

Economic Performance in East Africa: Perceived Impact On Subjective Wellbeing

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Abstract

This study identifies challenges and opportunities in achieving greater social cohesion and their implications to regional development in East Africa. Descriptive analysis was done from an in-depth desk review of reports on historical economic performance in the East African region covering the period “lost decades” of the 1980s and 1990s and the period of improved economic performance (2000 to 2015). In addition, a comparative analysis of East African region and selected countries globally in which social cohesion has enhanced regional sustained development and welfare was undertaken in order to offer lessons for the East African region. The findings of the study reveal that in spite of improved economic performance in East Africa region since 2000, majority of the population of the region do not share the perception that this leads to an improvement in their wellbeing. While a number of economies in the region like Rwanda are now among the fastest growing in the world, the growth has not translated into shared prosperity. In order to achieve a broad-based prosperity, countries need to pay particular attention to public investments in social services and infrastructure with the aim of reducing poverty and promoting the well-being of their citizens. The study has empirically determined that the challenge facing governments of the countries in the region is how to improve equity and sustain high economic growth at the same time.

Keywords: Economic performance, social wellbeing, sustainable development

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