

The challenges of the demographic dividend for African countries

A gender perspective

Policy Paper

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Keywords: Demographic dividend and transition, gender inequalities, reproductive health, human rights, public population policies, family planning.

Summary: The implementation of population related public policies in Africa will only have the anticipated effects if a certain number of issues are tackled: harmful traditional practices, the stereotypes regarding gender social roles and family, community and societal norms; the legal and socioeconomic status of women and their condition regarding rights and reproductive health. These are the indispensable prerequisites for (and ongoing support of) the full realization of the demographic dividend. This document puts forward a certain number of recommendations concerning necessary and sufficient investment, both large and focused on human capital and particularly in a gender perspective.

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Highlights

- The dynamics of demographic growth in sub-Saharan Africa driven (among other factors) by a high fertility rate can inhibit development.
 - In other sub-regions of the African continent, advanced demographic dividends have been made possible by the political commitments and intervention of public policies (population policies) targeting the promotion of family planning and women's rights.
 - Demographic and health surveys show that reproduction is not simply an issue of biological factors but that it is a matter of gender, i.e. that it poses the question of women's physical, psychological, economic and social autonomy regarding their reproductive choices.
 - The issue of demographic dividend must be put into perspective according to gender relations, norms, values and social practices, which govern the often unequal relationships between men and women from the point of view of households, families and communities.
 - The gender perspective in studies and population policies is materialised by the contribution of statistical gender indicators, which thus make it possible to go beyond the gender-based descriptive surveys and supplement demographic, economic and social issues.
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Synthesis

For decades, the importance of the demographic¹ dividend in the economic emergence of a number of countries has been shown by facts and solidly demonstrated by research². Nevertheless, the conditions of the potentialities it represents still have to be developed according to the particularities of the countries concerned.

In Africa, different levels of demographic transition and opportunities make it possible to benefit from them³. The differences stem from the history of the continent and the countries, which constitute it. The diverse landscapes of contemporary African demographics must not, however, hide the existence of common challenges identified in the first instance by large African institutions such as the African Union (AU)⁴, and the African Development Bank Group (AfDB)⁵.

To seize the window of opportunity that the demographic dividend can represent, there are a certain number of economic, social and anthropological conditions to take into account including the gender perspective, which has very often been ignored, or very widely underestimated until now⁶.

1 Briefly presented as the phenomenon of the increase in economic productivity that occurs when the ratio of the active population in comparison with the number of dependent people increases.

2 The origin and validity of the demographic dividend concept is nevertheless still under discussion in the scientific community (Garenne, 2016).

3 See Research Paper No 119 | Transitions démographiques, inégalités et développement humain : analyse des fiches démographiques synthétiques pour 43 pays d'Afrique subsaharienne, December 2019. <https://www.afd.fr/fr/ressources/transitions-demographiques-inegalites-et-developpement-humain-analyse-des-fiches-demographiques-synthesiques-pour-43-pays-dafrique-subsaharienne?origin=/fr/ressources-accueil>

4 See AU roadmap on how to fully benefit from the demographic dividend by investing in youth. <https://wcaro.unfpa.org/fr/publications/feuille-de-route-de-lua-sur-tirer-pleinement-profit-du-dividende-d%C3%A9mographique-en>

5 "Transforming Africa's demographic burst into a demographic dividend: the 2016-2025 strategy for the employment of young people in Africa by the AfDB covers the five great priorities of the institution which are known as the "Top 5". This goes for a fifth of them, which aim to improve the quality of life of Africans, by taking advantage of the demographic explosion the continent is experiencing – often qualified as a time-bomb –, to turn it into an opportunity for inclusive growth. <https://www.afdb.org/fr/news-and-events/transforming-africas-demographic-burst-into-a-demographic-dividend-15680/>

6 See women's contribution to the demographic dividend, also known as "gender dividend" (Belohlav, 2016).

Since 2000, the African continent as a whole has experienced sustained economic growth. To illustrate this, the gross domestic product (GDP) of sub-Saharan Africa rose from USD 397 billion in 2000 to over USD 1,700 billion in 2018⁷. However, this growth did not result solely in significant progress from the point of view of economic diversification and the creation of decent jobs, but also in terms of the social development of the populations. Specifically, all the countries on the continent have multifaceted inequalities including those linked to income (level of poverty), ethnicity, age and geographical location (rural and urban areas) which, when they are combined with gender inequalities, expose girls and women to much greater educational and health vulnerabilities than boys and men.

The implementation of demographic, macroeconomic and social public policies will only have the intended effects if a certain number of issues are clearly addressed.. Traditional practices (early marriage, female genital mutilation; the stereotypes related to gender roles and family, community and societal norms (such as the priority given to boys in schooling and the acceptance of unsafe abortions); the unequal status of women (personal legal status, land tenure and immovable and movable property rights, access to credit and to the formal employment market, the satisfaction of needs relative to reproductive health). These are the indispensable prerequisites (and ongoing support) of the optimal realisation of the demographic dividend.

