THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF A RURAL COMMUNITY: CASE STUDY OF NKUENE DIVISION, MERU COUNTY, KENYA

BY

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ABSTRACT

Africa in general, Kenya in particular struggles with various developmental problems with efforts being made to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of communities by various agencies and the government itself. As some areas struggle with poor socio-economic development others do relatively well, a factor some researchers have attributed to differences in stocks of social capital. This research was prompted by this observation and existing research gaps that say studies on social capital and how it influences development especially in rural areas are inadequate. The main objective of this study was to establish if social capital influences the socio-economic development of a rural community. Three specific objectives guided this study and were: to assess levels of social capital, to examine effects of social capital and to establish role of social capital relative to physical and human capital. The study was carried out in the rural areas of Nkuene division where four villages were selected. A sample of 20 households in each community was selected through convenience sampling. A case study research design was adopted with data collection being done using schedules, interviews and observation methods. Data analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) software where descriptive quantitative analysis was carried out in an attempt to answer the research questions. Using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) it was found out that social capital in structural and cognitive forms existed within communities. Social capital had contributed to socio-economic development of communities especially in regard to establishing infrastructure such as schools and health centers. However, the success of the community depended heavily on the levels of physical capital where well endowed communities did better. The research concluded

that social capital is capital like human and physical capital that leads to socio-economic development when utilized by communities. The policy implications was that social capital of a

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community ought to be considered before any development initiatives are undertaken so that the expected returns can be yielded within a community.

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