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DECENTRALISED PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION:
A Case Study of Kenyan District Focus for Rural Development

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1.0 DECENTRALISED PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION: A CASE OF KENYAN DISTRICT FOCUS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

1.1 Introduction

It is common knowledge that many African countries inherited a colonial administrative/development framework which has been counterproductive to the aspirations of the indigenous population. The administrative and technical tools of development inherited at independence were largely of a 'top-down' nature so designed as to accommodate the objectives of the colonial leadership. This administrative and development framework has been for a long time used wholesale or with been minor adjustments. It is an established fact that if governments are going to respond more readily to the needs of their rural population they will have to establish a greater presence and solicit the participation of the masses at grass-root level. Kenya has in the past tried with varying amount of political commitment to adapt a 'bottom-up' approach instead of 'top-down' approach.

1.2 Origin and Objectives of District Focus for Rural Development

The official launching of the District Focus Strategy in 1983 does not represent the start of decentralized planning in Kenya.

The Kericho conference in 1966 emphasized among other things, the need for experimentation with different approaches to rural development. As a follow-up of this recommendation,

Special Rural Development Programme (SRDP) was set up in six divisions in six different districts. The efforts to decentralise development planning did not however achieve the intended goals. This can be attributed to poor co-ordination between local and central government levels. Despite this drawback, the SRDP offered useful lessons and indeed paved way for the current strategy of District Focus for Rural Development.

Prior to the current strategy, the organizational structure led to many problems in organizational responsibilities and project implementation. Co-ordination, for example, of projects initiated and implemented by different agencies was difficult and haphazard. The 1982 report by 'the working party on government expenditure' correctly noted that,

'Planning and coordination of development had become a complex process which could only easily be managed at the district level' (Republic of Kenya, 1983)

The working party report therefore explicitly stated that

'Our major recommendation is that the district team, under the leadership of the DC and with guidance of the District Development Committee should be established as the major force and vehicle for the management and implementation of rural development (Republic of Kenya, 1982, p.53)

The major objective of District Focus for Rural Development is to direct the attention of the planner to the districts with the aim of achieving faster development through granting districts the autonomy to plan and implement projects at the regional level rather than serving as an 'extension agency for the operating ministries' (Makokha, 1985, p.33). The goals