

Call for Research proposals/abstracts for the 12th EPRN Annual Economic Research Conference

Lemigo Hotel; 25-26 June 2026

- Conference Theme: Resilient and Inclusive Growth in Rwanda: Policy Pathways Amid Global Uncertainty
- Deadline to submit Research proposals/abstracts: February 06th, 2026 (by 5 pm CAT)

1. Background and Rationale

Rwanda's economy has shown remarkable resilience in recent years. Real GDP grew by 8.9% in 2024, exceeding earlier projections of 8.3%, driven by strong performance in services and industry (NISR, 2025). In the second quarter of 2025, GDP at current market prices was estimated at Frw 5,798 billion, up from Frw 4,966 billion in Q2 2024, representing a 7.8% year-on-year increase (NISR, 2025). Services contributed 50% of GDP, agriculture 23%, and industry 21%, while net taxes accounted for 5% (NISR, 2025).

Inflation, which peaked at 14.3% in 2023, has begun to ease, supported by tighter monetary policy and improved food crop production (IMF, 2024). Fiscal consolidation has also reduced Rwanda's debt-to-GDP ratio from 71.3% in 2022 to 66.6% in 2023, reflecting improved domestic resource mobilization (MINECOFIN, 2024). The Government's FY2025/26 budget stands at Frw 7,032.5 billion, a 21% increase from the previous year, prioritizing investments in agriculture, infrastructure, energy, and social services (MINECOFIN, 2025).

At the continental level, the CAADP Kampala Declaration (2025) sets ambitious targets for agrifood systems transformation, including tripling intra-African trade in agrifood products, reducing post-harvest losses, and raising the share of locally processed food (African Union, 2025). For Rwanda, where agriculture employs over 60% of the population and contributes nearly a quarter of GDP, aligning national agricultural policies with CAADP commitments is critical for food security, rural development, and export diversification (NISR, 2024).

Youth employment remains a pressing challenge. According to the EICV7 Youth Thematic Report (2025), Rwanda's youth (aged 16–35) represent over 60% of the population, yet unemployment and underemployment rates remain high (NISR, 2025). The report highlights that while ICT and digital platforms are expanding, only 18% of youth are employed in technology-related sectors, underscoring the need for deliberate investments in skills development and digital job creation (NISR, 2025). Complementary findings from the ILO's Digital Employment Diagnostic (2025) emphasize Rwanda's potential to leverage ICT policies and innovation hubs to absorb its growing labor force (ILO, 2025).

Regional integration offers Rwanda significant opportunities. Exports to African countries increased from \$196 million in 2016 to \$778 million in 2021, accounting for 50% of total exports (RDB, 2022). Full implementation of AfCFTA is projected to increase Rwanda's real incomes by 3.2%, boost intra-African exports by 38%, and diversify export destinations (World Bank, 2024). However, challenges remain, including reliance on gold exports, limited industrial capacity, and non-tariff barriers (IMF, 2024).

Finally, Rwanda's Vision 2050 emphasizes inclusive growth and equity, aiming to ensure that no citizen is left behind. Social protection programs, gender equality initiatives, and inclusive education policies are central to this agenda (Government of Rwanda, 2020). With poverty reduction progress slowing in recent years, renewed focus on equity is essential to sustain Rwanda's transformation (World Bank, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the 12th EPRN Annual Economic Research Conference will provide a timely platform to discuss how Rwanda can strengthen fiscal space, advance agricultural transformation, harness youth potential, deepen regional integration, and promote inclusive growth. The conference will generate actionable recommendations to support Rwanda's Vision 2050 and its role in Africa's broader transformation.

2. Conference Objectives

The overall objective of the 12th EPRN Annual Economic Research Conference is to provide a platform for collaborative dialogue and evidence-based research that strengthens Rwanda's economic resilience and inclusivity in line with Vision 2050 and the National Strategy for Transformation (NST 2). The conference seeks to generate practical insights and policy recommendations that respond to both domestic priorities and global uncertainties, while fostering partnerships among government, academia, civil society, and development partners.

Specifically, the conference will brainstorm on key policy areas linked to its sub-themes: strengthening tax administration to expand Rwanda's fiscal space Agriculture and Food Systems Transformation for Resilient and Inclusive Growth; Youth and jobs in the era of technology: harnessing Rwanda's demographic dividend; : Regional Integration, Constraints and Prospects: Positioning Rwanda in AfCFTA and EAC; and : Inclusive Growth and Leaving No One Behind: Equity in Rwanda's Vision 2050. These objectives aim to guide discussions toward actionable strategies that can accelerate Rwanda's journey toward sustainable and equitable development.

