Paradigm

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The potential of enterprise centres for sustainable livelihood in informal settlements: A case of Kibera slum in Nairobi

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Abstract

Despite the gains made towards alleviation of slums globally, the phenomenon is increasing in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, several studies have focused on various aspects while little focus is placed on livelihood empowerment in slum upgrading and redevelopment programs. This study focused on the livelihoods of slum dwellers and challenges emerging from upgrading and improving infrastructure. Therefore, a qualitative approach and case study strategy were adopted to gauge the potential reception in the Kibera slum area. Interviews with traders within the settlement and key informants from institutions engaged in the slum upgrading and infrastructure improvement were conducted. In addition, a review of official documents, particularly policies and laws affecting slum upgrading, was crucial in building the evidence-based component of the study. The study revealed that while there exist several interventions aiming at improving livelihood and economic situation of the residents, such interventions are generally perceived to be far-removed from the formal slum redevelopment program. Further, it was observed that there are limited coordination and synchronization of these efforts, resulting in disjointed support systems to small entrepreneurs and resource wastage. The research points out the potential of enterprise centres as an economic policy in slum alleviation. The concept, if well implemented, can help improve the retention of beneficiaries of slum redevelopment initiatives. Moreover, increased cost recovery from the new infrastructure can boost the replicability and sustainability of redevelopment interventions.

Highlights for public administration, management and planning:

- Slums are a niche urban segment that houses many low-income groups and individuals.
- Potential economic opportunities in slums through enterprise centers can sustain slum dwellers and contribute to national income.
- Slum upgrading and infrastructure improvement should be a national policy.

Keywords

Slums,
upgrading,
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Sustainable livelihood,
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1 Introduction

The United Nations acknowledges that slums seem to be the only significant, large-scale solution to meet the needs of the urban poor, including housing and enterprise centres, in developing regions of the world (UN - Habitat 2003; Magina et al. 2020a; NACEC 2020). This traces the first origins of the squalid and congested living quarters of slums back to 1500's in the western world. Centuries later, the challenge of poor living conditions in congested urban settings, coupled with constrained access to water and sanitation, persisted in many parts of the world (UN - Habitat 2003).
In slums and in other informal settlements, dwellers are often confronted by numerous constraints

that prevent them from living decent lives like other city residents. Unhygienic environmental conditions, little attention to empowerment interventions, poor quality of infrastructure, social exclusion, and sometimes illegality of living conditions often limit them to day-to-day survival (UN - Habitat 2003, 2010). As such, about 213 million residents in informal settlements have been adding to the world population since 1990 (Fundisha 2022; UN - Habitat 2018). At the end of 2009, close to 900 million people lived in slums worldwide, with Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) being the region with the largest proportion of its urban population living in slums, since up to 71% of urban residents in SSA lived in slums (UN - Habitat 2010). In terms of absolute numbers, Asia still topped the ranking of regions with the highest slum populations (UN - Habitat 2003). Nevertheless, the continent has achieved the biggest improvement of living conditions of slum dwellers, with up to 172 million lifted from filthy living conditions between 2000 and 2010; representing 74% of the overall global slum alleviation progress. During the same period, Latin America contributed 13% to these statistics, with an estimated 30 million people moving out of slum into better living conditions (ibid). Sub-Saharan Africa has made the least progress regarding slum alleviation. Only 5% or 17 million of its urban slum dwellers were rescued from slum environments between 2000 and 2010 (UN - Habitat 2010). However, estimations have shown that 25% of the globe's urban inhabitants reside in unplanned/informal settlements of whom the majority are in the global south (UN - Habitat 2018; Magina & Kyessi 2024). While the State of World Cities report provides that slum populations are receding in other regions (notably in Asia and Latin America), it is not the case in Africa particularly in the Sub-Saharan region (UN - Habitat 2010). For example, in 2020, more than 1 billion people lived either in slums or in informal settlements. Out of this population, about 359 million lived in Central and Southern Asia, 306 million in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, and 230 million were living in Sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations 2022; Magina & Kyessi 2024). In this region, the current challenge of slum proliferation is perhaps more compounded by its population structure. Rural-urban migration has been rising in recent years as a troop of young people to towns searching for employment and infrastructure that is largely lacking in rural areas (The Rockefeller Foundation 2013).

Urban scholars expose changing socio-economic features of dwellers in informal settlements. The World Bank (2002); Fay & Laderchi (2005); Magina et al. (2020b, 2024) record diverse, rapid and dynamic trends of population through natural births and rural-urban migration of dwellers in informal settlements. In these areas, communities have been exposed to different social burdens and inequalities particularly exclusion from regular access to the benefits of urban development including public services, infrastructure, public spaces, and collective facilities (Kyessi 2002; Siaens & Wodon 2003; Fay & Laderchi 2005; Fay 2005; Fernandes 2011). In Colombian, Brazilian and Mexican cities, the socio-economic vulnerability of the communities has made them easy targets for predators, including drug-related and organized criminals (Fernandes 2011). More so ever, housing that provides adequate shelter and physical safety is the greatest challenge whereby most poor people resort to informal housing, often located in marginal areas that are poorly serviced and vulnerable to natural disasters (Magina et al. 2020b). Economically, people in informal settlements are hardly employed in the formal sectors and instead, a remarkably high percentage of people is involved in the informal sector which offer low wages (leading to high poverty levels), limited employment security and high health risks (Fay & Laderchi 2005). The pronounced income poverty, exclusion from the city's mainstream socio-economic sectors and decision-making creates an urban divide (UN - Habitat 2010). The stark urban divide between slum dwellers and other city residents is evident in the low Human Development Indicators (HDI) inherent in these areas. Notwithstanding, enterprise centres are a proven solution to income poverty, and they are perceived engines of entrepreneurship in slums and informal settlements. This is because of their ability to provide physical workspace to new and emerging businesses and, hence, they are valuable sources of business support especially in areas of low employment or low economic opportunity (NACEC 2020). Apart from the challenges revolving around unsanitary and unsafe living environments, a host of other disadvantages plagues residents in slums and informal settlements. With little change in the situation and continued rural-urban immigration into these areas, successive generations of slum dwellers are likely compelled to continue living in these settlements, a situation which creates a unique class system (UN - Habitat 2003, 2010). Furthermore, the exclusion from various aspects of urban networks is a significant contributor to the constrained mobilization of the vast human resources that could come in handy in the holistic development of a sustainable city (Marx et al. 2013; UN - Habitat 2010). Such exclusion often occurs despite the contributions they may make both socially and culturally (ibid). The rapid and continuing growth of slum settlements in the developing world, in the face of the global call for 'slum-free cities', requires a paradigm shift in housing policy, urban planning and city development (UN - Habitat 2012). Furthermore, as Carbonnier (2010) opines, there are persistent criticisms and calls to restructure development assistance between the developed and developing world. This calls for concerted efforts in unlocking the opportunities abound in slum settlements to reveal local solutions to developmental challenges as it was intended to be explored by this study. Furthermore, bridging urban divisions that often obscure the contributions of the urban poor in city-building and enhancing inclusivity in decision-making can contribute significantly to overall economic growth of respective nations (UN - Habitat 2010; Marx et al. 2013). This can also go a long way in affording slum and informal settlement communities' decent livelihoods and better living environments.

