

**Thematic Session
Right to Housing**

**Survey and research on informal residence
(motel or jjokbang) in Daein-dong and
Gyerim 1-dong, Dong-gu, Gwangju**

KIM Yonghee

[Secretary General, Gwangju Social Innovators Network]

1. Background and purpose of the research

1) Research background

- Daein-dong once was a transportation hub of Gwangju with Gwangju Railway Station and Express Bus Terminal.

It is an area where restaurants and bars were lined up on the streets and a concentrated hub of prostitutions was attracting travelers of trains and buses and workers from the surrounding business district until the 1990s.

- However, with the terminal moving to Gwangcheon-dong, Seo-gu, outskirts of the city, the inflow of passers-by sharply decreased. In the beginning of the 2000s the buildings of Gwangju City government and Jeonnam Provincial government relocated to other regions and the region itself and its neighboring areas started declining. Under the circumstance, as business areas formed centering around the terminal that were declined accordingly, yeoninsook and motel (Korean version of inns or small-scale accommodations) were struggling in their business management and facilities became old and obsolete as well.

- Since 2020, Gyerim-dong, neighboring area of Daein-dong have been designated as a target area of urban redevelopment projects and urban regeneration projects have been actively proceeded. Therefore, the owners of the existing accommodations are maintaining operation while waiting for the region to be designated as the subject for redevelopment project.

- Since 2000, they have rather operated accommodation businesses, provided residence at low costs for informal housing residents in order to maintain their yeoninsook and motel businesses. The owners of old and worn-out motels in Daein-dong and Gyerim1-dong have provided the monthly rental residence in order to earn revenues and make up for the operation costs while waiting for the region to be redeveloped. In those types of residence, most dwellers are those in their 40s or over and the elderly of single-person households. They have faced various risks in terms of economy, health and others.

2) The purpose of research

- The purpose of the research is to understand the basic information of their buildings such as building type, structure and heating system, current status of facilities including kitchen, laundry, shower booth, and toilet, which would be used as basic information to improve the residents' living condition.

- At the same time, the research would allow to grasp on substantial needs of residents by gender, income level, types of residence, and social and cultural characteristics to ensure public welfare delivery system to be established based on a long-term perspective. Additionally, the research results could be utilized to establish the very first welfare system in Gwangju City through securing platform based on common use of local resources.

2. Demographic status of Deain-dong and Gyerim1-dong, Dong-gu, Gwangju City

1) Daein-dong

- The total population of Daein-dong is 5,517 living in 4,036 households. The ratio of male and female population is 5:5 and those at 65 and over account for 20% or 1,048. Also, there are 3,247 single-person households accounting for 80% in the area. Among them 180 households or 4.4% are dwelling in informal residence.

No. of household	Total	Male	Female	Those at 65 or over	No. of single-person households	Household in informal housing
4,036	5,517	2,575	2,582	1,048	3,247	180

- Also, 431 residents in 403 households are beneficiaries of government subsidy and 220 households or over 55% out of the total are single-person households. Given that 180 households of informal housings are the recipients of the subsidy, over 80% of total single-person households are residing in jjokbang.

Total		Single-person households		Couple households		Couple with children households		Other types of households	
No. of household	No. of household under government subsidy	No. of beneficiaries	No. of beneficiaries	No. of household	No. of beneficiaries	No. of household	No. of beneficiaries	No. of household	No. of beneficiaries
403	431	220 (55%)	220 (51%)	19 (5%)	26 (6%)	41 (10%)	58 (13%)	9 (2%)	10 (2%)

2) Gyerim1-dong

- The total population of Gyerim1-dong is 10,568 and the ratio between males and females is 5:5. Also, 2,051 are those at the age of 65 or over accounting for 22% of the total population. There are 3,138 single-person households accounting for over 30% of the population. Among them, there are 110 households or 1% of the total population dwelling in inadequate housings.

(Redevelopment project in Geyrim1-dong allowed the construction of a large complex of

apartment where 2,336 households moved in.)

No. of household	Total	Male	Female	Those of 65 or over	No. of single-person household	No. of household living in informal housing
5,812	10,568	5,550	5,018	2,051	3,138	110

- 953 residents of 744 households are living on the government subsidies in Gyerim1-dong. Over 81% of them are from 599 single-person households. Also, 18% of them or 110 households are living in jjokbang.

Total		Single-person household		Couple household		Couple with children household		Other types of households	
No. of households	No. or beneficiary	No. of household	No. of beneficiary	No. of household	No. of beneficiary	No. of household	No. of beneficiary	No. of household	No. of beneficiary
744	953	599 (81%)	599 (63%)	38 (5%)	76 (8%)	58 (8%)	253 (26%)	11 (1%)	25 (3%)

3. Status of residents in informal residence in Deain-dong, and Gyerim1-dong, Dong-gu, Gwangju

1) Labors and activities for income

- Most jjokbang residents in Daein-dong, and Gyerim-dong, Dong-gu in Gwangju are beneficiaries of government income guarantee benefits. The benefits are delivered in diverse forms related to livelihood, housing, education and medical services.
- Residents on income benefit from the government live on remaining KRW 400,000 to 500,000 after paying KRW 170,000 to 350,000 of rental fees for jjokbang with the benefits of KRW 600,000 ~ 800,000 on a monthly basis.
- Major reasons that hinder the residents from engaging in labor activities are health issues. Even in case of residents capable of economic activities, most are involved in half-day labors (labors for public project) or daily-job that requires primary skills and are living on just KRW 0.9 ~ 1.4 million of monthly paycheck.
- With regard to questions on future labor activities, most of them answered that they were not willing to work even though a job opportunity would be given. Even though they were

capable of working, they wanted half-day labors or jobs that required primary skills.

