

THE DISTRICT FOCUS POLICY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA: THE DECENTRALIZATION OF PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION, 1983-9

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Introduction

In 1983 the government of Kenya introduced a new policy for planning and implementing rural development. This strategy, known as the District Focus Policy for Rural Development (DFP) transfers considerable responsibility from ministerial and provincial headquarters to the district-level officers. Responsibility for general policy and the planning of multi-district and national programmes remains within the ministries. In this way a complementary relationship between the top down sectoral approach at the central level and the integrated, horizontal bottom up approach at the district level is sought. This chapter tries to analyse the progress made so far with reference to the decentralization of planning and implementation in Kenya.

Historical background of development planning in Kenya

Planning in Kenya can be traced back to the mid-1940s 'when the British Colonial Government called upon the Heads of Departments and Provincial Commissioners "to prepare plans" for post-war recovery' (Vente, 1970, p. 26). Funds made available changed the government policy of maintenance and control by adding the dimension of *development*. Outside experts as well as newly established special

committees contributed to the plans for development used within the decision-making process. Their 'plans' were mainly restricted to the British tradition of budgeting – What is going to be spent on what and when, and where will the finance for it come from? This concept of 'good housekeeping' dominated the British administrative system transplanted into the colonies. Although the system was based on indirect rule (making use of the prevailing indigenous administrative or authority units) planning was still mainly a task of the central authorities.

At independence in 1963, Kenya inherited this strongly centralized and vertically integrated development administration and planning machinery. Shortly after independence some attempts were made to change the administrative set-up and concept of planning. A Ministry for Economic Planning and Development was established and the First National Development Plan (1966-70) was produced. In 1965 the government released sessional paper no. 10, which stated that:

- (1) Planning is a comprehensive exercise designed to find the best way in which the nation's limited resources – land, skilled manpower, capital and foreign exchange – can be used.
 - (2) Planning cannot be done effectively unless every important activity is accounted for and every important decision-maker involved.
 - (3) Planning will be extended to provinces, districts, and municipalities, so as to ensure that in each administrative unit progress towards development is made.
- (Republic of Kenya, 1965, pp. 1, 49, 51)

Besides the notion of scarcity of resources, other factors also supported the higher interest in careful planning. It was politically necessary for the new leaders to treat development of the young independent state as a very important issue, while the hope of foreign aid favoured the production of plans. This was connected with an equivalent expectation on the side of the donors (e.g. the World Bank); indeed, the first plans produced were mainly the result of findings and recommendations of various World Bank missions to Kenya.

In 1967, the Special Rural Development Programme (SRDP) experiment started in six selected pilot areas. It was a first attempt towards a more horizontally oriented form of development planning and administration. However, project development was disappointing, implementation was slow and interministerial co-operation never reached levels permitting an integrated local approach. The project was phased out entirely by 1977. SRDP failed because of unclearly formulated objectives and terms of action, on the one hand, and problems of political nature at the local administrative level on the other. Unselective data collection also proved confusing rather than helpful (Rondinelli, 1982; also Sterkenburg, this volume). Nevertheless, 'SRDP identified the need for improved skill levels, increased staffing and infrastructure support and commitment by central ministries to the concept of planning at and for decentralized levels' (Cohen and Hook, 1987, p. 79). SRDP also stimulated changes in the government administration: the District Development Committee (DDC), a civil service body, and the post of District Development Officer (DDO) were introduced.

Although the need for a decentralized form of planning was recognized in the mid-1960s, the Second National Development Plan (1970-4) was still mainly a product of the central planners. The Third Plan (1974-8) attempted to revive the

concept of district planning by the preparation of forty local plans, one for each district. 'Labelled "District Plans" they were in fact largely written at province and headquarter levels by Provincial Planning Officers and expatriate advisers' (*ibid.* p. 81). An evaluation of all forty plans concluded that they contained too many proposed projects, failed to set clear principles, lacked detail needed by operational ministries and failed to merge with the national budgetary system. These experiences were used to improve district-level planning during the period of the Fourth National Development Plan (1979-83).

First, the government identified constraints to be overcome, namely,

- (1) insufficient numbers of trained DDOs;
- (2) inability of many DDCs to manage the district planning process;
- (3) inadequate Treasury guidelines on budget ceilings;
- (4) skepticism by provincial and district planners over the use of district plans by central ministries;
- (5) poor liaison between planners and operating ministries in developing sectoral recommendations;
- (6) insufficient generation and sharing of data to carry out planning exercises;
- (7) limited participation by popular representatives in the DDCs; and
- (8) financial information systems at the ministerial level that made it difficult to disaggregate expenditures to the districts.

