Nakamura, Shohei; World Bank
snakamura2@worldbank.org

Authors:

Title: Recent Trends of Poverty and Urbanization in Sub-Saharan Africa

Taking advantage of the latest available harmonized household survey dataset, this paper updates the trends of poverty and living conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa. This paper offers several new findings by focusing on their spatial patterns and link to urbanization. First, despite the relatively low—and declining—poverty headcount ratio in urban Africa, the number of urban poor has been increasing, resulting in the urbanization of poverty. Second, poverty headcount ratio is particularly low in the largest cities, but those cities accommodate only a limited share of the poor in Sub-Saharan Africa. Instead, the number of poor has been rapidly increasing in other urban areas. Third, despite the low likelihood of being poor in urban areas, Africa’s urbanization does not clearly contribute to poverty reduction due to, among other factors, its still low level of urbanization. Finally, urban benefits become even clearer when not only monetary poverty but also living conditions are considered. However, urbanization has outpaced infrastructure development. Based on these findings, this paper discusses the importance of harnessing the urban opportunities to accelerate poverty reduction.