

Urban Expansion and Displacement: Effects on Peripheral Farming Communities' Livelihood in Burayyu Town, Finfine, Ethiopia

Gemechu Urgesa Amena

Department of Civic and Ethical Studies, Salale University, Salale, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Rapid urban expansion in Ethiopia has produced profound transformations in the livelihoods, land-use patterns, and socio-economic structures of peri-urban communities. Burayyu town, located on the periphery of Finfine (Addis Ababa), has experienced accelerated spatial growth driven by population pressure, investment demand, and administrative restructuring. This study examines the extent to which the expansion of Burayyu town has displaced farming households and reshaped their livelihood strategies. Using mixed methods household surveys, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis the study analyses changes in landholdings, income sources, employment patterns, and social networks among affected households. The results indicate significant livelihood disruption: loss of agricultural land, inadequate and delayed compensation, limited access to alternative employment, and erosion of traditional socio-cultural systems. While some displaced households pursue new strategies such as informal trade, wage labour, and rental housing, these opportunities remain unstable and insufficient for long-term livelihood security. The paper argues that urban expansion without inclusive planning exacerbates poverty, marginalization, and socio-economic vulnerability. It concludes with policy recommendations for more equitable land governance, livelihood restoration programmes, and sustainable peri-urban development.

INTRODUCTION

Urban expansion in Africa has accelerated over the past three decades, driven by demographic growth, rural-urban migration, economic restructuring, and land-use change (UNFPA, 2007; United Nations, 2008). Ethiopia is no exception; major urban centres such as Addis Ababa and its satellite towns have expanded rapidly, converting surrounding agricultural lands into residential, industrial, and infrastructural developments. This process has generated profound implications for the livelihoods of peri-urban farming communities who rely on land as their primary economic asset and social identity (Fayera Abdisa, 2005; Berhanu, 2002).

Burayyu Town, situated adjacent to Finfine, represents one of the fastest-growing peri-urban areas in Oromia National Regional State. Its proximity to the capital city has attracted real estate projects, manufacturing facilities, and government-led infrastructure investment. While urban growth is often celebrated as a sign of modernization and economic transformation (McGee, 2006; Abdul et al., 2010), it also produces displacement, land expropriation, environmental degradation, and socio-cultural disruption (McGranahan et al., 2004; Simon et al., 2005).

In peri-urban Ethiopia, land expropriation for urban development has been governed primarily by Proclamation No. 455/2005, which authorizes the state to take land for “public purposes” while providing compensation (Federal Negarit Gazeta, 2005). However, numerous studies have documented that compensation is often inadequate, poorly administered, or insufficient for restoring livelihoods (Habtamu, 2011; Degefa, 2005). For farming communities, the loss of land represents not merely an economic loss but the erosion of social security, identity, and intergenerational continuity (Ellis, 2000; Barrett, 2001).

Despite the growing scholarship on peri-urban transformation in Ethiopia, empirical studies focusing specifically on Burayyu Town remain limited. This research contributes to filling that gap by investigating:

1. The patterns and drivers of urban expansion in Burayyu Town.
2. The extent and nature of displacement experienced by farming households.
3. The livelihood changes that have occurred as a result of displacement.
4. The coping strategies adopted by affected households.

The study draws upon a sustainable livelihoods framework (Ellis, 2000; Tacoli, 2002) to analyse how farming households navigate the transition from land-based to non-land-based livelihoods.

METHODS

Study Area

Burayyu Town is located in Oromia Regional State, adjacent to the western boundary of Addis Ababa. Over the past two decades, it has transformed from a predominantly agrarian locality into an urban centre characterized by mixed land uses, dense housing development, and expanding industrial zones. According to CSA (2007), Burayyu's population grew rapidly due to natural increase and in-migration, triggering intense pressure on land resources.

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques to obtain a comprehensive understanding of displacement and livelihood changes.

Household Survey

A sample of displaced and peri-urban farming households was selected using stratified random sampling. A structured questionnaire was administered to collect data on: household demographics, landholding size before and after urban expansion, compensation received, income sources, livelihood strategies and perceptions of displacement impacts

Key Informant Interviews

Interviews were conducted with: municipal officials, land administration officers, elders and community leaders and representatives from affected households

These interviews provided insights into land acquisition procedures, compensation mechanisms, and urban planning challenges.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were held separately with men, women, and youth to explore communal perspectives on displacement, loss of land, and livelihood transformation.

