

Urbanization Process in Kenya: The Effects and Consequences in the 21st Century

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Abstract: This paper focuses on the effects and consequences of urbanization process. The characteristic of Kenya's urban area is the focus of this paper as it specifically focuses on issues pertaining to transportation, housing, employment and cultural transformation. It further focuses on the ecological theory of Louis Wirth – Urbanism as a Way of Life and as means of explaining the urbanization process. Drawings lessons from other scholars, this paper focuses on strategies for improving the state of urban areas in Kenya. The paper critically suggests the need for creation of centralized business association in various counties, overhaul planning in the urban development process, shift in perceptible thought of urbanization and overall Effective implementation of the slum upgrading programme thus this will improve and upgrade Kenya's urban areas thus improving the quality of standards.

Keywords: Urbanization process; Effects; Consequences; Strategies.

I. INTRODUCTION

Urbanization is the process whereby a parcel of persons collectively settles in an area, eventually developing social institutions that include businesses and government, in order to support themselves as a system. Urban areas are generally characterized as relatively densely populated thus referred to as settlements. Furthermore, it may originate from the effort by some authorities to consciously concentrate power, capital, or both at a particular site (Orum, 2011).

Over the last few decades, cities in both developing and developed countries have emerged as the major form of human settlement. Today more people live in and around cities than in rural areas (SOFA, 2002). Urbanization is the increase in the proportion of a population living in urban places thus a complex process of social transformation. It is arguably the most significant demographic trend to emerge over the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and it has deeply affects rural development (SOFA, 2002). Urbanization is further characterized by non-agricultural activities that are characteristic of, but not exclusive to, city dwellers. Accordingly, an increase in the size of towns and cities leading to growth of urban population is the most significant dimension of urbanization. Hawley (1981) further points out that urbanization propagates the changing from agricultural form of activity to other pursuits common to cities, such as trade, manufacturing, industry and management, and corresponding changes of behaviour patterns. He further points out that it is the process of expansion in the entire system of interrelationships by which a population maintains itself in its habitat. An increase in the size of towns and cities leading to growth of urban population is the most significant dimension of urbanization.

In Kenya, urbanization results due to the concentration of large-scale and small scale industrial and commercial, financial and administrative set up in the cities in the various parts of the country. It is further accompanied by the changing technological development in transport and communication, cultural and recreational activities. In the developing world, a city's ultimate economic fate rests on the position of its country in the global political economy (Walton, 1976; Snyder and Kick, 1979). Cities in the developing world are nodes of intersection for the global political economy and the countryside, often attracting investments that aim on taking the opportunity for the "emerging opportunities" (Smith, 1996).

In the pre-colonial days the British East African Company built a railway network from Mombasa to Uganda in 1899. This period allowed for the mushrooming of towns that would lead to the development of manufacturing industries thus encouraging rural-urban migration. However, the colonial administrators encouraged laws that restricted Africans from reaching the town centers requiring them to have a 'pass book'. Such laws also prevented land ownership and led to the development of squatter settlements for the lower class citizens who were mostly Black-African of decent.

The colonial administration forged with Nairobi as this was the central urban center in the region that would harbour industries and would formally be Kenya's capital for colonial administration. In 1948, the colonial administrators set up designing a master plan in building a modern commercial centre with industrial area that would have a vast network of roads and the construction of the African houses that would be for the African servants (Anderson, 2001).

Accordingly, after gaining independence in 1963, lack of preparation and governance approach led to the disorganization of the master plan as majority of the African elite served to further social exclusion and segregation among the poor (Huchzermeyer, 2006 & 2011). Furthermore, lack of policies on employment creation strategies in the rural area force majority of the youth to migrate to urban centers such as Nairobi and Nakuru in search of employment. As K' Akumu and Olima (2007) put it, there was a reverse of native restriction law that saw mass rural migration and reduced agricultural activities in the rural area. Rapid shift to the urban areas saw problems of overcrowding and substandard housing becoming a reality up to the 21st century. This paper aims at addressing the effects and consequences of urbanization process with an aim of addressing a strategy to improving the critical areas that the urban development process in various counties.

II. METHODOLOGY

This paper used a desk review to examine the portrayal characteristics of urban centres in Kenya. The paper also analyses effects and consequences on urbanization process in the majority of the Kenya town centers. At the same time, there is need to focus on strategies that promote urban growth in Kenya.

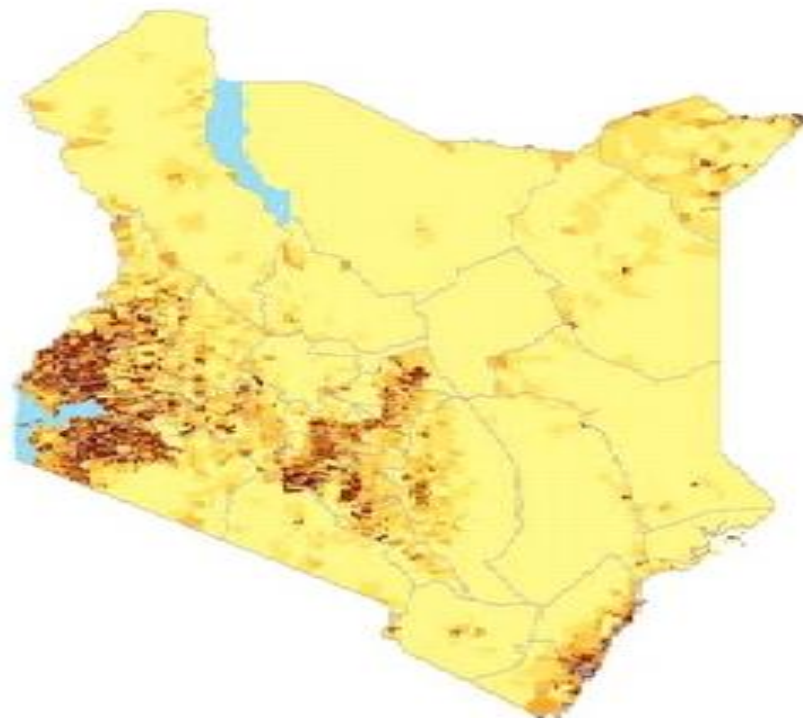


Fig. 1 Show the concentration of urbanites in the urban areas shaded in brown.

III. ECOLOGICAL THEORY

Accordingly there are theories that explain the urban situation. This paper used the Ecological theory by Louis Wirth (1938). Louis Wirth's theory focused on urbanism as a way of life. He attempted to distinguish the concepts of urbanism and urbanization. His social-psychological theory investigates the human behaviour in an urban environment. He indicates that density, size and heterogeneity regarded as the principal traits in defining cities are conducive to specific behavioral patterns and moral attitudes. For him "a city is a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals". Urbanism is that complex of traits that makes up the characteristic mode of life in cities.

Urbanism, as a way of life, focuses on the three themes as stated by Wirth:

- 1) As a physical structure comprising a population base, a technology, and an ecological order;
- 2) As a system of social organization involving a characteristic social structure, a series of social institutions, and a typical pattern of social relationships; and
- 3) As a set of attitudes and ideas, and a constellation of personalities engaging in typical forms of collective behaviour and subject to characteristic mechanisms of social control.

Louis Wirth shows two kinds of forces operating in urban society: the force of segregation and the melting pot effect that have many unifying aspects like uniform system of administration. However, he concludes that urban society is based on a means-to-end rationality, which is exploitative and where the individual is isolated through anonymity. Wirth believed that the density of life in cities produced neighborhoods, which have the distinctive characteristics of traditional communities. Accordingly, Wirth's theory is important for its recognition that urbanism is not just part of a society, but expresses and influences the wider social system.

This theory is crucial in this paper in that it reinforces the theme of urbanization process, and thus clearly illustrates and explains the characteristics of urbanites and the dwelling system.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF KENYA'S URBAN AREA

4.1 Transportation System

Poor traffic command structure is the order of the day for most of the urban areas in Kenya. The challenge facing the transportation sector is the promoting of an integrated transportation system that will focus on sustaining the current population in the urban area. Currently, attempts have been aimed at decongesting urban areas but this has failed due to lack of clear guidelines and tougher policy implementation of the policies regarding the transportation sector. The 21st century transportation system has seen the introduction of the *boda boda* (both the bicycle and motorcycle) in the most of the urban areas (Nyaura and Ngugi, 2014). This has addressed the gap created by the motor-vehicle which in some cases cannot reach the impassible areas and also as a result of costs.

4.2 Housing

Housing fulfils the psychosocial needs of a society, and serves as a hope where an individual is able to express his or her need for privacy and territoriality, psychological and social security, refuge and protection against natural elements of climate (Onyekachi, 2014). Housing can be seen to be the core characterization of an urban setting. Thus it distinguishes whether an area is a slum area or more developed urban area.

However the problem of housing becomes of concern when there is an influx of persons from rural to urban area (Nabutola, 2004). Furthermore, land unused or no longer in use for long periods is easy targets for settlement for the homeless. Informal settlements spring upon these lands. Many poor and low-income families excluded from access to land and housing in the formal sector. In Kenya slums such as Kibera, Mathare and Mukuru Kwa Njenga have resulted due to establishing of sprung up settlements. Such settlements are referred to as *Ghettos*. In Kenya, the proliferation of slums has resulted in squatter or slum dwellers occupy land without having a legal title to it. Moreover, these persons do not have the resources to purchase land legally or even rent houses. The characteristics of squatter settlement include the following (Nzioka, 2002):

- 1) **Physical characteristics:** Due to its inherent no-legal status, its services and infrastructure are below the adequate minimum levels. Such services are both network and social infrastructure which include water supply which is inadequate; sanitation due to poor drainage and this has resulted to disease out breaks such as cholera and typhoid, unavailability of educational facilities, health centres and accessibility of medical facilities.
- 2) **Legal characteristics:** this is the key characteristic that outlines a squatter settlements is due to disorganized housing structures and lack of ownership of the land parcel on which they have built their structures. These could be vacant government or public land, or marginal land parcels like railway or in some other cases it's the set back marshy land, for instance in Kibera. Furthermore, land owners may rent out his land for a nominal fee to a family or families with an informal or quasi-legal arrangement which is not however valid under law. Squatters are predominantly migrants either rural-urban or urban-urban, but many are always second or third generation squatters.

Accordingly, housing requires the commitment of the government to adequately strategize on formulae to address the current situation on adequate housing in urban areas. Onyekachi (2014) postulates that housing demands resolute commitment, intelligent planning, and effective implementation strategies for developmental programs. A rational and effective policy must therefore be developed to shape the foundation and framework for the much-needed housing development this would in turn lead to adequate and affordable housing for the majority of the urbanites.

4.3 Unemployment and Semi-skilled

The main reason for the rural-urban migration is as a result of employment. However, the influx of persons has resulted to scarcity of opportunity. Accordingly, persons from rural areas seek employment in cities, thus urban employment becomes a symbol of higher social prestige. However, majority of the urbanites are youths who are in most cases unemployed. Carney (1999) points out that young people want the entrepreneurial opportunities, types of services, and control over livelihoods currently unavailable in smaller cities and towns, thus will seek to migrate to urban centers. Nzioka (2002) further postulates that squatter settlements or households belong to the lower income group, who are either working as wage labours or even unskilled and semi-skilled labours who work in informal sector enterprises. Some of these unskilled and semi-skilled works opt to work in industries, for instance in Industrial Area in Nairobi area

4.4 Cultural Transformation

Cultural transformation entails both the cultural and social psychological process whereby people acquire the material and non-material culture, including behavioural patterns, forms of organization, and ideas that originated in, or are distinctive of the city. Although the flow of cultural influences is in both directions (both toward and away from the city), the cultural influences exerted by the city on non-urban people are probably more pervasive than the reverse. Urbanization seen in this light has also resulted in "*Westernization*".