2) General life condition on clothing, food, and shelters

- Housing rental fees: Housings of the regions are supplied on monthly payment without downpayment. Old and worn-out Residential facilities are provided for KRW 150,000 to 240,000 a month and poorly equipped with required facilities including air-conditioners. A slightly better informal residence with just minimum facilities such as air-conditioners and heating systems are paid from KRW 250,000 to 350,000 a month, though they are old.

- basic facilities: most informal housings in the regions are motel or yeoninsook with bathroom equipped. Therefore, residents in those types of housings do not difficulties in using shower booth or toilet. However, very tiny bathroom space is used for storing or even for cooking, which makes the living condition very poor.

- meals: regarding the question on the number of times of having meal a day, some of them said they ate meals 3 times a day due to medicine consumption and most of them said they ate meals 2 times a day.

- Since most rooms of motel do not have adequate cooking spaces, residents use electric rice cookers and portable burners in order to have simple meals. However, they felt it was uncomfortable to cook right next to their bed.

Also, they tended to spend KRW 200,000 ~ 300,000 a month for their meal which was a pretty small amount of money. What the residents also suggested that supports for food were badly needed.



<Residents are using a tiny space for both accommodation and cooking. Also, they are inevitably exposed to fire incident in this living condition.>

3) Health and medical service

- In terms of health, most of dwellers said they were in a bad condition. Residents mostly have 3~4 chronic conditions, especially most have spinal diseases and arthritis.
- Male residents in their 50s to 60s are in a great need of dental treatment. Indeed, many of them lost some of their teeth. Those residents were once decent members of community. After losing jobs they were put in economic difficulties resulting in family breakdown, which made them dependent on alcohol. Going thorough all these, their teeth were damaged and dental problem made them face secondary conditions such as weight loss, ultimately to put them in difficult situation in term of labor.
- Most residents are under medical benefits so monthly medical payment is not that high. They only pay for non-reimbursable medical services. However, residents not entitled to medical benefits are not able to pay healthcare insurance so they were not able to see a doctor over the last year.

4) Residential condition and area of residence desired

- Except the rental fees, the residents are badly needed to get supports for food costs. Because of inflation, many of them cannot afford expensive food ingredients. Also, poor living condition aggravated nutrition imbalance. Costs for medical services and expenses for clothing and shoes are following next in terms of the need of support.
- What causes inconvenience the most is that they have to cook in their tiny rooms of informal residence. Especially in 2023, they had difficulties of water leakage and humidity derived from extreme precipitation and heat. During the day of extreme raining on 7th July 2023, the dwellers in the informal residence were in difficulties with floods caused by the dropping water from the roof of the building. As such, many of informal housings are not under an appropriate management, even they are not able to weather extreme heat and rain.
- In terms of improvement of their living condition, they wanted to move in public housing supported by the government. The reason why they have not applied for the supported public housing is unawareness of the system and the burden of moving costs including downpayment. Also, applicants and non-applicants both are not able to afford the cost of the minimum downpayment and additional living costs (ex. utility fees) even though they desire to improve their living condition by moving in to better housings.
- Also, there were some dwellers who felt uncomfortable to move to and live in other place than the area they have long lived.
- They have Daein traditional market near their place where they could get food ingredients. Also, around the area, there are various banks, the Central Library and other various facilities. A well-developed transportation network including buses heading to Hwasoon, Jangseong, Damyang, the hometown of most residents of the area, makes them to want to stay in Dong-

gu.

5) Family, friends, and neighbors

- The biggest concerns of the residents of informal housing are deteriorating health and rental costs. Especially, they are worried about a situation in which they could be kicked out of the house for not paying for the rental costs. Next, loneliness and boredom are their biggest concerns.
- Since there are no parks or sports facilities at the surrounding areas of the informal residence, they tend to spend their day staying at home or at near banks or hospitals. With climate disaster getting worse, some of them walk up to the Malbau market or near park for more than 30 minutes and get back home in the evening to avoid their hot room not equipped with air conditioner during a day time.
- Many of them do not keep in touch with their family. There are some people whose parents or siblings already passed away or have not contact them for a long time for economic reason.
- Even in the event of difficulties, they do not have no one to contact or ask for help. If there is any contact person, the owner of the motel is. However, residents who have stayed in the places, though, they greet to their neighbors one another.
- As such, this isolated living condition makes them to be unacquainted with neighbors of the next doors. What they said was “there’s nothing that I can help them, also they are not in a situation that they can help me either. Though, we are living here together so we just live our life as it is”.

4. Policy proposal

- Launching counselling center supporting residents in informal residence in Dong-gu, Gwangju
 - Running registration system for around 300 residents in informal housings to accurately grasp on the current status
 - Providing healing and treatment programs to deal with physical and mental health of residents
 - Cooperating with self-sufficient program to enable the residents to engage in local community
 - Connecting and providing various welfare resources required for living condition except for housing
 - Taking a role of platform for connection and identifying private and public sectors within the region

○ A comprehensive housing strategy for Gwangju is required for the resident of informal housing

- To constantly raise budget for letting the residents move in public housings in a better condition
- To come up with collaboration system among departments and ministries of central and local government
- To shorten the period until to move in public rental housing by expediting application procedure
- To draw roadmap for public rental housing supply in various forms such as rental housing, rental apartment, and government support housing

○ Intervention required based on a comprehensive care plan for informal housing residents

- A comprehensive and continued management for diseases of residents
- Measures to be taken for residents' nutrition
- Measures to be taken to expend social relations of residents

○ Housing and living coordinators to be required as the residents move in public housing in a better condition

- Continued support to be required as the residents move in public housing in a better condition

○ To check up life safety for informal housing dwellers

- Immediate intervention to be required for informal housing especially in terms of fire and sanitation