(*ibid.* p. 82)

Second, with funds and advisers from abroad (USAID and Harvard Institute for International Development) attempts were made to address these constraints: more DDOs were trained, guidelines for the district plans were provided and planning and budgetary links between district and national allocation processes were established. This time the district plans were indeed written at district level and their content exceeded the former shopping list of project proposals. Still, a real integrated district plan could not be produced mainly because knowledge of how to integrate local- and national-level planning was still lacking and, furthermore, the DDC had no authority to require action or co-operation from the operating ministries.

The environment for planning changed dramatically by the end of the 1970s due to national and international factors. With a change of government the Office of the President started to play a more direct and interventionist role in the economic business of administration and development. The government also recognized that the open nature of Kenya's economic system made it extremely sensitive to fluctuations in international economic conditions. During 1976-7, there had been a massive rise in the world price of coffee, Kenya's leading export product. As a result, several development projects were started and the government greatly increased its participation in an extensive range of private companies. However, due to the second oil crisis of 1979 and a drop in export revenues (low price of coffee) the budget and balance of payment deficits both increased dramatically. Kenya had to turn to economic policy discussions with such international institutions as the IMF and World Bank. Structural adjustments were needed to counterbalance the negative developments. Kenya reacted to the IMF and World Bank advice with several sessional papers and development plans. A document of major importance was the 1982 report of the Working Party on

Government Expenditures, which drew attention to public sector inefficiencies in the parastatal organizations and to the Treasury's inability to exercise adequate financial control. The Working Party (*ibid.* pp. 52-3) also reviewed the planning machinery and stated that

There is a lack of a sharp, carefully co-ordinated focus on rural development at district level. There is too much emphasis on the provision of services and too little emphasis on involving the people and their resources in the development process. Yet, because officers in the field identify more with their superiors in Nairobi than with the people of the district, even the provision of services is carried out negligently and without dedication or respect for the people being served. Distance precludes the adequate enforcement of discipline and accountability. Family, farm and national development all suffer as a result.

The conclusions and recommendations of the working party later formed the foundation for the District Focus for Rural Development Policy.

The District Focus Policy for Rural Development

As has been seen, since independence the call for decentralized planning has been heard and some pilot programmes were undertaken. The efforts of the 1970s taught some valuable lessons and pointed out the major constraints to be solved. However, in practice primary emphasis on centralizing economic development efforts still dominated Kenya's development strategy during the 1970s.

This changed dramatically with the introduction of the District Focus Policy for Rural Development in July 1983. Backed by the Office of the President, this new approach was introduced as a major initiative in the process of decentralizing planning and implementation of development in every district of Kenya. This resulted in changes to the (local) administrative set-up and to the planning and implementation process.

Kenya's administrative structure

Administratively, Kenya is divided into seven provinces encompassing forty districts, excluding the extra-provincial area of Nairobi. The districts are further subdivided into divisions, locations and finally sublocations. The so-called Provincial Administration forms the backbone of this administrative system, through a hierarchy of Provincial and District Commissioners, District Officers (division), Chiefs (location) and Assistant Chiefs (sublocation). The Provincial Administration is the main executive arm of the central government, operating under the direct supervision and authority of the Office of the President. The other technical ministries (Agriculture, Livestock, Education, Health, Water) are usually represented by their own officers in the various territorial units. These representatives are directly responsible to their ministry headquarters in Nairobi. A district also contains a system of local administration, comprising local authorities in the form of county councils whose boundaries usually coincide with those of the districts, and frequently of one or two urban councils.

Under the District Focus Policy the DDC has been chosen as the foundation

of the decentralized rural development. This body is composed of the following:

- District Commissioner.
- District Development Officer.
- Departmental Heads of all ministries represented in the district.
- Members of Parliament.
- District KANU executive officer (the only Kenyan political party).
- Chairmen of local authorities.
- Clerks of local authorities.
- Chairmen of Divisional Development Committees (DvDC).
- Representatives of development-related parastatals.
- Invited representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGO) and self-help groups.

The DDC will meet at least four times a year. Technical support for its activities, including preparation of plans and management and implementation of projects, is provided by the District Executive Committee (DEC), which meets at least once a month. Membership of the latter is restricted to the senior officers and representatives of local authorities and parastatals.

