

# Kenyans discussing Agenda 4: Affordable Housing

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Kenyans from all walks of life yesterday discussed one of the Agenda Four : affordable housing in a lively television debate hosted at the University of Nairobi , Chandaria Auditorium, UoN Towers and televised by NTV, one of the leading brands from Nation Media Group.

Speaking during the live television, University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbithi, observed that the University places a significant role in programs that impact the society. The Government's 'Big Four agenda of affordable housing affects all Kenyans and hence the University has a keen interest in it", he said. The Vice-Chancellor was represented by Prof. Peter Ngau, Principal, College of Architecture and Engineering.

Nation Media Group CEO, Stephen Gitagama raised the pertinent issues like demolitions of building built on riparian land, financing and the issue of quality housing. The issues of permits and approvals were raised too.

It was observed that 86% of Kenyans are renting and hence the need to provide affordable housing was critical. Currently, the country has a deficit of 2 million houses. The government in it's plans, has promised to construct 1 million houses and the plans are underway. Macharia, Cabinet Secretary, Housing, Infrastructure and Urban Planning, promised that ground breaking ceremony will be held late October, 2018 at Park Road, Pangani estate. He revealed that the private sector has been at the forefront in constructing houses after the government provided incentives like land, infrastructure, power, roads, lighting and permits among others.

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On the issue of financing, CS. Macharia observed that several models of financing is being looked into. These includes; housing tax, where low paid employees contribute 500 shillings monthly and those who are paid more than 100,000 shillings pay 2,500/- monthly towards housing. Some experts from the audience opined that pension funds can be used to help in financing the affordable housing program. "Those who will be lucky to get the houses, through lottery, will get the house, while those who don't manage to get the houses will get the refunds back", observed CS. Macharia.

Regarding quality of the houses, the audience were assured by the architects that 'affordable housing doesn't necessarily mean that its low quality. It simply means that more expensive ways of building houses like brick and mortar will be discarded and cheaper building technologies will be adopted instead. Such technologies can help reduce the time taken to build the house as they maintain quality. On the issue of approvals it was agreed that the government will set up a one stop shop, where all the permits can be obtained.

County governments are not left behind in this agenda. The County Governments have access to World Bank loans to construct affordable houses in all the 47 counties.

When the program is fully implemented, a bedsitter will be going for 600,000 shillings and one bedroom at 1 million shillings.

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