

■ KENYA

The legacy of colonialism

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The steady decline in the provision of food, education, health, shelter, communication infrastructure and security has its roots in an oligarchy whose only interest seems to lie in controlling the instruments of state, the international division of labour inherited from Kenya's colonial period and the prevalence of ethnic chauvinist conflicts.

The country's economy has largely been mismanaged by an oligarchy whose only interest seems to lie in controlling the instruments of state, with concomitant inefficiencies in allocation and distributional inequity.

The international division of labour bequeathed to Kenya by the colonial political economy has not only remained intact, but has been reinforced by the emergent middle class in the post-colonial era. The consequence is a country that continues to produce and export primary commodities and import manufactured and processed goods. In other words, Kenya, like all other African countries, produces what it does not consume and consumes what it does not produce.

An overwhelming prevalence of ethnic chauvinist tendencies and sectarianism is the *sine qua non* of political and social organisation. This has had an asymmetric effect in the distribution of public resources, leading to shameful geographical imbalances that conceal structural and gender-based inequalities.

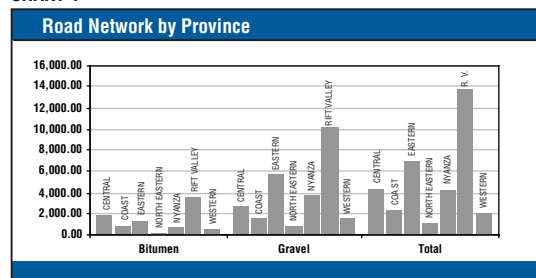
The government has pursued a two-pronged approach to fighting the scourge of poverty. One prong is the National Poverty Eradication Plan (NPEP) launched in 1999. The other is the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) driven by the Bretton Woods institutions. In the wake of these programs, inequalities between regions, ethnic groups, sexes, races and social groups continue to exist.

Inequitable access to physical infrastructure

Provision of roads, rail transport, telecommunication and energy is regarded as one of the most critical catalysts in the social development of a people. A country with high levels of social disparity of necessity develops physical infrastructure in an equally skewed fashion. It is no accident, therefore, that the distribution of all-weather roads, telephones, electric power and other physical infrastructure is not based on population spread or demand for such infrastructure, but rather on the concentration of the middle class with its anachronistic social development needs and ethnic/sub-ethnic considerations.

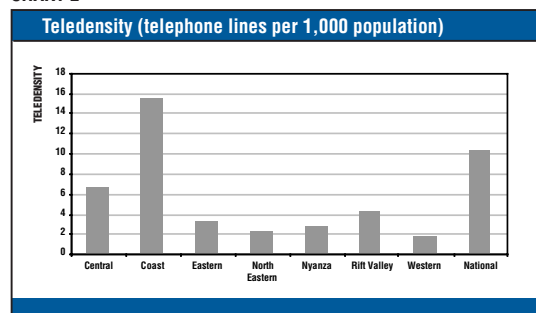
Kenya has some 63,307 kilometres of roads, of which only 8,937 is bitumen. Gravelled road runs some 26,524.7 kilometres and the rest is dirt road. The distribution of this road network betrays even more insensitivity with regard to geographical/regional inequities within the country. For instance, Kiambu District alone (in the Central Province) with a population of 742,000 boasts a total road length of 1,167.4 kilometres of which 513 km is bitumen and 355.2 km is gravel. This compares sadly with the whole North Eastern Province, with about ten times the land area of Kiambu and a total population of 1,015,000, which has a paltry 147-kilometre bitumen road. Seven districts – Suba, Wajir, Lamu, Samburu, Moyale, Trans Mara, Mt. Elgon and Marakwet – have no bitumen road at all.

CHART 1



The same trend can be observed in the distribution of telephone services. Thika district in the Central Province, for example, with a population of 647,000 has a total of 5,443 fixed telephone lines (excluding the 154 public telephone booths), while the whole of Western Province (eight districts) with a total population 3,354,000 shares only 5,397 fixed phone lines excluding the 381 phone booths. For every 1,000 people in Thika, 8.4 have access to a telephone line while for the same number of people in the Western Province, only 1.6 have access to telephone services.

CHART 2



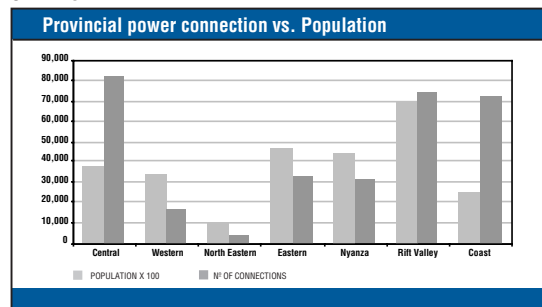
Of serious equal concern is the extent to which the ever-growing population is dependent on the use of firewood and charcoal for cooking fuel. As the following table shows, something has to be done to bring an end to this trend. Attempts to have governments reduce taxes on kerosene to provide poor people with alternative fuel have been unsuccessful. Wetlands are being harvested unsustainably as is soil cover vegetation.

Percent of population relying on different cooking-fuels in the East African sub-region			
COUNTRY	FIREWOOD & CHARCOAL	GAS + KEROSENE	ELECTRICITY
Kenya	85	13	1
Tanzania	96	2	1
Uganda	97	2	1

Source: African Development Indicators, 2000.

The limited access to grid electricity is also regionally skewed. Chart 3 shows power connection by population and province.

CHART 3



The situation is poised to get worse as infrastructure is handed over to transnational corporations (TNCs) through their local private-sector proxies (branches and agents). The imbalances can be traced to the first round of globalisation, colonialism, which assigned the African countries a role of producers of primary commodities that were in demand in the "mother countries." Under that arrangement, infrastructure went to the areas that produced these commodities. The current round of globalisation has reproduced inequalities within and between countries and undermined the productive capacities of less developed ones. It has compounded the struggle for social justice, gender equity and sustainable development, and increased fears of a widening valley between the strong and weak, the haves and have-nots. Based on export-oriented growth, with complete disregard to domestic needs or social justice, globalisation continues to reproduce the same inequalities.

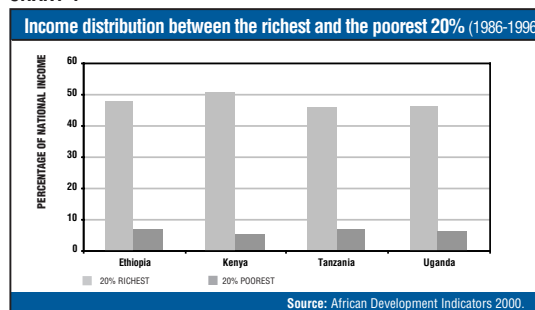
Recognition that tackling the internal causes of inequality is important, and many actors, including business and social movements, pay lip service to the need to decisively deal with it. Given the kind of resources available and the lack of technological sophistication, however, Kenyans are unable to share even the skewed benefits of unequal development in their national economy.

The external environment has gained influence in recent years over the level of available resources and the way they are used. The rhetoric is about decentralisation across the board. The reality is that while governments are being coerced into decentralising at the national level, policy-making is becoming more and more centralised, with Washington D.C. as the axis. This explains, to a large

extent, why the "home-grown" Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in Kenya is a mirror image of that of Bolivia, which in turn is a replica of that of the Philippines, in defiance of the "home-grown" logic that is being peddled by the Bretton Woods institutions to justify their imposition on the national economies.

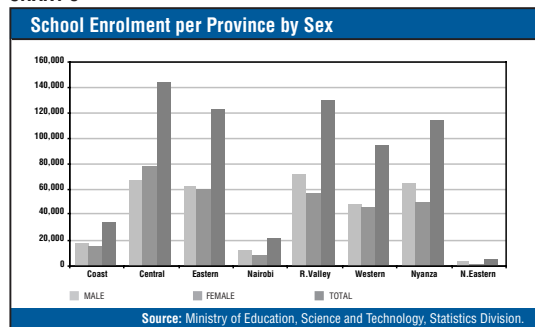
The level of income disparity in Kenya has been said to be second only to Brazil. The chart below shows how Kenya compares with its immediate neighbours in terms of income distribution.

CHART 4



In terms of access to basic entitlements like education, health and water, inequalities exist both regionally and between different social classes. In education, there is also marked inequality when it comes to choices between sending a son or a daughter to school, and there are fewer schools for girls. Chart 5 below shows the distribution of secondary school enrolment. With the cost-sharing measures required by structural adjustment, more and more people find themselves unable to take their children to school. Where a choice is to be made, it is almost always in favour of the male child.

CHART 5



Kenya Coalition for Social Watch.
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Member organisations are:
 Social Development Network (SODNET),
 Education Centre for Women in Democracy (ECWD), EcoNews Africa,
 Civic Initiatives Forum (DARAJA), African Women's Communication Network (FEMNET),
 Public Law Institute, Kenya Human Rights Commission, Undugu Society of Kenya,
 Pastoralists Development and Education Program (PADEP), Kenya Land Alliance,
 Action Aid Kenya and the Centre for Governance and Development (CGD).