Aspects of diffusion and acculturation are ingrained in urbanization process. Urbanization may be manifest either as intra-society or inter-society diffusion, that is, urban culture may spread to various parts of the same society or it may cross cultural or national boundaries and spread to other societies. It involves both borrowing and lending of cultural values.

Accordingly, urbanization has resulted to the diversity of ethnic, linguistic and other forms of backgrounds based on the social statuses. Furthermore, there is also introduced sense of fashion, changes of lifestyle and music depending on the current trend status. This has furthered the diffusion of cultural traits where many cultural traits are diffused from area one to another. Also, new thoughts, ideologies are also diffused from the cities to the rural areas due to increase in technology and communication, internet, mobile phone technology, radio, television, newspaper.

V. EFFECTS AND CONSEQUENCES

5.1 Geographical Spill Over

This refers to the mass rural urban migration of persons in search of opportunities. This causes imbalance in rural area. This paper identifies the fact that if there is massive increase in population in the urban area there is underdevelopment. Scholars have pointed out that the result impact of urbanization is the dramatic shift rural-to-urban migration as formerly

agrarian villagers move to the cities in search of employment, often landing in urban slums in rapidly growing cities (Neuwirth 2006; Davis 2007). Some of the challenges facing urban areas is the overpopulation of persons in search for opportunities, thus the pressure is created on the overall social amenities. Some will lack and some will have depending on their availability and opportunity to seek them. Those who will not have these opportunities will result to unorthodox and quire means in acquiring them thus this results to crime.

Accordingly, the geographical spill-over as this paper suggests results to food insecurity since the population growth rate in urban areas have surpassed those of the rural areas. Women are left behind in rural areas as the men go to urban areas in search of employment. However, since there is demand for food in the urban areas, women are in most cases unable to meet the demand of food crop. They heavily depend on subsistence crop growing as this cannot meet the demands of the urbanites. This in turn affects food production in the country.

5.2 Pressure in Creating Low cost Housing- Slum development

In Kenya, most of the urban areas are predominantly faced with acute shortage of housing. Much of the available accommodation is qualitatively of sub-standard variety. This problem has tended to worsen over the years due to rapid increase in population, fast rate of urbanization and proportionately inadequate addition to the housing stock. This means that the demand for housing is high thus people pay excessive rent which is beyond their means. In our profit-oriented economy, private developers target the wealth in creating housing facilities which they can easily afford. This leaves out the majority who are poor and the lower middle class since they cannot afford housing thus this leads to the creation of shanties and slums in most of the urban centers in Kenya. Such shanties and slums are characterized by sub-standard housing, overcrowding, lack of electrification, ventilation, sanitation, roads and drinking water facilities. Furthermore, the slum dwellings have been breeding grounds for communicable diseases, environmental pollution, demoralization and many social tensions. Such slums in Kenya are found in Mukuru Kwa Njenga, Kibera, Huruma, Sinai, and Mathare in Nairobi. Other parts of urban areas in Kenya including Kisumu, Eldoret, Nakuru and Mombasa have slum dwellings that have not been mentioned in this paper.

5.3 Social ties cease

Urbanization affects not only the family structure but also intra and interfamily relations, as well as the functions the family performs. With urbanization, there is a disruption of the bonds of community and the migrant faces the problem to replace old relationships with new ones and to find a satisfactory means of continuing relationship with those left behind. Furthermore, joint family is being gradually replaced by nuclear family, the size of the family is shrinking, and kinship relationship is confined to two or three generations only. In most case, there are increasing cases of divorce as result of lack of mechanisms for dispute resolution. Immorality takes the form of *'mpango wa kando'* (side dish) where either the spouse seeks an alternative partner. This means that there is increasing prevalence of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. This is in line with the current statistics by NASCOP (2014) that indicated that majority of the urbanites especially the married couple are prone to be infected with HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, social ties reduce in that one cannot help the other including relatives because of the economic sustenance within the family. This creates a culture of selfishness among the individuals in the urban areas. This clearly creates the chances of lack of socialization.