The office of the District Development Officer is being strengthened by the introduction of the post of Assistant District Development Officer and by the establishment of a District Planning Unit (DPU). The unit's objectives are to serve as a secretariat to the DEC for day-to-day co-ordination of planning and implementation work. Several other (technical) posts will be attached to the DPU. In total, the DPU will have sufficient personnel to assist the departments not only in planning and monitoring but also in such technical activities as costing of projects or technical appraisal of project proposals. Beside appointing these special development officers, redeployment of technical staff from the centre and the provinces in order to raise the number and quality of the officers attached to the various technical ministries at district level, is one of the objectives of the District Focus Policy.

Alongside the DDC and the ministries, every district has several special purpose subcommittees operative in a specific field of development. These include the District Agricultural Committee, District Education Board, District Land Control Board and District Joint Loans Board.

At divisional level the Divisional Development Committee (DvDC) is operative. The DvDC's composition is a copy of the groups present at the DDC. The Locational Development Committee (LDC) and Sublocational Development Committee (SLDC) represent the grassroots-level community and are responsible for discussion of community needs and the initial identification of projects and activities to address those needs.

Planning and implementation under the District Focus Policy

In the past, planning and implementation in the district were seriously hampered by the dichotomy between the Provincial Administration and the technical ministries. The former had responsibility for the actual implementation of local

programmes and projects but had no direct control over either the staff involved or their budgets, while the latter had power but no responsibility for overall policy, only for their particular specialized programmes.

The District Focus Policy specifically attempts to solve this main structural problem of the vertical integration of the ministries and the horizontal integration desired in the district. 'Responsibility for the operational aspects of district-specific rural development projects has been delegated to the districts. Responsibility for general policy and the planning of multi-district and national programmes remains with the ministries' (Office of the President, 1987, p. 1).¹

District planning and co-ordination are carried out through a process that includes regular meetings of the development committees at each level of the district administrative structure and through the preparation of two basic planning documents: the five-year District Development Plan and the annual annex to that plan. Project suggestions made by the (sub)local communities are forwarded to the DvDC for selection and setting of priorities, the DDC making the final selection for the district as a whole. These project proposals are then included in the five-year District Development Plan and in the annual annexes to the plan. The objectives of the annex are

1. to show the progress made in implementing the District Development Plan;
2. if necessary, to adjust the plan with reference to available budgets or new projects; and
3. to convey district development priorities to the operating ministries for incorporation in the Forward Budget and Annual Estimates.

The DFP designers thought that effective and efficient implementation of the proposed projects would be enhanced by increasing responsibility at district level with respect to financial management, supplies management and by training of the officers on general principles of management and administration as well as on other district-focus related subjects.

Financial management

As a result of the District Focus Policy, the ministerial budgets are nowadays disaggregated on a district-by-district basis so that each DDC can anticipate the resources available for district-specific activities; ministries are obliged to base their programmes and budgets on the district's own plans and priorities; and guarantees should be given as to the funding of district-specific budget ceilings. Figure 9.1 shows the Annual Budget cycle and the several steps involved between identification and implementation of projects.

'The district focus strategy does not necessarily expand available resources beyond current levels. Funding of district activities remains under operating ministry control' (Cohen and Hook, 1987, p. 84). However, by transferring Authorities to Incur Expenditures (AIE) at the beginning of the financial year to the district level, the strategy tries to overcome unnecessary delays in implementation as in the past when AIEs were transferred in an *ad hoc* way from Nairobi via the provincial departmental heads towards the districts. Also, the District Cash Float Fund has been increased from K £1.3 million in 1983-4 to K £5.15 million in

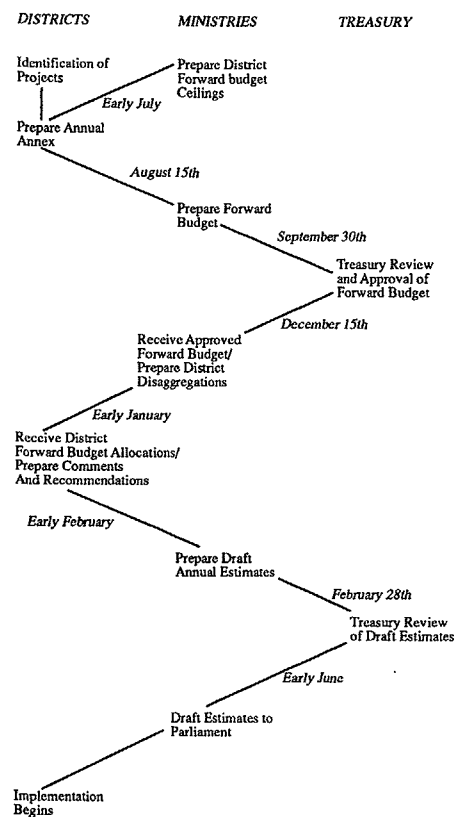


Figure 9.1 Kenya: Annual Budget cycle (Source: Office of the President, 1987)

1986-7 (1 K £ = 1 US \$). This allows for more rapid payment of invoices.

