

Moving to Condominium Housing: Views on the Prospect among Children and their Families

The urban landscape in Ethiopia is currently undergoing a fundamental transformation, with whole neighbourhoods in the centre of major cities being cleared for urban development. The urban renewal programmes have the twin objectives of promoting urban growth and providing improved housing for the urban poor. On the one hand, the clearing of areas without high-value buildings is viewed by developers as freeing urban space for the construction of office blocks, shopping centres and real-estate development. On the other hand, low-cost housing condominium apartments are being constructed by the government and offered to urban residents who were living in the areas that are being demolished and who can afford the down-payment and subsequent monthly payments. Some of these condominiums are close to these central areas that are being redeveloped and a larger number are being constructed on the outskirts of the city.

This summary reports on a study carried out with families in four urban communities (three in Addis Ababa and one in Hawassa, the capital of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region) that are due to be resettled when a planned redevelopment of these parts of the city centres starts. It provides baseline data on the views of children and their families about condominium housing prior to the planned move and will provide important evidence to compare with experiences of the respondents after the relocation. Despite the desire of most caregivers and children to live in condominiums, many of them acknowledge that they will not be able to afford the costs which raises important questions about the viability of these low-cost housing schemes for the urban poor and suggests the need to reconsider ways of addressing their needs. The indications from our interviews with the few households who have already moved raise issues concerning the need to consider income generation, employment and services, notably education, alongside low-cost housing schemes.

Background

Young Lives has been working with children in 8 urban and 12 rural communities in Ethiopia since 2002. In two of the central sites in Addis Ababa (Bertukan and Menderin)¹ and one in Hawassa (Leku), residents have been told some time ago that they would have to move. The planned redevelopment and relocation was mentioned as a concern for families during the third round of our household survey in 2009, even though the exact timing is still unknown. The fourth site, Duba, is on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. Relocation does not seem to be a major concern here, but we included this site for contrast as a 'control' site to purposes of comparison. However, the main road out of town may stimulate investment, leading to some displacement.

We visited the four communities in January 2012 and interviewed 466 caregivers and 451 children (almost 16% of all Young Lives children in Ethiopia and 40% of those living in urban areas). Of the 451 children, 299 (64%) are among the Younger Cohort (aged between 11 and 12 years old at the time), and 152 (36%) are among the Older Cohort (aged between 17 and 18). Of the total, 232 (51%) are girls and 219 (49%) are boys.

We also carried out in-depth interviews with 79 children and their caregivers, 10 boys and 10 girls in each of the four sites. In Bertukan and Leku, which are sites where we conduct our core longitudinal qualitative research, we interviewed the children who are part of that sub-sample (although one boy in Bertukan had moved and could not be located). In Duba and Menderin, a qualitative sub-sample was generated from the main survey sample. The selection criteria included the wealth quintile of the household, home ownership, and other social categories such as religion and ethnicity, in an attempt to include a mix of different groups and equal numbers of boys and girls from both cohorts. Interviews were also conducted with representatives from formal and customary institutions in each community. Focus group discussions were conducted in separate groups for boys and girls for each cohort, and were also held with their caregivers and with community representatives.

¹ The children and their families share a great deal of personal information with us over many years. For this reason, pseudonyms have been used – both for the children mentioned here and for their communities – to preserve anonymity.

Communities due for redevelopment

All four sites are in poor areas in either the national capital or a regional capital and they each present particular characteristics which are worth noting.

Bertukan is in the central part of Addis Ababa in an old quarter developed during the Italian occupation. It is close to a major market where many of the households find casual employment. The site is heterogeneous in terms of ethnicity (Amhara and Gurage are the largest groups) and religion (with Orthodox Christian and Muslim communities included). Many Young Lives households rely on informal-sector activities, notably petty trade in the market, street vending, wage labour, the sale of food and beverages, and carpentry. There is a large proportion of female-headed households and some of the women concerned are involved in commercial sex work, for which the area is known. Several adjacent areas have already been demolished and are being redeveloped and this neighbourhood is also within the priority areas for redevelopment. Although most of the redevelopment is earmarked for commercial interests, three blocks of condominiums have already been built in the area and about a dozen very poor families were able to obtain flats within them with the support of NGOs, although none of these was a Young Lives household.

