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**AN OVERVIEW OF SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS  
IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

Squatter/informal settlements are notable features of the urban areas of developing countries. This study aims at exploring the facts related to squat settlements in Ethiopia, with reference to the capital city, Addis Ababa. The study tries to explore the causes, scale and consequences of squatter settlements. It also attempts to assess municipal responses aimed at redressing the problems evolving from the proliferation of squatter settlements within and the suburbs of the city. The study is based on secondary data available to demonstrate the spread and challenges brought about by informal settlements. Related literature is reviewed to provide theoretical background. The emergence and alarming increase of squatter settlements has been caused by multiple factors, including the delays in the implementation of legal land provisions for housing and escalating costs of owning formal houses. The growth of slums and squatter settlements has been among the key urban planning and management hurdles for the city. The city government adopted preventive and curative measures to deter the

emergence and prevalence of squatter settlements. The approaches range from demolition of “non-poverty-driven” to regularization of “poverty-driven” informal settlements. However, squatter settlements have continued to proliferate despite the successive regulatory measures taken by the concerned government organs. This trend is due mainly to unrestrained poverty and population pressure complemented with weak municipal capacity to handle the problem.

**Keywords:** Squatter settlements, urban poverty, housing, demolition, regularization.

## INTRODUCTION

The world has experienced rapid urbanization in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries (Mossamam et al., 2017). Yet, the urbanization process has failed to be consistent with the demands of increasing urban dwellers particularly in areas of access to job opportunities; housing; infrastructure and services (WB 2013, in Shibru, 2018). Of the three billion global urban residents, almost one billion live in slum and informal/squatter settlements. Informal (squatter) settlements have been in existence in urban history for long time. All major cities and towns in Africa, Latin America and South East Asia, have extensive squatter (informal) settlements and slums in the inner parts and on the outskirts of the cities (UN-HABITAT, 2011). Massive migration from rural to urban areas is the major reason behind the proliferation of urban informal settlements and slums (Nouri A. Elfarnouk, in Jemal, 2019). One very distinctive character of urban growth in less developed countries (LDCs) has been the proliferation of squatter (informal) settlements. According to Payne (2005) and Abunyewah et al. (2018), the rapid population growth and unemployment in rural areas led to the spread of squatter houses in the main urban centers of low-income countries, which resulted in a situation whereby more than half of the population live in informal settlements and slums.

UN-HABITAT (2006) estimated that about 924 million people in LDCs live in urban informal settlements without secure tenure. This number is projected to increase to two billion in the year 2030 (*ibid*). UNCHS, cited in Daniel (2006), estimated that between 20% and 80% of urban growth in less developed countries is informal. In another estimation made by UNCHS (2003, in Jemal, 2019), about 40 to 70

percent of urban growth in LDCs is quite informal. Hence, informal settlements and urban informality are typical aspects of cities in LDCs and are essentially the result of burning need for housing by the urban people, particularly the poor (Nassar & Elsayed 2017; Daniel WG, 2011). The housing problem is among the key socio-economic problems and among the most visible dimensions of poverty in LDCs. The swelling growth of slums and squatter settlements in the urban centers of LDCs is synonymous with “urban poverty” (Pugh, in Daniel L, 2006). The poor living in slum and squatter settlements are vulnerable to abject poverty manifested by low household income, low level of consumption, diseases, lack of social services, and political and economic exclusion (Beall & Sean, 2007). Rising costs of living, unemployment, falling wages and widespread homelessness have enormously been behind the unchecked growth of squatter (informal) settlements in this region of the world.

Informality in the urban structure and appearance is the key evidence of either unaffordable cost of housing or deficit in housing supply (Roberts & Okanaya, 2018). The explosion of informal settlements in many cities of the less developed world indicates growing disparity in the allocation of resources and wealth (Gondo, 2011). The international community recognizes that sufficient housing is an elemental human right (UN-Habitat, in Shibru, 2018). People of the world need appropriate shelter, i.e., settlements that may offer the feeling of “home” as a matter of human right (Philimon, 2019). This piece of work is aimed at exploring the facts related to squatter settlements and urban informality in Ethiopia, with particular reference to the realities of its capital city, Addis Ababa. Informal settlements in Ethiopia, perhaps as in anywhere in the cities of developing countries, are distinguished by a crowded spread of makeshift “houses” built from sub-standard materials (Daniel, 2011). Informal settlements are not as such defined in Ethiopian laws; however, such settlements are customarily known as “moon shine houses” (*ibid*) or “moon light settlements” (Jemal, 2019), both terms to mean squatter settlements in the country. In Ethiopia, squatter or informal settlements are residences “built on government, communal or privately held land against the will of the holder or without having building permit” (Daniel, 2011). This particular study on Addis Ababa is based on secondary data available to demonstrate the extent, the problems and complex issues related to informal settlements in and around the city. A modest review of literature pertinent to the subject and experiences

of informal settlements is presented to provide theoretical background to the experiences of the case in the study area.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The issue of urban informal settlements is complex and dynamic. The rapid urbanization trends in Sub Sahara Africa (SSA) show that Ethiopia stands third, next to Tanzania and Mozambique, in regard to the population living in informal settlements (Shubira Kalugila, in Jemal, 2019). The investment in the formal settlement sector is below the level registered by most developing countries. In Ethiopia, the national investment on urban housing is only 0.5 % of the GDP, whereas most developing countries allocate about 3-6% of their GDP for housing (Daniel, 2006). This small investment is accompanied by rapid growth of squatter and informal settlements in the major towns, cities of the country. From a broader perspective, the collective burdens of informal settlements have been generally harmful not only to the cities and the formal dwellers at large but also to the informal settlers themselves. The implications are crucial and diverse in environmental, political, legal, social and economic terms.

Since its establishment, the city of Addis Ababa has been growing and expanding horizontally in all directions. About 28% of the total urban population in Ethiopia concentrates in Addis Ababa (CSA, in Daniel, 2006). The population pressure from all over the country is increasing the demands for urban housing in the city. The large parts (which is estimated to be 80%) of the city including its inner and expansion areas are predominantly occupied by unplanned informal settlements (Alemayehu, 2008). Combined factors of migration, corruption, poor urban planning and low income (poverty) are the causes for the expansion of squatter settlements in the city. Addis Ababa does not meet urban quality standards in terms of physical fabric, level of infrastructure and urban services. Slums in the city, squatter houses in the periphery and plastic shelters in the streets are common phenomena of the city. All such appearances have produced annoying images for the city since constructions are unplanned and done with low quality building materials, including woods and mud.

The upsurge of squatter settlements in Addis Ababa is among the main urban planning and management challenges for the proper growth of

the city (Jemal, 2019). Informal settlements in Addis Ababa, as in many third world cities, are causes for insecurity of holdings, health problems and social distress. Dealing with various aspects of informal settlements and improving living conditions in such settlements is among the burning challenges of the city. Of course, government's inability to deal with the intensified migration and demand for housing is on the top of the list of urban problems. This modest study has the objectives of looking into the causes, scale of coverage, and consequences of squatter settlements in Addis Ababa. It also attempts to assess the municipal responses aimed at redressing the problems evolving from the expansion of squatter settlements in and in the vicinity of the city.

## **DATA COLLECTION AND PRESENTATION**

The data for this study was collected from written documents (secondary sources) and analyzed and presented in mixed methods, quantitatively and qualitatively. The data secured from secondary sources has been used to analyze facts in such thematic areas as causes and consequences of squatter settlements, the regulatory framework and municipal responses. Descriptive data are presented to analyze the spread of squatter settlements and measures taken by the city government to maintain and improve certain poverty-driven informal/squatter settlements in and all over the surrounding areas of the city. Literature on diverse theories related to the causes, growth, consequences and remedial measures and empirical studies on informal settlements are reviewed to provide theoretical background to the study.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Definition and Characteristics of Squatter Settlements**

Lucid and coherent definition of squatter settlement is hardly available or still illusive (Daniel, 2011; Jemal, 2019). Informal settlement (also called “squatter settlement”) has been described and defined differently on the basis of the legal and planning framework of a country where it exists (Mohammed & Muhammad, 2006). Different

naming include: spontaneous, irregular, unplanned, squatter, illegal, marginal, unauthorized, informal settlements (Lamba, in Daniel WG, 2011; Jemal, 2019). The definitions used to describe informal settlements vary from country to country. Informal/squatter settlements generally are “units of irregular, low cost dwellings, usually on lands belonging to third parties, and most often located in the periphery of the cities” (UNCHS, 1996, in Philimon, 2019). Informal settlement is an illegal (squatter) settlement since squatters do not possess the formal right to occupy the land (Soyinka & Siu, 2018). Informal settlement is “uncontrolled mass urbanization” (Lejano & Bianco, 2018) defined as urban residential areas of the poor, more often in the towns and cities of less developed countries (Daniel, 2006). Squatter settlements are “dense settlements comprising communities housed in self-constructed shelters under conditions of informal or traditional land tenure” (Daniel, 2011). Informal settlements are distinguished mainly by the low standard houses that suffer from the deficiency of social services and infrastructure (Mohammed & Muhammad, 2006).

The notions of “legality” and “planning” are emphasized in the UN 2015 description of the term informal settlements, which are defined as (i) settlements where housing units have been built on land on which the occupants do not have “legal” right and claim, and (ii) “unplanned” settlements where housing units do not comply with contemporary planning and building bylaws (UN, cited in Jemal, 2019). According to Inostroza (2017), informal urban settlements have four critical features of informality: “(i) absence of legal (official) title; (ii) irregular development of urban structure; (iii) shortage of vital public service; and (iv) occurrence on the public land/property”. Some writers often use the terms squatter and slum interchangeably. This is however misleading unless the two terms are precisely defined and explained. Slums can be legally authorized residential areas characterized by overcrowded and old houses, inadequate services and poor living conditions (UNCHS, HABITAT, in Jemal, 2019). Slums are residences partly or entirely without the following basic conditions: “security of tenure, housing durability, access to water and sanitation, and availability of sufficient living area” (UN-HABITAT, in Abnet, 2017). On the other hand, informal settlements, whatever physical status and appearance they might have, are settlements without any legal permit. Thus the issue of “legality” would be the key factor to distinguish the two. Squatter settlements and slums have

different (local), notably colloquial, naming in different countries. Examples are provided as follows (Peattie & Alderate-Haas, 1981):

<b>Naming</b>	<b>Country</b>
Gecekondü	Turkey
Villas Miserias	Bones Aires (Argentina)
Barriadas	Lima
Bidonville	French colonies
Favelas	Rio (Brazil)
Barong-Barongs	Philippines
Challampas	Chile
Colonias Populares	Mexico
Ranchos	Venezuela

Four major characteristics of squatter settlements are identified under physical, spatial, social, and legal dimensions (Abenet et al., 2017; Srinivas, in Shibru, 2018, Daniel, 2006; Philimon, 2019). The key characteristics of squatter settlements can vary depending on the different settlement locations. Physical characteristics describe that squatter settlements have no or below the sufficient or minimum levels or standards of urban infrastructure and services. The dwellings are also built out of substandard materials. According to the World Bank (2002, in Philimon, 2019) the urban physical services include “roads and drainage, water supply, sanitation, electricity, schools, health centers, market places, etc.” The spatial characteristics describe that squatter settlements are built in marginal land parcels at peripheries, riversides, dumpsites, railway setbacks, hillsides, or undesirable marshy lands and flood plains (Abnet et al., 2017; Jemal, 2019). Social characteristics portray that households in squatter settlements are predominantly poor people belonging to the lower income group (Fernandes, 2011). Most of them, largely recent rural-urban or urban-urban migrants, are wage laborers and casual workers in diverse informal enterprises. The final and the most defining feature of such settlements is their legal status. Legal characteristics refer to the key feature that delineates informal settlements from the formal (authorized) ones. Informal settlements exhibit certain forms of illegality that violate ownership rights of private and public lands. Moreover, informal settlements also violate environmental and building regulations and standards, registration and taxation requirements (*ibid*).

Based on a study conducted in Kenya, informal settlements exhibit six common characteristics: “(1) insecurity of tenure; (2) lack of planning; (3) lack of infrastructure; (4) poor environmental condition; (5) lack of public facilities; and (6) unemployment and poverty” (Pellikka et al., in Jemal, 2019)

### **Causes and Consequences of Squatter Settlements**

The major causes of squatter settlements are embedded in the complex socio-economic, political and institutional settings, including the broader array of legal and administrative factors (WB 2000, HABITAT 2000, in Daniel, 2006). The population dynamics and ever-increasing urban population pressure complemented with low income of the people, both the original residents (the urban poor) and immigrants can be taken as the key reasons for the emergence of informal settlements. According to AERUS, in Philimon (2019), we observe significant coincidence between informal /illegal settlements and poverty. The urban poor use informality as the coping mechanism of securing shelters when they lack alternatives for decent houses. According to UN-HABITAT (2011) and Philimon, (2019), the key reasons for the emergence and growth of squatter settlements and slums emanate from: (i) “the inability of governments to create equal and efficient land allocation”; (ii) “the inability of low-income groups of the urban dwellers to afford the acquisition of land” and (iii) “the sluggish bureaucratic processes of acquiring land”. In most less-developed countries, the problems of informal settlements are strongly linked to lack of political will, failed policies, inappropriate regulatory frameworks, bad urban governance and corruption (Daniel, 2006; Shibru, 2018). On top of these, the causes for the growth of informal settlements are identified as unrealistic urban planning, high (unattainable) building standards for most people, rising rent of housing, ineffective system and practice of control over illegal construction, delayed responses and procedural setbacks of the formal land provision and strong temptations for land speculation (Minwuyelet, 2005; Fanta, in Shibru, 2018). The major actors of informal settlements as observed in many LDCs are: informal land developers, corrupt civil servants, professionals, brokers, speculators and the urban poor.

The common consequences of informal settlements may fall under environmental, socio-economic, regulatory and urban management



dimensions. Pollution of water bodies, damage on urban vegetation, pollution from solid and liquid wastes, environmental degradation (flooding, erosion, air pollution, etc) and encroachment on communal, agricultural and forest lands are among the environment-related consequences (Mohammed & Muhammad, 2006; Daniel, 2011). Squatter settlements entail higher economic costs (losses) when such settlements are demolished or cleared some day. High social costs prevail since the residents of the area live in isolation hence detached from the domains of the formal city. Informal settlers have no address No, identification cards, bank accounts and so on since they have no legal contract with the city government (*ibid*). Moreover, informal settlements are causes for social distress, hygienic and urban security problems. Informal settlements are located at the expansion areas and outskirts, hence hinder well-planned development of cities and result in misuse of land resources and infrastructure. Squatter settlements cause physical harms manifested as irregular residential structure, unorganized façade of buildings and houses that ruin the appearance and overall look of the city (Jemal, 2019).

### **Approaches to Managing Squatter Settlements**

Historical approaches (strategies) of dealing with informal settlements have diverse variants, including eviction (clearance), housing programs, sites and service schemes, and upgrading (Daniel L., 2006). Responses to informal settlements have changed over time (*ibid*). The earlier responses of eviction and demolition have been followed by new curative and preventive measures. Over the years, legalization, physical upgrading and latter on the integration of informal settlements in the urban fabric (formalization) has been common response to ameliorate the problems of informal settlements. Urban government approaches of managing squatter settlements and slums since 1950s are related to the prevailing attitudes, upgrading responses and policy measures. Such approaches can be seen under five chronologically ordered categories: “1. Laissez-faire attitudes in the 1950s and 1960s; 2. Site and service programs in the 1970s; 3. Slum upgrading in the 1980s; 4. Enabling strategies and security of tenure in the 1990s; 5. Cities without slums action plan in the 2000s” (Mensah, in Jemal, 2019).

Historical reactions to informality were marked by hostility in a way of “demolition and relocation of slums” in urban areas. Realizing

the fact that this method is overly expensive and that it was not possible to overcome the situation in such a way, there has been a change of policies that seek to deal with urban informality. In terms of policy making, the goal has shifted "... from hostility to acceptance, restriction to tolerance, restraining to enabling ..." (Perera & Amin, in Philimon, 2019:2)

Eviction (demolition) is the earliest mode of government reaction to informal settlements; not however been successful as informal settlements continued to proliferate and step up in size and number (Fernandes, 2011; Gondo, 2011, Philimon, 2019). Even though evictions still occur in several countries, other vital options like upgrading had to be chosen. Upgrading includes building roads, schools, legal tenure and planning, etc. The finest approach to mitigate informal settlements is "through regularization" (Amis & Lioyd, in Philimon, 2019), which ultimately turns "the low-income urban poor to owner of urban housing". In more precise terms, governments have a couple of methods to manage squatter settlements: preventive and curative approaches (Shibru, 2018).

## **SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS: EVIDENCE FROM ADDIS ABABA**

### **Population Trend**

This modest study is carried out with a focus on informal/squatter settlements in and around the expansion areas of the city of Addis Ababa. The problems associated with the emergence and expansion of squatter/informal settlements entail strong challenges that may call for robust preventive and curative efforts at all horizons and levels of governance. The narration of facts under this section begins with brief presentation of data on the proportion of people living in slums in the country and the trend of population increase in the study area. It is estimated that about 21.3% of the population in Ethiopia is urban; of course the population in the cities and major towns of the country is considerably and recurrently increasing, particularly in recent years, because of intensifying push factors from the rural areas. An increasing number of the urban poor (both the resident poor and new comers) is living and chronically forced to live in slum areas of cities and towns since it is impossible to pay for decent residential houses.

The situation in the capital city, Addis Ababa, can still be worse than the national average since more people are flooding to the city on daily basis in search of better means of livelihood and opportunities. In fact, it has been estimated that about 80% of Addis Ababa's population is living in slums (Yitbarek, in Abnet et al., 2017; Alemayehu, 2008). The city has a peculiar feature of housing distribution over areas having a mixture of modern buildings and slum neighborhoods, with a proportion of 20 and 80 percent, respectively. These days, an ultra-modern building in Addis has a typical slum adjacent to it (Abnet et al., 2017).

**Table 1**

*Population Living in Slums in Ethiopia (as percentage of the urban population)*

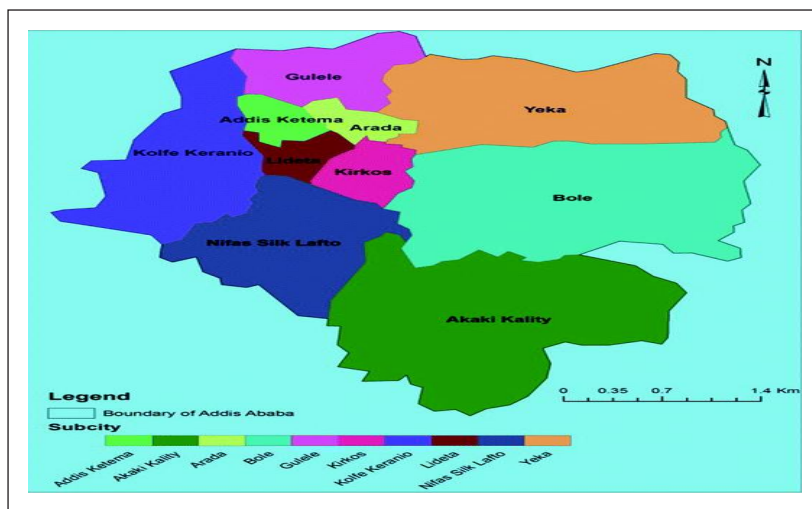
Year	Percentage of people living in slums
1990	90 – 95 %
1995	90 – 95 %
2000	85 – 90 %
2005	80 – 85 %
2007	77 – 80 %
2009	75 – 80 %
2014	70 – 75 %

Customized from the World Bank 2016, in Philimon, 2019: 34)

Founded in 1886, Addis Ababa is among the largest, oldest and fast growing urban centers in Africa. Addis Ababa, as the principal and primate city in Ethiopia, is more than 10 times larger than the second largest urban center, Adama (MoUDHC, 2015, in Abenet et al., 2017) and more than 14 times larger than the eastern commercial city, Dire Dawa (Jemal, 2019), both in area coverage and population size. The city is situated on an area of 540 km<sup>2</sup> (Abenet et al., 2017; Daniel, 2006) and accounts for about ¼ (4.79 million) of the country's urban population, which is estimated to be more than 23 million (CSA, in Jemal, 2019). The km<sup>2</sup> coverage substantially increases as the city is fast expanding into the surrounding areas since recent times. The city of Addis Ababa has formerly been divided into ten administrative sub-cities (one more, named Lemi Kura, being currently added to the list which brings the total to eleven).

**Figure 1**

*The Map of Addis Ababa and its Sub-Cities*



Addis Ababa is a chartered city with three tiers of government, namely, the city government, the sub-city (borough level) government, and the woreda (district level) government. When we look into population size, density and spatial coverage of the sub-cities, Kolfe Keranio (546,219) and Yeka (368,418) are the largest sub-cities in terms of population size. Whereas Bole (122.08 km<sup>2</sup>) and Akaki Kaliti (118.08 km<sup>2</sup>) are the largest sub-cities in terms of area (AACA, 2021). Bole, the largest sub-city, is almost three times larger than the total area of the four smaller sub-cities of Addis Ketema, Arada, Lideta and Kirkos. These are the inner sub-cities with relatively smaller area and highest population density. Addis Ketema has the largest density of population per km<sup>2</sup>, followed by Arada, Lideta, and Kirkos sub-cities.

**Table 2**

*The Sub-Cities of Addis Ababa*

Sub City	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population No.	Density (per km <sup>2</sup> )	No. of Woredas
Addis Ketema	7.41	271,644	36659	10
Akaki Kaliti	118.08	195,273	1653.7	11

(continued)

Sub City	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population No.	Density ( per km <sup>2</sup> )	No. of Woredas
Arada	9.91	225,999	23000	10
Bole	122.08	328,900	2694.1	14
Gullele	30.18	284,865	9438.9	10
Kirkos	14.62	235,441	16104	11
Kolfe Keranio	61.25	546,219	7448.5	15
Lideta	9.18	214,769	23000	10
Nefas Silk	68.30	335,740	4915.7	12
Lafto				
Yeka	85.46	368,418	4284.9	13

*Source:* AACA (2011)

The city of Addis Ababa is located at the center of the country and has been a pool of people from all corners in search of better opportunities, including employment. The city is a melting pot of metropolitan population; it is a miniature of almost all ethnic and diverse linguistic and religious groups of the country. The population growth of the city, as per the words of Jemal (2019), is due mainly to net immigration than to natural increase or birth rate. The recurrent trend of political instability, absence of employment opportunities, and rural stagnation in almost all parts of the country has forced many people to migrate to the city. The trend has been further exacerbated by lack of proper development policies that were to create ample job opportunities hence hold back the current enormous migration to the city.

**Table 3**

*Addis Ababa Population (10 years data)*

Year	Population No (in Millions)	Growth Rate (in Percent)
2020	4.79	4.40
2019	4.59	4.36
2018	4.40	4.36
2017	4.22	4.36
2016	4.04	4.37
2015	3.87	4.37
2014	3.71	4.36
2013	3.55	4.38
2012	3.40	4.35
2011	3.26	4.38

*Source:* Macrotrends.net (2020)

The population size in the metro area of Addis Ababa in 2020 was 4.79 million, with a 4.4 % increase from 2019, which was 4.59 million. The estimated average density is 5,607.96 people per square kilometer. The current population size of the city is based on estimates since the last census in Ethiopia was carried out in 2007 (Abnet et al., 2017). Given the current exodus-type immigration and high birth rate, the horizontal expansion of the city and the resultant growth of slums and informal settlements, increase in the diversity and magnitude of the urban informal economy, increase in the number of “hidden” dependents at household levels, the likelihood of administrative and technical inefficiency in conducting census, and so on, the city’s population can be by far greater than the one often portrayed as an official figure.

### **Squatter Settlements**

The emergence, intensity of squatter settlements in the developing world in general is considerable and a matter of significant concern. When it comes to Ethiopia, there is no adequate and reliable document that reveals the exact time when informal/squatter settlements have actually emerged (Daniel, 2006). We can, however, contend that squatter settlements in the towns and cities of Ethiopia have evolved and grown in recent times after the down fall of the imperial regime (Abnet et al., 2017). In 1975, following the nationalization of the land by the military socialist government (through Proclamation No. 47), urban land has come to be under the stewardship of the government. Nationalization was complemented with confiscation of “extra” urban houses, which concentrates the power of monopoly over the urban land and houses in the hands of the government. This monopoly in turn created a loophole for the emergence and growth of informal settlements. However, the construction of houses on the public land without the consent of city authorities intensified after the fall of the military regime in 1991 (*ibid*). This time, squatting had substantially proliferated in and at the outskirts of Addis Ababa and other major towns of the country.

The term “informal settlement” has, according to Daniel (2011), never been defined in Ethiopian laws. Nevertheless, an operational definition for such settlements has been provided by the Addis Ababa Development and Improvement Project Office (AADIPO) as follows: informality/illegality includes any form of construction like houses, sewerage lines, fence, containers, movable/ temporary kiosks and notice boards which have been built on or erected on public lands

without having legal basis. The degree of informality/illegality ascribed to such settlements ranges between total to partial informality. As per the working definition provided by AADIPO, the entire forms of informality/illegality are divided into two major categories: Category 1 includes illegal settlements which have been occupied or built without having any legal evidence or basis recognized by the law as title deed/book and construction permit. These settlements are identified as squatter/informal settlements and mainly to be found at the *expansion areas* of the city. Category 2 includes settlements which are partially illegal or informal. The illegality or informality emanates from several sources. For instance, they can have legal right (title deed/book) but not building permit. Partial informality can also be identified in cases where settlements can have both “the title deed/book and building permit” but built, expand, change the size and shape, upgrade, etc. without the proper legal procedures or permit. Such informal settlements are mainly to be found in the inner parts of the city (Daniel, 2011; Jemal, 2019).

In Ethiopia, squatter/informal settlements are customarily known as “Yechika Bettotch” as these settlements are often constructed and “mushroom” overnight under the “moon light”. Most often the processes are out of government sight since the constructions are completed in a very short period of time in the nights (*ibid*, Abnet et al., 2017; Munweuyelet, 2005; Daniel, 2006). Squatter settlements constructed in such a way are seen on roadsides, hillsides, on the city outskirts and even on valuable lands in the city center (*ibid*). Squatter settlements in Addis Ababa emerged as a result of multiple factors including the delay of implementation of legal housing, delays of legal land provisions, and escalating costs of owning or even getting houses for rent (Menweyelet, 2005). Taye (2000) argued that the key actors for the growth of squatter settlements in the peripheries of Addis Ababa are the peasants who sell farm lands at cheaper prices to individuals who construct houses without the consent of municipal bodies. Of course, large numbers of brokers are also involved in the process.

According to Taye (2000), two periods were particularly relevant to the growth of informal settlements: 1982-1986 and 1992-1995. During the first period, formal housing construction was not possible since a new policy on housing was under preparation. During the second period, land allocation for housing construction was not carried out since the market-oriented lease policy was under preparation. In both cases, land allocation and housing construction (formal) came to a

halt owing to the absence of a clear policy to guide the process. In this context, many people seeking housing construction could not tolerate to be in the waiting list of municipalities for land. This situation had forced many people to resort to squatting, which led to the sudden increase of squatter settlements, particularly in the peripheries of the city. Expansion of unauthorized settlements has indefinitely continued then after at an alarming rate (*ibid*; Daniel, 2006). Such settlements had been growing by 15.7% in the years 1984-1994. The rate was almost double (30%) in 2001 (ORAAMP, in Daniel, 2006). As per the survey conducted by the Urban Development and Works Bureau (UDWB) of Addis Ababa, a total area of 2000 hectares was covered by squatter settlements. It was further reported that in the year 2000, about 300000 people were living in 60000 squatter housing units, with an individual plot size ranging between 200 and 2000 m<sup>2</sup> (UDWB, in Jemal 2019; Daniel, 2006).

**Table 4**

*Locations of Informal (squatter) Settlements in Addis Ababa*

Name of the locality	Area of squatter settlements (in hectare)	Woreda (district level) (Kebele, the lowest tier)
Ayer Tenna	115.63	24 (15)
CMC	350	28 (03)
Gourdshola	81.25	28 (04)
Hanna Mariam	288.13	19 (60)
Jimma Road	228.13	24 (16)
Kaliti	62.5	27 (11)
Kotebe (Kara-Alo)	112.5	28 (03)
Kotebe	81.25	28 (02)
Kotebe	62.5	28 (01)
Kotebe (Yeka)	48.75	16 (22)
Meri – Ayat	90.63	28 (03)
Reppi	138.75	24 (16)
Worku Sefer (Nefas Silk)	95	19 (59)
Worku Sefer (Northern part)	80	17 (20)
Worku Sefer (Southern part)	38.75	27 (11)
Total	2000 hectares	

Source: Modified from ORAAMP, in Jemal (2019)



Who are the squatters? There are opposing viewpoints regarding the core causes of informal/squatter settlements in urban areas. These causes are either “poverty driven”, as maintained by many scholars and global agencies such as the World Bank and UNCHS, and “non poverty-driven” as the ones evident in the expansion areas of Addis Ababa. According to the first line of thinking, informal settlements evolve due to multiple socio-economic and institutional problems as self-built informal housing units emerge in several parts of the city. To secure footholds in the city, many people seize lands (illegally) and erect makeshift and dwellings. In some places, informal settlements are formed through large, organized inventions of public lands. However, as it is often assumed, informal settlements in the city of Addis Ababa are not associated to the urban poor (low income groups) alone since people from relatively high income groups are also widely implicated as speculators in squatter settlements (Daniel, 2006; Jemal, 2019). According to Daniel (2006: 23), most of squatter settlements in the expansion areas of Addis Ababa can in fact be described as “non-poverty-driven”. The unauthorized settlers in the expansion areas occupy large plots, approximately 300 m<sup>2</sup> on the average, and most of them belong to the middle or high income groups. Moreover, about 70% of the houses have good services, including electricity, water, telephone and access to roads. The proliferation of squatter settlements in Addis Ababa is one of the major urban planning and management concerns for the city (*ibid*; Jemal, 2019).

### ***Regulatory Frameworks and Municipal Responses***

The city government adopted preventive and curative measures to deter the emergence of squatter settlements and to take appropriate steps when squatter settlements had already evolved. Regulatory frameworks (Regulation No 1/2000 and Regulation No 2/2010) were adopted in order to prevent and control the expansion of informal settlements in the city. The regulations generally stressed that squatter settlements affected the growth and development of the city (Jemal, 2019). The approaches, which have been used to alleviate the problems, have been ranging from total demolition to partial regularization of informal settlements (Daniel, 2006).

The primary purpose of Regulation No. 1/2000 was to control the expansion of informal settlements and thereby install efficient land utilization mechanism for the city. Despite the regulation, illegal

settlements have flourished in the city from time to time as a result of failures to implement the regulation effectively. The city government, according to Jemal (2019), failed to restore law and order in this regard and was in state of abstention from taking appropriate action after illegal settlements have mushroomed across the city. Such abstentions by concerned municipal officials were either due to lack of capacity to deal with the problem or complete failure to appreciate the extent, intensity and severity at which illegal settlements have been spreading within and the peripheries of the city. Another major problem was on the part of the residents themselves in misinterpreting the provisions of Regulation No 1/2000. The intent of the regulation was to keep the spread of informal settlements at minimum by legalizing all residential housing units built between 1975 and 1996 if the houses fulfill minimum requirements set in the regulation. Unfortunately, the residents interpreted it to mean that all illegal housing units will be recognized and given legal status by the city government. Ironically, the regulation had contributed to the emergence of new waves and outburst of squatter settlements (Jemal, 2019). The peripheral zones including forests were invaded in the following years (Philimon, 2019). Farmers have already started to sell their lands in the expectation of losing their land to the government without any or with very small compensation (*ibid*, Jemal, 2019). This unwelcome outcome led to the promulgation of Regulation No 2/2010 (*ibid*, Daniel L., 2006).

The prime purpose of Regulation No 2/2010 was to redress the failures of Regulation No 1/2000 to curb the expansion of squatter settlements. More specifically, the objective of Regulation No.2/2010 was to provide solutions to the squatter settlements constructed before 1996. Fortunately, Regulation No.2/2010 had great successes in regulating squatter settlements. The regulation embraced both approaches, namely preventive and curative measures, of controlling squatter settlements. Thanks to the implementation of Regulation No2/2010, the city administration was able to regularize about 80 percent of the informal settlements (Jemal, 2019).

It was stated earlier that the root causes of squatter settlements are either “poverty-driven” or “non poverty-driven” in character. Municipal responses assumed corrective measures of “demolition” and “regularization” for those settlements with “non poverty-driven” and “poverty driven” in character, respectively. The city government

was of the opinion that the largest part of the squatter settlements in the expansion areas of Addis Ababa are “non poverty-driven” since medium, even high, income groups of settlers and speculators occupied large plots (300 m<sup>2</sup> on the average) in those expansion areas of the city. Hence the city government had to execute “demolition” as a corrective step. Consequently, hundreds to thousands of informal housing units, identified by the city government as illegal settlements, were demolished in the past (Daniel, 2006; Jemal, 2019).

**Table 5**

*Squatter Settlements Demolished*

Name of the locality	Demolished settlements (in hectare)	Woreda (Kebele)
Hanna Mariam area	288.13	19(60)
Kaliti area	62.5	27 (11)
Kotebe (Kara-Alo)	112.5	28 (03)
Kotebe (Yeka)	48.75	16 (22)
Meri – Ayat area	90.63	28 (03)
Reppi (Kolfe-Keranio)	228.13	24 (16)
Worku Sefer (Southern part)	38.75	27 (11)
Total	869.39 hectares	

Source: Modified from Daniel L., in Jemal (2019)

Nevertheless, squatter settlements have continued to proliferate despite the successive regulatory measures taken by the city government. This trend is mainly due to unrestrained poverty and high population pressure complemented with weak municipal capacity to deal with the problem. Moreover, the expansion of squatter settlements is aggravated by multiple factors of housing demand-supply imbalance, stagnating rural economy, political instability and rapid urbanization due mainly to massive rural-urban migration. The administrative efforts so far did not bring about marked success because of capacity limitations in the public administration, the role of corrupt bureaucracy, greedy speculators and brokers (Jemal, 2019).

Demolishing squatter settlements without offering the settlers any alternative to offset the consequence could not bring sustainable solution particularly where the settlements are “poverty driven”.

The city government has to complement bulldozing with measures of addressing the housing needs of the poor dislocated from the settlements. Otherwise, demolition in itself can only aggravate and bring about fresh challenges to the people and the city (Daniel, 2006). Realizing that demolition could not yield lasting solution to the city and justice to the dislocated low-income groups, settlements built on lands reserved for residential use were proposed to be maintained and improved. At the same time, informal settlements built on areas reserved for non-residential purposes were proposed to be demolished.

**Table 6**

*Informal Settlements Identified to be Maintained and Improved*

<b>Name of the locality</b>	<b>Maintained and improved areas (in hectares)</b>	<b>Woreda (Kebele)</b>
Ayer Tena	115.63	24 (15)
CMC	350	28 (03)
(North of the housing project)		
Gourd Shola	81.25	28 (04)
Jimma Road	138.75	24 (16)
Kotebe	62.5	28 (01)
Kotebe	81.25	28 (02)
Worku Sefer	80	17 (20)
(Northern part)		

*Sources:* ORAAMP, in Daniel L. (2006)

Informal settlements have been perceived both as a problem and solution to the urban management and housing sector in the fast growing cities of the third world (Srivinas; Todaro, cited in Mohammed & Muhammad, 2006), including Ethiopia. Without taking aspects of quality into account, informal settlements provide affordable, fairly low cost, housing for the poor since the government is unable to build sufficient houses for the increasing urban population. Bulldozing the existing settlements would only multiply the number of homeless people or reshuffle the location of informal settlements to other parts of the city. The solution in this context would be that governments at all levels should intervene in regularizing and upgrading settlements and on the whole support the urban people, particularly the low-income and the lower middle-income group, to construct houses on their own.

## CONCLUSION

The metropolitan city of Addis Ababa has been expanding in all directions since its establishment in 1886. The population pressure is swiftly triggering the demands for housing in the city. As a result, the large parts of the city including its inner and expansion areas are predominantly occupied by unplanned informal settlements. Combined factors of migration (population pressure), corruption, poor urban planning and low income (poverty) are the key reasons behind the expansion of informal settlements. Addis Ababa fails to meet the standard of urban quality in terms of physical structure, level of infrastructure and urban services. Slums in the inner most parts of the city, squatter settlements in the periphery and plastic shelters (particularly for very small businesses) along the streets are common features of the city. All such appearances have produced annoying images for the city since constructions are unplanned and done with low quality materials, including woods, mud, iron sheets, and plastic. The proliferation of squatter settlements is one of the key urban planning and management impediments for the proper growth of the city. Informal settlements are causes for insecurity of holdings, health problems and social distress. Dealing with various aspects of informal settlements and improving living conditions in such settlements is among the burning issues of the city.

The urban poor are living and chronically forced to live in slum areas of cities and towns since it is impossible to pay for decent residential houses. The situation in the capital can still be worse than the national average since more people are flooding to the city on daily basis in search of better means of livelihood and opportunities. The city has a peculiar feature of housing distribution over areas having a mixture of modern buildings and slum neighborhoods, with a proportion of 20 and 80 percent, respectively. These days, an ultra-modern building in Addis has a typical slum adjacent to it. Squatter settlements (*Yechika Bettoch*) are commonly spotted on roadsides, hillsides, on the outskirts and even on valuable lands of the inner parts of the city. The emergence and alarming spread of squatter settlements has been exacerbated by multiple factors including the delay of implementation of legal housing, delays of legal land provisions, and escalating costs of owning or even getting houses for rent. Peasants who sell farm lands at cheaper prices, backed by large number of brokers in the

process, are the key actors for the growth of squatter settlements in the peripheries of the city.

The city government adopted preventive and curative measures to deter the emergence of squatter settlements and to take appropriate steps when squatter settlements had already evolved. Regulations were promulgated in order to prevent and contain the spread of squatter settlements. The approaches, which have been used to alleviate the problems, have been ranging from total demolition to partial regularization of informal settlements. Despite the efforts, squatter as well as illegal settlements have constantly mushroomed in the city as a result of failures to realize the regulation effectively. The city government failed to restore law and order in this regard and was in state of abstention from taking appropriate action after illegal settlements have mushroomed across the city. Failures in implementing the regulation effectively and misinterpreting the provisions of the regulation by the general public had ironically contributed to the emergence of fresh waves and outburst of informal settlements. This undesirable outcome led to the promulgation of Regulation No 2/2010, with the prime objective of redressing the failures of the Regulation No 1/2000. Regulation No.2/2010 had relatively notable results in regulating squatter settlements. The regulation embraced both preventive and curative approaches of controlling unauthorized settlements.

The fundamental causes of squatter settlements are either “poverty-driven” or “non poverty-driven”. As per the first line of thinking, informal settlements evolve due to multiple socio-economic and institutional problems. In the second case, squatter settlements are non-poverty driven as most of the squatters are people from the medium and high income groups. Municipal responses come as corrective measures of “demolition” and “regularization” for those settlements with non poverty-driven and poverty-driven in character, respectively. Squatter settlements in Addis Ababa are not associated to the low income groups (the poor) alone since people from relatively high income groups also involve in the construction of squatter houses. The largest parts of squatter settlements in the expansion areas of Addis Ababa are mainly “non-poverty-driven” in character.

Squatter settlements have continued to proliferate despite the regulatory measures taken by the city government. This trend is

mainly due to unrestrained poverty and high population pressure complemented with weak municipal capacity to deal with the problem. The administrative efforts so far did not bring about marked success because of capacity limitations in the public administration, the role of corrupt bureaucracy, greedy speculators and brokers. Demolishing squatter settlements without offering the settlers options to offset the consequence couldn't bring sustainable solution particularly where the settlements are "poverty driven". Demolishing settlements would only multiply the number of homeless people or reshuffle the location of informal settlements to other parts of the city. Demolition in itself can only aggravate and bring about new challenges to the people and the city. The city government has to complement bulldozing with measures of addressing the housing needs of the urban poor dislocated from the settlements.

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