Slum Areas: Concept, causes, effects, solutions, and experiences.

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Abstract

The phenomenon of slums is one of the most dangerous social phenomena and the biggest obstacle to social balance and urban development. This is due to the multiplicity of its negative effects that require study and analysis.

Therefore, this research aimed to study the causes of the emergence of the phenomenon, its characteristics and effects, and to present suggestions for its eradication. The study also presented some of the best international experiences in handling the phenomenon with an evaluation of these experiences based on the descriptive approach.

Keywords: slum areas, the phenomenon of slums, causes, effects, solutions, international experiences.

Introduction

All praise be to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah.

The issue of slums is of paramount significance to all countries, peoples, and humanitarian organizations, particularly in third-world countries. It is closely related to the housing crisis facing many vulnerable social classes, such as the low-income people, the poor, the displaced, the refugees, and other social groups that cannot have adequate housing.

Slum areas have affected the national security of the countries where they exist because of the law violations committed there, such as the prevalence of weapons, drugs, robberies, and other crimes jeopardizing the security of citizens. Also, poverty, illiteracy, and disease are common in slums, which have created visual confusion that destroys the aesthetics of cities.

Encountering slums provokes wide controversy at the international level, including the United Nations, international housing organizations, and humanitarian organizations dealing with human rights and freedoms.

This study tries to highlight the characteristics, causes, solutions, and experiences of the issue as follows :

1. Concepts and characteristics of slums
2. Causes and impacts of slums
3. Proposed solutions to the problem of the slums
4. Most important international experiences.

1. Concepts and characteristics of slums

1.1. Concept of slums

Approximately one billion people live in squatter housing around the world. This number is expected to increase steadily.[i] Non-official or slum areas refer to the second stage houses and the houses owned by seizure or built on usurped public or private lands. Semi-slums are dwellings built on legally owned lands, but their layout schemes are not approved and are without legal permits.[ii]

Slums are the "areas located within the administrative boundaries of the governorates. They emerged without land partitioning schemes and are based on public or private properties, leading to unplanned random urbanization. The area is not required to have a certain size because they range from a small bloc of dwellings to a whole group of neighborhoods. Slums vary in size and space spontaneously and are not subject to planning rules."[iii] Slums also refer to "agglomerations of settlements crowded with poor

populations. They are built of mud, wood, tin, and remains of buildings on land that is not owned by its inhabitants or has facilities."[iv]

1.2. Characteristics of slums

Characteristics of slums can be summarized as follows:

- Most slum houses are not subject to the approved schematic and architectural principles, and some do not have construction permits from the municipality.
- Services in those areas are distributed randomly and are not subject to the foundations, criteria, and standards of architectural planning.
- The road network is neither planned nor organized. The road widths vary due to randomness, and most of the roads are unpaved (earth without sidewalks), and their width may not allow the passage of cars.
- Their "water, sanitation, electricity, and telephone" infrastructure does not serve all buildings, and it is too inefficient to be developed.
- They do not comply with the recognized planning and urban design criteria due to the haphazard construction of the buildings. This has reduced the presence of public spaces, the lack of green areas, and the low level of hygiene and environmental health.
- They are characterized by overpopulation, low education, and income levels, high unemployment, and moral and social deviation. Therefore, slum areas constitute a threat to the security and stability of other regions.[v]

2. Causes and impacts of slums

2.1. Key causes of slum houses prevalence in cities

Several reasons have led to the existence of slums in different countries. They include:

First: The large migration from the countryside to the cities, which is called the civilizational transition from the rural-agricultural lifestyle to the urban-industrial-service pattern. This transition has increased the number of population living in the cities from 31% to 35% of the world's population in the twentieth century.

The concentration of investment in cities has made them polarizing centers, increasing the number of immigrants to obtain employment and improve their financial conditions. In parallel, prices of urban lands, housing, and rents have risen. Consequently, internal migration to major cities in the Arab world increased, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century between 1960 and 1996, with an estimated 2.3 million immigrants residing in the popular neighborhoods of greater Damascus. So are Cairo, Beirut, Casablanca, and other major cities.[vi]

Second: The absence of an integrated planning system capable of addressing housing problems associated with urban growth expansion has made villages stuck into the neighboring cities. With the passage of time and poor control, these villages are merged in the city's plans with inadequate conditions and services.

Third: Inability to own formal housing due to insufficient income that hardly covers the necessities and an abysmal rise in the price of formal properties. Another factor is the increase in natural population growth resulting from women's high rates of reproduction and fertility, social habits, the desire to have boys, polygamy, and early marriage, making the average natural growth equal to 35 per thousand in the periphery of the Arab capital cities.[vii]

Forth: Fragile security and political conditions, weak controls in law and legislation enforcement on such violations, and the inability of the state to provide adequate housing for large low-income segments of society.

Fifth: High demand for squatter housing because of their low prices and rents –for both accommodation and business purposes – and because these dwellings suit in lifestyle of the newcomers from the rural areas and those aspiring to improve their conditions.[viii]

Sixth: The low education levels, prevalence of illiteracy, and lack of planning awareness and legal knowledge have led people to expand the construction of squatter areas and live in them without paying attention to the environmental condition and its negative impacts.[ix]

2.2. Impacts of Slums

Slums bring about urban, environmental, economic, social, and other problems. They are as follows:

2.2.1. Urban problems

- Absence of space areas that can be used for breathing clean air to reduce the impact of pollution resulting from high congestion in these communities, workshops, and the waste produced.
- Commercial, industrial, and craft activities overlap the residential premises.
- Overpopulation, shortage of existing services, high construction density in the area, and the deteriorating condition of the buildings.
- Inefficient infrastructure and drainage systems in the houses and major roads, and weak road lighting systems and road conditions.

2.2.2. Environmental problems

- The buildings do not take into account the engineering principles in terms of safety, breadth, air and sun vents, and allocation of suitable places for cooking and restrooms.
- Population densities rise to levels threatening public, psychological, and mental health, and lack the privacy element and the facilities such as clean drinking water, sanitation, and roads.
- Garbage and solid waste pile up in slums, and they miss proper education and health services, playgrounds, and green areas.

2.2.3. Economic and social problems

- High rates of family disintegration, illiteracy, and divorce.

- ▪ Inhabitants of slums suffer from low economic conditions, high unemployment, and the tendency to rely on crafts with no attention to the health and environmental impacts resulting from them.
- ▪ Increase in the dropout rate and negligence of female education.[x]

3. Proposed solutions to the problem of slums

Before mentioning the suggestions, there are methods for encountering the slums phenomenon in contemporary states. They are as follows:

3.1. Methods that mitigate the phenomenon

- **Replacement and renewal:** The population is relocated to other planned areas where housing, land, services, and facilities are provided, and these degraded areas are demolished and replanned.
- **Immediate and progressive development:** The overall image of the buildings should be improved, and the demolished houses should be rebuilt while providing the population with adequate services and necessary facilities.
- **Development through public participation:** The technical authorities in the governorates and cities involve people in developing their degraded areas by offering technical and logistic support, drawing up the plans and designs, and training the laborers in construction works to participate in buildings development.[xi]

3.2. Key solutions to address slums problems

Some implementable solutions could be proposed in this regard:

3.2.1. At the urban level :

- Ending the squatter housing phenomenon and urban sprawl towards agricultural land around cities.
- Creating urban-planned community housing to form suburbs with public nature.
- Ministries of housing, construction, and development issue organizational schemes for these proposed housing, which are alternatives to the slum areas at affordable prices and assist their inhabitants in building their homes through long-term and interest-free loans. This solution requires introducing a housing financing policy for low-income families in working-class neighborhood belts, slums, malfeasance areas, nesting, and tin residential neighborhoods to find alternative dwellings for the inhabitants of those areas.
- Improving the existing squatter areas and granting permits to the owners of the houses in good conditions.
- Encouraging housing associations to build more public apartments under the supervision of housing ministries.
- Lifting the administrative boundaries between the city and the slum areas and offering services to them as if they are part of the city.

