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# Rural Community Perception and Readiness on Urbanization: The Case of Wolaita Sodo Town, Sodo Zurya Wereda (Gandaba and Ofa Seri Kebelles)

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**Abstract:** This research paper was about the perception and readiness of rural community towards urbanization with the specific objectives of assessing the factors for the rapid expansion of Wolaita Sodo town, the level of understanding of the local people about urbanization and the investigation of the problems faced as a result of urbanization and their readiness to face the inevitable process of urbanization. Both qualitative and quantitative research design were used to obtain relevant data. Observation, interview and questionnaire were the tools employed to gather data. Both purposive for site selection and interview, and simple random sampling (questionnaire) techniques were used in selecting respondents from the study areas. Respondent from Sodo town government officials from the sectors of water supply enterprise, electric power authority, urban development bureau and road authority Sodo branch were selected purposively, whereas the questionnaire was distributed among for 40 members of the two kebelles. The finding are; the existence of unplanned and unmanaged expansion of the town, the low level of satisfaction of the people of the works of the responsible bodies (main about compensation and the distribution of the electricity and road among others), and awareness creation programs (about saving and significance of development for public) should be made by the responsible body are among the way outs to minimize the negative impacts of urbanization.

**Keywords:** Urbanization, Readiness, Wolaita Sodo Town, Positive Impact, Negative Impact

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## 1. Introduction

Mostly urbanization can be defined as a growing number of people that live in urban areas and there are several causes of urbanization. It is not merely a modern phenomenon, but a rapid and historic transformation of human social roots on a global scale, whereby predominantly rural culture is being rapidly replaced by predominantly urban culture. It also predominantly results in the physical growth of urban areas, be it horizontal or vertical [1].

Now the vast majority/ or more than half of the people in the world live in urban centers. According to the United Nations 2018 report, 55% of the world's population lives in urban areas, a portion that is expected to increase to 68% by 2050. Projections show that urbanization, the gradual shift in residence of the human population from rural to urban areas, combined with the overall growth of the world's population could add

another 2.5 billion people to urban areas by 2050, with close to 90% of this increase taking place in Asia and Africa [2].

Political, economic, social, cultural advancements are the decisive role in transforming rural areas to urban centers and growth of large cities. Following this there are various impacts on the land, natural resources and the life system of the people in rural areas and this impacts of urbanization rate differ from country to country due to inconsistencies of socio-economic circumstances and prominence of development [3].

Regarding the expansion of urban population, in the 1950's only 751 million people have been living in urban areas, but in 2018 4.2 billion live on urban areas. This rapid growth of urban population, despite its relatively lower level of urbanization, in Asia it covers up to 54% of the world urban population, followed by Europe and Africa (13%). In terms of the urban areas; the most urbanized regions include

northern America (82% of its population living urban areas), Latin America and Caribbean (81%), Europe (74%), and Oceania (68%). The level of urbanization in Asia is, as the 2018 UN report, approximating 50%. Africa, in contrast, remains mostly rural, with 43% of its population living in urban areas.

Urbanization has favorable and unfavorable impacts. Most of the time urbanization in developing countries is frequent but not sustainable. Rapid and unplanned urban growth as well as urban expansion threatens sustainable development when the necessary infrastructure is not developed or when policies are not well-implemented. Unplanned or inadequately managed urban expansion leads to rapid sprawl, pollution, and environmental degradation, together with unsustainable production and consumption patterns' [4].

More specifically, the positive impacts of urbanization on rural livelihood, well-planned and managed urban growth and development can serve as a positive factor for rural livelihoods [5] such as a high demand on agricultural products, access to developed extension services, educational and medicinal facilities and opportunities for non-farm employment [6]. On the other, unplanned urbanization negatively affects rural livelihoods [7] as a result of changing land use and cropping patterns, decreasing arable land, increasing unemployment in farming sector, causing high price of food commodities, poor quality and scarcity of water, rural-urban migration and increasing competition between agricultural and residential uses of natural resources [8].

