

Urbanization and Informal Settlements in Yangon, Myanmar

Eben Forbes

(Independent Researcher, Consultant)

Methodology

- Largely Qualitative, based on over 40 interviews:
 - 35 in-depth household interviews (60-90 minutes each)
 - 30 of these were informal
 - 5 were formal, in adjacent areas- a “control group” of sorts
 - 2 Focus Group Discussions
 - 10 + Key Informant Interviews
 - Ward Administrators
 - Heads of 100 Households
 - Heads of 10 Households
 - Yangon City Development Committee
 - Local NGOs
 - Independent Researchers
- Rudimentary Quantitative data based on the above
- This study could be phase one of a two phase study (if I can find funding)
- Phase two would add quantitative research to the methodology

Research Questions

Do Yangon's informal settlers fare better in the inner city or periphery?

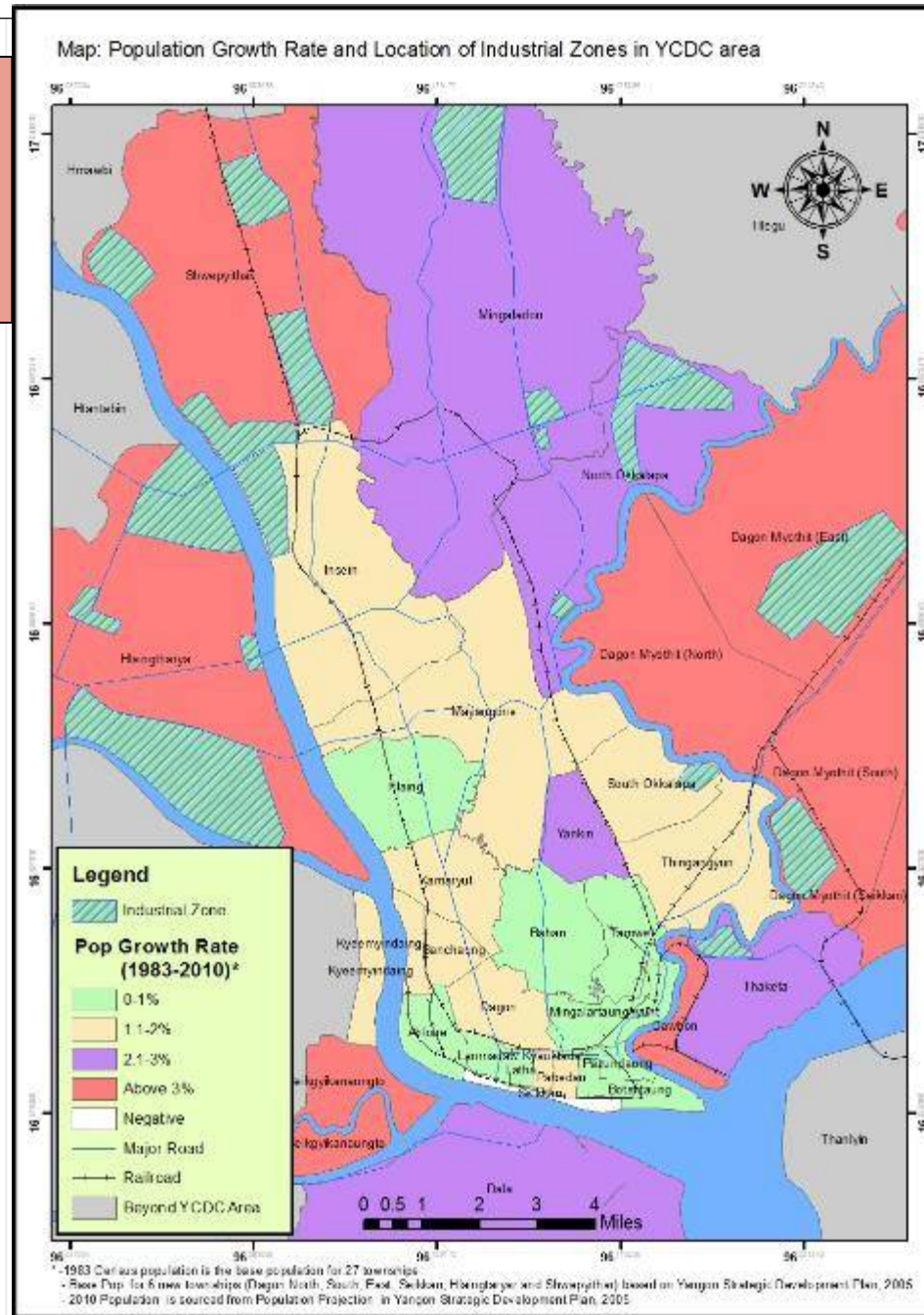
What steps towards tenure security are possible for these residents and how can the cycle of squatting and eviction be assuaged?

