

The Sixth EPRN Students' Conference

Theme: "Post COVID-19 Recovery: Youth Employment in Rwanda, Challenges and Opportunities."

Venue: Kigali – Rwanda, 25th November 2022

Concept Note

1. Background

The coronavirus pandemic, which started in China in December 2019, has not only created challenges on the health system, but it has had a very big impact on youth globally. School dropouts, mental health problems, unemployment, home based sexual violence and early pregnancies... those are some of many challenges facing youth and specifically university students due the Covid-19 pandemic. On another hand, Covid-19 generated some opportunities to youth including but not limited to getting jobs by the time classes were closed mostly those related to e-services; undertaking hands-on income generating activities like from construction, mining, masonry, etc. According to the NISR Labor Force Survey (2021); generally, the number of employed population has declined since August 2020. A comparison of the current Quarter (August 2021(Q3)) with the same quarter one year back (August 2020(Q3)) shows that the total employment declined by around 13.3 percent from 3.7 million to 3.2 million of employed population. A comparison with the previous quarter shows that total employment slightly increased by 1.6 percent. The unemployment rate in August 2021 (Q3) declined to 19.4 percent as compared to 23.5 percent in May 2021(Q2) which is equivalent to a decrease of 4.1 percentage points. The unemployment rate remained relatively higher among females (22.2 percent) as compared to males (17.2 percent). The unemployment rate is relatively higher among youth population aged 16 years to 30 years (25.5 percent) as compared to the unemployment rate among adults aged 31 years and above (14.9 percent).

The Government of Rwanda seeks to alleviate unemployment by implementing various programs like NST1 (National strategy for transformation) to support young people in finding and keeping a job, thus contributing to economic growth. Through the NST 1, the Government aspires to curate 1,500,000 off-farm jobs by 2024.

In addition, to support recovering the capacities of private sector, the Government of Rwanda established the Economic Recovery Fund phase one and two (ERF 1&2) to support the recovery of businesses hardest hit by COVID-19 so that they can survive, resume operations and safeguard employment, thereby cushioning the economic effects of the pandemic. The ERF 2 will provide funding to key sectors manufacturing that champion innovation, create employment opportunities and prioritize Made in Rwanda such as construction material, agro processing, textiles and light manufacturing.

The fund is also expected to provide loans to businesses which demonstrate the negative impact of COVID-19 on their operations proven by at least 20% reduction in sales for the past 12 months. Additionally, it will allocate working capital for small businesses, guarantee scheme for special categories such as youth women and people living with disabilities as well as a refinancing window for sectors that are eligible.

The 6th Students Conference will be a good platform to reflect and brainstorm on COVID-19 employment related challenges and opportunities to youth; and devise recommendations to all concerned players (GoR, DPs, CSO/INGOs, PSF...), to undertake strategies to enhance youth employment as one of key recovery measures.

About EPRN Rwanda

Economic Policy Research Network (EPRN Rwanda) is a Research and Training Institution with a mission to contribute to the evidence-based economic policymaking by providing high-quality research, building capacities and creating networking opportunities. The Students Chapter is a flagship project of EPRN, which aims to develop young researchers, provide opportunities for university students such as debate competition, networking, youth seminars, study trips, research conferences. So far, five students' conferences in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021 have been organized with more than 17 papers presented and awarded. EPRN website: www.eprnrwanda.org.

2. About the Conference

Every year, EPRN and partners prepare a research conference for university students at bachelor level; who write papers and participate in debate competition on selected topics. Interested university students from both public and private universities write good quality research papers; or attend debate sessions around one or more of the following subtopics (around the main theme which is: ***Post COVID-19 Recovery: Youth Employment in Rwanda, Challenges and Opportunities***).

Sub-topics:

- *COVID-19 and education/human capital development*
- *COVID-19 and digital economy*
- *COVID-19 and youth labor market*
- *COVID-19 and green economy revolution*
- *Youth in agribusiness*

3. About the Competition

The competition will be held in two categories: Quiz competition and paper writing competition

3.1. Quiz competition

Interested students in universities will form groups of three members. The preliminary selections of the groups to participate in the group quiz will be done at provincial level, and winners from provinces will compete at national level during student conference. Three winning groups will be rewarded financially or in-kind. Females students are highly encouraged to participate.

3.2. Paper writing competition

EPRN advertises a call for abstracts and interested students will respond by submitting abstracts around one of the suggested sub-topics. Authors of the selected abstracts will be trained in Research methodology and will be assigned with supervisor (s) to help them come up with quality papers. The best three papers will be presented sign the conference and awarded financially or in-kind. Females students are highly encouraged to submit abstracts.

4. Budget and Partnership arrangement

The overall budget for this conference is 10,000,000 Rwf (conference logistics including promotional materials, awards to winning contestants, payments to trainer and mentors and judges).

Is your company /institution interested in supporting and unleashing the potential of youth? Kindly join hands with EPRN to make this conference successful. Partners will contribute to activities' budget and take part in their implementation towards achievement of conference objectives, and at the same time widen the visibility of partners' brands.

In case you are interested to partner with EPRN in organizing this students' conference, kindly contact us through info@eprnrwanda.org .

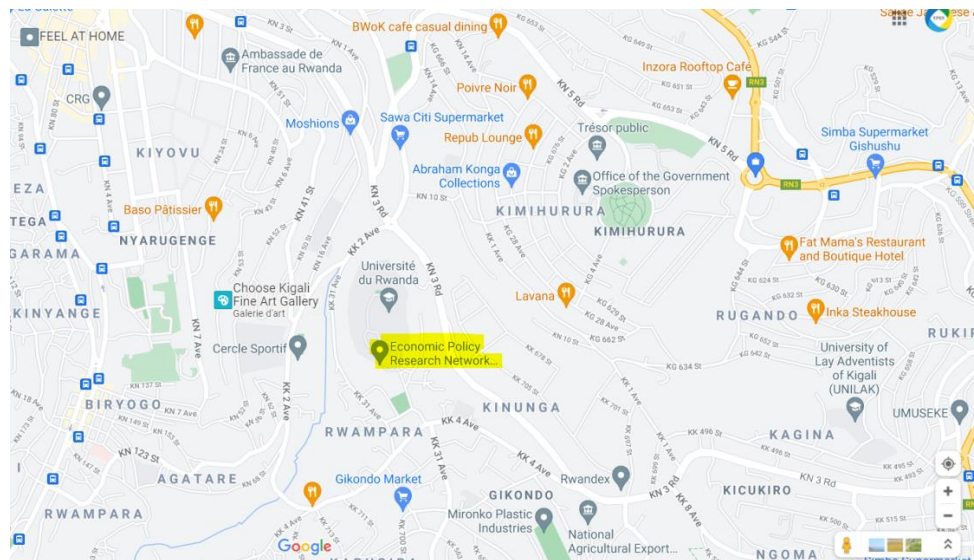
5. More information about this conference

For further clarifications, kindly write to us through info@eprnrwanda.org with a copy to ed@eprnrwanda.org or call to any of these numbers: **0788357648/789648172/0788615859**.

6. Address

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