

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Effect of NGO Activities on Living Conditions of Informal Settlements in Kisumu City: An Empirical Literature Review Approach

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Abstract:

Living conditions refer to circumstances regarding how people live. How people live is quite broad; it implies the quality of food people eat, the type and quality of houses people live in, the clothes people put on, access to health care, and access to quality education and sanitation. Living conditions define the overall well-being of a human being and, at times, are related to self-esteem and dignity. Besides, quality of living may dictate life expectancy and affect the nation's overall productivity. Living conditions have been a worldwide concern to non-governmental organizations, various local governments, and stakeholders. The study, therefore, investigated the effect of NGO activities on living conditions in informal settlements in Kisumu City. The study used a literature review method; the inclusion criteria were that the study only reviewed literature done in Kisumu related to living conditions, NGOs, and informal settlements in Kisumu. The key search words were living conditions, NGO activities, and informal settlements in Kisumu County, and the study used Google Scholar as the database source of the articles reviewed. Results of the study revealed that despite NGO activities in informal settlements in Kisumu City, the effects of such activities on living conditions are dismal and not quantified. The study recommends a joint effort by stakeholders such as the County Government, the Central Government, the private sector, local development finance institutions, international development finance institutions, and individual philanthropists to help salvage the poor living conditions in informal settlements in Kisumu City. This study is essential to the citizens living in informal settlements, central and County Governments, NGOs, private sector firms, and all the stakeholders.

Keywords: Non-governmental organization activities, living conditions, informal settlements, vulnerable, sanitation, needy children

1. Introduction

The term NGO was first used in the USA official documents in 1942. The term appeared in pamphlet No.3 of the series Education and National Defense, which was published by the Federal Security Agency of the Office of Education in the United States of America; the term also appeared in pamphlet No. 2, and this became the first time distinction between governmental and non-governmental organization was made (Olivo, 2007). When the United Nations was created in 1945, immediately after the Second World War, it officially adopted the term NGO (Lumun & Kingsley, 2020).

The role of NGOs in developing countries has been researched and established by several researchers. Areas where NGOs focus in developing countries are rehabilitation and environmental protection, awareness creation and employment, capacity building, advocacy services and literacy, poverty reduction, social welfare activities, education, and provision of health services. Empirical studies about the role of NGOs in Kenya reveal varied results; despite the immense effort put in by NGOs to improve the quality of education in the country, NGOs still face many challenges that compromise education quality (Yambo, 2022). Non-governmental organizations are pivotal in health care, community development, social justice, and education. NGOs fill in development gaps that the central government is not in a position to meet due to insufficient resources (Abiddin, Ibrahim & Aziz, 2022).

2. Literature Review

Mumbe, Simiyu and Naburi (2023) studied urban vulnerabilities in households in informal settlements in Kisumu County. The study employed a descriptive research design; a multistage random sampling technique was used, and 396 household heads participated. The study revealed significant environmental-induced vulnerabilities. The vulnerabilities included water shortages, inadequate sanitation facilities, flash floods, water stagnation during rainy seasons, and inappropriate waste management. Other issues affecting households were further recognized as insecurity, poor housing status, and low economic status. The study, however, did not delve into the NGO activities in informal settlements in Kisumu County. Despite NGOs in Kisumu County focusing on vulnerabilities, the evidence reveals that residents in

informal settlements in Kisumu County still face various challenges that must be addressed. Furthermore, the research instruments used in the study incorporated the NGO aspect; however, the responses during the interview did not reveal what such NGOs are doing to reduce the level of vulnerabilities in informal settlements in Kisumu City.

Greschner (2023) investigated poverty in Manyatta B informal settlements; Manyatta B is one of the informal settlements in Kisumu City. The study employed 32 semi-structured interviews between May and July of 2022. Results of the survey reveal that the residents of Manyatta B are aware of poverty in their area of residence. However, they refute the government's top-down approach to addressing the poverty situation in informal settlements in Kisumu. According to the residents, the authorities should seek information and possible solutions from the informal residents because they are the ones who are on the ground and are aware of the problems they face and potential solutions.