3. Conference Sessions and Focus Areas

Session 1: Tax Administration to Finance Sustainable Growth: Strengthening Rwanda's Fiscal Space

Context: Rwanda's fiscal deficit has narrowed in recent years, with debt-to-GDP declining from 71.3% in 2022 to 66.6% in 2023 (MINECOFIN, 2024). However, financing ambitious development programs under Vision 2050 requires stronger domestic resource mobilization.

Focus Areas:

- Brainstorm on reforms in tax administration to improve efficiency, compliance, and equity.

- Explore innovative financing instruments such as green bonds, blended finance, and digital tax systems.
- Deliberate on balancing revenue generation with private sector competitiveness and citizen welfare.

Session 2: Agriculture and Food Systems Transformation for Resilient and Inclusive Growth

Context: Agriculture remains the backbone of Rwanda's economy, employing over 60% of the population and contributing nearly a quarter of GDP. Beyond its role in livelihoods, agriculture is central to food security, nutrition, rural development, and export diversification. Rwanda's transformation agenda requires a holistic approach to food systems — spanning production, processing, distribution, and consumption — while addressing challenges such as climate change, demographic pressures, and regional integration.

This session will provide a platform to reflect on Rwanda's progress and co-develop strategies that strengthen resilience, enhance productivity, and ensure inclusive benefits across the food system.

Focus Areas:

- **Food security and nutrition:** Explore strategies to improve availability, access, and utilization of nutritious food.
- **Climate-smart and sustainable agriculture:** Brainstorm on approaches to strengthen resilience through irrigation, mechanization, soil health, and climate adaptation.
- **Value chain development:** Deliberate on strengthening agribusiness, agro-processing, and market linkages to reduce post-harvest losses and increase competitiveness.
- **Innovation and financing:** Reflect on digital platforms, innovative financing instruments, and public-private partnerships to support farmers, SMEs, and cooperatives.
- **Policy coherence and evidence-based planning:** Discuss how research and data can guide Rwanda's agricultural transformation and food systems development.
- **Regional and global integration:** Co-create strategies to expand intra-African agrifood trade under AfCFTA and EAC, while addressing non-tariff barriers and logistics challenges.
- **Equity and inclusion:** Ensure women, youth, and marginalized groups benefit equitably from agricultural transformation and food systems development.

Session 3: Youth and jobs in the era of technology: harnessing Rwanda's demographic dividend

Context: Youth (16–35 years) make up over 60% of Rwanda's population, yet unemployment and underemployment remain high (NISR, 2025). Only 18% of youth are employed in technology-related sectors despite Rwanda's ICT-led development agenda (ILO, 2025).

Focus Areas:

- Explore opportunities in ICT, fintech, and innovation hubs for job creation.
- Brainstorm on skills development programs to align education with labor market needs.
- Deliberate on entrepreneurship support, access to finance, and policies to reduce youth unemployment.

Session 4: Regional Integration, Constraints and Prospects: Positioning Rwanda in AfCFTA and EAC

Context: Rwanda's exports to Africa grew from \$196 million in 2016 to \$778 million in 2021, accounting for 50% of total exports (RDB, 2022). AfCFTA implementation could raise Rwanda's real incomes by 3.2% and boost intra-African exports by 38% (World Bank, 2024).

Focus Areas:

- Brainstorm on Rwanda's trade and industrial policies to maximize AfCFTA and EAC benefits.
- Reflect on constraints such as non-tariff barriers, logistics, and infrastructure gaps.
- Co-develop strategies for SMEs, agro-processing, and regional value chains to enhance competitiveness.

Session 5: Inclusive Growth and Leaving No One Behind: Equity in Rwanda's Vision 2050

Context: Vision 2050 emphasizes inclusive growth, aiming for equitable access to opportunities across rural and urban areas. Poverty reduction progress has slowed, requiring renewed focus on social protection and equity (World Bank, 2023).

Focus Areas:

- Explore Rwanda's social protection, gender equality, and inclusive education policies.
- Brainstorm on approaches to reduce inequality and accelerate poverty reduction.
- Deliberate on how to ensure marginalized groups benefit from Rwanda's transformation agenda.