3.2.2. At the environmental level :

- Combating environmental pollution, caring for sanitation, and establishing treatment plants outside the community houses boundaries.
- Protecting agricultural land around cities and capitals from erosion and shrinking and preventing random and cumulative urban sprawl because it serves as a vent and lung for those cities.
- Planting trees in the belts surrounding towns with open land instead of slum housing belts.

3.2.3. At the population growth level

Population growth is the fundamental cause of the slums and urban sprawl towards agricultural lands and cities congestions. Therefore, it is important to address this issue as follows :

- Rational planning of the population growth phenomenon in capital cities.
- Planning and regulating the phenomenon of internal migration to cities and external migration.[xii]
- Monitoring the natural growth rates of the population and utilizing them in people development.
- Attempting to reduce the internal migration to cities, particularly to squatter areas, to prevent urban fabric destruction.[xiii]
- Balancing the urban growth in the first city in each country and the rest of the cities.

4. Most important international experiences in developing slum areas:

Most countries suffer from the phenomenon of slums and have developed plans and strategies to confront them due to their negative consequences that include obstructing economic development, drug abuse, moral corruption, illiteracy, and diseases. Countries have followed different policies in approaching this phenomenon each according to its vision, financial, and operational capacity but with one common objective of obtaining slums development or removal. some countries succeeded while others failed, and we will review some of the experiences of countries that succeeded in their entire approach and the way how they deserve to be benchmarked.

4.1. Arab experiences:

4.1.1. Jordan's Experience in slum development

The Eastern Units project which was implemented by the Department of Urban Development is one of the most prominent examples of dealing with slum areas development. It holds its uniqueness in solving the problem of slums in Jordan where a residential area of 9.1 hectares was redesigned in 1985 and old houses that were not environment, health, and construction-friendly were renovated.[xiv]

This experience was widely welcomed by citizens and their mass participation helped in its success, as the land ownership was maintained by its inhabitants, and they showed a clear interest by spending their savings on the purchase of land and the development of their homes. They also paid (5%) in advance of the value of the land, and the remaining was paid in installments equivalent to (25%)of the family's monthly income. According to

urban development studies, the monthly income of each family was estimated at 145 dinars then.

The site was replanned, organized, and developed in line with the new road network and corridors in the project area. In addition to the work on small property vouchers that did not pose a significant financial burden on the beneficiaries, the area was also organized by providing the necessary services and infrastructure.[xv]

Jordan has expanded its experience in economic development and investment in tax-free areas, in addition to building large residential cities to create jobs and move away slums through creating alternative housing.[xvi]

4.1.2. Slums in Riyadh

The workers in companies were forced to set up informal housings around government facilities and companies in Riyadh. This attracted relatives of residents of these agencies who do not even work in these companies to join furthering these slum areas to arose around the Military College, Communications Facilities, The Military Hospital, Cement Company, Gypsum Company, and the National Guard. when the development began in Riyadh and the city expanded, these slum areas which were primarily between its sides were included within the city.

The Riyadh City Secretariat disposed off the slum housings by offering ownership of the land to its residents but retained the legitimate instruments of ownership until the residents evacuate those areas in coordination with the mayor of those areas or the elders of the residents. The slums were then removed, the Sukuk were handed over to their owners and they received loans from the Real Estate Development Fund to build their homes.

As for the slum areas around the National Guard, the National Guard established an integrated city in its area (Khasham al-Aan) and transferred its employees to it.[xvii]

4.2. Non-Arab Experiences

4.2.1. Turkish Experience

Turkey was able to overcome the phenomenon of slums in a short period of time by replacing them with decent health cities through successful approaches most notably: involving the population in the development process, or developing slums into a tourist attraction, or establishing a private company to build based on self-financing. In the process, the government committed itself to fighting corruption among its officials, employees, and businessmen. It also committed to institutionalization and full coordination between the three sectors i.e., government, private and charitable sectors in addition to an infusion of huge funds to lend and finance citizens with long-term loans to obtain economic houses.[xviii]

4.2.1.1. Involving the residents in the development process

The government issued laws that give the residents of slums many legal and political rights that encourage them to invest and develop the place where they live. These laws prevent the government from demolishing any house in these areas, and when the number of these houses reach 1,000, the owners of these informal houses apply to the government to form a municipal council for their neighborhood in order to legalize the area residents and provide services through donations from residents to clean their neighborhood, pave its streets, set up shopping malls, parks, bus stations, etc., and then elect their mayor amongst them.