One of the institutional changes with respect to financial management under district focus is the strengthening of the District Treasuries. Nowadays, accounting services are centralized under the District Treasury; the District Heads of Departments (AIE Holders) are supported by the District Accountants in preparing and examining vouchers. Internal audit work has also been improved.

Under DFP, the district is also responsible for planning and/or co-ordination of projects funded by foreign donors, local authorities (county or urban councils), self-help organizations and NGOs. Districts must identify financing for proposed projects, ensure that the funds have been committed and co-ordinate timely provision of the funds. Funds are limited and districts must set priorities for their use.

Supplies management

District Supplies Officers have been established in each district to handle the supplies and procurement operations of the district. District Tender Boards have been given more authority to process procurement for district-development activities. Previously, limits were set very low and most important purchases had to be handled centrally. Nowadays, inputs for district-specific projects, such as timber, sand, casual labour and the like should be procured locally wherever possible. District-produced inputs are allowed a 5 per cent cost bias.

District Focus training

A special National Training Strategy for District Focus has been prepared to ensure that all personnel involved in the implementation of District Focus, including the development committees down to the grassroots level, receive the required training. All District Commissioners have followed a full-time three-month course on management and administrative issues outside the country. Heads of Departments are trained under the responsibility of five major training institutions in Kenya. The District Heads of Departments themselves should train the Divisional Officers and the latter the Locational Officers by organizing seminars and workshops at those levels.

The District Focus Policy in Kajiado District

Evaluating the effect of the policy of District Focus for Rural Development is not an easy task. This is due partly to the DFP-induced changes in administration and planning after 1983 (e.g. District Annexes) that make comparisons over time difficult. Moreover, it is not always clear if new developments can be traced back to the incentives of the DFP or any other process. Nevertheless, the remainder of this chapter attempts to provide at least an overall impression of the effects of the DFP in the fields in which it has been operative since 1983. Data from Kajiado District, located in southeast Kenya (see Figure 9.2), and overall statements made by officers involved in the DFP have been used in this study.

Kajiado District (22,000 km²) is divided into 4 divisions, 20 locations and 54 sublocations. These numbers are not fixed, and the status and number of administrative units are adjusted almost every year.² It is a semi-arid area inhabited by approximately 240,000 people who are mainly involved in nomadic pastoralism and rain-fed and irrigated agriculture.

Planning and implementation of projects in Kajiado District

Before the introduction of DFP, project implementation rates in Kajiado District were often very low. Reasons given are various, including a lack of participation by local people, poor project identification and a shortage of manpower and funds (especially in relation to the long shopping lists presented by the DDC) (see also Wisner, 1988).

Project-implementation rates under DFP are no longer available on a five-year planning-period basis. However, some general remarks can be made with reference

