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The Housing Crisis and Living Conditions in the University Residence Zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi)

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ABSTRACT

Food, clothes, and shelter are the three fundamental requirements for human survival. Specifically, the significance of housing has been generally acknowledged since the birth of human civilization. Even the Neolithic man, who lived between 1000 and 2000 BCE, constructed housing such as pit houses, lake houses, and beehive huts. Thus, housing can be said to be important not only for humanity's progress but also for students' acquisition of a quality education. Despite this, a variety of indicators demonstrate that Cameroon's public universities lack good living conditions in the university residential areas. However, an examination of the existing literature reveals that there is little literature on conditions in the university residential zone, specifically in Yaoundé I. For this singular reason, this research studies the varieties of factors that contribute to the housing problem in the University Residence Zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi) and its consequences. This study was carried out using both primary and secondary information sources. Personal observation, first-hand accounts, and case studies account for the primary research sources. The secondary information was gathered from books, academic articles, and internet sources. This work submits that the housing crises and living circumstances in the university residential zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi) have several consequences, most notably fire dangers, sexual immorality, theft, health hazards, and personality challenges, particularly among students. This paper also submits that addressing the current housing crisis and living conditions requires immediate action. This research, lastly, made some recommendations to address the housing crisis and living conditions in the ZRU.

Keywords: Living conditions; housing crisis; student environment; Bonamoussadi.

INTRODUCTION

Along with food and clothes, housing is one of the essential human necessities for survival. For a citizen, house ownership gives important security and social standing (Jacobs et al., 2019). Since a house provides humans with a social identity, it binds them to their local social milieu. Although the definition of “housing” varies, the majority of academics describe “housing” as a building or portion of a building that is meant to be inhabited by every family or individual. Thus, according to Farquhar (1995), housing is a vital component of the majority of people’s lives. Canham et al. (2021) also support this argument by acknowledging that every aspect of a person’s life, as well as society as a whole, is affected by the “house” in which they reside. Since a house provides humans with a social identity, it binds them to their local social milieu (Jacobset et al., 2019).

According to De León (2012), as a component of material culture, housing protects against threats to life security and serves an essential purpose by providing shelter. It provides a place for several human activities. Man often uses “house” regardless of place or period. A “house” facilitates communication within the family and with the wider community. Krugman (1980) defines “a house” as a large, sturdy, and permanent product that has a fixed position and is only used at the site where it was built. It tends to persist in existence for many years after its purpose has been fulfilled. It practically becomes a part of the land. Shelter is an essential human need. According to Farquhar (1995), housing is traditionally defined as “the best and noblest product of civilization.” Every human needs shelter, a roof over one’s head, and for the vast part, this entails a home, a permanent “base” where the majority of one’s life is spent. In addition, it is recognised that urban housing has a significant impact on energy consumption, the design of transportation networks, and communication systems (Banister, 2011; Ekuri et al., 2014).

A more accurate definition of “housing,” according to Seamon (1982), is an abode for interaction between an organism and its environment. A single individual, a family, or a community might constitute the organism. The organism’s natural surroundings as well as its political, economic, social, and cultural surroundings comprise its environment. Wegelin (1978) provides a broad definition of housing, stating that “any established or growing civilization has a fundamental requirement for housing.” For every person, whether alone or as a member of a family, a cave or a castle is more than just a physical shelter. It should be a place that fulfils the essential purpose of human civilization. For the individual or family, the house is both a shelter and a symbol, a physical protection, a physiological identity with economic worth, and a basis for safety and self-respect. The spatial pattern of housing in cities is the consequence of a number of variables, the most prominent of which are socioeconomic pressures and the geographical position of the city in terms of physical space and accessibility. According to Duncan and Duncan (1955), residential segregation is stronger for occupational groupings with uncertain status. Several scholars emphasise residential segregation based on similarity in wealth and race. The model utilised by Muth (1972) suggests that the price per unit of housing, rent per unit of land, and production of housing per unit of land all decrease with distance from the market, but per capita housing consumption grows. This is supported by “trade-off” theory and several studies of the urban land market.

Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, is facing a housing crisis (Saghir & Santoro, 2018). While around one billion people live in slums worldwide, 200 million of them are in sub-Saharan Africa (Saghir & Santoro, 2018). The reason for this can be

attributed to the fact that Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa in particular, is characterised by exponential population growth, several of its nations' debts, and a severe socioeconomic problem. The student population and other vulnerable populations are particularly affected. Access to good housing is becoming more challenging in major cities and even in small communities with over 5,000 residents. As indicated above, population growth is one of the primary causes of the housing crisis in the main cities of Africa. Thus, the problems linked with urbanisation and housing problems in Cameroon are also associated with overcrowding in the country's major urban areas.

Cameroon, a country in west-central Africa, has two major cities, Douala and Yaoundé, which are home to 39 percent of the country's urban population (CAGF, 2014). A picture of Cameroon's living circumstances is incomplete without the all-important indicators of gross domestic product and gross domestic product per capita. Cameroon's total nominal GDP of \$38 billion ranks it in 98th place worldwide and 15th place in Africa (Milanovic, 2022). Taking its population into account, the nation's GDP per capita of \$1,400 ranks it towards the bottom of the world rankings at 152nd and 26th out of 55 African nations.

Despite the above gloomy statistics, Cameroon's economy has made significant gains in recent years toward becoming a thriving emerging market. While the country's reserves doubled to \$3 billion between 2004 and 2008, the public debt decreased from over 60% of GDP to about 10% (Milanovic, 2022). Furthermore, throughout the last decade, Cameroon's GDP per capita expanded at a consistent rate of 4 percent each year, which is much higher than the world average of 2.6%. In addition, the unemployment rate in Cameroon is a respectable 4.24 percent. Also, despite this, Cameroon has a long way to go, as 48 percent of its people continue to live below the poverty line (Milanovic, 2022).

The urban population in Cameroon is anticipated to surpass 60% by 2020. (INS, 2005). Even government initiatives such as CFC (Credit Foncier du Cameroun), MAETUR (Mission for the Development and Equipment of Urban and Rural Land), and SIC (Société d'Investissement du Cameroun) to address housing issues have fallen short. Other government efforts have expanded through relationships with the private sector. As part of the housing development plan, the state entrusted national SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) in 2016 with the construction of 1,675 housing units in the cities of Garoua, Bafoussam, Kribi, etc. As predicted by the Strategy document for growth and employment (DSCE), Cameroon has developed a construction programme for 10,000 social housing units by 2020. However, this has not been able to address the housing issues in major cities across Cameroon.

Due to the above, this research attempts to investigate the housing crisis and living conditions in the University Residence Zone (ZRU) in Yaoundé, Cameroon (Bonamoussadi). This study aims to respond to the following research questions: the principal reasons for the housing problem in university residential areas of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi) and the link between the rapid urbanisation of Yaoundé and the difficulty in supplying housing in university residence areas. This study is being conducted because, as a result of Cameroon's protracted economic recession (1985–1995; 1995–2005), governmental funding for the building of university dormitories is often insufficient to sustain a considerable financial outlay. Consequently, traditional structures are unable to accommodate the ever-increasing demand. This is due to the annual rise in the number of students accepted to higher education institutions (Otu et al., 2011; Sunday et al., 2014). Most public colleges and universities do not have dorms.

Where we do research, in the university residential area of the University of Yaoundé I, there is a paucity of state-provided housing.

The study was carried out using a questionnaire as a data collection tool. Compared to 39.24% of respondents, 60.76% of the 98 respondents did not feel comfortable in their living environment. 88.89% of respondents felt that the ZRU did not offer safety, while 11.1% disagreed. 85.71 percent of respondents feel their living environment presents a health risk, while 14.29 percent disagree. This paper contends that the lack of good housing in ZRU has become a danger to the safety of its residents as a consequence of a rise in prostitution in the region.

URBANIZATION AND HOUSING ISSUES IN CAMEROON

Practically, almost all developing countries face serious housing problems, particularly in urban areas (Lee, 1988). Thus, it can be said that access to secure and affordable housing is a central feature of urbanisation in undeveloped societies. Housing is said to be an important productive asset since access to credit to secure a livelihood may depend on property ownership. Urban scholars argue that the urban housing problem is not a simple problem but that its nature is complex and intertwined with other problems like urban poverty and unemployment (Slater, 2013).

