

## **Eking out a living: The livelihood implications of urban space regulation on street hawking in Accra, Ghana**

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### **Abstract**

Street hawking as a source of livelihood across the developing world has often raised a lot of concerns regarding hygiene, slum, crime, health, human and vehicular congestion from governments, city authorities and other actors. These concerns noted have necessitated a decongestion and relocation of hawkers to a constructed market in Accra, Ghana. Based on field interviews with hawkers, metropolitan authorities and the public, it is shown that the relocation of the hawkers to the newly constructed Odawna Pedestrian Market in Accra has negatively affected the livelihoods of the hawkers and other actors involved. The relocation exercise succeeded in moving a significant number of the hawkers to the constructed market, but its goal of totally getting rid of hawkers from the streets and pavements has, first, been unsuccessful as many people continue to hawk on the streets, and, second, decreased the incomes of the hawkers. There is the need to adopt more holistic measures and strategies, such as the provision of credit facilities, to address the challenges emanating from the relocation exercise, in particular, and street hawking in general.

**Keywords:** *Hawkers, Abaayei, Decongestion, Relocation, Informal Economy, Odawna*

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## 1. Introduction

The world over, people strategise and adapt in diverse ways to make a living. The search for alternative livelihoods has seen more people engaging in the informal economy in especially many developing countries. The pioneering work of Hart (1973) suggests that, although the informal economy is characteristic of the economic life in both developed and developing countries, they are particularly prevalent in developing countries. Since Hart introduced the concept of informal economy to development studies, its conceptualisation has evolved. In turn, it is sometimes difficult to define in simple terms (Godfrey, 2011). Hackenberg (1980) argues that much research work on the informal sector has often brought with it ‘conceptual confusion’, with many scholars often calling for a new modelling or conceptualisation of the informal sector. This is because the informal economy is characterised by competition, and mostly unregulated with a host of activities ranging from casual work, self-employment, and home-based production to illicit ventures (Beall, 2000). The complexity of the informal sector and the difficulties in conceptualising it stems from the fact that ‘in practice, informal activities encompass a wide-ranging scale from marginal operations to large enterprises...’ (Hart, 1973, p.68).

In view of this, the informal economy has been defined differently by economists and sociologists. Hart (1973), in his work on informal economic activities in Accra, observes that the informal economy can be seen to encompass both legitimate and illegitimate ventures. Illegitimate activities, according to Hart, are often pervasive and sometimes come with positive outcomes. LaPorta and Schleifer (2008, p.1) from the economic perspective, for example, conceive of the informal economy as any ‘economic activity that is conducted by unregistered firms or by registered firms but hidden from taxation’. From the sociological perspective, on the other hand, Chen (2006, p.76) argues that the informal economy includes ‘... not only enterprises that are not legally regulated but also employment relationships that are not legally regulated or protected’.

As can be observed in the preceding background, the terms ‘informal economy’ and ‘informal sector’ have however often been used interchangeably by various scholars following the International Labour

Organisation's (ILO) Kenya Mission extensive usage of 'informal sector' in its report on informality (ILO, 1972). This is because of the contestations ensuing, and of which, those against the use of 'informal sector' maintaining that informality transcends a single economic sector (Ojong, 2011). It is argued generally that both the formal economy and informal economy which were hitherto perceived as two different economic sectors and not linked are indeed interlinked with a range of economic relations (Chen, 2006; Ojong, 2011; Obeng-Odoom, 2011). The Multiple Modes of Livelihood (MML) approach, for example, has brought to light the inter-linkages between the formal and informal economy (Ojong, 2001; Owusu, 2007). The MML highlights that in the face of economic changes, most people in Africa, irrespective of their socio-economic background, often engage in different economic ventures to diversify their sources of income. Most people in formal employment in Africa often also engage in informal economic activities as an additional source of income for their survival or for accumulation (Owusu, 2007). In view of the linkages, overlaps and contestations surrounding the usage of the terms, 'informal sector' and 'informal economy' will loosely be used interchangeably in this paper to describe informality as perceived in Accra, Ghana.

Street hawking in Accra has a complex identity. On face value, it appears completely unregulated. However, in practice, it often also involves informal employment or arrangements between registered and regulated shop-owners and hawkers who are neither registered nor regulated (Broadbent, 2011). Hart (1973) highlights that, in Accra, even though an individual may be self-employed, small enterprises like barbering shops, hair salons, restaurants, wayside provisions and carpentry shops may hire the services of a person through informal arrangements even though these enterprises may not be captured as business 'establishments'. In line with Chen (2006), and hawking as an informal economic activity therefore, the informal economy can be said to include all unregistered and not legally regulated economic ventures; and informal inter-personal arrangements between two parties (without legal backing) that may have an economic motive.

Street hawking is an important source of livelihood in the developing world and has been seen to absorb many unemployed persons often youth

who move to urban centres for better economic opportunities (Bromley, 1998). Xaba *et al.* (2002) have observed that in sub-Saharan Africa there has been an increase in informal sector activities while the formal sector has stagnated in growth over the years. Following the work of Hart (1973) on the economic activities of people in the lower income bracket in Accra, it is seen that the informal sector serves as refuge for the unemployed and a way to safeguard against economic hardship and dependence on others. In Ghana, the informal sector is an important component of the economy; employing many people and contributing to economic growth and development (YEN and IYF, 2009; Grant and Oteng-Ababio, 2012). Grant and Yankson (2003) are of the opinion that about 40% of the population of Accra in 2000 were engaged in the informal sector. Similarly, Appiah-Kubi (2007) contends that the informal sector contributes within the range of 20% - 40% to the economy of Ghana and indeed experienced an increase in labour force participation from 79% to 86% between 1987 and 1999. In spite of its importance to the economy of Ghana, the informal sector does not have a singular positive depiction in public policy. It has been differently constructed as an employer, backward space or a nuisance and a 'goldmine' for electoral votes by political parties in the country (Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom, 2011). These multiple representations in part influenced state intervention through the decongestion and relocation of street hawkers to the Odawna Pedestrian Market in Accra (Davis, 2008; Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah, 2008).

The policy debates of decongestion, spatial dynamics of street hawking and their engagement with city authorities in the wake of the relocation exercise in Accra have been the subject of previous studies (see, for example, Mitullah, 2003; Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah, 2008; Broadbent 2011; Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom, 2011; Farouk and Owusu, 2012). Although shedding much light on the subject, these studies do not drill into the complexities of specific, large scale eviction exercises and how they sometimes lead to relocation activities. Such detailed exploration of specific cases is needed to deepen our understanding of how people in the informal economy experience aspects of the formal economy when they are relocated either permanently or temporarily.

It is this task that this paper sets for itself. The paper highlights the challenges and effects of the relocation exercise on the livelihood and the socio-economic wellbeing of hawkers who were recently relocated to the Odawna Pedestrian Market in Accra, Ghana, a formally constructed Market in the city. It also considers how the city authorities and the general public experience eviction and relocation. The paper reveals that while the eviction and relocation has succeeded in moving a significant number of the hawkers to the Odawna Pedestrian Market, many of them have returned are still selling on the streets. It is further shown that the eviction and relocation exercise have not only affected the livelihoods of the hawkers but have also affected them socially and psychologically and hence their return to the streets and pavements to do business in spite of persistent harassments and raids from city authorities and taskforce. The rest of the paper is broadly divided into five sections. The next section dwells on the street hawking situation in Ghana with subsections looking at the theoretical perspective, the study area, and research methodology. The ensuing section highlights the typology and official discourses about why the city authorities relocate hawkers. The third section discusses the challenges the AMA, hawkers and the public face as a result of the relocation exercise, while the fourth section looks at possible interventions to ameliorate the challenges. Section five concludes.

