

Development Studies View No 13. 2019

Department of Development Studies

Pakistan Institute of Development
Economics

‘DS View’, an academic activity in which students, researchers and faculty are encouraged to write short academic essays on the Development discourse, aims to generate discussion on issues concurrent to the times we are living in. The topical range may include academic debates on issues such as poverty, inequality, gender, conflict and human security. The essay for DS View can be expository, argumentative, persuasive or analytical.

The topic of 13th DS View is **‘The Impact of Anti-Encroachment Drive on the Livelihood of Working Class in Islamabad’** authored by Huda Hussain Bhurgri.

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The Impact of Anti-Encroachment Drive on the livelihood of Working Class in Islamabad

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The Planning and Development Commission of Pakistan estimates that 29.5 % of Pakistan's total population currently lives below the poverty line (Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform, 2019). It translates that around 55 million people cannot access basic necessities of life, such as healthcare, food, housing and education. There are multidimensional factors of poverty pushing people to migrate and seek employment in urban centers where men secure jobs at factories, mills, sanitation and local businesses on meager wages; and women serve as caregivers at upper-middle class households. The Cambridge Dictionary defines such groups as working class; a social group which earns less than other groups; are paid only for the hours or days they work; and use physical labor as force of production. Although the constitution of Pakistan promises the provision of adequate and cheap housing schemes to ameliorate the living conditions of the downtrodden communities, yet with major cuts in development budget, the government is unlikely to achieve this target. Thus in absence of public housing schemes, millions of migrants have assembled '*Katchi Abadis*' or slums on state owned lands in order to access informal job markets for sustenance.

In Islamabad, slums provide a cheap housing option to thousands of wage laborers who cannot afford to pay exorbitant property rents in the metropolitan city. Such settlements could thrive as communities if they are regulated and included in development plans to ensure provision of schools, hospital, housing and clean drinking water to the residents. Due to price hikes of residential and commercial land and lawsuits by the plot allottees, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered district administration to demolish encroached areas in Islamabad. The Capital Development Authority in compliance bulldozed 857 illegal structures, such as slums, houses, and shops (Choudhry, 2019). Within few days, CDA wiped hundreds of constructions in many areas of the city, disrupting the socio-economic life of working class people, including elderly, women and children.

Keeping in view the current economic crisis, this essay aims to analyze the impact of anti-encroachment drives on the livelihood of working class groups and how state policies are marginalizing landless communities in Pakistan. In addition, this essay attempts to outline consequences of evicting slums '*Katchi Abadis*' in Islamabad and what alternative methods could be put in place before carrying out such massive eviction plans. The outcomes of anti-encroachment campaigns are central in development studies discipline and thus it is important for the development practitioners to reflect on state policies causing massive socio-political instability and economic inequality.

The anti-encroachment drive has abrogated the article 14 of constitution of Pakistan which asserts that the dignity of man and privacy of home is inviolable (Pak. Constitution, art. 14). Unfortunately, the occupants of slums were devoid of this right and were treated as trespassers, encroachers or thieves. Their privacy was violated and their belongings were smashed to the ground. In many areas occupants resisted with violence and planned mob attacks on government officials to prevent the demolishing (Chaudhry, 2019).

The evictions followed by displacement exposes affected population to countless economic shocks and fluctuations. In Pakistan the inflation rate has reached to 10.3% in July 2019 indicating a significant decline in consumer purchasing power and overpricing of basic utilities (Trading Economics, 2019). During economic crisis, demolishing local shops or homes cause severe economic instability since the displaced laborers leave their jobs in order to find an alternative place to live. The relocation also affects the role of women in family because losing a

job puts them in a vulnerable condition where they do not have any say in the household decisions (Abubakar, 2016). On the other hand, the household either sell their possessions such as small furniture, cattle, kitchen utensils or bicycles to meet the ends, or take loan on high interest rates, ignoring the future consequences of such decisions.

In addition, the sense of community of such settlements gets badly affected due to evictions. Islamabad is home of hundreds of community-specific slums. The slums in F-6, F-7, G-7, G-8, and G-12 are homes of Christian population, while the Afghan refugees live in I-11 who have resettled here after military operations to earn a livelihood (Siddiqui, 2015). These communities migrate as groups, form informal social ties and make safety nets such as looking after children when women go on work or lending money to each other in case of crisis etc. Displacement not only affects the economic life of migrants but it badly disturbs their social ties where the safety of women and children becomes a major problem. Child abuse, rape, theft and violence incidents are common in such settlements where people do not identify each other as a community.

Rather displacing the working class population, the government should chalk out plans to reduce housing crisis which deeply affects the livelihood of people working on low wages. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) enlists a twofold solution which can turn slums into thriving communities (Buhne, 2016). First, the government should regularize the '*Katchi Abadis*' to avoid further marginalization of people in peripheries of the city. Through regularization of *Abadis* government will be able to allocate a significant proportion in development budget to build schools, roads and health facilities. The idea of 'Clean and Beautiful Islamabad' relies on the labor of those who work day and night as janitors or maids in upper middle class households. Regularization of these slums will save residents from sudden housing crisis and severe economic shocks or fluctuations.

Second, labor housing schemes are crucial to cater the needs of the working class migrants and settlers, such as affordable housing, provision of clean drinking water, proper sewerage system and access to informal job markets. Since a person earning wage per day is often responsible for providing to his/her family, has to be physically healthy to produce manual labor. Access to clean drinking water is essential to disease control and prevention of health emergencies. Same is the case with sewerage system. On the other hand, labor housing schemes constructed near urban settlements are cost effective for people who rely on public transportations. However, recently government has announced a housing scheme located in zone 4 Islamabad where the government will ballot 10,000 houses (The Dawn. 2019). Yet the scheme could not cater hundreds of migrants working on daily wages and are expected to pay the monthly installments.

In the final analysis, working class in Islamabad is facing a catastrophic economic crisis amidst high inflation rate and anti-encroachment drives which have shoved them into a pit of poverty. Slum caters housing needs of hundreds of people migrating from war-torn areas who cannot afford skyrocketing rents in the metropolitan. Every citizen, no matter which economic class he/she belongs to, deserves a dignified life where they are provided with the basic civic amenities. Shelter, clean drinking water, sanitation and access to health facilities are few basic and essential needs to name which would turn these slums into thriving communities. Yet, displacing the people and absence of cheap labor-housing schemes create issues such as unemployment, housing insecurity and poor living conditions affecting the socio-economic life of hundreds. Thus instead of treating residents of '*Katchi Abadis*' as encroachers and selling their lands for commercial housings, the Capital Development Authority must regularize the settlements and initiate development plans so the working class residing in Islamabad could access their fundamental right to live with dignity.

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