

## RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN KENYA: A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OVER 1970-2001 PERIOD

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### ABSTRACT

The rural sector is a major factor in Kenya's productive sectors referred to in the Statistical Abstracts as 'Economic Services'. The sector experienced a declining trend in performance reflected in rapid rise in the incidence of rural poverty. The objective of the study is to provide a critical analysis of the extent of the effectiveness of implementation of rural development policies in Kenya focusing on the decentralization process over a period of 32 years between 1970 and 2001. The study distinguishes two Phases (periods) of rural development each covering 16 years, the Phase I or the Introductory Rural Decentralization period over the 1970-1985 during which Kenya's economy was mainly a state-controlled economy and the Phase II or the Full Rural Decentralization period over the 1986-2001 during which the economy was more market-oriented. The commitment of the Government to rural development is compared between the two Phases both in terms of policies and budget allocations as well as between the rural economy and the manufacturing sector. The methodology employed in the study is desk-based using secondary data and descriptive analysis method to achieve its objectives. One of the key findings of the study is that rural development policies pursued during Phase II were more pro-manufacturing sector development at the expense of the rural sector. Another key finding is that the commitment of the Government to the rural sector in terms of budget allocations and policies was weakening over time more drastically during Phase II. These findings can be important in formulating policies and strategies for refocusing attention to rural sector development.

**Keywords:** Rural development policies, rural decentralization, rural economy, rural urban balance.