

Concept Note
International Seminar:
***Migration and Demographic Dividend:
Sub-Saharan Africans' mobility***

May 23, 2018

**Sala Aldo Moro,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and international Cooperation,
Rome, Italy**

1. Background

With a population of 1.2 billion (2015), Africa's population is projected to reach 1.7 billion in 2030 and 3 billion in 2063. About 46 percent of the 1.3 billion increase in the population between 2015 and 2063 will be young people aged 15-34.

As the population of Africa grows, so does the rate of migration. In 2010, 42.6% of all international migrants from least developed countries were aged 15 to 34 years, compared with 29.1 percent from developed countries. Migration within Africa and to OECD countries, China, Argentina and the Gulf countries has increased steadily over recent decades. Much of this migration is irregular and unregulated¹. Globally, migration has been growing progressively, reaching an estimate of total 258 million international migrants in 2017².

The 2016 IOM report showed a steady increase in migrants from North Africa to European shores. In addition, it has been reported that the increase of irregular migration is directly linked to the growth of human trafficking smuggling.

Migration remains one of the few options for people, particularly youth, to find a perspective of peace, decent work and escape the vicious cycle of poverty and/or violence, even by risking perilous journeys in search of a 'better life'.

2. Rationale for the Demographic Dividend Agenda

« We simply want to live like human beings. » 16 - year-old Gambian migrant in encampment in Rome

Africa's rapid population growth, particularly the proportion of young people, could represent the greatest challenge as well the greatest opportunity for the continent. If appropriate investments are made and effective policies are implemented, it could be possible to reap the demographic dividend –the economic benefit that can arise if a large proportion of working-age population is empowered with opportunities, services and investments in health, education and employment.

¹Anne Sofie Westh Olsen, *DIIS policy brief: demographic window of opportunity in Africa –and the role of migration*, October 2012

² *International Migration Report 2017*, United Nations

Addressing emerging issues related to demographic dynamics becomes key in achieving the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action.

As shown by the Africa Union's Agenda 2063 and the adoption of the 2017 AU theme of "harnessing the demographic dividend through the investment on youth," African governments recognize the need to invest in the continent's youth population. It is there fundamental to examine the demographic dividend in the framework of the Agenda 2030 and reflect upon how it can become a tool for achieving the SDGs. In order to do so, countries should also look strategically at the long-term development process of their societies, not only by solving short-term crisis, but also by looking at sustainable and long term solutions to reduce hunger, poverty, health and education, illiteracy and promote investments that focus on sustainable wealth creation.

The transformative power of the demographic dividend consists in turning the youthful population of high fertility countries into valuable human capital and a force for propelling socio-economic transformation and development.

Indeed, given that 75% of Africa's 1.2 billion people are under age 35, efforts for achieving the SDGs should focus on the continent's youth, by putting them and their action at the center of the Agenda. Youth can be critical agents for positive socio-economic change if appropriate investments are made to unleash their power to innovate and become productive citizens.

Gender perspective should be considered as a cross cutting issue. The concept of a gender dividend has recently entered into the broader demographic dividend discussion. While the demographic dividend originates from shifting demographic structures towards more productive ages, the gender dividend refers to increase the volume of (paid) work and the level of productivity of the female population. It represents the increased economic growth that could be realized with investments in women and girls.

The gender dividend can be the result of lower fertility rates, which lessen women's burden of caring for dependents and make time for other productive activities, notably formal employment. Investments in the human capital of women and girls may thus have multiple beneficial effects.

The United Nations Population Fund – UNFPA is one of major actors in this scene, campaigning to engage partners (governments, developmental, private sectors, civil society) in tackling the drivers of high population growth and investing in human capital development particularly young people. "The Sahel Women Empowerment and the Demographic Dividend (SWEDD)" is among the current initiatives being supported by the UNFPA.

o o o o o

The event will be part of the Sustainable Development Festival, a national awareness-raising campaign launched by the Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS) every year to promote and spread a culture of sustainability within the Italian society. The Festival draws public attention to the 2030 Agenda by calling upon the participation and enthusiasm of all segments of society, is going to be held from May 22 to June 7 in Italy.

Objectives

To highlight the need for:

1. A Multi-Sector/Multi-partner approach to mitigate the root causes of irregular migration and interlinked challenges and pave the way for sub-Saharan Africa to harness the demographic dividend and achieve sustainable development;
2. The need of global and regional partnerships to build resilience and find the appropriate responses to the root causes of high population growth.

3. Format

The International Seminar will consist of three sessions dedicated to specific fields of interest, relevant to contribute to harness the demographic dividend: Employment and Education; Health and Wellbeing; Youth Empowerment. Experts from academia, international development cooperation actors and international institutions will be invited to present their contribution, studies, experience and idea.

Working languages will be English, Italian and French: simultaneous translation will be provided.

4. Expected output

- Provide inputs to the preparatory process of the ICPD Review Conference 2019.

5. Participants

Representatives of Embassies in Italy, UN agencies, NGOs, migrants' and diaspora organizations, CSOs and high school and university students.

6. Venue

Sala Aldo Moro, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rome

7. Date

23 May 2018, from 8:30 to 13:30.