

(Re)claiming Citizenship Rights in Accra: Community Mobilization against the Illegal Forced Eviction of Residents in the Old Fadama Settlement

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Hundreds of thousands of urban dwellers in Sub-Saharan Africa face the threat of forced evictions every year. According to the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) over two million forced evictions occurred in nineteen African countries between 2003 and 2006 alone (COHRE 2006).

This case study of the attempted illegal forced eviction of residents in Old Fadama, Accra's largest informal settlement, exposes the circumstances in which the municipal government sought to evict the community, and presents and analyzes the subsequent local urban movement that formed as part of a larger international housing rights movement in order to contest the eviction and find alternative solutions.

Old Fadama's residents appealed against the eviction order to Ghana's High Court, without success. In response, the community sought international support from Shack Dwellers International (SDI) with which it succeeded in halting the unlawful forced eviction and created a constructive dialogue with the local authorities. During this process, Accra's urban poor have built a progressive network of community-based and non-governmental organizations that have moved beyond the prevention of the Old Fadama eviction to address broader issues of social exclusion faced by Ghana's urban poor. The Old Fadama case supports the notion that the negative externalities and detrimental social costs of the globalization of capital and the neoliberalization of cities are creating "new forms of translocal political solidarity and consciousness amongst those marginalized and excluded from the city they inhabit" (Peck and Tickel 2002, p.399).

In contesting the Old Fadama forced eviction, the causes of which were clearly rooted in the municipal authority's neoliberal urban planning approach, the community opened up the political space for the renegotiation of existing power relations. Although this process has encountered numerous hurdles along the way, it has strengthened the capacity of Ghana's urban poor to reclaim their full citizenship and human rights by demanding to participate in the use and production of the urban space they inhabit through participatory urban planning and ensuring democratic governance and a more equal distribution of resources, including vital urban infrastructure and services.