

Informal Settlers: Identifying the Genuine Settlers and Landless of Nepal

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SUMMARY

According to the World Cities Report by UN-habitat, an estimated 1.6 billion people live in inadequate housing globally, of which 1 billion live in slums and informal settlements. With its characteristic, informal settlements are defined as settlement that occupies land without legal ownership and has been in the dyadic dichotomy of legal and illegal. Conceptually, informal settlements are in "grey space," the space positioned between "whiteness" of legality and "blackness" of eviction. Nonetheless, some studies suggest certain legitimacy within this 'grey space,' defined as social legitimacy.

In 2020, Govt. of Nepal had formulated a commission, named as Land Issues Resolving Commission. The commission aims to resolve land-related issues by transforming so-called socially legitimate rights of informal settlements towards legally legitimate rights by providing legal recognition and secured land for housing. The land use policy 2015, The Land Policy, 2075 and Land use act 2019 of Nepal also spells about managing of informal settlements particularly by resettling the vulnerable settlers in the safer area. In this regard, the government has already initiated planning of land in this direction

Regardless of the various intervention strategies undertaken by various government as well as non-government organizations for managing the land and housing issues of informal settlements, the pertinent questions arising are "How to identify the genuine informal settlers?", "Who are the real beneficiaries of the intervention?". To tackle these questions, the land commission has developed an innovative socio-technical approach for identifying and preparing the baseline data of informal settlers. This paper aims to describe this innovative approach of identifying the real beneficiaries to be included in the government program of providing secured land for housing. In the end, this paper will discuss the potential strengths and challenges of this approach.

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