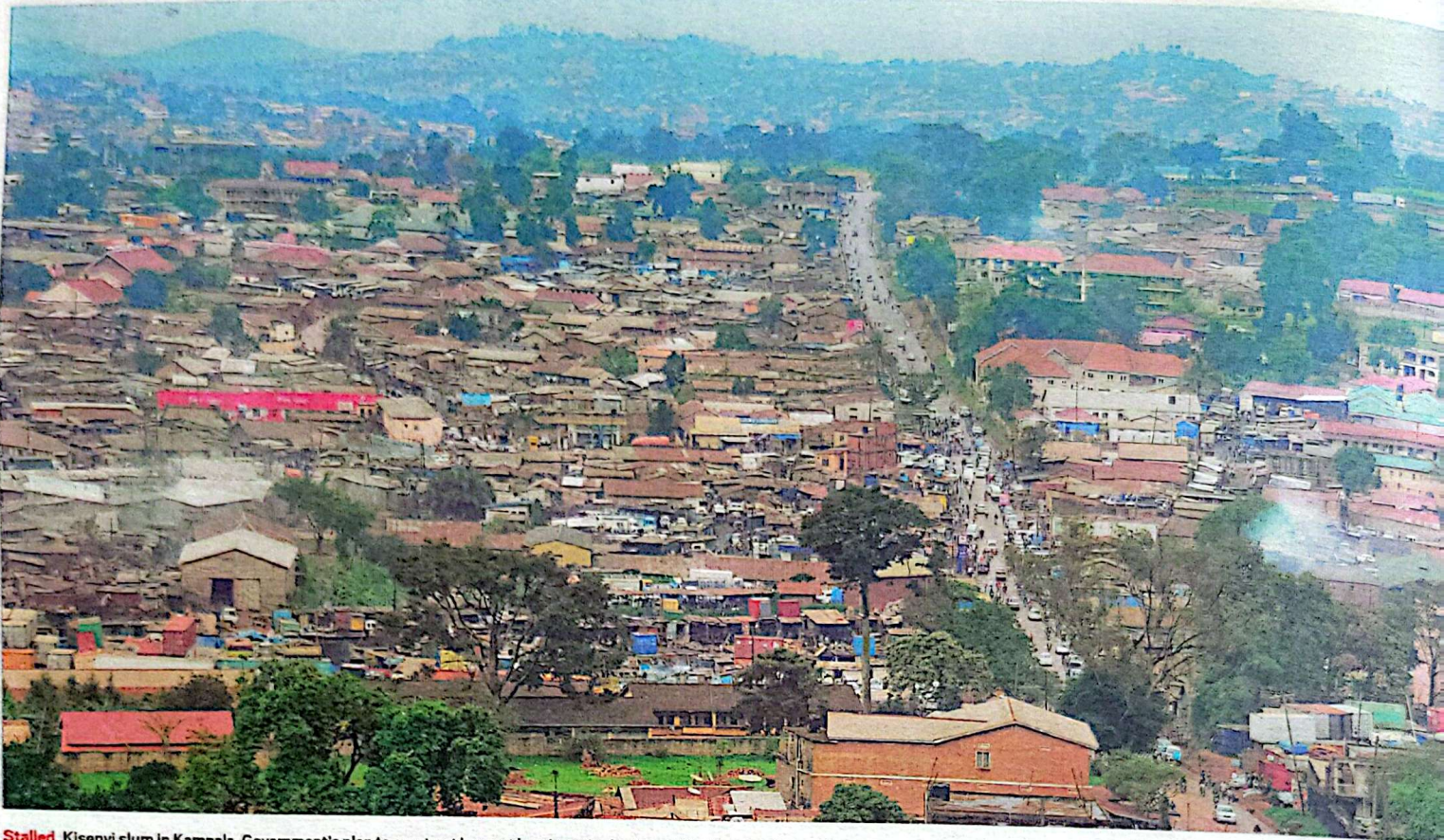


# Promise Tracker

**New special report.** The **Promise Tracker** is Daily Monitor's weekly special feature that will track the promises made by leaders of all categories as well as public agencies to the people. The aim is to cause accountability, show status and analyse whether it was a realistic, unrealistic or empty promise.