Based on the foregoing challenges in Kibera slum area in Nairobi, this study aimed to explore the potential of enterprise centres in achieving sustainable livelihood and slum living. Based on this aim, special attention was placed on livelihoods of slum dwellers, opportunities available, and challenges emerging from upgrading and improving infrastructure.

2 Literature review

2.1 The slum agenda and paradigm shift in slum alleviation approaches

Studies confirm that slums came into existence way before the start of the 20th century, with some accounts dating their first occurrence to the 1700s in the mercantile cities where housing shortages were prevalent (UN - Habitat 2003). Today, governments in developing regions potentially have a much harder struggle in the quest to make slums better and integrate them into the wider urban fabric compared to how the developed world handled it in the years before. One main reason for this is rapid urbanization observed in many countries that is not complemented by adequate economic growth (UN - Habitat 2003). This is true even in instances where there is significant and rapid economic growth like in India and Brazil. As opined by Kasych & Vochozka (2019) in their exploration of the approaches used to investigate modernization, territorial approaches often associate modernization with the developed world. Authors confirm that there is an undoubtedly positive correlation between decline of slum settlements and a stronger economy because transformation is often slow and constrained by a number of contextual barriers in the developing world.

The concept of slums was refined and given more attention from the early 1800's (UN - Habitat 2003). Due to the unique variations in the occurrence of slums globally and historically, respective countries and territories have often tried different approaches to alleviate these settlements. These have often ranged from extremist measures like slum demolition and forced evictions to incremental upgrades of infrastructure and shelter (UN - Habitat 2003). Nevertheless, the prevailing mainstream academic and professional discourses have also often played a role in the selected slum eradication strategy. Turner & Robert (1972) put forward a proposal for self-help approaches to slum upgrading with the assertion that housing is a basic human right which individuals ought to be able to provide for themselves. In addition, he favored the encouragement of autonomy to self-build or upgrade existing shelter, with the government taking a minimalist role in housing. Later, the site and service schemes and slum upgrading were increasingly adopted to enable people play a bigger role in improving their housing situations (Cohen & Turner 2015; Magina et al. 2020a,b).

As critique to Turner's proposal for minimal government engagement in slums, Werlin (1999) opined that strong "humanistic administration" was crucial in providing tenure security and regulation of the upgrade activities. He asserted that "development from below" ought to be combined with "development from above", essentially proposing for enhanced collaboration between people and the government in improving slums (ibid). While he maintained that slum clearance was not humane, he observed that governments play a critical need in providing tenure security for dwellers, a component that would encourage dweller-initiated improvement of living conditions (Werlin 1999). This standpoint coincided with the widespread adoption of measures to assure slum inhabitants of their tenure security. Today, two of the most common contributions of governments in slum upgrading are incremental improvement of infrastructure and regularization for tenure security (UN - Habitat 2003).

In recent years, comprehensive and hybrid approaches to slums have been put forward. The post-modern and neo-liberal schools of thought have modified governments' and experts' attitudes and approaches to urban planning, to realize that tackling slum alleviation is not a discourse that will avail a universal, "one-size-fits-all" kind of solution (Minnery et al. 2013). The unique contexts of the present-day occurrence of slums vis a vis the causative factors of these settlements are increasingly being acknowledged as the basis for employing varying ways of handling the threat. Moreover, the role of global movements and agreements such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and later the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the 2030 Agenda have offered a broad view to the aspect of slum upgrading, creating room for more global partnerships and cooperation (United Nations 2015). In particular, Goal 11, which strives to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe and resilient, calls for the upgrading of slums as one of its key actionable target areas.

In parallel, the New Urban Agenda (NUA), which is the urban component of the SDGs, presents a paradigm shift in the management of cities. It is styled as a resource offering a collective vision for Member States that are part to it for use by different levels of governments and other stakeholders including residents of cities to steer city growth towards inclusivity and sustainability (The New Urban Agenda, Habitat III, 2016). Regarding its relevance to slum upgrading, it especially emphasizes the link between governance and sustainable urbanization, and the subsequent benefits that accrue from it in the form of creation of jobs, better livelihood opportunities and enhanced living standards (United Nations 2016). Quantifying the results from the implementation of the NUA and the SDGs may be challenging since the implementation depends directly on local governments although there has been positive progress especially in middle-income countries. However, the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (2017) further reports that in low- and low-middle income countries, evidence points to worsening service delivery, particularly in the informal settlements.

2.2 Slums: Places of persistent policy neglect

Marx et al. (2013) provide that while slums are spatially located near the vibrant economies of cities, they face challenges of low human capacity development, slow and constrained rates of investment and a general policy exclusion. Due to the range of challenges facing them, inhabitants do not have much ability to take advantage of their strategic locations and significantly contribute to their livelihood enhancement. This scenario is manifested in the heavy dependence on low paying, informal economic activities that are vulnerable to various shocks (UN - Habitat 2003; ILO 2013, 2007). As observed by Dupont (2016), government authorities have often viewed informality both in the sense of housing and economic sustenance as an indicator of poverty, and hence a stain in the development agenda envisioned for urban areas. This, they argue, contrasts with the opinions of people who, themselves, might view the resultant informality because of being excluded from support. To these people, informality might be a means of fending for themselves and providing their own socioeconomic and sometimes political spaces in urban settings. Policies and an informal class segregation based on spatial disparities have contributed to the manifestations of urban inequalities, with those in distressed areas like slums and informal settlements being the biggest losers. UN - Habitat (2010) notes that a city which is divided may not adequately accommodate its poorer inhabitants, regardless of their contribution to the urban economy. This exclusion is exemplified in the persistent attitudes of urban planners and governments towards these distressed areas. As the UN - Habitat (2014) records, slum neighborhoods are rarely considered to be part of the larger city and thus, are not sufficiently integrated in physical and social infrastructure. Nonetheless, scholars on space production, spatial practices, transportation and mobility in the Global South provide rich relationships between space and all activities that take place in space. On place-making and governance, Saar & Palang (2009); Gieseking et al. (2014); Brenner & Theodore (2003) discuss the negotiation of multiple interests in the production of contemporary cities, which calls to examine governance, public policies towards urban space and the civic/communal drivers used by people to protect and realize spaces. They argue that the State is the main producer of space, where the State and territory interact in such a way that they can be said to be mutually constitutive. Likewise, Lefebvre (1991) coins the notion of 'spatial practices' to define the mobile interactions between individuals and the environment.