## **2. Street hawking situation in Ghana**

In Ghana, street hawking is present in almost all the big towns and cities. Normally, economically active youth and, in many cases, children move from rural to urban areas to work mostly as hawkers and *kayayei*<sup>1</sup> (Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf, 2008; Anarfi and Kwankye, 2009; Farouk and Owusu, 2012). The pioneering works of Harris and Todaro (1971) show that this rural-urban drift arises partly because of a lack of economic opportunities in rural areas and partly due to the perception of a better life in cities. As with other cities elsewhere in Africa and the world at large, there is often a divergence between perception and reality as conditions in urban areas are not as idyllic. In Kenya for example, labour that do find work in urban areas are

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<sup>1</sup> Persons, mostly young females who carry loads in head pans normally for a negotiated fee (female head porters).

often faced with appalling working conditions and gross violations of their rights. Kindiki (2011) in his study of labour upgrading in urban parts of Kenya showed that most workers are working under poor conditions. The safety and health of workers are not only compromised in the apparel industry but are often coerced to work overtime with low wages, and also denied the right to form associations for negotiations, thereby hampering the possibility of upgrading labour to achieve national accumulation for better conditions of work for labour and poverty reduction. The UN-Habitat notes that, urban areas in sub-Saharan Africa are plagued with the highest degrees of poverty in the world with 43% of the population living below the poverty line of less than US \$1 per day (UN-HABITAT, 2008). In West and Central Africa for example, cities have become 'dysfunctional' and lagged greatly in access to resources and livelihoods for their urban population in spite of an expansion in economic activities (UN-HABITAT, 2008, p. 11). Hence, many of the people who migrate in anticipation of better conditions in the urban centres often get themselves entangled in a poverty trap orchestrated by severe job restrictions, stigmatisation, social marginalisation and exclusion, deteriorated living conditions among other deprivations (UN-HABITAT, 2010; Farouk and Owusu, 2012).

The political economy of Ghana like many African countries has been erratic over the years with economic crises coupled with high inflation rates and a subsequent decline in the 1970s and 1980s (Government of Ghana, 2005b). These conditions intermingled with political challenges, such as instability and totalitarianism (Songsore, 2011). Simultaneously, there was a severe sahelian drought around the time which resulted in poor agricultural yields and sub-sequent food shortages. Additionally, many Ghanaians were deported from Nigeria in the 1980s during a time when Ghana and Nigeria implemented beggar-thy-neighbour policies (Adepoju, 2002; Dietz *et al.*, 2004). As a result of these unfavourable conditions prevailing at the time Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) were instituted (Aryeetey and Harrigan, 2000; Yeboah, 2000; Awusabo-Asare and Tanle, 2008). SAP was implemented in Ghana as economic recovery programmes (ERPs) in three phases (Hutchful, 1996). This included ERP I which spanned from 1983-1986. ERP II, that actually commenced the adjustment policy including

Programmes to Mitigate the Social Cost of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) ranging from 1987-1990 and ERP III which started from 1993 with objective of shifting from 'economic recovery' to 'accelerated growth' (Hutchful, 1996; Briggs and Yeboah, 2001).

As part of the 'accelerated growth strategy', the private sector was regarded as central in achieving the objective of a sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction (Obeng-Odoom, 2012). With the aim to roll back state intervention and promote the private sector as a catalyst for economic growth, there was a sale of over 300 state enterprises between 1987 and 2000. This resulted in the loss of jobs to 70, 000 and 147, 000 people in the formal sector with a subsequent decline in employment from 18% in 1989 to 13% in 1999 (Gockel and Vormenor, 2004). Thus, SAP in Ghana led to privatisation, deregulation and the retrenchment of many public sector workers resulting in high unemployment levels in the country (Overå, 2007; Obeng-Odoom, 2009). Notwithstanding this, the adjustment policies brought about an expansion and growth in the economy with increasing foreign direct investment (FDI) (Grant, 2001). For instance, there was an increase in FDI in the country from 82.8% between 2001 and 2007 to 99.6% in 2008 but slightly declined to 94% in the middle of 2010 (Obeng-Odoom, 2012). Increase in FDI in the country has subsequently promoted a strong link between Ghana and the global economy, production, distribution, consumption and political system (Yeboah, 2000; Grant and Oteng-Ababio, 2012).

The government in 2001 re-emphasised the commitment to adopt an aggressive divestiture program by instituting measures to reduce cost in private sector production with the view to strengthening the private sector (MOFEP, 2001). Following this, the private sector (formal and informal) has in tandem with the public sector absorbed many Ghanaians in employment (Obeng-Odoom, 2012). Whiles there has generally been a decline in unemployment nationally from 8.2% to 3.6% between 1999/2000 and 2006/2008, urban areas have also experienced a decline in unemployment rates from 12.0% to 6.3% within the same period. Similarly, Accra also experienced a decline in unemployment rates from 16.6% to 8.9% 1999/2000 and 2006/2008 (GSS, 1995; 2000; 2008).

Although poverty rates have declined nationally with an increase in wages and a drop in inflation, the income disparity between the poor and the rich in urban areas is still high and as such derailing efforts at poverty reduction (GSS, 2007; Bawumia, 2010; Obeng-Odoom, 2012). This situation is consistent with the UN-HABITAT's key finding on urban trends that, income inequalities in the developing world and African cities are higher than in developed countries (UN-HABITAT, 2010). The incidence of poverty, for instance, is still high in the three savannah northern regions with about 11% of the urban population in the country plagued with poverty (GSS, 2008). The Ghana Living Standards Survey showed that, while 37% of the population were considered to be extremely poor (earning income which is less than \$260), 52% were considered to be poor (earning income which is less than \$333 per annum in 1991/92). In spite of the persons considered to be poor declining from 52% in 1991/92 to 40% in 1998/99 and to about 29% in 2005/06, the incidence of poverty in the country is still high (GSS, 2007; 2008). The recent oil find, like in many African countries, is also yet to translate into any tangible benefits for the poor (Gray, 2009). Also, these figures are calculated on the \$1 a day poverty benchmark when, in fact, \$1.25 is the internationally agreed poverty line. A revision of the poverty line in Ghana may show that more people live in poverty than is officially estimated (Gray, 2009; Obeng-Odoom, 2012).

Further, while there has been a decline in levels of unemployment nationally, the unemployment rate in urban areas including Accra is still high due partly to the migration of people from rural and other urban areas into the city (Overå, 2007; GSS, 2007; Davis, 2008; Agyei and Ofosu-Mensah, 2009). High levels of unemployment and a widening income inequality (Gray, 2009; Obeng-Odoom, 2010) have thus resulted in many people (48%) engaging in the urban informal economy with hawking and *kayayei* as a livelihood (Gyamfi 2000; Tanle and Awusabo-Asare 2007; Awumbila and Ardayfio-Schandorf 2008; Aryeetey *et al.* 2009; Obeng-Odoom, 2012). Informal economic working spaces have multiplied in the urban environment (Yankson, 2000a). Anecdotal information indicates that, in Accra alone, there are more than 4,000 street hawkers (*The Statesman*, 2007b). There have, however, been concerns and intense debate and politicisation about the

legality and the problems associated with the activities of the hawkers (Davis, 2008; Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom, 2011; Farouk and Owusu, 2012). Hawkers risk their lives selling their wares in between moving vehicles and, in the process, impede the flow of traffic (Duh, 2004).

In relation to this, several attempts were made by the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA) as far back as 2007 to relocate the hawkers to the 4,000 capacity Odawna Pedestrian Market in Accra (Davis, 2008). Besides the efforts of the authorities being derailed by the overflowing of water from drains into the Market and the abandoning of sheds and return to the streets, many of the hawkers have not been able to acquire a shed to sell their wares (*Daily Graphic*, 2007a). Bentil (2009) observed that the hawkers have returned to the streets and have now adopted new strategies. They have changed their strategy from verbally ‘harassing’ to physically pulling pedestrians to sell their wares. This situation has resulted in recurrent clashes with AMA task force (*Abaayei*<sup>2</sup>) and the police who normally raid and seize the goods of the hawkers - consistent with the global trend of street hawkers becoming vulnerable in times of conflict situations with the police, city authorities, pedestrians and formal or registered shop owners. In the port city of Surabaya in Indonesia, for example, Peters (2009) notes that petty traders have become vulnerable due to their eviction and the subsequent burning down of traditional Markets which have displaced and rendered thousands unemployed. The burning down of Pasar Turi, which is the largest traditional Market in Eastern Indonesia, for instance, did not only destroy property and displaced many traders but led to the loss of 30,000 jobs.

Against this background, the paper seeks to find out who these people are? What reasons underpin the relocation exercise? What are the challenges facing the hawkers, the public who are the potential buyers and the AMA in the face of the relocation exercise? What is the socio-economic impact of the forced relocation to the Odawna Pedestrian Market on the hawkers? To answer these questions carefully, it is important to use a conceptual

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<sup>2</sup> “*Abaayei*” is a Ga (language spoken by people of Accra) word meaning “they are coming” used to refer to the AMA task force.

framework that is designed to understand the tensions and contradictions in the informal economy.

