



EPRN/IPAR HIGH LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE

“Towards the 3rd Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy/Citizen Participation and Inclusive Plans”

DRAFT REPORT

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACBF:	Africa Capacity Building Foundation
CEO:	Chief Executive Officer
CRC:	Citizen Report Card
CSOs:	Civil Society Organizations
EDPRS:	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
EPRN:	Economic Policy Research Network
IPAR:	Institute of Policy Research Analysis
DDP:	District Development Plans
DDS:	District Development Strategies
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GOR:	Government of Rwanda
RGB:	Rwanda Governance Board
ICT:	Information and Communications Technology
MINECOFIN:	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs:	Non- Government Organizations
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
UR:	University of Rwanda

FOREWORD

Involving citizens in planning and implementation of government programs is crucial for any government to deliver inclusive growth. Giving citizens the opportunity to decide what should be done for them saves a lot of resources when governments are planning for the future of their countries. At the same time, going back to the citizens to consult them when anything goes wrong helps to build a strong bond and trust between the people and the their government.

It is against this background that the Economic Policy Research Network (EPRN) in collaboration with the IPAR Rwanda- with support from ACBF organized the half-day High-Level Policy Dialogue on Citizen Participation with the focus on the upcoming third Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS 3) which was held on Friday, May 26, 2017 at Lemigo Hotel and attracted over 90 participants.

The overall objective of the High-Level Policy Dialogue was to provide a platform to various stakeholders to discuss and make recommendations on how citizens' participation in the EDPRS 3 can be enhanced after learning from the experience and practices from the EDPRS 2.

This dialogue was timely given the fact that elaboration of EDPRS 3 has begun and according to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), a mass awareness is planned in June 2017 for all the categories of stakeholders including citizens. The High-Level Policy Dialogue was therefore a success from the fact that participation was very impressive in fact beyond our expectations and the feedback we received was genuine and useful.

From the assessment carried out on the 2016 results of Rwanda Governance Score Card and Citizen Report Card which are published by Rwanda Governance Board (RGB), we learnt that citizen participation in government programs was generally still low. For example, in planning and budgeting at district level, citizen participation remains quite low and there is need to aggressively involve the citizens in these processes in order to budget for the things that match the needs of the people. There was also low citizen participation in decision making at the district level which is also another area that needs attention.

We therefore wish to present to you this report which includes the recommendations made during the High-Level Policy Dialogue. We hope you will get time to read it and also share with others.

On behalf of the organizing team at EPRN and IPAR-Rwanda , I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all the participants for their time and the ideas shared during the meeting.

EPRN and IPAR-Rwanda are always committed to growing a culture of dialogue on policy issues and we are more than ever open to suggestions on how we can even do better when it comes to impacting policy-making.

We thank you.

Seth KWIZERA
Coordinator
Economic Policy Research Network

Eugenia KAYITESI
Executive Director
IPAR-Rwanda

1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The High-Level Policy Dialogue was organized under the theme: “*Towards the 3rd Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy/Citizen participation and inclusive plans*”. The Policy dialogue was further divided into two key presentations as follows:

- Presentation by RGB regarding the assessment of EDPRS2/Citizen participation and inclusiveness in Rwanda;
- Presentation of future plans to make the EDPRS 3 more inclusive and strategy to enhance citizen participation during formulation and implementation done by MINECOFIN.

The High-Level Policy Dialogue brought together 113 participants who included researchers, academics, government officials, representatives of development partners, local and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the Private Sector and media deliberating on issues related to strategic approaches to stir up citizen participation in the formulation and implementation of EDPRS3.

This report therefore, summarizes presentations, plenary discussions and recommendations that arose from the deliberations of the dialogue. The report is organized with a foreword from the Executive Director of IPAR-Rwanda, which is followed by general introductions including a background on IPAR-Rwanda and EPRN and the High Level Policy Dialogue.

This report also features general comments and ideas raised in the opening and closing sessions of the dialogue drawn from the two open discussions involving participants.