During the past two decades (more specifically from 2000 onwards) Ethiopia had experienced a relatively rapid and continuous development. Throughout these two development decades the ratio of the urban population also witnessed a tremendous change (it reached about 24.4 million people). 'Starting from a very low level of urbanization in 1950, Ethiopia has undergone relatively rapid urbanization compared both to the historical experience of the more developed regions and to other developing countries at similar levels of urbanization' [2]. The urbanization in Ethiopia encounters both opportunities and challenges; like any other developing countries the urbanizations process is/was not well planned and managed. On the other hand the process uncovers the immense potential of cities and town towards the fast and rapid expansion urban cities.

Wolaita Sodo town is one example of town which shows a fast and rapid growth of urbanization. But like other cities and towns in Ethiopia, Wolaita Sodo town also experienced the unplanned and unmanaged expansion and development which have its own impacts.

In this research the major emphasis is on the perception and readiness of the rural area community to mitigate the challenges and to reverse it to opportunities in Wolaita Sodo town.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

According to the national statistical offices, urban population defined as people living in urban areas. It is

calculated using the World Bank population estimates and urban ratios from the United Nations World Urbanization prospects [7].

Ethiopia with long history of nationhood is a country of so many astonishing issues. Ethiopia is a country of great civilization (during its peak of civilization it was one among the four great civilizations of the world, and the country have its own written letters and number, and is a country of mosaic of people). Despite these all things, the country is still categorized among the underdeveloped countries. This categories of states are, mostly known by various characteristics namely among other, lack of development, lack urbanization, and maladministration.

Despite the above listed manifestations, Ethiopia has scored a remarkable result in the recent three decades in many aspects. Due to this developments Ethiopia have been named among the fastest growing economies in the world. Even if there are some debates with regard to the rate of annual economic development, within the time frame (most importantly since 2000 EC) the country undergo an overarching changes. Urbanization though is not planned and managed well, is among the reflection of the development.

As explained earlier, economic, political and social aspects are also deserve process of urbanization... urban living is often associated with higher levels of literacy and education, better health condition, greater access to [4]. Prior to 1990's from the total population of the country (Ethiopia) about 6 million (13%) people were the total urban population. Today the number increased to 21% (about 24 million), [9].

Even though urbanization has substantial sustainability of economic development and other similar benefits in developing countries, however, there are also challenges from the public. In line with the sustainability, here it come the issue of the readiness and the positive attitude of the rural area community to urbanization (expansion of urban centers). As can be seen from the report of the UN many developing country face the rapid urban expansion without proper planning and infrastructure which leads to the urban pollution, urban sprawl, above all environmental degradation which make life so hard and it ended up under the same life cycle of hand to mouth life (underdevelopment). In this regard, the case in Ethiopian is not different, in that even if it has a long history of statehood and once was among the great civilizations of the world, it is still among the underdeveloped country. Different research have conducted on the impacts of urbanization both in Ethiopia and outside of Ethiopia, but the researchers have not seen research which emphasized on the perception and readiness of the local community when the urbanization is inevitable in incorporating their surroundings. So this is the gap that this research attempt to explore.

## 3. Objective of the Study

### 3.1. General Objective

The general objective of the research was to analyze the rural community perception and readiness on urbanization

the case of Wolaita Sodo town; Sodo Zurya kebelles

### 3.2. *Specific Objective*

Assess the factors for the rapid urban expansion of the town (Wolaita Sodo).

Understand the local communities' perception towards urbanization.

Investigate the major problems faced by the rural community as a result of the rapid expansion of the town.

Evaluate the rural community readiness to tie up with the inevitable urbanization process.

## 4. Research Question

What are the major factors that facilitate the rapid expansion of town?

How do the local communities perceive urbanization?

What are the major problems; the rural community facing due to urbanization?

How far is the rural community ready to tie up with urbanization?

## 5. Literature Review

### 5.1. *Meaning and Definition of Urbanization*

There is no conventional definition of urban; it varies from place to place, from country to country beyond time period. Because there is no universal criteria for defining what urban mean. However, there are some minimum requirements of urban which employed people to identify from rural centers, and these are; population size, life system and the availability of infrastructures like schools, hospital, bank and others.