2.3 National programmes on slums upgrading and income generation

Kenya's Vision 2030 Development Blueprint is a long-term vision that envisions an industrialized middle-income country offering high quality life to all citizens by the year 2030. It is also a vehicle towards attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is anchored on three key pillars of political governance, social and economic transformation (Government Kenya 2007). The six crucial and priority sectors of focus towards the attainment of the broad vision include agriculture, tourism, trade (wholesale and retail), financial services, manufacturing, IT services as well as business process off shoring. These sectors are targeted with a range of interventions to improve their efficacy towards socio-economic transformation of the country. Enterprise centres would fall under the manufacturing sector, due to the country's focus on uplifting home-grown industries to boost their productivity and value addition for overall competitiveness. Furthermore, on training opportunities that enterprise centres provide, these facilities contribute towards the attainment of the social pillar of the development blueprint. One the one hand, while one of the aims of the blueprint is to reduce poverty, it is not emphatic on how this will be achieved in distressed places like slums (Ong'udi 2019). On the other hand, the Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Project was established in 2010 to complement the work of KENSUP. Aside from government funding, the program financed from the World Bank, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the AFD (Agence Française de Dévelopement). Its roles include facilitation of tenure security preceding upgrading initiatives, as well as to involve the communities in planning their settlements. It also aims at building capacities of urban management agencies involved in slum upgrading (Anderson & K 2013). On this aspect, Kibera was among the first settlements to benefit from the creation of KISIP and KENSUP, with the latter led the ongoing redevelopment of the settlement.

Nonetheless, the National Hygiene Program (NHP), popularly referred to as Kazi Mtaani, was a project aimed at creating a sustainable supply of public goods in urban areas using labor-intensive methods. Considered an Extended Public Works Project (EPWPs), inhabitants of slums and informal settlements were engaged in projects within their environments specifically regarding sanitation and hygiene as well as infrastructure improvement while providing them with incomes. This project was domiciled at the Kenya Informal Settlement Project (KISIP). Having kicked off in April 2020 in a number of settlements including Kibera, its core objective is to cushion youthful, able-bodied inhabitants of these settlements from the economic ravages of economic downturns or underperformance e.g. those arising from the aftereffects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.4 Policy and legal frameworks on slum upgrading

The country's first slum upgrading policy was drafted in 2014 and approved in 2016 by the parliament. It aims at providing a legal and institutional framework for effectively and sustainably conducting slum upgrading (Government Kenya 2014). Regarding income empowerment in distressed settlements, the policy proposes on-site, place-based entrepreneurship promotion ventures like theatres, studios and incubation infrastructure to encourage innovation (ibid). In as much, the Housing Policy of 2016 envisions slum improvement through participation and with focus on income generation as a means of fighting poverty in these settlements. It also encourages the mainstreaming of efforts to enhance access to low-income housing and complementary infrastructure by low-income households (Government Kenya 2016). A key result of the policy is the establishment of KENSUP (Kenya Slum Upgrading Programme) in 2001, a collaborative initiative with the UN-Habitat and other partners to spearhead slum upgrading throughout the country (UN-Habitat, 2008). While the government provides most of the funding for the program, UN-Habitat supplements its efforts through technical advice, involvement in enhancement of infrastructure in slums, and capacity building of government authorities and officers involved in upgrading processes. Aside from upgrading of housing infrastructure, KENSUP is also mandated to work towards tenure security in upgrading initiatives and to provide opportunities for livelihoods empowerment and income generation.

Concerning the legal framework, the Micro and Small Enterprises Act 2012 provides for the creation, development as well as the regulatory needs of both micro and small enterprises. It also creates a legal platform for establishing Micro and Small Entreprises Authority (MSEA) to help oversee the implementation of different elements contained in the Act (Government Kenya 2012). Amongst the ways of promoting micro and small enterprises are provision of conducive environments for business, enhancing access to the required business development services, nurturing a culture of entrepreneurship, enhance and facilitate the development and formalization of small and micro businesses, and the encouragement of representative associations. Important to this study was the aspect of provision of worksites and the requisite infrastructure, and communal facilities for the nurturing and operation of micro and small entreprises. With regard to development of skills, Government Kenya

(2012) provides for partnerships with government agencies and training institutions to develop relevant curricula to impart demand-driven skills into beneficiaries.
Overall, this paper is structured in main five sections: introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion and conclusions. Section 1 introduces the study, section 2 sheds light on detailed literature on informal settlements/slums, their diverse characteristics and the challenges facing people living in such areas, the slum agenda, paradigm shifts in slum alleviation approaches, policy orientation on slums, and the Kenyan national programmes on slums upgrading and income generation. While section three encompasses the methodology used, section four presents the results. The discussion of the findings is presented in section five and at the end, conclusions are made.

2.5 The sustainable livelihood framework

This study adopted the livelihood framework of the Department for International Development's (DFID) that comprises five main components of livelihood: the structural conditions, livelihood assets, transforming structures and processes, livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes (Fig. 1). The central idea in this framework is the availability and possession of livelihood assets on which people depend to carry out their livelihood activities (Farrington et al. 2002; Lloyd-Jones & Rakodi 2002). These resources can be owned individually or communally, although different people or groups have varied levels of access to them. The ease at which one can accumulate or increase the ability to resources could be affected by the policies in place. In the same vein, the transformation of social interactions into social capital is based on trust built between individuals or institutions through knowledge exchange. Likewise, the physical capital encompasses infrastructure, equipment and technology available for an individual or community. While structural conditions represent external forces that may affect the livelihood assets of the people, transforming structures and processes are institutional structures and processes taking place in those structures (Farrington et al. 2002). They include different levels of government as well as the private sector.
Livelihood strategies 'include coping strategies designed to respond to structural conditions, shocks in the short-term, and adaptive strategies designed to improve circumstances in the long-term. Lastly, livelihood outcomes refer to the general change in status quo of the livelihoods of the people as determined by adopted livelihood strategies. The aim is to make their lives better and thus the adopted strategies should lead to more income, improved well-being and reduced vulnerability. The key underlying question for this framework is to what extent has upgrading and improvement of infrastructure negatively or positively peoples' livelihood in the context of Kibera slum area.

