

The chapter presents an overview of Kenya's efforts in the field of decentralized development since independence, and gives a more detailed analysis of the latest decentralization programme which has been introduced, and is currently being implemented. The programme in question is known as the District Focus for Rural Development. The study is concerned specifically with deconcentration and devolution. Introductory comments are made on Kenya's colonial heritage in the sphere of decentralization. The focus then shifts to deconcentration efforts and the creation of new institutions after independence, as well as the Special Rural Development Programme launched in 1970. The district planning exercise of the 1970s is looked at next, followed by an outline of ministerial efforts, and the establishment of the Rural Development Fund. Attention turns to the experience of devolution in Kenya. The early 1980s saw the Government announce the 'district' as the focal point for its management of rural development in Kenya. The District Focus strategy is examined in terms of: its characteristics; its launch; the associated training programme, its timing and content; the participants of the strategy; the institutional set-up; the performance of the strategy; the organizational setting; personnel management; financial aspects of the strategy, namely budgeting, incurring expenditure, and the procurement of goods and services; and relationships among local organizations for development. It is concluded that the Kenyan experience seems to indicate that strong deconcentration affects devolution inversely as the district begins to emerge as the new unit of centralization.