**Stalled.** Kisenyi slum in Kampala. Government's plan to construct low cost housing units for Kampala's urban poor is yet to bear fruit. FILE PHOTO

## Where did Shs85 billion for slum development go?

BY ISAAC MUFUMBA  
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

### THE PROMISE:

On October 1, 2007, as the country celebrated the World Habitat Day, the then minister for Lands and Urban Development, Mr Daniel Omara Atubo, announced that government would construct low cost housing units for Kampala's urban poor.

"Plans to construct low cost houses for the urban poor have been finalised. Government is committed to improving the living conditions of Ugandans living in slums," Mr Atubo said at Nakivubo Blue Primary School.

He was speaking shortly after launching the construction of 10 low cost houses, part of a pilot housing project that had been lined up for implementation in Kisenyi slum.

The initial phase of the main project in Kisenyi, with the support of the Slum Dwellers Association, was meant to benefit at least 500 households. The minister revealed that gov-

ernment had secured at least \$23m (about Shs85 billion) for improving living standards in Kampala's slums, which include Kibuye, Katanga, Kisenyi, Kamwokya, Kivulu, Bwaise, Wabigalo and Kinawataka. The biggest slums in the city are located in Kawempe Division. They are Katanga, Kivulu and Bwaise.

Under the plan, government was meant to construct roads, service lanes and extend clean, piped water and electricity to the slums.

At the time Mr Atubo made the announcement, it was estimated that between 1.2 and 1.8 million people were residing in Kampala's slums, most of them in single-roomed tenements.

At the same time, it was estimated that Uganda had a housing backlog of about 1.6 million units. Urban areas were at the time said to have a deficit of 211,000 units while the rural one had a deficit of 1.4 million units.

A 2012 report from the Uganda Human Settlement Network indicates that Uganda has about 6.82 million

households residing in 6.2 million housing units, of which 900,000 are deemed unfit for human habitation.

At the time, the population of Uganda stood at 30.59 million people but has since risen to about 40 million, so the population in the slums must have increased by at least 35 per cent.

No major housing project has come on board since Mr Atubo's announcement yet there has been an upsurge in the number of people making their way into towns in search of employment opportunities, meaning the

housing deficit must have increased by at least 40 per cent.

Owing to the unplanned nature of the structures there, there is little or no access to water and hygienic toilet facilities.

The bulk of the residents in the slums are often compelled to use polythene bags, which are commonly known as "flying toilets", to dispose waste. It is also not uncommon for one to find heaps of faecal material on the sides of the footpaths or in the corridors.

This led to an increase in the prevalence of diseases such as cholera and diarrhea, which are associated with consumption of contaminated water. A total of 1,104 cases of cholera were reported in Kampala's slums in the Financial Year 2006/2007 when the plan to improve living conditions in the slums was planned to commence.

Infestations by common parasites such as pinworms, tapeworms and ascariis had also become a way of life.

At the same time, respiratory related diseases and complications were on the rise in the slums on account of, among other things, overcrowding, the huge amounts of waste and lack of proper ventilation. Besides the health and hygiene-related challenges, there were also problems with lack of physical infrastructure such as roads.

The plan was, therefore, meant to address all these challenges by reclaiming all the land in the slums, providing infrastructure such as roads, providing decent accommodation complete with toilets and providing them with utilities such as water and electricity.

Unfortunately, more than 10 years since Minister Atubo announced the development, the plan has never been actualised and no one seems to know where the money that Mr Atubo had been earmarked for implementation of this project went.

Matters have not been helped by the slow pace at which government has been moving with the implementation of the National Housing Policy, which the State minister for Housing, Dr Chris Baryomunsi, recalled on lack of funds.

"It is true the implementation of the (National Housing) Policy has been delayed but this has been due to shortage of funds. But with support from donors, we are hopeful the project is yet to kick start. It is a matter for all groups of people to address the disparities in the housing sector," Baryomunsi said.

