

Determinants of poverty: lessons from Kenya

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Abstract:

Poverty and food security are twin concerns of Kenya in a manner similar to many affected developing countries. It is characterized by the inability of the affected households in the country to acquire and retain sustainable livelihoods. The picture in Kenya is bound to be complicated by the projected changes in climate, as well as by population increase and environmental degradation, all which will put pressure on the natural resource base and militate against the achievement of sustainable development. The poverty picture in Kenya has hardly changed since independence over four decades ago despite the enormous resources and efforts which have been directed at tackling it. The current national poverty level remains high at well over 70% in some pockets which remain particularly vulnerable. Following the recent post-election violence, there is now a fear that the situation could degenerate into famine conditions and further hopelessness for a sizeable proportion of the rural population. Government efforts to eradicate poverty and food insecurity spelled out in a thirty year development plan are unlikely to succeed unless underlying causes of inequality are properly addressed. The paper contains suggestions for new approaches to addressing the twin problems.