Document and Policy Review

Relevant literature, policy documents, and earlier studies—including those by Berhanu (2002), Fayera (2005), and various international sources—were reviewed to contextualize the findings and draw theoretical links.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency distributions, and cross-tabulations. Qualitative data from interviews and FGDs were transcribed, coded, and categorized thematically based on the sustainable livelihoods framework.

RESULTS

Patterns of Urban Expansion

Findings reveal that Burayyu Town has experienced rapid horizontal expansion driven by:

- large-scale housing developments
- industrial investments
- road network expansion
- administrative boundary changes
- demand for residential plots by migrants from Addis Ababa

Respondents reported that agricultural land has been progressively converted into urban uses, often in fragmented patterns characteristic of peri-urban interfaces (Marshall, 2009; Hudala et al., 2008).

Nature and Extent of Displacement

Loss of Agricultural Land

The majority of surveyed households lost between 60% and 100% of their farmland. Land expropriation occurred in phases, beginning with the acquisition of communal grazing lands, followed by private holdings.

Compensation Challenges

Respondents highlighted: delayed compensation, undervaluation of land, limited transparency in valuation and mismatch between compensation and market prices. These findings align with critiques of Proclamation 455/2005 noted in earlier studies (Habtamu, 2011; Fayera Abdisa, 2005).

Livelihood Changes

Shift from Farming to Non-agricultural Activities

After losing their land, households pursued: wage labour (construction, factory work), petty trade, transport services (three-wheelers) and renting out rooms from subdivided residential plots

However, these income sources are generally unstable and low-paying compared to farming.

Decline in Food Security

Households reported reduced ability to produce food and greater dependence on market purchases, echoing findings from similar Ethiopian peri-urban contexts (Maxwell et al., 2001; Degefa, 2005).

Social and Cultural Disruption

Loss of land has weakened: kinship networks, traditional social institutions and customary land management systems. This mirrors trends noted by McGregor & Thompson (2006) in other peri-urban African settings.

DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that urban expansion in Burayyu Town resembles broader peri-urban dynamics observed across Africa and Asia (McGranahan et al., 2004; McGee, 2006). Although urban growth can create economic opportunities, it simultaneously threatens the sustainability of rural livelihoods.

Livelihood Disruption as Structural Vulnerability

Loss of agricultural land central to livelihood security forces households to transition to unfamiliar and often precarious urban economic activities. Consistent with Ellis (2000) and Barrett (2001), livelihood diversification under compulsion tends to increase vulnerability rather than resilience

Policy Gaps in Land Compensation and Livelihood Restoration

Proclamation 455/2005, while legally clear, fails in practice to ensure equitable and timely compensation. This inadequacy contributes to impoverishment, as compensation does not reflect the social, cultural, or future economic value of land.

Social Displacement in Addition to Physical Displacement

The erosion of cultural identity, community cohesion, and social capital represents an often-overlooked dimension of displacement. Peri-urban communities express feelings of marginalization as their way of life becomes incompatible with urban organization.

Environmental Implications

Urban expansion contributes to environmental stress including: loss of green spaces, soil degradation and waste accumulation. Such impacts have been widely documented in other contexts (Fazal, 2000; Gregory, 2009).

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Urban expansion in Burayyu Town has displaced farming communities and reshaped their livelihoods, often in destabilizing ways. Key challenges include:

- inadequate compensation
- loss of agricultural land
- limited access to secure non-farm employment
- erosion of social and cultural systems

Policy Recommendations

1. Strengthen Compensation Frameworks

Implement transparent, market-based valuation mechanisms and ensure timely payment.

2. Livelihood Restoration Programs

Introduce skills training, credit access, and job placement initiatives.

3. Participatory Urban Planning

Engage local communities in land use decision-making.

4. Protect Remaining Agricultural Land

Establish clear zoning to preserve strategic peri-urban agriculture.

5. Enhance Social Support Systems

Support community cohesion during resettlement processes.

In conclusion, sustainable urban development in Burayyu Town requires integrating livelihoods, equity, and environmental considerations into planning and implementation.

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