



Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investments in **Youth**



Leh wi ep yong pipul fo mek Salone



HARNESSING THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND THROUGH INVESTMENTS IN YOUTH



The demographic dividend is the economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure. A growth potential occurs when the working-age population (15 to 64) is greater than the non-working age population.

"A country with both increasing numbers of young people and declining fertility, has the potential to reap a demographic dividend."



YOUNG PEOPLE SHAPING THE FUTURE OF SIERRA LEONE



Countries with the greatest demographic opportunity for development are those entering a period in which the working-age population has good health, quality education, decent employment and a lower proportion of young dependents. Smaller numbers of children per household generally lead to larger investments per child, more freedom for women to enter the formal workforce and more household savings for old age. When this happens, the national economic payoff can be substantial. Long-term investments in the health of adolescents and youth, including sexual and reproductive health, can help accelerate economic growth when combined with appropriate investments in education and economic planning.

UNFPA supports the Government of Sierra Leone to engage youth in the planning and implementation of development strategies. In doing so, youth will be equipped with relevant information and services to empower them to act as change agents to transform and improve society.

LAUNCH OF NATIONAL YOUTH WEEK AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

On 24 April 2017, His Excellency the President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma launched National Youth Week (21-26 April) and the Demographic Dividend process.

The launch of the Demographic Dividend process attracted a large number of attendees including: the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Representative, Dr. Kim Eva Dickson; Youth Representative; Minister of Youth Affairs; Minister of Labour and Social Security; Minister of Information and Communication; Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Forestry; Minister of Finance; Minister of Education, Science and Technology; Minister of Health and Sanitation; Minister of Finance and Economic Development; diplomats; youth; media representatives; and members of the public. The launch provided the Government of Sierra Leone with an opportunity to reaffirm its commitments to empower youth through the development of a roadmap consisting of four key areas:

1. Employment and entrepreneurship
2. Rights, governance and youth empowerment
3. Education and skills development
4. Health and well-being

The launch of the Demographic Dividend also provided a platform for UNFPA and development partners to advocate for improved engagement with young people, regardless

of gender, religion, demographic and differing abilities, to empower them to realise their full potential and contribute significantly to society

Speaking at the launching ceremony, President Koroma described the youth population as Africa's most valuable resource.

“With about 65 percent of Africans below 35 years old; with projections pointing to an increasing number of youth entering the African job market every year; it is a wakeup call for the continent to productively harness this vital natural resource for the development of the continent. We must ensure that we have a healthy and educated workforce with the right skills as a prerequisite for peace, security and prosperity. A sufficiently educated and gainfully employed population, driven by innovation and technology, would improve living standards and address the risk of social and political instability.”

“We must ensure that we have a healthy and educated workforce with the right skills as a prerequisite for peace, security and prosperity.”

In Sierra Leone, 44%
of youth (15-35 years) are not
in the labour market.



“A sufficiently educated and gainfully employed population, driven by innovation and technology, would improve living standards and address the risk of social and political instability.”

His Excellency the President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma

An unexploited potential

In Sierra Leone, **55%** of working-age individuals have never been to school.

Employment by industry

59% of the population employed in agriculture.

Delivering his remarks at the launch, Chairman of the National Youth Council of Sierra Leone and Youth Representative, Mr. Ibrahim Prince Tholley stated, “On behalf of the young people of Sierra Leone, I want to call on our government to increase its investment in young people by mainstreaming youth development needs and priorities in all sectors of the economy in order to realize sustainable economic growth in our beloved country.”

UNFPA Representative, Dr. Kim Dickson reaffirmed her organization’s commitment to supporting the Government to take deliberate actions towards achieving the demographic dividend and added, “As UNFPA we are a vital actor for creating the conditions for harnessing the demographic dividend through our ability to support government in generating data for development planning, making investments in health systems, strengthening the reduction of maternal and newborn mortality, improving the provision of family planning, as well as empowering young people, particularly young girls.”

The United Nations Resident Coordinator a.i., Mr. Geoffrey Wiffin, stated the Demographic Dividend is an opportunity for Sierra Leone to bolster efforts in making effective use of the youth population. He remarked the country must lay emphasis on: guaranteeing good reproductive health systems and solid health systems; enhancing quality education; and creating a favourable environment for job creation. He added the United Nations will continue to invest in youth, and harness the demographic dividend to transform the African youth population to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda.

Also speaking at the launch, Minister of Youth Affairs, Mr. Bai Mahmoud Bangura, said that National Youth Week seeks to promote youth recognition, potential, participation, innovation and involvement in the development process at all levels.

PROGRAMME - LAUNCH OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND

TIME	ACTIVITY
8:30-9:00	Arrival of Guests
9:15-9:30	Arrival of Guest of Honour
9:30 -9:35	Call to Order and Prayers
9:35-9:40	Introduction of Chairman
9:40-9:50	Chairman's Opening Remarks
9:50-10:00	Presentation of Demographic Dividend
STATEMENTS	
10:00-10:05	Youth Representative
10:05-10:10	UNFPA Representative
10:10-10:15	Minister of Labour and Social Security
10:15-10:20	Minister of Information and Communication
10:20-10:25	Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Forestry
10:25-10:30	Interlude
10:30-10:40	Minister of Education Science and Technology
10:40-10:45	Minister of Health and Sanitation
10:45-10:50	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
10:50-10:55	UN Resident Coordinator
10:55-11:05	Minister of Youth Affairs
11:05-11:15	His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma
	Chairman's Closing Remarks



Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investments in **Youth**



Employment and
entrepreneurship



Rights, governance and
youth empowerment



Education and skills
development



Health and well-being



Everyone counts