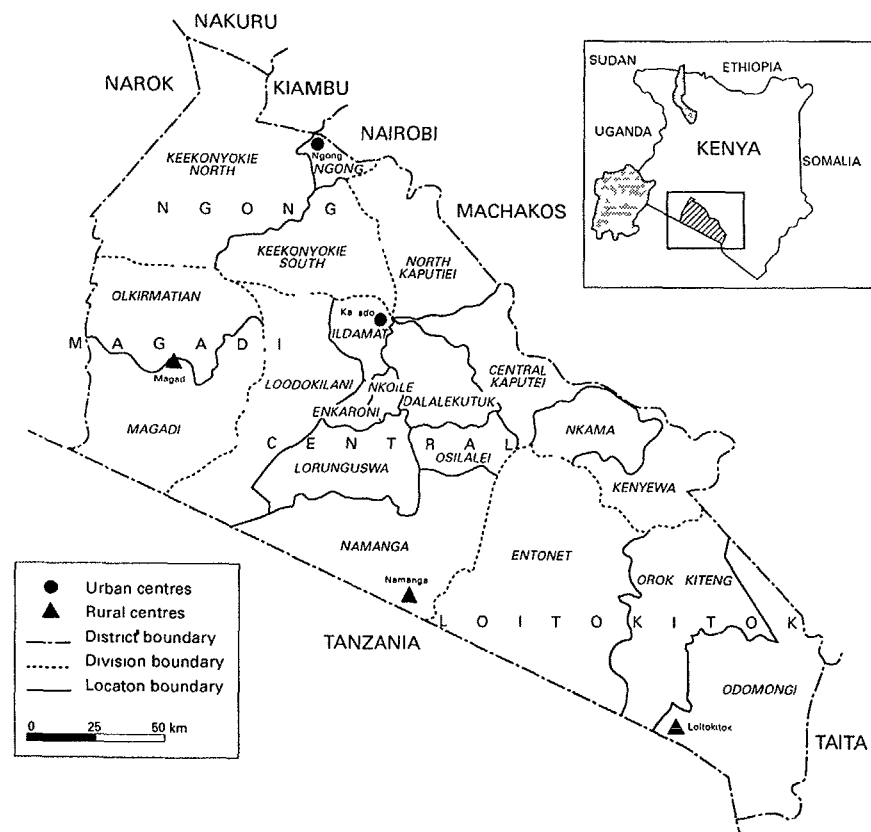


Figure 9.2 Kajiado District: administrative structure

to the presence or absence of obstacles within the planning and implementation process as far as Kajiado District is concerned. By comparing the district proposed projects for the financial year 1988–9 with the 1988–9 Printed Development Estimates (that is, the same list of projects after revision by the technical ministries and the Treasury in Nairobi) and finally the Kajiado District Development Plan Annex 1988–9 (showing what has actually been allocated in 1988–9) we are able to obtain an idea of the real change towards transferring responsibility under District Focus as far as planning and implementation are concerned.

So, in every financial year there are three moments at which the kind of projects and money allocated to them can be reviewed. These include the district proposals, the Printed Development Estimates as presented to the Kenyan Parliament and the Final Budget Allocation. Tables 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3 show a comparison of these moments.

Table 9.1 Comparison of District Proposed Forward Budget (DPFB), Printed Development Estimates (PDE) and Final Budget Allocation (FBA) of the Kajiado District Development Budget 1988–9 (in K £)

Sector	DPFB		PDE		FBA	
	(K £)	(n.)	(K £)	(n.)	(K £)	(n.)
Administration	240,000	4	—	0	—	0
Home affairs	86,750	3	10,000	1	10,000	1
Finance	20,000	3	137,000	3	137,000	3
Agriculture	551,502	6	—	0	97,126	3
Health	2,250,000	20	460,000	4	145,000	4
Public works	18,563,946	12	—	0	3,568,150	6
Tourism/wildlife	10,000	1	—	0	—	0
Livestock	171,632	22	—	0	20,176	3
Cultural/social services	288,129	5	80,000	1	72,500	2
Information/broadcasting	17,000	1	—	0	—	0
Water	388,000	15	265,500	11	220,000	12
Environment	209,890	16	59,500	4	—	0
Co-operatives	120,000	2	—	0	2,120	1
Commerce	131,000	3	—	0	—	0
Energy	500,000	2	500,000	2	500,000	2
Education	320,000	3	20,000	1	20,000	1
Total	23,867,849	118	1,532,000	27	4,792,072	38

Note

(n.) = number of projects.

(Source: Author's own derivations based on MNDP, 1987, 1988a; ROK, 1988.)

In the Printed Development Estimates, projects are also mentioned that were not proposed by the district. They have been added to the list of proposals by the technical ministries or the Treasury in Nairobi. Table 9.2 shows these added proposals as well as the number and amount of money involved in the final allocation of these new proposals. Also in the Final Budget Allocation one can find proposals that were not present in either the District Proposed Forward Budget or the Printed Development Estimates (Table 9.3).

Figure 9.3 is a graphical reproduction of Tables 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3. It shows three different phases of the planning process that, since the introduction of District Focus, should in principle give more or less the same picture as far as funds and type and number of projects are concerned. However, from the tables it can be concluded that District Focus in Kajiado District has so far not been able to streamline this process in a satisfactory way. The budget requested by the DDC (approximately K £24 million) to finance 118 projects is rewarded with the provision of K £6 million to fund 82 projects.³ However, only 38 of these projects were originally proposed by the Kajiado District Development Committee.

Table 9.2 Comparison of Printed Development Estimates (showing projects *not* proposed by the district) and the Final Budget Allocation of the Kajiado District Development Budget 1988-9 (in K £)

Sector	DPFB		PDE		FBA	
	(K £)	(n.)	(K £)	(n.)	(K £)	(n.)
Planning/national development	—	—	77,500	5	92,500	5
Agriculture	—	—	1,000	1	—	0
Health	—	—	290,867	5	280,867	5
Public works	—	—	1,153,750	2	—	0
Livestock	—	—	60,000	1	81,500	1
Water	—	—	13,248,000	22	276,500	16
Environment	—	—	200,508	2	—	0
Co-operative	—	—	12,500	2	21,500	2
Industry	—	—	12,000	1	—	0
Total	—	—	15,056,125	41	752,867	29

Note

(n.) = number of projects.

