

The Economist ~ Why “Affordable Housing” In Africa Is Rarely Affordable

ETHIOPIA’S flagship social-housing programme is probably the most ambitious in Africa. But for most locals the houses are still barely affordable. The poor cannot afford the down payment for even the most subsidised units. And those who can often struggle to meet repayments, opting instead to rent out the houses and move elsewhere. In this respect, though, Ethiopia is hardly alone in Africa. Take Angola, where a recent \$3.5bn social-housing project on the outskirts of Luanda, the capital, offered apartments from \$84,000, in a country where incomes per person are just over \$4,000. Or Cameroon, where the government’s social-housing scheme is out of reach to 80% of the population, according to the World Bank. In Ethiopia the state has spent over a decade building cheap homes on an almost unprecedented scale, but supply still fails to match demand. Why?

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