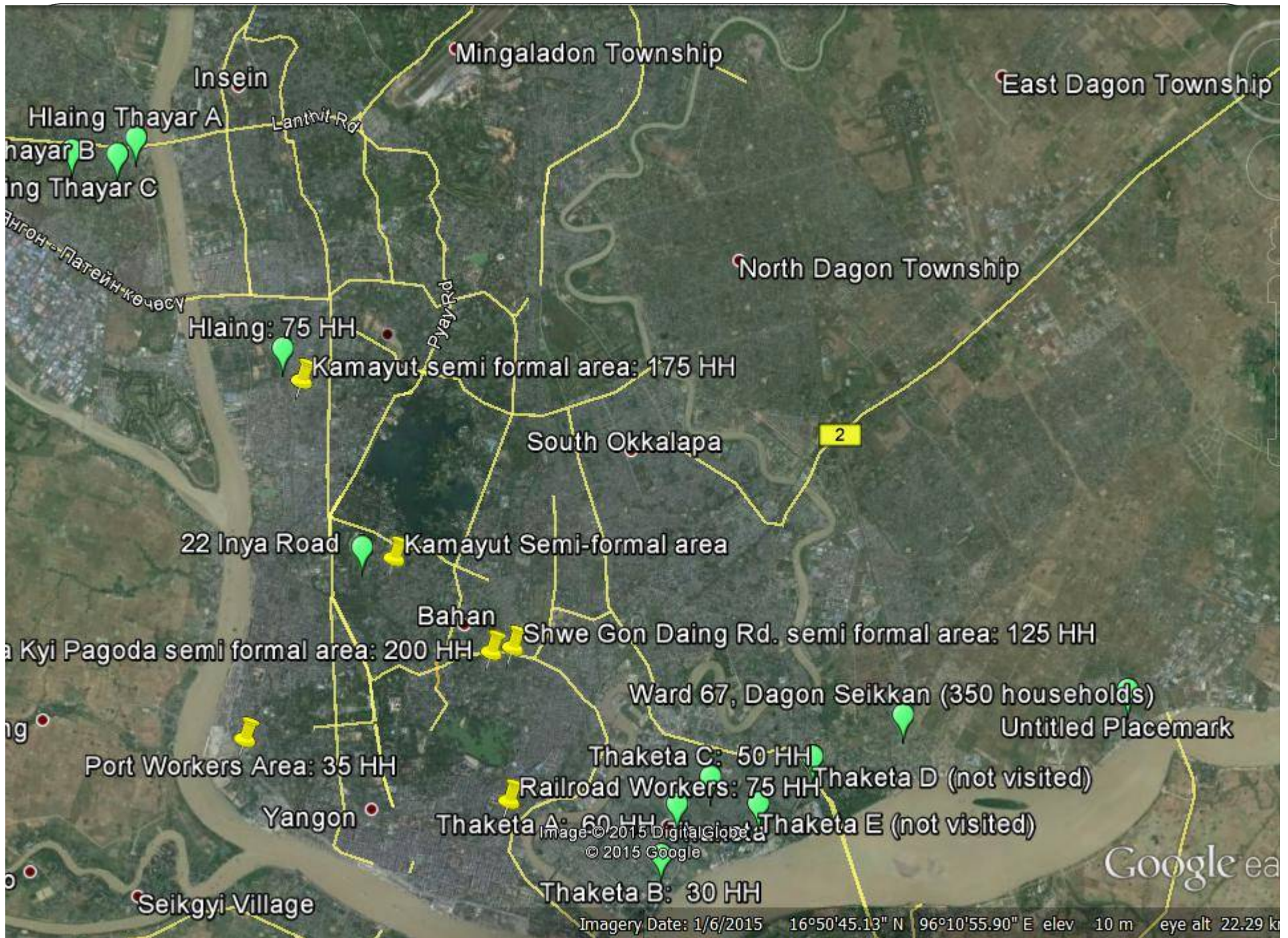
Is there an optimal distribution of low income settlements in Yangon, Myanmar?

Parallels between HtanThaBin today and New Towns of the 1990s

There may be some parallels between the conversion of Htan Tha Bin from ag. to settlement land today, to what happened in Dagon Myo Thit and Hlaing Thayar in early nineties after the mass relocation of squatters from the inner city.

Pop. Growth & Industrial Zones







**Thaketa
Township:
Close to
Downtown;
Strong Sense of
Community**

FEB/12/2015

Thaketa Township: free and easily accessible water supply



Township	Avg. HH Size	Point of Origin	Reason for Squatting
Thaketa	6.25	Thaketa (8) Dagon Myothit (2)	Rent too high (8) For work (2)