7 <https://donnees.banquemondiale.org/region/Africa-sub-Saharan>

If we consider the hypothesis of a common pro-active approach at the level of the continent, a certain number of recommendations related to necessary and sufficient investments, both large and those targeting human capital can be proposed, particularly in a gender perspective. Development stakeholders can initiate and support these investments based on the following factors/measures/actions: *(i)* recognising and raising the anthropological/cultural barriers to development; *(ii)* supporting strong and committed leaderships in favour of gender-based public policies at both the levels of the countries and the continent; *(iii)* developing the offer where reproductive health and voluntary family planning are concerned; *(iv)* identifying and supporting the demand relative to contraception; *(v)* coordinating efforts regarding education, employment and social safety nets, particularly for young girls and women.

Introduction

In 1994, a briefing note issued by the Organization for African Unity (OAU)⁸ and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)⁹ indicated that *"The African countries, which are characterised by a low fertility rate are the countries where the rate of use of means of contraception, the proportion of girls enrolled in primary schools, expenditure devoted to the social sector is very high and where expenditure devoted to safety is very low. It is thus that the development of basic education and particularly that of girls, along with a favourable socio-economic situation are important factors in favour of the use of contraception and family planning, and consequently, allow a better control of fertility and a better quality of life"*.

In 2017, the theme of the year for the African Union (AU) was "Exploiting the demographic dividend by investing in youth"¹⁰. In collaboration with UNECA, the African Development Bank Group (AfDB)¹¹, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the AU presented a roadmap focusing on reproductive employment, education and health as primary investment sectors.

8 Founded in 1963, the OAU was dissolved in 2002 and replaced, on the same date, by the African Union (AU).

9 Source: <http://www.unfpa.org/fr/resources/population-et-developpement-en-Afrique>

10 Op. cit.

11 The AfDB group affirms its wish to "transform the spectacular demographic explosion of African youth into an economic dividend" <https://www.afdb.org/fr/news-and-events/transforming-africas-demographic-burst-into-a-demographic-dividend-15680/>

The importance of the demographic dividend in the economic emergence of a number of countries in East and South-East Asia at the end of the 20th century was demonstrated¹² by Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan in a first wave, followed by Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam in a second wave. These examples show that in order to seize a window of opportunity, a certain number of political, economic, social and anthropological measures were considered¹³. Among them, public policies targeting gender equality, a subject, which has very often been ignored, or widely underestimated up until now, have contributed towards realizing its potential, as was the case in Tunisia¹⁴ and, more recently, in Rwanda¹⁵.

¹² <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/04/06/demographic-dividends-in-south-asia-a-window-of-opportunity/>

¹³ See "Politiques de population et maîtrise de la croissance démographique au Sud", in Questions de développement. Agence française de développement (AFD), Décembre 2019. "Sept pays du Sud sont régulièrement cités pour avoir mis en place une politique de population accompagnant le processus de transition démographique: le Bangladesh, le Mexique, la Tunisie, l'Éthiopie, le Kenya, le Malawi et le Rwanda. Comparer leurs politiques publiques permet de mettre en avant les bonnes pratiques en matière de planification familiale.

¹⁴ <http://www.onu-tn.org/uploads/documents/14766995540.pdf>

¹⁵ L'égalité hommes-femmes et le dialogue social au Rwanda. (Gender equality and the social dialogue in Rwanda). https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---dialogue/documents/publication/wcms_194270.pdf

1. Definitions of demographic transition and dividend

The demographic context of the African continent cannot be broached without a prior brief reminder of the two fundamental concepts of the demographic theory.¹⁶

The concept of **demographic transition** reflects the shift of a country with high fertility and mortality rates and an almost inexistent demographic growth, to a situation of combined decrease of mortality and fertility, implying moderate demographic growth. Between these two extremes of demographic transition, there are two specific moments.

- The moment during which the mortality rate, and particularly infantile mortality, decreases thanks to the improvement of health conditions while the fertility rate remains high, resulting in strong demographic growth.
- The moment when the fertility rate also starts to decrease, triggering a decrease in demographic growth.

The final phase of the demographic transition in which fertility and mortality balance out and thus offer an opportunity to benefit later from a "demographic dividend".

There are three "types" of demographic transition which are somewhat differentiated if we refer to a sample of 44 sub-Saharan African countries with available data¹⁷: (i) the countries in a phase of advanced transition, (ii) those where the transition is ongoing, and lastly (iii) those whose transition is in the initial phase.

- The countries in advanced transition are few and of limited geographical size (Mauritius, Cape-Verde, the Seychelles, with the exception of South Africa). They have reached a rapid concomitant decrease of mortality and fertility rates.

- The majority of countries where transition is ongoing: the downward convergence of mortality and fertility rates is underway, but remains slow and should not peak before 2050.
- The countries which have only managed to begin a weak (or even inexistent) transition due in large part to a still very high fertility rate (Niger, Chad, Mali in particular).