The residents in the Manyatta B informal settlement, however, acknowledged the role played by the government in addressing the poverty level in informal settlements in Kisumu City. Some of the solutions suggested by the residents include business sensitization, youth education, empowerment, and better governance. Consequently, the residents in Manyatta B informal settlement justified the poverty situation based on rampant unemployment, idleness, poor governance, and inadequate knowledge of how to escape instances of poverty. However, the study did not explore NGOs' effects in improving the living standards of residents of Manyatta B informal settlements. The study helps expose that despite NGOs and government activities in informal settlements in Kisumu City, the poverty level is still high, hence the poor living standards in such informal settlements in Kisumu; this warrants a study.

Musuva et al. (2019) studied community participation, water and sanitation activities, and control of Schistosomiasis in Nyalenda B in Kisumu City. The study used 8 Key informant Interviews (KII) and eight focused group discussions (FGDs). Additional data about water and sanitation activities were collected from the local NGO registration board. The data was then organized into themes and analyses using Atlas. Most participants revealed that they were not involved in critical levels of project implementation, which always led to a lack of sustainability and a lack of community acceptance.

The study also underscored factors hindering participation in sanitary activities, which included negative attitudes from community members, poor monitoring and evaluation strategies, limited disclosure of details of the projects, and overdependence from the community. However, this reviewed study is silent about the role played by NGOs in improving sanitation in Nyalenda B informal settlement despite using data about water and sanitation from the NGO registration board. Therefore, the present study reviewed the effect of NGO activities on improving the living conditions in informal settlements in Kisumu. The reviewed research is, however, necessary since it helped expose the water and sanitation challenges experienced in informal settlements. Water is an essential commodity that can be used to gauge the living conditions of residents.

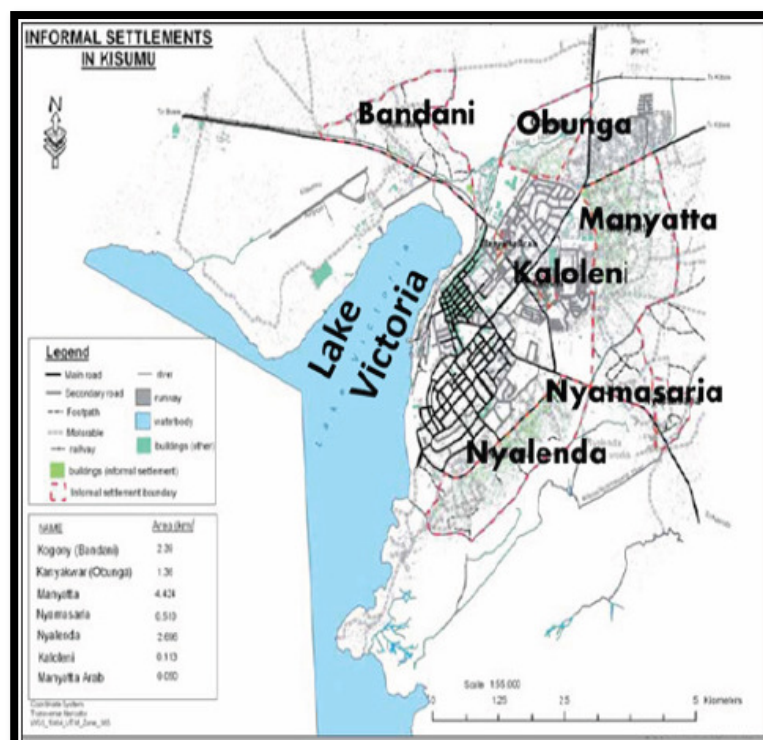


Figure 1: Informal Settlements in Kisumu City
Source: Musuva, et al., (2019)

Figure 1 shows informal settlements in Kisumu city. These include Manyatta, Nyalenda, Nyawita, Nyamasaria, Kaloleni, Obunga, and Bandani. Reviewed literature reveals that despite NGO presence in Kisumu City, the majority of residents in these informal settlements are still living in extreme poverty. Therefore, various stakeholders should step in, join hands, and improve the living conditions of residents in these informal settlements in Kisumu City.