Rising Rents in Thaketa Township

Tenants flee to suburbs as rents rise

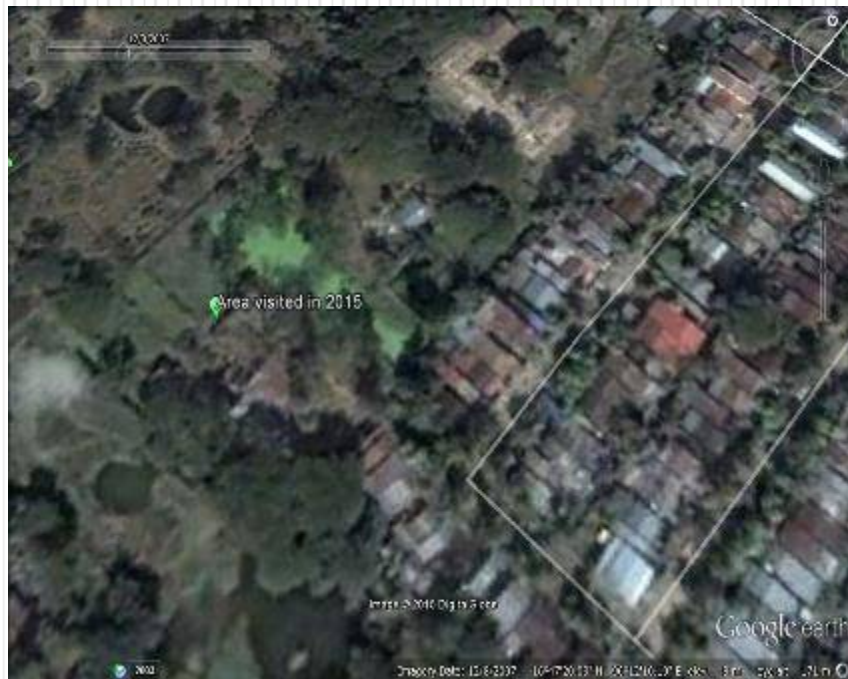
Eleven Myanmar, 01 March 2015 22:28

The average monthly rent in Hledan Township has rocketed to Ks180,000 this year from Ks120,000 last year and Ks60,000 in 2011.

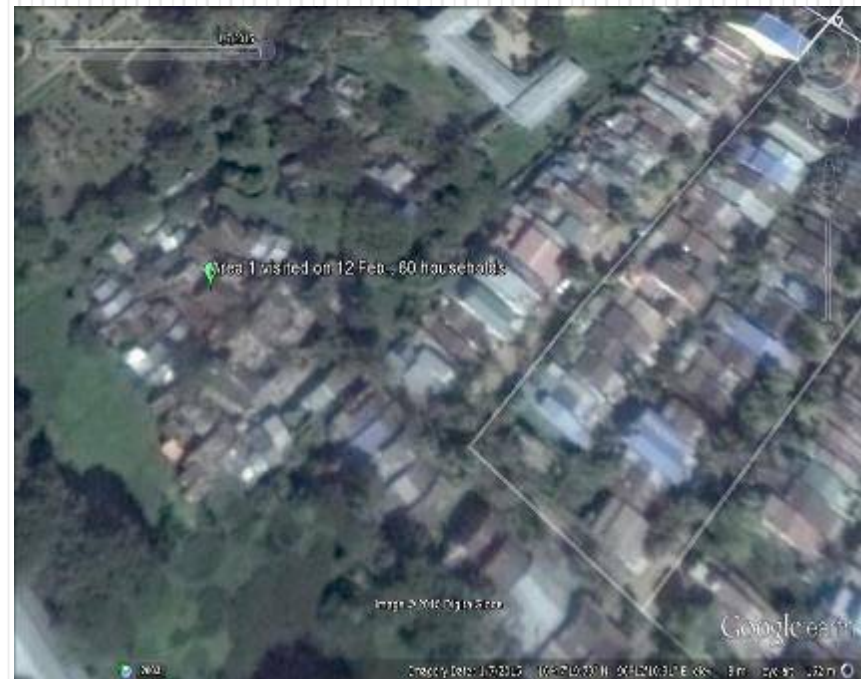
"Rents are being driven up by an influx of tenants. I have to pay Ks150,000 a month for a ground floor apartment," said Than Than Aye of Thaketa Township.

Observing migration over time using Google Earth

Thaketa Area 1 in 2007



Thaketa Area 1 in 2015



What caused this squatter area to grow between 2007 and 2015?

Living on the Edge in Dagon Seikkan Township



Township	Avg. HH Size	Point of Origin	Reason for Squatting
Dagon Seikkan	5.5	Rural (5) Urban (5)	Work (5) Family (3) Rent too high (2)

Complexity of Land Ownership: case of Dagon Seikkan, Ward 67

- Land appropriated from farmers without compensation c.1991
- 350 plots (40' x 60') were originally created for civil servants relocated from city center
- All except for 11 households were resettled again to make way for a hotel that was later cancelled.
- YCDC claimed the remaining land and over the course of two decades,
- 3,500 HHs occupy the Ward; 99.9% are squatters
- DHSHD mandated to build "affordable housing" in Ward 67