The **demographic dividend** is a "portmanteau concept" which combines a consequence (the dividend, particularly in terms of potential economic growth) and its cause (the structure of the population at a given moment in time). In other words, it is the perspective of an economic dividend that a country could draw from a specific evolution of its demography, i.e. the particular period where dependents (the under 20s and the over 65s) are less numerous than active or potentially active people. The economic perspectives that such a demographic evolution can offer are the following: the acceleration and structural strengthening of growth supported by the increase in production, consumption, investment and saving capacities. Thus, a country where the share of active population increases and the fertility rate decreases can reap the benefits of a demographic dividend, a phenomenon of raised economic productivity which occurs when the ratio of the active population in comparison with the number of dependents increases¹⁸.

16 Lee R. and A. Mason (2006), What is the Demographic Dividend? Finance & Development, 43(3), pp. 16-17.
<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2006/09/basics.html>

17 See the report "Transitions démographiques, Inégalités et développement humain en Afrique sub-Saharienne" with demographic sheets for each country (2019) published by AFD.

18 <https://www.unfpa.org/fr/le-dividende-d%C3%A9mographique>

2. Historical overview and contemporary situation of African demographics

In the 15th century, before the first contacts initiated by the Europeans during what the Western historiography refers to as the great discoveries, Africa represented around 17% of the world's population. Over the following four centuries, the continent was to undergo an absolute decline of its population up until the beginning of the 20th century, bottoming-out at 7% of the world population, followed by a slight increase up until the 1950s (9.1%) before returning to its 15th century level¹⁹. The chronological reasons for this demographic feature are numerous: (i) the appearance of exogenous pandemics with the arrival of the Europeans (smallpox, flu); (ii) the direct and collateral effects of triangular trade and the slave trade²⁰; (iii) colonisation and its consequences, chiefly the systematic and violent exploitation of an almost free workforce maintained constantly available, both in peacetime within public and private infrastructures and in times of war, during WWI and WW2.

Contemporary African demographics offer a diverse landscape, but have challenges in common. The total population of Africa tripled between 1980 and 2019, rising from 400 million to over 1.3 billion inhabitants. It should reach the 3 billion mark in 2065. The population of 15-24 year olds alone should represent over 900 million people by this date²¹.

2.1 – The diverse landscapes of African demographics

On a **geographical and economic basis**, the distribution of populations has differentiated levels: Eastern and Western Africa total around 58% of the continent's population; Southern and Northern Africa around 16% each and Central Africa 11%. Using data from the AfDB, in 2017, the five sub-regions of the continent total 1,244,770,450 male and female inhabitants, according to the following distribution:

Table 1 – Distribution of the population in Africa by sub-region (2017)

SUB-REGIONS	% TOTAL POPULATION
Central Africa	10.8
Eastern Africa	28.1
Northern Africa	15.5
Southern Africa	16.0
Western Africa	29.6
Total Africa	100.0

Source: author.

These figures are to be compared with progress where fertility is concerned. While the Maghreb²² and Southern Africa are on the way to reaching their demographic transition with an average number of children between 2 and 3 (promotion of family planning and women's rights), in sub-Saharan Africa, the number of children per woman is still, according to the countries²³, between 5 and 7. Therefore, slow demographic transition, due to a persisting high level of fertility, is one of the major obstacles for many countries²⁴ (specifically the G5 Sahel countries²⁵, and the Great Lakes region) which have not managed to convert the strong growth of their GDP to an even greater prosperity, a reduction of inequalities and, finally, a better well-being for their population. From the point of view of education, in a phase of uncontrolled high fertility, the consequences have proved to be dramatic. The arrival of an ever increasing number of children in primary school (which can also be explained by a greater number of girls enrolling) is added to the extremely precarious conditions of basic learning skills (reading, writing and counting) with an average of 50 to 80 pupils per class in many regions of the continent²⁶. Moreover, the material conditions (insufficient, highly derelict buildings

19 United Nations DESA / Population Division. World Population Prospect 2017 <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/>

20 <http://www.lafriqueidesidees.org/quel-est-le-bilan-humain-de-la-traite-negriere/>

21 <http://ideas4development.org/afrique-dividende-demographique/>

22 "En Afrique du Nord, c'est à la fois l'élévation de l'âge au mariage et la contraception qui expliquent la baisse de la fertilité", in Maria Eugenia Cosío-Zavala, "Les transitions démographiques du XXe siècle dans les pays en développement, des contre-exemples théoriques ?", Les Cahiers d'EMAM, 21 | -1, 13-31.

23 May J. F et J.-P. Guengant (2014), Les défis démographiques des pays sahéliens, Revue études • June • No4206. https://sites.clas.ufl.edu/sahelresearch/files/Sahel_ETVDES_juin-May-2.pdf

24 <https://www.unfpa.org/fr/news/causes-et-cons%C3%A9quences-de-la-croissance-d%C3%A9mographique-au-mozambique>

25 Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Tchad.