(Source: Author's own derivations based on MNDP, 1987, 1988a; ROK, 1988.)

Table 9.3 Final Budget Allocations of projects *not* proposed by the district or presented in the Printed Development Estimates of the Kajiado District Development Budget 1988-9 (in K £)

Sector	DPFB		PDE		FBA	
	(K £)	(n.)	(K £)	(n.)	(K £)	(n.)
Agriculture	—	—	—	—	42,500	1
Health	—	—	—	—	25,000	1
Livestock	—	—	—	—	278,000	1
Cultural/social service	—	—	—	—	26,500	4
Water	—	—	—	—	253,500	3
Environment	—	—	—	—	10,500	1
Education	—	—	—	—	106,750	4
Total	—	—	—	—	742,750	15

Note

(n.) = number of projects.

(Source: Author's own derivations based on MNDP, 1987, 1988a; ROK, 1988.)

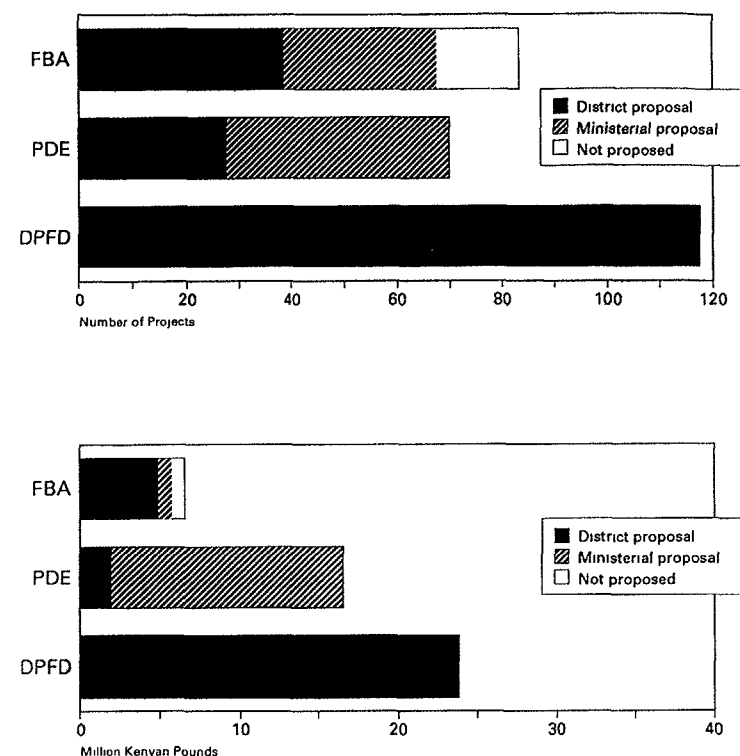


Figure 9.3 Kajiado District: 1988-9 Development Budget

Moreover, the actual allocation to specific projects was also very often not in accordance with the district's wishes.

Several, sometimes very specific, reasons are responsible for this discrepancy between the proposals made by the district and the final allocation by the technical ministries and the Treasury in Nairobi. It is thought that the lack of budget ceilings, in particular, led to a huge demand (some 10 per cent of the National Development Budget) by Kajiado District (representing only 1 per cent of Kenya's population) for the financial year 1988-9. On the other hand, it seems that the number of projects included by the technical ministries in the Printed Development Estimates and Final Budget Allocation is sometimes even higher than the number of district proposals (see, for example, the water sector). Foreign donors or international financing institutions (e.g. the World Bank), in particular, are responsible for the allocation of funds *not* present in either the District Forward Budget Proposal or Printed Development Estimates.

