

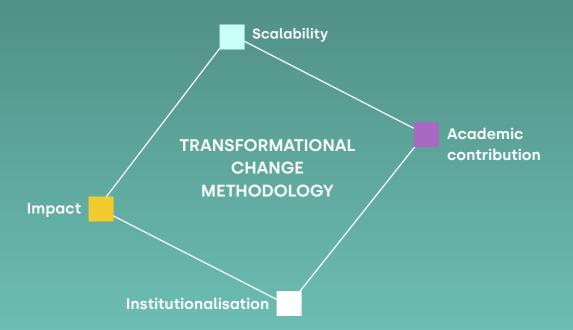






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### 1. Understanding Transformational Change

The IGC works with policymakers in low- and middle-income countries to promote inclusive and sustainable growth through pathbreaking research. Our research and policy engagement are supported by an international network of researchers and resident country offices across Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East. The collaborative approach made possible by this model – with embedded country teams that bring senior policymakers together with leading researchers – has created an effective mechanism for collaborative idea generation.

To understand, enhance, and communicate IGC's impact, we created a 'Transformational Change' methodology in 2024. The methodology aims to identify the conditions in which research can achieve significant and positive policy and academic impact by focusing on four key dimensions: innovative contribution, institutionalisation, scalability, and impact. Our Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Team is now applying this methodology to a series of case studies. The knowledge from these studies will deepen our understanding of the IGC's pivotal contributions and help us to draw actionable insights that inform future strategies and reinforce IGC's role in driving evidence-informed policy research.

From May to July 2024, we applied our Transformational Change methodology to the Economic Growth Forum events and research cluster, drawing on internal documents, official reports, publications and fourteen interviews.<sup>1</sup>



# 2. Uganda Economic Growth Forum (EGF)

In 2013, the government of Uganda observed a decline in growth rates. The government reflected whether the expanded focus on social sector development had meant that not enough attention had been given to essential investments in productive capital, crucial for sustainable growth. In response, policymakers have increasingly looked for strategies to accelerate growth through independent and high-quality research and analysis seeking to complement the traditional recommendations by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) (A. Musisi, personal communication, 4 June 2024).

Despite previous efforts to integrate research into policy, communication challenges across different levels of the government of Uganda prevented effective policy dialogue. While the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC) at Makerere University has effectively provided evidence and research to Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development (MoFPED), dissemination can remain limited to technocrats. In addition, ministries, departments, and agencies often hesitated to advise beyond their policy boundaries, even when relevant, further limiting the scope of policy discussions.

<sup>1</sup> We consulted the following interviewees for this case study: Ugandan Commissioner for Macroeconomic Policy Department, Dr Albert Musisi; Assistant Commissioner for Macroeconomic Policy Department, Dr Sam Mugume; Former Senior Agriculture Advisor at USAID, Martin Fowler; FCDO's Development Director in Uganda, Philip Smith. Senior local researcher and Head of Trade and Regional Integration Department at the Economic Policy Research Centre, Isaac Shinyekwa; IGC Uganda Country Director, Richard Newfarmer; Lead Academic for Uganda, Vittorio Bassi; IGC Country Economist for Uganda, Nhial Kuch; Former IGC Country Economist for Uganda, Liam Carson. Other five interviewees have preferred to remain anonymous, including three individuals in Government, a local researcher, and an international researcher.

Recognising the opportunity to create a unified platform to connect researchers, senior policymakers, civil society, and international donors to inform economic growth, the Ugandan Commissioner for Macroeconomic

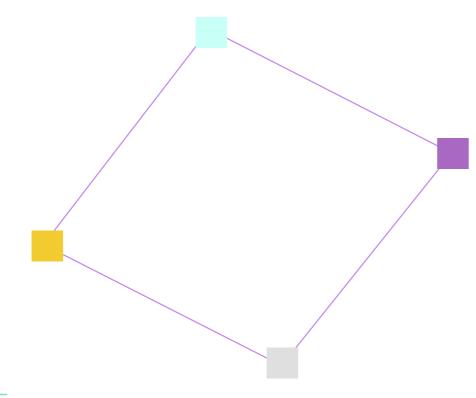
to Fusion States

Head of the IGC's Tax for Growth Initiative, Twivwe Siwale, presents strategies for enhancing tax compliance and mobilising revenue at the 7th Economic Growth Forum in Kampala.

