

**THE PERFORMANCE OF WEIWEI IRRIGATION PROJECT IN IMPROVING
THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY: A CASE
OF WEST POKOT COUNTY**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES OF MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY**

MAY, 2015

ABSTRACT

Rural development remains a major challenge in Kenya. The Kenya Government put in place eight regional development authorities with an aim of initiating and implementing equitable socio-economic development programmes in their areas of jurisdiction. Wei Wei Irrigation Project is one of the projects that Kerio Valley Development Authority (KVDA) has implemented. Although KVDA has implemented many projects, a lot still needs to be done to address rural poverty and unemployment. This study set out to examine the performance of Wei Wei Irrigation Project (WWIP); to examine the performance of WWIP in relation to improving the people's livelihoods; to establish the socio-economic benefits of the WWIP accruing to the local people; to appraise the challenges attributed to the implementation of WWIP both for the locals and the WWIP staff; to explore appropriate measures that KVDA can put in place to address any challenges at the WWIP with a view to enhancing project success. The study was based on the economic theory and a conceptual framework showing the relationship between KVDA and rural people livelihoods. The study adopted the mixed methods research design. The target population consisted of the local people in Wei Wei, opinion leaders, members of the executive committee of the Wei Wei Farmers Association (WWFA), project employees and the local WWIP staff. Both purposive and stratified random sampling techniques were used to identify respondents. A total of 95 participants were involved. The respondents were selected by virtue of their knowledge concerning the project. The research employed focus group discussions (FGDs), questionnaires, observations and in-depth interviews. The research instruments were piloted for validity and reliability. Data from in-depth interviews was summarized and analyzed thematically while that from FGDs and Photo-evidence was used to present the findings from field observation and to make evidential conclusions. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in form of tables and graphs. These findings revealed that WWIP has provided its beneficiaries with means to irrigate land and produce both food and cash crops. Findings show that most people owned land. It was established that the project led to the establishment of many socio economic structures and services within the area which has led to the improvement of road infrastructure and electricity availability within the community and increased small business trade. WWIP has tried to increase facilities 'which include the input of farmers, training, offering transport, water, and reclaiming land as appropriate measures of addressing the challenges it experiences. The study recommended that more experts be deployed to enhance performance and Productivity plus focus be on empowering locals economically through more income generating activities. Such mitigating measures should lead to a lasting sustainability of such development projects in the country.