### **3. Conceptual Framework**

The livelihoods framework has been used in this study to explain the dynamics and impact of the relocation exercise on street hawking as a livelihood and on other actors involved in hawking phenomenon.

#### ***3.1. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)***

The use of the livelihoods debate has been ongoing for a long time (Scoones, 2009). A 'livelihood', according to Carney (1998, p.4), comprises 'the capabilities, assets including both material and social resources and activities required for a means of living'. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework was developed by the Rural Poverty Advisory Group within the UK Department for International Development building on the earlier work by development studies scholars and institutions such as the Institute of Development Studies. It is aimed at helping to better understand the multifaceted nature of poverty and the livelihoods of the poor (SLF Guidance Sheet 2.1).

The framework focuses on the resources and assets on which poor people draw in their quest for survival. The argument is that in looking at livelihoods there is the need to understand the poverty situation from the perspective of the poor (Ellis, 2000). The framework highlights how policies and institutions can influence the vulnerability of the poor as they try to make a living. In view of this, Carney (1998) posits that a livelihood is sustainable when it is able to cope and recover from the shocks and stresses, maintain its capabilities and assets without affecting the natural resource base.

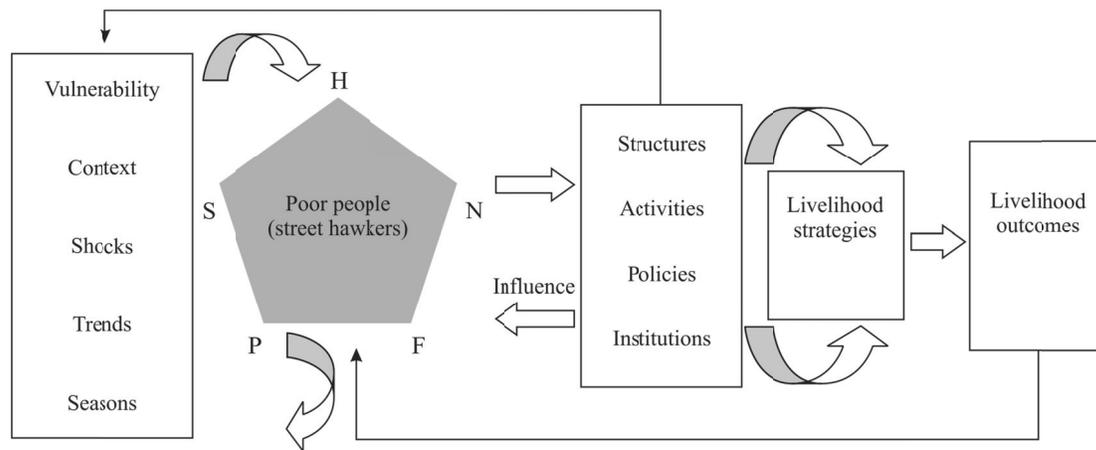
The livelihoods framework envisages that, even though poor people may lack money or any form of savings, they may be endowed with both material and non-material resources or *assets*. These resources according to the framework may encompass their knowledge (ideas and skills), labour, health, family and friends among others. The livelihood assets (resources) pentagon as conceptualized by Carney (1998) include: human, physical, social and political, financial and natural capital. The *human capital*

highlighted in the framework refers to the manpower or labour endowments of households/poor people which according to the livelihoods framework can be measured in the quantitative and qualitative terms (Carney 1998; Ellis 2000; SLF Guidance Sheet, 2.3.1). These according to the framework can also be seen as the capabilities of the poor people which are both crucial in both the productive and reproductive process. Most often, the ability of poor people to exploit opportunities for their socio-economic wellbeing is saddled by their lower levels of education, skills and health status as well their social responsibilities which places some form of psycho-social and economic stress on them. The lack of appropriate qualitative human capital, for instance, may predispose poor people in urban areas or households to engaging in low income-earning livelihood activities as they are unable to secure employment in the more formal labour Market in the urban setting.

Similarly, *social capital* illustrates the social relationships that emanate from the social interactions or networks that exist amongst people as well as other important actors and existing institutions; both private and public available where people seek refuge in times of crisis. It encompasses the “the rules, norms, obligations, reciprocity and trust embedded in social relations, social structures, society's institutional arrangements which enables its members to achieve their individual and community objectives for their *socio-economic wellbeing* [emphasis mine]” (Narayan 1997; cited in Rakodi and Lloyd-jones 2002, p.10). Normally the interaction amongst people over time often results in some mutual trust which people exploit in their daily activities as they pursue their livelihoods. This social capital that emerges as a result of the social networks or relations may also wane or breakdown as a result of conflicts and mistrusts which are inevitable in human social interaction. In this regard, it is argued that these social networks do not often favour, for example, poor people in the urban settings due to mistrust, insecurity and increasing heterogeneity (Ellis 2000; Knox & Pinch 2000). In relation to social capital is political capital. *Political capital* borders on the decision making system or the political process. The influence of political actors and government agencies can influence peoples’ efforts at making a living. In many countries where hawking is common for instance, government and other governmental agencies often do not recognize the activity

(Bhowmik 2005). In places where recognition is given, unfavourable policies and lack of commitment is always not there at ensuring the welfare of the hawkers or people engaged in other informal activities (see, for example, Obassi *et al.*, 2008). Similarly, Market associations normally formed by the hawkers often lack power to be able to engage government and political actors in negotiations geared at their welfare.

The *physical capital* on the other hand encompasses the infrastructure; from transport, roads, traffic lights, pavements, built Market, shelter, water, energy and communications. The physical capital influences the ability of poor people to take advantage of their capabilities or assets for their socio-economic wellbeing. Also, the savings, credit and any other finances available relates to the *financial capital* aspect of the livelihoods framework. Money is very important for survival or starting a livelihood. Hence, a person's ability to survive or continue with his or her source of livelihood in the light of shocks (e.g. low sales, drought, poor crop yield, fire outbreak or unfavourable governmental policy) will depend on the amount of initial capital or savings one has. Besides, the availability of credit facilities or loans from the banks and how accessible it is to the poor can influence their livelihoods. Normally where loans or credit facilities are available poor people are unable to access them because of high interest rates or they lack the collateral security required to access these facilities. Lastly, the natural resource stocks of relevance to livelihoods of people especially common pool resources borders on the natural capital aspect like land (space) and other environmental resources of the framework like trees, wildlife and water. The livelihoods framework is diagrammatically represented below.



**Figure 1 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework**

Source: Adapted from the DFID’s Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Carney, 1998).

From figure 1 above, the framework shows that the livelihood assets are the resources central and available to individuals or households which they rely on for sustenance. These assets are often influenced by the context which in itself serves to make the poor people and their assets vulnerable. Being a generic framework, how it can be used for the purposes of this study requires careful thought. The next section explains how this study links the SLF to the particular case of street hawking and sheds some light on the study area.

### ***3.2. The study area and research methodology***

From the framework, it is understood that the vulnerability of the hawkers depends on how they are able to overcome the constraints to their capabilities posed by the *context*. Indeed government policies or the activities of institutions may also indirectly present constraints or *shocks* to people and thereby making them vulnerable. It is envisaged that the ability of the hawkers to overcome these constraints or *shocks* observed will determine their level of vulnerability and hence the livelihood outcome.

The empirical material for the paper is from the Accra Metropolitan Area where the newly constructed Odawna Pedestrian Market is located. There have been a number of decongestion and relocation exercises in the some other areas like Kumasi and Takoradi in the Ashanti and Western Regions respectively (*Modern Ghana News*, 2007b; 2009). However, Accra has been chosen because the whole issue of decongestion and relocation of

street hawkers started in the city with the razing down of the then Makola No. 1 Market during the regime of Flt. Lt. J.J. Rawlings in 1979 (Robertson, 1983). A regime change from the Rawlings era (1979; 1981-1992; 1992/3 - 2000) was not accompanied by any significant change in the policy direction of urban management and governance (Obeng-Odoom, 2010; Farouk and Owusu, 2012). Both the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government led by the then President, John Agyekum Kufour (2001-2008) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC) government led by Prof. John Mills (2009 – till date) have drafted different manifestos with varying policy directions. The decongestion and relocation of street hawkers, however, gathered renewed momentum with the reign of the then Mayor of Accra; Stanley Nii Adjiri-Blankson in 2004 (Broadbent, 2011). The city itself has over the years expanded and grown in size with a population of 1,658,937 people as of 2000 (GSS, 2002). Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah (2008) recognise that, anecdotal evidence estimate the daytime population in the city to be more than 3 million people from adjoining towns and villages who come to engage in trading activities. Although, the population of Accra as of 2007 was 2.1 million people (UN-HABITAT, 2008), it has been projected to increase to about 4 million inhabitants by 2020 (Grant and Yankson, 2003).