4. Expected Outputs

The 12th Annual Economic Research Conference is expected to generate both **policy-relevant outputs** and **capacity-building impacts** that contribute to Rwanda's Vision 2050 and NST1 priorities. Expected conference outcomes are as follows:

- **Evidence-based policy recommendations:** Actionable insights on tax administration, agriculture, youth employment, regional integration, and inclusive growth to inform government strategies.
- **Strengthened collaboration:** Enhanced partnerships between policymakers, researchers, academia, civil society, and development partners for coordinated policy implementation.
- **Knowledge dissemination:** Publication of conference proceedings, policy briefs, and selected research papers to guide future programming and advocacy.
- **Capacity building:** Opportunities for young researchers and practitioners to present, network, and gain mentorship from senior experts.
- **Visibility of Rwanda's policy innovations:** Showcasing Rwanda's progress in fiscal reforms, agricultural transformation, ICT-driven youth employment, and regional integration within continental and global platforms.

- **Networking and partnerships:** New collaborations across sectors to support inclusive and sustainable development initiatives.

5. Venue, Dates and Participants

The 12th EPRN Annual Economic Research Conference is scheduled at Lemigo Hotel - Kigali on 25th-26th June 2026; and is expected to attract approximately **350 participants** from Rwanda and abroad, attending both physically and virtually. This diverse mix of stakeholders will ensure rich dialogue, knowledge exchange, and practical recommendations.

Categories of Participants

- **Government Institutions:** Senior officials and technical staff from ministries and government agencies.
- **Development Partners:** Representatives from multilateral and bilateral organizations including the ICTD, IFPRI, MasterCard foundation, World Bank, IMF, Akademiya2063, UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, and key donor agencies.
- **Academia and Research Institutions:** Professors, researchers, and students from the University of Rwanda, regional universities, and think tanks engaged in economic policy and social sciences.
- **Private Sector:** Business leaders, SMEs, financial institutions, and industry associations contributing to Rwanda's economic transformation.
- **Civil Society and NGOs:** Organizations working in child protection, gender equality, agriculture, and inclusive development.
- **Regional and International Experts:** Specialists in fiscal policy, agriculture, youth employment, trade, and inclusive growth from across Africa and beyond.
- **Youth and Early-Career Researchers:** Emerging scholars, innovators, and entrepreneurs presenting research papers, participating in workshops, and networking with senior experts.
- **Media Representatives:** Journalists and communication professionals covering economic policy, development, and regional integration.

6. Submission guidelines

EPRN Rwanda encourages researchers to submit abstracts related to one of the sub-themes listed above, which, once accepted, will be developed into a full paper. **Research Proposals must be original, in English and submitted in Word format to: conference2026@eprnrwanda.org and copy to info@eprnrwanda.org.** A researcher may submit more than one abstract; and a team of researchers may submit a joint abstract. Female researchers and researchers with disability are highly encouraged to submit.

A Research abstract of **maximum 500 words** should include:

- i. **Background.** The policy context of the proposed research.
- ii. **Research Issue.** A detailed statement of the issue to be researched, including reference to other work and perceived gaps in knowledge.
- iii. **Objective(s).** A brief statement of the specific objectives of the research.

- iv. **Literature Review.** A detailed but brief reference to existing (current) relevant literature is important in identifying perceived knowledge gaps and relevant methodology to use.
- v. **Methodology.** A statement detailing how the research objectives are to be achieved, i.e., hypotheses, methods, data collection, data analysis, etc.
- vi. **Results.** Anticipated results and how they might contribute to knowledge, future research, and especially public policy.
- vii. **Dissemination.** Expected output from the project, e.g., paper(s), article(s), and other forms of dissemination to interested researchers and policy makers.
- viii. **Timetable and duration.** The length and time needed for each portion of the project and an estimated completion date.

Key Dates:

- Deadline to submit Research proposals/abstracts: 05th February 2026 (by 5 pm CAT)
- Notification of acceptance of your abstract by the selection committee: 06th February 2026
- Deadline for initial submission of the full draft papers: 30th May 2026 (by 5 pm CAT)
- Comments from external reviewers sent to researchers: 05th June 2026
- Submission of final papers: 15th June 2026 (by 5 pm CAT)
- Final notification on acceptance of a paper for conference presentation: 20th June 2026
- 12th EPRN Annual Economic Research Conference: 25th-26th June 2026

7. Contacts

For more information, contact us through: info@eprnrwanda.org or conference2026@eprnrwanda.org OR Phone number (office): +250788357648. You may also visit our website: www.eprnrwanda.org.

Done at Kigali, January 14, 2026

