

ISLAMABAD: A CITY FOR THE RICH

Mariam Mohsin
(Lecturer PIDE)



If you have ever been to Islamabad, chances are you must have visited the city's celebrated Jinnah Super Market. It is green, it is beautiful, it is crammed with local and international brand outlets, and it is brimming with life – so much so that you probably didn't get a chance to look South. Standing at the edge of Bhattai Road looking southwest from the Jinnah Super Market, one sees an eyesore in the middle of the glorious beauty of Islamabad's most exclusive location: France Colony, one of several slums within the environs of Islamabad. Shabby, unkempt, impoverished – it is everything Islamabad is not.

Islamabad is plagued with a housing crisis. This is an issue that needs serious and immediate policy attention. The capital city of Pakistan is a 'planned' city. It was conceptualized as the new capital of Pakistan replacing Karachi. Built in 1960, it became the capital of Pakistan in 1963. After the site was selected, the Greek firm of Doxiadis Associates was commissioned to plan the new city. The city was planned according to utility of space, i.e. 8 basic zones: administrative, diplomatic, residential, educational, industrial, and commercial areas.

Islamabad is divided into five zones: Zone I, Zone II, Zone III, Zone IV, and Zone V. Zone I comprises developed residential sectors while Zone II consists of the under-developed residential sectors. Residential sectors have alphabetical designations from A to I, and are further subdivided into numbered neighborhoods. Land prices in Zone I have skyrocketed over the past decade and a half. People moving to Islamabad rarely find affordable housing here. Residents of this elite neighborhood require support services such as house help, janitorial services, drivers, babysitters, and gardeners.



However, this locality has no availability of housing for the working class people providing these services. It seems that this was not part of the planning vision in 1960. I suppose the planners assumed that the city's labor class would be sourced from Rawalpindi. With a distance of at least 20 km and an absence of any feasible public transport system, this assumption was bound to fail. With an increased need for workers within the city, the slums around Islamabad slowly began to grow. There are currently about 42 slums all around Islamabad, with a population of well over 100,000. The city administration has demolished several of these settlements, causing outcries at national and international levels. There has been no policy to include the working class of Islamabad in the city's master plan. These people are expected to show up for work and disappear into the dark without blemishing the city's natural beauty.

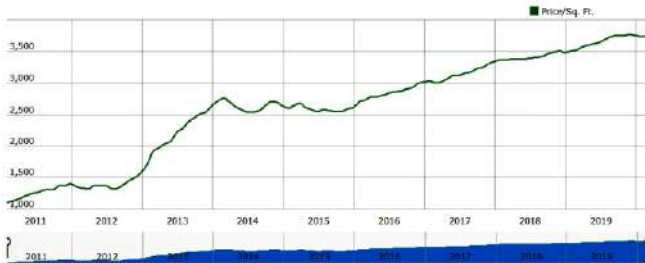
Residential plot prices in Islamabad have increased by 232% from February 2011 to November 2019. The increase is sharper for smaller plots in newer sectors i.e. Sectors D-12, G-13, I-12, Gulberg etc., showing a high demand for low-cost housing. One of the major reasons contributing to the demand for low-cost housing is the influx of people migrating to the twin-cities in the past decade.

According to the 2017 population census, Islamabad saw the highest population growth rate of any city in Pakistan at 4.91%. The population of the city was estimated at approximately 2,000,000, of which 397,731 had migrated to the city from 1998 to 2017 (KP: 76,614, FATA: 2,534, Punjab: 241,977, Sindh: 26,143, Balochistan: 2,969, Azad Kashmir: 24,438, Northern Areas: 1,684, Overseas: 21,372). Of the immigrant population, 21.8 percent had moved for employment while 53.42% were their family members, thus explaining the increased need for housing.

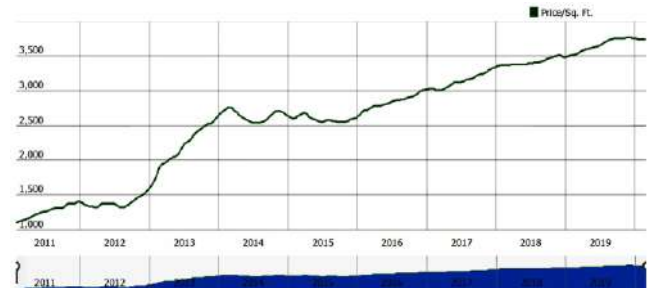
This increased need for housing remains unmet by the city administration as the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has not introduced a new residential program in the past 30 years. Presently the intense shortage of housing is being catered to by the private sector, and the city is experiencing unplanned mushroom growth of several low-cost private

housing schemes in the suburbs and along the Rawalpindi boundary. While these new housing schemes respond to the city's housing needs, the unplanned growth is complicating the urban infrastructure by creating added issues of traffic and mobility, which is not adequately handled by the road network or available public transport.

At present, according to the 2017 census, there are 128,753 housing units in Islamabad of which 5.64% are semi-pakka (made of clay as well as cement) while 6.39% are completely katcha (built with clay). Of these housing units, 20.74% have no kitchen, 24.30% have no bathroom, and 27.61% have no toilet facility, thus reflecting the level of housing crisis in the city. Hence there is urgent need for policy that recognizes the city's growing population and the requirement for affordable housing for all classes of the society. The state must provide the vision and policies to build urban spaces that are inclusive of all segments.



Islamabad Land Price/Sq. Ft. (2011-19) – Source: <https://www.zameen.com/index/buy/plots/islamabad/>



Islamabad Land Price/Sq. Ft. (2019) – Source: <https://www.zameen.com/index/buy/plots/islamabad/>

21.8% of the migration to Islamabad is for employment & 53.42% moved along with head of family

20.7% housing units in Islamabad do not have a Kitchen

24.3% housing units in Islamabad do not have a Bathroom

27.6% housing units in Islamabad do not have a Toilet

6.39% of housing units in Islamabad are Katcha - 5.64% are semi-Pacca

16.01% housing units have only one room

23 *katchi abadis* in the rural and urban areas of Islamabad housing 13,521 families and 84, 591 individuals.

National Housing Policy, 2001 states that no one can demolish an *abadi* without resettling or providing some council accommodation

In 2015, approximately 15,000 *katchi abadi* residents of I-11 were forced to vacate the area and their houses were demolished as per CDA's anti-encroachment drive.

³<http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/tables/MIGRANT%20POPULATION%20PLACE%20PLACE%20OF%PREVIOUS%20RESIDENCE.pdf>
⁴<http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/tables/MIGRANT%20POPULATION%20PLACE%20PLACE%20OF%PREVIOUS%20RESIDENCE.pdf>
⁵<http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/tables/MIGRANT%20POPULATION%20PLACE%20PLACE%20OF%PREVIOUS%20RESIDENCE.pdf>
⁶<http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/tables/HOUSING%20UNITS%20BY%20NUMBER%20OF%20ROOMS%20AND%20TYPE.pdf>
⁷<http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/tables/HOUSING%20UNITS%20BY%20KITCHEN%20BATH%20ROOM%20AND%20LATRINE%20FACILITIES.pdf>