Besides being the administrative capital with so many businesses, banks and manufacturing industries, Accra also abounds with social amenities which attract people mostly from rural areas and other urban centres (GSS, 2006; Owusu 2008; Obeng-Odoom, 2011). The unemployment rate of Accra, which was about 14% in 2000, and above the national average of 11.2%, was one of the highest in the country. It also has a very large population with majority being engaged in the informal economy of which sales is the leading occupation (GSS, 2002). The preponderance of people selling on the streets and the problems that come with it has necessitated the construction and relocation of the hawkers to a Market structure (*GhanaWeb*, 2005; *Daily Graphic*, 2007b). The construction of a Market of this sort purposely for hawkers in Accra justified the choice of the city and for that matter the Odawna Pedestrian Market for the study. Further, my familiarity with the city and my experience of the activities of the hawkers also gave me the urge to situate the study in Accra.

The relocation process of the hawkers was met with resistance as property was destroyed by the city authorities and the hawkers were treated harshly by *Abaayei*, so adopting a qualitative methodology was one of the best ways to bring out people's feelings and sentiments. Secondary data consisting of published works, articles, internet sources and statistics were used to complement the qualitative data obtained from the study site. The data collection involved the use of in-depth interviews and participant observations. The interviews were conducted with hawkers who had relocated to the Pedestrian Market at Odawna, Kwame Nkrumah Avenue (Circle), Accra. Interviews were also conducted with hawkers who were yet to relocate and were still selling their items on the streets and pavements around the Accra CBD. In addition to interviews with the hawkers, I interviewed some members of the general public and AMA officials mainly to have a feel for their views on the relocation exercise. The research was structured in such a way that 2 to 3 interviews were conducted in a day at the Pedestrian Market and specific locations along the street spanning a period of 2 months from June to August, 2010. The interviews were scheduled in this way to accommodate the schedule of the interviewees.

In all, the qualitative data for the research was gathered through snowball sampling. This method was used because the hawkers had become very apprehensive and hostile as a result of resentments borne out of the relocation exercise. The problem had been compounded by the politicisation of the exercise and the activities of investigative journalists who on many occasions disguised themselves in various forms in recent times to obtain sensitive information in the country. Although snowball sampling method raises concerns about representativeness, it is appropriate for studying migrant workers and highly mobile persons such as hawkers (Babbie, 2005). Both open-ended and semi-structured questionnaires were used to conduct the interviews with 28 informants. Out of the 28 informants interviewed, 5 were key informants including city authorities. The 23 primary informants consisted of the public (including potential buyers and a *trotro*<sup>3</sup> driver) and

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<sup>3</sup> *Trotros* are local mini vans that transport passengers from one location to the other within the city for a designated fare depending on the distance of the destination and stops at almost every bus stop for people to alight and hence its name (*Trotro*-meaning short distance stoppages).

hawkers drawn mainly from the Odawna Market and *trotro* station at the Nkrumah Avenue (Circle) and Accra CBD area. The informants included males and females within the ages of 15-55 years and varying marital statuses. For the primary informants of both sexes, 2 fell within the 15-24 years age brackets, 9 in the 25-34 age brackets, 11 and 1 person in the 35-44 and 45-54-year cohort respectively. For both the key and primary informants, 17 of them were married, 8 said they were never married, 1 person said she was widowed and 2 persons indicated that they were divorced.

More than half of the primary informants had educational levels up to primary and junior high school level (19 informants). Only 2 of the total number of informants interviewed were educated up to senior high school level. One person had education up to the tertiary level, while another interviewee reported 'no education'.. With the exception of a primary informant (hawker) who indicated 'Lagos-Nigeria' as the hometown, nearly all the others interviewed were migrants coming from rural areas (Owusu *et al.*, 2008) in southern Ghana with a few from Accra. They were mostly of the Akan<sup>4</sup> ethnic group, notably the *Akwapems*<sup>5</sup> and *Ashantis*<sup>6</sup>. The Akan, who are the majority ethnic group in Ghana, have much higher concentrations in Western, Ashanti, Central Eastern and Brong Ahafo Regions (Agyei-Mensah and Owusu, 2010). Although there are people from the various ethnic groups in Ghana residing in Accra, the *Akans* (42%) dominate the Accra Metropolitan Area (Owusu and Agyei-Mensah, 2011).

Within the Odawna Pedestrian Market, a total of 13 hawkers were interviewed (10 primary informants and 3 key informants) of which 7 were females. Also, 7 primary informants (3 females) were interviewed as hawkers still selling on the streets and pavements while a total of 6 primary informants (4 males) were drawn from the public across the city of Accra to solicit their views on the subject. While participant observation was used in collecting data at the Odawna Pedestrian Market, activities of hawkers on the street were

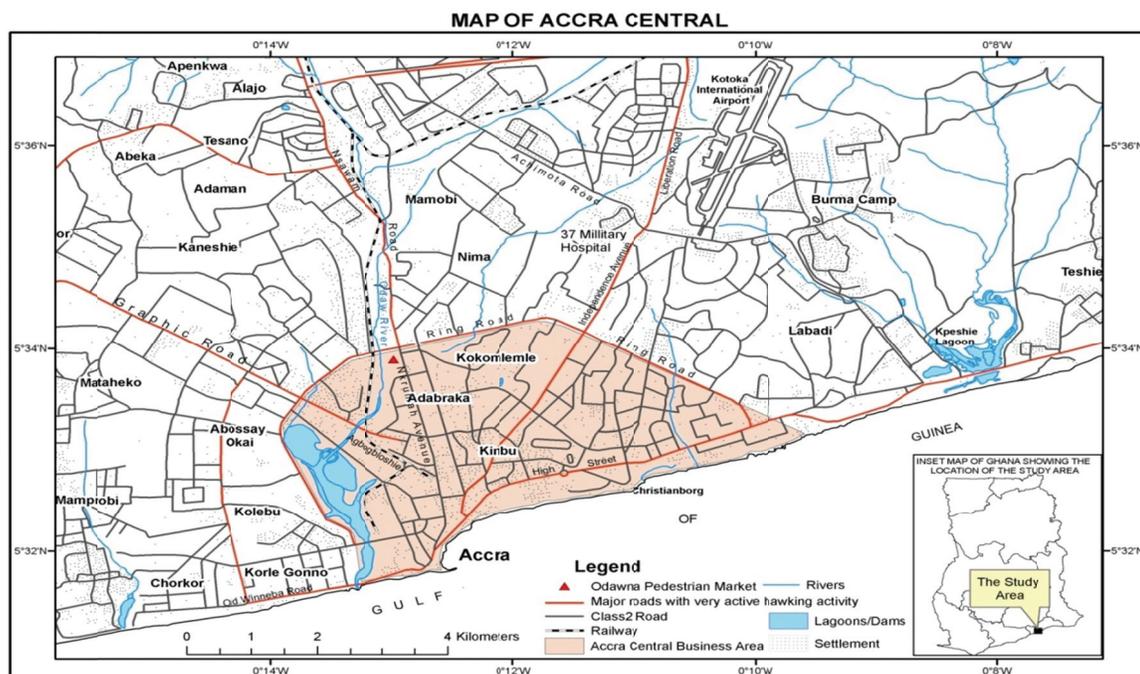
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<sup>4</sup> Akan is an ethnic group found from the forest belt in the south to the western coast of Ghana.

<sup>5</sup> People in the Akwapem tribe are mainly found in the Eastern region of Ghana on the Akwapem mountain ranges, although because of internal migration some have settled elsewhere in Ghana.