The problem “urbanization” and “housing” has been worsening in Africa owing to the rapid increase in population, the fast rate of urbanization, the inadequate addition of buildings, the steep rise in land prices, and inadequate investment in other factors (Opoko & Oluwatayo, 2014). In Cameroon specifically, a substantial proportion of households either do not own houses or have inadequate housing (Page & Sunjo, 2018). It is estimated that a large number of the urban population in Cameroon lives in slums and squatter settlements. The spatial pattern of housing in Cameroonian cities is a result of several factors, of which the socio-economic forces and the geographical location of the city in terms of physical space and accessibility are considered to be most significant (Acho-Chi, 2002).

Cameroon is a highly urbanised nation by sub-Saharan standards, with an urban population of around 49 percent (7.4 million) of the overall population (Mbongsi, 2022). From 1970 to 1995, the average annual urban growth rate was 6.1%; in recent times, it is predicted to be 4.1%. Cameroon’s urban structure contains two major poles: the principal port and commercial city, Douala (population: 1,400,000), and Yaoundé, the administrative and political capital (population: 1.1 million) (Munoz, 2018). This bipolarity is unique to Cameroon. Unlike in the majority of African nations, the majority of the population is concentrated in a single city (usually the capital). However, in Cameroon, the two cities (Douala, the economic capital, and Yaoundé, the political capital territory), are followed by the secondary cities of Garoua, Bamenda, and Maroua, which each have a population of over 200,000 (Munoz, 2018). Thus, Douala and Yaoundé are highly urbanised cities in Cameroon.

The economic crisis of the mid-1980s had an impact on Cameroon’s infrastructure, public amenities, and urbanization. In 1988, the urban poverty rate reached sixty percent, and over seventy percent of the population lived in unplanned settlements. The majority of the peri-urban population lived in areas with insufficient drainage and infrastructure. The decline in public services had the most effect on the water supply and sewage sectors. Consequently, health indices declined. Despite the economic crisis of the mid-1980s, the Cameroonian government initiated the First Urban Project with the objectives of

achieving acceptable infrastructure standards, legalising land, and establishing the institutional basis for continued improvement (Ako, et al., 2010).

The First Urban Project was specifically aimed at improving the Nylon Zone, one of the worst slums in Douala. The first urban project was a multisectoral effort that began in 1984 (Gulyani & Bassett, 2007). During the first years of the Urban Project, it was marketed as a regionally advanced experimental project through a public relations campaign. However, the first urban project was short-lived, and the second urban project was commissioned. Originally, the Second Urban Project was considered a continuation of the first, with the addition of civil works targeted at improving Douala and Yaoundé's traffic conditions. Additionally, the project was also spread to secondary cities. The Second Urban Project was terminated in 1994, and the loan was cancelled prior to the completion of its goals (Hommann & Lall, 2019). The World Bank had deemed the Second Urban Project's implementation to be generally disappointing (Hommann & Lall, 2019). This was the last major upgrade of unplanned settlements in Cameroon, which used a multisectoral strategy and included land regularisation and legalization.

Other smaller minor upgrade programmes have concentrated on urban development by implementing microprojects involving local governments and the people. The Nkonldongo project in the Municipality of Yaoundé 4 and the FOURMI I and II (Fonds d'Appui to Urban Organizations and Micro Projects) projects are examples of these programmes (Asheni & Gabana, 2022). Also, the urbanisation of the Nkonldongo project began in 1991 and was completed in 1996. It was supported by the French Cooperation (1.5 million francs, equal to \$270,000) and carried out by two non-governmental organisations: GRET (Groupe de Recherches et d'Echanges Technologiques) and (A.F.V.P.) the French Volunteer Association (Asheni & Gabana, 2022). This 8-thousand-person neighbourhood was emblematic of the majority of unplanned regions, with significant challenges in the administration of urban services, especially water supply, drainage, and sanitation. The goal was to enhance living conditions by completing micro-projects (a short bridge connecting neighbourhoods, standpipes, and drainage) with community involvement.