Policy, Dr Albert Musisi, and the then Permanent Secretary at MoFPED, Mr Keith Muhakanizi, approached the IGC to explore ways to enhance policy discussions in Uganda. They believed that the IGC's expertise in high-quality growth research and ability to provide independent, evidence-informed, and rigorous academic insights could inform economic planning and growth (A. Musisi, personal communication, 4 June 2024).

This led to the launch of the Uganda Economic Growth Forum (EGF) in 2017 as a joint initiative of MOFPED and the IGC. The EGF has since become a pivotal platform. It brings together policymakers,

researchers, civil society, and stakeholders from various sectors to discuss and develop economic growth policy solutions grounded in academic evidence. So far, IGC has funded seven events<sup>2</sup>, two research projects, and a book, involving a total investment of approximately GBP 250.000, in support of the EGF.<sup>3</sup>



- 2 EGF VIII is scheduled for August 2024.
- 3 Calculation based on direct and estimated indirect costs to IGC, including the time of the IGC Uganda Country Team.

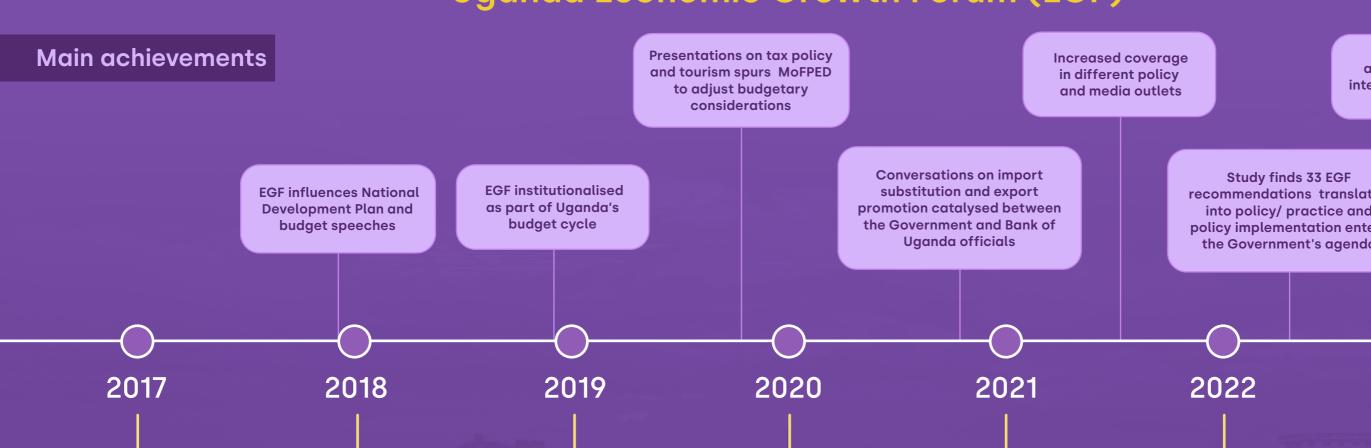
#### The IGC's contribution to change

- Providing a direct route for high-quality research to inform economic strategy by enabling the first national forum for inclusive and evidenceinformed policy dialogue;
- Supporting the institutionalisation of the EGF as part of Uganda's annual budget cycle through continuous and responsive engagement;
- Leveraging the expertise of over 70 international researchers from IGC's network and Ugandan experts to participate in the EGF, reshaping discussions and framing debates on agriculture, taxation, tourism, and climate change, thereby influencing government policies and shaping both local and international research agendas.



TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

## **Transformational Change timeline Uganda Economic Growth Forum (EGF)**



"Accelerated and Inclusive **Growth for Sustainable** Development": MoFPED, with the IGC, organised the inaugural EGF to reflect on the state of the Ugandan economy and identify policy solutions to drive future economic growth.

Research and policy engagement

contribution rather than direct attribution to the observed outcomes.

EGF 1

"National Budget Conference and Economic Growth Forum": At the request of MoFPED, EGF 2 combined the **National Budget Consultative** workshop. Focus on key sectors e.g. Agriculture, Tourism, Oil, Gas.

EGF 2

"Accelerating Economic **Growth for Shared Prosperity": Covered in New** Vision, a popular Ugandan newspaper, this EGF saw larger dissemination of IGC research and attracted more high-level presentations.

EGF 3

"Unlocking New **Opportunities for Inclusive Growth During and After** COVID-19": This Forum concentrated on mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and fostering a swift recovery in crucial sectors.

EGF 4

"Beyond Recovery: Policies **Towards Resurgent Growth** in Uganda," which contains a collection of 13 articles on different topics related to Uganda's growth, based on content presented at EGFs 1,2 and 3 (2017-2019)

> First phase of "Policy Implementation research in Uganda" by request of MoFPED to analyse EGFderived policies. The study focused on identifying obstacles to policy implementation.

IGC funded

**EGF BOOK** 

EGF 5 "Economic Resilience,

recovery and Resurgent **Growth": Focused on** post-pandemic economic resilience, covering areas such as preparedness for and management of economic shocks, mitigation and management of the impact of climate change, exploiting benefits from regional integration, driving export growth, and making growth in Uganda inclusive.

EGF 6

"Building a Self-Sustaining **Economy to Weather Future** Shocks": By request of MoFPED, the EGF was hosted twice in a year for the first time. EGF 6 centred on creating a self-sustaining economy.

Climate change and carbon pricing integrated into MoFPED policies

recommendations translated into policy/ practice and policy implementation enters the Government's agenda

"Strengthening Uganda's Competitiveness to Foster **Accelerated Economic** Growth": Solidifying the EGF's position as a pillar of economic discourse, this Forum called for the integration of climate change issues into national development plans.

2023

EGF 7

Second research phase on policy implementation marked a continuation of research identifying obstacles to implementation with an economy-wide study requested by MoFPED.

### 3. The path to Transformational Change

#### a. The origins and structure of the EGF

The idea for the EGF began in April 2017 during the World Bank's International Financial Meetings, where Mr. Muhakanizi, former Permanent Secretary at MoFPED, approached Richard Newfarmer, IGC Uganda Country Director, to explore ways to enhance policy discussions in Uganda. This conversation led to launch of the first EGF in Kampala that same year.

Dr Albert Musisi, the Ugandan Commissioner for Macroeconomic Policy, and his team, with the support of the IGC, co-designed the EGF as an inclusive platform that could foster open and diverse dialogue among key stakeholders in Uganda's economic policy landscape. The inaugural EGF, themed "Accelerated and Inclusive Growth for Sustainable Development," brought together 19 international and local academics to present high-quality research to top-level decision-makers on diverse policy areas crucial for economic growth. Discussions covered non-traditional industries, agriculture, industrialisation, trade policy, regional integration, labour productivity, and infrastructure investment as key drivers of Uganda's economic development.

Following the event, a dialogue between the Honourable Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda and members of IGC leadership led to the development of an action plan by the Ministry, based on the Forum's discussions and recommendations. The immediate impact of the EGF became evident when two of the three key investment priorities in the Prime Minister's subsequent budget speech — agriculture and industrialisation—aligned with the themes of the 2017 Forum. The government of Uganda then requested that the IGC support the Forum again the following year.