<sup>6</sup> People in the Ashanti tribe are mainly found in Ashanti region in the middle forest belt of southern Ghana even though due to internal migration they can be found in almost all the regions of Ghana.

observed from strategic locations on the street. With the 5 key informants, 3 were males. All of them were between the ages of 35-44 years. An AMA official and an *Abaayei* including some Market Association executives of the Odawna Pedestrian Market were interviewed as key informants. The AMA official and *Abaayei* were interviewed with the same interview guide while the Market Association executives and hawkers in the Market were interviewed with the same guide. In all, 4 different types of interview guides were used for the targeted informants. With the exception of one of the Market Association Executives who declined to be audio recorded, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Figure 2 is a map of Accra Central showing the Odawna Pedestrian Market (depicted with a shaded triangle) and areas of street hawking activity.



**Figure 2: Map of Accra Showing Study Area and Places with high levels of hawking activities**

### ***3.3. Typology and Dynamics of Street Hawkers***

While a study by Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah (2008, p.196; see also, Iyenda, 2005) revealed two types of street hawking (itinerant or walking and stationary), this study revealed a third type which can be categorised as semi-

stationary. The *walking or itinerant hawkers* were those selling on the street between cars and *trotros* in heavy traffic (see Figures 3 and 4 below). The youth, mostly males between the ages of 15-25 years, sold items such as newspapers. Some sold food such as plantain chips, and others sold water in small sachets. The sale of dog chains is also popular. Contrary to Mitullah's (2003) finding that generally women dominate the street hawking economy and that the street hawking economy is gendered, this study revealed that in the Odawna Market and Nkrumah Avenue *trotro* station, males were seen to be selling items like pastries, ladies shoes, bags and underwear. This latter finding is corroborated by Overå (2007) and Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah (2008). In reference to these changing gendered patterns in the sale of goods in Ghana for example, Overå (2007) is of the view that it could be attributed to economic crises, structural adjustment policies, unemployment and rural-urban migration which brought about competition and overcrowding for the limited income making opportunities (see also, Agadjanian, 2002). In the light of the constraints that people encounter, it has become necessary to transcend gendered perceptions about particular economic ventures so as to work for survival.



**Figure 3 Traffic Jam in Accra**

Source: Author (2010)



**Figure 4: Street Hawkers selling in Accra**

Indeed what is sold is ever changing and fluid, and sometimes dependent on special occasions, seasons, and time of the year. As such, profits depended on the number of items sold within a period. The hawkers often have to 'sense' the demand for new products so as to be able to introduce 'new' products or

typical seasonal products such as flags, toys and unique paraphernalia. This is because changes in the *seasons* or *trends* as noted in the SLF can present vulnerabilities to the hawkers. It is observed that the *structures* inform the type of goods that will be sold and the mode of operation or strategy that will be adopted. The strategy adopted depends on the ability of hawker to digest the possibilities or limitations, the perception of the *place* (place of restriction or opportunities) and consequently the livelihood outcome (Rakodi and Lloyd-Jones, 2002).

The *semi-stationary and stationary hawkers* consisted of those who sold their wares while sitting or standing on the pavements, street corners, and walkways of overhead bridges. They are semi-stationary because they move from their locations occasionally to avoid the city authorities and AMA task force from harassing them and also to occupy specific locations identified as strategic for selling more of their items. Goods sold are quite similar to those of the itinerant hawkers but include people selling mobile phone cards and accessories, and operating ‘space-to-space’ (roadside mobile telephony systems). Lastly, the stationary hawkers identified were those who had relocated to the Odawna Pedestrian Market in Accra. They sold their items under sheds allocated to them by the AMA authorities in the walled Market. Items sold included second-hand clothes, shoes and bags, cooking utensils, cooked food and jewellery. The stationary hawkers in the Market are immobile even though they can become mobile at certain times of the day and year by going onto the street to sell. Their presence on the street, however, tends to be temporary as they return to their sheds the next day or after a certain period. Goods sold in the Odawna Market generated relatively higher profits than those sold by the itinerant hawkers. Hence, the hawkers strategically adopt the best market situation to make enough profits. Indeed, many others also see hawking as a stepping-stone to other better income making ventures. It is observed that some similarities thus exist amongst the various hawking categories identified. Even though similar studies in Accra by Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah (2008) did highlight these dynamics, it is worthy to note that, for the hawking categories observed, some diversify by selling different types of products while others deal in only one type of product to maximize profits.

### **3.4. Official Discourses for Relocation**

The AMA has bye-laws which were instituted in 1995 to guide it in managing the city. Of these laws, it is section 79 of the Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462) that is of particular relevance to street hawking. However, other regulations are used too. The 'Hawkers' Permit' laws of section 7 of the 1995 AMA are a case in point. They are important because they state that 'no person shall offer for sale or sell any article in a street market other than in the space or selling allocated to him [sic] by the AMA'.

In cognizance of the bye-laws, the AMA stressed the need to remove the hawkers from the streets or, in AMA words, 'decongest the city'. According to AMA, one key reason for being tough with hawkers is that they impede the free flow of vehicular traffic (Broadbent, 2011). The mayor of Accra from 2005 to 2009, launched 'Operation Nimrod' in 2007 which he stressed was going to be 'firm and inhuman'. The mayor said, 'now that there is a place for the petty traders and hawkers, the moment we (the AMA) dislodge them from the streets and pavements, the AMA will regard hawking in the CBD as illegal' (*Modern Ghana News*, 2007a). In an emergency meeting with assembly members to solicit their support, he emphasised that the activities of informal workers and the proliferation of unauthorised structures in the face of the floods in city had been chaotic (*The Statesman*, 2007a). This was because hawkers had virtually taken over pavements of the central business district and portions of the road selling and erecting structures (*The Statesman*, 2007c).

Official discourses stressed how the activities of hawkers and the putting up of unauthorised structures like kiosks and metal containers had become a common sight across the city (Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom, 2011) and why, as a result of this situation, people and vehicles were competing for space. Simultaneously the discourses stressed how choked drains and unauthorised structures block waterways to cause flooding and slum conditions in the city (*Daily Graphic*, 2011; Farouk and Owusu, 2012). There was therefore the need; the official discourse went, not to only clear the hawkers off the streets but also to demolish unauthorised structures constructed by squatters/hawkers on waterways to help stem the recurrent flooding and loss of lives and property in the city. Labelling all these

discourses 'official' may be misleading. Such concerns are raised by non-officials too. For example, a *trotro* driver had this to say, 'that one (hawking); I am always complaining about it. Just recently an accident occurred at Opebia roundabout; I was not there but I heard it killed a lot of them (hawkers). This is because when you are driving, for example, they are selling on the street. When sometimes you want to change to another lane on the road, may be after you look into your driving mirror and you want to cross to the other lane you will realise that they are on that side again. So sometimes you find it difficult and because of that, me I think the way they have been selling on the street I think it is not advisable' (Driver, Male-age: 44yrs).

Such anti-hawking view in non-official circles is not typical. Other potential buyers, even though acknowledged that hawking was bad, were however emphatic that the hawkers provided very essential goods at cheaper prices as compared to buying from the shops. Pedestrians for instance, lamented that apart from the impulse buying that they do, sometimes as a result of persistent harassment from the hawkers, they occasionally have conflicts with them.

The hawkers interviewed did acknowledge the problems that emerge as a result of their activities. They thus saw the relocation exercise as a step in the right direction. Their continued presence in public spaces and refusal to relocate however was because they had no other job other than selling on the street and hence their persistent disregard for the *Abaayei* and Police. The street is seen as a locale with possibilities where they have developed strong attachments to and derive their livelihood. The hawkers argued that getting a shed to sell in the Odawna Market was very expensive. They did not have enough money to go to the AMA to pay for a permit to acquire a shed. Most of the hawkers interviewed at the Nkrumah avenue (Circle) *trotro* station were also of the opinion that it was difficult to acquire a shed at the Market even if you had the money to do so. They indicated that the process of shed allocation was done on grounds of nepotism and favouritism. A third reason for refusing to vacate the streets is that potential buyers and customers typically buy on the streets, not in the formal Markets.

### ***3.5. Challenges facing the AMA, Hawkers and Public in the face of the Relocation Exercise***

The construction of the Odawna Pedestrian Market and the relocation exercise posed several challenges, to the AMA, to the hawkers, and to the general public. The experiences of each of these groups are discussed in turn.