There are also welcome remarks by the Executive director –IPAR and the opening remarks by Dr. Felicien Usengumukiza who spoke on behalf of the EPRN Chairman, Prof. Kigabo Thomas.

The last two sections of this report are general conclusions principally containing the closing remarks.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 ABOUT EPRN

The Economic Policy Research Network, EPRN, is an equal opportunity economic policy research platform in Rwanda bringing together key economic management institutions, individuals and organizations active in economic policy research and analysis to create a pool community for economic policy researchers through organizing trainings on qualitative and quantitative research methods and analysis, research coaching and mentorship, joint research projects to support provide evidence for economic policy formulation and implementation. EPRN therefore responds to economic policy gaps created mainly by lack of quality and informative research and the challenge of human capacity in terms of limited numbers of economic researchers and active involvement.

EPRN’s mission is to contribute to the development of economic policy research and the capacity strengthening in economic policy in Rwanda and beyond.

1.2.2 ABOUT IPAR-RWANDA

IPAR-Rwanda is an independent non-profit think-tank whose mandate is to carry out policy analysis and research to inform policies and decision-making and promote a culture of debate on policy issues in Rwanda.

IPAR-Rwanda at large seeks a harmonized target of strengthening the evidence base available to government, civil society, private sector and development partners regarding the pressing social, economic, and political issues facing Rwanda.

It has an engagement strategy which is designed to ensure that beneficiaries as well as stakeholders are engaged with its work. Its research is designed to support the Rwandan Policy Makers by offering scientific evidence to inform strategic planning in implementation of blue-prints such as the Vision 2020 aimed at achieving economic growth and full employment, social protection for the vulnerable and improved governance, and the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy in its second phase (EDPRS II).

As highlighted in IPAR-Rwanda's mandate, contributing to the development of public discourse on policies and strengthening the evidence base available to policy makers, the organization of annual research conference was thought out as one of the platforms through which available research on contemporary topics is disseminated to ignite public debate on these issues presented.

1.3 GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE EPRN-IPAR HIGH LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE

Rwanda's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS) stems from the country's vision 2020 and guides medium term actions that will lead to the achievement of the vision's goals.

Currently, Rwanda is implementing EDPRS2(2013-2018) whose main goal is to speed up Rwanda's progress towards becoming a middle-income status country and creating better quality of life for all Rwandans through sustained average Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate of 11.5% and accelerated poverty reduction to less than 30% of the population.

The objectives of the EDPRS 2 are; to achieve a rapid economic growth to middle-income status, increased poverty reduction, more off-farm jobs, more urbanization, reduced external dependency and private sector as the engine of growth.

The EDPRS 2 will come to end in June 2018 and it will be succeeded by EDPRS 3. As EDPRS 2 comes to an end while preparations for formulation of EDPRS 3 start, there is need to look back how EDPRS 2 was inclusive in terms of bringing on board citizen participation in its formulation and implementation process and also to enhance citizen participation in planning and implementation of EDPRS 3.

EDPRS 2 emphasizes citizen participation in accountable governance, one of its four thematic areas. The objective of this thematic area is to improve the overall level of services delivery and ensure citizen satisfaction above 80% during EDPRS 2. It also focuses on increased citizen participation as a way of ensuring ownership and feedback for efficiency and sustainability of the government programs.

The EPRN-IPAR High-Level Policy Dialogue aimed at discussing on how the forthcoming EDPRS 3 can be more inclusive and how citizen participation can be enhanced during the formulation and implementation.

The dialogue was therefore the right platform for participants to discuss strategically various ways through which the EDPRS 3 objectives can be achieved by involving citizens at the grassroots level in its formulation and implementation.

1.4 ORGANIZATION

The EPRN/ IPAR-Rwanda High-Level Policy Dialogue was organized in such a manner that allowed and stimulated contribution from all participants. The presentations and plenary discussions focused on general objectives and targets of EDPRS 2 and 3, Vision 2020 and how citizen participation can be enhanced in the forthcoming EDPRS 3 planning and implementation.

