

# Boomtown Slum - A Day in the Economic Life of Africa's Biggest Shanty-Town

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MEN in patched overalls and women in freshly washed blouses walk down a narrow lane just after six in the morning. They are packed in tightly like spectators leaving a sports stadium, but this is their life, their every morning. Backs are straight; trousers and sleeves rolled up, exposing mottled yet able limbs. They crush discarded wrappers of quick-fry breakfasts under foot, corn and oil dripping from mouths. Banana skins are ground to dust by thousands of feet.

Everyone is moving in one direction, jostling and shoving, out of a maze of low-strung shacks, past shops selling shoes and phones that have already been open an hour, out into the high-rise centre of Nairobi, where factories and offices pay salaries—everyone, that is, except a limp male figure huddled in a corner strafed by the first delicate rays of the sun. He seems to wait for the crowd to pass or at least thin before he dares to swim upstream. His hair is short and shiny as if sanded down rather than cut; his shirt is in pieces. He tells your correspondent that he has just arrived from the countryside. This is not home, he says. He does not sound convinced it ever will be.

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