

The Power of 1.8 Billion: Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the Future **SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

About the Report

The 2014 State of the World Population Report, *The Power of 1.8 Billion: Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the Future*, discusses the enormous potential for economic growth and social development in countries with large youth populations, given the right investments in human and social capital for youth development are made.

The Importance of Youth for sub-Saharan Africa

- Sub-Saharan African countries have a proportionally large youth cohort. In **15 countries** in sub-Saharan Africa, **half the population is under age 18**.
- Some sub-Saharan African countries have yet to begin the demographic transition, and without a decrease in the rate of population growth, these countries will find it difficult to create sustainable development.
 - In **5 sub-Saharan African countries**, the population is still becoming **younger** rather than ageing, which is expected to continue until **2015-2020**, and potentially beyond.
 - In others, the **fertility rate is barely declining**, while the number of women reaching childbearing age is rising, which is creating larger groups of young children and adolescents.
- If countries in sub-Saharan Africa make the right human capital investments, the combined demographic dividends could be at least **\$500 billion per year** (equal to **one third of the region's current GDP**) for up to **30 years**.

Demographic transition and Demographic Dividend

- The **demographic transition** occurs when a population shifts from high fertility rates and high mortality rates to low fertility rates and low mortality rates. There has historically been window of rapid economic growth in countries experiencing the demographic transition, a benefit called the “**demographic dividend**.” This accelerated growth occurs when a country's working age population grows larger than the non-working age population, creating a more productive economy in a state facing fewer costs associated with non-workers, like children and the elderly.

Current Conditions for Youth in Sub-Saharan Africa

- World Bank data shows that **children have higher poverty rates than adults** in the poorest countries of sub-Saharan Africa, with **more than half of children** living in conditions of **extreme poverty**.
- In many countries, access to and quality of education remains low.
 - According to UNESCO, **22 million** of the **69 million eligible adolescents** in the world that did not attend secondary school in 2011 lived in sub-Saharan Africa.
 - 35.89% of adolescent girls are not in secondary school in sub-Saharan Africa, compared to 7.39 in Latin America and the Caribbean.
 - While **30% of youth aged 15 to 24 worldwide** were considered “**digital natives**” in 2012 (five or more years of online experience), **under 10%** qualified at this level in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Sub-Saharan Africa has also yet to overcome major challenges related to **gender equality, female empowerment, and reproductive rights**.
 - According a study from the National Violence Against Children Surveys, **38% of women aged 18-24 in Swaziland, 27% in Tanzania, and 32% in Zimbabwe** had experienced **sexual violence before the age of 18**.
 - **3 million girls are at risk for female genital mutilation each year in Africa**.
 - **At least 30%** of sexually active women between the ages of **15-24** in **West and Central Africa**, and **25% in East and Southern Africa**, would use **contraceptives** if they had access to them, regardless of marital status. In both regions, the proportion jumps to almost **50% for unmarried 15-19 year-olds**.

- In sub-Saharan Africa, females 15 to 24 years old are twice as likely as young men to be living with HIV (UNAIDS, 2013).

Policies and Initiatives for Sub-Saharan Youth Development

- UNFPA has identified **40 countries** in the sub-Saharan region where the population data suggest they are in the early stages of the demographic transition. UNFPA’s review of youth-related policies in these countries suggest that
 - a) **the vast majority have committed to investments in youth-related initiatives and recognize their importance, but:**
 - b) **most have failed to implement these programs on a wide scale.**
- The need for targeted, impactful youth investment in these countries is pressing.
 - The World Bank estimates that to **maintain 2005 levels of employment** in sub-Saharan Africa, it will require generating a **50% increase in the number of jobs annually**.
 - In Uganda, the aggregate **lifetime opportunity cost of adolescent pregnancies** (or the aggregate forgone annual income over women’s lifetime) is estimated at up to **30%** of the country’s **annual GDP**.

UNFPA Identifies a Way Forward

1. The successful implementation of policies that **empower women and girls and promote gender equity** in social and economic environments are vital to securing the demographic dividend.
2. The focus of policy initiatives should be on **expanding employment and increasing the living standards** of broad sections of the population – the model used across East Asia to capitalize on the demographic dividend in the 1980’s.
3. Governments must create **legal and regulatory environments** conducive to investment.

Case Study: Nigeria

Nigeria is a country that could reap significant benefits from the demographic dividend. The proper investments in human capital could catalyze explosive social and economic development.

- Nigeria and Indonesia had the same fertility rates and similar working age to non-working age population ratios in 1960 - **Indonesia’s fertility rate began to decline and Nigeria’s did not**
 - Nigeria went from a **GDP per capita slightly higher than Indonesia in 1960 to half the GDP per capita of Indonesia today**
- If Nigeria invests more in social and human capital the British Council and Harvard School of Public Health estimates it could **raise its GDP by two percentage points and lift 2.3 million people out of poverty**
- A slight **decline in fertility** would **raise output per capita by 5.6% at a horizon of 20 years** and by **11.9% at a horizon of 50 years**
- The demographic dividend in Nigeria could contribute to a trebling of GDP per capita as well – the WEF predicts that **Nigeria’s GDP would be 12% higher by 2020 and 29% higher by 2030** due to increasing life expectancies and demographic transition

Nigeria has already begun to implement policy initiatives to invest in the country’s youth.

- “The Child Rights Act in Nigeria has passed in 23 states and the Federal Capital Territory, with advocacy ongoing in the remaining 13 states. Other policies and programmes benefitting the girl child include a national database for vulnerable children, girls’ mentorship programme, national nutrition policy, a children’s parliament, gender mainstreaming and a policy on gender in basic education”.
- “From 1997 to the present, Nigeria’s Child Rights Act has formed the basis of law and policy in various parts of the country. In addition to gender equity in education, they prohibit child marriages and taking girls out of schools”.

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Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Togo, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe

