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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kikuyu district is a new district hived from the former Kiambu West district within the Central Province in Kenya. It is a peri-urban, area which is densely populated. The district covers an area of 233 sq. km. Kikuyu district lies within Kikuyu highlands which has a rich and well drain volcanic loam soils that support crop farming. The climate is cool and wet with the long rains from March- May and the short rains from October to mid December. This makes the area a high agricultural potential area. Besides subsistence farming there is also commercial horticultural farming that takes place. The creation of Kikuyu District has been very positive as previously the residents of Kikuyu had to travel all the way to Kiambu Town for any government services. The new District has therefore brought government services closer to the people. Despite being a well to do area Kikuyu District is faced by a number of challenges which include:-

1. Water;
2. Unplanned development expansion; and
3. Insecurity

(i) *Water Problem: Kikuyu District is home to some rivers and springs* which originate from Naivasha in the Rift Valley Province which provide water for the residents of Kikuyu. However the water levels have been diminishing over the years due to a lot of irrigation that takes place in the flower farms in Naivasha. There is no clear water policy as to how irrigation in Kenya should take place and this then becomes a major problem. When the water levels in Kikuyu diminish it will translate into certain parts of the capital city of Nairobi lacking water as an essential commodity because of reliance on Kikuyu as a water resource.

A majority of the people in Kikuyu District depend on water from boreholes, springs, rivers, wells and piped water. However due to the rapid population growth in the last thirty (30) years the water per capita has reduced from 1,853 cu mi in 1969 to about 647 cu mi¹ recently which is below the universal standard of 1,000 cu. mi. In order to substitute piped water many people have taken up drilling boreholes in their small farms. The ever increase of wells and boreholes being sunk haphazardly pose a threat to the low water table. Kikuyu is home to about twelve (12) springs however due to human encroachment and unregulated irrigation the spring's water capacities of the springs have reduced. The Kikuyu Springs which also supply water to the City of Nairobi has been victim of human activity and hence the water capacity has been reducing hence affecting the supply of water in the City. Further Kikuyu District also boasts of being home to the Ondiri Swamp whose source is Lake Naivasha whose water capacity has been diminishing due to, the reduction of water levels at Lake Naivasha caused by commercial flower irrigation farms by multi national corporations in Naivasha. Further the Ondiri Swamp is also threatened by diverting water to agricultural farms in Kikuyu. The Kikuyu Water Board is the body that is entrusted with handling and supplying water within Kikuyu district however this body is plagued with corruption which continuously affects the supply of water within Kikuyu District. It is recommended that:

- a. The National Environmental Management Authority in conjunction with the Kikuyu Water Board identify and map out the water catchment areas in the District and protect them as *conservations*
- b. The Ministries of Water, Agriculture and Environment should work together and develop a *water irrigation policy* to ensure that even people in downstream locations are protected. This policy should also guide the drilling of bore holes in the areas.

(ii) *Unplanned Development Plans: Kikuyu District has been regarded as a rural –urban area* with a relatively dense population. However with the expansion of the Nairobi Metropolitan plans, Kikuyu has in the recent times experienced a rapid growth of population. This population is mostly of people who are

¹ Kabete Constituency Strategic Plan 2007-2012
Kinoo Paralegal Network, 28th October 2009

working in the City of Nairobi due to its proximity and has resulted in higher demand for housing. Kikuyu District is hence expanding at a very rapid rate which is unfortunately poorly planned for by the Kikuyu Town Council. This unplanned expansion will mean that some of the houses that will be put up will be sub-standard hence endangering the people living in these houses, stressing the sewerage systems which may continually burst hence posing health risks and haphazard sub-division of land for sale hence food production becoming more threatened.

Despite the good agricultural soils, farming plots in Kikuyu district are too small for large scale production of crops. Therefore many people are opting to convert these small plots into residential or commercial areas for low income housing which is more profitable and also in response to the increasing population and demand for housing. However, the sewerage system may not be able to accommodate this population expansion and is basically a disaster waiting to happen. This unplanned expansion will give rise to informal settlements, overcrowding, poor housing standards, environmental degradation of natural resources and indigenous forestry in the name of development. It is therefore recommended that:

- a. The *Housing Policy* should be implemented in the rural – urban areas to ensure the houses being constructed are of good quality.
- b. The Ministry of Planning through the Town Council of Kikuyu should develop an *expansion plan* for Kikuyu District. This will include ensuring proper sewerage systems.

(iii) Insecurity: Kikuyu District has had its share of security problems. The source of insecurity comes from armed robbers and the outlawed militia like the Mungiki sect which has a big following in the area due to high rates of unemployment. This militia group extorts money from private business owners (particularly the public transport) and in case one refuses they are threats of violence and even death. The residents of Kikuyu therefore live in constant fear of their lives from both the armed robbers and the militia. The Police and the Provincial Administration seem incapable or unwilling to provide security to the residents due to their ill-equipped resources, tactics and corruption.

The proximity of Kikuyu area to Nairobi makes it a target for armed robberies since the population is largely well off. The area has experienced some of the gruesome cases of robberies coupled with the infiltration of the outlawed Mungiki Sect. This sect extorts money as ‘operation costs’ which range daily from \$2 to \$3 (Ksh.100 to 200/=) depending on the size and capacity of the vehicle. The residents in Kikuyu District live in constant fear for their lives. It is recommended that:

- a. The Office of the President, Ministry of Internal Security should ensure that all the police stations are *properly equipped with recent crime detection and crime management technology, equipment and skilled personnel* to counter the criminal gangs and militias.
- b. The development and operationalisation of a *national security policy* is essential in Kenya. This would focus among other things on disarming the militia groups, community policing among others.

In conclusion, there is need for the government to put in place a *water irrigation policy* to ensure that the use and access to rivers and catchment areas are protected from environmental degradation. The government should also develop urban expansion plans and policies in Kikuyu town council to ensure that essential amenities are developed to cope with growing populations and development. There is need to develop and put in place a *national security policy* to deal with general insecurity and militias in Kikuyu district and elsewhere. This should also follow closely with a *national employment policy and recruitment strategy* to deal with the youth bulge in the country which is threatening both the social and economic cohesion in the country.