The hawkers, especially those in the Markets pay tolls to the AMA. fees and fines which are non-tax sources of revenue and of which Market tolls form the nucleus constitute a principal source of revenue to the AMA (Darison, 2011). In looking at the contribution of hawkers to the socio-economic development of the Accra Metropolitan Area and Ghana at large, the AMA official interviewed conceded that:

they pay tolls anyway, so it gives the AMA revenue. All the Markets; we take tolls from them. So it contributes to our revenue generation which we use to develop the city. We use (revenue from tolls) for our road construction, some of our street lights and even pay our own task force (*Abaayei*) and work force that are helping to maintain the city. So they contribute and for the fact that the things they trade in are essential, they serve the public. For instance, those who were at the Novotel Park, they trade in ingredients which people need on daily basis. So they satisfy if not only the AMA, but the larger public where when you want tomatoes to buy you have access to that. So they also help to maintain the citizens. People need to stay on food and all that on daily basis. So besides the financial gain and revenue we generate, they also service the residents within the metropolis (Field Interview, 2010).

The hawkers are therefore not only pivotal to the sustenance of people in the city but contribute to the revenue generation that the AMA makes for their developmental projects.

Notwithstanding the contribution of the hawkers to revenue generation in the Accra Metropolitan Area, a major challenge facing the assembly is preventing hawkers from selling on the streets. The AMA is saddled with the lack of political will to carry out its eviction exercises (Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom, 2011). Although, the Mayor of the AMA is often in charge of the decongestion and relocation exercises, the drive to carry it out is influenced by the president (Broadbent, 2011). The Mayor is normally appointed by the president partly in consultation with political party executives and must be a 'true party member' (Bob-Milliar and Obeng-

Odoom, 2011, p. 268). This means that the actions of the Mayor must not only please the president, but work in the interest of the ruling political party and other ministries like Ministries for Local Government and Rural Development, Health, and Roads and Highways. These ministries mostly support the decongestion and relocation exercise through both technical and financial support. Sometimes, in executing development plans, government functionaries are often more concerned about their political gains and losses that come with the execution than what is stated in the plan (Yeboah and Obeng-Odoom, 2010).

The policy of decongestion and relocation of street hawkers is not contained in one policy document. However the decongestion and relocation of 'non-conforming' activities and the spreading of economic activities across the city were highlighted in the Accra Central Area Development Plan as far back as 1992/93 (Broadbent, 2011, p.11). A draft National Urban Policy (NUP) has been developed and is undergoing valedictory workshops with stakeholders nationwide (*GhanaWeb*, 2010a; Government of Ghana, 2010). The NUP basically aims at addressing the urban challenges of Ghana by ensuring sustainable urban development which will meet the needs of the Ghanaian society, promote economic growth and remain habitable for generations to come (Owusu, 2010).

Besides requiring an integrated urban development in reference to the key themes (society, economy and the environment) (Owusu, 2010), there is the need to adequately resource the various metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies and other governmental actors to be able achieve the objectives of the NUP. The decongestion and relocation exercise, for instance, comes at a high cost to the AMA (Obeng-Odoom, 2011). However, the AMA, like most decentralised institutions in the country, face financial constraints and weak human resource capacities (Mensah, 2005; Yeboah and Obeng-Odoom, 2010). The 2007 relocation exercise cost the AMA GH¢181, 488.60 (over \$125, 000) (Braodbent 2011, p.13). The *Abaayei* who are in-charge of the evictions only act as 'scarecrows'. This is because they are saddled with the lack of power to arrest but can only drive away hawkers, remove unauthorised structures or confiscate items. In view of this, hawkers were still seen selling on the major streets and pavements of the city even in the

presence of the *Abaayei*. An official at the AMA admitted that, '...generally hawking in Accra is a bit problematic. It is not easy; you drive them away and they come back. For instance when you just see the National Theatre area, it is a problem. They would wait when the task force (*Abaayei*) is coming around and then they move out of the place. When they are not there, then they come back. It is becoming a big problem...'. The hawkers adopt strategies to outwit the authorities to be able to sell (Bentil, 2011). Apart from selling the items while holding them in their hands, the hawkers constantly look out for each other so as to raise an alarm whenever the *Abaayei* emerge to be able to run away from them. From this perspective, it may be argued that the hawkers collaborate with one another against the city authorities.

The AMA expressed their frustration at the good patronage the hawkers on the streets were still enjoying from the public which encourages them to stay instead of moving to the Odawna Market. The hawkers also verbally abuse city authorities and *Abaayei* whenever they try to drive them away from the streets. The AMA official interviewed complained that:

'...some even want to attack the *Abaayei*. So mostly we go with armed policemen, and the financial cost; when you go out with the men, you need to pay them to stay on the job for it to be done. So it comes with a financial cost which could have even been used for other development projects. We need to build schools, provide social amenities and other things for residents. So we used part of that to decongest. Hence it comes as a great cost to us...' (Field Interview, 2010).

The official further indicated that managing the waste and filth in the city also come at a cost to the AMA. The collection and management of waste and garbage in the city has been problematic with heaps of uncollected rubbish in especially poor neighbourhoods and slums often a common sight (Obirih-Opareh and Post, 2002; Ofori, 2007; Grant and Oteng-Ababio, 2012). Garbage and waste management companies charge exorbitant fees to clear the filth and waste. These sentiments about the cost involved in the decongestion and relocation exercises corroborate findings by Obeng-Odoom (2011, p. 369) who noted that, in 2009, the eviction exercises, excluding the demolition of structures on waterways in the city, cost the AMA about GH¢140, 000.

The hawkers also accused the authorities and the *Abaayei* of corruption and extorting monies from them. During the interviews, the female hawkers, in particular, alleged that the *Abaayei* sexually abuse and sometimes ask for sexual favours from them. Such advances by the *Abaayei* take place when the hawkers try to retrieve their seized items or when negotiating for a place on the pavement or in the Market. A female hawker interviewed at the Odawna Market said:

‘I was chatting with my colleagues when the *Abaayei* came and seized my items. As a result I went to AMA several times for about a week; day and night trying to retrieve my items. I spent all the money on me in trying to retrieve my goods. Fortunately, I met this man at the AMA who said he would help me but he was interested in me and wanted to marry me in addition to his wife since my husband was late. So I agreed to the proposal and he got some money to bribe some officials to be able to get my items. If I hadn't agreed to his proposal, I wouldn't have gotten my items back. So I had to deceive him by agreeing that I will marry him. So after I got my goods back, I wasn't even picking up his phone calls again’ (Female hawker-age: 35yrs).

One member of the *Abaayei* interviewed however claimed the accusations were false. He was of the view that the hawkers as a result of the force being put on them to move make those claims to discredit the *Abaayei*, to derail their efforts, and to win public sympathy. The AMA official even though similarly dismissed the claims of the hawkers, did not discount the possibility of the claims being true. Indeed investigations by the Daily Guide, a newspaper in Ghana, revealed that some AMA officials and *Abaayei* have been extorting monies from hawkers whenever their items were seized (*GhanaWeb*, 2010b). Revelations of this sort and unfavourable media reportage prompted the AMA to accuse the media of stifling the efforts of the assembly at getting rid of the hawkers from the streets (GBC, 2010).

However, the attention the media houses give to the challenges of the hawkers is deserved, given the pervasiveness of such issues. Hawkers in the Odawna Market complained that the gated-wall around the Market did not make it visible to pedestrians and passers-by who were potential buyers. Also, the narrow entrance made movement of people in and out of the Market difficult. This aided criminals and pick-pockets to operate in the Market. A hawker noted that:

There are too many thieves here. They steal from us. People do not want to come here because of the thieves. This is because when they come the thieves steal from them. They pick their phones or snatch their bags (Male hawker-age: 27yrs).

This did not only create some state of insecurity for the hawkers themselves but discouraged people from coming into the Market to buy. The hawkers also registered their displeasure at the lack of advertisement for the Market. The billboard showing the Market had the advertisement of the 'Mobile Telephone Network' (MTN) boldly advertised on it with the name of the Market written in very small font at the top of the billboard (see Fig 5).



