



# Demographic Dividend

Lessons from two years of advocacy  
with UNFPA-WCARO



UNFPA West and Central  
Africa Regional Office



# Content

6	<b>Foreword</b>
8	<b>Introduction: The Libreville Declaration as a starting point</b>
10	Ambitious approach, tangible results: The Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend Project (SWEDD)
12	<b>From Vision To Action: The Four Strategies</b>
12	<b>The Social Mobilization strategy</b>
14	Religious and Traditional Leaders and the Demographic Dividend
16	Parliamentarians commit to harnessing the demographic dividend
16	Meeting with African Ambassadors representing their countries in Senegal: The Rwandan approach, it's about how you view young people
18	<b>A Leveraging Strategy</b>
19	The London Summit : Family Planning in the Sahel, An essential investment for the achievement of the demographic dividend, and the realization of peace, security, and stability
20	Youth Ministers at the Africa-France Bamako Summit
21	High-level Symposium on Demographic Dividend and Africa's Development
22	<b>A Focus Strategy</b>
24	The African Youth Charter, the Demographic Dividend and AfriYAN
26	ROJALNU and the Demographic Dividend
27	Going National with the African Union Road Map for Harnessing the Demographic Dividend
28	<b>A Communication Strategy</b>
30	Sustained Communication
31	Targeted Communication
32	<b>Conclusion: Moving Forward to harness the demographic dividend</b>



*“ I congratulate you for designating 2017 as the year of harnessing demographic dividend through investments in youth... More than three out of five Africans are under 35 years of age. By investing in education, training, and employment, this makes it possible to build the future of African youth. ”*

**H.E. Mr. António Guterres**  
Secretary-General of the United Nations







# Foreword

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The Demographic Dividend is a serious and urgent issue for the future of Africa.

To this effect, the African Union has developed a centerpiece Roadmap entitled *Harnessing the Demographic Dividend: The Future We Want for Africa*. The trajectory to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is also intimately linked with the demographic dividend. The role of population dynamics in socio-economic development is evident. Unleashing the full potential of the youth population of Africa to boost this development is critical for reaping the transformational benefits that come with the demographic dividend.

More than 64 per cent of West and Central Africa's population is under the age of 24. Young people in this region face considerable challenges with some of the world's highest levels of child marriage which is at 40.1 per cent in West Africa, adolescent pregnancy, high maternal mortality especially among adolescents at a regional figure of 679 deaths for 100,000 births, and a very high fertility rate of 128 births for 1,000 girls. Yet, young people are a tremendous resource for the region, but their potential will only be realized when the right investments are made in their education, their health, their skills and their empowerment.

Therefore, there is an urgent need for a paradigm shift.

Investments in youth should not be limited to paying lip-service but they should rather be a key national development priority.

The demographic dividend concept forces us to confront these issues and challenges us to address them with adequate responses. Demographic dividend is not only a question of health; it is a question of social and economic development. It is also a highly strategic one because one cannot speak of peace, security, and resilience, particularly in this region beset by some of the most important conflicts in the world, without taking into consideration the question of demographic dividend.

Since June 30, 2015, date of the Libreville Regional Management Team meeting, the UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) has dedicated itself to prioritizing the implementation of the vision presented then which was to make the demographic dividend the focus of all interventions in the region as well as its accompanying roadmap, also developed at the time. This has translated into playing a critical role in advocating for, and mobilizing key stakeholders to prioritize, adopt, and invest in policies and programmes that will significantly improve the lives of their young populations and result in the harnessing of the demographic dividend in their countries. This advocacy has been driven by data and evidence, accompanied by a unity of message of the necessity, To Put Young People First.

We take a brief pause here to reflect on what we have achieved thus far and the lessons we have learned in the last two years, so as to move forward in a more robust manner with this vision. As such, this document reflects the work accomplished during the first stage of the long march towards harnessing the demographic dividend for our young people. And this stage necessarily involves, through advocacy and social mobilization, ensuring that all the stakeholders understand what is at stake and is given the opportunity to make a commitment in favor of it. A movement on such a massive scale needed a No One Left Behind approach. This is exactly the approach that was adopted and which merits the review presented here.

This focus on advocacy and social mobilisation is showing progress and has the merit of displaying strong evidence that silos can be broken and that interventions can converge as they have to the concept of the demographic dividend, as long as they are consistent with the UNFPA strategic focus. In a small but significant manner, WCARO with this contribution has demonstrated the viability of the UNFPA business model.

Much remains to be done to reach our target. As we enter the most challenging stage of implementation stage, we are pleased that we have a Demographic Dividend Programming Guide that will be launched in September 2017 in the margin of the 72nd United Nations General Assembly. This guide will also help us mitigate and resolve some of the risks such as training and learning that are implicit in all the actions when going-to-scale, particularly with so many different partners. This tool will help us galvanize and mobilize across various sectors and stakeholders ranging from youth to religious leaders, to decision-makers at country and international level.

*“Yes it is a risky gamble, but implementation is a must and for the youth of Africa, it is one that we will win.*

*We need to put our young people first.”*

**#PutYoungPeopleFirst**

**Mabingue NGOM**

Regional Director, West and Central Africa Regional Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)



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# Introduction

## The Libreville Declaration as a starting point

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“Today is the beginning of a new milestone... Let us not forget that Africa is the continent with the most constraints and uncertainties. Globally, it appears as a disaster area, therefore you see why our action and our place in the agenda beyond 2015 are critical. For this reason, I would like to suggest a roadmap that could help us maximize our contribution, the construction of a better future for us and for all... **Today there is a need to agree on how to make the Demographic Dividend the foundation of all of our interventions...**” said Mabinque NGOM, Regional Director of UNFPA West and Central Africa Regional Office (WCARO) on June 30, 2015 in Libreville in Gabon.

This, the Libreville Declaration, was made at the UNFPA - WCARO Regional Management Team Consultation attended by UNFPA Representatives from the 23 countries that constitute the West and Central Africa Regional Management Team. Other participants included senior staff from the Executive Director’s Office, from WCARO and guest communication and media experts from France and the United States.

At that time, the term *demographic dividend* was a little-known expression used mostly by demographers, university professors and other population experts to explain some of the economic consequences of population change. In fact, demographic dividend is a socio-economic concept. It is the accelerated economic growth that may result from changes to a country’s age structure due to people living short lives and having large families to people living long lives and having small families. More specifically, the subsequent change in the age structure of the population is due to a decline in a country’s mortality and fertility. With fewer births each year, a country’s young dependent population grows small in relation to the working age population. In other words, the labor force is growing more rapidly than the population that is dependent on it, creating a window for faster economic growth and human development. Because of this change in the age structure resulting in fewer people to support, fewer investments are thus needed to meet the

needs of the youngest age groups and resources are freed for what is called the “economic gift.”