5.4 Feminism Perspective has taken form

Feminism takes centre stage as women constitute an important section of rural urban migrants. Formally, women were traditionally relegated to the informal and family setting thus they were the care takes of home, thus they were supposed to operate in the home setting. However, this paper acknowledges that with the rapid industrialization middle class women are getting employed in the white collar jobs and professions while the lower class women find jobs in the informal sector (Kapur 1970). Women are also found in the formal sector as industrial workers. Never the less, in a patriarchal social system men have been forced to acquire more specialized skills. This has been due to the fact that the increasing number of women have taken to white-collar jobs and entered different professions. These professions are instrumental in enhancing the social and economic status of women, thereby meaning increased and rigorous hours of work, professional loyalty along with increased autonomy. The traditional and cultural institutions remaining the same, crises of values and a confusion of norms have finally resulted. Accordingly, the enlightened woman is forced to perform

the dual roles - the social and the professional roles (Gore, 1968). This in most cases leads to confrontation between women and men in most cases, it has reached a point where by a majority of women nowadays feel the urge to sustain on their own and furthermore making it on their own. They mostly want to avoid establishing families due to its complex 'pressures' as presumed and the challenges that come with it. This has led to them adopting the feministic approach that they can do all things without the involvement of the family or in most cases the contribution of the man as perceived traditionally. Technology has taken center stage where women have opted to being single mothers through encouraged development of fertility centers.

5.5 Increased Pollution

In countries like China and India, there are cases of pollution. A recent study by the UNDP (2014) has seen China being a country that leads in increased pollution. This is seen as a result of the population who heavily rely on vehicles that are termed or referred to as having the highest emissions. The Kenyan case is not exempted because we are on the verge of being listed as a country not observing the Kyoto protocol due to the fact that although we have formulated mechanisms in dealing with the environmental degradation, we are far from implementing the already established environmental laws. Accordingly, increase in population significantly increases the chances of increased pollution.

Another pollutant in an urban area is the presence of garbage. Lack of disposable units in urban area can be seen to lead to pollution. Children die or suffer from diarrhoea, tetanus, measles etc. because of poor sanitary conditions and water contamination. In October 2009 alone, two weeks of heavy rains unleashed significant emergencies in urban areas in Kenya. Cholera killed 11 people in Nairobi's Mukuru kwa Njenga slums alone in the month of October. Some 949 people most of them pregnant women and children under five years have been treated for cholera and other water-borne diseases like diarrhea, vomiting and dysentery in Kenya's slums (OCHA, 2010). Accordingly, increased pollution has resulted to high temperatures and drought due to changes in climate. The raining patterns have shifted thereby contributing to low food production. Moreover the weather patterns are unpredictable.

5.6 Underdeveloped Services

Nabutola (2011) points out that high density settlements (slums) are often highly polluted owing to the lack of urban services, including running water, trash pickup, electricity or paved roads. Nevertheless, cities provide poor people with more opportunities and greater access to resources to transform their situation than rural areas. The same can be said of Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru and Eldoret, Kenya's five largest cities. This paper acknowledges the fact that when there is overpopulation, there is cause of strain in the promotion of services that target the overall population. For instance, health care services are sometimes left in a deplorable condition, overcrowding in public schools thus there is lack of academic delivery to the pupils.

According to SOFA (2002) informal settlements of Nairobi for example, 94 percent of the households have no sanitation and 60 percent have no direct access to toilets. As discussed earlier in this paper, lack of proper sanitation and proper drinking water is on major concern to the inhabitants in slums. Thus is attributed to low cost housing facilities. Furthermore, the prevalence of communicable, gastrointestinal, food-borne and other infectious diseases, such as diarrheal diseases, malaria and parasitic infections, is usually high under such conditions. Interactions between infectious diseases and nutrition are well-known, and environments that increase health risk exposure also increase the risk of malnutrition. In these instances, infants and children are the most vulnerable. These conditions are worsened if the urban poor have no financial or physical access to health facilities.