**Figure 5: Billboard showing Odawna Pedestrian Market (Nkrumah Circle, Accra)**

Source: Author (2010)

The poor sanitation, stench and occasional flooding in the Market were also enumerated by the hawkers. The lack of bins and efficient collection of garbage has led to littering and the subsequent accumulation of garbage in and around the Market (see, Ofori, 2007; Ghana Institute of Planners, 2010). The stench coming from the Odaw River as a result of the dumping of waste into the river and around the Odawna Market had made it uncomfortable to stay in the Market to do business. In Accra, like many other cities in Africa, e-waste for example has become a lucrative business for many people (Webster, 2005; Grant and Oteng-Ababio, 2012). However, the thick smoke and filth normally generated from burning these materials for copper have raised concerns about

the effects of these activities on the environment, and health of the people (Oteng-Ababio, 2010). This situation is particularly evident in the Agboghloshie area near the Odaw River and Korle Lagoon in Accra (Farouk and Braimah, 2012). A worrying situation identified also was that, those who had acquired sheds in the Market had abandoned their sheds and returned to sell on the streets. This was occasioned by the refusal of their colleagues to come into the Market and also due partly to the issue of people not coming into the Market to buy; hence their return to the streets and pavements as a livelihood strategy. The AMA official in contrast to the sentiments of the hawkers posited that the Market was doing well. He noted that the AMA had even acquired umbrellas to provide shade for the newly relocated foodstuffs sellers who had just moved to the Market. He indicated that, 'those who didn't get the sheds, that is the new extension, we gave umbrellas. So when you go there, all of them; those who are in the open space have umbrellas which we provided them. Some also got theirs on their own any way' (Field Interview, 2010). A follow up visit to the Market extension where the foodstuffs sellers were located revealed umbrellas dotted all over. A chat with some of the hawkers however revealed that the umbrellas were provided by the 'Tigo' mobile telephony network company.

Lastly, the issue of politicisation of the relocation exercise was also enumerated. A Market executive contended that government was not committed to addressing the problems of the relocation exercise due to the issue of canvassing for political votes from the hawkers. He argued that, 'they have also politicised the Market, both the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC)<sup>7</sup>; this government accuses the other of building the Market, so the government is not making efforts to develop the Market and improve on the conditions here. There should be no politicisation of the Market, it is a state property' (Market Association Executive-age: 38).

The hawkers also do politicise the eviction exercises by aligning with political parties or through their negotiations with politicians to influence decisions in their favour (Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom, 2011). The issue of

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<sup>7</sup> NPP and NDC are the 2 main political parties in Ghana. The NDC forms the current ruling government having taken over from the NPP government which initiated the relocation exercise during the 2008 general elections.

politicisation is exemplified by the threat of residents of Sodom and Gomorrah (Old Fadama), a slum settlement, during a decongestion exercise to defect from the NDC to the NPP after which the exercise was discontinued. A similar exercise in Sukura, another slum settlement, also saw residents calling on the president to intervene. The demolition proceeded to the displeasure of the NPP who threatened legal action against the AMA as they thought it was a calculated attack on their party supporters (Yeboah and Obeng-Odoom, 2010). A similar study by Broadbent (2011) has corroborated the issue of politicisation of the relocation exercise between the two major political parties in Ghana (NDC and NPP). Thus, political actors often use the street hawking situation to score political points with little commitment to addressing the concerns of the hawkers.

The hawkers were emphatic about the socio-economic and psychological effect the relocation exercise has had on their livelihood. The impact of the exercise was across the gender and age divide. It was seen during the research that the impact was felt more by females than males and also on persons below the age of 25 years. While the socio-cultural factors, like their roles as housewives and mothers prevailing, disadvantaged females, their bio-physical make up did not facilitate their ability to be able to endure the hawking activity which is stressful and laborious in nature. The males unlike the females are physically strong, resilient, able to run and psychologically strong to be able to withstand the challenges of the decongestion and relocation exercise. Hence for the females, just like other hawkers, the relocation had affected their livelihood and indeed their survival.

Both the hawkers and the Odawna Market Association executives interviewed stressed that, economically sales had reduced as a result of decline in the demand for their wares with the relocation to the Market. A female hawker interviewed said:

‘yes the relocation has affected me. It is not like selling by the roadside. People don't come in to buy. So sales have gone down. Like when people come inside, there wouldn't have been any problem. In the evenings like this I have to go with the items myself to sell on the street. So it has affected my business greatly. Because the amount of money we make from sales in a day on the streets, we don't get that again. Things you want to

buy for your children, you can't and also many expenses you can't make them' (Female hawker-age: 44yrs).

This view illustrates the frustration of the hawkers at relocating to the Market and hence not making much profit. Consequently, many who took loans to start their business indicated that repaying the loans was difficult. Hence, the relocation exercise has come as a *shock* to them as they find it difficult to cope.

This contraction in the economic asset of hawkers has severe social costs. The hawkers reported that taking care of their families was difficult, further creating some psychological problems for them. One of the Market executives laments, 'I have lost money, I have been asked to move from my rented room because I don't make enough sales to cater for my basic needs. I can't even go to my hometown to greet them and also the girl I want to marry has refused to marry me because I can't give her money and perform the marriage rites. So it has affected me psychologically. I can't go to Mampong (hometown), because as a man, they will expect something from me. But I don't have money, because I don't make enough money here. So the AMA should force the public to come here and buy things' (Market Association Executive-age: 38).

Although there is no way to independently verify the claims of the hawkers that the relocation exercise has negatively affected them, other studies (see, for example, Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah, 2008; Bob-Milliar and Obeng-Odoom, 2011) have corroborated this finding. About 15.3% of the hawkers interviewed in the Odawna Pedestrian Market were however of the contention that it had positively impacted on them. The relocation provided positive livelihood outcomes for them health-wise. They pointed out that they now sit under a shade provided by the shed erected. For them, money that would have been channelled into seeking treatment at the hospital would now be used for other financial commitments. Even though some of the hawkers acknowledged the enormous impact of the relocation, they base their hope on the divine intervention of God to improve sales. It is thus very common to see hawkers normally having morning devotion in the form of prayer sessions in front of their sheds for God's intervention before the commencement of business for the day. For most of them they seek solace in the adage that "to

*be a 'man', it is not a day's job"* and that *"Rome was not built in a day"*. That is to say, to be successful in life, one has to be patient as things will change for the better with time.

The general public, constituting potential buyers, has concerns with the eviction and relocation exercise too. Besides expressing their inability to get items needed with relative ease from the streets argue that they cannot find hawkers with whom they have established rapport and from whom they enjoyed discounts on goods bought. Although they expressed joy at the ease with which they can drive and walk freely, members of the public lamented that the Market was not readily accessible due to the vehicular traffic in the area. For them, enduring the vehicular traffic when going to the Market at Nkrumah Circle (avenue) just to purchase one item was unbearable. They claimed that the high walls and gate of the Market had made it look like a place that houses 'banished' people. Some of the members of the general public expressed their fear that the Market was inundated with pick-pockets and criminals. They were of the view that they risked losing some of their property to pickpockets when they shop in the Market. So for them, in spite of the plea from the AMA authorities to stop buying from hawkers to discourage them from selling on the streets and pavements, they prefer to still buy from them. The research thus shows that all the stakeholders have lauded the decongestion and relocation exercise which indeed saw other metropolitan assemblies replicating it across the country. However, the impact of the exercise on all the stakeholders involved cannot be discounted.

#### **4. Suggested measures at tackling the challenges of the relocation exercise**

The hawkers in sharing their views at mitigating the challenges facing them suggested the need for political commitment at solving the problems of hawkers and the relocation exercise. Similarly, they called on the authorities to reduce the height of the fence wall. The appeal was also made to the authorities to improve sanitation in the Market by constructing drains and providing garbage bins as well as giving the Market visibility through adequate publicity. It was recommended that the big billboard mounted should have 'Odawna Pedestrian Market' on it boldly written to give the

Market visibility. The suggestion was also made for abandoned sheds to be re-allocated to hawkers who were interested in selling at the Market.

A request was made that the AMA institute some measures to discourage people from selling on the streets. If spot fines are instituted and strictly enforced, it will discourage people from purchasing items on the streets. On the issue of criminals and thieves in the Market, they stressed the need for adequate security in the Market. They recommended that the authorities could seek the services of security companies to be in charge of security in the Market. For the hawkers on the streets, they were unequivocal about the fact that their presence on the streets was due to their inability to access the sheds in the Market as a result of the high cost of paying for a shed. They appealed to the government to assist them with loans to engage in other profit making ventures or acquire employable skills to be able to make a living for themselves.

