ABSTRACT
Adequate supply of land is fundamental for housing delivery and property development process of urban residents. In Ethiopia, due to high rate of urbanization, housing shortage is becoming the challenging issue for urban areas. The goal of this study was to examine major bottle-necks of urban land acquisition for housing practices in Bahir Dar City and Debreberhan Town in a comparative basis. To achieve the intended goal, the study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches, based on the descriptive research design. A household survey was done on 240 households from each of case study areas in a random selection in one hand, and from 20 key informants’ interviewees (government officials from land and housing departments, and kebele administrators) on the other. Accordingly, the researchers came to the conclusion that urbanization, land demand and supply imbalances, high land prices, municipal institutional capacity issues, the land lease policy and lack of good governance in the land administration were the main challenges and issues that hampered land acquisition in the case areas. It is found that the only option to acquire urban land is addressed through either auction (totally exclude the poor people) or allotment (only permitted to the housing cooperatives).

Keywords: Housing, Land Acquisition, Urban Land Policy, Land Lease, Urbanization

1. Introduction
Due to high rate of migration-led urbanization in developing countries, urban areas in such regions are highly suffering from shortage of housing. Residential development couldn’t be true without adequate urban land supply (Sminkey & Le Doux, 2016). Adequate supply of land is generally recognized as a prerequisite for sustainable housing delivery system notwithstanding the important role it plays in the socio-economic life of people. It has been observed that access to land for housing development in urban areas in many developing countries of sub-Saharan Africa is becoming highly problematic with each passing day (Arijumend, 2018; Owoeye &
In Ethiopia the trend of housing demand becomes alarming when comparatively seen on the supply side. Such unbalanced urban population to housing stock and other basic infrastructures is among the critical issues which could absorb the attention of researchers. According to the official figures from the Central Statistics agency of Ethiopia (CSA), the urban population of Ethiopia is projected to triple from 15.2 million in 2012, to 42.3 million in 2037 growing at average rate of 4.1% a year (CSA, 2013).

Today, Ethiopia’s land administration is seen as a major source of concern given the country’s level of poverty and development. Article 40 (3) of the Constitution states that The right to ownership of rural and urban land, as well as of all-natural resources, is exclusively vested in the State and in the peoples of Ethiopia (FDRE constitution, 1995). However, the constitution said nothing on the tenure system of urban land and particularly for housing development. The lease system was introduced in Ethiopia as a sole means of urban landholding in 1993 before FDRE constitution. Arjjumend (2018) argued that since the lease system was enacted before the adoption of the Constitution, and since the Constitution does not say anything about urban land, it can be argued that this proclamation, and the subsequent lease proclamations for that matter, lacks Constitutional base. Moreover, it prevents the lease takers to capture the enhanced urban land value beyond the ground rent while transferring their lease right and this potentially prevented investors from urban development.

Land as a public property and an individual can enjoy only the use right of it under his/her possession (FDRE Constitution, 1995). Specifically, in urban Ethiopia, the means to acquire formally the plot of land for housing development and investment purpose is dependent on the efficiency of lease policy application. Legal access to land is a strategic prerequisite for the provision of adequate and affordable housing for all. In contrast, lack of access to land is the cause for increased living costs; the proliferation of slums and informal settlements; environmental degradation; and the increased vulnerability of urban poor and women-headed households, and other marginalized and disadvantaged groups (UN-Habitat, 2015; 2016)

Some studies have been conducted concerning the issue of urban land including; urban land policy (Belachew Y, 2010), Urban land administration challenges (Abuye A, 2006), cooperative housing practices in Bahir Dar City (Dawd Abdi, 2012) and challenges of land access for business activities by (Hasrat A. and Mifta N, 2018). From the studies, it is found that there is more concern for the importance of access to land and land tenure focusing on some administration, governance and management issues. However, the issues, challenges and scenario of urban land acquisition haven’t been well addressed by both foreign and national scholars, while extensive rural land studies were carried out. Thus, more research is required to focus on challenges of access to land for residential housing at household level and the policy implications as an integral part for human settlements.

