

The Simy Tandika residential estate.



TANZANIA

Rapidly deteriorating housing situation

The housing situation for Tanzanian tenants is extremely critical. To meet the most immediate demands, some 2,5 million houses have to be built in the next few years. For those having a place of their own, rents are souring. And when failing to pay the rent in time, people are evicted with almost no means of challenging merciless landlords in court.

When Tanzania became a republic in 1962, decent housing for everyone was on top of the agenda. Now, almost fifty years on, the situation is different. There is an ongoing government program to improve the housing situation by establishing a Housing Policy Act. But investments in the building sector are minimal and with the current global recession being, not much is happening to remedy the housing crises.

As for tenants, things started to dete-

riorate when the Rent Restriction Act of 1984 was repealed and replaced by “the Land disputes Settlement Act of 2002. This new law is very favourable for the landlords resulting in extremely high rents, and the rents are constantly adjusted and increased by the landlords on their own merits.

Evictions are now the order of the day. If rents are not settled in time, households and other properties are confiscated to defray the unpaid arrears. Following this, there are now numerous ongoing tenant cases and disputes in the Housing tribunals and other law courts almost everywhere in this vast African country.

IUT representation in Tanzania

The present situation calls for a strong and determined character to take on the battle with stubborn landlords and neglectful authorities. This is where Mr Ludger Bernard Nyoni, the president of the Tanzania Tenants Association (TTA), comes in. With a background in the political field as one of the founders of the ruling party

Chama Cha Mapundizi (CCM), Mr Nyoni knows the political game and has the right contacts to deal with politicians at all levels. He has also held important positions within the labour movement in Eastern Africa, fighting for the rights of hundreds of thousands of workers.

Meeting with Mr Nyoni in central Dar es Salaam, you can immediately sense the respect this elderly gentleman has gained over the years. Impeccably dressed in a dark suit with a fitting tie, despite the souring temperature, he is greeted cordially wherever he goes. This includes people of all ranks, including the kitchen staff at the small café where we meet. These are some of the people who rely on Mr Nyoni and TTA to find a descent housing situation.

Public housing

As of today, most Tanzanian tenants, some 60 per cent, live in privately owned buildings. These are mostly small bungalows holding anything from four to ten families, each occupying a single room or two.

Living conditions in many of these flats are often poor. Many families may have to share the same toilet. And given the fact that the toilets are frequently out of work, one can easily imagine the pain.

A large number of tenants also live in houses under Public Housing Programmes, such as the National Housing Corporation, the biggest landlord, owing about 19 000 houses and Blocks of flats in the country.

Regardless of what type of flats tenants are renting, they mostly have neglecting landlords to deal with.

This is evident in most residential areas. Visiting Mrs H Chipa in the Simy Tandika residential area of Dar es Salaam, the lack of most basic services is apparent. The dark staircase leading up to the flat is pitch-dark without ant lights and the staircase is so worn out that the risk of falling about is apparent. Entering the two-room flat, Mr Nyoni listens with great concern to Mrs Chipa's grievances; leaking pipes and constant water and electricity cuts, not to mention the ever rising rent.

For most tenants it is very hard to obtain a loan and its getting increasingly difficult with the economic depression at hand. And interest rate of 21 per cent is not uncommon.

The constant struggle for many families and households to earn money enough to pay the rent is not the only problem. Most landlords demand that the rent is paid at least six months in advance. Some even ask for an advance payment covering 12 months.

Advance payment of rents cuts deep into the economy of many families. With minimum monthly wages at only 80,000 Tanzanian Shillings, or some 60 US dol-



Ludger B. Nyoni visits the Simy Tandika residential area in Dar es Salaam.



Mrs H Chipa in her bedroom in the Simy Tandika residential area, Dar es Salaam.

lars, typical rents are between 10,000 to 25,000 Shillings, or 8 to 20 US dollars.

– This system of advance payment is a problem of great concern to many tenants, says Mr Nyoni.

Selling of remaining rentals

Despite the urgent need for new housing, very few houses are built. Only 762 new buildings catering for tenants were erected between 1990 and 2007, compared to 14 000 in the two previous decades. A growing number of houses and flats are being sold to its present tenants. So far this has mostly been the case with former civil servants and others being offered “social housing”, subsidized by the government. Now this habit of selling out the rented flats is extended to tenants with flats under the Public Housing Programmes.

– This adds to the problems already at hand, says Mr Nyoni, adding that there is nothing wrong with people being offered to buy their own flats. But this way, the flats will never be available to anyone else looking for some place to rent. The flats will leave the housing market for ever.

TTA is sole representative

As a result of the rougher climate on the housing market, a growing number of

disputes are brought to court. But today many tenants are left at their own as the Tanzania Tenants Association, TTA, has lost its lawful right to be represented at court when housing disputes are challenged. Still, being registered at the Vice Presidents' Office, TTA should be entitled to be represented at courts.

– Without us in the courts, the lawyers take advantage of the situation as the tenants have no means to engage their own lawyer, says Mr Nyoni.

Being President of TTA involves also the Chairmanship of IUT Focal Point for Africa, FPA. The IUT -FPA brings together tenant representatives in Benin, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Kenya, Togo, Uganda, South Africa as well as from Tanzania.

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We are looking for someone who who could assist us in translating articles of the Global Tenant to French. Please get in touch with us in Stockholm via info@iut.nu