26 <https://www.inegalites.fr/La-scolarisation-des-enfants-dans-le-monde>

Even if some countries have set up an educational system known as "double shift teaching" which receives alternatively two cohorts of pupils of the same level during the day, this system of double shift class is the object of much criticism as to the quality of the teaching provided.

with no latrines specifically for girls) are also highly detrimental to the quality of life of the children and the teaching staff. All the other public services (health, transport, access to water) are likewise affected as are the broad economic balances such as the employment market which is struggling with the massive and continuous arrival of young adults;

- At the level of the **employment market**, there are also marked differences. As we have seen previously, if Northern Africa and Southern Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe have succeeded for a large part in their demographic transition (voluntary family planning policies and, more widely speaking, the promotion of women's political, civil and social rights), these countries are still waiting for an economic growth that actually creates jobs, specifically on the labour market for the young, and above all for women. In 2017, the unemployment rate for young people, women and men combined, was 28.8 % in North Africa²⁷ and 47% for Southern Africa²⁸.

In addition to this, labour market participation shows large disparities between women (W) and men (M): in sub-Saharan Africa the W/M ratio is 28%, but it exceeds 50% in Northern Africa. Where the participation in the job market for the young is concerned, gender inequalities are particularly marked and while the gap at world level between young women and young men stands out at 16%, it reaches on average between 16 and 30% in sub-Saharan Africa and around 50% in Northern Africa²⁹.

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2016)³⁰, Africa loses on average USD 95 billion every year in sub-Saharan Africa due to gender disparity on the labour market. In 2014, with USD 105 billion, it represented the equivalent of 6% of the sub-regional GDP. The recent concept of gender dividend helps to enrich the demographic dividend: although it is based on generational

structures and highlights the relationships between productive and dependency ages, the gender dividend approach makes it possible to integrate the contribution of paid work, and above all women's unpaid labour (specifically in the domestic sphere), and their productivity level in economic growth and development.

2.2 – Common challenges remain for most sub-Saharan African countries

Despite the strong and sustained economic growth recorded between 2000 and 2015 on the African continent, *"it did not however result in advantages in the form of economic diversification, decent jobs and rapid social development"*³¹. The GDP per capita has stalled, and social inequalities have amplified. In most of the countries on the continent, social inequalities were higher in 2017 than in 2010, and African women have to bear a disproportionate share of these inequalities³².

More precisely, all the countries in the area are subject to gender inequalities which, when combined with income, ethnicity, age and geographical location, expose girls and women to much greater difficulties than boys and men³³. Thus, for example, *"only 23 % of poor girls from rural African areas (In Eastern, Central, Southern and Western Africa) complete their primary education"*³⁴. In addition to this, it is above all the girls and women who belong to poor and deprived backgrounds who have the most children, partly because they marry earlier and only have a very limited access to modern contraception³⁵.

In light of the urgency and the importance of the stakes of gender inequalities and their

27 ILO (2017), Global Employment Trends for Youth.

28 World Bank, (2016), Southern Africa's working age population presents potential for growth.

29 ILO country profiles. <http://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/>

30 Report on human development in Africa 2016 : Accélérer les progrès en faveur de l'égalité des genres et de l'autonomisation des femmes en Afrique.

31 <http://www.un.org/africarenewal/fr/documents/rapport-économique-sur-l'Afrique-2016>

32 "African women earn only seventy cents on their male peer's wage dollar, and attain only 87 per cent of the development outcomes of men."
<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hdr/2016-africa-human-development-report.html>

33 This is what is covered by the intersectionality concept which refers to the situation of people who are subjected simultaneously to several forms of domination or discrimination.

34 UNO (2013), A New Global Partnership for Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development – Report of the High-Level Panel in charge of the sustainable development programme after-2015.

35 <https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/5811/1/ep04020.pdf>

consequences both from the point of view of human rights and economically, the UNPD, AfDB and UNECA have developed measurement tools to gauge the progress made by the African States where gender is concerned. Whereas the UNDP³⁶ has set up the gender inequality index, the AfDB and

UNECA jointly produce the gender equality index in Africa³⁷ (Insert 1). This tool should allow the States to determine their strategies of governance and investment as well as their gender-related public policies.

Insert 1

Gender inequality index (UNDP, 2010)

A composite index that measures the lack of progress in three dimensions of human development resulting from gender inequalities:

1. Reproductive health measured by the maternal mortality rate and the fertility rate of adolescent girls.
2. Empowerment measured by the share of parliamentary seats occupied by women and the share of women and men aged 25 and over who have reached secondary education level.
3. The economic status measured in labour market participation and measured by the rate of activity of the active population for women and men aged 15 or over.

Sources: UNDP, AfDB et UNECA.

African gender equality index (AfDB/UNECA)

The gender equality index measures gender equality using three distinct dimensions: (i) equality in economic opportunities, (ii) equality in human development, (iii) equality in laws and institutions. Each dimension is based on a series of indicators which correspond to the following six questions :

1. Do women and men have equal opportunities in business and employment ?
 2. Do girls and boys have equal opportunities at school?
 3. Do women have access to reproductive health services?
 4. Are women and men equally represented in institutions?
 5. Do women and men have the same legal rights?
 6. Do women and men have the same rights in the household?
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³⁶ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index>

³⁷ https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/African_Gender_Equality_Index_2015-FR.pdf

3.