Sultan Bay is one of the areas that began as slums and then became one of the most famous neighborhoods of the Asian part of Turkey.[xix]

4.2.1.2. Development of slums for tourist attractions

The experiment began to develop in 2006, turning slums into tourist attractions after the restoration of destroyed houses, beautification of the area, and establishment of many art shops including antiques and decorations, and Arabic calligraphy that is common in these areas. This, in turn, provided the region with a market of the latest art style and empowered cultural and artistic events. The owners agreed that the government renovate the houses and benefit from them for a period of ten years, and then it returns them to the owners to continue activities in their homes, or to move to other activities - economic or political[xx].

4.2.1.3. Establishment of a Private Self-financing Construction Company

Toki was a company founded to solve the problem of low-income housing for urban dwellers as planned. it is also involved in working to create major cities on the borders of other major cities. Financing Toki projects is one of the most successful because it provides one of the best prices compared to other companies and sold at a high price when selling.

This experience was followed by the strategy of partnering with different segments of society in return producing projects, selling them to the rich, and using profits to build moderate housing for low-income people through specific ownership conditions such as being a low-income Turkish citizen, a slum dweller who does not own another unit, or among those who receive assistance. Then the land is bought and handed over to the contractors to build on it without pay.[xxi]

4.2.2. Brazilian Experience in the Development of Slums:

Brazil's efforts to address slum areas date back to the beginning of its democratic transition in the 1980s. Local initiatives with limited funding and voluntary work were launched at city level, and a joint venture was launched in Rio in 1981with the aim of introducing some services to slum areas such as water systems, roads, and sewage systems under local administration and volunteer engineers.

After Lula da Silva won the presidency in 2003, who himself lived as a child in slum areas, the development of slums became a government goal at the State and federal level. A large budget was allocated to it and President Lula da Silva made many federal decisions that contributed to the implementation of the vision of the government in two ways: Firstly: addressing the existing slum areas and Secondly: developing precautionary plans to prevent the re-formation of slums so as not to burden future governments.[xxii]

4.2.2.1. The Handling Program:

Brazil adopted a policy of slum development after failing to improve relocation conditions in some cases due to the high cost of relocation and economic collapse. It embarked on development plans as follows:

- Innovated an informal education system called the Knowledge Beacon. This system was made of education centers with libraries, internet facilities for vocational education, and educational resources.
- Launch of the "Eliminating Child Labour" program by providing financial assistance to prevent exploitation and violence.
- Providing financial incentives such as cheap land to different companies to train and hire slum dwellers.
- Providing modern transportation and upgrading buildings and roads in slums, building stadiums, music halls, and green spaces, and providing public services such as electricity, clean water, sewerage, and sewerage maintenance.
  The Government contacted the residents in order to prioritize their needs and make the best arrangements and plans for the site that meet their needs.
- Establishment of a charitable center that offers specialized training programs, sports activities, arts, and community awareness, and works under the supervision of the State Security Service to ensure the safety of university students who volunteer to spread knowledge in the same neighborhoods. Anyone who completes his/her education and helps recruit other residents and works to communicate with other sections of society is provided with financial incentives.
- 2,700 armed soldiers from the regular army forces were deployed to arrest drug traffickers and prevent assassination groups, using federal police. [xxiii]

4.2.2.2. Preventive program

Brazil's experience has not only solved the problem of existing slums but has gone beyond that to prevent the establishment of new slums in the future as it adopted housing programs to solve the problems of poor families.

One of the most important programs in this area is the "**MY HOME MY LIFE PROGRAM**", which aims to expand the construction of houses to prevent citizens from building more informal houses. The program provided 3.4 million housing units and spent a total of $26.6 billion in the first phase of 2009-2010 and $62.85 billion in the second phase of 2011-2014.

The Brazilian government intends to offer ownership of these units to low-income people at the lowest cost and then by this it Provided incentives for private companies that build units by reducing taxes in addition to tax cuts on construction materials etc. As it also provides financial support for families to enable them pay for housing bills and it has contracted approximately (2.3) Million units.