**"Plans to construct low cost houses for the urban poor have been finalised. Government is committed to improving the living conditions of Ugandans living in slums."**

DANIEL OMARA ATUBO, THEN MINISTER FOR LANDS AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT



## SPECIAL REPORT

## IMPACT

According to the former minister for Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Mr Daudi Migereko, the general idea behind the ministry's redevelopment plans had been to address and fix the pathetic conditions prevailing in most of Kampala's slums.

The redevelopment was meant to ensure the construction of decent accommodation in well planned settings complete with roads and lanes for the extension of clean water and electricity and other facilities such as schools, hospitals and markets. This has not happened on account of government's failure to see the plan through.

The slum areas continue to be plagued by lack of proper toilet and sewerage disposal facilities, which means that faecal matter remains difficult to dispose of. This means that they continue to be prone to diseases such as diarrhoea, dysentery and cholera.

## Diseases

Little wonder that whenever there has been an outbreak of cases of cholera in Kampala, the slums are the most affected. The case was not very different early this month when the ministry announced an outbreak of the disease.

In the same breath, this means that the country continues to face an acute housing problem and that it falls short on its obligation to facilitate every citizen to access decent accommodation facilities, both of which would have been partially addressed if this slum improvement project had been carried out as Minister Atubo had announced.

According to the national housing policy which was unveiled in May last year, government seeks to promote progressive realisation of adequate housing for all and is premised on the principle of partnership.

## 1.8 million

**Housing shortage.** In 2017, it was estimated that between 1.2 and 1.8 million people were residing in Kampala's slums, most of them in single-roomed tenements.

## MONITOR'S POSITION

If what Mr Migereko said is anything to go by, one of the areas where the development of slums was meant to begin was Kasokoso where National Housing Construction Company acquired close to 300 acres of land in two separate transactions in 1968 and 1972. According to Mr Migereko, the French government had committed to provide \$11 million to have the area developed into a modern housing complex complete with

markets, schools and hospitals. However, the plans remain frozen because squatters on the said land have refused to vacate it and government seems to be incapable of evicting them or providing some form of compensation to convince them to leave.

One of the challenges here is the politics. The political leadership tends to always look more at the political ramifications than the social and economic benefits of implementing policy decisions. It might be a hard lesson

to learn, but our leaders must learn to put the greater good ahead of the effects that implementation of key policies might have on the politics.

We cannot possibly address issues around the housing deficit and improvement of our plans if we cannot do anything to evict those who have encroached on public land. One cannot make an omelet without breaking a few eggs.



Filthy. A boy plays in stagnant water in Namuwongo slum recently. PHOTO EDGAR BATTE

## VOICES



"President Museveni promised us low cost housing units in Masese in Jinja, but that was not followed through with allocation of funds. So, there is a disconnect between what he says and what the ministry of Finance does yet we all know that some of the diseases out there are as a result of poor living conditions. Addressing the issue of housing might help reduce the health budget."

PAUL MWIRU, JINJA EAST MP



"It is true the implementation of the (National Housing) Policy has delayed but this has been due to shortage of funds. But with support from donors, we are hopeful that the project is yet to kick start. It will cater for all groups of people to avoid disparities in the housing sector."

CHRIS BARYOMUNSI, STATE MINISTER FOR HOUSING



"What we were working on was to make people in the slums have a decent life. India, Ethiopia and Kenya are others have it. Those who were living in slums there now living in apartments were constructed here, but our people reject the plans so that government wanted to take them out."

DAUDI MIGEREKO, FORMER MINISTER FOR LANDS, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT



## OFFICIAL EXPLANATION

The spokesperson of the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, Mr Den says while it is true that the ministry funding from the World Bank, the n for computerisation of the land regi not for the development of Kampala "It is true that there was a \$23 million known as the Private Sector Comp Land Component (PSCPII) project, ran between 2005 and 2010, with from the World Bank, but it was n slums development," he said.

As a result of the implementation project, Mr Obbo said, the land re capacity to process land titles w major boost, the lands record sys and a land information manager established. Employees of the li underwent specialised training equipment was acquired.

## VERDICT

Promise was Realistic

Promise was Unrealistic

Promise was Empty

Promise is Overdue

## WE VALUE YOUR FEEDBACK

Tell us what you think about this story! Write to editorial@ug.nationmedia.com or Whatsapp