Theoretical and operational patterns for interventions

Cross differences both in terms of population volumes and fertility-related behaviour, according to the countries of the continent, make it difficult to have one discourse alone on the demographic dividend whose full realisation will have to consider the respective national challenges that the countries will have to deal with and at different speeds. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify the nature of the common issues and offer (a) a theoretical and (b) an operational pattern of interventions for public authorities.

(a) Three fundamental indicators give a more practical view of the demographic dividend concept and make it possible to suggest the economic and social policies which must be implemented in order to fully benefit from it³⁸:

1. The first indicator ("*demographic dependency ratio*") is the ratio between, on the one hand, the number of individuals from 0 to 14 years old and 65 and over, and on the other hand, the number of individuals between 15 and 64. However, this indicator does not include the fact that a lot of children are still dependent after the age of 15 and that many adults also become dependent before 65, and lastly, that all adults are not active on the labour market.
2. The second indicator ("*economic dependency ratio*") takes into account part of the dependency issue. It compares the number of individuals aged under 20 **plus** the individuals aged 65 and over **plus** the inactive individuals aged between 20 and 62 and the number of individuals in activity between 20 and 62. However, this indicator does not make it possible to measure the "dependency burden" prevailing on the active individuals who support dependent persons. It should be possible to compare this charge, expressed in financial terms, with the sum of the income of the active individuals. This is the purpose of the third indicator.

3. The third indicator ("*dependency burden ratio*") can be defined as the ratio between the total transfers towards dependent people and the total income of the active population.

(b) The three indicators combined make it possible to enlighten population policies, i.e. the explicit or implicit measures taken (or not) to influence the workforce, growth, composition or distribution of population, macroeconomic policies, specifically those that are labour-related, and lastly social policies, and in particular those regarding education and health.

Nevertheless, these population policies, and the macroeconomic policies, which may be inspired by them, will only be able to take effect if certain traditional practices, certain representations relative to social gender roles, and certain family, community and societal norms cease to be hidden anthropological challenges. This is particularly the case of the unequal status of women that covers personal legal status, land tenure and immovable and movable property rights, access to credit, access to the formal labour market and unsatisfied needs where reproductive health is concerned. Meeting these challenges nevertheless represents an indispensable prerequisite and ongoing support for the optimal realisation of the demographic dividend.

The window of opportunity that the demographic dividend can represent may be of variable amplitude. It will be materialised according to where the countries are in the demographic transition³⁹. UNECA (2016) offers two scenarios using two different transitions:

38 Recent typology presented by Vincent Turbat.

Turbat V. (2017), *The Demographic Dividend: A Potential Surplus Generated by a Demographic Transition*, in Groth H. et J. F. May (eds), *Africa's Population: In Search of a Demographic Dividend*. Cham, CH: Springer, 181-195.

39 https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/PublicationFiles/era2016_chap5_fr_rev6may.pdf

- The "*laissez-faire*" scenario in which the current rhythm of population growth continues, particularly in Western, Central and Eastern Africa with an increase of the urbanisation process, which will lead us to 2050, and beyond, for the realisation of the demographic dividend. In this scenario, economic growth, even if it remains high, does not allow the creation of sufficient jobs (and decent jobs) compared with the growth of the working age population. Moreover, this same economic growth may be lesser as time goes by due to an increasing deficit of infrastructures in terms of education, health and transport. Lastly this growth is based on the currently strongly challenged pattern of the carbon model based on fossil energies;
- the most pro-active scenario of a "green growth" rooted on the sustainable development agenda, valorising the consequences of a significant decrease in fertility rates due to a wider and more accepted contraceptive coverage, especially among the educated component of the urban population.

Even if demographic increase remains high⁴⁰, its significant inflection allows more resources to be made available in order to improve the skills and productivity of the workforce, increase its contribution to the manufacturing sectors (which are still in their infancy in most of the countries) and services and thus facilitate the regional and international integration of the continent in the global value chain, achieving at the same time the commitments of the Paris COP21 climate agenda (2015).

A recent document by UNECA, focusing on Western Africa⁴¹, supports this pro-active scenario: it proposes a certain number of recommendations that the funders could initiate and/or accompany. These recommendations call for massive and targeted investments in human capital, investments, which should take gender perspective into account, in an integrated and systematic manner.

40 It is in fact the population momentum that causes the population of a given country to continue to grow over 60 to 70 years after the fertility replacement rate (2.1 children per woman) has been reached.

41 Discussion paper "Les dynamiques démographiques au service du développement durable de l'Afrique de l'Ouest défis et mesures politiques », May 2019.
https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/WA/ice22/ice22nd_wa_issue_paper_ddd_french30aprildef_05.pdf

4.

Recommendations for a pro-active gender-based scenario

In Renaissance times, the famous maxim coined by the philosopher-economist Jean Bodin, "*The only genuine form of wealth is people*", placed populations at the heart of societies' development. Wrongly interpreted up until recently as a call for demographic expansion, this maxim shows that even if it is necessary to take people into account, it is more important to have educated and healthy people. Nevertheless, Bodin's maxim, as it was understood, confirmed and perpetuated a universal tradition dating back thousands of years, which removed girls and women from public life and made them invisible in all fields of economic and social life, by limiting them to the domestic and reproductive sphere.