In the study area, Bahir Dar City and Debre Berhan Town, there is an observable fact that they are physically and demographically being doubled in the past few years. This high number of urban population growth demands many services and infrastructures from which land plot for housing is a crucial one. The municipalities are facing with multiple challenges to supply adequate land for residential housing development especially for those who are under low-income earning class of society though they are engaged in transferring residential plots.
for housing cooperatives. Therefore, it is believed that assessing the challenges of access to urban land for housing, and policy issues related to urban land and housing in Amhara Regional State in general and, Bahir Dar City and Debre Berhan Towns in particular is important to gain better understanding about the existing situation; suggest/recommend possible remedies that reduce the challenges and issues related with access to land for residential housing.

The reason behind selecting the above urban centers of Amhara Region as a case study area was due to the fact that they were among the principal urban centers and migration-led urbanization was relatively higher than when compared to other intermediary urban areas. Furthermore, urban land value is becoming increasing from time to time, which becomes the acquiring capacity of the demanders. Moreover, there was no study, which has been specifically undertaken on urban land and housing problems in the study areas. This fact pushed for the selection of the urban centers as the study area. In the view of this fact, the study attempted to examine the issues, scenarios and challenges of access to land and policy implications of urban land acquisition for residential purpose in Bahir Dar City and Debre Berhan Town.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Description of Case Areas

Debre Berhan is a Town in central Ethiopia located in the North Shewa Zone of the Amhara Region, some 130 kilometres northeast of Addis Ababa on the paved route to Dessie. It is located at 9°41′N 39°32′E and has an elevation of 2,840 meters. It was an early capital of Ethiopia, and later, along with Ankober and Angolalla, one of the Shewa kingdom's capitals (Fikire, 2021). It is now the administrative capital of the Amhara Region's North Shewa Zone. Debre Birhan contains nine kebele with a total population of 103,450 people, with 46,553 men and 56,897 women (CSA, 2014).

Bahir Dar is the capital city of the Amhara Region, which is positioned in the North-Western part of Ethiopia and covers an area of about 62.5 sq. km. The absolute location of Bahir Dar is 11°27′ N to 11°43′ North latitudes and 37°01′E to 37°03′ East longitudes, which is within the tropics in the Northern Hemisphere (Map 1.1). Administratively, the city is comprised of the main city of Bahir Dar with five sub
cities (Gashe abye, Belay zelke, Dagmawi menlike, Tana and Fasilo subcities), and three satellite towns; Zegie Town in the North, Meshenti Town in the South-west, and Tis Abay Town in the South-East directions (Figure 2). In relative terms, the city is situated 563 km North-West of the capital city of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa along Addis Ababa - Debre Markos - Bure road.

Figure 2. Map of Bahir Dar City Administration and peri-urban areas

Source: Tassie Wegedie (2018)

2.2 Research Design and Approach
The study employed descriptive type of research design and mixed research approach to use because of its suitability to describe the nature of challenges that residents encountered in the study area, and applied in a cross-sectional time. In line with this, mixed research approach was applied concurrently (where survey strategy is dominant) intended to capture the best of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The rationale of using this approach was to crosscheck the data generated from survey questionnaire and key informant interviews and increase the validity of the result.

2.3 Source of Data and Method of Collection
In order to answer the intended research questions, both primary and secondary data were used. The primary data were collected using instruments like survey questionnaire, interview and participant observation, while secondary data like annual reports and other literatures were reviewed.

Survey Questionnaire: both open and closed-ended questionnaires were developed and firsthand information related to the scenario, challenges and policy issues of urban land acquisition were collected from sample household respondents (240 respondents who have no private residential house from each case area). The collection process was held via hiring field enumerators.

Interview: the purpose of the interview was to view the perceptions, experiences, and recommendations of land, housing and related authorities towards urban land acquisition for residential housing development. A semi-structured interview checklist was prepared and interviews were conducted with 9 key informants from each case area, Bahir Dar City and Debreberhan Town. The key informants from area were interviewed until the data got saturated.
Observation: The researchers were observing the actual land acquisition and housing development scenarios, infrastructure situations and the documentation system of housing cooperative offices of both Bahir Dar City and Debreberhan Town.

