

## WDA Forum

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## Demography: Shaping Socioeconomic Transformation Development Experts Convened in Kampala/Uganda September 19-21, 2023

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Experts from the Makerere University, the National Population Council (NPC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Demographic & Ageing Forum (WDA Forum) Switzerland as well as global actors on the “Demographic Dividend Concept” convened in Kampala from September 19-21, 2023. Their objective was to explore policies, strategies and plans that could help to make the best use of population dynamics to achieve economic and social development in African countries. In the case of Uganda, these population dynamics are characterized by an extraordinary proportion of young people with 70% of the total population being under the age of 30.



Under the headline “Linking Demography to Wealth Creation”, this 2nd Demographic Dividend Seminar was held at Statistics House in Uganda’s capital. Experts analyzed the megatrend demographic change with the potential to capture a “Demographic Dividend” for economic growth and its interdependencies with other megatrends such as climate change, digitalization, urbanization and migration. Currently, Uganda’s population is the 3<sup>rd</sup> youngest in the world – its mean age is slightly less than 16 years, its population size today is 48 million citizens or the 31<sup>st</sup> largest population in the world.



Mr Haruna Kasolo Kyeyune the Minister of State Microfinance and Small Enterprises opened the conference with a clear statement: *“Achieving this unique demographic dividend will not only accelerate economic growth, getting Uganda closer to attaining a middle-income status, it also has the potential to boost key social outcomes crucial to improving the daily lives of Ugandans”*.



Dr. Hans Groth, President of World Demographic & Ageing Forum, Switzerland highlighted the demographic transition around the world, African countries and Uganda in particular. *“The 21<sup>st</sup> Century will be particularly shaped by demographic growth and transition in African countries. This unprecedented transition will be characterized by huge proportions of young people ready to work and to produce”*. Dr. Hans Groth underlined that *“Uganda must therefore invest and implement appropriate policies to enable this transition and create an environment for a skilled and healthy labor force. Only then the benefits of the upcoming demographic dividend can be captured for the benefit of all Ugandans and the nation as a whole!”*

Dr. Manuel Buchmann, Research Director of the World Demographic & Ageing Forum, explained how this demographic transition is linked to economic growth and what prerequisites must be fulfilled by Uganda to harness its Demographic Dividend: *“The so-called Asian Tiger countries are prime examples for harnessing a Demographic Dividend from an economically very similar starting point as the East African Community. Uganda needs to significantly reduce its fertility, improve the education of its young workforce, and create labor market policies that promote entrepreneurship and fair wages. If these prerequisites are met, Uganda has the potential to mirror the development of South East Asian countries and become an African Lion.”*

### **What is the Demographic Dividend?**

The first Demographic Dividend is an economic surplus resulting from a relative increase of the working-age population as compared to the dependents, in particular the young (U15) dependents. It is an effect that will last only during a period of 40 years. As such it is a Demographic Window of Opportunity that can only be realized if certain social and economic prerequisites are fulfilled.

A second Demographic Dividend can be captured when the benefits of the first Demographic Dividend have been properly saved and invested.

Former Head of the Swiss Development Cooperation Ambassador Martin Dahinden spoke on the topic „Demography: Why does it matter to advance a nation?“ He addressed the impact of population dynamics on economic productivity, labor markets, consumption patterns, health and social services or urbanization and infrastructure. Furthermore, he addressed the multifaceted political and social implications, and finally how all those efforts need to be aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030).

Ambassador Dahinden’s second presentation was on „Policy Building: What has to be Considered?“. Reflecting on the concept of mitigation and adaptation, he emphasized what needs to be considered when formulating policies to cope with demographic change. His presentation was a kind of checklist for all those involved in policy development and formulation.



Prof Florence Mirembe, the Vice Chairperson at NPC who represented Amos Lugolobi the State Minister for Planning under the Finance Ministry, noted that the Ugandan government launched “*Operation Wealth Creation*” as an intervention to efficiently facilitate socioeconomic transformation.



*“With the right investment choices, as the young population matures and the birth rate goes down, there is an extraordinary opportunity for Uganda to reap the economic and social benefits of a young working-age population”,* noted Ms. Mirembe, Vice Chairperson at NPC.



At the closing officials including Dr. John Ssekamatte Ssebuliba, a population & development expert, Mr Samuel Omwa a director at NPC, Dr Abel Nzabona of Center for Research and Dr Betty Kyadondo among others highlighted unprecedented demographic opportunities in Uganda and its particular impact on culture, human capital, demand for education with appropriate curricula, employment, healthcare and investment opportunities.

**Their consensus was: “Uganda’s Vision 2040 on wealth and prosperity needs a strong road map – now!”**



The 3<sup>rd</sup> Seminar on “Linking Demography to Wealth Creation” is scheduled for October 2024. Practical business examples of actions in the regions and communities as well as even more engagement of young people will be the focus.



The conference featured various dignitaries including; Dr. Manuel Buchmann the Research Director World Demographic & Ageing Forum, St. Gallen/Switzerland; Dr. Martin Dahinden former Swiss Ambassador and Director General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Member of the UNICEF Advisory Group, Dr. Hans Groth – President of World Demographic & Ageing Forum, St. Gallen/Switzerland; Dr. Patricia Ndugga the Head of Department, Department of Population Studies, Makerere University; Dr. Stephen Ojiambo Wandera a Lecturer, at the Department of Population Studies, Makerere University and experts from Uganda/East Africa .

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### **About the WDA Forum**

*As a Think Tank, the WDA Forum actively shapes the discussion on demographic topics. We work closely with the Institute of Insurance Economics at the University of St. Gallen as well as other educational and research institutions including the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston, Stanford University in California, American Enterprise Institute in Washington/DC, Population Europe in Berlin and Ageing Centre at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, the Fudan University in Shanghai, and Swissnex Network of Science and Technology.*

*The WDA Forum has been founded in 2002 and is based in St.Gallen/Switzerland*