4.3. Kenya's Experience: Mafuko Development Project

The Mafuko region is 20 kilometers southeast of Nairobi which grown rapidly and attracted people from all over the country due to its job opportunities that resulted in set up of informal and unplanned houses. As a result, 25 informal settlements emerged in Mafuko and its outskirts.

The Mafuko experience relied on the relocation of residents to 250 acres of land and the implementation of environmental programs such as waste management, as well as to enhance the ability of communities, the private sector, and local authorities to provide housing, infrastructure, and social services such as schools, markets, and hospitals. It was also concerned with improving people's lives by training them in income-generating activities such as construction, industry, craft development, and capacity building, and finally, the land was provided by small and medium-sized loans to help start new businesses by the Kenyan government.

The project was funded by the United Nations Human Settlements Program (Habitat) and the Finnish Government's Sustainable Residential Neighbourhood Programme. The project was carried out in cooperation with residents of these slum areas who can provide ideas and resources to implement strategies to improve the living environment. In addition, 100 self-help groups have been registered that have cooperated with the Ministry of Sports, Culture, and Social Services to develop slum areas.

5. Assessment of these Experiences.

There is no doubt that these experiments show the attempts of these states to eradicate the phenomenon of slums according to their size, and effects to these states. Different means and methods are used because of the different causes that led to their emergence and spread, each state chooses what it sees as an appropriate solution to its situation.

When assessing the experiences of some countries, we believe that the Turkish experience is a successful one and can be benchmarked based on the most appropriate methods used in the development of slum areas by relying on giving slum dwellers the rights in order to encourage them to involve themselves in the development of their homes, investing in them, and preventing the government from demolishing them which has helped the consistency of the integrated work relationship between the government, private and charitable sector. The establishment of a private company owning its separate financing fund which handles the construction and development process and provides ownership to residents or to low-income earners within the specified criteria also fueled the progress.

Rich countries that can allocate a budget for private companies to develop slum areas can benefit from this experience but it's not in line with poor countries that are unable to allocate a budget independent of the government's budget either due to poverty or corruption manifested in the institutions of these poor countries.

The Jordanian experience that is based on residential participation where the residents own the land at a value that does not pose a financial burden to them, paid in installments on the monthly income after being employed by the government brings them

enthusiasm to work in their homes, and encourages them to develop them after realizing that the land belongs to them.

This experience can be used in slum areas in poor countries that are unable to establish private companies with a special financing fund.

As for the Saudi approach in Riyadh slums, which is based on the evacuation and removal of these slums and construction of new cities in other areas, this plan costs a lot of money those poor countries cannot afford and is not in line with many countries suffering from the phenomenon of slums.

The Brazilian approach is a model commensurate with many poor countries with a high number of slums, where crimes against humanity and insecurity and instability are widespread. Relying on strengthening the relationship between the government and the inhabitants of slum areas, instilling trust between them, reducing the accommodation of criminals in those areas, facilitating the government's delivery of basic facilities, and the establishment of education and psychological rehabilitation centers for the people of those areas was considered first.

Secondly, persuading residents to develop their homes and turn them into tourist destinations after borrowing methods have been facilitated. The government promised financial incentives for residents who change their social status and tax incentives for any company that builds the area.

Thirdly, carrying out preventive plans to prevent the recurrence of slums in the future by establishing housing units and providing them at low prices so that low-income people can obtain them.

The Kenyan experience has been based on external funding that provided some basic services to the residents of these areas.

Countries, where slums have spread, can benefit from these experiences, and most appropriate for many countries where slums are scattered, the Jordanian and Brazilian experiments are suitable because they rely on the involvement of the residents in slums, encourage them to develop their homes, the governments provide them with basic facilities, reduce the price of land, monitor the land price of agencies, and prolong the installment period in proportion to the family's monthly income in a way that does not affect their daily living and does not cost the government financial losses.

From another point of view, there are many slums whose inhabitants do not work, have no job opportunities, and cannot find enough to meet their basic needs. How can slums with such characteristics be developed?

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