Since then, the EGF has been held annually with continuous improvements being made to its design. Each year, during the planning for the EGF, the government outlines its key priorities and budgetary or growth questions for the year to guide the discussions. IGC supports the event by curating the academic agenda and recommending relevant work that provides high-quality, contextually relevant evidence and data. Senior policymakers actively engage as discussants, offering real-time feedback on the policy recommendations, while private sector, donors, and civil society participate as audience and panel members.

This inclusive engagement model ensures that research findings are not only presented and discussed, but there are mechanisms to enable their uptake, with findings very often informing government policies and practice. Isaac Shinyekwa, senior local researcher and Head of Trade and Regional Integration at the Economic Policy Research Centre (EPRC), emphasises the relevance of the event structure, "The EGF brought together a diverse group, including civil society, academia, research institutions, and policymakers. This mix provided different perspectives on the same issues, helping to sharpen our communication and making it more effective. The forum acts as a bridge between research and policy, allowing us to package our findings in a way that is useful for policymakers" (6 June 2024). The EGF's approach is well-aligned with the IGC model, making it an ideal avenue for collaboration. "Previously, we would make policies and then implement them, but now we present at the [Economic] Growth Forum and get feedback on the feasibility of these policies. This has been very instrumental" (Anonymous, personal communication, 2024).

# b. High-quality research informing Uganda's economic strategy

The IGC has played a key role in ensuring that research presented at the EGF is of high quality and shapes the academic debate. During the seven editions of the EGF so far, the IGC has leveraged the expertise of 76 distinguished academic experts—30 Ugandan and 46 international — who have delivered 110 academic presentations across 16 key themes critical to Uganda's economic growth, offering senior policymakers a wide range of perspectives. Vittorio Bassi, international researcher and IGC Uganda Academic Lead, highlights the forum's significance:

"The uniqueness of the EGF is in the scale of research presented and discussed about one context, which is incredibly rare. It's owned by the government, bringing credibility and the conditions necessary to create policy impacts [...] its model shapes how we think about academic engagement with the government" (5 June 2024).

The EGF addresses key economic themes, such as agriculture, tourism, tax policy, strategic planning, and trade. Agriculture and agro-industrialisation are often prominent topics, appearing every year as key elements on the agenda. For example, a presentation by former advisor to USAID, Martin Fowler's in 2019 on "Agro-industrialisation in Uganda" focused on productivity and value addition, and EPRC researcher Dr Swaibu Mbowa's

2018 discussion on "Fostering a Sustainable Agro-industrialisation Agenda". "Tax policy has also been a key focus, particularly due to Uganda's low tax revenue-to-GDP ratio" (R. Newfarmer, personal communication, 16 July 2024), with presentations such as "Domestic Revenue Mobilisation: Challenges and Policy Solutions" by Georgetown University's Nada Eissa in 2017 and "Strategies for Enhancing Tax Compliance" by IGC's Head of Tax for Growth, Twivwe Siwale, in 2023.

Strategic economic planning and trade promotion have also received considerable attention, given their role in guaranteeing economic growth. Highlights include Dr Albert Musisi's 2017 talk on "Accelerating Uganda's Economic Momentum" and Cambridge researcher John Spray's exploration of "Export Transitions, Productivity, and the Supply Chain". More recently, the Forum has pivoted towards sustainability, with discussions on climate change, such as World Bank economist Vicky Chemutai's 2023 presentation on "Adapting to a Brave New (Hotter) World: Fiscal Priorities for Uganda and Climate Financing" and Nicholas Stern's and Shanta Devarajan's 2022 session on "Climate Change and Sustainable Growth in Uganda."