The rural-to-urban migration in Cameroon intensified throughout the 1960s as a result of the nation's economic expansion (Peer, 2015). Traditional tribal rulers administered the land inhabited by the incoming settlers (Ekuri & Sanusi, 2016). Two-thirds of the inhabitants of both Douala and Yaoundé were expected to dwell in dense residential neighbourhoods that developed around major roadways leading to the administrative and commercial cores of the cities. Douala is situated near the mouth of the Wouri River on the Gulf of Guinea. Large portions of the city are just a few feet above the water table; thus, flooding is prevalent during the rainy season, especially in the unplanned districts. Yaoundé, on the other hand, is distinguished by a terrain that impedes urban development. The steep slopes and flood-prone bottoms of the region's valleys make the development of infrastructure in these valleys prohibitively expensive. There is a high rate of migration and a rising demand for services among the population. Approximately 65% of households do not have access to piped water, and 80% do not have access to sanitary services (Armah, et al., 2018). The population uses standpipes and a limited number of private water connections; nevertheless, leakage and overflow from pit latrines and septic tanks have contaminated the water table, which is the source of water for wells and streams. This prone-to-flooding region has historically been inhabited

by a populace living in unstable dwellings without legal property titles (Armah, et al., 2018; Akujobi & Awhefeada, 2021; Ehirim et al., 2022).

This astonishing rise is the result of the increasing urbanisation of the two cities, which has been propelled by the influx of people from all across the nation in quest of better living circumstances (Udoka, 2006). Annually, 15,000 and 12,000 dwellings must be constructed in Yaoundé and Douala, respectively, in order to address the informal housing crisis caused by fast population growth (Onomo & Nkakleu, 2022). The metropolitan area population of Douala in 2022 is 3,927,000, a 3.53 percent growth over 2021. In the same year, the population of the Yaoundé metropolitan area is 4,337,000, a rise of 4.15 percent from 2021 (Koholé, et al., 2022). However, on average, just 2,400 apartments are built annually in these cities. Thus, both Douala and Yaoundé have housing shortages. Despite the government's attempts to resolve the problem, a historical examination of the nation's housing policy demonstrates that there has always been a major disparity between housing supply and demand. To remedy the housing shortage in Yaoundé and Douala, around 15,000 and 12,000 units of housing need to be built yearly, respectively, to fulfil the population-driven demand (Koholé, et al., 2022).

Multiple interrelated factors have contributed to the growth of informal housing in Yaoundé and Douala. The UN-Habitat reports that rural exodus, population growth, high housing costs, weak housing governance (particularly in planning, policy, and urban management), economic vulnerability and low-paying jobs, deprivation and displacement caused by conflict, natural disasters, and climate change are some of the negative factors that contribute to the spread of informal housing.

STUDENT'S HOUSING CRISIS AND LIVING CONDITIONS

After education, student "hostels" within and outside the universities are of the utmost significance (Khozaei, et al., 2010). These dorms serve as temporary residences for students and mirror their home backgrounds. These "houses," which serve dorms, must accommodate the requirements of students and their parents, as well as their social expectations. Researchers have been fascinated by the residential lives of university students, both inside and outside the campus, for decades. Student housing has traditionally been one of the fundamental services offered by colleges and universities to assist students in developing their intellect. However, in the case of the unavailability of "hostels" within the university campus, houses outside the campus have often served the same purpose. College and university are the beginning of a new chapter of life for many students, which includes the experience of living in a dormitory. According to a study, people's emotional moods are influenced by their living situations and the internal changes that occur (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). When prospective students leave home to attend college or university, the kind of housing they find near their school is significant.

In addition, parents are more receptive to the dormitory living arrangements of their children owing to the increased sense of safety and the monitoring of hostel staff, or extra security service from the government for houses around the university premises. Consequently, many students like living in university dorms or "houses" around the university premises. Furthermore, the problem of prices and economic savings has led to a minimalist perspective on dormitory design, which explains why the majority of dorms do not adequately satisfy the housing and educational demands of students. It also explains why students may attempt to reside in "houses" outside the university premises, since it may be cheaper; at the very least, tight regulations on the number of students per

room may not apply. Due to its significance, scholars have investigated the consequences of student housing. Many studies have concluded that university dormitories or dormitories outside the school are a specific sort of structure that is meant to be both a sanctuary for students and a pleasant and functional environment conducive to study and academic performance.

