Zambia and Western Province Are on the Cusp of a Promising Future

Zambia has the potential to achieve a prosperous and competitive economy in the coming decades, but rapid population growth hinders its goal of becoming an upper middle-income country by 2030.

Rapid Population Growth Challenges Zambia's Ability to Provide for Its People

- Half of Zambia’s 17 million people live in poverty.
- The unemployment rate is 12.6%; the youth unemployment rate is 17.4%.
- One in five married women (ages 15 to 49) have an unmet need for family planning—they want to space or limit childbearing but are not using a family planning method.
- On average, Zambian women have five children. At this rate, the population will increase to 24 million by 2030 and more than double to 41 million by 2050.
- For every 100,000 live births, there are 252 maternal deaths.
- To meet the basic needs of the population in 2030, the government will need to:
  - Train and absorb 25,000 doctors and nurses and 115,000 teachers.
  - Educate more than 4.5 million primary and secondary school students.
  - Invest 37 billion Kwacha in health and education.

With Investments in Family Planning and Reproductive Health, Western Province Can Help Zambia Achieve Upper Middle-Income Status

Women in Western Province have on average 5.6 children, while their mean ideal number of children is 4.9. By expanding access to family planning and reproductive health services, women and couples will be better able to choose the timing and spacing of their pregnancies, meet desired family sizes, and improve child survival. These changes will help slow the country’s rapid population growth and free up resources to address health issues like malnutrition, HIV, and malaria. Western Province is home to 6% of Zambia’s malnourished children under age 5, and its mortality rate for children under age 5 is 73 per 1,000 live births. At 15.4%, the province has the third highest HIV prevalence rate. In 2015, the incidence of malaria in Western Province was 499.6 per 1,000 people—the fourth highest in the nation.
In 2017, Western Province had more than 316,000 students enrolled in primary and secondary school, and 8,600 students received bursaries from the Ministry of General Education.21 Twenty-seven percent of adolescent girls in Western Province completed secondary school, compared to the national average of 30%.22 While Western Province has one of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy, 85% of girls who experienced pregnancy in primary and secondary school returned to school after giving birth.23 Eliminating barriers to family planning for youth will enable them to avoid pregnancy and adverse pregnancy outcomes.

To achieve sustainable population growth and meet national development goals, Western Province must:

- Use demographic data to inform development policies and programs, and invest in multisectoral approaches that integrate population issues, including age-structure dynamics.
- Increase prioritization of and funding for voluntary family planning and reproductive health services, with a focus on reducing unmet need and expanding access to services for young people.
- Improve educational outcomes by identifying and reducing barriers to secondary school completion by adolescent girls.
- Invest in economic growth by creating youth employment and skills building opportunities.

References

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4. Zambia DHS 2018: Key Indicators.
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8. Track20 and PRB analysis.