Document Review: Thematic review of research articles, office manuals and annual plans were systematically reviewed to understand the study problem properly and to capture important data for the study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Scenario of Land Access for Residential Purpose in Bahir Dar and Debreberhan

When the EPRDF led government assumed power in 1991, the land within the administrative boundary of an urban center in Ethiopia is governed by the urban leasehold system since the 1993, then revised in 2002; and finally again re-enacted in 2011. Accordingly, the case urban areas base the lease system to transfer land to any purpose including housing.

As shown in Figure 3 and 4, the respondents were asked about the most common mode of access to land for residential housing development in the case areas currently. In Bahir Dar city, 51% and 37% of the respondents’ data shown that land for housing purpose is acquired through lease auction and purchase from informal market respectively. This shows that the poor sections of the urban society who can’t buy in the informal market and easily beat in the auction are remained with no room to access land for housing. On the other hand in Debreberhan town, 43% and 37% showed the same thing from informal market and lease auction respectively. However, land lease through the allotment modality is hardly provided in both areas.

![Figure 3: The most common mode of access to land for housing in Bahar Dar and Debreberhan. Source: Household survey, 2020/21](image)

In addition, interviews that were conducted with selected government officials and Kebele administrators revealed that, currently the most common modes of accessing land for housing development are, through lease auctions and purchasing from landholders living at the peri-urban areas of the town. Some of the informants stated that, purchasing of land informally was serving as a simplest way of accessing land for most residents of the town. This way of informal land delivery was facilitated by illegal land brokers.

Therefore, the data obtained accordingly indicated that, the most common mode of access to land for housing development is through purchasing from peri urban farmers.
in the informal land market, and lease auction. Researchers like (Mengie, 2015; Owoeye & Adedeji, 2015; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, 2017) concluded that if the state fails to provide land formally, the inhabitants prefer the informal way to acquire residential plot.

3.2 The Challenges of Access to Land for Residential Purpose in the Study Areas

There are many challenges on both the government and the demanders’ side to access residential land plot. These included the current high urbanization rate that go beyond the capacity of the municipalities to cope up delivering serviced land per demand.

The interviews conducted with government officials and farmers confirmed that, the population growth and migration that have been undergoing in the town makes the supply of land more challenging. The informants also stated that, the population of the town is growing at a high rate. In addition, the migration of people, particularly from the surrounding Weredas and rural Kebeles, towards the case urban centers in search of jobs is increasing at a high rate. This condition brought an increasing demand of land for housing development in the town. That was way; the municipality has lagged behind to ensure adequate supply of land for residents.

The other challenging factor in land delivery system in the case towns is corruption. The interview conducted during field survey with government officials, kebele administrators and farmers confirmed that the existence of corruption in the land sector of the municipality. Particularly, the interview held with the manager of ethical and anti-corruption office and corruption investigation office of the municipalities provided information that gives the general picture for the practice of corruption in the land sector of the municipality. The land operational staff shown practice of bribe, file hiding, long process of providing service manipulate of personal files, etc.

The ineffectiveness of land lease policy to serve the low income residents is another challenge to access land plot for residential development. The interview conducted during field survey confirmed that, currently it is difficult to get land through winning lease auctions, particularly for the low income groups in the town. In line with this, some informants stated that, the opportunity of accessing land with floor price of lease by the low income groups can only be achieved through forming housing Co-operatives. Forming housing cooperative by itself is highly challenging as the data base to identify the proper demander is highly exposed to corruption. There is a situation that an individual can form more than one cooperative as long as he comes with residential ID. In both urban areas, especially in Bahir Dar city, each sub cities deliver ID card to the residents, and there is no common data base to identify whether that individual has other ID from other sub cities.

The document study revealed that, the benchmark land lease price for residential housing in the town is 400ETB and 320ETB per square meter for Bahir Dar and Debreberhan respectively, which is affordable to the majority of residents. However, in the auction modality, lands the price of residential lands more than 25,000ETB in average in both towns, which are unthinkable for almost all urban inhabitants. This revealed that it is only the riches that can get access of the natural resource which should be belonging to everyone.