Information for analysing the planning procedure from (sub)locational to divisional and district level is not available. However, several Kajiado District officers stated, with reference to the District Focus Policy in general, that

- identification of projects is still problematic. The idea of involving the grassroots level (sublocation, location, division) does not work, due to a lack of guidelines and specific capabilities at these lower levels. Also, feedback within this project identification process between DDC, technical ministries and the lower administrative levels is poor. The production of long shopping lists of projects is still common;
- project formulation and prioritization handbooks for use at the district level have been developed (e.g. Bethke, 1983). However, priority-setting at district level comprises mainly a process of going along the lists of the four divisions and, in turn, transferring the highest-ranked project proposal towards the final DDC list of project proposals;
- co-ordination by the DDC of NGO projects does not take place. Contacts with NGOs are mainly restricted to occasions in which these organizations seek for assistance (e.g. in acquiring land for constructing a building);
- local contractors are not always available. If they are available their quality and/or charges are sometimes not acceptable;
- transferring of officers to the districts is still problematic as far as accountants (quantity and quality), planners (quantity and quality), water engineers (quantity) and supplies officers (quantity) are concerned; and
- training of officers under District Focus is still going on and the magnitude of this task seems to be underestimated. More people have to be trained and for longer periods of time. It is doubtful whether the approach of training trainers down to the sublocal level is a sound strategy. External inputs from the training institutions will be necessary.

Conclusion

Inclusion of the regional levels in the 'planning' machinery of the Kenyan government dates back to the beginning of the 1960s. However, in those days the Provincial and District Commissioners acted mainly as an implementing force of the plans and decisions made in Nairobi. In the course of time, the administrative structure at district level was changed by the introduction of several civil service bodies, such as the development committees at district, divisional and (sub)locational level. Also, recognition grew that deployment of regional 'planning' to solve the implementation problem *after* all decisions had been made centrally offered less chance of success than regional planning proper, which also includes the regional representatives in the whole planning process. Moreover, national planning normally gives emphasis to homogeneity and tends to ignore diversity in different physical, geographical and economic regions of the country. Being closer to the field, the officers at the (sub)district level are generally more in touch with the problems and potentialities of the regions and local people than are officials at headquarters. Although this was recognized for some time, it seems that the economic crises of the early 1980s, which hit Kenya's economy very severely due to higher oil and lower coffee prices, provided the ultimate stimulus to implementation of a decentralized form of planning. Besides measures of macro-economic policy, the government focused attention on public sector

management. One of the conclusions was that the planning machinery was badly performing and had to be improved. In future, especial attention had to be given to the district level.

So in 1983, with very strong political support, a District Focus Policy was introduced that led to several structural modifications:

1. Supervision and disciplinary authority of the District Commissioner over the district ministerial staff increased, mostly by virtue of the enhanced authority of the District Treasury, the District Tender Board and the newly established District Executive Committee, all of which fall directly under the responsibility of the District Commissioner.
2. Under District Focus, senior officers are transferred from Nairobi to the districts and more junior civil servants are recruited to expand the manpower base within the districts. In addition, the Kenyan government started a huge training programme to uplift the quality of the (planning and technical) officers at all district levels. This is an ongoing process.

Looking at the achievements so far, it must be stated that considerable progress has indeed been made. An improved district planning system has been established. Guidelines for financial and supplies management have been developed. The quality of the District Development Plans and the efficiency of public services are said to have increased. There is an increased awareness that local-level decisions are important and that an integrated approach at district level is a far more viable approach than the old top down system of planning and implementation. It seems that there can be no return to the former process of planning and implementation, but is real fulfilment of the objective of effective decentralized and participative planning and implementation any nearer?

Information from Kajiado District suggests that the way ahead is still long. It is clear that several prerequisites for the efficient functioning of the District Focus Policy have thus far only taken shape on paper and not in practice. Some of the constraints mentioned by the Fourth National Development Plan (1979-83) before introduction of the District Focus Policy still exist. The major differences with respect to the kind and number of development projects proposed by Kajiado District and the funds ultimately approved and allocated to these projects by the technical ministries are too great. The role played by these ministries is sometimes very vague. Overall sectoral policy guidelines are very often lacking. Without active and proper support of these government bodies, District Focus will end up being still-born. In particular, the lack of information on budget ceilings hampers the real transfer of responsibility towards the districts. But even if the budget ceilings are properly taken care of by the technical ministries, the flexibility of planning and implementation at district level is still limited. For example, a district such as Kajiado, which is mainly oriented towards livestock and agriculture, has traditionally had a very low budget for industrial projects. Initiatives by the district in this direction will be hampered as a result.

A possible solution to improve flexibility of planning and implementation could be the introduction of a single unified District Budget, covering all the various ministry programmes in the district, and administered by a District Manager with

a large measure of independent power and authority over all field officers. Some experience in this respect is being gathered nowadays through the Arid and Semi Arid Lands programme (ASAL), which has been operative in Kajiado District since the middle of 1987. This programme is an integrated rural development programme funded by the Dutch government. It is closely linked to the planning and implementation machinery of Kajiado District. It provides the DDC and the technical ministries with an overall additional budget allocation of 10 per cent. Moreover, this money can be allocated in a flexible way. Planning, budgeting and implementation are all in the hands of the district officers.

