Using data to improve public policy in Rwanda

Background

The Rwanda Economy Digitalisation programme, which is implemented by Cenfri in partnership with the Rwandan Ministry of ICT and Innovation and support from the Mastercard Foundation, demonstrates the use of data for public policy.

Objectives

The initial objective was to deepen financial inclusion by informing the Government of Rwanda's Cashless Agenda, but we have been responsive to requests from partner institutions. Much of our work relates to four sectors likely to contribute to economic growth and employment creation: education, agriculture, retail and tourism.

Methods

Access to anonymised transaction and record-level data is secured. The data is then cleaned and analysed. Data analysis is supplemented with contextual input on the policy objectives of the government entities and, in some cases, with qualitative research. Policy recommendations are developed and shared with stakeholders.

Results

This work in Rwanda has generated evidence that has been used to:

- Track mobile money usage during COVID-related lockdowns, including monitoring the impact of a central bank decision to zero-rate transaction fees.
- Inform improvements to policies on bus transport in Kigali
- Alert the Ministry of Agriculture to improvements needed for the agricultural inputs subsidy system
- Assist the Chief Economist to monitor the price of staple foodstuffs and inform the response to food inflation

Conclusion and recommendations

The programme has been successful in demonstrating the value of data in driving policy decisions in Rwanda, however we have needed to make investments in data infrastructure and data classification and sharing protocols. Catalysing the use of evidence-informed decision-making required building data science skills in Rwanda.

Cenfri can share recommendations on getting access to datasets that enable this level of analysis, on the need for a flexible and responsive approach, developing partnerships to deepen data skills and what we have learnt about relationship building.