The following recommendations belong to a gender perspective that consists of considering human capital (women and men) as "*all the aptitudes, talents, qualifications, and experience accumulated by individuals and which determine to a certain extent their capacity to work or to produce for themselves or for others*" (Généreux, 2000).

In this way, investing in human capital by taking stock of the respective interests and contributions of women and men, becomes one of the major conditions for the acceleration of the transition and, finally, of the realisation of the demographic dividend.

4.1 – Identifying and removing anthropological barriers

In line with the international commitments made by the majority of the countries on the continent⁴², it is now up to the political authorities of the countries and their development partners to combat together the social norms that generate gender inequalities⁴³, directly and clearly, and more specifically the practices which are harmful to adolescent girls and young women, such as leaving school before

they have finished their primary and secondary education, early marriages and pregnancies, unsafe abortions, female genital mutilations, sexual abuse and violence in all the components of societies. As shown by the phenomenon of L'École des maris (school for husbands)⁴⁴, men must be associated in the deconstruction of the social norms, which penalise girls and women, and therefore to lay the foundations of behavioural changes. Supporting the creation and/or the strengthening of the demand related to reproductive health products and services by taking part in dedicated funding would appear to be essential. This deals with the promotion of voluntary family planning on a variety of media whose diversity makes it possible to reach both educated urban populations (web platforms and social media) and poor and underprivileged rural and peri-urban populations (community radios, TV series)⁴⁵ and contribute in this way to the reduction of socioeconomic inequalities, and the well-being of populations. Lastly, the educational system must take part, on the one hand, in the deconstruction of gender inequality stereotypes, and on the other, in increasing knowledge of the mechanisms of reproduction, and sexuality in general, in secondary education.

4.2 – Supporting strong committed leaderships in favour of gender-based policies

The strategic choice of investing in human capital requires that public authorities have a long-term vision, a capacity to challenge the causes of gender inequalities and their perpetuation and lastly a declared will to support an agenda that may not represent all the aspirations of a society at a given moment in time. All societies are structured by the coexistence of divergent or antagonistic forces, which seek to maintain a status quo on given social or cultural values, or values that are perceived as

42 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979); Action Plan of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994); Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995); Millennium Development Goals (New York, 2000); Sustainable Development Goals (New York, 2015).

43 See UNPD study (2020), Tackling social norms: a game changer for gender inequalities. 2020 Human Development Perspectives.

44 Launched in Niger in 2007 and developed a few years later in other Western African countries (Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast), the École des maris involves men in information and educational activities and in the peer awareness-raising actions on behavioural changes where family planning is concerned. <http://news.abidjan.net/h/620621.html> <http://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/2013/case-study-husband-schools-in-niger/>

45 One of the objectives of the tv series "C'est la vie" supported by AFD. <https://www.afd.fr/fr/actualites/le-defi-de-egalite-femmes-hommes-dans-lacces-aux-soins>

"natural", or to promote patterns of change and agendas for the transformation of anthropological and legal patterns among others. This gender equality agenda is the subject of increasing consensus.

Moreover, In addition to the ethical and legal commitments made by the States, the politicians of the continent⁴⁶ must consider elements that can strengthen their commitments and support them in the implementation of public policies: on the one hand, the significant weight⁴⁷ of much better educated young people, who are globalised via the internet and who are demanding where their futures are concerned and dynamic diversified civil societies, and on the other, of the existence of a growing mass of young people who are still left to their own devices and who only have a very limited access to economic, financial resources as well as, education and health services.

In this context, it seems urgent to implement four measures:

- (i) firstly, to accompany public institutions in their governance efforts regarding "gender" legislations for infrastructures and social sectors, the composition of the decision-making bodies of public and private enterprises; a reform of institutional mechanisms such as gender budgeting⁴⁸ ; support for creation/development of equality and parity observatories);
- (ii) next, ensure that gender equality is included in the priorities of national plans and budgets by challenging political and economic decisions which would ignore gender issues in the development process. In addition to this, support female and male professional equality champions in public and private enterprises on the continent, both inside (women's/men's clubs) and via inter-company networks;

- (iii) in addition to this, contribute to the financing mechanisms which target continental, regional and national consolidation/harmonization mechanisms in statistics institutions from the point of view of disaggregated data by gender and detailed indicators specifically in the sectors of education and health;
- (iv) support the emergence and development of social entrepreneurship in a gender perspective. And lastly, help to strengthen the social link through associative movements, (leadership, networking).

