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Colonial Legacies and Social Welfare Regimes in Africa

An Empirical Exercise

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prepared for the UNRISD project on
Politics of Domestic Resource Mobilization

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The project seeks to contribute to global debates on the political and institutional contexts that enable poor countries to mobilize domestic resources for social development. It examines the processes and mechanisms that connect the politics of resource mobilization and demands for social provision; changes in state-citizen and donor-recipient relations associated with resource mobilization and allocation; and governance reforms that can lead to improved and sustainable revenue yields and services. For further information on the project visit www.unrisd.org/pdrm.

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Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GDP	Gross domestic product
GNI	Gross national product
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
LOGCAP	Log of per capita income
ODA	Overseas development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
USD	United States dollars
WHO	World Health Organization

Summary

This paper identifies three types of welfare regimes in Africa, based on the insight that tax and expenditure regimes are closely associated. Using cluster analysis, the author highlights historical legacies in current welfare policies, demonstrating that welfare regimes in Africa have been strongly determined by the ways in which different countries were incorporated into the colonial economy. The author finds that many of the new social welfare reforms are taking place in what he refers to as labour reserve economies, and are generally internally rather than aid-driven. He stresses the importance of thinking of social expenditure in relationship to domestic resource mobilization, and finds that the focus on aid and social expenditure has tended to obscure this important aspect of welfare regimes in Africa.

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