**Growth of Urbanization, Urban Poverty, Housing Problem, Homelessness and Begging**

About 15% of the population of Ethiopia lives in urban areas. With growth of urbanization, many social problems have emerged. The problem of urban slums, increasing poor quality of life and poverty, shortage of basic social services such as clean water, electricity, communications facilities, housing, etc, and the growing rate of crimes and deviance. Urban slums are centers for undesirable social behaviors such as commercial sex work, theft, robbery, drug trafficking and use, sanitation problems, among others. With the growing number of urban population, access to good housing is becoming increasingly problematic. Studies indicate that many urban people live in substandard houses and many more even lack accesses to housing. Thus, homelessness has now become a growing social problem in many urban centers.

Many people are thus forced to spend their entire lives in the streets. Available data show that number of people taking to the streets is increasing rapidly, particularly in major urban centers. Here, we can talk about a category of people known as the street children. These are those who are born to homeless people or those who come from various parts of the country to urban centers and live in the streets. The number of older persons living in the streets is also growing.

The health and living conditions of these categories of people is very appalling. The street children and adolescents are often among the risk groups to contracting STIs including HIV/AIDS. They lack access to basic social and health services. The main means of making a living for these categories of people is usually begging and sometimes engage in commercial sex. Begging itself has become a major social pathology in some large urban centers. The problem of begging is especially visible during the religious ceremonial days in some big urban centers like Addis Ababa (Zerihun, 2000; see also Woubshet, 2003).