The EGF's focus on these themes has shaped local perspectives and influenced policy formulation. For example, insights from tax policy presentations have prompted MoFPED to reconsider its approach to tax incentives. As L. Carson (28 May 2024) remarks: "The tax incentives work turned some heads in the Ministry. The findings on discretionary tax holidays versus fixed ones were counterintuitive and made the Ministry rethink their approach". Similarly, the Forums' emphasis on the tourism sector contributed to a substantial increase in government funding for tourism development, rising from UGX 32 billion to UGX 193.7 billion in the 2019-20 budget (Kasaija, 2019). Although this increase cannot be solely attributed to the EGF, stakeholders have acknowledged its influence: "The EGF contributes by bringing up questions that we may not have been focusing on [...] It has influenced us to consider new topics and to look at existing issues in different ways [...] it has influenced our investment in sectors like tourism. For example, detailed presentations on tourism led to increased funding for infrastructure in that sector" (S. Mugume, 29 May 2024).

Stakeholders are already seeing the influence of recent discussions focused on sustainability, which has led to the uptake of recommendations from the EGF. Mugume emphasises, "...climate change and carbon pricing are now being integrated into our policies. We are also focusing on human capital development in health and education, which were strongly advocated for at the EGF. These discussions have made these issues more visible and emphasised their importance" (29 May 2024). Over time, policy ideas presented at the EGF have influenced relevant national strategy documents, including the National Development Plan and budget speeches, highlighting its broad influence and evidencing uptake at highest levels of government.

As Musisi states,

"If you listen to our budget speeches, there is always a section called the economic growth strategy that borrows from the EGF recommendations" (4 June 2024).

Beyond its direct influence on policy, the EGF also serves as a platform for local researchers to present their work, interact with international experts, and strengthen relationships across research and policy ecosystems. As Vittorio Bassi notes, "...the EGF is a local event. The main impact will be on local academics and relationships. International academics benefit from the engagement, but the primary focus is local" (5 June 2024). This local focus of the EGF could be further strengthened to drive greater opportunities for local academics, especially in a context where researchers often rely on international funding, which may not always align with government priorities. As Carson notes, "The EGF gives local academics the platform to engage in high-level policy discussions. I am not sure there is another platform quite like it" (28 May 2024).

To further amplify the impact of the EGF and ensure broader dissemination of its ideas, IGC has supported publications on EGF discussions, including the 2021 release of the book *Beyond Recovery: Policies Towards Resurgent Growth in Uganda*. Drawing on insights from the EGFs held in Uganda between 2017 and 2020, the book was produced in collaboration with international researchers, policymakers, MoFPED economists, and IGC. Available on the government's website, it features 13 articles covering crucial topics such as domestic revenue mobilisation, public investment management, education and skills for growth, urban policy, trade and regional integration, agricultural transformation, tourism development, and the oil and gas sector. Mugume highlights its practical applications: "The EGF Book is used as a reference for various topics like labour and education. It shows the benefits of investing in these areas and is used for advocacy. I have seen it referenced in policy documents and used in classes and seminars" (29 May 2024).

This underscores the book's significant influence in both policymaking and educational settings.

Building further on EGF discussions and recommendations, IGC commissioned two studies at the request of MoFPED in **2021** and **2022**. Conducted by a local researcher at MoFPED, the studies aimed to understand the challenges of research-policy implementation across Uganda. This involved compiling a dataset of policies originating from EGF recommendations and findings, which showed that between 2017-18 and 2021-22, at least 33 instances of changes to government practice or policies in Uganda were informed by EGF evidence and discussions (Kaddu et al., 2023).

The multiple editions of the Forum, with its publications, have led to international recognition of the EGF's role in advancing inclusive economic planning. The UNDP's Global Partnership for Effective Development

Cooperation highlighted the EGF as a model for strategic dialogue among government, donors, and the private sector. Philip Smith from the British High Commission in Uganda emphasises its importance:

"The EGF is one of the key places where we come together to engage the government on a whole range of issues, from macroeconomic stability to climate finance and tax, it's important for development partners in a context where that dialogue is very weak" (29 May 2024).