3 Methods, data and study area

3.1 Data collection methods

In this study, a qualitative approach was adopted by conducting a socio-economic household survey to 100 households, using Open Data Kit (ODK), to understand these elements, and to gauge perceptions of residents on the establishment of place-based livelihood activities. Through 15 structured questions, the survey was crucial in understanding the peoples' concerns on the constraints or potential areas of support for informal traders. Areas of focus included knowledge of the main challenges of the informal traders, the skills prevalent in the people that enabled them to operate the enterprises they had established, any unused skills they might have, attitudes towards establishment of enterprise centres, as well as their main needs and desires with regards to what such centres should offer. Due to the campaigns of caution emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic, it was critical for data collectors to have the least physical contacts with respondents. Moreover, six (6) open-ended questions were administered to understand motivations and context in which slum dwellers conduct their livelihood activities.
To complement the socio-economic surveys, observations and key informant interviews were carried out. Observations involved a general appreciation of the settlement to livelihoods and infrastructure important to generate income. The focus of the observations, therefore, revolved around the infrastructure available, the conditions of houses and business premises, and the manifestation of the prominent business activities ongoing in the settlement. Key informant interviews with six (6) officials from government institutions. Out of these, two (2) were from the Kenya Slum Upgrading Program (KENSUP) and the other two from the Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Project (KISIP), one from Kenya Industrial Estates (KIE), and one from the County government of Nairobi. During the study, the key limitation observed on official-focused approach was the tendency to view the poor as beneficiaries to be man-

aged rather than active agents in their own development. Also, formal institutions ignored livelihoods in slum areas and hence regulatory pressure from officials restricted or destroyed these informal, yet vital, livelihood sources.

3.2 Data analysis and presentation of findings

Data collected from surveys through use of the ODK software was automatically exported into a digital MS Excel database into CSV format. Since the data were captured electronically, entry, cleaning and coding was easier than would have been expected if the answers were recorded manually on paper. This was especially crucial given the fact that the survey mainly produced unstructured, qualitative data of considerable volumes. From the database generated during data collection, open coding of the responses was conducted manually based on different themes of enquiry and specific keywords were used to group and classify similar responses. Quantifiable relationships, trends and patterns became apparent, and MS Excel was then utilized to visualize them in form of charts, tables and graphs. The interview transcripts obtained from key informant interviews, data from secondary sources and field reports were cleaned and scanned for repetitive keywords and phrases. These were then correlated to qualitative data from the survey and synthesized to give concrete analyses in terms of thematic areas of livelihood categories.

3.3 The study area

The study was conducted in East Soweto in Kibera settlement that lies within the city of Nairobi (Fig. 1). The area was once a grazing land for the Maasai community. However, the British colonial regime turned it into a military reserve of sorts with part of it allocated to returning members of the King's African Rifles in 1904 (Dale 2019), specifically, the Nubian tribe that is native to Sudan and Egypt and who served in the British Army in the two world wars were the later residents. Kibera sits on about 250 hectares of land, mostly occupied by poor quality, tin structures with earth walls and constrained access to water and sanitation services (Water & Program 2005). By the year 2019, the settlement

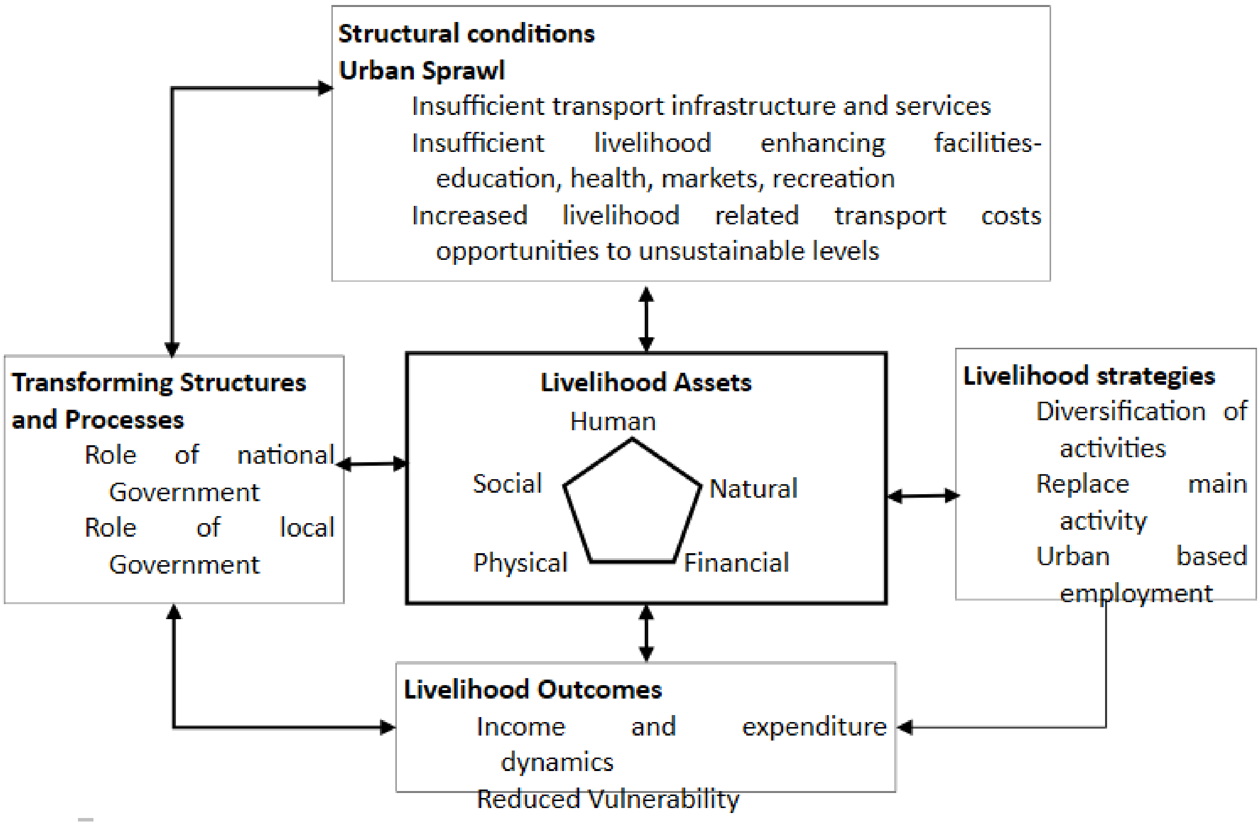

Fig. 1 The sustainable livelihood framework. Source: Adapted from DFID (1999); Booth et al. (2000); Magina et al. (2024), with modifications