In modern times in Africa, university dormitories, often referred to as “dormitories,” are less likely to meet the needs of students (Daliri-Dizaj & Hatami-Khanghahi, 2022). An overview reveals that the architecture of dormitory buildings in most universities is designed and implemented more to meet the basic needs of students, with less attention paid to the qualitative dimensions and aspects related to their mental conditions. When resources are limited and a minimalist approach is applied, students’ preferences from among the available options help the designer prioritise design options. Because financial resources are limited for the design and architecture of student dormitories, designers and planners have to choose cost-effective options in areas such as interior divisions, forms, building materials, furniture, and more.

Housing fosters physical, social, economic, and psychological satisfaction for its residents, in addition to providing leisure and reflecting social status. In addition to being a basic human right, sufficient housing has the ability to further the nation’s civic, social, economic, and sustainable development objectives. The provision of housing is so intrinsically linked to national socioeconomic development that, despite its perceived high cost on available asset resources, the Cameroonian government, both past and present, recognises the need to provide adequate housing units to meet the needs of working people and students. Literature has long acknowledged that business organisations, including student housing providers, must concentrate on enhancing service quality (SQ) in order to remain competitive and influence student customers’ behavior. Numerous studies have identified service quality as a significant antecedent of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty.

Youth in Cameroon and the rest of Africa are disadvantaged, and the education sector is not an exception. Due to distortions in the country’s social, economic, and religious components, many youths no longer get a proper education, which has a detrimental influence on individuals and the nation as a whole. Numerous attempts have been made to comprehend and solve this issue, yet the issue of academic quality continues to be a problem not only in the classroom but also in students’ living conditions. While all efforts have been devoted to tackling the problem of education in most countries in Africa, little has been done to investigate the suffering of the students, who are central to this issue.

Students’ housing in Sub-Saharan Africa has not gotten the attention it needs from both the government and the administration of the institutions (Magesso, 2022). Francis et al., (2020) remarked that hostel accommodations have not received sufficient attention despite being an essential component of student personnel management. It is fairly usual for hostels within and outside the campuses to have inadequately maintained services and infrastructure. There have been reports of students becoming ill in the dormitories due to unsanitary conditions. Student housing must not only be sufficiently provided for in proportion to the university’s student population, but it must also be able to meet their demands if the best is to be extracted from them. The most prevalent definition of user satisfaction in this work describes satisfaction as the process of comparing what was received to what was anticipated. One of the key objectives of providing any facility

(including dormitories and housing units for students near university campuses) should be to guarantee student fulfillment.

Babakus et al., (2004) argues that user satisfaction has a favourable influence on the profitability of any organisation, including educational institutions. Some writers argue that it is not sufficient to just please customers; rather, it is essential to guarantee that they are exceedingly satisfied. Therefore, it is crucial that research be conducted to determine the housing crisis and living conditions in university residential areas, because when students are satisfied with the facilities provided in their accommodations, it will lead to an improvement in their academic performance, among other benefits. The purpose of this article is to examine the housing crisis and living conditions in the university residence zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi) in order to evaluate the degree of student satisfaction with the existing facilities and the implications of the infrastructure for the students' wellbeing.

STUDENTS LIVING CONDITIONS IN YAOUNDÉ I (BONAMOOUSSADI),

About 55 percent of the Cameroonian population is under 35 years old and of school age. Therefore, there is a need for the nation to invest in housing infrastructure for the youthful population that could attend colleges and universities in the near future (Basse et al., 2022). According to Page and Sunjo (2018), the housing shortage in the Yaoundé metropolis is catastrophic. The research states that there will be a need for 72,251 new dwelling units between 2018 and 2035. The situation is not much different at the university residential zones (ZRU), where housing accommodations for students are becoming progressively inadequate due to the ever-increasing number of students, i.e., more than 60,000 new graduates entering Cameroonian institutions each year. According to reports, the state's provision of student accommodation is restricted since not all state schools provide university dormitories; this is the case with universities in Yaoundé 2 (SOA). In addition, it is vital to note the deteriorating quality of the housing, the narrowness of the university rooms, and the insecurity linked to the permeability of the residences in Cameroon's institutions.

On the campus of the University of Yaoundé I, more and more rooms are vacant, such as building E, which has been closed for years owing to the necessity for renovations. The annual cost of lodging is 480000 CFA francs (about 780.09 USD) for shared rooms and 600000 CFA francs (about 959.35 USD) for private rooms. Due to the ever-increasing number of congested students pounding on the doors of the institution, the housing supply has been inadequate relative to demand for many years. This includes students from private higher education institutions (such as the Siantou Higher Institute, among others) as well as those from governmental institutions (students from the University of Yaoundé I, University of Yaoundé II (SOA), Polytechnic, etc.).