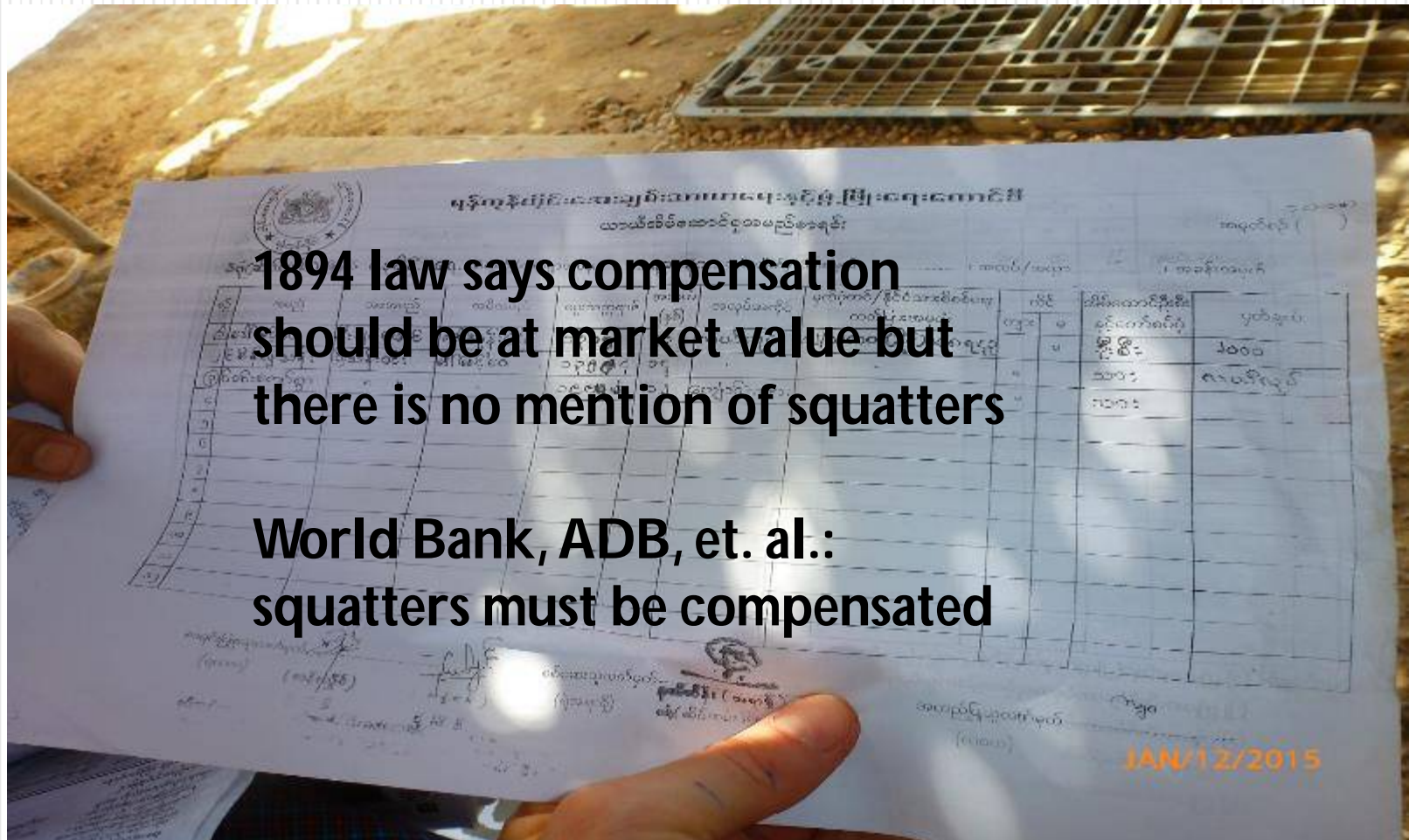
Building "Affordable Housing" in Dagon Seikkan



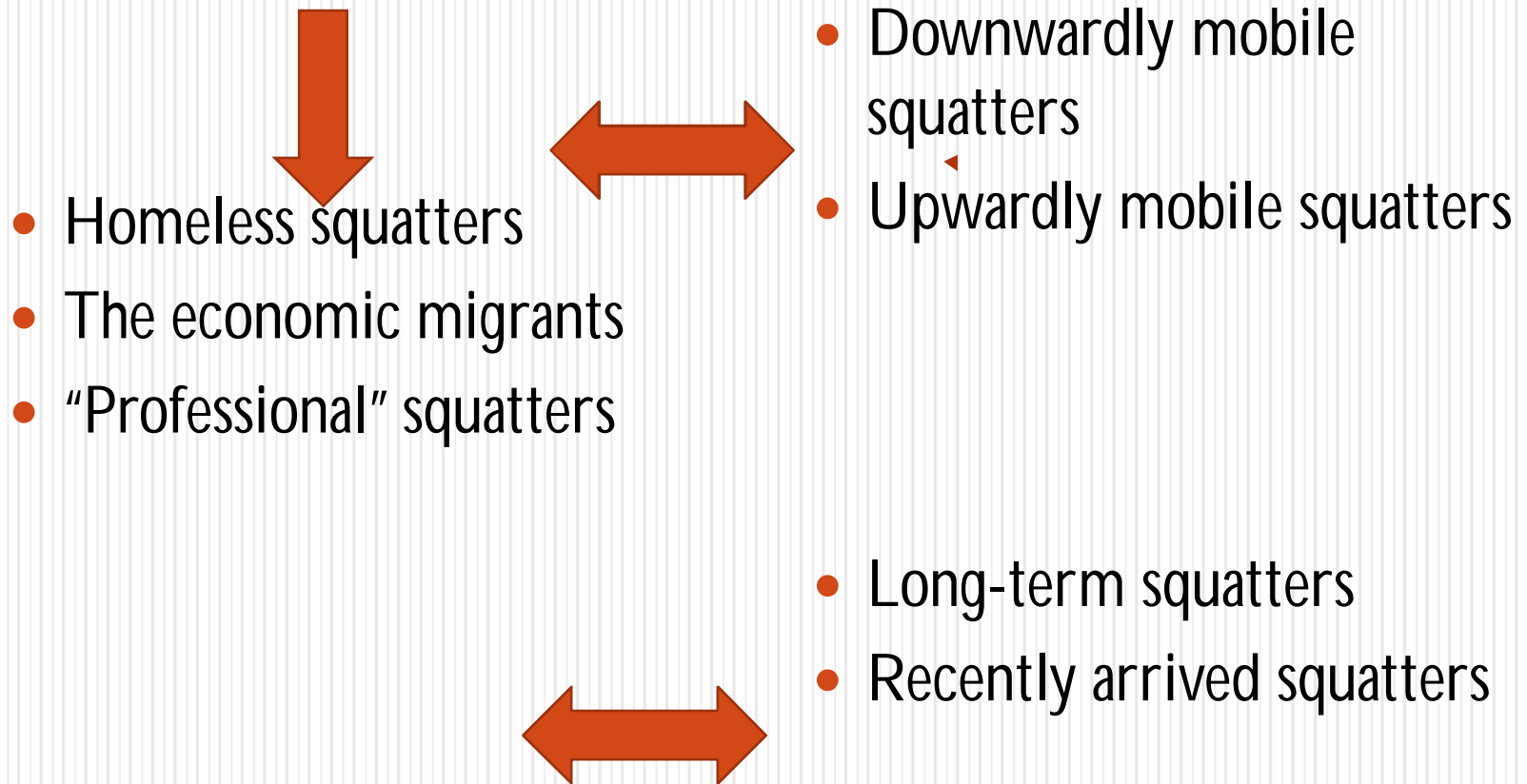
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Crown Advanced Construction Co.,Ltd
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Parcel (H) Building (1/2)


