

Joel Ogwang - High Population, Poor Planning and High Unemployment Problem Fuelling Slums in Uganda

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In the close-knit and brotherly traditional African setting, housing was always a social concern. Aside from children who, because of their vulnerability and dependency, lived in their parents' homes, any other person had to have their own house.

As a precursor to manhood, a boy on turning 18-years had to build his own home - often a hut distant from his parents', while a girl had to move out and stay with an aunt, who mentored her for marriage.

"There was no excuse for a man not to own a home," says Patrick Mugumbya, 82, a retired civil servant.

"Even renting a house was unheard-of. To be a man, you had to build your own home and marry."

Enter colonisation

However, the imperialist invasion in search of raw materials and markets for finished industrial commodities after the industrial revolution in the 1800s in the West exposed Africa as a safe haven for the imperialist foreign policies.

The Britain conquered most colonies in eastern and southern Africa, whilst France dominated western and northern Africa and Belgium central Africa.

In Uganda, British control was not asserted until 1894, when the country became a British protectorate, which was finally cemented by the 1900 Buganda agreement.

While the 1900 Buganda agreement endeared Kabaka Muteesa I to the British hearts, he lost his powers upon accepting British occupation in exchange for protection and Western civilisation.

And while the chiefs who owned guns paid gun tax, hut taxes was borne by squatters, in addition to ground rent.

Because the colonial Government did not want to look unpopular, it surrendered tax collection to the chiefs.

To evade the taxes, some Ugandans escaped into urban centres, says Dr. Christopher Twesigye, a political scientist

“The colonial police would surround tax evaders at night,” he says. “As a result, people went into hiding, while many slept in trees and others escaped to urban areas.”

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