



## Looking beyond the glamour: the cost of Rwanda's strict COVID-19 response

Rwanda's COVID-19 response, driven by President Kagame, has been considered as robust and rapid. It imposed a two months nationwide lockdown and its use of high-tech innovations such robots and drones has received much attention. However behind this glamour the impact of the strict containment approach has been devastating for the poor and has raised human rights concerns. Unemployment has increased by approximately 40% during lockdown and poverty is expected to increase as much as 27%. In response the government, in cooperation with development partners, has rolled out cash transfers, food distribution as well as business stimulus plans targeting the informal economy. We will look into how these mitigation measures have affected the wellbeing of Rwanda's poor and vulnerable.

### Objectives

Our objective is to analyze the impact of COVID-19 responses of state and non-state actors on the wellbeing of Rwanda's poor and vulnerable. Wellbeing is multidimensional as well as relational, with individual wellbeing being interrelated with the wellbeing of the collective. Our sub-objective is therefore to shed light on the impact of COVID-19 responses on the following dimensions of wellbeing:

- Material wellbeing operationalised as work and income as well as access to basic services (notably education, water and electricity).
- Relational wellbeing operationalised as social relations and social capital.
- Subjective wellbeing operationalised as the subjective evaluation of ones quality of life (prior and post COVID-19).
- Collective wellbeing operationalised as political empowerment.

### Lead organisation

Martin Munu Luther, Research Consultant

### Country

Rwanda

### Partners

Zjos Vlaminck, Research consultant

### Planned activities

We have translated our analytical framework into the following research phases:

1. Socio-economic and political context analysis (focusing on the state of the economy, inequality and legitimacy of political institutions in Rwanda).
2. Mapping of Covid-19 mitigation responses (by (national, regional, local) state and non-state actors) paying specific attention to measures implemented in Kigali and those in the Western Province.
3. Identification of specific vulnerable groups for in-depth case-studies of social and spacial equity issues in times of COVID-19.
4. Equity assessment (in formulation and implementation) of identified policies/programmes: how have they affected the material, relational, subjective and collective wellbeing of the specific groups selected in phase 3 (in the short and long term)?

The research involves the collection of data using the two methods highlighted below:

- Key stakeholder interviews
- Document analysis