

**Department of Development Studies**

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**Pakistan Institute of Development  
Economics**

## **Thematic Focus: Urban Development**

### **Redefining Urban Slums: Changing Employment Trends and Lifestyles in Abyssinia Lines, Karachi- Zonia Yousuf Baltistani (2014-2016)**

*This research studies the varying nature of slums by firstly, investigating their changing employment trends (from informal to the formal sector) and secondly, by looking at their changing lifestyles (education patterns, use of technology and available government utilities).*

#### **Key Findings**

1. The findings revealed that a shift in the employment patterns of the slum dwellers had indeed taken place from the informal to the formal sector of the economy. The current generation of slum dwellers was involved in government and private sector employment and also included businessmen, religious scholars and teachers.
2. It was evident that the lifestyle of the slum dwellers had improved over the generations and has become more urbanised. The children attend private schools and are pursuing higher education, there is widespread use of technology within the slum and they have access to government utilities, namely electricity and gas, much like the rest of the city for which they also pay monthly bills.
3. This slum has been a part of Karachi since before the partition of Pakistan and India. Moreover, since the very beginning, it has been inhabited by people belonging to the Balti ethnic group from the province of Gilgit, Baltistan. The slum is surrounded by numerous formal settlements. Yet it remains unregistered and unrecognised. Despite the various efforts made by the community and the various developments that have taken place in the area as discussed before, the area remained unregistered and therefore continues to be recognised as a slum.

#### **Policy Recommendations**

1. Slums like Abyssinia Lines qualify as slums only because they exist on unauthorized land without any formal allotment/ lease from the government. Hence, the manner in which they can be improved and made a part of formal housing societies will differ as compared to other slums with no basic governmental utilities, sewerage lines and running tap water.
2. A sustainable solution to the slum challenge can only be accomplished through a combined effort of all the stakeholders. It is imperative to form an environment, inclusive in nature, which inspires the commitment of not just the concerned authorities but also the related communities to improve the understanding of this challenge. The government therefore must establish authoritative bodies in slums, like Abyssinia Lines, in order to keep track of their conditions and prevailing problems.
3. The most imperative issue that needs addressing in slums like Abyssinia Lines is the lack of tenure insecurity. The government must therefore assess and recognize the various ways in which the slum can be turned into a legal settlement. This will not only overcome the insecurities of the slum dwellers but will also encourage them to invest in their properties. It will also open a new source of tax revenue for the government; property tax which the slum dwellers will pay once they receive legal ownership of their properties. Tenure security will also ensure the dwellers of the slum property rights which will harness a safe environment for investment within the slum.
4. Instead of fractional advances, city wide approaches will prove more sustainable for slum upgrading. This will allow the slums to integrate with the urban management and public planning systems in a physical, social, economic as well as legal manner.