Given that the demographic dividend is not only a unique opportunity for countries, but also that the concept, at the time of the Regional Director’s statement, was a relative novelty not only to the management team present but to the region’s policy makers and other stakeholders despite its time-sensitive, even urgent nature, the Libreville Declaration to make it the foundation of all of UNFPA’s interventions in the region was at the very least challenging and at most, very ambitious. Immediate action was needed to guarantee the increased political leadership needed to define and set public policies and allocate the needed investments necessary to launch the process.

Thus, it was imperative that regional staff be capacitated to successfully carry out the challenge set. As such, in Libreville, the participants defined an ambitious action plan to be implemented in the 23 countries in support of the demographic dividend. This plan included ensuring common understanding by all staff in the region of the framework of demographic dividend programing, strengthened support and coordination, and demographic dividend country profiles with detailed modeling as well as situational analysis for all 23 WCARO countries. Political commitment and buy-in became indispensable. A Communication action plan in support of the demographic dividend was designed in Libreville to engage partners and key stakeholders on different aspects of the concept.

In the last two years since June 30, 2015, the landscape of uptake of the demographic dividend concept, as well as its positioning as the foundation of UNFPA interventions in the region, have changed significantly in the West and Central African region, this in line with UNFPA - WCARO Director’s setting of it as the new milestone in Libreville. UNFPA as an institution had defined this issue as a key element in its work since 2002.



Today, there is compelling evidence that the demographic dividend concept is not only well known in the region, but that it has been adopted as a movement that translates what Africa needs for its development. Different milestones have also been reached, not only in the comprehension of the concept itself, but in the most important policy work that has been carried out successfully. Furthermore, ownership of the demographic dividend concept has increased, as several countries have adopted it as a development mechanism.

It is thus opportune to revisit the road taken over the last two years by UNFPA - WCARO to make the demographic dividend concept the focus of its interventions. More importantly, through impressive and systematic policy dialogue, strategic efforts in advocacy and communication, it has become a central element in the development narrative of the region as an economic and social development policy and framework.

Drawing on interviews with various partners, and desk review of publications and other documents, this snapshot report summarizes some of the key actions and strategies used in the last two years in the effort to make the demographic dividend concept known and adopted by all. It also highlights some specific stakeholder actions or best practices.

Encouraging signs are emerging.

*“Youth is essentially creative, demanding, inventive and rebellious in its aspirations. All of these qualities are fundamental for the development of all countries and constitutes one of the most potent signs of its vitality... Youth will be and must be the most decisive group of a society that is to be dynamic and active.”*

**H.E. Mr. Jorge Carlos de Almeida Fonseca**  
President of Cape Verde

*“To benefit from the demographic dividend, we need to put in place audacious interventions to manage the fertility and population growth, to be able to accelerate the demographic transition, the economic growth and the creation of jobs.”*

**H.E. Mr. Idriss Deby Itno**  
President of Chad

# Ambitious Approach, Tangible Results

## The Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend Project (SWEDD)

“Knowledge of the concept of demographic dividend had to start with ourselves, the staff who talking about it,” said Justin Koffi, explaining the early days of the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend Project (SWEDD) which coincided with the Libreville Declaration. “In fact, it functioned much like a laboratory for the region as well as for the institution,” added Koffi, who has been SWEDD's Regional Technical Secretariat Coordinator since the early days of the project in 2015. The objective of SWEDD project is to improve the availability and affordability of reproductive health services, strengthen specialized training centers for rural-based midwives, improve nursing services, and pilot and share knowledge on adolescent girls' initiatives.

The SWEDD project started in 2015 as a joint venture between the World Bank, the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The World Bank Group put forth US\$170.2 million for women and adolescent girls to expand their access to reproductive, child and maternal health services in seven countries in Africa's Sahel region. Other development partners are involved in various capacities including the West African Health Organization (WAHO), the health arm of ECOWAS, which will be strengthened through its participation.

The six countries are Niger, whose leader His Excellency President Mahamadou Issoufou was the first to actually call on the World Bank, UNFPA and other donors for such a project, Chad, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, et Cote d'Ivoire.

The SWEDD project has two dimensions, which are complimentary and indissociable: Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend.

The Women's Empowerment dimension is geared towards empowering women and girls so they can continue their education, improve their knowledge of Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health and Nutrition, as well as increase the number of young women who participate in life-skills programs. Combined, these interventions have been shown to reduce fertility rates, child marriage and teen pregnancy, all factors that contribute to preventing women from prospering and formally contributing to economies, while also increasing demand for and access to family planning services.

To end poverty across Africa and promote greater prosperity for families, we know that the answer involves improved access to health services for women and educating adolescent girls," said Makhtar Diop, World Bank Vice President for the Africa Region. "Meeting these objectives is even more critical for countries in the Sahel, which have some of the world's highest birth rates. Improving access to maternal and child health, and family planning services, will create more economic opportunities for women and girls in the region." Mr. Diop noted.

The Demographic Dividend dimension aims to support these countries in harnessing their demographic dividend at a crucial moment in their population dynamics. "High fertility, rapid population growth and poor health services are preventing Sahelian countries from taking advantage of their demographic dividend which could bring greater prosperity, » said Christophe Lemière, World Bank Task Team Leader for the project, during the launch of the project.

To ensure SWEDD's success as well as the rollout of the Libreville Declaration, it was thus important to start at the beginning. First by building capacity on the concept itself by responding to the question: "What is the demographic dividend?"

Hundreds of officials as well as technicians from governments, civil society, United Nations and partners received training in the different aspects that make up the concept of demographic dividend. Once there was common understanding, the next phase was set to begin.

Thus the second question: "Since each country has a demographic dividend profile, what was it?" And again, capacity-building of each country's

stakeholders was essential to carry out this task. But what was significant was the emergence of critical gaps. The profiles sometimes revealed lack of information, but most importantly that some evidences and parameters of development had not been taken into consideration in the countries' development plans.

The evidence was irrefutable: this exercise and these tools could influence development policies in these countries.

That became a catalyst for swift action.

Mauritania led the way and its Government mobilized its different ministries, women's groups, religious leaders and different sectors of its civil society to review and update its development plan in accordance with these new parameters.

The different steps to the demographic dividend were elements of a programming tool that could be adapted to the reality of each country.

This then led to a more advocacy-focused agenda directed towards positioning the demographic dividend into the road map of the AU. Although Guinea was not a SWEDD country, at the time, it held the Presidency of the AU and as such, it participated in the various trainings on demographic dividend to facilitate its policy and political actions on the road map.

Some of the preliminary results of this initiative are the development of the demographic dividend profiles of countries, a regional pool of well-trained human resources, and instructive programming tools to support countries, as well as revised or newly elaborated development plans or national policies that take into account the demographic dividend dimension, and the demographic programming guide to be launched in September 2017.