In the course of the day, constructive discussions were preceded with opening speeches, presentations citizen participation in the EDPRS 2 and the future plans to make EDPRS 3 more inclusive. Participants were also given time to ask questions, seek for clarifications and complement or supplement on key presentations.

Presentations were spaced into one session. However to allow dialogue and full participation, after every presentation, there was plenary discussions to gather more ideas and give space for recommendations for future policy formulation and research on the area. Participants were also treated to one healthy break—morning and there after presentation of the recommendations and closing remarks, there was lunch buffet for all participants from where they continued networking and discussions on the topics of the day.

2.0 OPENING SESSION

The opening session of the EPRN/IPAR High-Level Policy Dialogue included welcome remarks from IPAR-Rwanda Executive Director and key note speech from the representative of EPRN Chairman. These followed by a group of the participants.

2.1 WELCOME REMARKS BY THE IPAR-RWANDA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IPAR Executive Director, Mrs. Eugenia KAYITESI, welcomed participants and commended them for their time to attend and to contribute to the discussions during the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Citizen Participation in EDPRS 3 formulation and implementation process.

She informed participants that the High-Level Policy Dialogue was organized by EPRN in collaboration with IPAR with the support from the Africa Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). The purpose of the policy dialogue, she noted, was to discuss the ways citizen participation in the formulation and implementation process of the forth coming EDPRS 3 should be enhanced. She noted that this policy dialogue was timely because EDPRS 2 is nearing its end and it is therefore the right time to discuss how citizens can play a role in formulating and implementing the upcoming EDPRS 3.

Mrs. KAYITESI reminded the participants that EDPRS stems from Rwanda's Vision 2020 and guides medium term actions that will lead to the achievement of the Vision's goals. She said that specifically EDPRS 2 has a goal to speed up Rwanda's progress towards becoming a middle-income status country and creating a better quality of life for all Rwandans through sustained average GDP growth of 11.5% and

accelerated poverty reduction to less than 30% of the population. The objectives of the EDPRS 2, she said, are achieving a rapid economic growth to middle income status, increased poverty reduction, more off-farm jobs, more urbanization, reduced external dependency and private sector as engine of growth.

Mrs. KAYITESI noted that EDPRS 2 in its 4th thematic area—Accountable Governance— seeks to improve the overall level of service delivery and ensures citizen satisfaction above 80%. EDPRS 2 also focuses on increased citizen participation as a way of ensuring ownership and feedback for efficiency and sustainability of government programs.

She said the High-Level Policy Dialogue was therefore the right platform at the right time to discuss ways how citizens’ voices can be integrated into formulation of the EDPRS 3. She ended her welcome remarks by urging participants to actively contribute to the dialogue.

2.2 OPENING REMARKS BY DR. FELICIEN USENGUMUKIZA ON BEHALF OF EPRN CHAIRMAN

Dr Felicien Usengumukiza delivered the opening remarks on behalf of Prof. Thomas Kigabo, the EPRN Chairman, who was attending other official duties. Dr. Usengumukiza welcomed the participants and thanked them for their time to attend the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Citizen Participation in EDPRS 3 formulation and implementation.

He informed participants that EPRN was created to bring together researchers and policy-makers to share information related to economic performance of Rwanda. He said the High-Level Policy Dialogue aimed at contributing to informing policy-makers towards improving economic transformation of Rwanda by identifying areas needed for citizen consultation in terms of planning for EDPRS 3 and Vision 2050.

In his words, he said, “Citizen Participation is one area we are discussing today and that’s why I welcome the idea of inclusiveness and participation. When we are planning EDPRS 3, we need to consult each and every member of the population in order to take the needs of the citizens into planning.”

He said that such a dialogue provided a good opportunity for the Institute of Policy Research and Analysis in Rwanda to formulate policy recommendations for Rwanda’s economic transformation through EDPRS 3 and Vision 2050.

Before declaring the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Citizen Participation in EDPRS3 open, Dr. Usengumukiza ended his remarks by calling upon participants to contribute ideas on how citizen participation can be enhanced during EDPRS 3.

