

Charles Mkula - Urban Disasters: A Challenge To Planning In Malawi



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Urbanisation has outstripped government's capacity to provide services and guide urban growth in Malawi, a physical planning expert, Mphatso Kadaluka has said. "Inadequate and deteriorating infrastructure has exposed urban inhabitants to myriad types of disasters that leaves them vulnerable to inexplicable impacts," said Kadaluka, a northern region Acting Commissioner for Physical Planning in the Ministry of Lands and Housing.

Kadaluka said Malawi has been ill prepared for fires and other forms of disasters such as collapsing buildings, roads and bridges.

"The only disasters we seem to care most about are floods, drought and earth tremors and quakes," noted the planning official. He bemoaned the lack of a proactive stance to mitigate urban disasters which catch authorities and professionals off guard when they occur.

"Urban areas in Malawi are not spared of these natural and human made disasters," he warned.

Kadaluka said the most common urban disasters were fire outbreaks resulting from faulty electrical installations, illegal storage and sale of liquid fuel. He pointed to the fires at the Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (Escom) offices, farmers organisation warehouse, Blantyre Flea market, Bakers Pride, Ori

cooking oil refinery, Keza building, Ekwendeni market, and the most recent at Mzuzu city main market in April.

“These fires led to disastrous consequences such as loss of goods and services, property, and people’s livelihood,” said Kadaluka.

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