# From Vision to Action

## The Four Strategies

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To benefit from the demographic dividend, that is to take advantage of this window of opportunity for rapid economic growth, the right social and economic policies need to be developed, the right investments made and action is required at different levels.

Achieving this bold vision is both legitimate and critical.

However, implementing the vision set out in the Libreville Declaration and its accompanying action plan required understanding and the adoption of specific strategic elements, so as to coalesce all efforts around its attainment. As such, two years ago, the West and Central African Regional Office developed four major strategies: a Social Mobilization Strategy, a Leveraging Strategy, a Focus Strategy, and finally a Communication Strategy. All four strategies were complimentary, yet when combined as planned since 2015, they gave a sum total that accelerated the progress initially envisaged.

The UNFPA - WCARO leadership was prescriptive about these strategic actions and advisers and management staff were empowered accordingly. Considerable resources were deployed including collaboration with local research institutions in support of these four strategies as the regional office worked to deliver the vision in a two-year timeframe.

This was a genuine and unique opportunity to plan for the scale-up of the harnessing of the demographic dividend concept by all concerned.

## The Social Mobilization strategy

In order to accomplish such a major shift, a massive movement requiring the combined efforts of all concerned was necessary. As such, the strategy of social mobilization entailed targeting every group of stakeholder and mobilizing them for the contribution they could bring to the issue. While political leadership and commitment are needed, the real struggle lies in getting effective responses in terms of allocation of financial and human resources needed at both country and regional levels.

The stakeholders mobilized ranged from high-level decision-makers in governments and Parliamentarians; civil society organizations; Faith-based leaders; Traditional Chief; Youth leaders and diplomatic representatives. They also included journalists and media practitioners, UN agencies and regional institutions. Numerous events were organized to gather these stakeholders who were asked to commit themselves and their organizations to ensure that young people in particular, adolescents and women were prioritized as were health, education and employment. All aimed at contributing to the harnessing of the demographic dividend in their countries.

One of the most important was the PanAfrican Youth Forum held in late June 2017 in N'Djamena, the capital of Chad. Hundreds of youths from countries in the region gathered to define their role and plan their actions under the umbrella theme of how to fully harness the demographic dividend by investing in youth. They made numerous recommendations to transition to empowered and skilled youths and to youth-friendly policies and



investments, all based on the AU Road Map. They presented their recommendations to President of Chad, who was expected to share them with his AU counterparts.

The various stakeholders approached have responded overwhelmingly and positively to the challenge and their dedication and commitment have been made evident.

The Road Map to harnessing the Demographic Dividend developed by the African Union proved to be a major anchor for mobilization efforts. It was a central rallying point because it is the fruit of consensus at the highest level. This Road Map is focused on four major areas, namely: health, education, economy and governance. Its highlights are:

**Health:** for youth access to family planning and reproductive health services;

**Education:** for girls to spend more years in school, get education in high-growth sector and meet labor market demands;

**Economy:** for decent jobs accessible to both women and men;

**Governance:** for a healthy and stable political environment conducive to transparency, gender responsive governance and accountability.

Later, in mid 2016, the 10-year old African Youth Charter was also a rallying point.

*“...Creating a social environment that is sustainable and peaceful is directly linked with the manner in which young women and young men find the place that is theirs, as well as the opportunities that are offered them.”*

**H. E. Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf**  
President of Liberia

## Religious and Traditional Leaders and the Demographic Dividend

### Faith-based organizations and leaders are among the most influential leaders in Africa

How then to substantially increase the number of committed leaders and organizations and reach new ones, so as to build on the momentum required to harness the demographic dividend?

That was the central question facing UNFPA – WCARO as it rolled out the social mobilisation strategy to fast-track the Libreville Declaration. Thus, along with several of its distinguished partners, it organized two historic meetings over the last two years to address this preoccupation. The results have overwhelming shown that the UNFPA – WCARO strategy works.

One of these events was deemed to be an extraordinary accomplishment, so much so that the President of Chad, who hosted the meeting, told the assembly that UNFPA had succeeded where his government had not.

“I congratulate UNFPA for having organized this symposium and having succeeded in making Muslim religious leaders admit to the importance of the demographic dividend and Family Planning. UNFPA succeeded where the government had difficulty reaching a consensus. I exhort the members of government to work with the Superior Council for Islamic Affairs to implement the recommendations and to transmit the message to the grassroots in all the regions,” said His Excellency Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, at the opening session of the Regional Symposium « Islam, Demographic Dividend and Family Welfare held in late July 2017 in Chad’s capital, N’Djamena.

The Government of Chad and the Superior Council for Islamic Affairs organized it with the support of UNFPA, the World Bank, and the SWEDD project with a two-fold objective. One was to get the commitment of the religious leaders to participate in harnessing of demographic dividend and the other was to build their capacity so they could, in turn, understand and be able to promote family planning, or birth spacing as it is sometimes called in the Sahelian region.

Over 1,200 delegates participated including religious experts who came from twenty countries in Africa including Egypt, Algeria and Morocco and from as far away as Pakistan and Indonesia in addition to the participants from Chad’s 20 regions. Numerous bilateral and UN technical and financial partners also took part in this event. The debates centered on three different pillars: the first was women’s empowerment and factors linked to infant and maternal mortality, birth spacing and demographic transition; the second: education, empowerment, youth employment and radicalization, and the third: the role to be played by Muslim leaders in the *African Union Road Map on Harnessing the Demographic dividend by investing in youth*.

After intensive high-quality exchanges, analysis of good practices generated by different countries, and in a spirit of shared responsibility, they issued the N’Djamena Declaration outlining their strong commitment to contribute to the harnessing of the Demographic Dividend. For UNFPA – WCARO, this was a resounding success.

Just two years prior, on the heels of the Libreville Declaration in October 2015, a similar event, the first of its kind in the region was held in Dakar, Senegal. As the ECOWAS chair country, the Government of Senegal with the support of UNFPA organized the Regional consultative meeting with Faith-based Organizations and Leaders on Reproductive Health and the Demographic Dividend. It gathered several bilateral, and international financial and technical partners including the World Bank, UNICEF, the European Union, the African Development Bank, USAID and the Ouagadougou Partnership.

The extraordinary aspect of the Dakar meeting was that different faith groups represented in the region namely Christian, Traditional and Muslim leaders and organizations from fourteen ECOWAS member countries and Mauritania participated side-by-side.

A significant milestone of that meeting is the Dakar Declaration in which the faith-based leaders made a strong commitment to promote interfaith dialogue, and strengthen efforts to prevent maternal, child and youth mortality, protect youth against risk factors, combat extremism and terrorism as well as contribute to provide more health services and advocate for more investments in sexual and reproductive health, all to achieve the Demographic Dividend in their respective countries.

As a result of this meeting which aimed to build and expand a partnership with non-traditional but important actors, each delegation developed an action plan in partnership with the UNFPA country office, which then integrated them into their annual work plans.

