Poverty reduction and the HIV / AIDS epidemic in Kenya: What are the core issues
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Abstract:

The government of Kenya has recently attempted to develop a national budget that gives priority to two pertinent constraints to national development efforts. These are poverty and HIV/AIDS. The poor are those members of society that are unable to afford minimum basic human needs comprising food and non-food items. Slightly over 50% of Kenyans live below poverty line. Also, about 700 Kenyans are lost to the HIV/AIDS epidemic everyday. 75% of those infected live in the rural areas and the majority of those are aged 15-39 years. Any efforts to reduce poverty and contain the epidemic will require an integrated approach because of the interplay between the effects of HIV/AIDS and poverty. Both poverty and HIV/AIDS are direct, non-selective and universal, both affects males, females and children, reduce the labour force as well as food production, strain medical services and generally aggravate the performance of the economy. There is therefore an absolute need to protect the poor from infection and re-infection especially those located in the rural areas and the youth who are at risk. An essential component of this protection is public education of these groups, accompanied by economic empowerment through creation of self-employment opportunities. The recently developed Poverty Reduction Strategy paper (PRSP) clearly identifies these lines of attack. What remains is the translation of these noble ideas into concrete implementable projects and programmes with the participation of all stakeholders.