

The urgent need for new housing policies in an entrenched neoliberal economic environment.

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Abstract.

In a decidedly neoliberal environment, the urban poor in countries of SSA, cannot afford to live in adequate housing, as such, they will continue to be accommodated in the ever-expanding informal settlements in urban areas. Over the past 60 years, there has been a consistent search for a housing solution for the urban poor and its strategies are ever changing due to demographics, politics and socioeconomic forces. Despite frequent shifts of strategy in housing policy over the years, housing challenges have persisted and it is getting worse for the low-income population in a liberalized economic context. This paper is a contextual evaluation of housing policy within a neoliberal environment in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries and Kenya in particular. It is a desk study based on literature review from varied sources that includes the World Bank and UN-Habitat. Many housing policies formulated after 2000 in these countries, indicate a significant shift in the role of government in housing delivery from that of main actor to facilitator. This has tremendously changed housing delivery through increased participation of the private sector, both in formal and informal housing, the latter having experienced greater impact. The embrace of neoliberalism in seeking a housing solution for the urban poor has been riddled with challenges resultant from shifts in economic paradigm, unfulfilled policies, poor economic performance, limited and inaccurate information, regulatory constraints and tenure challenges. This paper has argued for a review of housing policies in view of the challenges and suggests that these can be redressed in ways such as; developing capacity for information gathering, social support for the urban poor, incentivising formal housing, formulating enabling regulations and secondary policies, changing social perceptions about poverty and institutional reforms.