These two meetings were important milestones to mobilizing non-traditional actors.



## Parliamentarians commit to harnessing the demographic dividend

Among the most powerful stakeholders whose commitment has been sought are the region's Parliamentarians.

A first meeting on the theme "Demographic Dividend and Development in Africa" was the International Conference of Parliamentary Networks on Population and Development. Held in November 2016 in Dakar, it was supported by UNFPA.

An outcome of their participation in this event was that the Parliamentarians made a commitment to support the implementation of the four pillars of the AU Road Map on harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in youth. They officialized their commitment in a declaration on the demographic dividend in Africa and also spent time developing their own Action plan, which they aligned with the AU Road Map.

Some of the actions they promised to carry out were to promote more investments in education and health, to improve budgetary allocations in both areas, to review discriminatory laws to full participation of youth in electoral processes, or those that have a discriminatory impact on girls and young women such as child marriage, sexual and gender based violence and female genital mutilation as well as those who pose barriers to the full exercise of the fundamental rights of young people. They also committed to ratify the African Youth Charter, where needed.

## Meeting with African Ambassadors representing their countries in Senegal

### The Rwandan approach, it's about how you view young people

A few years ago, Rwanda embarked on a massive program of development of its human capital. The government's policy was that all development pillars of the country, such as education and health, are focused on the *human capital*.

"The population is not the problem. The problem is what do we expect, and how do you plan for your population, and Rwanda viewed it as a human capital in which you need to invest," reflected H.E. Dr. Mathias Harebamungu, Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to Senegal. He was one of the participants at a UNFPA meeting organized to advocate to the African Ambassadors representing their countries in Senegal about the need to fast-track the harnessing of the demographic dividend.

"So, massive investments were made in the education sector and in less than twenty years, access to secondary school went from 15% to 94%," explained His Excellency Harebamungu, who was his country's Education Minister from 2009 to 2015. This was a significant milestone on a long journey. It also gave the opportunity to those who succeeded at secondary school to go to college and then to the university, he added.

This data is remarkable by any standard, but even more so because back in 1994, Rwanda was in the news for the genocide that practically destroyed the country. The resurgence of Rwanda is, within very recent memory, all the more exceptional because the country's leaders not only prioritized key elements of the demographic dividend such as health and education, but that they also invested massively in these sectors.

The Ambassador, however, cautioned that it was a step-by-step process that started slowly and aimed to go from education to innovation for 9 to 12 years old. That objective was reached in 2012.



But advancing the agenda of innovation started with the vision, the most important element. And for Rwanda, the most critical question was: How do you view youth?

Tomorrow's generation, as youth is often called, is all about being connected to the world, so the vision of youth must also be on how to better prepare them to be connected to the world, His Excellency Harebamungu explained. Society is based on information technology, so young people must be vectors of that technology. As such, the Ministry of Youth is a Ministry of Youth and Technology, he commented.

Another part of the vision is that youths are not to be considered as consumers, but rather as producers, therefore, they must be properly equipped to produce value, goods and other things for the country, he added.

The vision also included a reform on what was being taught: the content. As such, Rwanda evolved from a knowledge-based curriculum to a competency-based one. "Today, 40% of the teaching is general, and 60% is technical and professional, this in total harmony with the vision of youth not as job seekers, but rather as job creators. They are the ones creating jobs," His Excellency Harebamungu said.

As a result, the competency-based curriculum automatically boosted family planning and hygiene, since a part of it is about managing attitudes and behaviors. It also necessarily introduced notions of dignity, discipline, and other positive social and human values. During the summer, Rwandan youths participate in work camps where they volunteer to work on social issues and there is also a national service that is not about the army but rather on development challenges, according to him.

To orient the trajectory of the education reform even more toward the innovation direction, Government called on the private sector to participate in the development of this curriculum because "they are also creators of employment and know the skills and competencies needed as well as the different job profiles needed for future growth," he described adding that they also participate in the evaluation at the end of the competency cycle, which is tailored to fulfill the needs of economic growth.

A case study done in May 2014 by the World Economic Forum on Prospects for Reaping a Demographic Dividend in Rwanda, lauds Rwanda's significant achievements over the twenty years since 1994. In addition to recommending key strategies such as lowering the total fertility rate, concentrating on environmental protection, and investing in family planning to hasten the demographic dividend, there were two that centered on youth. One was to focus on youth as the potential engine for economic growth and the other was develop a strong national employment programme that targets large-scale delivery for youth in terms of skills development, job creation... among others.

While this is compelling evidence of the world's interest in what is considered the "Rwanda miracle", the evidence that should not be ignored but rather learned as a lesson is that Rwanda's government had already determined the trajectory of its path to harnessing the demographic dividend to enable it to overcome the challenges to ending poverty, well ahead of most countries in Africa. It did so in its ambitious Vision 2020 development plan by defining its vision on youth, and by making massive investments in their health and education, among other things.

While citing development models like Singapore, The Netherlands and Germany, the former Education Minister insists that strategies that are imposed on countries must be refused, because one's model and one's vision "has to be tailored to your needs" before concluding "It's about mind-set change, and mind-set shift."

# A Leveraging Strategy

Using some of the best approaches of what experts call the leveraging principle, UNFPA-WCARO invested its resources to using every available opportunity to bring the focus to the demographic dividend concept and its benefits for families, the population and the countries themselves.

As such, UNFPA - WCARO deliberately ensured a presence over the last two years at various fora.

First and foremost by sharing its technical expertise. Then, by sharing its knowledge base by contributing to the deconstruction of what the demographic dividend is so as to show the value of investing in it.

It also identified thought leaders, engaged with them, got them involved by proposing its expertise and other linkages so as to relentlessly work its way into their consciousness of the urgent necessity of harnessing the demographic dividend.

In addition, over the last two years, UNFPA - WCARO has successfully targeted potential

stakeholders, building strong partnerships with key ones and identifying great opportunities, to slowly but nonetheless powerfully infiltrate the concept of harnessing the demographic dividend as an unavoidable path to the development of the region that it serves.

One application of the use of this strategy was when in January 2017 the governments of France and Mali organized an Africa-France Summit in Bamako. It's theme was 'Being in a peaceful world to aspire to development,' and UNFPA - WCARO seized the opportunity to organize an African Youth and Diaspora Forum to build the capacity of hundreds of youths from several countries on Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and the Demographic Dividend. This leverage was based on the principle that no country can plan its future without taking into account adolescents and youth. The premise was that peace also entails the enjoyment of one's rights and the knowledge that the future will be better since it implicitly means inclusion and the right to health, education and employment.



# The London Summit

## Family Planning in the Sahel, An essential investment for the achievement of the demographic dividend, and the realization of peace, security, and stability

The second FP2020 London Summit held in London in July 2017 presented an opportunity to focus on the link between family planning and the goal of harnessing demographic dividend, and it was seized by the UNFPA - WCARO.