Duba is located on the outskirts of Addis Ababa in an area that was first developed as an industrial zone in the late imperial period. The area is close to a main road and a major river, which is polluted from the nearby factories. It is less congested than the two sites in the centre of the city. The area is mixed in terms of ethnicity, with Oromo, Amhara and Silte being the major groups, and the population is predominantly Orthodox Christian. The main forms of livelihood involve wage labour in the informal sector, retail trade and street vending and some men work in factories. There is relatively good access to health and education services. There are no immediate plans for redeveloping the area, although there has been an increase in industrial development in the vicinity and along the main road passing through the area, which may well lead to some displacement along the road. It was included as a 'control' site for comparison with the areas where relocation is expected to take place.

Menderin is in the centre of Addis Ababa in a very congested area which has a reputation of being one of the poorest parts of the city, with badly constructed make-shift dwellings. The area is polluted by open sewers and waste in the streets and air pollution from a cigarette factory. The site is mixed in terms of ethnicity with four major ethnic groups, the Amhara, Gurage, Oromo and Tigraway. The majority of the population are Orthodox Christians, although there are large Muslim and smaller Protestant minorities. There is an important market in the area. The main forms of livelihood are based on informal-sector activities, including petty trade, street vending, retail selling, woodwork and daily labour, and some residents earn wages in government or private organisations. Several adjacent areas have already been demolished and are in the process of being redeveloped and there are also some condominiums that have already been built. The area has been designated for redevelopment and the residents have been informed they will have to move.

Leku is located in an old neighbourhood in Hawassa, the capital city of SNNPR. The ethnic composition of the site is heterogeneous, with three major groups among the Young Lives sample being the Wolayta, Amhara and Oromo. There are also a few Gurage and some Tigraway and Sidama. In terms of religion the site is also mixed, with Orthodox Christians and Protestants representing the largest groups. Most people in the community are engaged in informal-sector activities, notably petty trading, daily labour, street vending, or other forms of self-employment. Children are also involved in such activities. There is a high prevalence of female-headed households. The community is considered to be very poor and a few NGOs have been engaged in distributing aid and educational materials. Some parts of the area are expected to be demolished for renovation, although the boundaries are not yet clear.

Views about the prospective relocation

Both adults and children expressed strong interest in living in condominiums, especially in the sites in Addis Ababa, where more than 70% of the respondents aspire to live in condominium apartments. For caregivers the proportion was 80% in Bertukan, 73% in Menderin, 75% in Duba and 46% in Leku, and for the children it was 79%, 82%, 70% and

56%. However, even in Hawassa where fewer than half the caregivers said they would want to live in condominiums, more than half the children are keen to do so. The proportion of children who would like to live in condominiums differs in terms of gender with 75% overall for girls and 68% overall for boys. The difference is greater when the data are disaggregated by age, with a higher proportion of the 11- to 12-year-olds (75%) wishing to live in condominiums compared with 65% of the older children.



Photo: David Styan

However, in our in-depth interviews we found some respondents who were not registered for condominiums and who do not want to live in them, for various reasons. Some of these concerns related to condominiums being uncomfortable, or worries about the durability or strength of the buildings. One family already living in a rented condominium in Bertukan said they preferred their previous kebele house. This might suggest that people who are currently living in relatively good housing and compounds may not want to move to condominiums.

Other concerns related to livelihoods and the needs of people working from home, notably women preparing and selling food and beverages, who felt that they could not do this from condominium housing. In particular, people expressed doubts about their chances of finding work in the informal sector close to where they would live in the condominiums, unlike in the central areas where they currently live. Some people also felt that condominiums were not suitable for the cultural way of life, where coffee is ground and holidays celebrated by slaughtering animals in the compound.

