This conference thematic area we will deal with the aspirations of the youth and women during post-covid-19 era. The key issues within this thematic area will be youth employment and women empowerment through the reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work among women in Rwanda. IPAR-Rwanda will present findings from the youth employment policies research under the PEP project and the findings from the GROW project baseline study on the reduction of unpaid care work among rural women. The presentation of research findings will be followed by a panel discussion among policy makers and practitioners in the Youth employment and Women Empowerment Space in order to come up with recommendations on enhancing youth employment and women empowerment in Rwanda.

Conference Thematic Focus 5: Policies to mitigate against the Impacts of Climate Change in Rwanda: The Food innovations systems approach

One of the key challenges during the post-covid 19 era has been an increase in the cost of living which is partly attributed to bottlenecks in the food production systems which have been impacted by both climate change and constraints with fertiliser supply chains. Policies to increase food production need to take a systems approach to all the issues surrounding agricultural value chains in

Rwanda in order to ensure sustainable food security for the growing rural and urban populations. IPAR findings on the food Governance and innovations system in Rulindo, and the Assessment of the Agricultural Innovation Systems (AIS) will be presented under this theme followed by policy discussions with the key agricultural sector stakeholders. In addition, IPAR invite other researchers to submit their researcher papers on this topic as well.

IPAR's mission is to enhance evidence-based policy making through research and policy analysis, promote a culture of dialogue and debate to improve policy and impact change in Rwanda.

5. The Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR-Rwanda)

The Institute of Policy Analysis and Research- IPAR-Rwanda is Rwanda's leading independent think tank with a reputation for high quality, cutting edge research and policy publications. IPAR-Rwanda has been operational in a wide range of fields structured around five themes: **1) Agriculture, Rural Development and Settlements 2) Social Development; 3) Governance, 4) Economic Growth and Transformation; 5) Environment and Natural Resources Management.**

IPAR-Rwanda became fully operational in May 2008. Since then, IPAR-Rwanda has successfully Conducted 9 research conferences, workshops and panel discussion which bring together different stakeholders including policy makers, development partners CSOs and private sector debate and exchange ideas on different with an aim of impacting change on the wellbeing of citizens.

IPAR staff has had wide consultancy and research experience internationally and have collaborated and consulted with institutions in Europe, America and many countries in Africa. Major IPAR partners are Government of Rwanda, Civil society, the private sector, development partners, universities and other Think Tanks regionally and internationally. We collaborate with major international organisations, including GIZ, USAID, DFID, World Bank, Action Aid Rwanda, UNDP, UNFPA, EU, ACBF and World Vision among others.

Overall, the institute has worked well with private organisations, governmental and non-Governmental organisations in undertaking project assessments and developing monitoring and evaluation programs, strategic plans and resource mobilisation strategies. We also have a highly professional relationship with other think tanks in Africa as well as a competent and well-qualified team that is able to undertake any activity which falls within our mandate.