JAN/26/2015

Eviction and Resettlement: Compensation



Squatters: dividing them up





**Hlaing Township:
Just minutes from
downtown, but a
constant threat of
eviction**

Township	Avg. HH Size	Point of Origin	Reason for Squatting
Hlaing	5	Urban (5) Rural (5)	Commute (5), Education (1), Healthcare (1), Eviction (3)

HLAING THAYAR: Growing Fast on the City's Edge

© 2015 Google
Image © 2015 DigitalGlobe

Google earth

41 m

2004

Imagery Date: 1/6/2015 16°52'41.90" N 96°05'34.85" E elev 10 m eye alt 196 m

Push and Pull Factors in Hlaing Thayar

Push Factors

- Landlessness, especially in the Delta
- Low wages and seasonal work in rice paddies
- Drought
- Natural Disasters (Cyclone Nargis)

Pull Factors

- Factory jobs that are stable year-round
- Better access to education and health care
- Better communications between rural and urban areas (mobile phones)

Wealth Inequality within the slum: Who is Faring better than the rest?

- Water suppliers and distributors
- Electrical generators
- Informal real estate brokers and landlords
- Residents along main roads with home-based shops
- Money Lenders

Will urbanization bring prosperity?

Urbanization, like globalization, does not correlate directly with economic growth

Economic growth is itself a dubious concept given that it doesn't correlate with equity

Urbanization is inevitable and has advantages and disadvantages. Negative aspects are more likely to be seen when urbanization occurs rapidly without sufficient prior planning.

Future of Slums in Yangon

As democracy takes root, It would seem that Yangon will go the way of India or Kenya in that slums will become large vote banks.

The new Chief Minister of Yangon Region says new efforts will be made to settle squatters near work places, and expressed that more research is needed.

More Food for Thought

Would granting communal tenure be a better alternative to individual titling during slum upgrading?

Unskilled workers have as much right to what the city offers as do skilled professionals

Research Questions

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Is there an optimal distribution of low income settlements in Yangon, Myanmar?

Recommendations

- Prevention is less costly than upgrading or relocating a slum later
- Authorities need to be aware of squatters' logic- that the decision to squat is usually a rational choice. Understanding the reasons can help Gov. to work w/people rather than against them in searching for solutions
- Government could consider working with NGO partners for this reason
- There are humane alternatives to eviction

For Further Study...

- In spite of their miserable conditions, informal settlement areas also have characteristics that are the envy of urban planners: walkability, mixed use and income, combining work space with housing and in-situ social support networks



Thank You!

