**CONCEPT NOTE**

**3rd POLICY DIALOGUE ON INVESTING IN CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN RWANDA**

**Date: 2nd December 2021**

**Venue: Serena Hotel Kigali**

1. **Background**

Article 4 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides for the obligation of States’ Governments to invest the appropriate resources for guaranteeing that all the rights safeguarded by the convention are fulfilled “to the maximum extent of their available resources”. Safeguarding of these rights requires States to engage in budgeting processes that allocate the necessary amount of resources to provide access to social services for all children for them to be able to reach their full potential […]”.

In June 2016, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child made general comment *No. 19 on Public budgeting for the realization of children’s rights which sets out detailed guidance to states on their obligation to invest in children*. The UN Committee recommends open, inclusive and accountable resource mobilization, budget allocation and spending. It clearly states that States must not discriminate against any child through resource mobilization, budgeting and spending. The committee underlined the fact that State parties are obligated to take measures within their budget processes to generate revenue and manage expenditures in a way that is sufficient to realize the rights of the child and suggested governments to refer to principles of effectiveness, efficiency, equity, transparency and sustainability as tool of resource mobilization.

The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 has not only affected health sector; its devastating effects have expanded to various sectors of the economy. In Rwanda, the death toll caused by COVID-19 amounted to more than 1,300 casualties by mid-November 2021 while the economy contracted to 3.4 per cent in 2020 down from 9.4 per cent in 2019. The economic down fall recorded has been the deepest for the past 20 years; school closure has resulted in significant learning losses which will result into long term negative effects to Rwandan children, while the poverty rate is believed to have significantly increased across the country.

According to Debt Sustainability Assessment report by MINECOFIN of 2020, the effects of COVID-19 have also had implications on the country’s public finance situation due to increased demand for public funds to address the health and socio-economic crisis. As a result: (i) the overall fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP increased from -5.1 per cent in 2018/19 (Pre-COVID-19) to - 9.1 per cent in 2019/2020 and the deficit is projected to reach 9.2 per cent; (ii) the size of public debt as a share of GDP from 56.8 per cent in 2019 to 71.3 per cent by the end of 2020. The public debt level is projected to increase to 75.9 per cent of GDP in 2021 and further to 81.6 per cent in 2022, and (iii) the debt distress level moved to moderate from low debt distress in 2020, and the buffers to accommodate any additional shocks on the economy have diminished.

The Government of Rwanda has established strategic measures for recovery from the pandemic as outlined in Rwanda’s Economic Recovery Plan (ERP) and Social Protection Response Plan. The ERP outlines four major priorities to support Rwandan economy to return to the pre-pandemic socio-economic trajectory;

* Contain the pandemic and strengthen the health system through improving health sector infrastructure, Human Resource for Health, and IT systems
* Mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 economic crisis on households’ income by scaling-up Social Protection through provision of immediate social protection assistance to the most vulnerable population
* Ensure food self-sufficiency by increasing agriculture production and
* Support businesses and protect jobs.

Implementing the above priority actions was expected to cost government finance about 3.3 per cent of GDP, thus the government faces the double challenge of reduced fiscal space to finance critical sectors and the increasing demand for the public finance to support the economy to return to a normal trajectory of growth.

It is against this background that there is a need to engage policy makers and development partners with the aim of enhancing strategic reflections on the required investments with a particular focus on priority sectors for children and young people in Rwanda in order to ensure that human capital gains achieved over the past decades are prioritized in government budgeting. In this context, discussing strategic mechanisms to maximize the demographic dividend both in short and medium terms is also essential.

1. **Objectives**

The main objective of the public policy dialogue on investment in children and young people is to enable stakeholders from the Government (central and districts), Development Partners, Non-Government Organizations, Faith-based organizations, Private sector organizations, research and academia to reflect on the investment needs for children and young people in Rwanda towards the achievement of highly productive human capital through a participatory approach and efficient utilization of public funds.

Specifically, the policy dialogue will be an opportunity to:

* Share the findings of recent analytical works including budget briefs conducted around public financing for children and young people in 2021/22 and progress against SDGs
* Share the experience on citizen participation including children and adolescents’ engagement and the distribution of the citizen’s guide to the national budget 2021/22
* Discuss financing mechanisms which could contribute to reducing the fiscal gap while safeguarding social sectors spending.

1. **Expected results**

It is expected that after the policy dialogue, participants will have: (i) An increased understanding of the scale and level of investments made by the government to finance the priority sectors for children (Public Financing for Children) in Rwanda in 2021/22 and SDG statistics; (ii) increased awareness on the efforts made by the Government and other stakeholders to promote citizen participation and accountability; (iii) Increased understanding on the options for reducing fiscal gap while maintaining the social sectors spending.

