

A study is reported concerning the factors that influenced the involvement of village headmen (*ligurus*) in rural development activities at village level in Kenya. The research was expected to inform a wider participatory action research (PAR) project in Kabras area of the possibilities of concentrating action research in the village units and relying on village headmen as leaders able to broke development ideas and activities for their villages. In the current Kenyan District Focus for Rural Development Strategy, full participation of the local community in planning and implementation of development activities is regarded as a key element. This study contends that in order for this kind of participation to occur, there must be, at the grassroots (villages), some popular leaders who will coordinate the exercise of rural development. The study determines how village headmen in Kabras division rose to office, and their socioeconomic status as well as their involvement in rural development activities and the factors that affected such involvement. Findings indicate that the headmen did not possess any unique personal characteristics uncommon among their fellow villagers. They were in most cases elected and were popular grassroots leaders close to the villagers and with potential for influencing villagers to undertake development work. For this reason, villages need to be regarded as the basis for genuine rural development activities and the village headmen as the genuine managers of these activities. This being the case, PAR would be more effective if it treated villages as its basic units.