“Investing in the universal access to modern contraception and family planning is fundamental for achieving the demographic dividend,” said Mabingue Ngom, Regional Director of UNFPA - WCARO, and moderator of the panel Family Planning in the Sahel: *An essential investment for the achievement of the demographic dividend, and the realization of peace, security, and stability*. He contextualized the root causes of the challenges in the Sahel region and the importance of family planning to capturing the demographic dividend as he put an accent on the more recent threats to the environment and livelihoods such as dramatic drought, desertification, climate change and the overexploitation of natural resources.

That a panel on the Sahel region was organized is a testament to this strategy of ensuring a presence developed following the Libreville Declaration. The second Family Planning Summit, as the first held in 2012, was organized by United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNFPA and FP2020. It aimed to assess progress made and revitalize the global commitments to rights-based family planning made five years earlier, as well as fast-track urgent and intensified measures to accelerate progress in the goals of family planning 2020 and those set out in the Agenda for Sustainable Development of 2030.

It was also critical to discuss the important challenge to harnessing the demographic dividend in the West and Central African region that is the crisis - violence, radicalization and poverty - facing the Lake Chad Basin region. It is the underlying effect of a growing population composed disproportionately of children and adolescents without economic power, and largely dependent on the active population, the Regional Director emphasized. These crises, for they are interlinked, have caused an exacerbation of barriers to women’s empowerment, particularly gender-based violence, early marriage, among others in the affected regions, particularly the Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin, he added.

High-level panelists called for a holistic approach, involvement of the security sector and scaling up of successes, most notably the tangible results to date of the SWEDD program.

Another highlight of the panel was when Nancy Wildfeir-Field spoke of the leading role that can be played by the private sector as a key development partner by investing in areas critical to generating dividends from Africa’s demographic change. In the case of family planning, it can help generate demand by accelerating progress and removing barriers for women and girls to access Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services, reinforce commodity availability, optimize supply chains and also contribute to developing and co-funding innovative financial mechanisms so as to attract new donors, according to her. All of these private sector interventions can ultimately benefit business as they engender a more robust economic environment and provide opportunities for investment in future employees and customers, while reducing systematic risk and volatility, she concluded.

## Youth Ministers at the Africa-France Bamako Summit

### #pasunpassanslesministresdelajeunesse

Seizing the opportunity of the Africa-France Summit held in January 2017 in Bamako, the Government of Mali and UNFPA organized a meeting of Youth Ministers. Twelve countries participated and committed their efforts to harnessing the demographic dividend.

In most, if not all, of the West and Central African countries covered by UNFPA - WCARO, young people are in the majority. In certain countries, the age group 10 to 24 constitutes up to two thirds of the population, and when the 25 to 35 age group that are considered by some African countries as youth are factored in, the result is that most of the population of that region is young.

It follows that most of the countries in the West and Central African region have ministries of youth. However, most are aptly called ministries of youth and sports, and the vision behind them is not aligned with the attainment of the demographic dividend.

“The concept of the Ministry of Youth is one of ‘let’s give some balls to some young people, most often boys, so they can go play by the beach.’ The notion of youth equals hobbies equals sports is dead. A paradigm shift needs to be made and urgently,” said Mabingue Ngom, Regional Director of UNFPA - WCARO. It must be youth and development rather than youth and sports, because young people need to be given agency to grow, to develop, added Mr. Ngom.

Reinventing or perhaps reinvigorating the region’s youth ministries required that the disparities in terms of vision be addressed in order to achieve the Libreville Declaration. Since Mr. Ngom had committed to the milestone of making the demographic dividend the overarching vision of the region, in order to reach this bold target, the Ministries of youth, albeit an untraditional target group, needed to be mobilized.

UNFPA as the lead agency for issues related to youth entered into a strategic partnership with Ministers in charge of the youth portfolio in the region. Considering them to be key stakeholders in the drive to harness the demographic dividend, advocacy was carried out at the national and regional level for recognition and adoption of a vision of their ministries that would entail youth and development, rather than youth and hobbies/sports.

This is critical when one considers that young people under 24 constitute 64 per cent of the population in the region, thus the importance of looking at youth as a development sector. Multiple avenues need to be pursued and efforts must be intensified to cultivate and put into action that vision of youth as a development sector, including the involvement of youth ministries in innovative and sustainable actions aligned with that vision. Those ministries can also ensure that budgets as well as spending are not only focused on youth but that they be increased in accordance with their needs. This is also a key element of good governance.

The Youth Ministers said they were convinced that Africa’s development as well as the attainment of the SDGs must necessarily pass through the empowerment and responsabilization of its youth. They committed to develop actions pushing for employment and entrepreneurship, factors indispensable for the realization of the demographic dividend. They also called for more financial resources to be allocated for youth programmes, and urged the domestication of the African Union Road Map.

The extraordinary response from youth ministers gathered at the UNFPA High-Level Meeting inspired confidence that this transformation could be achieved.



# High-level Symposium on Demographic Dividend and Africa's Development

When the National Transfer Accounts (NTA), a network of researchers on Demography and Economic Development, decided to hold their 11th Global meeting in June 2016 in Senegal, the first of its kind to take place in Africa, UNFPA - WCARO advocated and succeeded in getting an entry point to this eminent body. That is how the High-level Symposium on High-level Symposium on Demographic Dividend and Africa's Development became the Opening Session of the NTA Global Meeting. This was done in collaboration with the Centre for Research in Applied Economics and Finance of the University of Thies (CREFAT) and the Government of Senegal.

The Symposium brought together high-level opinion leaders and policy makers from Africa, including five former Heads of State and Government (H.E. Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania, H.E. Karl Auguste Offmann of Mauritius, H.E. Armando Emilio Guebuza of Mozambique, H.E. General/ Dr. Yakubu Gowon of Nigeria, H.E. Aminata Toure of Senegal). The Prime Minister of Senegal, H.E. Mohammad Boune Abdallah Dionne, opened

the meeting that also had as participants the representative of the President of the Organization of African First Ladies, His Royal Highness (HRH) Yahaya Haliru, the Emir of Shonga (Nigeria) and other religious and traditional leaders. Many Ministers from across Africa (including Ministers of Economics and Development Planning, Ministers of Youth, Ministers of Gender, Children and Social Protection) and a Nobel Peace Laureate, Ms Leymah Ghowee of Liberia, also participated.

One of the most noteworthy moment of the Symposium was the inter-generational dialogue that took place between young people and the high-level policy makers and opinion leaders, which facilitated the sharing of their concerns with the eminent personalities present. The hope is that this will influence policies and decisions that will translate to more strategic investments in young people to harness the demographic dividend in Africa. The Symposium also provided space to share knowledge and experiences, networking and constructive exchanges among eminent personalities and opinion leaders, policy makers and the participants.