The public urged the government to show commitment at stemming, if not reducing, the out-migration of the youth to the cities. They explained that since informal sector employs majority (89%), (including 56% in agriculture and 21% in retail trade) (Xaba *et al.*, 2002) in both rural and urban areas, agriculture could be improved through the provision of agricultural inputs and extension services in especially the rural areas. Production could be boosted further by providing ready market for agricultural produce, particularly food crops, at competitive prices and as a way to cushion any adversities that may come with agricultural production. This they noted will encourage the youth not to only venture into agriculture but also stay in the rural areas and hence a reduction in outmigration and unemployment levels in the cities.

Indeed, there is still the need to holistically reconsider the alternatives available in tandem with the strategies involved in warding off the hawkers from the street. This could be done while addressing the challenges confronting all the actors involved if hawking on the street is to be reduced to the barest minimum.

The AMA should liaise with the Hawkers Market Association executives to identify the pertinent issues confronting hawkers so as to address them. With the informal sector serving as an important component of the economy and employing majority of the population (Mitullah, 2003;

Appiah-Kubi, 2007; Grant and Oteng-Ababio, 2012), the creation of permitted trading areas around the city for hawkers similar to the legal trading zones in cities like Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town and Mumbai as suggested by Ofori (2007) could be also be considered by the AMA. This involves setting aside certain areas or public spaces in the face of urban space challenges purposely for informal economic activities. These permitted trading zones according to Ofori (2007) are restricted by fees and are often compliant with environmental and sanitation standards and obligations. The permitted trading zones, Ofori noted, will help overcome some of the challenges such as those enumerated in the discussion that often come with the construction of Market places for hawkers. In line with this, the call by Mr. Ohene Mensah Kakra (the spokesperson for the GNAH) for the AMA to allow hawkers to operate on certain days of the week on the streets as a way to help tackle the problems emanating from the relocation exercise could be taken into consideration (*Daily Guide*, 2011). The permitted trading zones as suggested could be complemented by the *pauti* system as in Mumbai-India (Anjaria, 2006). The *pauti* system involves the payment of fees for authorised occupation and as charges for the removal of refuse at a particular location. This could be considered in the case of Accra but at specific locations across the city in tandem with the constructed Markets to ensure order and conformity to urban space regulations. This will help stem the return and flooding of hawkers on the streets while ensuring environmental sanity and revenue generation to the AMA.

The provision of new Markets for hawkers, as recommended by Asiedu and Agyei-Mensah (2008), alone is not enough. It depends on whether the hawkers will be willing to relocate and how readily accessible the Markets will be to potential buyers. The location of the Markets, accessibility and the willingness of the public to patronize them will influence the decision of the hawkers to relocate. The National Urban Transport Policy aims at enhancing urban transportation by improving the accessibility of the urban population to their places of work, shopping, residence, leisure and other important amenities (Kwakye and Fouracre, 1998, p.2). In cognizance of this, the proposed construction of a 1.5 billion dollar mono-rail system under the Millennium City Project by the government (*The Ghanaian Times*, 2011), the

addition and improvement of rails to the existing network around the city could increase patronage of these transport services. When an efficient complementary metro bus transport system (like the Metro Mass Transport (MMT) bus system) in the city is developed with bus lanes, it can encourage businesses, companies and government agencies to relocate in other areas of the city other than the CBD. The spread of businesses, government agencies and enterprises providing important services across the city may reduce the concentration of activities in the Accra CBD where almost all the ministries and economic ventures are located.

In line with Broadbent (2011), it is suggested also that the AMA could embark on a massive sensitization of the hawkers to see the benefits of selling in the Market than on the streets. The media which has played a crucial role in the whole relocation debate could be ‘roped’ in to help in the sensitization process. This could be complemented by public education as to the need to patronise the new Market as a way to encourage hawkers to stay, while enticing others to relocate to the Market. The decongestion and relocation of hawkers should be a consultative process between all stakeholders so as to prevent the recurrent clashes between *Abaayei* and hawkers which often give the relocation exercises bad perception and publicity. The new bye-law by the AMA to arrest anyone who engages in street hawking and also to punish members of the public who purchase from hawkers on the street is laudable (*Citifmonline*, 2011). In addition, spot fines could also be instituted as some form of punishment to discourage people from buying on the street. Augmenting the staff of the AMA and *Abaayei* together with strict monitoring could be considered to help enforce this legislation and to collect fines.

As part of the research many of the hawkers, especially the *itinerant hawkers* were seen to be youth who had dropped out. Many expressed the desire to move to the Market or engage in other income making ventures but did not have the necessary financial capital to do so. Thus, for those who are willing to go into other income making ventures like technical or vocational work, the government could through the various Markets Associations compile and enrol interested persons in skill training. In spite of government’s emphases in the GPRS I and II on training and skills development (Government of Ghana, 2003a; Government of Ghana, 2005c), programmes

have been seen to be lagging. Skills training and development by government are not much orientated towards the informal economy but are focused much on formal sector employment (Palmer, 2007). There is the need to recognise the multi-faceted nature of the informal economy and the multiple pathways that people including street hawkers in the city take to make a living so as to adequately tackle the challenges of urban unemployment (Palmer, 2007; Debrah, 2007; Langevang, 2008). The Youth Leadership Training Institutes and Technical Institutes that abound in the country should be resourced to come out with training modules to train these youth selling on the streets. The National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP), launched in October 2006 with a target of training 500,000 youth between 2006 and 2009 have as of 2007 been able to train 92,075 youth (World Bank, 2009). The NYEP is however faced with a number of challenges including inadequate financing, and its Skills Training and Employment Placement Programme (STEP), even though covers youth with different educational backgrounds, a larger share of the employment modules require at least some level of education (World Bank, 2009, p. 52). In spite of the challenges, NYEP could make provisions to absorb some of these hawkers in their target areas so as to provide some employment and regular income after the training.

For those who have acquired skills, the government and NGOs could show some commitment by assisting them with loans to establish their own businesses. Further, hawkers who want to move to the Market but have no money to acquire sheds could be assisted by government with credit facilities to acquire sheds. Incentives like a tax holiday for a specified time period could be granted to hawkers who have relocated in addition to the credit facilities so as to enhance their businesses. These strategies could be coordinated in collaboration with executives of the Ghana National Association of Hawkers (GNAH) (which is the umbrella association for hawkers in the country), and the various Market branch associations but constantly monitored to ensure sustainability. The lack of coordination amongst the associations, however, often renders them weak when it comes to bargaining or negotiating with the AMA (Mitullah, 2003). A case in point was when Mr. Kwadwo Asamoah (the president of the GNAH) and Madam Rita Adjiri (president of Millennium Food Stuff Traders Association (MFSTA))

denied the existence of the Market Women's Association of Ghana (MAWAG). The GNAH and MFSTA distanced themselves from the call by MAWAG for the removal of the Mayor of Accra Mr. Alfred Okoe Vanderpuije to prevent their eviction from the streets (*Daily Guide*, 2011). Hence, there is the need for unity and a strong leadership front on the part of the hawkers in order to push forward their grievances for attention.

When these recommendations are taken into consideration along with measures under consideration by the AMA with support from government, the challenges could be tackled for the socio-economic welfare of all the stakeholders involved and the country as a whole. Even though the study is situated in Accra, the issues covered may have some implications for the cities of many developing countries where the hawking activity is prevalent.

## **5. Conclusion**

Using the sustainable livelihoods framework, this study has drilled into the complexities of specific, large scale eviction exercises and how they sometimes lead to relocation activities. It has shed light on how people in the informal economy experience aspects of the formal economy and why, despite the official rhetoric and effort, 'formalised workers' in the informal economy revert to their informal spaces.

As with the reasons underlying the attempt to relocate, namely that hawking is illegal, it generates filth, and creates vehicular traffic congestion, the reasons for the inability to formalise the informal are legion, ranging from administrative problems plaguing the exercise such as corruption to structural problems such as separating customers from hawkers. In turn, the decongestion and relocation exercise carried out by the AMA succeeded in moving a large chunk of the hawkers into the Market; however its main goal of totally getting rid of hawkers from the street has not been successful. More seriously, the exercise has had devastating economic and social effects on hawkers.

These findings suggest that mere formalisation of the informal is not a panacea. Rather, broader socio-economic and political measures and interventions are needed to improve the social, physical, economic, natural, and political capital of the workers in the informal economy.

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