1. **Agenda**

| **Time** | **Activity** | **Responsible** |
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| 8:00 – 9:00 | COVID-19 test, registration and coffee | EPRN & HOTEL |
| 9:00 – 9:15 | Opening remarks | * **EPRN** - Chairperson * **UN Resident Coordinator** - Fodé Ndiaye * **MINECOFIN** - Minister of State in charge of National Treasury, Honorable Richard Tusabe |
| 9:15 – 9:40 | Presentation on Public investments in priority sectors for children: Budget briefs (Health, Education, Social Protection, Nutrition & WASH). | UNICEF |
| 9:40 – 10:00 | Sharing experience and approaches of engaging children and young people in the dissemination of the Citizens’ guide to the Budget. | MINECOFIN National Budget Department. |
| 10:00 – 10:20 | **Panel discussion (1)**  Rwanda National Financing Landscape: Challenges and Opportunities | MINECOFIN Chief Economist Department, UNICEF Representative, WB/IMF (TBC) |
| 10:20 - 10:40 | Questions & Answers | Participants |
| 10:40 – 11:00 | **Health Break and Networking** | **Hotel** |
| 11:00 - 11:15 | SDG Statistics: Progress and Gaps | NISR |
| 11:15 - 12:00 | **Panel discussion (2)**  Children and Adolescent Participation in Planning and Budgeting | CLADHO, Children’s Voice Today (CVT) & Save the Children |
| 12:00 - 12:30 | Questions and Answers | Participants |
| 12:30 - 12:45 | Recap and Closing remarks | Save the Children/EPRN |
| **13:00** - **14:00** | **Lunch and Departure** | **Hotel** |

1. **Participants**

The policy dialogue will bring together high level and strategic partners from the following institutions:

* Government (Ministries, Agencies, and decentralized entities) and Parliament
* International Non-Government organizations
* Development partners (UN Agencies, International Financial Institutions, Bilateral Agencies/ Organizations)
* Civil society and faith-based organizations
* Academia, Research and think tanks
* Private Sector Federation.

1. **Date and Venue**

This dialogue is scheduled on Thursday, 02nd December 2021 from **09:00 am to 13:00** at Serena Hotel Kigali.

1. **Policy dialogue Organizers**

* **EPRN**

The Economic Policy Research Network (EPRN) is formerly registered with the Rwanda Governance Board as a national non-governmental organization (Registration No 240/RGB/NGO/2017), and its mission is to contribute to the evidence based policy making in Rwanda and capacity strengthening through offering professional trainings creating networking opportunities, carrying out high quality research and organizing national policy dialogues as a space for research dissemination and advocacy thus promote socio-economic policy reforms for wellbeing of Rwandans:

<https://www.eprnrwanda.org/>

Save the Children

* **SAVE THE CHILDREN**

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In Rwanda and around the world, Save the children work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, Save the children is always among the first to respond and the last to leave. Save the Children has been working in Rwanda since 1994. In the immediate aftermath of the genocide, Save the Children helped trace parents or relatives of thousands of children who had become separated from their families. Since then, it has been working in partnership with the government and local stakeholders to promote a bright future for Rwanda’s children.

At present, Save the Children has Programmes in Child Protection, Child Rights Governance which include public budget analysis, Education, Humanitarian Relief and Health and Nutrition.

<https://rwanda.savethechildren.net/>



* **UNICEF**

UNICEF began its development work in Rwanda in 1986. After the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis, UNICEF’s assistance focused on emergency, recovery, and small-scale projects. When the Rwanda Aid Policy as passed in 2008, with the beginning of the UN Delivering as One reform, UNICEF’s work as part of the One UN programme shifted to larger scale projects and national policy support to the Government key programme areas. The 2018-2023 Country Programme continues to support the realization of the rights of every child, especially the most disadvantaged. Guided by the SDG principle ‘leaving no one behind’, the programme contributes to five priorities under the social transformation pillar of the Government’s National Strategy for Transformation 2017-2024: The areas of focus are; (i) ensuring access to quality health for all; (ii) reducing malnutrition; (iii) increasing access to and improving the quality of education; (iv) moving towards a modern Rwandan household; and (v) enhancing graduation from poverty and promoting resilience. <https://www.unicef.org/rwanda/about-unicef-rwanda>

* **CLADHO**

*Collectif des Ligues et Associations de Défense des Droits de l’Homme au Rwanda* (CLADHO) is the umbrella of Human Rights organizations in Rwanda, founded in 1993 with an aim of promoting, protecting and defending human rights in all settings. CLADHO participates also in promoting open informed debates on key social and economic policy issues and proposes feasible policy alternatives. Through government budget interventions, CLADHO provides comments on budget programmes that addresses legal and institutional constraints to facilitate economic reforms and growth, poverty reduction and human rights. CLADHO runs different programs on human rights, social protection, advocacy and social economic rights. <https://www.cladho.org.rw/index1e35.html?id=39>

* **Children’s Voice Today (CVT)**

CVT is Child/youth led organization that was established in 2001 to promote the rights of the child through meaningful child participation where children/youth initiate and lead all activities of the organization. (Registration No 26/RGB/NGO/2015). Children’s Voice Today (CVT) is envisioning a child-friendly society whereby children are empowered to meaningfully participate in addressing issues affecting them and that their voices are heard. With its mission, CVT is committed to be the voice of Rwandan children, to empower them to advocate for their rights and to fight against poverty <https://childrensvoicetoday.org/>

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