# A Focus Strategy

The declaration of the Regional Director at Libreville is clearly a formulation of a focus strategy: "Today there is a need to agree on how to make the Demographic Dividend the foundation of all of our interventions..."

In the past two years, embracing the demographic dividend as a focus has worked well for UNFPA in a number of ways.

UNFPA - WCARO leveraged its technical competitive advantage in the population field while it focused its efforts on the demographic dividend. In the process, UNFPA has become the go-to agency for the theme of demographic dividend for the general public, for its stakeholders and also amongst the UN family as well.

Linking key areas of the UNFPA strategic plan to the demographic dividend was an important manner of effectively rolling-out this focus strategy and bringing it all together under the one-umbrella of the demographic dividend.

Finding the linkages between the key thematic issues of UNFPA's work such as the reduction of maternal mortality, the elimination of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy, the push for the empowerment of adolescent girls, the advocacy for universal access to sexual and reproductive health education and services and the demographic dividend has been done. It has enhanced UNFPA's work as most stakeholders targeted for the demographic dividend rollout had most likely had partnerships with UNFPA in other areas.







## The African Youth Charter, the Demographic Dividend and AfriYAN

The idea that youth groups are major actors in the development of policies, frameworks, laws, and fora in which they are the main stakeholders or that have them as central beneficiaries has been, for the most part, just that, an idea.

That's why the Regional Director of UNFPA - WCARO, Mr. Mabingue Ngom, has, since the Libreville Declaration, called on major youth groups in the region to step up and play their leadership role in the demographic dividend agenda that is of critical importance for them.

That's also why some of the youth groups quickly came to the realization that the demographic dividend agenda was crucial for their future, and the future development of their countries, and that they needed to embrace it.

That's also why the African Youth and Adolescent Network on Population and Development, or AfriYAN as it is more commonly called, came to the table as a major stakeholder to speak on behalf of adolescents and youth of Africa in 2016 in Banjul, The Gambia when the African Union and its partners, including UNFPA, organized Banjul+10, the Forum commemorating the African Youth Charter (AYC) with the theme: "10 Years Implementation of the African Youth Charter: Accelerating Youth Development in Africa." That meeting aimed to assess the progress made over the last decade as well as to evaluate the major challenges faced with regard to the implementation of the Charter and to map the way forward.

Ten years before, back in 2006 in Banjul, a historic gain for youths and adolescents was made when 42 African Heads of State and Government who participated in the 7th African Union Summit adopted the African Youth Charter. This legal and political continental framework outlined the rights, duties and freedoms of youth, provided guidance towards youth empowerment, and aimed to ensure their meaningful involvement in decision-making processes linked to the development agenda of Africa. At the time, there was weak and little participation of an organized continental youth advocacy group, despite that of smaller and

sometimes disparate country groups supported by UNFPA, which had also played a major role in the development of this framework.

AfriYAN's strong presence at Banjul+10 is a testament to its increased political leadership. Since its founding in 2005, AfriYAN has regrouped national, sub regional and continental youth-led structures to advocate for issues related to youth and adolescents and universal access to reproductive health. It has now been split in two, AfriYAN southernafrica for the Eastern and Southern region and the original name AfriYAN for the one for West Africa. Over the years, the organization has also made significant progress in building capacity of youth leaders from country networks, and has gained considerable experience at different levels in advocating for youth-friendly and youth-led development, including the access and provision of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services.

« For us at UNFPA, it is about reinforcing the capacity of youth organizations, to render them independent and capable of defending youth issues. And ultimately, it is about the youth being able to say 'For us, with us and never without us', » commented Mr. Ngom. To that end, UNFPA - WCARO has committed financial and technical support to AfriYan for capacity-building of its members. As part of this, AfriYAN and other youth networks such as ROJALNU participated in UNFPA's March 2017 conference on Youth Leadership and the Demographic Dividend. The objective was to prepare their members as youth leaders for their meaningful participation on the *African Union Roadmap to Harnessing the Demographic Dividend*. As such, they participated in sessions on the concept of demographic dividend and on communication skills, and developed their own Youth Roadmap outlining the strategic actions to be taken to accompany the AU Roadmap.

AfriYAN's presence is also a result of the broad role it's now playing in the advocacy for harnessing the demographic dividend in Africa and the key instrument used for this work is the 10-year old African Youth Charter. By adopting it, AfriYAN





aims to reinvigorate the Charter, although the task is partly done since so far 38 out of the 54 countries in Africa have ratified it. But applying it continues to be a challenge.

« It is a legal instrument for African Youth, » explained Pape Arona Traore, the Executive Secretary of AfriYAN. « Countries have signed conventions like the African Youth Charter, but have not applied them. » The AfriYAN leadership is working with its membership and major stakeholders to ensure that the content of the Charter is not only known by its youth as well as their leaders, but that the countries themselves ratify it and most importantly, apply it.

In the past, AfriYAN had been involved in more operational activities and particularly training, but at this turning point in its organizational life and with the imperative of the Libreville Declaration, it has decided to become involved rather in strategic and political activities including that of being a watchdog, all of which give it increased visibility. Among the actions carried out recently by AfriYAN are the Inter-generational dialogues and advocacy it organized or participated in at different events such as Banjul+10, or the high-level UNFPA - WCARO Meetings with African Ambassadors who represent their countries in Senegal, as well as in the development of documents and strategies.

“Very often, Heads of States take decisions without the participation of youth and what we want is for them to prioritize youths. We want long-term solutions,” Mr. Traore said. He cited the major challenges faced by youth in Africa, in addition to access to health services and quality education, namely lack of employment, entrepreneurship, migration, radicalisation, terrorism.

« We want to hold countries accountable. And in the next ten years, we want to see what countries are doing, if they are investing in youths and adolescents by investing in their education, their health, their participation and their employment, » is how Mr. Traore explained the watchdog role of AfriYAN.

African youth is committed. Youths must now be at the table, not on the table in some documents. Youths will be speaking out, particularly on social media. We also want to mobilize youths on the issue of peace,” he added so as to promote the African youth development and empowerment agenda. For, the opportunity to participate in the transformation of Africa by harnessing its demographic dividend must not be missed.

## ROJALNU and the demographic dividend

Using the Banjul+ 10 African Union Meeting on the African Youth Charter Meeting, Mabingue Ngom, Regional Director, UNFPA WCARO, held a meeting with the Pan African Youth Leadership Network (ROJALNU) in which he emphasized the need to empower and put young people at the heart of Africa's vision to transform the continent by 2063 by participating in expediting the harnessing of the demographic dividend. Mr. Ngom welcomed and echoed the strong demands from young people for leaders to translate political declarations into concrete actions.

The advocacy for the demographic dividend was not easy, according to ROJALNU's Advocacy Officer, Salamatou Kountche, of ROJALNU Niger: « We had to fight to keep the wording and concept in the Banjul Declaration because most of the National Youth councils were against that. But in the end, it was positive and the theme of demographic dividend is included.»

ROJALNU's members were among the 600 young people from 53 countries and about 100 representatives from international organizations, civil society and the private sector who participated in the May 2016 meeting organized by the Gambia government and the African Union to reflect on progress made and challenges faced during the decade of existence of the African Youth Charter.

ROJALNU is a federation of youth organizations that functions primarily at country level since 2004 when it was created with UNDP support to work in favor of the Millennium Development Goals. It has also collaborated with UNAIDS and continues to receive support, both financial and technical, from UNFPA - WCARO and in country by the country offices.

The Banjul+10 experience was helpful to ROJALNU, which has since been a key stakeholder representing youths in most regional events including the International conference of parliamentarians on demographic dividend, the 4th PanAfrican Summit held in Libreville, at the High-level event on demographic dividend held in NY in September 2016, the France - Africa Summit in Bamako, and the Youth Ministers Meeting in January 2017.

ROJALNU country organizations have also fully participated in the SWEDD project trainings to build their capacity on the theme of demographic dividend, as well as seize opportunities to speak confidently about youth issues to various high-level national decision-makers. ROJALNU is actively involved in sensitizing the youths that are its core members at country level and is partnering with UNFPA to support its restructuring, and strategic plan implementation.

Based on its enhanced capacity and its experience in advocating to high-level leaders of the need to invest massively in youth, Ms. Kountche said that ROJALNU was at the forefront of the youth declaration strongly in support of harnessing the demographic dividend. It was developed with other organizations such as AfriYAN, and was taken into account in the final France-Africa summit Declaration held in Bamako, Mali, in January 2017.

# Going National with the AU Road Map for Harnessing the Demographic Dividend

At country level, multiple initiatives have been launched to implement the Libreville Declaration, all in line with the African Union recommendation for member states and governments to review their development strategies to harness the demographic dividend for the “Africa We Want”. The basis for country road maps is the AU Road Map on harnessing the demographic dividend through investments in the youth and its four thematic pillars, namely Employment and Entrepreneurship, Education and Skills Development, Health and Wellbeing and rights, and finally Governance and Youth Empowerment. UNFPA Country Offices have provided both financial and technical support to these governments’ Road Map preparations. The examples of Benin, Cameroon and Nigeria follow.

Setting up national demographic dividend observatories is an original idea from Benin. During a workshop to develop Government of Benin’s Road Map for the Demographic Dividend, participants proposed having national observatories for DD to better monitor what is being done, among other actions.

The government of Cameroon went for an inclusive approach. Leaders of youth organizations in Cameroon used their experience of developing a regional road map at the UNFPA - WCARO Youth Leadership Forum on Demographic Dividend held in April 2017 in Dakar to identify their priorities and prepare their own inputs into the country’s national road map. Then the youth organizations participated in several consultative meetings with representatives of government, civil society organizations and bilateral and international financial and technical partners to formulate the national road map in June 2017.

Nigeria, being a federal state, has planned road map development activities at both state and federal levels, with UNFPA as a major supporter, with both financial and technical resources. At the state level, initiatives to mainstreaming demographic dividend in policies and programme implementation are at different stages of development. Lagos State carried out a situational analysis and senior government officials and the Governor have used the brief at high-level sensitization events to push for policy changes designed to harnessing the demographic dividend, calling it « the opportunity we cannot afford to forego.” In Kaduna State, the Governor has encouraged key ministries to adopt demographic dividend in planning and programme implementation in all state projects, programmes and budgetary decisions.

At the federal level, pre-summit activities with key stakeholders were held to develop a draft road map and get buy-in, prior to the organization of a much larger demographic dividend Summit launched by the Acting President in July 2017. Post-summit activities include the setting up of an ‘Observatory’ of signature indicators at the office of the Vice-President to monitor the national road map’ implementation.

# A Communication Strategy

At the time of the Libreville Declaration two years ago in June 2015, it was recognized that a communication strategy was indispensable. As such, during the meeting, a Communication Action plan in support of the *Demographic Dividend* was developed by the participants to engage partners and key stakeholders on different aspects of this socio-economic concept and its imperative implementation.

Three of the most interesting actions proposed in that Libreville communication plan were to develop a strategic communication that includes the use of social media, to determine how UNFPA contributes to the realization of the demographic dividend in order to explain it clearly and convincingly to governments and to the media, and that the Regional Office should produce user-friendly advocacy tools for the demographic dividend in very simple language. Taking the communication plan one step further meant that one of the four strategies defined to implement the Libreville Declaration was a strategy of communication.

During the past two years, the major component of this strategy has been a package that combined the use of a mix of media channels ranging from audio-visual, print and radio as well as social or digital media. This has been assembled to explain the concept of demographic dividend, to convey the message of the urgent necessity of harnessing the demographic dividend in the West and Central Africa region and also to mobilize political support for policies and investments. The concept of "demographic dividend" is not user-friendly by its very nature, so it was essential to deconstruct it to facilitate its comprehension by the stakeholders to be reached.

The press played a major role in reporting and analysing the issues involved in harnessing the demographic dividend, both at the local, national and regional level. First, journalists and media directors needed to be empowered with the understanding of regional issues and challenges, as well as the concept and the different layers of interventions needed such as massive investments in health, education, skills and employment, and governance.

Then, the press carried out its work to sensitize the population around the concept in addition to spontaneously reporting on issues pertaining to demographic dividend.

Omnipresent in the lives of many youths, social media from online forums to chat rooms has also been used to engage with youth in particular about the issue of demographic dividend. One example is the tagline **#PutYoungPeopleFirst** which was conceived during a regional youth meeting. With the backdrop of communication materials with this hashtag, many Heads of States, such as H.E. Roch Marc Christian Kabore, President of Burkina Faso and heads of United Nations agencies such as Babatunde Osotimehin, then Executive Director of UNFPA, participating in a September 2016 High-Level meeting on Women's Empowerment and Dividend Demography in the margin of the United Nations General Assembly talked eloquently about the need to **#PutYoungPeopleFirst**. They spoke of investing more in education, of the need to have a healthy population- particularly of youth and women, of the urgency of creating more and better entrepreneurship and creative jobs for youth, of the critical responses needed to prevent and mitigate the challenges of perilous migration of youth from Africa to Europe, of poverty, inequality, unequal distribution of resources. It was about this vital issue of making youths the central axis of development. In other words, **#PutYoungPeopleFirst**.

A sign of progress can be attested to when one looks at the digital footprint of the hashtag **#PutYoungPeopleFirst** on Twitter, the evidence on internet clearly shows that it has evolved from what a few youths defined as their agenda to a slogan widely used today by people throughout the world from Guinea, Senegal, Congo, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Gambia to New York in the United States of America. Heads of UN agencies, members of civil society organizations, UNFPA country offices, journalists as well as concerned citizens have used it to convey that belief. From a rallying cry of youths, it has helped identify as well as galvanize a movement for much-needed priority actions to benefit young people.



