

**YOUTH AND SOCIO - ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN WESTERN KENYA.
A CASE OF KAKAMEGA MUNICIPALITY FROM 1963 - 2012**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined socio-economic transformation among the youth in Kakamega Municipality of Western Kenya from 1963 to 2012. Socio-economic transformation among the youth fall into three periods namely the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial phases. Of these three periods, not much will be said about pre-colonial and colonial periods. The focus is on the post-colonial period often referred to as the post-independence period. The study objectives were: to identify socio-economic activities youth in Kakamega Municipality have engaged in from 1963 to 2012; to examine the influence of the youth on socio-economic change in Kakamega Municipality from 1963 to 2012 and to assess the socio-economic challenges youth in Kakamega Municipality have faced during the period under reference. The study employed descriptive research design. The sample was taken from Kakamega Municipality. It comprised included 30 informants, all above 18 years. The informants included 15 youths and 15 youth leaders. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select the informants. The study used primary data where the interview schedule was used to collect data. Qualitative technique was used to analyze the data. The study was guided by critical social theory of youth empowerment, a perspective that is oriented towards critiquing and changing society as a whole. The study established that the youth participated in activities such as environmental conservation, business enterprise and capacity-building, cultural and cross-cutting issues and that youth activities were geared towards solving economic, social, environmental and political challenges facing them. The study also established that the government had initiated activities that benefit both the youth and the community as a whole. It was further revealed that the youth face problems such as lack of resources, lack of a clear youth policy and awareness among others. The study therefore suggests the need for a clear youth policy framework covering all areas of youth development. It is also imperative that counseling services be provided to the youth. The findings will provide additional material to the scanty existing literature on youth socio-economic transformation and also information that governments and donors need in enhancing youth's participation in development in Kenya and globally, with a view to create a safe environment and encouraging meaningful participation and engagement of the youths in the community.