Urbanization is the transference and mobility of population from rural to urban areas in order to attain socio-economic and political welfares. In history the urbanization of the developing world began to accelerate in late twentieth century [10]. It is the growth of towns and cities as the result of the movement of men from rural to urban to search jobs and to have better life style and life standard. The process of urbanization results in a dense settlement called an urban area. The conglomeration of urban areas including cities and their suburbs linked economically and socially constitutes a system called a metropolitan area or region [11].

### 5.2. *Causes of Urbanization*

Among the various factors of urbanization industrialization is major one; it is the basic driver behind the movement of rural population to urban areas for factory jobs. Before the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain, no society could be described as urban or urbanized. And all countries, primarily in the West, that began to industrialize rapidly after Great Britain became highly urbanized by the mid-twentieth century, which was followed by accelerated industrialization and then urbanization in the rest of the world through the last century and into the present [12].

Migration is also a decisive factor of urbanization; most of

the time in several countries people is migrated to urban centers to access social and economic facilities like university/college, health centers (hospital), and better life system/standard. Moreover, people may be migrated to urban centers seeking jobs/ for the sake of job opportunities. Because the fundamental source of income in rural centers is agriculture, however, if there is no sufficient rain/happen drought the people have no choice other than migrating to urban centers to find other jobs as alternate to survive. Despite people may be also migrated to urban centers to live better life by availing all needed services and facilities like, electricity, education, transport, social media, financial institutions, and so on.

This implies urbanization is primarily the outcome of (net) migration from rural to urban areas. The expansion of urban boundaries and the formation of new urban centers (mostly the reclassification of what were previously villages as they grow or develop to meet national urban criteria) also contribute to urbanization, but it should be kept in mind that migration is also an important driver behind the formation of new urban centers and the spatial expansion of old ones.

The other cause of urbanization is trade and business movement. The trade movement of urban centers is larger and better compared to the rural one. Hence, trade and commercialization is significant factors of urbanization.

### 5.3. *Impacts of Urbanization on the Community*

The impacts of urbanization varied from state to state in terms of economic growth and development. In most of developed states the impact of urbanization is necessarily is related with environmental pollution (global warming), whereas the impacts of urbanization in developing countries are associated with shortage and scarcity of facilities and services.

Urbanization has negative and positive impact on the community. Some of the negative impacts of urbanization are environmental pollution, lack of sanitation, homelessness, lack of sanitation, reduction and exploitation of trees and forests and others. Moreover, urbanization has substantial impact or directly affects the natural resources at the regional and global scales [13]. This implies untreated industrial wastages in urban centers potentially pollute the natural environment like rivers.

In addition to that, urban centers may experience traffic jams, infrastructure breakdowns such as water main breaks, lack of appropriate housing, lack of appropriate jobs, and lack of electricity. Most urban centers in developing countries suffer more related with scarcity of facility and infrastructure such as lack of transportation, straight light, police station near to them, access to water and the like.

The other factor of urbanization is the assimilation and destruction of home grown moral and cultural values of the native community that were in rural centers and this necessarily leads to social crisis.

On the other hand, urbanization sustains positive impacts over the society. There are several services are expected from urban centers, such as providing a variety of services that

rural centers cannot. Some of the services delivered to the society in urban centers are: public transportation system, access to clean water and sewage services, access to educational and recreational facilities, access to specialized healthcare facilities.

Moreover, urban centers also provide a great multiplicity of housing for their citizens ranging from individually owned houses to high-density apartments and condominiums. The extensions of infrastructural developments include open spaces for playgrounds, schools, hospitals and other community centers.

#### **5.4. Urbanization in Ethiopia**

Urbanization in Ethiopia is not a new phenomenon it can be traced back to the ancient civilization of Axum. Despite this Ethiopia is among the least urbanized countries of the world. In comparison to other Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, Ethiopia's urbanization rate is low -- only 16% of the population is urbanized according to data published by the country's Central Statistical Agency. This is far less than the average for all SSA, at approximately 30 percent [14].