Price of a commodity is determined by the demand for that commodity. If nobody demands the commodity, it has no price or
value. But when more people need it, the price goes up and higher. As such the highest bidder gets the opportunity of accessing land. Land prices are critical factors in access to housing. High land prices resulting from market forces (demand and supply) and restrictive framework together with low incomes of many households turning land into a single biggest component of legal housing cost in many developing countries towns (UNEP, 2002). The problem is compounded by urbanization and globalization which has accelerated the commercialization of urban land market in developing countries (UN-HABITAT, 2003). This is evident as land has become scarce and those available for sale are offered at a higher cost that is too expensive for many to afford.

Therefore, the study revealed that, currently there is high demand of land in the case areas. When the demand of land raised, that is when more people need it, the price goes up and higher. As such the highest bidder gets the opportunity of accessing land in the town. The highest bidder is selected based on various parameters such as: bid price, amount of down payment and duration of payment. Therefore, the low income groups were unable to win lease auctions through computing with higher and middle income groups. On the other hand, according to Proclamation No 211/2011 of land lease policy, the low income groups shall access land with the bench mark price of land through forming cooperative housing. But, this opportunity of accessing land for the low income groups was not implemented effectively. Thus, there is little/no opportunity for the low income residents to access land through the floor price of lease in the town.

3.3 Policy Implications on Formal Land Acquisition for Housing in the Study Areas

Land tenure in Ethiopia has shifted dramatically, from feudalistic systems during Emperor Haile Selassie's monarchy (1930-1974), to socialist land policies during the Derg military government (1974-1991), and finally to the current system under the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which took power in 1991. As a result, people are unsure about their rights (Tetra Tech, 2013). Given Ethiopia's poverty and lack of growth, the country's land administration is now viewed as a key cause of concern. Article 40 of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Constitution deals with “Right to property”, provides details about land rights in Ethiopia. Article 40 (3) of the Constitution answers the core question of land ownership issue in Ethiopia:

*The right to ownership of rural and urban land, as well as of all natural resources, is exclusively vested in the State and in the peoples of Ethiopia. Land is a common property of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia and shall not be subject to sale or to other means of exchange'*. In Ethiopia, the lease system was implemented as the sole way of urban landholding in 1993. Because the lease system was established prior to the ratification of the Constitution, and because the Constitution makes no mention of urban land, this proclamation, as well as subsequent lease proclamations, can be claimed to be without constitutional support. This statute was repealed in 2002 (Proc. 272/2002) and replaced in October 2011 (Proc. 721/2011) by the present proclamation. A lease system, a perpetual permit system, and distinct legislation for condominiums are all used to provide urban land. The leasing mechanism allows for
terms of up to 99 years. It necessitates the payment of the agreed-upon lease amount to the relevant government within a time frame set by the regions or local governments in the lease contract. The permit system mostly refers to permits issued prior to 1993 that require the payment of an annual land rent to the government (World Bank, 2012b).

During the data collection session, the interviews were inquired their idea on effectiveness of urban land lease policy of Ethiopia. Accordingly, the data showed that the lease proclamation is only workable for the riches that can compete. In the latest version of the lease proclamation (721/2011), only two modalities (tender and allotment) are functional to transfer land for housing purpose, except for cooperative housing and condominiums. This implies that only the haves who are the high bidders can get access of residential land which is a natural resource to equitable distributed among every class of the society.

4. Conclusions

The scenario of access land for residential development in Bahir Dar and Debberhan is attached back at the lease policy in the modality of tender and allotment. The dwellers of the each municipality are hardly get access of land since the lease pave only way for riches, the higher bidders can only get it.

There are many challenges that hampered the land acquisition process including the high urbanization level running beyond the capabilities of the municipalities to access serviced land, land sector corruption and the lease system itself are found to be the dominant ones.

It is concluded that the lease system is inefficient to transfer land for housing in base case areas due to limitations on the modality, tender. The lease policy is skewed to add for the haves and deny the middle income and low income societies the right to get house.

Author Contributions

The manuscript was written through contributions of all authors. They have given approval to the final version of the manuscript as they contributed equally.

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