<https://twitter.com/hashtag/putyoungpeoplefirst?lang=fr>

A communication firm was hired to support UNFPA - WCARO's efforts. And its communicators were challenged to present new ways of capturing attention or of engaging people such as VOX Populi- where people in the street are questioned about demographic dividend issues, and establishing strong connection with word of mouth. Innovative branding was done for certain events that included press conferences.

The result is a compelling, stimulating and thought-provoking collection of high impact communication including television shows, radio broadcasts, publications, social media stories, all with a unity of message, that has helped catalyse the various stakeholders and shown encouraging progress as to the understanding of the concept of demographic dividend and the need to engage in its realization.

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## Sustained communication

One of the key lessons learnt from the communication experts that guided the formulation of the communication plan in Libreville was the importance of consistency in the activities. And to ensure that there would be no interruption in the transmission of information and messages, UNFPA - WCARO has established a long-term contract with the press agency African Television News (ATN) of the media group RACECO to produce various communication stories. This guarantees that the editorial line, which is to show how people's lives have improved as a result of UNFPA's interventions, is always followed. These reports are broadcast in Africa and on international news media to show results obtained.

A journalist and cameraperson are assigned as UNFPA focal points. This guarantees that they have had their capacity built around UNFPA's key thematic areas and therefore understand its messages. Several TV products result from this systematic media coverage: a monthly magazine of 13 minutes, interviews with various personalities, TV announcements of special events organized by UNFPA - WCARO and finally, news reports linked to activities carried out by the regional office for TV news shows.

Activities in countries from Chad and Benin to Guinea and Senegal, from Ghana and Nigeria to Gambia and Mali and Niger have been covered. Special coverage has also been done for momentous events such as Africa Union Summit in Ethiopia or High-level event with African Heads of State in New York.

The result is constant media coverage both at the level of WARI, a TV news magazine that focuses on development issues and has been broadcast throughout Africa since 2000. The reports are also broadcast on the French TV5Monde news channel broadcast in Africa, Europe and Canada, on OUEST-TV, which is a development news channel, as well as on Facebook and Twitter.





## Targeted communication

During the AU Summit on Demographic Dividend held in late January 2017, UNFPA - WCARO organized targeted communication for about 20 journalists from nine countries, thus demonstrating the crucial role they play in transmitting information to high-level stakeholders as well as to the general population.

Major briefings and capacity-building events on the concept of demographic dividend and the challenges linked with the empowerment and the participation of adolescents and youth in Africa were organized for the journalists. This approach is rich in potential for channeling the work of the journalists to not only ensure coverage of the Summit itself, but also to advocate to them the necessity for each of them to commit to inform in a continuous manner the various groups and the general population about the issues linked with demographic dividend.

UNFPA-WCARO Regional Director Mabingue Ngom told the journalists that came from Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Nigeria, Congo, Cameroun, Mauritania, Ivory Coast and Ethiopia, that UNFPA valued the important role they play as gate-keepers and wanted to partner with them on a long-term basis so as to have “a critical mass” of journalists knowledgeable about the challenges as well as the successes of harnessing the demographic dividend in the region. Such a partnership promises to expand the number of journalists and other communicators working on the issue, which should have the effect of exposing even more of the population to news about the critical themes of health, education, employment, governance and adolescent and youth empowerment and how they relate to the socio-economic development of their country.

The journalists had momentum as they attended a multitude of events such as a meeting with the African First Ladies Group, one with Professor Alioune Sall, a demographer who is President of the Africa Future Institute, and a special High-Level Round Table on Family Planning organized by AU, UNFPA and DFID in addition to the Summit itself.

UNFPA - WCARO innovated in that two Advocacy and communication national officers from two country offices managed this regional initiative, which also entailed the production of press kits, newsletters and press clippings as well as leading with the idea of the creation of a network of journalists working on demographic dividend.

# Conclusion

## Moving Forward to harness the demographic dividend

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Ten years after the endorsement of the African Youth Charter, young people represent three-fifths of Africa's unemployed population and, 72 percent of Africa's youth population relies on less than US\$2 a day. Currently, about one third of African young people between 5 and 14-year old are forced to work to help their families, meaning they have to leave the classrooms and face a high opportunity cost as they perpetuate the intergenerational poverty.

Today, productivity remains constrained by the low skills levels Africa continues to experiment with since over a quarter of our youths are still illiterate. Meanwhile, it is estimated that, within the next fifteen years, there will be annually about 25 million people entering the job market in Africa.

The concern for the youths on the continent of Africa is how to cope with the continuous population growth when there are no job opportunities and when access to basic services and fundamental rights such as health, education and a dignified life remains a significant challenge. However, obstacles to family planning are still around threatening progress.

The current situation is grave and requires immediate attention by all.

The good news is the demographic dividend is one of the priorities for both the international and the continental levels. Both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 of the African Union identified the demographic dividend as the way to go. In addition, the African Union leaders have adopted the demographic dividend as the theme of two African Union Summits of 2017.

We must therefore do everything to empower Africa's young people so that they are not forced into migration and radicalization. They need alternatives; they should have options that are consistent to our vision for 2063.

We have the opportunity to avoid a possible demographic disaster and transform it into a demographic dividend. This benefit could be up to the tune of 500 billion US dollars for 30 years if we make the right investments in the human capital.

The majority of the 2 Billion young people are in developing countries especially in Africa. In West and Central Africa, those below 25 years of age constitute 64% of the population. We cannot ignore them anymore.

Only by doing so can we contribute to the much-delayed and needed socio-economic transformation of Africa.

African leaders along their partners and friends need to swiftly address the many urgent needs of young people so they can contribute with their full potential to the transformation of the continent. It is also the right platform for young people to fully engage and actively contribute to the conversation.

This is unprecedented and a window of opportunity that calls for particular attention in terms of planning and concerted actions to encourage the emergence of empowered, motivated, healthy and well-educated young Africans. Only by doing so can we contribute to the much-delayed and needed socio-economic transformation of Africa."

From the keynote speech of Mabingue Ngom, Regional Director of UNFPA- WCARO at Banjul+10

Two years after the Libreville Declaration, much progress has been achieved in terms of making the demographic dividend the central element of UNFPA interventions in the West and Central Africa region that was phase one. But as the situation described above remains grave, the time for action, namely the second phase that includes delivering on the commitments and implementing all the road maps developed, continues to be now





*“ Investing in the universal access to modern contraception and family planning is fundamental for achieving the demographic dividend. ”*

**Mabingue Ngom**

Regional Director of UNFPA - WCARO

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### **Mr. Mabingue Ngom**

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Unedited version



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



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