

EDITORIAL

Proper housing must be a national priority

A society is considered civilised when its members are capable of creating a unit that functions and safeguards everybody. This society has a government that properly manages resources and ensures order, builds decent and advanced settlements, and has an organised labour force, among others. Thus, the unveiling of research by the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Housing and its implications on Service Delivery in Education, Health, and Law and Order report that revealed a gross shortage of accommodation for key service personnel, is deeply concerning.

Housing deficits for the Uganda Police Force and the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) are shooting through the roof at 76 percent and 85 percent, respectively, with Uganda Prisons Service at nearly 60 percent, teachers at 51 percent and medical workers at a whopping 97 percent.

The Issue:

National Housing

Our view:

That we have allowed the housing situation to deteriorate to this extent is a dereliction of government duty to its citizens and a clear violation of basic human rights. Urgent action is needed to reverse this sad state of affairs.

As is evident in the report and on the ground, there was no lack of effort to build accommodation for public officers; except that the last time there was deliberate planning to house essential personnel was so long ago that most of the existing accommodation is dilapidated and downright dangerous.

This report is a wake-up call to re-examine our national priorities. Poor and inadequate housing is a big disincentive to service delivery, especially in hard-to-reach areas, where the housing deficit is currently at 95 percent, almost non-existent.

These are the places where health workers will not turn up to their posts or work infrequently because they reside a long distance away from their duty posts, possibly in the next district. Some job positions may remain unfilled in areas with poor living conditions.

Overcrowding, poor sanitation and houses in unsafe condition were some of the issues cited in the report. These findings touch the very core of our society. Poorly housed police personnel make poor crime preventers and law enforcers.

Medical workers who do not get enough sleep or live in discomfort cannot execute their mandate, and the same goes for every other citizen.

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services.

That we have allowed the housing situation to deteriorate to this extent is a dereliction of government duty to its citizens and a clear violation of basic human rights. Urgent action is needed to reverse this sad state of affairs.

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