4.3 – Developing the supply of contraception and voluntary family planning

Family planning, as the first determinant for lowering the fertility rate, is a health policy tool whose cost-effectiveness ratio is the highest⁴⁹. It is nevertheless a major challenge in public policies for most African countries. This is a multi-faceted offer because it concerns not only the products (male and female condoms, implants, intra-uterine devices [IUD], injectable, pills, vaginal rings and tablets) and the services, but also the information and education of people on these matters. The indicator, which makes it possible to determine the efforts to be made in terms of political and financial commitments is the contraceptive prevalence rate for modern methods: in sub-Saharan Africa, it is on average 25%, whereas it would be necessary to reach 75% in order to reverse the fertility curves⁵⁰. It is up to development partners to encourage the governments' commitments to the effective financial implementation of the Abuja Declaration⁵¹

46 This notion of leadership also refers to the political empowerment of African women and their contribution to the making of public policies as female elected representatives (municipalities, regions, parliaments), political and economic leaders and civil society campaigners (NGOs, unions, media).

47 <https://ideas4development.org/jeunesse-africaine-avenir-continent/> "African youth is globally connected. The rate of penetration of mobile telephony is currently over 50%, and it has doubled in under ten years. This is a major evolution that young people have completely acquired. More educated, more international, more connected on social media whose power we were able to see during the Arab Spring, young people express strong expectations for the political and social choices of societies. Their opening to the world is one of the factors encouraging a greater mobilisation of young people in favour of their country's development".

48 <https://www.afd.fr/fr/carte-des-projets/reduire-les-inegalites-femmes-hommes-au-maroc-travers-la-budgetisation-sensible-au-genre>

49 Population Reference Bureau. "Family Planning Improves the Economic Well-Being of Families and Communities" and <https://www.prb.org/bangladeshfp/UNFPA.Stateofworldpopulation2012>. The report highlights the economic benefits of using voluntary family planning

50 Atlas of African health statistics 2016.

51 In April 2001, the heads of state and government met in Abuja (Nigeria) where they made a financial commitment in view of realising the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by announcing that they would allocate at least 15% of their national budget to the health sector. This commitment was confirmed during a special summit conference on HIV/Aids, tuberculosis and malaria which took place in Abuja in 2006, and during the Assembly of the African Union Fifteenth Ordinary Session, held in July 2010 in Kampala (Uganda). https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/uploaded-documents/CoM/cfm2011/com2011_informationnote10years-after-theabujacommitment_fr.pdf

and the Maputo Action Plan 2016–2030⁵². It is also necessary to support the international and national mechanisms of public/private funding in order to increase, improve and secure the products and the supply chain of reliable and quality reproductive health products.

4.4 – Identifying and supporting the demand for contraception

The second determinant is that of the demand which covers all the latent or expressed needs for controlling fertility and/or the use of contraceptive products and services. The low rates of use of modern means of contraception⁵³ can be partly explained by a low demand from women who do not believe that a staggering or limiting of births is possible or even desirable. The reasons for this behaviour on the part of women are known: the ignorance of reproductive phenomena and contraceptive methods, the weight of the social norms that valorise fertility, including at a very early age, and lastly the levels of education of girls, which are still low (particularly in primary and secondary education).

However, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in the world *"approximately 225 million women who wish to use efficient, safe family planning methods do not have the possibility to do so because they do not have access to the necessary information and services, or are not supported by their partner or their community"*⁵⁴. This concerns, first and foremost, the unmet needs in family planning (implying, when the demand is explicitly expressed) which are 22% in Eastern Africa, 24% in Western Africa and 27% in Central Africa⁵⁵.

However, two areas of activity are well-identified: firstly, mobilising the international and domestic, public and private resources in favour of programmes, which make it possible to improve access to modern methods of contraception, and secondly, funding programmes, which help to improve the conditions and expression of the demand (gender-oriented education from primary school, comprehensive sexuality education,

information and prevention campaigns on sexual and reproductive health for the general public).

4.5 – Coordinating efforts relative to education, employment and social safety nets for women

4.5.1 – Educating, training and protecting girls (and boys) by reducing gender bias

Education in general must give girls and boys the capacity to build relationships (including sexual relationships) based on understanding and respect. It must also provide correct information on the physical, cognitive, social, emotional and cultural aspects of sexuality, contraception, the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and HIV/Aids and sexual violence. It must also participate in the dissemination of information concerning the access to medical services and advice, notably in the case of problems and questions related to sexuality. This education adapted to age, at the level of development and schooling capacities of girls and boys must remain in phase with their sociocultural realities and their close environment. In 2018, UNESCO and other major agencies of the United Nations (ONUSIDA, UNFPA, UNICEF, ONU-Femmes, OMS) joined together to put comprehensive sexuality education at the heart of a pedagogy on equal relationships between genders⁵⁶.

Among the recommendations, it has been suggested that it is necessary to contribute to investments in favour of secondary and higher education by ensuring that the educational contents and administrative procedures are gender sensitive and that the recommendations of the five major agencies of the United Nations be relayed to the political authorities in favour of sexuality education despite strong resistance.

It is important where funding is concerned to support programmes, which target is to allow girls to stay in the educational system, to benefit more widely from professional education, to access (and stay) in larger numbers in secondary and higher education and, more broadly, to implement, which

52 Maputo Action Plan 2016–2030. The operationalization of the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights continental Policy. https://addis.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MPOA%20-%20FRENCH_Version%202.pdf

53 Modern methods of contraception cover oral contraceptives, implants, injectables, patches, IUD, male and female condoms.