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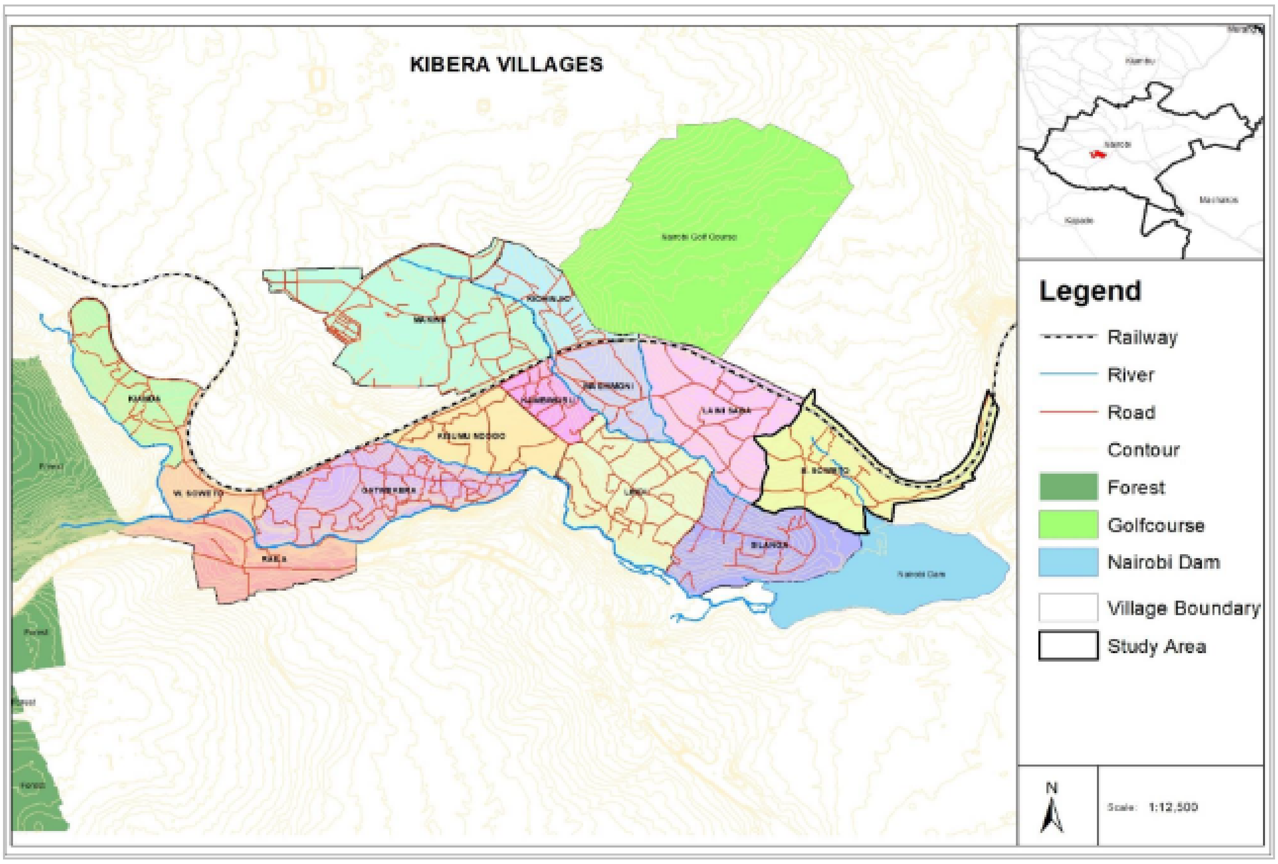

Fig. 2 Location of Soweto East in Kibera settlement. Source: Authors' Construct 2021

had approximately 180,000 people with an estimated population density of 720 people per hectare (Nairobi City County 2014; The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2019). As one of the settlement's wards lies within Lang'ata constituency, its biggest expanse lies entirely in Kibra constituency that is informally split into thirteen zones, often referred to as villages. These are Kichinjio, Laini Saba, Soweto East, Soweto West, Gatwekera, Silanga, Laini Saba, Kisumu Ndogo, KambiMuru, Undugu, Lindi, Kianda, Raila and Mashimoni as Fig. 2 presents.

4 Results

4.1 Informal micro- and small enterprises

Given the informality of the settlement itself, it was expected that the generation of livelihood activities would be manifested through a significant degree of informality. Generally, the settlement shows varied scenarios of informality. Most of the businesses observed displayed relative ease of entry with the simplicity of premises they operated from, individual or family ownership, employment of skills rarely taught in school and reliance on intense use of labour, and sometimes technology that is adapted. In this regard, there were several formal enterprises, operating from more permanent premises (see Table 1).

From Table 1 about 65 out of 100 (65%) of the respondents interviewed were involved in the sale of finished goods (both food and non-food) and services. The key skills needed are basic money management skills and maintenance of supply of the commodities being traded. Furthermore, due to the use of basic skill sets and common knowledge in running them, complex premises and equipment are generally not utilized, and the ownership of the ventures is mainly either individual or family oriented. Also, during field observations it was observed that the more technical a business is, the higher the chances of its ownership going beyond a single family or individual, and the higher the likelihood of its formalization and remittance of city taxes. This was true for enterprises involved in carpentry and metal fabrication. The

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S/N	Category of activities	Type of Enterprise	Prevalence of Category (%)
1	Processed household consumables	General retail store, alcohol, chemist	19
2	None-food household merchandise	Plastic products, shoes and clothes, Assorted second-hand merchandise	13
3	Perishable groceries and food preparation	Food kiosks and stalls, groceries, butchery	29
4	Beauty and dressmaking services	Hairdressing, dressmaking and knitting, boutique	14
5	Crafts and fabrication services	Metal works, carpentry, shoe making andrepairs; motorcycle and vehicle repairs	9
6	Materials and spares for fabrication	Motor vehicle spare parts, timbre, hardware	4
7	Technology related services	Cyber services, electronics goods and repairs, money transfer services	7
8	Others	Daycare services, charcoal selling	5
		Total	**100**

Source: Field visit in Kibera, 2021

Table 1 Classification of activities and prevalence in the settlement

county government observed that in the present days there were no tax or license cushions to traders in the settlement since they were applied uniformly across the county. Further, it was observed that within the same premises, multiple small enterprises would be ongoing. In this case, the sale of groceries, for instance, would be supplemented by preparation of food for immediate consumption, and sale or repair of electronic devices (Fig. 3) would be supplemented by money transfer services. Additionally, interview results indicated that 98 out of 100 interviewed traders (98%) from Kibera settlement agreed that most of small enterprises were owned by individuals within the settlement. In other cases, perhaps in a bid to take advantage of the movement of people and easy access to transport, some businesses were located next to the main roads and paths but within the settlement. Along the main roads, easy-to-carry goods comprised car and other motorable accessories, mobile phone while services which were provided included food vending and retail trade in Kiosks (see Fig. 3). This implied also that the deeper someone would get into the settlement, the smaller the observable sizes of income generation activities would become.