3. DIALOGUE PRESENTATIONS

3.1 FIRST PRESENTATION: Citizen Participation and Inclusive Economic Growth

The essence of this presentation was to provide an assessment of citizen participation and inclusiveness in Rwanda with a particular target on the tools used to measure citizen participation and inclusiveness in government programs such as EDPRS 2.

The presenter, Dr. Félicien Usengumukiza, Head of Research and Monitoring at Rwanda Governance Board (RGB) went an extra mile and provided a relationship between economic growth, citizen participation and inclusiveness.

From this presentation, it was understood that economic growth doesn't only address inequality but it also reduces or alleviates poverty by creating opportunities for the poor and the most vulnerable members of the society. This part, he said, is quite relevant for Rwanda because the assessment done by the government even in the EDPRS 2, shows that Rwanda has been ensuring inclusive economic growth which benefits the poor.

This presentation also provided an insight into the qualities of Government for Economic Growth and Democratic participation which include: Economic liberalism, Political pluralism, Social development and Administrative accountability.

Through this presentation, it was understood that citizen participation and inclusiveness in planning and implementing government programs is measured by two tools including Rwanda Governance Score Card and Citizen Report Card (CRC) which were developed by RGB. These two tools provide an insight into the level at which citizens participate in formulation and implementation of government programs. In Rwanda, citizens are also consulted on global programs such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because they are also aligned with national programs to speed up economic development and social transformation.

3.1.1 KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PRESENTATION

- According to Rwanda Governance Score Card, citizen participation and inclusiveness as one of the eight indicators tracked in this score card, stood at 76.48% in 2016. However, citizen participation as a sub-indicator performed relatively low at 61.93%.
- Citizen Report Card (CRC) shows relatively lower citizen participation at 58.9% and 51% in 2016 and 2015 respectively compared to the Governance Score Card.
- In the framework of promoting Good Governance principles and accountability, it was decided that 10% of CRC findings contribute in Districts performance evaluation.
- In some indicators, the level of citizen participation in government programs in CRC is generally below 50% which indicates less involvement of citizens. For instance, in 2016, citizen involvement in preparation of district budgets was 21.8%; preparation of district action plans at 24.3%; preparation of district performance contracts at 39.8% and decision making at 48.4%.
- However, citizens were more involved in other government programs such as elections, doing public works (Umuganda), volunteering and so many others.
- The higher involvement of citizens in Rwanda's Home Grown Initiatives (HGI) such as Ubudehe, Umuganda, Gacaca, Girinka, and Imihigo was having a positive impact on social and economic transformation of the citizens and economic growth. This is evidenced by the fact that 1 million

citizens were lifted out of poverty during EDPRS 1 due to the high economic growth of 8% annually on average for the past decade.

- Rwanda also has a governance month through which leaders meet the citizens and collect their views and needs. This is also a good platform that enhances citizen participation.

3.1.2 CHALLENGES PRESENTED

Despite visible progress in improving citizen participation and inclusiveness and the impact this progress had had on the social and economic transformation of Rwanda, there are still challenges or areas which need improvement in order to bring about citizen participation, inclusiveness and rapid economic growth. From this presentation, a number of challenges were shared and they include:

- Rural development. There is need to develop rural areas in order to speed up development and help to reduce poverty in order to accelerate social economic transformation of the rural folks
- Population growth. Rwanda's population is growing rapidly and this may become a burden if the economic growth doesn't grow as fast as the population. Citizens should there be educated on the need to control their family sizes.
- Youth unemployment: To avoid inequality, youth unemployment should be tackled
- Income distribution: Although poverty has reduced in the past decade, there is need to ensure that inequality between the rich and poor narrows down so fast.
- Infrastructure: Having the critical infrastructure will help to accelerate growth and service delivery. This will increase efficiency of the economy and improve citizen satisfaction
- Urbanisation and land management. This is very crucial for overall quality of life and productivity
- Balance of Payment deficit. There is need to increase exports in order to narrow down expenditure on imports. This will improve economic growth thus increase the likelihood of Rwandans getting out of poverty.
- Regional and International security. Terrorism is one issue that should be tackled at regional and international level to guarantee economic growth and stability;

3.1.3 HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PLENARY DISCUSSIONS

A plenary session followed immediately after the presentation. Generally, the participants reacted on the EDPRS 2 targets, low citizen participation and inclusiveness in some government programs and offered suggestions on how the citizens can be more involved in planning and implementation of EDPRS 3.