During the 2015–2016 academic year in Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi), there were approximately 2,500 requests for lodging in university residence halls but only 1,362 admissions owing to the restricted number of available beds, many of which were out of order. In addition, the communal rooms (rooms with two beds) have been converted into individual rooms as a result of complaints from several students regarding the rooms' narrowness. This resulted in a shortage of 300 beds, which decreased supplies and exacerbated the issue. It should also be mentioned that the deficit is exacerbated by a lack of infrastructure maintenance by the students. For example, the use of hot plates by students is prohibited by the hall wardens because it damages the electrical installations.

However, this rule is sometimes violated by a few stubborn students. To combat such activities, surveillance teams were established, particularly the “campus police,” which strengthened the school’s regulations. For this reason, students are compelled to evacuate their rooms at the conclusion of the academic year due to security concerns.

In recent years, landlords around the school area have often charged exorbitant fees for the private supply of student housing. Frequently, landlords use the acute housing crisis to defraud potential student renters. According to my personal interactions with administrators of the University of Yaoundé I’s student housing division, landlords often do not adhere to the rent levels set by the extended consultation conducted on April 24, 2009, for university residence areas. This consultation had brought together representatives from the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Commerce, philanthropists, student union leaders, and the Special Student Housing Brigade. The agreement reached was on the implementation of inexpensive housing alternatives within the university residence area.

Numerous resolutions have been enacted for this purpose. According to one of the resolutions, “the implementation of authorised pricing is required.” However, the reality is quite different. Frequently, landlords violate the agreement by charging excessive rent and mistreating students, particularly newcomers. Another factor that contributes to students’ confusion about the housing dilemma is their lack of knowledge regarding student housing regulations. As a result, they are victims of abuse and are occasionally duped.

In addition, Order No. 00006/MINDUH/MINCOMMERCE/MINDAF/MINESUP of June 30, 2005, which regulates the rentals of student housing in Cameroon’s state institutions, specifies in Chapter III of the conditions of payment of rent, Article 9 that rents must be paid at the beginning of each month. In contrast, the bulk of private university housing requires an annual payment and a deposit of at least two months. This indicates that rent comprises a substantial portion of yearly expenditures. This has made students in precarious circumstances engage in immoral practises (prostitution, theft) in order to be able to cope with the high cost of accommodation.

BONAMOUSSADI, NON-STUDENT POPULATION, AND HOUSING SITUATION

Bonamoussadi is a university living area that belongs to the University of Yaoundé I and is home to more than 5,400 students (Konings, 2002). The situation here is almost identical to that of the whole Ngoa-Ekellé university residential region. It is one of the capital’s most cosmopolitan neighbourhoods.

There are 226 university dormitories with over five thousand inhabitants within the said area. Most of the dormitories are constructed in an anarchic manner. The existence of puddles on the streets and inadequate waste management are indicators of environmental deterioration in the neighborhood. Consequently, immorality and lawlessness are often evident (Mrabure & Awhefeada, 2021). Multiple sources assert that high levels of sexual promiscuity, a prevalent problem in the region, often have negative effects that disrupt the tranquilly of local residents, and that students are frequently affected (Foko & Lehman, 2018). It is critical to note that the Bonamoussadi neighbourhood has a sizable non-student population (civil servants and other skilled and unskilled individuals). This scenario exacerbates the housing issue as well as the growth

of insecurity (theft, rape, vandalism, etc.), nuisances of all types (noise at inappropriate hours), difficulties with waste water evacuation and aeration, and the expansion of disease-carrying insects. Since the majority of inhabitants use gas cylinders, it is also crucial to note that the congestion in the restricted housing units poses a significant danger of fire breakouts. Furthermore, the ZRU's growing lawlessness and immorality exposes residents to an increase in the potential threat of social disputes among individuals.

THE EFFECTS OF THE HOUSING CRISIS ON LIVING CONDITIONS IN YAOUNDÉ I.