4.2 Existing Opportunities

4.2.1 Existence of unused, advanced skillsets

Enterprise centres, being essentially a local solution to economic problems, is one means of enhancing the incomes of the people living in the settlement. The existence of skills was a critical take-off point for such centers as it significantly lowers the initial cost of investment towards skills empowerment. The range of under-utilised skills in Kibera is summarized in Table 2.

As can be seen from Table 2, the study revealed that while the overall skillsets within the population are relatively low, it was also apparent that there are fairly advanced skillsets within the community, and these tend to be the least used or under-

Fig. 3 Sale of motorcycle spares and other activities along main access roads. Source: Field observations in Kibera, 2021

S/N	Category of skills	Unused skills	% of category vs. sample Population
1	Technology related	IT skills, electronics repairs, machine operation	10
2	Beauty Dressmaking	Beauty therapy, hairdressing, dressmaking, knitting	27
3	Construction related	Masonry, plumbing, road construction, painting	12
4	Crafts and fabrication	Carpentry, leatherwork, bead making, basket weaving, metal works, carpet weaving	12
5	Food related	Baking and confectionery, catering	8
6	Miscellaneous skillsets	Midwifery, pharmacy, urban agriculture, driving, sales and marketing, soap making, teaching	11
7	None	-	20

Source: Authors' construct 2021

Table 2 Unused/under-utilised skills in the settlement

utilized. In some cases, people opt to exploit these skills in small-scale operating from home by engaging in home-based enterprises ranging from education (establishment of nursery schools), manufacturing and production (weaving, garments, furniture, electronics assembly) and food-related businesses (cooking, food stalls) to services (hairdressing, repairs), and retail and trade (kiosks, selling goods) as illustrated in Fig. 4. Moreover, results from observations within the settlement revealed a semblance of small cottage industries where different skills and crafts were used to produce a variety of products.

As an attempt to help the traders use such opportunities, the government has put forward strategies to provide support for micro and small business incubation initiatives. In this way, a number of the policies reviewed indicated that the government was in various stages of setting up strategic infrastructure to help support upcoming micro and small enterprises. The country's slum upgrading policy proposes the establishment of studios in slum areas to provide support and infrastructure to innovators and producers who are marginalized due to their setting. Furthermore, the Kenya Industrial Estates targets similar facilities throughout the country to help propel the country's industrialization process. The county government also mentioned working on projects aimed at providing serviced marketplaces within settlements like Kibera. It is also involved in projects targeting women and youth empowerment like solid waste management, biogas centres and promotion of handicraft activities.

4.3 Constraints to development of small enterprises and informal trading in Kibera

4.3.1 Low proceeds from business

A constrained number of customers because of low proceeds from business was the key challenge mentioned, with 74% of the respondents (n=100) raising it as the primary constraint. A number of other causes conspire to keep proceeds from business low, with the study revealing little diversification in the type of enterprises as shown in Fig. 5. Limited value addition to products was yet another quality observed in the enterprises.

From Fig. 5, up to 65 % of respondents engaged in sale of ready products sourced from wholesalers like food, non-food products used by households, and sale of spares and parts motorcycles and timber used for carpentry and in construction. Out of 65% (n=100), 16 out of 65 informal traders (24%) consisted of those engaged in sale of per-

Fig. 4 Small-scale basketry and food vending from home. Source: Field visit in Kibera, 2021

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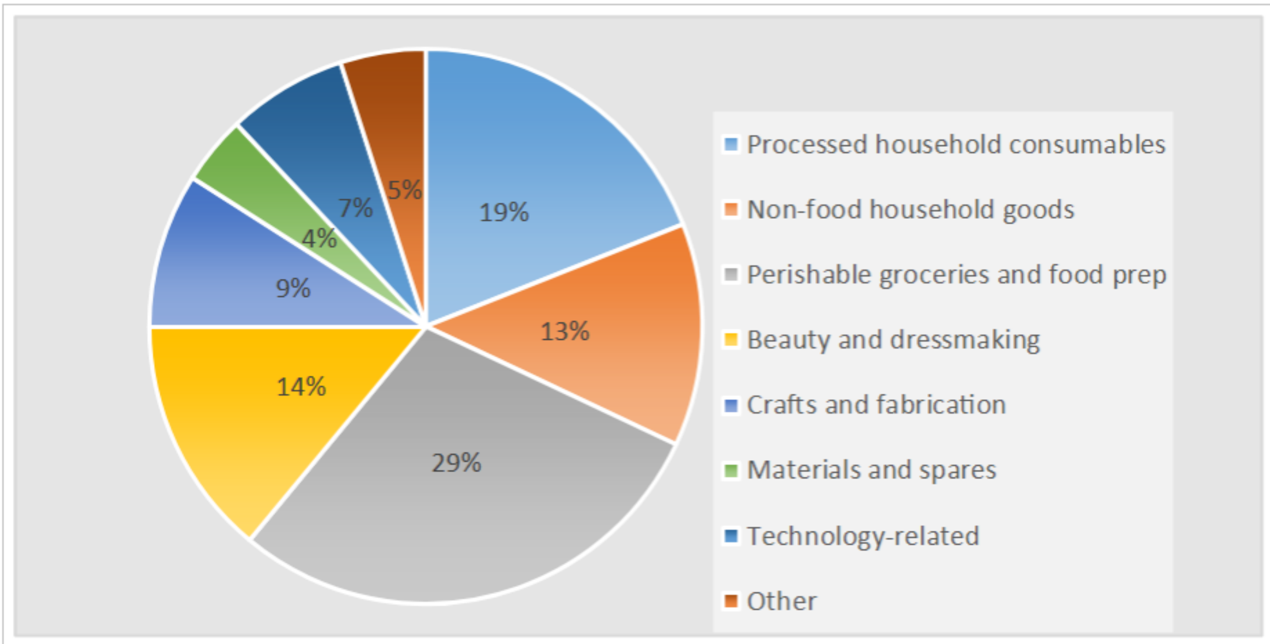