The dependency on foreign donors as far as the Development Budget of Kenya is concerned sometimes also interferes with proper district planning as it creates unforeseen cash flows and (the possible start of) new projects within the district. The opposite (withdrawal of funds) also happens and is of a more serious, disturbing nature.⁴ The fact that district focus training workshops and seminars at divisional level are funded by various foreign donors on a more or less *ad hoc* basis is considered to be an undesirable situation.

Effective local participation is limited and will remain so for many years to come because of constraints in the administrative structure and political system, as well as the semi-nomadic way of life and the high level of illiteracy of many people in the district.⁵ Participation in the planning process is mainly restricted to bureaucratic participation by officers and councillors at the (sub)locational and divisional levels. Some regard the role of politicians to be crucial in bringing about indirect participation of the people. For example, Delp (1981, p. 120) states that 'the local politicians should play a role of watch-dog in planning by seeing that fairness prevails and that civil servants follow-up in district discussions. What is needed is the appropriate forum, and the access to information embodied in the district level planning process.' In contrast, Tostensen and Scott (1987, p. 112) state 'it is difficult to see how in principle a political system, based in the final analysis on patronage and rapidly shifting factional alliances, can provide an entirely adequate foundation for a decentralized system of authority which presupposes rational decision-making, grounded on universalistic principles of administrative management'.

Under DFP, the role of the local political leaders and (sub)chief is not very clearly formulated. They seem to use this unclarity to dominate and politicize the project-identification process. That this is not a new phenomenon is also stressed by the Working Party on Government Expenditures (1982, p. 37): 'political considerations have at times affected the selection of projects and their regional location in the past and may do so in the future. These factors have also influenced the location of schools and health centres within districts and at times have resulted in uneconomic projects.' This seems to have created a general distrust in the civil service of political intrusions into the planning process: 'often a politician is viewed as an adversary whose main interest is government investment in his/her constituency, to improve the prospects of re-election' (Makokha, 1985, p. 37).

Participation of popular representatives in the DDC (especially compared to other countries in East Africa) is very poor since membership comprises approximately 85 per cent civil servants, 10 per cent representatives of parastatals and

only 5 per cent politicians. In the author's opinion, this situation forces the politicians to 'go underground' and use their informal connections in the district or at a central level to achieve their own specific objectives.

Indeed, for Kajiado District it seems that the role of the politicians does not end at the district boundary. All in all, this possible disadvantage could probably be dealt with if real participation in planning and implementation by the local people were to occur. Adult education, awareness-raising, government assistance in implementing self-help projects and the like are the key issues to be involved besides a larger number of popular representatives at the DDC. Prospects of achieving that seem remote at present.

Some problems of District Focus will not be very difficult to overcome, while others of a more structural, political-financial nature could, in the end, lead to the frustration of this process of decentralization, as happened with the Special Rural Development Programme in the 1970s. In an economic sense, as long as resources are centrally controlled, the districts are in fact not accorded any significant autonomy. Moreover, the District Commissioner, whose central role in policy implementation is reinforced, is ultimately answerable to the Office of the President. The DFP might therefore be better described as a decentralization of financial control, as recommended by the working party, rather than a devolution of power from the centre. It is hoped that the outcomes of District Focus Policy will be valued positively by local officers and local people in the years to come. If so, increasing local participation as well as the introduction of a District Budget could and should be the next important ingredients for a real transfer of power towards the district.

Notes

1. Projects that are primarily intended to serve one district are referred to as 'district-specific' and are to be identified, selected, planned and implemented at the district level. Examples of district-specific projects include a village water system, a rural access road, a youth polytechnic and the like.

2. In April 1989, the DDC decided to establish a fifth division (Mashuru) comprising some (former) locations of Central Division.

3. Due to some very big projects, the total amount of money allocated for projects in Kajiado District for the year 1988-9 is even higher than it would be on average. One big water project (costing K £12 million) blurs the picture of the DPE. Most of these major projects are funded with foreign money (as grants or loans).

4. Approximately 50 per cent (30 per cent grants and 20 per cent loans) of Kenya's Development Budget over the years has been derived from foreign support.

5. It is thought that districts suffering from high levels of illiteracy and lack of communication will encounter more difficulties in raising levels of effective participation. For example, Kajiado District has a 12 per cent literacy level among the adult population. Approximately 10 per cent of the people are living in small towns.

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