Eben Forbes:
eben.forbes@gmail.com

DEC/15/2014

END OF PRESENTATION

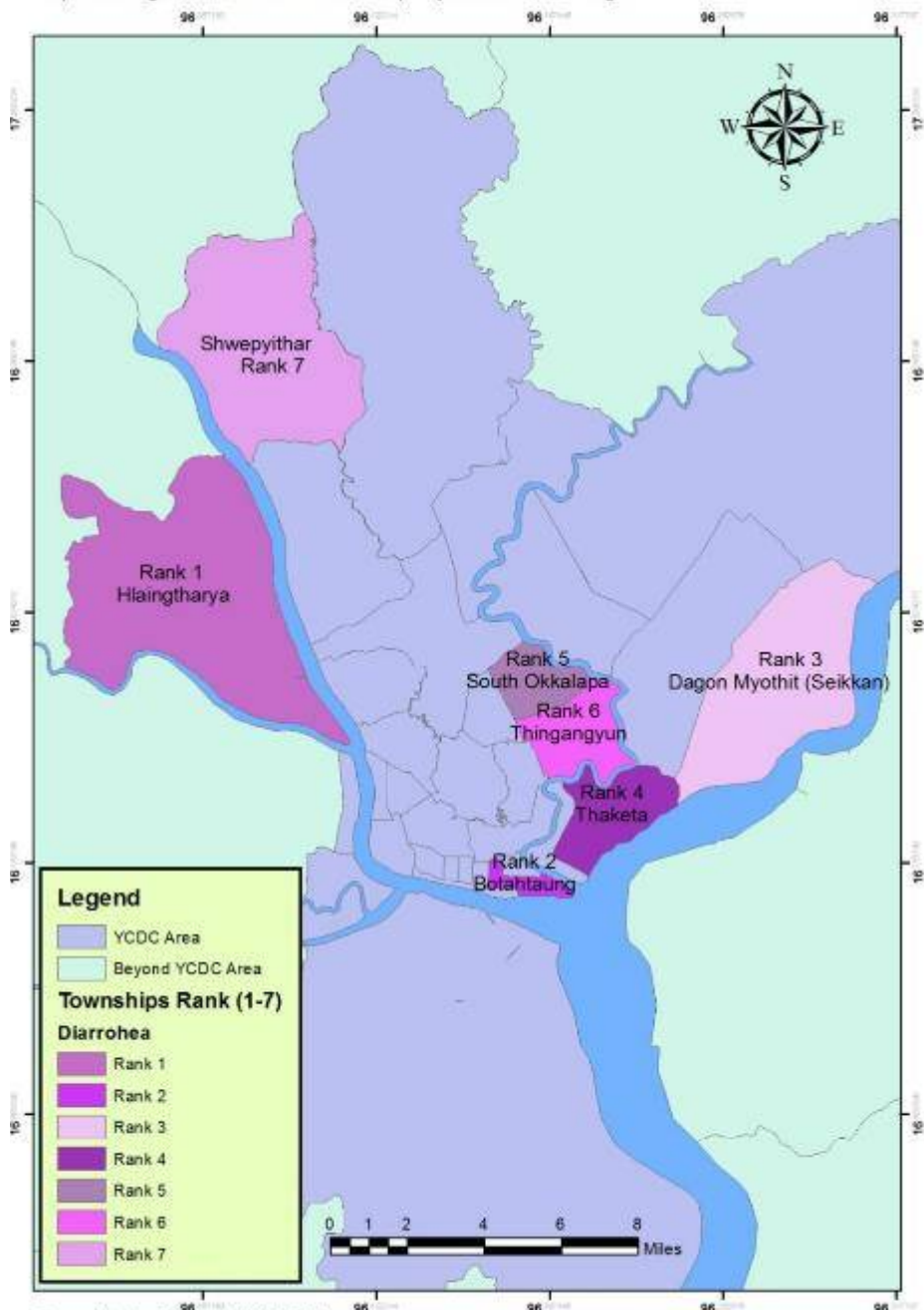
Distribution of Potable Water in Dagon Seikkan