Hopes for a better living environment

Most caregivers (85%) and children (83%) perceived the condominiums as being clean and having proper toilets (80% and 73% respectively). While in the three sites in Addis Ababa it was mostly adult caregivers who appreciated this, in Hawassa cleanliness was appreciated by a higher proportion of children. However, more caregivers than children appreciated the importance of having proper toilets, especially in Menderin and Berukan where relocation is expected to take place soon. There was also a difference between boys and girls, since in all four sites a higher proportion of girls (76%) than boys (69%) emphasised the advantage of having

proper toilets. Likewise, having a separate kitchen was a feature appreciated by a significant majority of caregivers (80%) and children (69%), and again the proportions were higher in the two sites where relocation is expected (84% in Bertukan and 92% in Menderin). More than half the total number of caregivers (60%) expressed a preference for condominiums because they represent a modern way of living, while somewhat fewer than half of the children overall (47%) appreciated this, although a higher proportion of girls (54%) than boys (40%) expressed this view.

Concerns about the new facilities

Asked about aspects of condominiums that they disliked, most respondents considered multi-storey buildings as potentially risky, especially for children, because of the external staircases and balconies. More caregivers (74%) than children (67%) expressed these concerns in most sites. The highest proportion expressing these worries was in Hawassa, where there has been less exposure to condominiums, which are relatively new to the area (92% for caregivers and 67% for children). There were also age-related differences, as a higher proportion of the younger children were more enthusiastic about living in condominiums (75% of Younger Cohort children and 65% for Older Cohort children). However, the younger children (64% overall) seem to be less aware than older children (73%) of the dangers for children. Most of the caregivers (80%) and children (63%) were concerned that living in condominiums is difficult for the elderly, for the sick and for pregnant women (80% of caregivers and 62% of children). The proportions concerned about this were higher among caregivers than children and were highest in the Hawassa site for both caregivers and children



Photo: Loulou Cherinet

Administration of the move

Registration for the new condominium housing seems to be closely linked to the likelihood of imminent relocation, since the two sites where relocation is planned have the highest proportions of households registered (87% in Menderin and 67% in Berukan). There are a number of reasons why some people have not registered for condominiums, the most important being the belief that they would be unable to pay even if they were given the opportunity to obtain condominium housing. There was limited knowledge about the costs of down-payments (only 17% of caregivers) and monthly payments (less than 10%), the duration of payments, and payments options (less than 15%), suggesting the need for greater awareness-raising.

Most respondents (61%) do not want to get a loan from banks for the down-payments; among those who said they would want a bank loan, only 22% thought they would be able to obtain one. The proportion of respondents who said they could get a loan from a relative or that they would have another way of paying was even smaller (15% and 8% respectively). The same was true for monthly payments: only a minority of respondents want to get loans from banks (26% overall) and fewer think they would be able to get loans (15%). Very few caregivers think they might get loans from relatives for monthly payments (12%) or that they might have some other way of covering the payment (8%).

Financial constraints

Almost half of all the people we interviewed (44%) are not sure where they will end up living after the relocation, due to their inability to afford any form of alternative housing. A little more than a fifth said they expected to live in condominiums, whereas 16% thought they would be re-housed in kebele

houses. Although more than half the respondents in the two sites where the relocation is expected soon think they will be allocated condominium houses, more than 80% said they could not afford the down-payment or the monthly payments (more than 60%).

Policy implications

The findings suggest that both the adults and the children appreciate the condominiums and have internalised their representation as a modern, ideal way of living, providing potential improvements in their lives, notably with regard to sanitation and privacy. However, some concerns about the quality and durability of the housing were voiced, even though the respondents have not experienced living in them yet. For instance, the dangers of children falling over balconies or on the external staircases suggest the need for improved safety features, such as internal rather than external staircases and higher balcony walls. Consideration should be given to finding ways of providing day-care, nursery and kindergarten facilities so that mothers are relieved of having to constantly watch small children to protect them from injury. The difficulties faced by elderly people suggest the need to prioritise allocation for the infirm and disabled on the ground floors.

Although the views of respondents about living in condominiums are generally positive, their inability to afford the payments is the major problem that leads most to be pessimistic about their chances of living in condominiums. These findings suggest the need to consider a range of options for financing access to condominiums for families who simply cannot afford the condominium down-payment and monthly payments if subsidies and support cannot be found. This could include more flexible, longer-term,



Photo: David Styan

inter-generational or group loans; the formation of housing cooperatives, possibly linked to *iddir* funeral associations; sponsorship or partial payment from NGOs; donor subsidies; and mobilisation of support from the private sector and the Ethiopian diaspora. It also raises the question of considering alternatives to the condominium model, since it does not seem to be a realistic option for the very poor without subsidies. Other models might include low-cost housing on the outskirts of the city that would be linked to employment opportunities or skills development.

