

Concept note for the 11th EPRN Annual Economic Research Conference

Theme: Policies to stimulate Rwanda’s development agenda: best practices, challenges and opportunities

26th -27th June 2025, Lemigo Hotel Kigali Rwanda

1. Introduction

Rwanda aspires to become a Middle-Income Country by 2035 and a High-Income Country by 2050. Specifically, this means that the GDP per capita will be over USD 4,036 by 2035 and over USD 12,476 by 2050. This will also be achieved through ensuring all walks of society have increased opportunities to contribute to national development, including by growing investments in human capital and ensuring universal access to amenities, safety and security. All youth, women, men, people with disabilities and elderly people will contribute as actors of sustainable development, ensuring that no one is left behind in benefiting from development.

Rwanda's economy continued to stage a strong growth in the first half of 2024. After growing by an average of 8.2% in 2022-2023, real GDP increased by 9.7% in the first half of 2024. GDP growth is expected to maintain momentum in 2025–26, with a projected average of 7.7%, thanks to a recovery in global tourism, new construction projects, and manufacturing activities. During the first National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), Rwanda made remarkable progress whereby over 1.37 million jobs were created between 2017 and 2023. Exports grew at an average annual rate of 21%, with revenue more than doubling by 137% from 2017 to 2023, driven by the "Made in Rwanda" initiative¹.

The overall fiscal deficit declined from 7.7% of GDP in 2022 to 7.0% in 2023 due to improved domestic resource mobilization. The debt-to-GDP ratio declined from 71.3% in 2022 to 66.6% in 2023 due to budget rationalization. The current account deficit averaged 10.7% of GDP in 2022 and 2023 because of the high import bill.²

Despite remarkable growth performance in recent years, creation of jobs in Rwanda is insufficient and the level of productivity remains low, reflecting infrastructure gaps, limited progress in innovation, and sub-optimal allocative efficiency. Furthermore, the inclusiveness of growth remains a key challenge, as the poverty reduction momentum has weakened in recent years. The benefits of structural transformation have tended to accrue to more educated workers, worsening inequality.

¹ <https://www.rwandainusa.gov.rw/actualites/info-details/rwandas-journey-under-nst1-what-lies-ahead-in-nst2>

² <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/east-africa/rwanda/rwanda-economic-outlook>

vulnerability to climate change, and the increasing pressure on natural resources are also among key challenges to be tackled.³

The Rwandan government approved the second National Strategy for Transformation (NST2), a comprehensive and forward-looking five-year plan that will run until the end of 2029. Approved on August 23, this strategy charts a bold new course for Rwanda's continued development. NST2 seeks to further advance the progress made under the previous strategy, NST1. It is designed to lay a strong foundation for sustained growth, bringing Rwanda closer to achieving higher living standards for all.

The seventh Integrated Household Living Conditions Survey (EICV 7), which shows significant improvement in citizens' well-being—including the lifting of over 1.5 million people out of poverty over the last seven years.

To keep growing its economy towards Vision 2050 targets, Rwanda needs to transform the structure of its economy to respond to current challenges and opportunities driven by technological progress and climate change. Furthermore, Rwanda has to overcome the limits of its small domestic market and landlocked position and find its place in global and regional value chains. There is also need for greater reliance on private sector investment to enhance productivity growth, raise incomes, enhance its human capital, modernize agriculture and provide the financing to address infrastructure shortfalls.

2. About the 11th Economic Research Conference

In line with the above emerging developments and policy initiatives, the Economic Policy Research Network and partners will be organizing the 11th Economic Research Conference under the following theme: ***“Policies to stimulate Rwanda’s development agenda: progress, challenges and opportunities”***.

This theme is subdivided into the following sub-themes to which Research Papers to be presented will be aligned:

- Economic transformation and development under the NST2 and Vision 2050
- Youth in agribusiness: opportunities and challenges
- Effective fiscal and tax policies to enhance robust domestic revenues
- Gender-transformative approaches to promote gender equality and equity
- Regional integration and progress towards the AFCTA

This high-level and interactive 2-day research conference is expected to bring together more than 200 participants, including researchers, senior policymakers, representatives of the development partners, civil society, private sector and the media. During the conference, research papers and reports related to conference sub-themes will be presented and discussed. Policy recommendations will be formulated and shared with concerned institutions as a contribution towards boosting

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<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/rwanda/overview#:~:text=Development%20Challenges,and%20sub%20Optimal%20allocative%20efficiency>.

Rwanda's economic resilience during the current socio-economic shocks. To help achieve these objectives, EPRN and partner organizations seek submissions of proposed research abstracts from researchers, development partners and postgraduate students. Selected and approved papers will be invited to present at the conference.

3. Conference Venue and Dates

The 11th Research Conference is scheduled on 26th-27th June 2025 at Lemigo Hotel Kigali Rwanda. Lunches will be served to all participants at the conference venue and catered for by EPRN.

4. Contact details

Contact us through: info@eprnrwanda.org or conference2025@eprnrwanda.org or Call/WhatsApp to: +250788357648 or +250788305142.