

Social safeguards perspective on street vendor evictions

Evictions are often justified by local authorities as due to congestion, hygiene, and public safety. But a social protection analysis is called for in exploring these actions, as the law is an instrument that disposes of certain groups in urban regions, so that it affects their very long-term existence. Street vending is integral to Uganda's informal economy, fueling a massive share of its urban labour force.

Some families rely on the income from street vending to get enough to survive, covering their basic needs of food, rent, schooling, and health. Therefore, displacement from high-volume commercial zones is more than a move of place, but also constitutes a major monetary dislocation.

Development finance and urban resettlement social safeguard systems guidelines highlight the importance of impact assessments, meaningful consultations, and livelihood repair measures before displacement takes place. Kampala, though, tends to enforce measures before enacting more formalized mitigations. This disconnect between regulatory ambitions and social protection multiplies vulnerabilities and strengthens them.

Public narratives often characterize street vending as a source of disorder and an increase in petty crime, but the relationship is delicate. Although densely packed informal markets may enable opportunistic theft, little systematic empirical evidence shows that vendors themselves contribute much to urban criminality.

Youth unemployment, income inequality and low state resources for policing and service provision are stronger predictors of crime.

The shock of losing a regular income can send a person into exploitative informal systems that preserve their dignity and provide the basic means to support themselves.

The solution lies not in regulation itself, but in the regulation of behavior itself, and the manner in which intervention may worsen structural vulnerability. Public policy regarding street vending in Kampala is

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inconsistent. Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) is responsible for urban regulatory enforcement; however, it has been subject to a series of fluctuating enforcement mechanisms, including tolerance, negotiated relocations, and rapid police crackdowns.

This inappropriateness strengthens institutional distinctions and underscores the political importance of the city, in which public spaces play functional roles that are at once symbolic and business.

It is the nature of many eviction campaigns to support the narrative of "Kampala" as "a world-class" city. However, without an agenda for inclusion, modernization results in unpredictable policies that do not bring a certain regulatory framework.

A major issue has been the lack of pre-planning with alternative trading points. With poor pedestrian access, sanitation, lighting, and security, these resettlement areas are economically unviable.

Use comparative examples from other cities to inform you. In Durban, certain in-market trading zones were created, and vendors were registered into a formal programme, taking a more inclusive and open approach toward informal trade in the municipalities.

This strategy creates a trade-off between pedestrian movement and the livelihoods of traders. Investments in storage, sanitation, and lighting infrastructures have made compliance efforts easier and re-

duced enforcement challenges. Although Durban's model doesn't get rid of informality, it shows that regulation can be achieved through alignment and not expulsion.

For Kampala, the lesson is clear: systematically embedding informal trade in urban planning can build a more sustainable infrastructure than irregular crackdowns.

Policymakers need to clarify vending areas, permit systems, licensing arrangements, and enforcement measures that allow predictability and reduce confrontation. Compulsory livelihood impact assessments must be conducted before major evacuations to assess household dependency ratios, income instability, and gender-based trade concerns. Markets for relocation should be economically feasible, sited in dense urban areas, and well-served by public transport.

Create a public forum for discussion between KCCA and the vendors' associations. Only on such open exchanges can the democratic governance system become participatory, rather than a purely top-down approach. By emphasizing structural crime factors, specifically youth employment and community policing, instead of spatial cleansing as a means of crime control, urban safety strategies can do more to prevent crimes.

As for informal economy stability, initiatives such as microcredit and skills training may enable formalisation without precipitating sudden income drops. Kampala addresses street vendor evictions, which is much more than an administrative process; it is a governance challenge and calls into question the feasibility of modernization without displacing the most vulnerable.

In the end, social safeguards should not be just regulatory, but preventive and aimed at reducing harm. Without sound policy formation, effective planning, and reasonable options to eviction, economic insecurity will endure, and long-term urban stability will be risked. The systematic inclusion of informal trade is a more sustainable modality of urban construction that will provide security and inclusiveness in Kampala's transforming environment.

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