In our in-depth interviews, respondents also mentioned their concern that their daily work or income-generating opportunities may be affected detrimentally if they are relocated away from the city centre. They also expressed worries about high transport and living costs in the new relocation areas. Two of the families from Bertukan and Menderin who are already living in their condominiums in other parts of the city also shared this concern, reporting that the major problem they faced in the new area is related to work opportunities and the higher costs and limited availability of transport.

Other concerns expressed by the families who had already moved to condominiums were that the schools for their children are now farther away so they now have to pay for transport to school, and that living costs in the new condominium areas are higher than in their old communities. Even though this evidence is based on very few case studies, the concerns expressed suggest the need for policy dialogue on these crucial questions. Insofar as the urban poor who live and work in the city centre are to be relocated to the outskirts, and given that the costs of commuting to areas where they used to work are likely to be prohibitive, the development of income-generation activities and employment opportunities in the areas where

new condominium complexes are being built deserve serious consideration. It is also important to ensure that not just housing but other services, notably schools, are available when new areas are being developed. The findings therefore suggest that there is a need to move beyond merely providing housing to considering ways of improving the livelihoods of the urban poor and providing appropriate services alongside housing, notably day-care, kindergarten and primary schools for the families that move. Some respondents also raised the question of limited play areas for children and the lack of communal spaces and facilities in the condominiums.

Although so far only three of the Young Lives households had moved into condominium housing and none of the sites has yet been destroyed, two are due for redevelopment in the very near future. The views of the families who are likely to have to be relocated and the experiences of those who have already moved into condominium housing provide some indication of both the positive aspects and also of the worries and potential concerns, particularly about affordability, which deserve to be the subject of policy debate. The study underlines the importance of managing the resettlement process better by creating enhanced awareness about the conditions and options for obtaining condominiums; linking housing to access to income-generation opportunities, social support, and services, notably pre-schools; and reviewing the condominium model to make it more flexible to the needs of poor people.



Photo: Konjit Seyoum

REFERENCES

Michael M. Cernea (2000) 'Risks, Safeguards and Reconstruction: A Model for Population Displacement and Resettlement', in M.M Cernea and C. McDowell (eds) *Risks and Reconstruction: Experiences of Resettlers and Refugees*, Washington DC: World Bank.

Jean Du Plessis (2006) 'Forced Evictions, Development and the Need for Community-based, Locally Appropriate Alternatives: Lessons and challenges from South Africa, Ghana and Thailand', in M. Huchzermeyer and A. Karam (eds) *Informal Settlements: A Perpetual Challenge?* Cape Town: UCT Press.

Alula Pankhurst and François Piguat (2009) 'Displacement, Migration and Relocation: Challenges for Policy, Research and Coexistence', in A. Pankhurst and F. Piguat (eds) *Moving People: Displacement, Development and the State in Ethiopia*, Oxford: James Currey.

UN-HABITAT (2008) *Ethiopia: Addis Ababa Urban Profile*, Nairobi : UN-HABITAT Regional and Technical Cooperation Division.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

This is a summary of a longer paper *Moving to Condominium Housing? Views about the Prospect among Children and their Families in Addis Ababa and Hawassa, Ethiopia*, Young Lives Working Paper 106) by Alula Pankhurst and Agazi Tiemelissan. It is the second of 3 reports from a sub-study conducted in the Young Lives urban sites which are due to be redeveloped. Since Young Lives has been working with these communities since 2002, we are in a unique position to see what conditions were like before and after they are resettled (although we do not know yet exactly when that will be). Our thanks to the children, their caregivers and other respondents who took part and to our research teams who carried out the interviews.

Readers are encouraged to quote or reproduce material from Young Lives Policy Briefs in their own publications. In return, Young Lives requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication.

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, following the lives of 12,000 children in four countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam) over 15 years. It is funded from 2001 to 2017 by UK aid from the Department for International Development (DFID), and co-funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2010 to 2014. The views expressed are those of the author(s). They are not necessarily those of, or endorsed by, Young Lives, the University of Oxford, DFID or other funders.

Funded by



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands