

AFRICAN STUDIES CENTER

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Speaker: Dr. Leonidas Murembya

Topic: “Population and development in sub-Saharan Africa”

Date: **Thursday, December 7, 2017**

Time: 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Place: Room 201 International Center

Dr. Leonidas Murembya (or simply Dr. Leo) is an assistant professor in the Economics Department at MSU where he teaches courses in the economic analysis of sub-Saharan Africa (EC414), the economic analysis of Latin America (EC412), a course in Integrative Studies in Social Science (ISS305) about critical thinking and evaluation of social research, and a course in public policy and program evaluation for the James Madison College. Dr. Leo is also a full-time economic specialist for the state of Michigan, doing research on the state’s demographic and labor market issues.

About the talk:

Does rapid population growth lead to slower, faster development, or have no impact at all? The debate has been ongoing since the early formulation of economic and demographic sciences. Some social scientists (like Malthus) think that a population is a burden to a community’s resources. Too much growth is met by natural checks such as wars, diseases, famines, etc. Other scientists (e.g., Boserup) believe that population growth leads to innovation. Yet others, such as Simon, consider that population has no effect on economic growth but rather the country’s political and economic systems. However, my belief is like Sylvia Ostry, a Canadian economist, once said: ““We have one asset, and that’s people”. Proper investment in the population (or human capital) is thought today to be an important factor for economic development of societies. It is no different for sub-Saharan Africa.

Sub-Saharan Africa has had the highest fertility rate and adolescent fertility in the world for the past five and half decades. Consequently, it has the youngest population in the world. With a high youth dependency ratio, this population could be a burden to the economies of sub-Saharan African countries. However, with proper investment in education, health, and work skills, this population could be a great asset to the region.

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