Ethiopia is among the least urbanized countries in the world today, and only 18% of its population lives in urban areas [15]. The arrangement is changing in Ethiopia in similar to other developing countries. With an average annual growth rate exceeding 4.54 percent for nearly three decades, Ethiopia is urbanizing faster than Sub Saharan Africa (4.03percent), which is itself among the world's fastest urbanizing regions [16]. According to Central Statistical Agency (CSA) projections, the country's urban population is expected to nearly triple from 2012 to 2037, reaching more than 42 million [16].

The rapid increase in urban populations has meant that peri-urban areas are growing much more quickly than formal urban centers. Peri-urban areas are those areas immediately around a town or city. They are areas in transition from countryside to city (rural to urban), often with undeveloped infrastructure, where health and sanitation services are under pressure and where the natural environment is at risk of degradation [15].

## **6. Research Method and Methodology**

### **6.1. Description of Study Area**

Sodo is the capital of wolaita zone, SNNP, Ethiopia and it has a latitude and longitude of 6°54'N 37°45'E with an elevation between 1,600 and 2,100 metres (5,200 and 6,900 feet) above sea level [10]. It was part of the former Sodo woreda which included Sodo Zuria which completely surrounds it.

Soddo zuria Woreda is one of rural Woreda administration in Wolaita zone (Southern Nations Nationalities Peoples' Region). The Woreda is located at a distance of 390 km (to the south) from Addis Ababa. The Woreda has 31 rural Kebele administrative. For this research two kebeles were purposively selected (Gandaba and Ofa Sere kebeles).

### **6.2. Research Design**

In this research both the qualitative and quantitative approaches (the mixed design) were employed with the major emphasis of investigating the perception and readiness of surrounding community towards urbanization. In order to better understand the issue under the issue using both the qualitative and quantitative approaches was necessary and thus qualitative and quantitative research design was used in this research. More specifically the research design of this paper is descriptive in nature in that, much of the work was in describing the impact of urbanization and the readiness of the people.

### **6.3. Data Collection Techniques; Source and Tools of Data**

The sources of the data were both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were gathered from different people; those who are in governmental work with the task of urban development bureau and other sector bureaus (water and sanitation bureau, electric power authority, road authority), and those groups of people who live in the surrounding (peasant). Primary data was collected by using interview and questionnaire. Secondary source was gathered by referring to different published and unpublished materials.

#### **6.3.1. Tools of Data Collection**

The major tools of data collection which are used in this research were personal observation, interview, and questionnaires.

#### **6.3.2. Interview**

Interview was made for the samples who work in government office (specifically on urban development, Ethiopian electric power sodo district, wolaita sodo water and wastage management, and the administrator of sodo zuriya woreda; specially the leaders of the selected kebeles). The content of the questions of the interview was open ended type of questions.

#### **6.3.3. Questionnaire**

Samples for this purpose were selected from the two kebeles (Gandaba and Ofa Sre). The contents of the questionnaire was both close ended and open ended type of questions as well as structured and semi structured type.

### **6.4. Sampling Technique and Sample Size**

In this research, the sampling technique which was used is both the purposive (from non-probability) and simple random sampling (from the probability sampling technique) employed. The purposive technique was used to select the study areas (two kebeles) and those who are working the governmental offices specifically; in urban development bureau, water and sanitation office, electric power authority, urban road construction and the selected kebele leaders. Whereas with regard to the probability sampling the number of the people who live in the kebeles is not small and taking purposively may misled into false conclusion i.e. the people who reside in the surrounding are facing the impacts of urbanization equally and taking the whole population is somehow cumbersome to manage it easily (in terms of data

collection and interpretation). Thus, from the selected kebelles respondents were chosen randomly.

The total household heads in each selected kebelles is 2000 and the researchers took 1% from each kebelles. So the total sample size is 50 and 40 of them was chosen from the surrounding (selected) kebelles and fill questionnaires, whereas the remaining 10 representatives were selected purposively from the governmental offices and used for interview. The composition of the respondents who were chosen for interview is; 2 from urban development bureau, 2 from the water supply enterprise, 2 from the Ethiopian electric power authority, 2 from the urban road construction office and 2 representative from (leaders) the selected kebelles.

