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PLANNING FOR RURAL AREAS IN EAST AFRICA:
EXPERIENCE AND PRESCRIPTIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

Although there is considerable interest in planning for particular rural areas, (area -based planning) in East Africa, past experience has been discouraging. The common experience of planning without implementation has taken three main forms: target disaggregation; the preparation of shopping lists; and development studies which do not lead to action. In the meantime there has been much implementation without area-based planning. Two exceptions have been settlement schemes and the SRDP. The experience of the latter to date suggests that with present procedures, injections of high-level staff are necessary for plan preparation and implementation; that this reflects much less on the capability of field staff than on the circumstances in which they find themselves; that the main administrative bottleneck is in Nairobi; and that implementability is the crux of good planning.

Common diagnoses of the problems involved and of prescriptions to deal with them include inappropriate structures of organisations, lack of coordination, lack of entrepreneurial and problem-solving attitudes in the civil service, and lack of trained manpower. The paper questions each of these diagnoses, commonly made in both Kenya and Tanzania, and also the considerable attention which has been given to social factors in administration, and argues rather that if area-based planning is desirable it can best be achieved through the design and testing of experimental procedures through a combination of research, consultancy and training.