

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARID AND SEMI-ARID AREAS OF KENYA:
A GENERAL MODEL WITH LESSONS FROM WAJIR DISTRICT**

A Project Report

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ABSTRACT

Development of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) of Kenya is a key element in the nation's overall development strategy. The ASAL region comprises some 80% of the total land area in the country, but contains only about 25% of the population. With the national population growing at 3.8% per annum all available resources, including land, must be developed to provide employment opportunities.

Substantial donor and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) funds have been spent in ASAL areas. The effort has not achieved significant development due to the lack of appropriate development strategy, programme design, and coordination. A review of the current donor and NGO programmes in ASAL districts suggests a duplication of projects among different programmes, lack of coordination in planning and implementation, and inefficient use of scarce technical manpower and capital resources.

The ASAL areas border five international countries. Development of these areas is politically and economically important to Kenya. Despite this need, national development strategies have not focused specifically on ASAL development.

A two-tier General Model is proposed in which the District Development Committee plans and implements district-specific projects, and the Provincial Planning Committee plans and implements inter-district projects. The

model takes a macro perspective of sustainable regional development. Individual projects and programmes for implementing this strategy have to be designed separately.

District specific projects will be funded by sectoral ministries of the government, the Rural Development Fund, the European Economic Community Micro-Projects programme, the ASAL Programme, the District Development Fund, NGOs, and private organizations. The inter-district programmes will be supported by the ministries of central government, donor grants, technical assistance, and parastatal organizations.

A well coordinated development programme incorporating all these financial resources, talents, and management capabilities would enhance the development of human resource capabilities, physical, social, and economic resources, and institutional capacities for development, as well as appropriate technology. The inter-district programmes would provide physical and economic infrastructure such as roads, telephones, electricity, regional water supplies, and research institutions. The ensuing linkage between district and inter-district projects would create opportunities for trade within the ASAL regions, as well as with urban centers in the core regions and the border countries.

The coordination envisaged in the proposed General Model allows some degree of autonomy in project implementation without sacrificing complementarity, consistency with national policy, or efficient use of resources by the parties

involved. The Camel Herd Improvement Project (see Appendix) illustrates this.

Effective enforcement of cost sharing for services offered by government institutions is crucial in sustaining important public services in the ASAL region. Integration of rural and urban development, and appropriate price policies, are crucial to promotion of the informal sector and exchange of goods between the ASAL region and major market centers in the country.

Policy and development management strategies are proposed to facilitate sustainable development in the ASAL areas. These include coordination, through planning, of all the development resources available to the ASAL in terms of development finance, personnel, and research work. Immediate research and documentation of potential industries like meat processing, canning, and tourism should be given top priority.

The General Model for Rural Development in Arid and Semi-Arid Areas is applicable to any region with similar ecological, socio-cultural, and economic characteristics.