Unleashing the Potential of Young People to Harness the Demographic Dividend in Botswana

Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person’s potential is fulfilled

A Demographic Dividend (DD) refers to the accelerated economic growth that begins with changes in the age structure of a country’s population as it transitions from high to low birth and death rates. As a country’s Total Fertility Rate (TFR, the average number of children per woman) drops, the proportion of the population under age 15 begins to decrease relative to the adult working-age population (generally ages 15 to 64—the child dependency ratio). The decline in this ratio sets the stage for smaller families, who now have more resources to invest in the health, education, and well-being of each child. With fewer people to support, a country has a “window of opportunity” for rapid economic growth if the right social and economic policies are developed and investments made.

What is a Demographic Dividend?

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Botswana is characterized by a youthful age structure: a. 55% of the population is aged below 25 years and 20% is aged between 25-34 years.
b. The proportion of children (0-14 years) to the total population has declined from 45.9% in 1991 to 36.4% in 2011, while the 15-24 years increased from 46.9% (1991) to 64.9% (2011).
c. The dependency ratio (proportion of population aged 0-14 and 0-49 years to those aged 25-34 years) has declined significantly from 6.6 in 1981 to 2.7 children per woman in 2011.

Total Fertility Rate declined from 60.2 in 1971 to 8.1 in 1991 and stood at 6.0 in 2011.

Botswana’s Youthful Population

How to harness a Demographic Dividend

Realizing a Demographic Dividend requires multiple intersecting investments to empower, educate and employ young people. These investments will build the capabilities of people, and ensure their right to achieve their potential.

Access to education is an important ingredient in the social and economic growth and development process, thus harnessing the Demographic Dividend. Government needs to:

a. Increase equitable enrolments in secondary schooling and higher.
b. Enhance quality and diversity in schooling.
c. Link training to employment gaps.
d. Adopt comprehensive sexuality education through the establishment of global standards and guidelines, to empower young women and men through information.
e. Promote equal access of boys and girls to primary and secondary education to provide equal opportunities of job security and lifelong learning to adults.

Botswana Situation

i. HIV prevalence 4.6% for age 15-29 and 10.6% for 20-24 years.
ii. High Maternal Mortality (50 deaths per 100,000 births) for a Middle Income Country.
iii. High teenage pregnancies (15%).
iv. 85% of victims of rape or defilement were found to be between 15 and 35 years of age, with 27% of them being below the age of 16.

Educate

A critical foundation for the Demographic Dividend is ensuring that all people have the rights and freedoms to define their lives, pursue education, join the workforce and access wealth. Government therefore needs to:

a. Build capacities of young people and create an enabling environment for young people to meaningfully participate in all stages of decision making and implementation of rights-based policies and programs.
b. Develop policies that advocate gender equality and social protection, including the elimination of all forms of gender based violence and discrimination.
c. Invest in family planning – policies, programmes to fulfil women’s need for family planning and expand access to choice, allowing young women, men and couples to decide on timing, number and spacing of their children.

Botswana Situation

i. NER at Primary School (8 years) around 96.
iii. Senior Secondary School NER (16-17 years) around 96.
iv. Gender disparity almost eliminated in primary and secondary schools. Primary School Enrolment Gender Parity Index was 0.957 in 2012.

Empower

The demographic dividend can only be realized if the skills developed are deployed in productive activity. Private and public sectors jointly need to promote high employment industries that match the working skills and resources. Government also needs to:

• Facilitate equal pay for equal work, to empower women to enjoy security of place, formal work and lifelong learning.
• Promote strategies for youth employment and entrepreneurship through engagement of young people in policymaking processes.
• Develop strategies for encouraging full, decent employment – as opposed to informal employment – through youth engagement in policy development.

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Empower, Educate and Employ young people. These investments will build the capabilities of people, and ensure their right to achieve their potential.

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Total Fertility Rate declined from 60.2 in 1971 to 8.1 in 1991 and stood at 6.0 in 2011. Investing in young people provides social and economic benefits at micro and macro levels.