# c. Facilitating the institutionalisation of the EGF through evidence-informed policy support

The EGF has grown since its launch as a pilot to an annual government-owned platform. Dr Musisi notes, "We made it part of the budget cycle. Our team includes the forum in the budget calendar, ensuring its recommendations feed into the next year's budget" (4 June 2024). MoFPED decided to combine the National Budget Consultative workshop with the EGF for its second edition in 2018, enabling a broader discussion on the economy and research findings, and on identifying policy solutions for growth. By 2019, the EGF had become an integral component of the policy-planning process, and MoFPED and the IGC produced a summary report and policy briefs summarising the most relevant recommendations as part of the Forum. These documents have since been formally presented each year to the Directorate of Economic Affairs, with input from the Permanent Secretary and Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, often influencing the following year's budget.

The Forum is now fully integrated into the country's budget cycle, with MoFPED taking a leading role in logistics. This shift in ownership is marked by the establishment of a National Organising Committee, comprising approximately 15 representatives from various Ministries, Departments, and Agencies, with IGC holding one seat. The committee plays a crucial role in organising the Forum and embedding its findings into policy frameworks. P. Smith emphasises, "the ownership by senior officials is significant. It's pragmatic about the value of these set-piece events... finding a middle ground where it has ownership from the host government and brings in challenge and political reality is as innovative as we can get in this context" (29 May 2024).

Despite these successes, the pathway to institutionalise the EGF has not been without its challenges. Initially, there was scepticism from various stakeholders about how tangible the results might be from a Forum like this, due to fatigue and concern that has stemmed from similar events. However, strong demand from the government of Uganda's Macroeconomic Policy Department, coupled with IGC's support, has helped to sustain and develop the Forum. This gradually led to increased government funding, the allocation of dedicated MoFPED staff supporting the event, and national media coverage.

The institutionalisation of the EGF also ensured that the event continued even in the face of challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2020 Forum specifically addressed the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns in Uganda. It took place in a hybrid format with due precautions and 450 people attending<sup>4</sup>, including the Prime Minister of Uganda, the Primary Secretary and Director Budget of Ministry of Finance, and the Deputy Governor of the Bank of Uganda.

The institutionalisation of the EGF has also been bolstered by the IGC's engagement with government officials across all levels. Researchers at the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA) remark, "There is no other forum at the same scale in the country. For example, we have worked with [other academic institutions] on some dissemination, but the scope of stakeholders is smaller compared to IGC. IGC has more visibility and outreach. [...] It brings multidisciplinary participants together to discuss economic development issues. Other forums may be organised by civil society, but at a government scale, the EGF stands out as the pinnacle" (30 May 2024). The EGF's distinctiveness is further highlighted by its diverse participants. As a URA researcher (30 May 2024) notes,

"The diversity and calibre of participants, including decision-makers and policymakers, make the EGF unique. It's not just about discussing issues but having those in power listen and engage. The presence of high-level officials like the Prime Minister, and MPs ensures that the discussions have a real impact" (30 May 2024).

The Forum's reach continues to expand, now attracting more than 400 in-person attendees each year, and gaining national television coverage. Attendance from public officials at regional levels and with diverse geographical representation has increased significantly. As a senior economist at MoFPED observes, "initially, there was low attendance from the government, but now the turnout is much bigger. The Ministry of Finance has been injecting money from the start, but the response from the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) has become more positive over time" (29 May 2024). The IGC continues to lead on the academic debate, recently broadening the event's themes to cover crucial issues such as climate change, the Parish Development Model, labour skills, and urban development.

<sup>4</sup> The majority of whom were online.