### 6.5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data from the primary and secondary sources was

*Table 1. Definition of Urbanization.*

s. no.	What do you think is urbanization?	Frequency	Percentage
1	A large conglomeration of people	5	12.5%
2	An area where a civilized people reside	10	25%
3	A place where people interact and share different culture and values	10	25%
4	A place where all the necessary infrastructure	15	37.5%

Own survey 2020.

As we can see from the above table majority of the respondents (37.5%) visualize urban centers in terms of the infrastructure, while the other respondents (25%) express urban centers in terms of the composition of the people (diversity in cultural and other aspects) and in terms of the peoples general status (in terms of level of understanding), and last category (12.5%) simply view urban centers as large conglomeration of people. Despite the manner of the respondents description one can understand the link between the above listed factors. Whenever there is collection of

analyzed and interpreted qualitatively and quantitatively using percentages and tables.

## 7. Data Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter the collected data was analyzed and interpreted, and the results were demonstrated in table and percentage. The data collected through interview was also used to elaborate the general issues raised and discussed by the respondents of the questionnaire. Below are the discussion of the data collected through questionnaire from the members of the local community who recently incorporated to the new structure (urban centers) and those who are on the way of being incorporated to the urban centers.

people definitely there will be interaction and sharing of different issues and as a means of interaction and communication they seek different infrastructural facilities. Moreover, the respondents understanding towards urban centers are similar and coupled one another.

According to the [4], urban living is often associated with higher levels of literacy and education, better health condition, greater access to social and economic services, and enhanced opportunities for cultural and political participation.

*Table 2. Expectation from urbanization.*

No	What is your expectation from urbanization?	No. of respondent	Percentage
	Electricity	7	17.5%
	Water	18	45%
	Safe road	5	12.5%
	Other social service (school, health center, administrative...)	10	25%

Own survey 2020.

What makes an area urban center is due the availability of the major infrastructural facilities (access to safe water, road electricity and social services). As a matter of priority the respondents expect different facility notwithstanding to the equal significance of these facilities.

As can be seen from the table above, 45% of the respondent prioritize water, next other social services (25%) followed by electricity (17%) and road (12.5%). The implication of these figures is human let alone in urban centers but also in rural areas gives priority to safe water because human cannot live without water, but despite their adequacy and safeness of the facility human can live without the other services. When it comes to the urban centers (study area) as can be understand

from the interview gathered from the respective sector offices the safe water service compared to the other services is better (but it does not mean availability of safe water is 100%). Whereas the other services, due to different factors, are below expectation (the need of the dwellers and the access to them show huge gap); there are different reasons which account for such problems, to list some like the management problems (in giving priority and strong decision), bureaucracies (having a lot of chain in decision and) and the local community resistance (for example with regard to road the local people complain about compensation and sometimes there are also burial place which the local people are uninterested to shift them into another places).

**7.1. Expansion /Progress of Wolaita Sodo Town**

Wolaita Sodo town have experienced a fast and rapid expansion especially during the last four or five years. Different reasons attributed to this fast expansion of the town are; urban sprawl, rural to urban migration, displacement following the recent political turmoil’s in country (thousands of people were forced to flee their residences from Hawassa and other parts of the country), and increment of number of population. These all factors led the town to incorporate more surrounding kebelles. According to the urban development bureau of the town, within this time gap (2008 up to now) almost the size of the town becomes about 16,000 hectare which prior to 2008EC was about 8000 hectare.

In addition to issues discussed above there is also strong demand of the people to self-administration (at this time the people generally is organized at zonal level, and they are asking for regional state level).

**7.2. Impacts of Urbanization (Positive and Negative)**

It’s obvious that urbanization brought different a lot of advantages to the residents as well as to the surrounding community. Among others the major advantages of urbanization are access to; job opportunities to the local community, infrastructural development (road, water supply, electricity, educational centers, health centers, and other social services), and investments.

If the urbanization process is without proper planning and management it result some many negative consequences. These negative consequences are so many people will be without home (homeless because their land is taken by the government for developmental purpose), the availability the necessary facilities will be scarce, the local community will be harmed by the wastages realized from the industries and factories which are installed in urban centers (both physical and psychological damages), deforestation, lack of arable land and so on. The following are the social and cultural impact of urbanization; drug addiction, gambling and youth gang, inappropriate dressing.

*Table 3. Readiness to live in town.*

Are you ready to live in town?	Percentage	
Yes	25	62.5%
No	15	37.5%

Own survey 2020.

More than half (62.5%) of the respondents are ready to face the change in their life. The rest which their responds is negative is, not because they are not interested in the life of town but due their suspicion about the appropriateness and fairness of the compensations. These figure show us the problems associated with corruption and maladministration which mostly developing countries are facing with regard to land management and that is why 37.5% of the respondents does not want to lose their land for expansion of town. Researches reveal that urban land management is the core area of corruption i.e. the people in the bureaucratic chain did

not effectively implement the proclamations and policies adopted by the government.

When it comes to the idea of readiness, most of them reply to participate in trade and house rental economic activities. In addition, they are careful keeping an eye on those who their land is handover to the government for urban expansion and already adopted the urban lifestyle, and planning to pursue in different economic activities.

*Table 4. Compensation’s appropriate and fair.*

Do you think the compensation is appropriate and fair?	Percentage	
Yes	15	37.5%
No	25	62.5%

Own survey 2020.

The above table shows us, majority of the respondents (62.5%) are not confident enough about the appropriateness and fairness of the compensation that the government provides them after holding their agricultural land. The rest (37.5%) responded that the compensation is fair and appropriate.

As of the data gathered from the officials through interview, the satisfaction level of the people in relation to compensation is below satisfaction. This does not mean the amount of money and generally the laws and regulations about land management are out of the context of the country. But, the problem is about the effective implementation of the laws and the regulations. That is why most of the respondent said ‘NO’ about the fairness and appropriateness of the compensation.

Here, two factors could be mentioned as the causes for the lack of confidence (of the people) on the compensation; the limited capability of the municipality of the town and the incorrect perception of the people about the amount of the compensation.

**7.3. Possible Mechanisms to Minimize the Negative Impacts of Urbanization**

Urbanization has its own positive and negative impacts. Urban living is often associated with higher levels of literacy and education, better health condition, greater access to social and economic services, and enhanced opportunities for cultural and political participation. Rapid and unplanned urban growth as well as urban expansion threatens sustainable development when the necessary infrastructure is not developed or when policies are not well-implemented. Unplanned or inadequately managed urban expansion leads to rapid sprawl, pollution, and environmental degradation, together with unsustainable production and consumption patterns [4].

In most developing countries the urban expansion is fast but without the necessary infrastructures. Such kind of rapid expansion led to wide range local and global environmental and socio-economic impacts. The case in Ethiopia is not different i.e. there is rapid expansion but without proper planning and management. As discussed above, on the

impacts part, the negative impacts of urbanization (if not properly managed) are numerous and it need strong commitment to solve or at least minimize the impacts.

According to the data gathered through questionnaire (in the study area) even if they are suspicious on the bureaucratic issues, they forward some point as a solution to minimize the impact of urbanization; as far as it is for the benefit of the public, people at all level should be convey about the significance and potential harms of the process, the local people (victim) should be made aware of economic activities (other than agriculture and if necessary should be given training on how to lead their new life), awareness creation programs should be prepared on how to save their money (if necessary preparing mandatory saving programs) and so on.

## 8. Conclusion

From the data gathered through observation, questionnaire and interview on the issue of perception and readiness of rural community towards urbanization the researchers reached at the following conclusions. These are; urbanization brings different changes and benefit to the urban dwellers and surrounding community, and it has also an adverse effect on the hinterland community. The results of the data gathered shows the negative impacts of urbanization are high in the study area, because it lacks an appropriate planning and implementation mechanisms. As a result in the study area a lot of people are losing their means living and exposed to a variety of hardships which they are compelled to lead the miserable life (some became homeless, forced to be drug addicted, become gang and so on).

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