5.7 Increase in crime rates

In most cases there are incidences of increased crime rates that are caused mainly by youth. The youth who are mainly unemployed and cannot afford the comforts of life are forced to engage in criminal activities. This means that they cannot afford proper housing, food, and other secondary necessities. In most cases the youths are lured to engage in criminal activities by their peers and this result in the involvement in such incidences that include mugging and pick pocketing in the streets. For example in towns such as Eldoret there are increased incidences of increasing cases of conmen and in Nairobi around the C.B.D area there are related cases of mobile theft and late night muggings making various areas inaccessible. Accordingly, the collapse of Webuye Pan-Paper mill in Western part of Kenya resulted to the introduction of prostitution and increased violent crimes in the area.

5.8 Increased gap between Socio-Economic Groups

The increasing gap between socio-economic groups in urban areas in this paper may be presumed to relate to job loss, lack of employment opportunity, the rising cost of living, the breakdown of governmental support systems and social disorganization that push more and more of the inhabitants into poverty.

Consequently, this may increase chances poverty and destitution. Those who lack basic opportunities in urban centers cities include persons from poor households, homeless persons who may be living on fixed incomes or no incomes at all. Therefore, the vulnerable families may be left out to fend for themselves and in most cases come may forced to engage in social evils such as prostitution and violent crimes. Moreover, the resultant effect poverty amongst the households is alcoholism which may be a form of escapism. For instance, areas such as Kibera, Mukuru Kwa Njenga slums and Mathare areas are sprawling with *chang'aa* and *busaa* (local brew commonly found in slum or rural areas) dens. This in turn leads to violence that creates instability in families in the slum areas. Moreover, once people adapt to poverty, societal attitudes and behaviours patterns that initially developed in response to economic deprivation are passed on to subsequent generations through socialization.

5.9 Increased presence of Non-governmental agencies.

The presence of non-governmental organization in slum areas is immensely high, including those that are referred to as community based organizations. Accordingly, scholars that include Jordan & Tuijl, (2006) have pointed out that the non-governmental organizations have notably increased in size while attracting a substantial amount of donor funding. However, their success and competence in reducing deficiencies in underprivileged communities especially those that are poor has been questioned (Schweigert, 2006). Furthermore, women and children who suffer from diseases and malnutrition have either been left starving or borrowing in towns. Accordingly, one can say that indeed there are challenges of food insecurity in urban areas.

VI. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING URBAN DEVELOPEMENT IN KENYA

6.1 Creation of Centralized Business Associations

Scholars including Nabutola (2011) have indicated that the rise to lobby groups like NCBDA (Nairobi Central Business District Association) that incorporate professionals and business people creates the realization that there is need to focus on the deterioration in services delivery and the severe loss of governance processes. He further points out that the local-governments have less revenue to spend on the basic upkeep of cities and the provision of services; cities have become areas of massive sprawl, serious environmental problems, and widespread poverty.

This paper critically advocates for the integration and formation of business associations for the development of the urban centers in the other parts of the counties to advocate for improved delivery of services. This will in turn promote service delivery and at the same time promote investor confidence and attracting tourism which is one of the country's chief earner. Advocacy in terms of planning and development of urban centers should be seen to complement the development of urban areas as a whole. The central business district associations should be incorporated in other counties.