Overcrowding:
fire risk; loss
of privacy

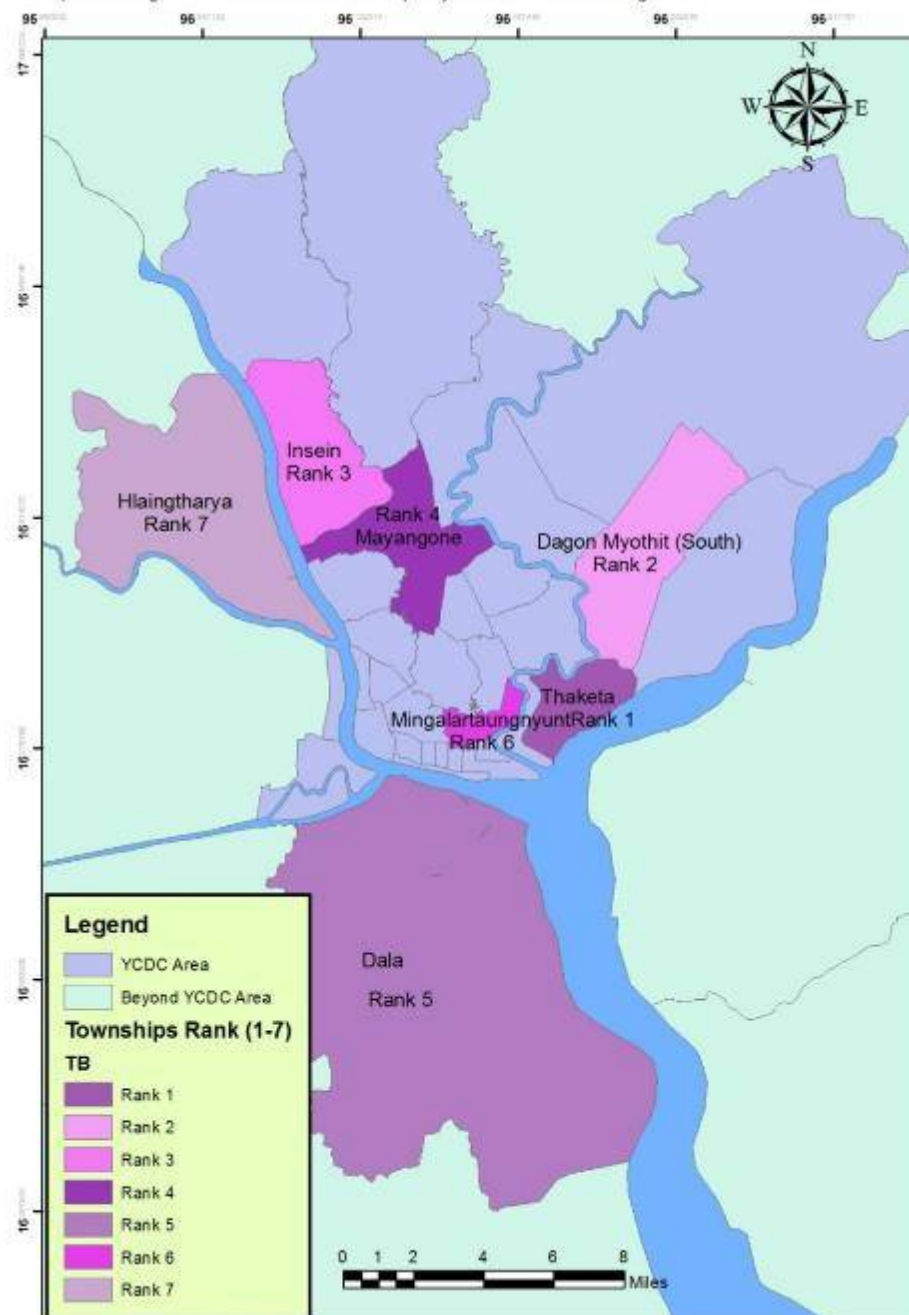


Map: Ranking of Worst Affected Townships by Diarrhoea in Yangon



Source: Ministry of Health and YCDC, 2011

Map: Ranking of Worst Affected Townships by Tuberculosis in Yangon



Source: Ministry of Health and YCDC, 2011



**Unsafe structures built in flood-prone areas.
No garbage disposal or sewerage system.**

Donors and Other Obstacles

Less than 2% of bilateral funding is allocated to housing assistance including slum upgrading. Why?

- Donors want short-term results, but housing development is slow and complicated and donors are unable to maintain a long-term focus
- Land Titling and local politics make housing programs difficult
- Housing programs do not have large supporting constituencies in the donor countries such as that for HIV/AIDS programming
- Many agency staff retain a rural focus, especially in countries like Myanmar

Criteria for Selecting Study Areas:

Characteristics of areas studied

- Majority of residents are squatters (land illegality)
- Households are poor/in the lowest income bracket (not all squatters are poor!)
- Lack of Access to Basic Services (water, sewerage, electricity, garbage disposal)
- Residents fear eviction

Some areas also had:

- Shoddy Construction (e.g. use of tarps and poles)
- Crowding
- Poor Access to Transportation

Additional Characteristics of slums

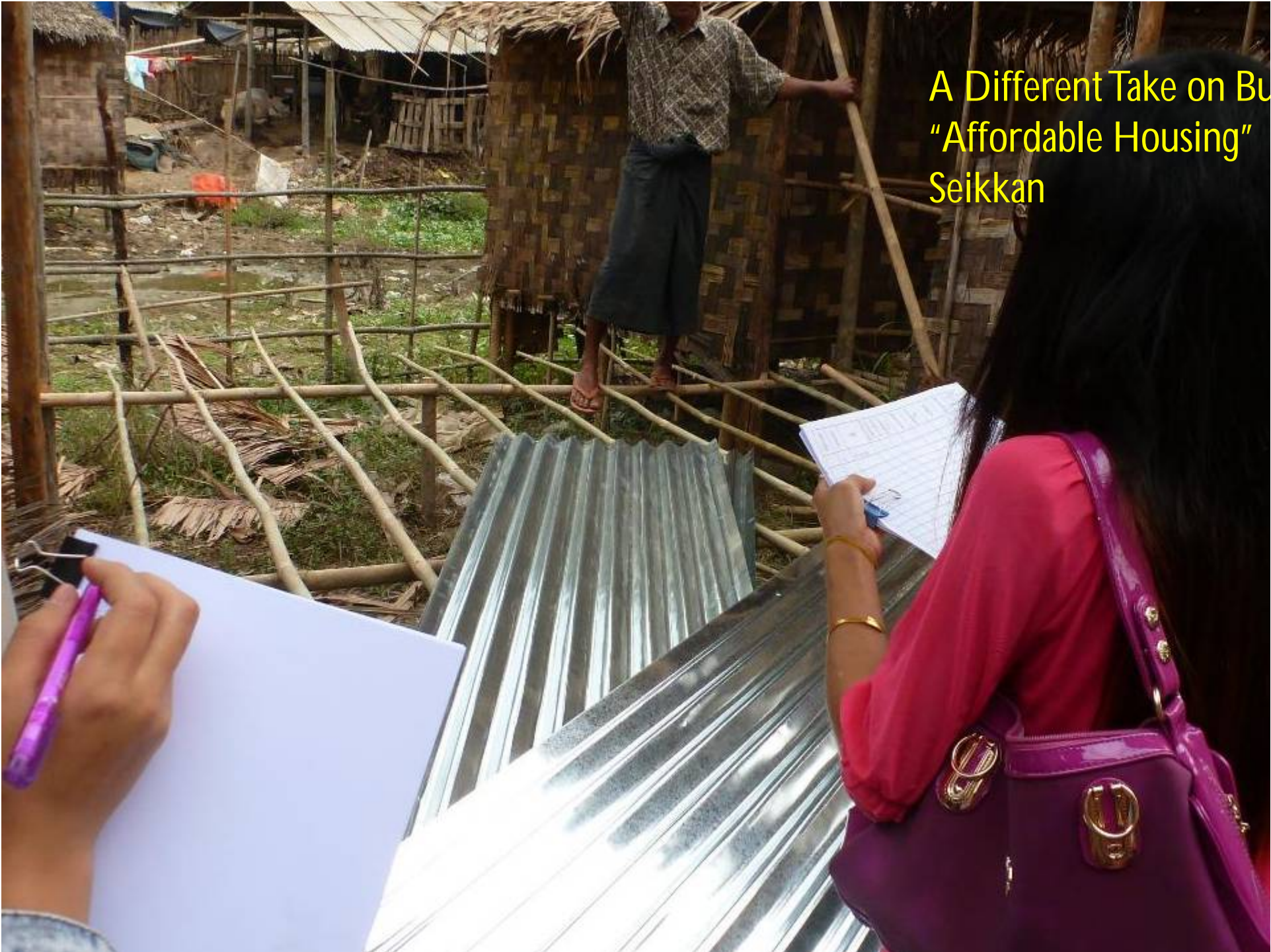
- Construction illegality (illegal subdivision, non-conformance with building codes)
- Hazardous Environment
- Crime and Violence
- Hygiene and Health problems
- Temporary nature/transience

A typical family in the fast-disappearing inner-city slums



Source: Biswajit Kumar Sarkar, UN Habitat 2013

- This couple live on railway land and pay Kyats 20,000 per month rent.
- They built the house themselves for Kyats 300,000
- Earn Kyats 3,000 per day folding books
- Wash clothes when no other work
- Borrow from money lender at 20% interest per month
- Family uses pawn shop
- 16 year old daughter taken out of school 4 years ago
- 6 year old goes to school
- Husband worked in Malaysia as construction worker for 2 years
- Had TB and now cannot do hard work
- Used to sell vegetables until YCDC raid
- Now helps wife at home



A Different Take on Building
"Affordable Housing"
Seikkan

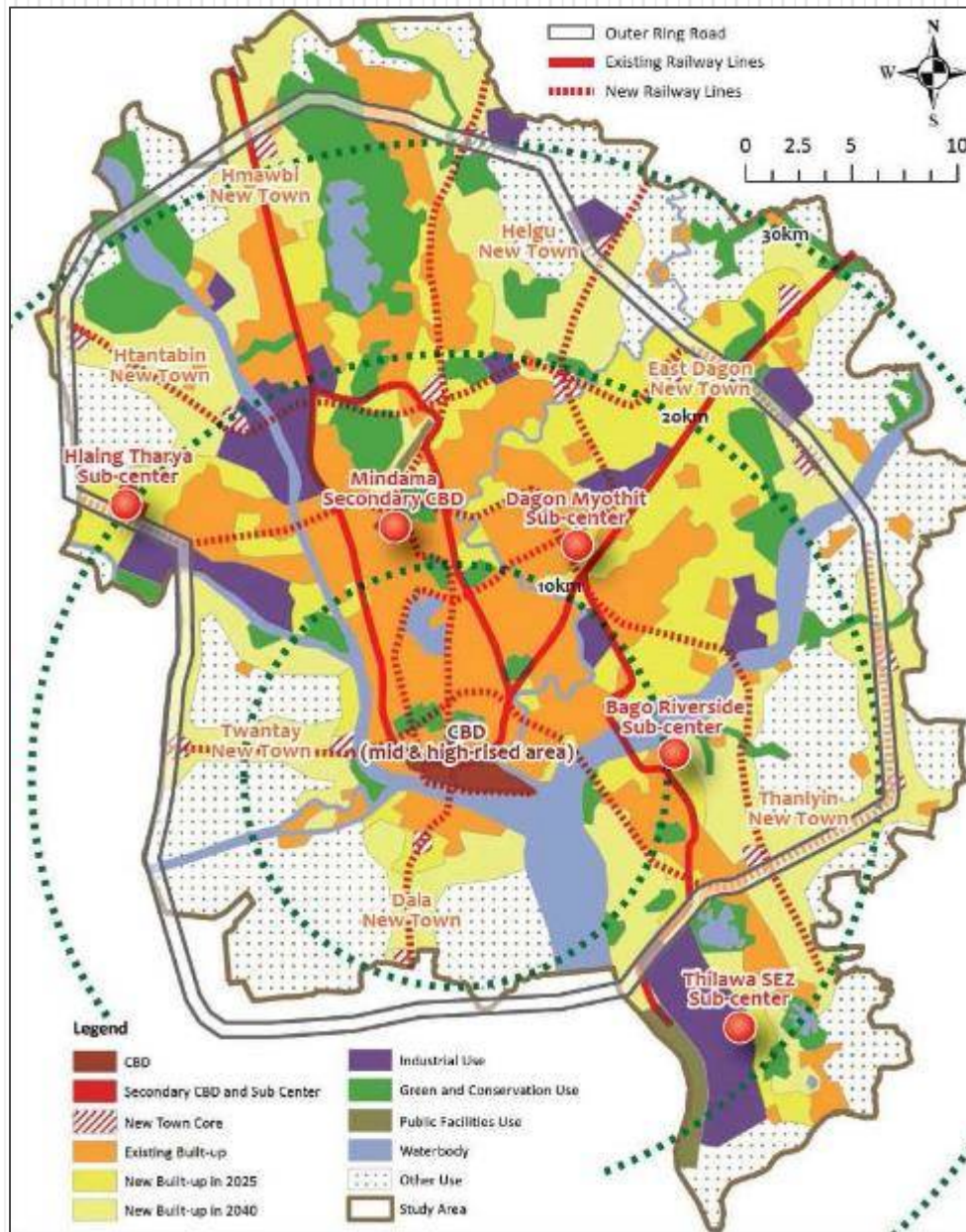


“We Want to Live Lawfully. Every citizen has the right to move around, live anywhere they want in the country as long as this act is according to the constituted laws. ”

--Section 355, 2008 Constitution



YANGON CITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE



Future Urban Structure and Land Use of Greater Yangon

Source: SUDP

Urban Land Working Group?

Topics of concern include:

- Squatters: cycle of squatting and eviction

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Population Dynamics: "land invasion"