# 4. What makes this case transformational?

#### **Key achievements by dimension**

- Academic contribution: The EGF has established a high-profile, formal process for bringing groundbreaking IGC research on priority policy issues identified by the government into public debate. Over the past seven years, it has featured over 100 academic studies, serving as a forum for structured, informed discussions that help integrate research into the budget planning process. The presentation of high-quality, relevant research plays a crucial role in shaping policy decisions, making it a key academic contribution to Transformational Change. Additionally, the EGF has fostered knowledge sharing between Ugandan and international researchers, introducing new methodologies and generating policy-relevant research questions that shape future research agendas.
- Impact: Over the past seven years, the EGF has systematically integrated innovative ideas and robust evidence from research into economic policy across key priority areas identified by the government. This process has raised expectations that decisions are informed by evidence and encouraged senior leaders to rethink policies. The EGF has reshaped debates in areas such as tourism, climate change, and tax incentives, leading to increased investment and changes in policy and practice within these sectors.
- Institutionalisation: The EGF has been institutionalised as an annual event under the Macroeconomic Policy Department, with a dedicated National Planning Committee of around 15 members. Held every August or September, the event allows key recommendations to feed into the budget preparation process in January. This integration of evidence-informed policy dialogue into national fiscal planning represents a major shift from past practices, where research sparked debate among technocrats but rarely influenced policies or budgetary decisions in an open dialogue with diverse stakeholders. This shift has solidified the role of evidence in shaping long-term economic strategies and data-driven budget decisions.
- Scalability: Since its inception, the event has grown significantly, with attendance rising from 200-300 participants to 450. Initially focused on public officials in Kampala, it now includes representatives from regional government offices and has garnered national television coverage. The event's scope has also expanded to cover a wider range of topics, such as climate change and the Parish Development Model, a nationwide program. This growth in participation and coverage reflects the government's commitment to continue hosting the event, which will reach its eighth edition in 2024. The most compelling evidence of scalability is the replication of the EGF forum by IGC in Zambia, where two EGFs have been held in Lusaka in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance and National Planning, featuring high-level participation, including President Hakainde Hichilema.

### 5. Drivers of change

Through our Transformational Change analysis, we have identified the following key factors that enabled IGC's engagement to contribute to change:

Ownership and support from policy champions. Local ownership and buy-in from senior policymakers have been crucial in ensuring that the EGF remains government-led and independent of international donors' agendas. While diverse voices are invited to foster fruitful discussions, retaining control over the agenda ensures alignment with government priorities. Furthermore, champions like Dr Albert Musisi, have embedded the Forum into MoFPED's culture, ensuring its continuity with ongoing support from the Permanent Secretary.

Understanding the local demand for research and rigorous evidence. The EGF was established in response to a clear demand from the government of Uganda to create a platform facilitating objective, rigorous discussions on economic policies. This demand has persisted despite changes in MoFPED leadership, and IGC has successfully contributed to expand the EGF's thematic focus over the years, demonstrating the forum's responsiveness to emerging issues and its role in shaping policy discourse in Uganda.

**Effective communication and inclusive dialogue.** The EGF promotes inclusive dialogue by ensuring the participation of key stakeholders from inside and outside the government, including development partners, the private sector, and civil society. This broad participation helps to bridge gaps in policy implementation and promotes a comprehensive approach to economic growth, while fostering structured debates on complex topics grounded in robust evidence and research.

Supporting agile research and policy engagement processes through the strategic use of various funding streams. The IGC's ongoing investment, extending beyond each Forum and continuing until the next, through different support mechanisms, contributes to the Forum's sustainability and quality. This continued support enables the content to be tailored to address the highest government priorities and to support the event in several ways.

**Fostering long-term research collaborations.** The presence of an incountry team, with country economists and academic leadership, has fostered close, collaborative relationships between policymakers and researchers. This structure facilitated the establishment and continuous support to the EGF, enabling productive exchanges throughout the seven years and allowing frontier research to annually inform pivotal policy decisions.

**Access to a varied pool of experts.** Facilitated by the IGC, benefits from a diverse pool of local and international researchers who can address government academic needs on any topic relevant to economic growth, fostering an environment for productive exchange.

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