54 <http://www.unfpa.org/fr/planification-familiale>

55 2017 World Family Planning Report. <https://worldfamilymap.ifstudies.org/2017/files/WFM-2017-FullReport.pdf>

56 UNESCO (2018), new version of International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education.

blend formal education and vocational training in a gender perspective aiming at no longer segregating the jobs, which are traditionally open to both women and men.

4.5.2 – Employing women and men more and better by developing the gendered absorption capacities of the formal labour market

The ILO – International Labour Organisation (2017)⁵⁷ shows that global unemployment of young people is rising. Even if they have a job, over 37% of young people who work in emerging countries or developing countries (DC) live in poverty and even in extreme poverty. The highest rates of young people working and living in poverty (70%) are recorded in sub-Saharan Africa. Gender inequalities are seen in the access to and participation in the labour market, in labour income, in the marked participation of women in the informal sectors of the economy and lastly in the very unequal distribution of women and men in the economic, social and community "care"⁵⁸ sectors. These gender biases, which are far from affecting only young women, can be seen at all the moments in women's life-cycle, particularly in the case of older women who, both in developed countries and DCs, must very often face extreme economic and social precarity⁵⁹. Gender perspective must therefore represent a key objective of existing investments/funding to *"encourage all young people to acquire, through training, skills in the high growth sectors and meet the demands of the labour market."*⁶⁰

4.5.3 – Establishing innovative social policies for women

How can the countries, which are still in the (pre) demographic transition phase, face up to a growing mass of young people looking for a job? How can social policies contribute to an inclusive economic growth, which generates high added-value productive jobs for individuals (including women) and companies?

These public policies are based on the following three strands:

- The development of the "decent work" concept (1). According to the ILO, the decent work concept "sums up the opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equal opportunities and treatment for all women and men"⁶¹;
- The reduction of gender-based discrimination (2). The fight against gender-based discrimination must be a priority because it represents not only an intrusion in the most fundamental of human rights, but also an economic error, which ignores or wastes productivity and economic growth. The issue of violence against women in particular in the working world is still a major challenge for their integration and their economic and social empowerment;
- The setting up of "social safety nets"(3). These are the decent conditions for the performance of work and the mechanisms for protecting against health and social risks which must be guaranteed for human capital to be more able to contribute fully to an inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
- The realisation of these objectives is based on three key axes: (i) supporting the implementation of public policies and private initiatives targeting the employability of women by focusing on domestic/reproductive time with productive time outside the home (time/activity studies and the measurement of women's economic activity); (ii) promoting programmes for the transition to a formal economy which give more opportunities and visibility to people, particularly women, who are very largely present on the informal labour market; (iii) initiating and financing innovative programmes which allow women (and men) to benefit from social protection (collective and/or individual) in the field of illness, accidents and retirement.

57 ILO. World Employment and Social Outlook. Trends for Youth 2017. https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/global-employment-trends/WCMS_598669/lang--en/index.html

58 "Care" can be defined by the sum of the provisions and effective concrete practices of benevolence and solicitude with regards to dependency and vulnerability.

59 ILO. Employment and social protection in the new demographic context. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_209717.pdf

60 Op. cit. African Union road map to take full advantage of the demographic dividend by investing in youth. <http://wcaro.unfpa.org/fr/publications/feuille-de-route-de-lua-sur-tirer-pleinement-profit-du-dividende-démographique-en-investissant-dans-la-jeunesse>

61 <http://www.oit.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--fr/index.html>

Conclusion

Gender equality as both a cause and a consequence of the demographic dividend

Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women is both the cause, the consequence and one of the conditions of the demographic dividend. According to the level of demographic transition in each country, the priorities of the public policies implemented are different, but all of them must take into account the establishment of a favourable environment, a "gender ecosystem", which includes the strong commitment by political authorities on this agenda, the insurance of a truly egalitarian education from primary school to university; the promotion of reproductive health and family planning, and lastly the creation of conditions of employability of young people and women with the guarantee of a minimum of protection to free them from the poverty traps.

More widely speaking, public policies, which target demographic transition in order to benefit from the potentialities of the demographic dividend will also make it possible to contribute to the solution of the challenges emerging from the African continent and the well-being of its populations: mass unemployment of young people, commitment in terms of sustainable development, economic and technological integration as well as the reduction of all inequalities, first and foremost gender inequalities.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
AFDB	African Development Bank
AU	African Union
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
DC	Developing country
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organization, a United Nations organisation
IUD	Intra-Uterine Device
MDG	Millen
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OUA	Organization for African Unity
ONAIIDS	Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations)
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNO	United Nations Organisation
UNPD	United Nations Development Programme
USD	American dollar
WHO	World Health Organization (a United Nations agency)

What is AFD?

The Agence Française de Développement (AFD) Group is a public entity which finances, supports and expedites transitions toward a more just and sustainable world. As a French overseas aid platform for sustainable development and investment, we and our partners create shared solutions, with and for the people of the global South.

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