Fig. 5 Prevalent business types in the settlement. Source: Field observations, 2021

ishable goods for immediate, daily consumption, with 7 out of 65 informal traders (nearly 11%) engaged in food preparation. Given the low income of the residents, meeting the necessities of food is a top priority in household expenditure and hence, many businesses throng towards food enterprises and other products consumed daily. The traders also link the low proceeds to the constrained target market. Also, 84 of the 100 (84%) of the informal traders sold processed household consumables targeting residents of the immediate vicinity, and this, coupled with low household incomes, comes with the implication of a generally inhibited business robustness. The more specialized the commodities or skills used are, the more the diversification of targeted clientele as seen in those selling materials and spares. None of the traders surveyed specifically target external markets. This confirms the assertions of the county government official interviewed who opined that most of the commodities produced in Kibera hardly find their way into the mainstream city markets.

4.3.2 Poor quality infrastructure and insecurity of premises

Through key informant interviews, observation and interviews with the respondents, it was apparent that the enterprises in Kibera lack some of the most basic infrastructure. Moreover, there was limited security in their working premises owing to unpredictable county government policies in the settlement. These results were manifested by responses from interviews conducted as the following quote stands:
"... One key challenge here is the unpredictability of security of our business premises. The county government sometimes demolishes structures without notice, leaving us with huge losses ...." (Respondent to survey in Kibera, 2021).
Further, a number of premises were of poor quality, with at least 15% of respondents (n=100) reporting being unable to continue operating when it rains. More so, inadequate water and sanitation facilities were mentioned as a key concern for majority of the respondents, particularly those that are engaged in production or sale of food products. Other uncertainties included power outages, alongside inexistent lighting for outdoor areas at night and they were mentioned as one of the manifestations of infrastructure inadequacy that severely affects nighttime operations and overall security.

4.3.3 Lack of/inadequate tools and equipment

Field results revealed that some informal traders had no appliances necessary for operations in their daily activities. For instance, lack of ideal machinery for Jua Kali artisans constrained their production ability and incomes. As one respondent

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Fig. 6 Multiple enterprises engagements under one roof. Source: Field observations in Kibera, 2021

mentioned, they sometimes resort to hiring some equipment at a fee. This not only reduces their profit margins by increasing operational costs but also constrains their delivery times and consequent profitability. Another key complaint by traders in food businesses is lack of refrigeration facilities for the storage of durable products as well as lack of customers, especially during the undisclosed COVID-19. Furthermore, diversification or adaptation of production into more marketable ventures depending on rapid changes in the market was one of the constraints in such instances. Results from interviews showed that up to 9 of the 100 respondents (9%) engaging in informal trade were currently involved after completely abandoning their previous ventures in response to such shocks. Often, the most favored new venture to take up in such instances is the sale of food products that offers the readiest customer base.

4.3.4 *Lack of cold storage facilities*

Another key complaint by informal traders engaging in food businesses was lack of refrigeration facilities for the storage of durable products. This led to wastages which were partly exacerbated by the effects of COVID-19 that also significantly reduced incomes of the population and automatically constrained their purchase of foods from vendors and grocers. In the absence of refrigeration equipment and limited adoption of value in addition to raw products, vendors reported huge losses. With limited equipment to produce commodities that can effectively compete in the wider urban market, informal traders had to contend with a sustenance-based economy that does not allow for much wealth accumulation. Moreover, inadequate cold facilities exposed them to shocks in such a way that many businesses in Kibera and other informal settlements were often vulnerable to. Resulting from lack of cold facilities amidst catastrophes like the recent COVID-19 pandemic, some informal traders closed their businesses, while those who continued operating reported losses in income. On this aspect, up to 9% of the respondents who were currently engaged in trade completely abandoned their previous ventures in response to such shocks. Often, the most favored new alternative venture to take up in such instances was the sale of food products which offer the readiest customer base.

Owing to the foregoing, an adaptation or a survival tactic observed was the engagement in multiple micro-trade ventures within the same premises. For instance, running a retail store was conducted alongside the provision of digital, money transfer services. Another common combination was the sale of fruits and vegetables alongside preparation of dishes for immediate consumption within the same premises as depicted in Fig. 6.

4.3.5 *Negative impacts of the global economy*

The influx of low quality, ready-made products has rendered a number of artisans without engagement in economic or livelihood activities. Common examples include plastic furniture that has lowered the demand for carpentry products. As earlier stated, many of the economic activities conducted within the settlement required very limited skill and thus did not require significant initial capital investments. This situation was particularly exploited by the recent influx of cheap products into the market, mainly from China, which have made local production obsolete. For instance, cheap imported footwear has eaten into the market share of locally made leather products, even when it has provided a business opportunity to retailers with

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Fig. 7 (a – left) Unused stalls by a former political representative. (b – right) Stalls developing along the wall of redeveloped housing. Source: Field observations in Kibera, 2021

no skills to create such items from scratch. This scenario also affects several other industries apart from leatherworks. Carpentry, metal fabrication as well as dressmaking have all taken a hit nationally, and the most intense effects are bound to be felt in places with distressed economies like Kibera.

4.3.6 Fragile politics of ethnic alignment

Another characteristic that complicates the workings of Kibera's informal economy is the fragile politics since a prime constituency is located a few kilometers from the capital's CBD. There was a general sentiment of wariness to be involved in programs and projects if they were not comfortable with the ethnicity of leaders spearheading and influencing different initiatives. On this aspect, five of 100 (5%) informal traders offered that their willingness to participate in the enterprise centres would be dependent on the local politics surrounding their creation. The continuity of economic development projects is often left in jeopardy when the initiative political leader loses a political position or otherwise retires. Key evidence of the fragile nature of politics in the settlement is the near obsolescence of business stalls pictured in Fig. 7 that were established and financed by a former Member of County Assembly (MCA). In other cases, provision of stalls was adjacent to the modern houses built by KENSUP, one of the initiatives that the government undertook within the slum-upgrading program as a means of providing space for entrepreneurial activity. The government's initial plan for the lowest floors of each new housing unit seems to have been deemed unsustainable very early into the redevelopment exercise.