Swaka, Rambo and Osogo (2018) studied funding activity, sanitation financing programs, and community livelihood in informal settlements of Obunga in Kisumu City in Kenya. The study underscored that governments, civil society organizations, and NGOs funded sanitation. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The sample size was 384 households and ten key informants. The study used stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. The findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between funding activities and community livelihood in Obunga informal settlements. The study recommends the sustainability of funding in Obunga informal settlements. This study is essential for making inferences; however, the study did not expose the extent to which the NGOs have contributed to financing sanitation to improve the livelihood of those living in informal settlements.

David (2015) studied non-governmental organizations and poverty reduction in Kisumu East Sub-County in Kenya. The study used a descriptive research design. The study sample consisted of 200 residents in Kisumu East Sub-County. The study revealed that challenges facing NGOs in Kisumu East Sub-County are inadequate staff, lack of funds, lack of sustainability of the projects, lack of priority to the community needs and wants, lack of transparency and accountability, lack of mobilization and sensitization. External challenges included rejection and lack of interest from community members, lack of active involvement, poor infrastructure, and language barrier. The study, however, did not focus on informal settlements in Kisumu City. The study is informative, given that some informal settlements, such as Nyalenda, form part of Kisumu East Sub-County. Furthermore, the study did not disclose to what extent NGOs have improved the living conditions in informal settlements in Kisumu City.

Opiyo, Obange, Ogindo and Wagah (2018) studied urban food poverty in Kisumu, Kenya. The study used primary data to collect information from the respondents. The study underscored that urban services and infrastructure are lacking, especially in informal settlements. Furthermore, the study opined that the consequences of food poverty placed Kisumu City at risk of continued food insecurity. This study outlines that food security is still rampant in Kisumu despite the presence of NGOs in the city. Besides, the study did not delve into NGO activities in informal settlements in Kisumu city.

Otieno (2016) studied community-based organizations (CBOs) and NGOs. The study employed a descriptive research design. Respondents comprised 40 women, 40 youths, five community leaders, and 10 NGOs/CBOs staff. The study instruments used were questionnaires, interview schedules, and observations; the study indicated that the NGOs offered services such as capacity building, health care services, counseling, engagement of vulnerable groups, and table banking. The study further underscored that the challenges faced by NGOs and CBOs are insufficient funds, community attitude, and literacy levels. The study established that service delivery in the informal settlement of Obunga improved due to intervention by NGOs and CBOs, with the majority (47.1%) confiding in this assertion. This study is one of the best studies reviewed as it mirrored NGO and CBO activities in Obunga and its impact. However, the study was done in Obunga only. A similar study could be done in other informal settlements such as Nyalenda, Manyatta, Bandani, and other informal settlements in Kisumu to allow for generalizations.

Simiyu, Cairncross, and Swilling (2019) studied living conditions in informal settlements in Kisumu. The study underscored that each informal settlement in Kisumu has unique challenges and hence requires tailored solutions according to their specific challenges. The reviewed research, therefore, focused on determining the living conditions in informal settlements in Kisumu and proposed solutions to the challenges of the living conditions identified. Results of the study revealed that deprivation is evidenced and widespread at the individual and household levels. However, health facilities and schools are available at the settlement level. The study outlines basic service provisions such as upgrading houses and supporting income-generating activities. The study suggests that all stakeholders, such as the government, landlords, community groups, and NGOs, should be involved in improving living conditions in informal settlements in Kisumu. The study, however, failed to identify to what extent the recognized stakeholders, especially NGOs, have managed to improve the living conditions in informal settlements.

