



Fourth EPRN Students' Conference

- Theme: “Multidimensional impacts of COVID-19 on youth in Rwanda, challenges and opportunities”

4th December 2020 @Kigali

CONCEPT NOTE

1. *About EPRN Rwanda*

The Economic Policy Research Network (EPRN Rwanda) is a research and training institution with a mission to contribute to evidence-based economic policymaking by providing high-quality research, building capacities and creating networking opportunities for local experts. Through its Student Chapter, EPRN aims to build a pool of young researchers and policy analysts in Rwanda who will contribute to such policy research. EPRN sets out to empower students to collectively participate in the reduction of poverty by sparking their creativity and innovation through the EPRN competition series. So far, three student conferences have been held in 2017, 2018, and 2019 with more than 12 papers presented.

EPRN Rwanda is organizing the Fourth Student Competition and Conference which is planned to be held on 4th December 2020 in Kigali, Rwanda (virtually through MS Teams). This year's theme is **“Multidimensional impacts of COVID-19 on youth in Rwanda, challenges and opportunities”**. *The target group for the Student Conference and Competition is Rwandan youth in general and mostly university students*. The main objective of this activity is to create a platform for youth and academics, to develop talents in research, and to foster a culture of reading and scientific writing. Through the quiz competition, the participating youth get to understand the clear picture of socio-economic issues and the status of our economy. Furthermore, they get the opportunity to discuss, exchange and network. This will lead to enhancing their communication and public speaking skills which are part of the foundation to youth empowerment.

2. *Back ground: Covid-19, key specific challenges for youth*

The United Nation's Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to the COVID 19 Crisis warns that “The COVID-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis: it is affecting societies and economies at their core while the impact of the pandemic will vary from country to country, from household to household and across all demographics, it will most likely increase poverty and inequalities at a global scale, making achievement of SDGs even more urgent¹.” The following are specific COVID-19-related issues for youth:

Education: Many countries have decided to close almost all economic activities as well as schools, colleges and universities. School closures impact not only students, teachers, and their families but have far-reaching economic and societal consequences. As the Government continues to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges it poses to different sectors, it has been decided that the earliest schools may reopen in September 2020 (MINEDUC, 2020).

¹ United Nations Development Program, 2020

This poses serious threats challenges to education, increases the probability of drop outs, and restrains student's participation and youth empowerment. The quality of education is also at stake because digital learning systems are not suitable and accessible to all.

Unemployment/underemployment: As for many workers countrywide and globally, young people in Rwanda are at risk of losing their jobs and occupations. Youth-led small and women businesses and cooperatives are particularly vulnerable (Cook and Nixon, 2000). The service sector employs a big part of working youth, i.e. hotels, restaurants, supermarkets and mobile services of which some have already laid-off workers and closed doors.

Networking and knowledge exchange: Young people are going to face the challenge of limited networking and opportunities for exchange. Important events such as Youth Connect, Capital Market University Challenge, Global Money Week and Rwanda Day are likely to be suspended until further notice.

Entertainment and sports: Lockdown and quarantine have severely restricted sport opportunities and entertainment activities which has particularly deprived many young people of their happiness.

Socio- economic problems, including food insecurity and homelessness, as well as access to childcare, health care, housing, internet and disability services have emerged.

Other issues: Limited chance of accessing loans and other financial assistance from banks and national financial fund boards; There are skepticisms that national youth bodies and NGOs should not prioritize other policies over youth policies.

3. Objectives and purpose of the competition and conference

The main objective of the EPRN Students' Competition and Conference 2020 is to create awareness of social and economic issues, to provide a platform for youth, and to ignite the research spirit among university students.

More specifically:

- To understand the current and post-COVID-19 socio-economic impacts on Rwanda's economy and catalyze the youth to participate in post COVID-19 nation building;
- To create awareness on youth policies aimed at strengthening student's capacities to actively conduct research and analysis to inform policymaking in post COVID-19 Rwanda
- To cultivate the culture of reading and scientific writing amongst youth;
- To create a platform to give opportunities for exchange and networking among aspiring and senior researchers, and learn from best practices across the country.

4. Theme and Sub topics:

The theme “**Multidimensional impacts of COVID-19 on youth in Rwanda, challenges and opportunities**” will comprise the following subtopics:

- COVID-19 and education in Rwanda
- COVID-19 and youth unemployment
- Coronavirus economy and digitalization
- Economic impacts of COVID-19 on young entrepreneurs
- Coronavirus and Agriculture: Impacts of COVID-19 on Youth Cooperatives and Farmers
- COVID-19: Socio-economic costs, failure for SDGs targets

Each subtheme should involve gender-related issues, and lessons and recommendations for medium- and long-term economic recovery.

5. About the Competition

Initial plan was to have both groups competition and individual competition. But due to COVID-19; whereby gathering many students together is not feasible, EPRN will undertake a competition individual level (research paper writing competition)

EPRN received more than 20 abstracts from students. They all undergone a training in research methodology focusing on writing research papers. They were also assigned a mentor/reviewer.

EPRN (through volunteer senior members and representatives of students’ groups) will select the best five papers to be presented in the conference scheduled on 04/12/2020. After presentation, judges will rank papers from number 1 to number 5.

Due to COVID-19, the conferenced shall be online by use of MS Teams.

Awards are as follows: 1st Paper: 300,000 Frw, 2nd Paper: 250,000 Rwf, 3rd Paper: 150,000 Rwf
4th Paper: 100,000 Rwf, 5th paper: 50,000 Rwf

6. Contacts

For further clarifications, kindly write to us through info@eprnrwanda.org, or call **0788357648** or **0789648172**.

Den at Kigali, 15th September 2020

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