

From VOA Learning English this is As It Is.

Welcome back. I'm Caty Weaver.

Today we report on inventors, innovators and craftspeople -- both amateur and professional -- who gather to share, learn, build and network.

But first, we bring you details from a new survey that shows growing African economies don't always help people living in those countries.

Survey: Economies Grow, But Poverty Remains

Africa has some of the fastest-growing economies in the world. But a new public opinion study suggests this growth is doing little to reduce poverty.

The Afrobarometer survey shows the majority of Africans still lack basic needs like clean water, food, cooking fuel and medicine.

Afrobarometer says it is “an independent, nonpartisan research project that measures the social, political, and economic atmosphere in Africa.”

Jim Bertel tells us more about the findings.

Afrobarometer says poverty levels have improved very little over the past 10 years. Yet economies grew by an average of five percent during the same period.

The latest survey took place in 34 African countries between October 2011 and June 2013. More than 50,000 people answered the survey questions. Three out of four of them reported that they had gone without cash income at least once in the past year. Almost half of the poor people who answered the questions said they had gone without food or clean water once or several times in the past year. One out of every two said they struggled to get medical care.

Researchers presented the survey findings in Johannesburg last week. The problems are deepest in East and West Africa, but they said even countries with strong economies are affected.

Robert Mattes is a professor at the University of Cape Town in South Africa. He says the findings should be a wake-up call to governments that poverty levels have actually increased in South Africa and Botswana.

“Based on that, one might say, with all the levels of growth that have been reported across the continent, with all the other kind of interventions that donors have made to try and bring down poverty, that there has not been much to speak of in the areas of success.”

The survey showed people in Togo, Burundi, Guinea, Niger and Senegal experience the highest levels of poverty. People in Mauritius and Algeria reported the lowest levels.

Most of the Africans in the survey criticized their government’s economic policies. Sixty-nine percent said they were dissatisfied with job creation. Seventy-six percent said they were not happy with efforts to reduce income gaps between the rich and the poor.

Afrobarometer says this survey suggests that either growth rates are not matching what is being reported or economic growth is not helping those at lower levels of the economy.

The researchers say the only way to reduce poverty levels is to increase investment in basic infrastructure, like water pipes, electricity, education and health services.

Maker Faire

If you like to make things -- especially things that involve science -- then you might like to attend a Maker Faire. Maker Faires are held every year in different cities around the world. The recent one in New York City had hectares of colorful demonstration tables, science-based games, performance stages and "play islands."

Eleven-year-old Genevieve Beatty, her 13-year-old sister, Camille, and their father Robert stood proudly next to a robot. It was a model of a Mars lander, about a meter and a half high. Genevieve says they built it themselves.

“Most of the ones that we built roll, like they have wheels, and some crawl and a few fly. It’s just fun to work with my dad and my sister. I do all the, like, inside, like the electronics and like soldering.”

Robert Beatty says Genevieve’s sister, Camille, had a natural interest in mechanical things. She would take apart household machines to understand how they worked. Robert, Camille and Genevieve began building items with transistors and LED lights. Before long, the two girls asked to build a robot.

“And that was pretty scary, but I thought, OK, if we really do a lot of research we will be able to figure out how to do it. So we just started learning on YouTube and various websites and trying to construct a little robot.”

In two years, the family has made nearly 35 robots, including several that science museums asked them to build. But Robert says the main point is fun, family and education.

“I

often don't know the subject of what we're trying to learn, but we learn it together, or I teach it to them and then they do all the work. And that way they stay super engaged. As soon as I take over and try to do it myself, that's boring, and they go off and do something else. So the key is to get them to do the work themselves.”

Three-dimensional printing was one of the most-popular areas of this year's Maker Faire in New York. At one booth, a young designer named Todd Blatt sold brightly-colored jewelry that he made with software and nylon powder.

“I focused on designs that couldn't be made with traditional manufacturing methods. So I have things that are linked together with no seams and metal pieces that are 3-D-printed in shapes that you couldn't make molds out of. So it is really exciting to make these things that couldn't exist otherwise.”

He uses software to draw the object he wants. Then he sends the design to a 3-D printer. It melts the nylon powder with a laser and builds the physical object one thin layer at a time.

“You can make products or you can make earrings, jewelry and movie prop replicas and clothing accessories -- anything you want!”

Not everyone at the Maker Faire is high-tech. A group based in Brooklyn, New York called “The Fixer’s Collective” had a table. Vincent Lai showed people how to repair a toaster and rewire a lamp.

“And we feel very comfortable being here because we also believe that fixing and repair is a strong part of the making process. Because as you create, and as you shape, and as you whittle and scrape, you’re gonna run into roadblocks. And so that’s when your fixing skills need to come into play.”

And that’s As It Is for today.

And for the latest world news listen to VOA at the beginning of every hour Universal Time.

I’m Caty Weaver.