During field surveys, the stalls still stood, largely unused regardless of the capital that was poured into the project and the potential presented by the premises both in terms of location and the conducive environment. It was not clear what were the reasons for abandoning the premises, but indicators point to the fragile political climate and poor continuity of projects often because of political alignments of incoming leaders. This misuse of modern facilities is despite the obvious need for them, especially given the poor quality of stalls surrounding them.

5 Discussion

Results of this study have clearly shown urban inequalities of the micro enterprise centres and informal traders on their livelihood activities as opposed to formal trading. As presented in section 4.2, it appears that micro enterprise centres and informal traders in Kibera face several constraints, particularly lack of infrastructure, which show a denial to sustainable livelihood activities and outcomes. Owing to these findings, the 1986 United Nations (UN) Declaration on the Right to Development (DRD) collectively places critical responsibility on the international community to eradicate inequality and enforce social and economic (intra- and extra-border) justice through the necessary reforms (United Nations 1986). Since the turn of the millennium, notions of social and spatial justice and the right to the city have featured prominently in global urban development and post-development discourses (Bah et al. 2018; Marx et al. 2013; Adegeye & Coetzee 2019), yet seldom engaged with the right to development (Huchzermeyer & Kornienko 2024). Although the upgrading of informal settlements programmes aligns with the principles of the right to development and, from that perspective, its potential to disrupt the formal–informal divide, in some cases this initiative has not shown success. A common criticism of city governments that has emerged in the debates on slum upgrading is the exclusion of these settlements from the formal development of infrastructure and economic opportunities in the wider city.

Responding to the UN DRD, the Kenyan government has taken a number of entrepreneurship promotion initiatives specific to Kibera with a target to improve livelihoods and increase incomes. Some of these include the construction of stalls alongside the redeveloped housing, establishment of cooperatives for settlement dwellers to enhance savings and facilitate payment for new housing, skills training, capital and equipment support by CBOs, NGOs and elected leaders. Findings of this study have shown that slums are potential areas for low-income individuals, groups, and households in many overarching aspects. Even though Kibera inhabits a big, youthful population and it sits in a prime location (5 kilometers from the CBD), a quality which provides a conducive opportunity for full engagement in Nairobi's economy, it has the lowest household incomes in the city. As such, findings have indicated that the number of enterprises which exist in the settlement are service-based offering subsistence daily needs. This implies that slums have not been considered potential areas from which higher economic returns can be realized as Ziai (2017) argued.

The Kenyan political environment advocates for slum upgrading and promotion of economic opportunities. As such, the country's slum upgrading policy recommends for the establishment of studios in slum areas to provide support and infrastructure to innovators and producers who are marginalized due to their setting (Government Kenya 2016). Also, the Kenya Industrial Estates aims the same i.e., to help push the country's industrialization process. Besides, the county government promised to work on projects aimed at providing serviced marketplaces within settlements like Kibera. The main challenge which remains unsolved is the easy implementation of government's targets particularly on infrastructure and service provision is slums. Enriching the discussion on the abonnement and segregation of slums, UN - Habitat (2012) and ECLAC (2016) put it clear that it is simply because slums, which are a part of the segregation phenomenon, are perceived as territories where different axes and aspects of socio-territorial inequality intersect the most.

The The Rockefeller Foundation (2013) recognizes that slums incubate potential economic opportunities which support the day-to-day product, service, and livelihood needs of many slum dwellers in developing countries. Slum economies also make important contributions to broader urban economies, representing a large share of the informal labor force, providing urban services (e.g., waste collection), and producing goods for local and export markets. As observed in the findings, in Kibera slum area there exists a number of opportunities that slum dwellers have tapped to earn their livelihood, transform their lifestyles and beyond. Some have not completely been used because of the prevailing barriers. These include unused, advanced skillsets; small cottage-like industries; different organizations to support micro and small business incubation initiatives. Despite the existence of these opportunities in the area, slum economies are negatively impacted by entrenched economic, political, and social systems, resulting in limited economic opportunity and mobility for slum dwellers. These constraints are also shaped by a complex and interrelated set of root causes that include social isolation, lack of legal power, and insecure access to public and private property (UN - Habitat 2003, 2010; Magina et al. 2020a,b; Magina & Kyessi 2024). This implies that governments and states in developing countries should perceive slums which form part of cities, as engines of urban economic growth as opposed to being chaotic and nuisance areas within cities (Leitmann 1992; Colenbrander 2016; Sida 2018).

6 Conclusion

While slums remain potential areas for low-income individuals, groups, and households; enterprises, community-based and non-governmental organisations are pillars to enhance livelihood of the communities in such slums. One of the most vulnerable aspects of life in slums and informal settlements is job and livelihood opportunities. Urban areas with a high incidence of slums pay a real economic, environmental and social cost which imbalances their prosperity capacity, as they do not make the most of their human and economic capital. Particular groups with the fortunes of the informal economy in slum areas are significantly connected with the fortunes of the informal economy. In Kibera slum area, the importance of mainstreaming economic empowerment in redevelopment exercises was underscored. The study revealed a number of economic activities residents engage in to earn income. These activities generally make use of basic skillsets geared towards meeting the basic needs. Several constraints to meeting their livelihood needs were also imminent including low proceeds, use of low-level skills which inhibit profitability, reliance on a strained internal market, and poor coordination of livelihood empowerment interventions. Furthermore, most economic policies and government economic interventions seem not to focus on revitalization of economically distressed areas. This evidence suggests that many policies fail to address the root causes of distress, often resulting in increased inequality rather than uplifting the existing community. Nevertheless, a lot of opportunities and potential, which can be exploited for growth, also exist in the settlement. These include proximity to the city, existence of a semblance of small cottage industries, numerous low and mid-level skills, interest from the popular sector, and general resourcefulness of residents. Amidst policy shifts on slum upgrading, barriers brought by the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictive regulations in force, entrepreneurship was at the fore. Even though households in the settlement were still the targeted group, people still engaged themselves in different trades. In the United Nations Right to Housing views, the “Right to the City” is included as a means of enhancing equality on access to all the benefits and potentials of the city for all urban residents. Inclusion in decision-making processes is acknowledged as a means to push for the realization of the rights of urban dwellers despite their social standing.

Urbanization, being the main driver for economic development, creates slums whose dwellers are left behind if their issues and concerns are not integrated into urban policies, legislation, planning, financing and investment frameworks. Owing to these challenges, a participatory and citywide approach to slum upgrading and livelihood enhancement, by considering people living in slums as citizens with assets, is critical.

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