

Harnessing the Demographic Dividend: Ethiopia at the Crossroads **Addis Ababa, May 29-30, 2018**

In the past 20 years, Ethiopia has experienced a significant fertility decline of about two children per woman; today, the total fertility rate stands at about 4.5 children per woman. Provided that the fertility decline gains traction, namely that fertility declines rapidly to about 2.5 children per woman (a level close to replacement), the country could capture a first demographic dividend (DD). The demographic dividend is an economic surplus triggered by a change in the age structure, namely an increase in the employed active adult population vis-à-vis their dependents (in particular, their young dependents).

East Asian countries experienced a DD in the 1960s to 1990s. Nowadays, discussions about a potential DD dominate the formulation of socioeconomic policies in sub-Saharan Africa and in Ethiopia. The recent edited volume by Dr. Hans Groth and John F. May, *Africa's Population: In Search of a Demographic Dividend* (Springer, 2017) offers a state-of-the-art analysis of the issues at stake. The book has received excellent reviews (e.g., *Population and Development Review*) and is deemed to be the most comprehensive collection of essays on the DD in sub-Saharan Africa. A key chapter of the book is devoted to Ethiopia and was written by Dr. Assefa Hailemariam, Center for Population Studies, Addis Ababa University.

With respect to the specific situation of Ethiopia, several crucial issues warrant a more in-depth examination. Among these, one should mention the possibility that the country might experience soon a fertility stall, whereby fertility would remain for a number of years at about 4.5 or 4 children per woman. Further worrying trends are the rather wide fertility and contraceptive use differentials among the various Ethiopian regions, the still low levels of literacy particularly among young women and the employment rates among the youth cohorts. Last but not least, population pressure on the environment, especially the Highlands, poses unprecedented challenges for achieving sustainable development in the country. All these factors call for a careful reexamination of the Ethiopian future demographic trajectory and its consequences on the various sectors. This knowledge should then be conveyed in actionable messages to key Ethiopian policymakers.

It is our plan to organize a two-day conference in Addis Ababa under the title **Harnessing the Demographic Dividend: Ethiopia at the Crossroads. The proposed date is May 29-30, 2018.** This event is under the auspices of the Swiss Embassy in Ethiopia. The scientific organization will be provided by the World Demographic and Ageing Forum (WDA Forum) in St Gallen, Switzerland, the Center for Population Studies, Addis Ababa University, Addis Ababa, and the Department of International Health, Georgetown University, Washington, DC. The conference aims to gather 40 to 50 Ethiopian and international scholars, including scholars from other SSA countries (e.g., Uganda).

The total budget is estimated at about USD 50,000.

The Conference would be organized around six major themes:

- Current and future demographic trends in Ethiopia
- Environmental and other socioeconomic consequences of Ethiopian demographics
- Drivers and obstacles to capture Ethiopia's DD (health, education, gender equality, employment, governance etc.)
- The impending fertility stall and how to avoid it
- Key policy interventions needed to capture a DD in Ethiopia
- The role and the responsibility of the private sector

Further information:

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