

Book Reviews

Book Review „Africa's Population: in Search of a Demographic Dividend“

Edited by Hans Groth and John F. May. Springer, 2017. 526p bibl index

ISBN 9783319468877, \$139.00; ISBN 9783319468891 ebook, \$109.00.

This multidisciplinary text involves 49 specialists in demography, public health, sociology, economics, finance, political science, and geography. The illuminating tome provides regional case studies, theoretical issues on the demographic dividend and its drivers, and challenges in health, climate change, urbanization, migration, and related issues. To what extent can the East Asian demographic dividend be replicated in Africa? What must be done to accelerate decline in African fertility rates, now double the global average? How do African children and senior citizens factor in the discourse about growth? One of the scholars proposes a fascinating dependency ratio formula for West Africa: Economic Dependency Ratio = U28 + Over 63 + Unemployed 28–62 divided by Employed 28–62. It is not clear whether child labor was factored into the formula, but this is one of the exciting hypotheses in this text of scholarly discourse, generously illustrated with maps, charts, and tables. The belt-tightening, monetarist structural adjustment programs of the International Monetary Fund in the 1980s have not been factored into the demographic analysis in the text, but generally this is a comprehensive, illuminating work of scholarship. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended.

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*Gloria Emeagwali's Documentaries on
Africa and the African Diaspora*

Hans Groth and John F. May (Eds.)**Africa's Population: In Search of a Demographic Dividend**

Springer International Publishing, 2017. 526 p. \$139.00.

The introduction of the concept of a demographic dividend (DD) in the 1990s invigorated the policy discussion on population and development at the national and international levels. The DD refers to a two-stage boost in the growth rate of a country's income per capita that follows a decline in the ratio of the number of dependents to workers. The first dividend is a purely demographic one and is largely brought about by a decline in fertility that reduces the growth rate of the population of children. The more rapid the decline in fertility, the larger the dividend. This change in the population age structure often leads to a rise in investments in education and health of children as increased savings provide the resources to allow parents and societies to make such investments. The second dividend is reaped when these children enter the labor force as more productive workers.

This edited volume analyzes the potential for sub-Saharan Africa to benefit from the DD. The thirty contributions are written by international scholars, more than a third of whom are from sub-Saharan Africa. The volume is organized in four sections: the demographic landscape (mainly country and regional case studies), the drivers of the DD (fertility, education, mortality, jobs), developmental challenges (economic growth, governance, natural resources, food security, and climate change), and concluding essays (on the feasibility of rapid fertility decline, DD models, and conflicts). This collection represents the most comprehensive available overview of the causes and consequences of the DD and of the policies that need to be pursued to benefit from it. While the development community has enthusiastically embraced the DD, the messages of most of these contributions is one of caution about the critical challenges ahead for sub-Saharan Africa. For example, the key driver of the DD is fertility decline, but fertility remains high in much of the continent. Governments in sub-Saharan Africa have generally shown little interest in family planning programs, despite the recent successes in a few countries in the continent (Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Malawi) where large increases in contraceptive use occurred following the start of programs. A lack of political will is partly to blame. Furthermore, while enrollment in schools has risen everywhere, dropout rates are high and the quality of schooling is poor. Once students graduate, jobs are few and low paying. Governance remains weak in much of the continent. This volume makes clear what needs to be done. The key question is whether governments can follow the sound advice and implement the much-needed reforms.

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