Othoo, Dulo, and Olago (2021) studied food risk vulnerabilities of sanitation facilities in urban informal settlements in Kisumu. The study assessed sanitation facilities, vulnerabilities of food, and assessment of flood risk models. The study revealed that most sanitation facilities in informal settlements were highly vulnerable (57%); growing food risk vulnerability, high storm risk, and 44% of rainfall received led to runoff, leading to flood risks. Nyalenda and Manyatta's informal settlements are mentioned to have a chance of increasing household social and economic instabilities. The study only recognized the intervention by NGOs at the tail end of the study by outlining that NGOs intervened by construction of latrines. This study does not explore details about how the NGOs have improved the standard of living of households living in informal settlements in Kisumu City.

NGOs	Activities of the NGOs
Care Kenya	Care is present in over 100 countries worldwide and was started during World War II. Its mandate is to provide a long-term solution to poverty (Care International official website).
World Vision	Has been present for more than 70 years, protecting and caring for needy children.
USAID	USAID was started on 3 rd November 1961 (USAD official website). The organization is involved in activities such as Agriculture and food security, Democracy, Human Rights and Governance, Environment, Energy and Infrastructure, Humanitarian Assistance, Water and Sanitation, Anti-Corruption, Economic Growth and Trade, Gender, Equity and Women's Empowerment, innovation, Technology and Research, Conflict Prevention and stabilization, Education, Global Health and Nutrition.
Ogra Foundation	Ogra Foundation started as a youth development group in 2000 before being elevated to a fully-fledged NGO in 2005. The organization focuses on diseases such as Cancer, HIV/AIDS, Malaria, tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases. It also focuses on sexual reproductive health education for teenagers, training community health workers, and supporting education for needy children (Ogra Foundation official website).
Impact Research	Impact Research was started in Kenya in 2003. Its headquarters are in Kisumu, Kenya, and the NGO has offices in nine other countries. Impact Research focuses on health, research, and development. The NGO's main focus areas are women and young people affected by HIV (Impact Research official website).
Oxfam	Oxfam, which originated from the Oxford Committee on Famine, was formed in 1995 by non-governmental organizations. Its primary focus is helping African farmers become self-sustaining (Oxfam official website).
ChildFund	ChildFund, formerly known as Christian Children Fund, was started in 1938. The organization is present in 23 countries. Its focus is eradicating child poverty by working with communities and various stakeholders.
KMET	KMET is an NGO based in Kisumu Kenya. It was founded in 1995 and registered in 1996 (KMET official website). Their primary focus and activities are health and education (KMET official website).
Plan International	Plan International is present in over 80 countries. Its primary focus is on young children and girls. It undertakes various activities, such as supporting education, eradicating discrimination, and ensuring a safe environment for young and vulnerable children.

Table 1: A Sample of NGOs Operating in Kisumu City, Their Details and Activities or Focus Areas

Table 1 shows a sample of NGOs operating in Kisumu city. It also reveals their focus areas and history regarding when they were started. It is evidenced that they all focus on vulnerable groups in society, such as children, young girls and women, except Oxfam. However, it is imperative to note that Oxfam focuses on farmers, which has the potential to solve food insecurity directly related to improving living conditions. The challenge with Oxfam is that the reviewed literature did not expose the impact of its activities in measurable terms.

3. Research Methods

Research methods and techniques are terms with different meanings, but they are often used interchangeably. Research methods refer to methods investigators use to perform research operations; research techniques refer to the behaviour and instruments used in selecting and constructing research techniques (Kothari, 2004). This study used the literature review method; Shaffril, Samsuddin & Samah (2021) outline vital points that researchers should consider when doing a systematic literature review. The key points include developing and validating review protocol/ publication standards/reporting, standards/guidelines, research question formation, systematic searching strategies, quality appraisal, data extraction, data synthesis, and data demonstration. However, this study used a narration literature review because it was the most appropriate for the study; the keywords used in the search for studies to be reviewed were NGOs, living conditions, informal settlements, and Kisumu City (Pautasso, 2019), the database used in the study is Google

scholar. The inclusion and exclusion criteria used in the study were that only studies done in Kisumu related to living conditions in informal settlements were considered; the studies that did not fall within this bracket were excluded.