3.1.4. REACTIONS ON EDPRS 2

- EDPRS 2 targets on access to clean water and literacy rate which are set at 100% are very unrealistic. Are they going to be met?
- Population growth remains high yet with EDPRS 2, Rwanda seeks to achieve an economic growth rate of 11.5%. Isn't the high population growth rate going to affect the achievement of this high economic growth rate? Is there a population control policy in place?
- Income inequality and youth unemployment are some of the biggest challenges EDPRS 2 should help address.

3.1.5 REACTIONS SPECIFICALLY ON CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Specific reactions were made on citizen participation and inclusiveness. They include:

- Rwanda Governance Score Card and Citizen Report Card all indicate low levels of citizen participation and to some extent low satisfaction especially in the local government. What kind recommendations would be suitable for the local authorities to increase citizen participation and therefore increase the level of citizen satisfaction?
- What was behind the low levels of citizen participation and satisfaction as presented in both Rwanda Governance Score card and Citizen Report Card?
- There seem to be a gap on citizen participation between Rwanda Governance Score Card and Citizen Report Card in terms of statistics of 2016.
- Low levels of citizen satisfaction could be explained by the fact that citizens demand ambitious services and in terms of infrastructure, the citizen demands are expensive and once they a slight delay, it could lead to less satisfaction among the citizens
- There is low participation of citizens in planning and budgeting process at districts. However, the local government has started addressing this by involving citizens in this process. Citizens are consulted on their needs right from the village level and these are taken into consideration when district budgets are being planned. This process started in the planning activities for the years 2017, 2018 and 2019 and it will continue in order to increase citizen participation in budgeting.
- Extreme poverty is one of the challenges hindering citizen participation in social and economic programs

3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FIRST PRESENTATION

- There is need to boost economic growth in order to eradicate extreme poverty, reduce income inequality and promote equal citizen participation and inclusiveness during EDPRS 3
- Citizens need to be sensitized on the dangers of rapid population growth if the country is to achieve higher economic growth and boost welfare of their citizens. The involvement of citizens in population control will be very key in order to achieve the EDPRS 3 targets

- Youth unemployment deserves an urgent attention because the youth make a big part of the population. If their participation in government programs, social and economic development is low, it will be hard to achieve the desired growth and transformation targets
- There is need for continuous sensitization of the citizens on their rights to participate in the activities that are meant for their welfare and also to demand better results from leaders especially at the local level.

4. SECOND PRESENTATION

The second presentation was made immediately after the coffee break by Alain Ngendahimana, Planning and Research Analyst at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN). The presentation was specifically on EDPRS 3 elaboration process and the role citizens are expected to play in it. It also covered the EDPRS 2.

4.1 KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PRESENTATION

- EDPRS 2 and related strategies (SSPs and DDPs) will be completed in June 2018
- Out of the 30 core EDPRS 2 indicators, 27 have been evaluated, 5 (19 %) were achieved, 7 (26%) are on-track, 11(41 %) are on-watch and 4 (15%) are off-track and that citizens were involved at all level through different framework.
- EDPRS 3 will also include important regional and global commitments such as SDGs, EAC Vision 2050 and Africa Agenda 2063
- MINECOFIN is now in the process of hiring a communications firm to work on a mass communication and sensitization campaign of EDPRS 3.
- Stakeholder consultations and outreach for the EDPRS 3 to ensure that as much as possible, no one is left behind in consultations will be held through: Multiple and widespread communication channels e.g. toll free sms line , TV and Radio spots, Kubaza bitera kumenya, Community radios, social media and other platforms;
- The communication strategy also targets grassroots citizen forums;
- The communication campaign will target a wide range of audience including; citizens, policy makers, civil society, private sector, development partners, youth, women, people living with disabilities, elderly, academia, researchers, Rwandans in Diaspora and friends of Rwanda
- The EDPRS 3 completion roadmap was also shared and it indicates that the communication campaign will be held in June 2017 while submission of draft priorities of sectors, interventions and Monitoring and Evaluation matrix which includes targets for Vision 2050, SDGs, were scheduled for May – June 2017;

- The first draft of EDPRS 3 will be ready in July 2017 while the second will be draft will be ready in August 2017. The final draft of EDPRS 3 will be available in November 2017 after adoption of the government seven year program in September 2017.

4.2 SECOND PLENARY SESSION

A plenary discussion was held immediately after the presentation and most of the interventions focused on EDPRS 2 targets and EDPRS 3. Participants also made suggestions on how citizen participation can be enhanced in the formulation and implementation of EDPRS 3.

4.2.1 HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PLENARY SESSION

- EDPRS 3 should help address the challenge of inequality and improve youth employment;
- Should unmet targets of EDPRS 2 be carried along in EDPRS 3?
- MINECOFIN should organize one or two workshops for local leaders on EDPRS 3 planning process.
- MINECOFIN should create an online platform through which researchers can add their input in EDPRS 3 and Vision 2050 planning process.
- Home Grown Initiatives should be strengthened in EDPRS 3 in order to effectively impact the lives of the rural folks. This will also empower the citizens at local levels to participate in the planning process of their development.

5. OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HIGH POLICY DIALOGUE

From the discussions that ensued during the half-day EPRN/IPAR-Rwanda High Level Policy Dialogue, several recommendations were made. They include:

- There is need to boost economic growth in order to eradicate extreme poverty, reduce income inequality and promote equal citizen participation and inclusiveness during EDPRS 3
- Citizens need to be sensitized on the dangers of rapid population growth if the country is to achieve higher economic growth and boost welfare of their citizens. The involvement of citizens in population control will be very key in order to achieve the EDPRS 3 targets
- Youth unemployment deserves an urgent attention because the youth make a big part of the population. If their participation in government programs, social and economic development is low, it will be hard to achieve the desired growth and transformation targets;
- There is need for continuous sensitization of the citizens on their rights to participate in the activities that are meant for their welfare and also to demand better results from leaders especially at the local level.

- MINECOFIN should create an online platform through which researchers can add their input in EDPRS 3 and Vision 2050 planning process.
- Home Grown Initiatives should be strengthened in EDPRS 3 in order to effectively impact the lives of the rural folks. This will also empower the citizens at local levels to participate in the planning process of their development
- MINECOFIN should organize one or two workshops for local leaders on EDPRS 3 planning process.

6. CLOSING SESSION

6.1 CLOSING REMARKS FROM THE IPAR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In the concluding remarks, Mrs. Eugenia Kayitesi, the IPAR Executive Director commended participants for the fruitful deliberations and ideas shared that were relevant in as far as supporting the need for citizen participation is important.

She said: “This was really an important topic and the ideas generated will be used to develop policy recommendations that will be shared with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and other policy-makers so that they can inform the planning process of EDPRS 3 and vision 2050 to make them more inclusive.”

She called upon researchers to be part of the EDPRS 3 and Vision 2050 planning and implementation and share their knowledge on how these policies can achieve the intended goals of transforming the country economically and socially and promoting good governance.

6.1 CLOSING REMARKS BY DR.FELICIEN USENGUMUKIZA

In his concluding speech, he appreciated all participants for the time spent during the half day session and promised that his organization would incorporate all inputs and recommendations drawn from the high level policy dialogue to implement a citizen participatory approach strategy while planning and executing government programs.

7 APPENDIX

7.1 LIST OF PARTICIPANTS TO THE EPRN/IPAR HIGH LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE