

# **DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMAL HOUSING IN KENYA**

## **CASE STUDIES OF KISUMU AND NAKURU TOWNS**



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The urban population in Kenya has been growing fast. This demographic growth is often accompanied by physical expansion of the centres to include what were formerly peri-urban areas into the realm of urban administration. For example, while in 1969 there were 48 urban centres (defined as centres with 2000 inhabitants) with a total population of 1.08 million, or about 10% of the total national population, these increased to 91 in 1979 with a total population of 2.3 million, or about 15% of the national population. In 1989 there were 172 urban centres with a population of 4 million, or about 17.6% of the estimated national population of 22.7 million. This rapid growth has placed a strain on the capacity of the urban authorities to provide required basic infrastructure and urban services. Urban migration has increased, municipal boundaries have expanded, but service standards have stagnated and per capita urban expenditures have typically declined.

Most urban immigrants are poor and lack marketable skills. They therefore end up unemployed, or operate as hawkers, petty traders, casual labourers, semi-skilled and unskilled with no permanent source of income. With the present scenario, market forces tend to operate against the majority of the urban residents, where in effect over 40% of Nairobi's residents cannot afford a minimum conventional dwelling unit. Other towns with less resources than Nairobi find up to 80% of their inhabitants marginalized in obtaining access to housing and other services.

Although the basic infrastructure and services are often considered sectorally, it should be recognized that a housing project for instance, includes local infrastructure including roads, water, sanitation, waste disposal, energy, etc. When urban authorities fail to devise appropriate means for the majority urban poor to get access to housing, they invariably deny them all the support services that go with housing.

While it is true that local authorities and the central government have a weak revenue base arising from both the national and international economic situation, it is equally true that efforts by other agencies or even by the poor themselves to provide access to selected urban services is hampered by public policies. The planning regulations, the building by-laws, monetary and fiscal measures etc are among some of the public regulatory policies that militate against the private sector, NGOs, CBOs or individuals to provide legal affordable housing facilities and services to the vulnerable groups. These policy instruments have lead to high costs of built environment relative to the income of urban residents, who have increasingly become marginalised.