

**PROTESTANT INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (PIASS)**

**10<sup>th</sup> PIASS SCIENTIFIC WEEK: ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-2022**

**THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:**

**“Challenges and Opportunities for the Future”**



*Huye, December 9-10, 2022*

In the weekend of 9-10, December 2022, at Huye Campus, the Protestant University of Rwanda (PIASS) hosted the 10<sup>th</sup> Scientific Week on the theme; **“IMPACTS OF COVID19 ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs): Challenges and Opportunities for the Future.”** The conference was officially opened by Prof. Penine Uwimbabazi, the Vice Chancellor of PIASS, and attended by students, academic and administrative staff as well as guests from different universities in Rwanda and abroad.

Scientific week is an annual research activity culminating in a two days conference during which papers are presented, discussed/ commented by scholars both locally and internationally. This time, the scientific week was so special because it was the first ever blended scientific week which took place after two years break due to COVID-19; was organized online and held both in plenaries and in clusters. Twelve papers were presented, including four keynote speeches in plenaries and 8 papers presented in clusters. Three keynote speakers and 3 papers were presented by international researchers, Canada, Germany, Cameroun and Uganda.; the rest were presented by Rwandan researchers. The contributions looked at how different aspects of life were affected by the pandemic, particularly on tourism sector, environment protection, church activities, bereavement and family healing in the absence of rituals in time of COVID19, family conflicts, education, and international relations.

## **Keynote Speeches**

### **COvid-19 on Quality Education: Challenges & Opportunities!**

In her keynote speech, Dr. Rose Mukankomeje, Director General, Rwandan Higher Education Council, reminded the audience that we are in a fast changing environment and may not be aware of how much COVID19 is part of it. She then took us in a wonderful journey of reminder, how the world, Rwanda included were unprepared to the pandemic. Yet the country managed to overcome the uncertainty of COVID19, thanks to effort to promote digital technology that kept the Higher learning institutions running up and down the country. The digital model of education, she said, is here to stay hence it is absolutely critical for all partners in education to equip young people face the future.

Rev. Dr. Jean Blaise Kenmogne (Vice Chancellor of the Université Evangelique du Cameroun) 's paper looked at COVID-19 from the angle of its challenges to universities; he, invited academics to overcome the empty popular even "scientific" discourses that promoted conspiracy theories instead of addressing a killing pandemic. His paper invited to a journey of research rallying international and interuniversity cooperation to enlighten indigenous deployment of energies and genius in the search of medicine that helped to mitigate covid-19 and other pandemics, initiatives that strengthened the resilience of the people of the continent.



*Students followed presentations online*

Prof. Annette Scheunpflug (University of Bamberg Germany) keynote speech on *the Impact of COVID19 on Education Sustainable Development*, reflected on what it means for education to be sustainable for example in times on climate change, or in relation to the impact of COVID19. She discussed the challenges of the pandemic including teachers' migration, serious problems in primary education with less knowledge; trouble of having wireless in all corners of the country in the contexts of developing world, due among other shortfalls to the absence of electricity. She pleaded for more effort by governments to increase resources that help to retain teachers, to train and invest in digital infrastructures.

Prof. Jean Gabin Ntabutse (University of Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada)'s intervention focused on Digital equity issues in time of the COVID19 pandemic. He insisted on the implications of

pandemic on the quality of education in developing countries. He analyzed the strategies put in place by six African countries in East Africa and beyond, and discussed on how those strategies have significant limitations in compensating for digital inequalities. He reflected on measures of a systemic nature that should promote digital equity and quality of education in the digital era.

## **RICH VARIETY OF CONTRIBUTIONS**

Dr. Mshilla Maghanga (University of Gulu, Uganda) looked at *COVID19 pandemic as the catalytic factor behind the paradigm shift in the internationalization of High Education*. This internationalization requires integration of intercultural and global dimension, with a world exposure of how we teach, learn, assess, research etc. Dr. Mshilla assessed how critical SDGs no 4, or the access to education for all is being engineered in East Africa during and in the aftermath of the COVID19 pandemic. He proposed an overview of how the education component in other SDGs like no 3; 5; 8; 12 and 13 were being attained inbound and outbound; at macro, meso and micro levels. He suggested that to be successful, the new normal in IHE paradigm shift must be among others, virtual, cross-border and online, revolutionized by ICT; tech-savvy academics researchers; flexible in teaching...; learner-centered, flexible in curricula, open educational resources. For this to be possible, he proposed a new review of curricula, including improving ICT teaching, etc.

Through a literature review, Vincent Canwat (Gulu University), on *political economy of COVID19*, discussed how the pandemic concentrated on his home country, Uganda, showing that both sides, the regime and the opposition capitalized on the consequences of COVID19 through bribery, ideological manipulations and donations to harvest political dividends. Canwat reported indigenous medicine in Uganda, initiative that yet were not tested nor coordinated in East Africa, due in part, to the fact that some political milieus were COVID19 deniers!

Tom David Orace (PhD Student in Education, Kyambogo University), reflected on *COVID19, the game changer, Why it matters in University education*. Looking at evidence from Gulu University and using qualitative methods, his study showed increased dropouts reported after institutions reopened while others mentioned financial constraints brought by the pandemic that resulted into losing a year of studies. Some students were constantly in touch with their lecturers and others had access to online learning platforms. He recommends that the government allocates more money to both public and private universities or have education recovery plan separate for public universities to increase completion and reduce dropouts in the universities as a result.

Protogéne Mugenga from Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS) Rwanda, reflected on the impact of COVID19 pandemic on tourism industry in Rwanda. He assessed the status of tourism industry before COVID19 pandemic, effect of COVID19 pandemic on tourism industry and the post recovery procedures.

Rev. Eraste RUKERA & Rev. Juvenal RWAMUNYANA from PIASS, discussed the *Impact of COVID-19 on Church Growth: Basic Church Communities Responses in Gisenyi Presbytery of Presbyterian Church in Rwanda*.

Dr. Gloriose Umuziranenge and Thembisile Mvula, (PIASS-Rwanda) Assessed *People's Perceptions About COVID19 and Domestic Violence Against Women in Rwanda, Huye District*. They underlined causes and effects of domestic violence on women during COVID19 period, and they explored how COVID19 has led to the increase of domestic violence against women. **Their study** examined the role played by some NGOs like Family Circle Love Lab in ending domestic violence against women.

Rev. Célestin NSENGIMANA (PIASS – Rwanda), explored *the consequences of absent ritual on church practice during the time of COVID19*, and how alternative rituals were engineered to address that issue, and to what extent they helped the churches and respective members.

Rev. Eraste RUKERA (PIASS – Rwanda) presented another contribution assessing *the impact of COVID-19 on environment protection and the initiatives of the Anglican Diocese of Shyogwe* in Rwanda as well as the protecting measures taken in the post-COVID-19 recovery.

On the last day of the event, a round table was organizing to draw the lessons of the conference. Lecturers and students discussed different presentations at the 10<sup>th</sup> Scientific Week and commended the model as designed to contribute to the teaching, learning and particularly to the research activities on the very real concerns of the people.

## **Closing remarks**

In her closing remarks, the Vice Chancellor thanked all contributors who made the Scientific Week possible. She acknowledged the presence of keynote speakers for their thoughtful inputs which and valuable perspectives from their vast experiences. She saluted the work done by the discussants who invested their time reading, commenting and giving constructive feedbacks to the contributors.

As the 2022 Scientific Week's conference closes its proceedings, the next step will be to review articles taking into consideration the comments from the discussants and audience with the purpose of publishing them in PIASS Publication Series.