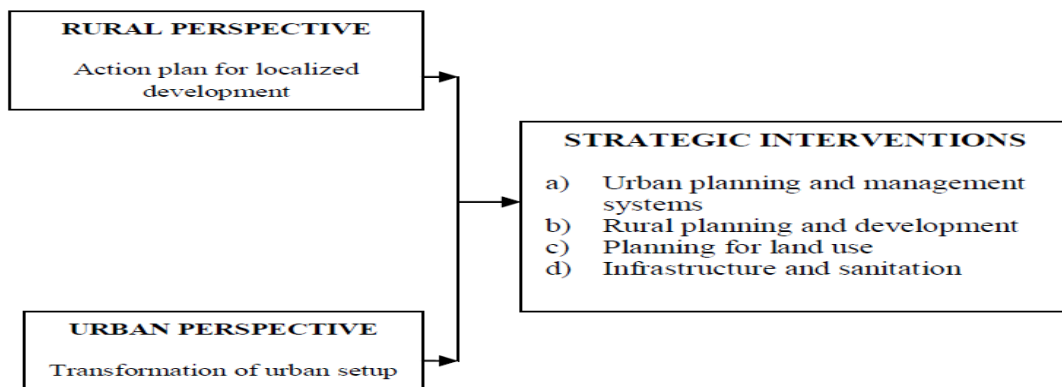


Fig 2: Showing strategic interventions for both rural and urban development

6.2 Overhaul in planning of the urban development process

Urban Planning can be defined as the design and regulation of the uses of space that focus on the physical form, economic functions, and social impacts of the urban environment and on the location of different activities within it (Shrey *et al.*, 2008). Urban planning provides for division of the city into specialized functional quarters what is commonly referred to as zoning; advanced systems of fortification, water supply, and drainage and space for housing.

Accordingly, preference for urban infrastructure should be installed before urbanization takes form. Improved planning for land use in urban centers integrates proper planning that includes transportation planning to improve the economic and social environments of communities. Moreover, urban centers in Kenya lack planning initiatives that focus on effective and efficient land use. Accordingly, Nabutola (2011) clearly advocates for zoning to assure harmonized land utilization in urban centers. At its most basic level, land use planning is likely to involve zoning and transport infrastructure planning. He further insists that land use planning is a significant part of social policy, ensuring that land is used efficiently for the benefit of the wider economy and population as well as to protect the environment. This paper further propagates that urban planners should be on the onslaught of creating policies that focus on land use. That is, creating rules and regulations that are in line with those of NEMA (National Environmental Management Authority).

Planning should also target environmental planning and management initiatives at the city level. UNCHS (1992) articulates that urban planning should have a focus between the reductions of urban poverty; improvement of environmental conditions (short and long term) and thus enhanced economic productivity in urban areas. As a long-term strategy, new techniques of solid waste management systems need be established thus new technology for garbage-disposal and fundamental change in the county infrastructure and land-use planning. Each and every county require a clearly laid out policy on solid waste management and propagated by other scholars.

6.3 Shift in perceptive thought of urbanization as compared to rural development

Accordingly, information and telecommunication, increasingly allow people in rural villages to become urbanized without necessarily migrating to towns and cities. As their access to modern infrastructure and services normally associated with urban areas increases, they become less dependent on living in towns and cities to meet their economic and social needs. Furthermore, there is need for reinforced creation of programmes that target the rural youth. Although such programmes such as the Kazi Kwa Vijana programme have existed, such policies have faced politicization. Therefore, there is need for policies that fully and equally target the youth, women and the persons with disability. This would encourage rural development and promote sustained growth in the rural areas.

6.4 Effective implementation of the slum upgrading programme

The promulgated Kenyan constitution of 2010 provides for access for housing and sanitation. Accordingly, the already established programmes such as the Kenya Informal Settlement Improvement Program (KISIP) established in 2011 and Kenya Slum Upgrading Project (KESUP) need be fully implemented to target the majority of low income earners in the slum areas in various towns in Kenya. Although politicization has taken form in the establishment of the upgrading programme, effective sensitization of such programmes. Government backing should be seen to provide support by improve basic infrastructure and service delivery. Upgrading of housing infrastructure should for instance target water supply, sanitation and transport services that will critical improve the lives of slum dwellers. Slum upgrading requires a stronger focus on networked technologies, such as sewers, piped water, and electricity. Community members should be involved and also, allowed, and supported to; play active roles in preparing and executing plans for slum upgrading (Onyekachi, 2014). Ownership of a house is important in most societies as it confers some forms of privilege. Efficient housing delivery and affordability therefore, will enhance the quality of life.

VII. CONCLUSION

Accordingly, although this paper has not addressed the social effects of urbanization, this is because other scholars have addressed such effects in their works. This paper concludes that planning and adequate policies should be geared towards urban planning more so the involvement of the county governments in the process. The national government commitment

should focus prioritarily on housing for the low income earner and the poor through annual budgetary allocation. This should be furthered through incorporation of institutions such as the housing finance corporation should be in the forefront for advocating for cheap housing amongst those who cannot afford housing.

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