

2.1. ONGATA RONGAI:

2.1.1 Location, Planning & Urban development.

Spanning 16.5 square kilometres with a current population of between 66,042 and 147,000, (CBS 1999), Ongata-Rongai is a fast developing residential urban aggregation within Kajiado County; situated at Kajiado's border Nairobi at latitude (0° -53' 60 S), and longitude (36° 25' 60 E. Located 50 Kilometres from Kajiado District Headquarters (the core to which it is subordinate), and 20 Kilometres from Nairobi City Centre on the Langata-Magadi Road, several reasons explain the growth of this area which started in the late 1950's as a stone mining township in present day *Kware* (quarry) area of Rongai.

As a local satellite urban centre, it owes its existence to proximity to Nairobi (locational advantage). Second, Ongata Rongai grew out of a small settlement put up by casual labourers who provided labour to neighbouring affluent Karen.

Ongata Rongai functions as Nairobi's dormitory. Strip and nodal physical development obtaining in the area has not occurred under planning control, with haphazard developments first coming along Magadi Road and then spreading to the interior. Present too is unchecked animal keeping and settlements encroaching/polluting Mbagathi River.

Dominated by economic motive and in total disregard of social, aesthetic and environmental long-term impacts on the areas' inhabitants; private developers dictate pace of physical developments. This has resulted in high densities, overcrowded housing, insanitary conditions, diminishing open spaces, and haphazard peripheral development.

This is precipitated by increasing demand for shelter, physical and social infrastructure, ineffective physical planning systems, informal investment finance and speculative land costs.

2.1.2 Geography and Economy.

Ongata Rongai with two administrative wards; *Ongata-Rongai* and *Nkaimurunya*, has mixed population except for lacking upper class in socio-economic terms. Ongata Rongai spatially consists of four areas namely Rongai shopping centre, a commercial area to the north, *Nkoroi*, an upper class area to the south, *Kandisi*, a semi-rural area to the east and *Kware*, a slum to the west. Though predominantly residential, formal and informal commercial developments have come up in an unplanned fashion, and functionally zoning the area along Magadi road.

2.1.4 Infrastructure.

Though characterised by proliferation of road links to Nairobi, Ngong and Kiserian to enable commuter travel, Rongai lacks infrastructure and social amenities commensurate to its population. An example is the acute shortage of public schools.

Rongai's single bitumen standard Magadi Road serves its entire population, while local access roads are narrow and untarmacked.

Residents obtain water from private boreholes and in the absence of trunk infrastructure, most developments are on conservancy/septic tanks. Residents contract private solid waste disposal companies.

2.2 KAREN AS A SUBURB IN NAIROBI.

2.2.1 Site and location

Karen suburb occupies an area of 56 square Kilometres, and is located to the south west of Nairobi Central Business District (core to which it is subordinate) at Latitude -1.32°, longitude 36.72°, adjacent to the rapidly urbanizing peri-urban areas of Ngong, and Ongata Rongai.

2.2.2 Chronology, planning & urban development

Like in the western and Northern ridges of Nairobi which hitherto exhibit planned development typologies informed by European standards, densities and development principles, Karen was initially settled by European colonialists.

Karen's origin can be traced to Karen Blixens' establishment of a coffee plantation, indigenous forest, grassland and farm worker settlement on 6,000 acres in 1913. Later, to foster white domination and develop the colony, the British government between 1918-1945, subdivided and sold Karen to ex-British forces and colonial government officials. In 1963, Nairobi city boundary was extended to include Karen and Langata which immediately became subject to Nairobi city by-laws. CCN's 1988 Structure Plan introduced a Rezoning Ordinance reducing minimum plot size to 0.4Ha to the south of the Langata and Dagoretti roads and to 0.2Ha, north of these roads. CCN's rationale was to avail affordable land to middle income Kenyans, increase areas' population and increase income from rates and water service charges. In 2006, to address development pressure in Karen, CCN, and other stakeholders prepared the obtaining Karengata Local Physical Development Plan

2.2.3 Geography and socio-economy.

Spatially, Karen consists of 2 broad areas as stipulated in the above mentioned 1988 Structure Plan, thus 0.4Hectare minimum plot size is allowed to the South of Karen upto Boundary with Ongata Rongai. Karen displays dispersed settlement pattern, where its affluent population inhabits low-density high income housing.

2.2.4 Infrastructure

Karen is connected to Nairobi and outlying areas by Karen, Langata and Ngong Roads which traverse it, whereas, other of its roads are narrow and in need of repairs. Public transport is at low scale.

Although Nairobi City Water and Sewerage Company supplies her with Water, Karen is not connected to Nairobi's trunk sewer system, consequently residents are on septic tanks/soak pits. Residents contract private companies for the purposes of solid waste disposal.