The building anarchy in Bonamoussadi is caused by the housing problem (Renz, 2018). Some houses are constructed in wetlands. And as a consequence, inhabitants are affected by floods during the rainy season, leading to the damage of personal belongings and the interruption of education. Environmental management also remains challenging. It is usual to see rubbish dumps around the area, sometimes against home walls.

In informal settlements such as Bonamoussadi, poor living conditions are accompanied by rapid deterioration of existing homes and a rise in homelessness. Also visible is the lack of access to services, safety nets, and political representation. In this kind of community, the populace is often poorly educated, yet competition is high, making it tough to find a job (Ogabor & Ekurim, 2016). In addition to schooling, which is clearly visible, they lack access to sufficient food, clean water, and other basic necessities (Renz, 2018). As these individuals have minimal potential for self-sufficiency, the environmental risks and precarious positioning of the informal settlements also have a substantial effect.

Those who reside in hazardous regions, such as swamps, canal setbacks, rail line setbacks, and marginal terrain, among others, are always at risk of unanticipated disaster. Frequently, both external and internal dangers threaten their way of life. This makes them more susceptible to environmental degradation, threats of eviction, and destruction. According to Briggs and World Health Organization (WHO) (1999), informal residents are often sick because of exposure to disease and poor environmental quality. They are always impoverished and unhappy. Inadequate housing and sanitation can jeopardise their health, while natural disasters may cause death and economic loss.

NON-STUDENTS AND INSECURITY AT THE BONAMOOUSSADI ZRU

Residents of Bonamoussadi include both students and non-students; this gives it a cosmopolitan character. The inflow of people with diverse objectives affects the living conditions of residents. According to Ajeegah and Landry (2019), the residents of this region think that the presence of non-student layers impedes access to decent accommodation and that the neighbourhood lacks security. Additionally, the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Bonamoussadi neighbourhood makes it more difficult to find affordable property. It is also worth noting that security is not guaranteed in the region since it resembles a ghetto, as people might deduce that the cosmopolitan character of the neighbourhood is tied to the assurance of safety (Anderson, 2011).

Additionally, the number of non-students in Bonamoussadi reflects the region's deteriorating hygiene. This is because the region is heavily influenced by human activities. Due to the growth of cultures and people with different goals, it is difficult to manage the environment. Residents' disregard for their living environment, according to Fogwe and Nkelzok (2011), results in poor environmental management.

Consequently, they are exposed to the dangers of infectious illnesses and numerous forms of pollution. The location and quality of a home affect human behaviour and interpersonal connections. The area of Bonamosadi is also well-known for the illegal and immoral activities that occur there. In fact, prostitution is flourishing on a street named “Carrefour Condom” (Fodouop, et al., 2015). This activity also poses a danger of deviation for the pupils that dwell there, particularly for some of the young pupils in the area. They are susceptible to influence, which adds to school dropout and increases the probability of obtaining STDs and other dangerous illnesses.

CONCLUSION

The housing crisis and living conditions in the university residence zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi) have many repercussions, notable among which are fire hazards, sexual immorality, theft, health hazards, personality difficulties, etc., especially among students. As earlier highlighted, the existing housing crisis and living conditions, which require immediate attention, would pose challenging propositions if not addressed and taken care of at the proper time. The area has been growing at the hands of inhumane landlords, and thus there’s no proper planning, even if there is some messy planning. Ultimately, this growth is obviously going to be more of a problem than a solution. There is an immediate need for more engagement, including officials from the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of Commerce, philanthropists, student union leaders, as well as students and other local residents, in a huge town hall meeting to discuss the way forward. The following recommendations are applicable to the housing crisis and living conditions in the university residence zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi) in order to alleviate urban housing challenges:

1. Appropriate expenditures in social infrastructure and education, as well as the urban master plan will alleviate the strain on the university residence zone of Yaoundé I (Bonamoussadi). Government must also implement programmes for poverty reduction, job creation, trade promotion, and other associated development in the neighborhood.
2. There is a great need for affordable housing, for the student majority in the area. This argues for complementing government policies designed to increase the availability of cheap housing with policies that offer housing subsidies to the poor. There should be policies in place for dealing with landlords who fail to adhere to the agreed-upon rent charge and terms. Government should also do everything possible to charge and punish offenders.
3. For the proper planning of Bonamoussadi Metropolis, it is strongly suggested that an urban information system (UIS), more specifically an urban housing information system (UHIS), be established.

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