4. Results and Discussions

Empirical studies failed to quantitatively expose the effect of NGO activities on improving the living conditions of informal settlement residents in Kisumu. Some studies, however, portrayed activities related to improving living conditions; most of the studies depict that NGOs do very little to improve the living conditions of those living in informal settlements in Kisumu City. Empirical reviews reveal that NGOs concentrate on improving the welfare of vulnerable groups and not the joint informal settlement's residents. Furthermore, the impact is minimal in areas where the NGOs have activities related to improving living conditions, as evidenced in the literature reviewed. Besides, such impacts are not measurable and lack statistics to back them up. Finally, none of the NGO activities are directly geared towards improving the living conditions of residents living in informal settlements. The NGO's activities remain secondary because they focus on something other than the residents' basic needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing. Instead, they focus on activities such as health care and education. Such activities are good but long-term in nature. Besides, such activities should be measurable in the long run to evaluate their impact on improving living conditions.

Empirical studies reviewed reveal exciting results. For instance, Mumbe, Simiyu, and Naburi (2023) showed induced vulnerability in informal settlements in Kisumu. Greschner (2023) revealed that residents of Manyatta B, an informal settlement in Kisumu, know they are living below the poverty line. Consequently, Musuva (2019) concurred that there is a sanitary problem in informal settlements in Kisumu; the study is silent about the NGO's activities to address the same. Swaka, Rambo, and Osogo (2018), on their part, opined that various organizations fund sanitation in Obunga informal settlement in Kisumu City, but they did not reveal or quantify the funds released by various stakeholders mentioned to address sanitary problems in Obunga informal settlement despite alluding to the fact that NGOs are among the stakeholders trying to solve the hygienic issues in Obunga. On the other hand, David (2015) concurred that the challenge facing NGOs in Kisumu is inadequate funding, and Opiyo, Obange, Ogindo, and Wagah (2018) on their part observed that urban services and infrastructures are lacking in informal settlements in Kisumu and that incidences of food insecurity in informal settlements in Kisumu are rampant.

Otieno (2016) agrees that the activities of NGOs are capacity building, counseling, engagement of vulnerable groups, and table banking; the study is, however, quick to mention insufficient funds as an impediment to undertaking such activities. Given the situation, as evidenced in the review, counseling and capacity building remain secondary objectives for improving living conditions. Doing capacity building and counseling for people who cannot afford basic needs is a lack of priority. Simiyu, Cairncross, and Swilling (2018) revealed that despite the government offering public goods such as roads, health facilities, and schools, there is still poverty at the household level. The study, however, has not exposed what the NGOs are doing to reduce such poverty at the household level. Finally, Othoo, Dulo, and Olago (2021) concur with other reviewed studies, opining that most sanitation in informal settlements in Kisumu City was vulnerable.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that there are poor living conditions in informal settlements in Kisumu City, as evidenced by the literature reviewed. The study also concludes that the activities of NGOs in informal settlements in Kisumu City are not measurable. Still, as per the studies reviewed, there is a lack of quantified measurements to rate whether living conditions are improving or deteriorating. Despite the survey revealing the effect of NGO activities in improving living conditions in informal settlements in Kisumu, the responsibility of improving living conditions should not be left solely to the NGOs. Stakeholders such as the County Government, the Central Government, various organizations such as development finance institutions, and private firms such as banks and insurance firms should team up to solve the poverty level witnessed in informal settlements in Kisumu County.

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