Why is it important?

This study assesses the prospects for harnessing the demographic dividend in Zambia and demonstrates policy options for optimizing the possibility of a demographic dividend. This report intends to inform planning, programming and policy and is useful for those looking to gain a better understanding of relevant demographic, economic, and human capital trends in the country.

Methodology

The study uses a mixed methodology approach, including a review of the literature on the demographic dividend, population dynamics and economic changes in Zambia; reviews of the trends in national demographic and socio-economic indicators derived from various national data sources; and modelling using DemDiv to demonstrate the potential demographic dividend that Zambia could reap.

Key findings

Zambia's demographic indicators and emerging economic opportunities could be turned into a sizable demographic dividend by 2053, which could potentially propel the country to surpass the socio-economic transformation targets envisaged in its Vision 2030.

Population and Age Structure Changes

The Business as Usual and Economic Emphasis scenarios would lead to a total fertility rate of 4.09 children per woman and a total population of 49 million people by 2053. The dependency burden would decrease marginally from 0.96 in 2013 to 0.79 in 2053. Under the Combined scenario, however, the total fertility rate would be 2.11 and the population size 36 million by 2053.

Working Age Population and Job Creation Challenge

All four policy scenarios would see a significant increase in the size of the working age population aged 15 years and above. Under the Business as Usual and Economic Emphasis scenarios, the population would increase from 7.8 million in 2013 to 30 million in 2053. Under the Moderate scenario, it would increase to 28 million, and under the Combined scenario, to 26 million.

Change in Economic Growth and Average Incomes

Of the four scenarios, the Combined scenario - in which the country prioritizes economic, social and demographic factors - is most ideal for the country. The other three scenarios would either not lead to industrialized middle-income country development levels or they involve high risk without investment in social development sectors.

Conclusion

To transition to an industrialized nation, it is recommended that Zambia adopt policies to harness the demographic dividend. This means prioritizing investments to initiate rapid fertility decline, improve human capital, reform the economy to create adequate decent jobs, and enhance good governance and accountability.

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