

REVIEW > The dialogue managed to link the Berlin and Tanzania walls.

Berlin wall thrives in Tanzania, EA

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By Ludger Kasumuni
The Political Platform Reporter

Dar es Salaam. Fatuma Yusufo complains over skyrocketing prices of goods eating up her family income to an extent of failing to secure reasonable meals.

The mother of three children says while she witnesses some Tanzanians leading a luxurious life, including driving posh vehicles, her family is uncertain of eking out a living. "I do not know how and where my family will get meals tomorrow, but some Tanzanians do not bother spending lavishly the money they earn through corrupt means. We see them constructing buildings overnight," she laments. Asked whether she knew she was complaining over political and socio-economic walls hindering her family's ability to live a decent life, Fatuma says she does not know.

The Germany Non-Governmental Organisation, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (Kas), had in collaboration with Germany Tanzania Society (GTS) organised a special event to mark the fall of Berlin Wall on November 9.

Many could not see the essence of marking the demise of the Berlin Wall in Tanzanian soil, but the organisers insisted on conducting a dialogue. They arranged a forum involving diplomats, local experts, human rights activists and representatives of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to translate the Berlin Wall debate into an active dialogue for discussing pertinent issues evolving around development endeavours in the country.

Germany Ambassador to Tanzania Claus-Peter Brandes officiated at the dialogue. Kas resident representative Stefan Reith says the relevance of discussing the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall stemmed from crucial lessons

to both Germans and Tanzanians as well.

A presentation by the former lecturer with the Institute of Finance Management, Dr Camilius Kassala, opened up a live and sound debate, which drew the link between the Berlin and numerous other walls affecting political and socio-economic developments in Tanzania. Kassala urges Tanzanians to look at the Berlin Wall in different perspectives, as it touched various spheres of life. "We can look at it through the lens of shaping economic experience between Tanzania and Germany. We can use it for exposing human sufferings and solving political and socio-economic problems," he explains.

Resident representative of another Germany NGO, Fredrick Ebert Stiftung (Fes), Dr Stefan Chrobot, concurs with Kassala, as he emphasises the need for recognising walls in the name of bureaucratic laws, rules and regulations at border points among East African Community partner states. "The procedure is still cumbersome for a person travelling from Tanzania to Uganda. This is also a wall," Chrobot, who is an economist, says. There are walls within minds of the people too," he adds, citing widening gaps between the privileged and the underprivileged and the haves and the have nots.

"We have to identify these walls and look for appropriate solutions. There are children, for instance, acquiring quality education while others do not have access to it," Chrobot observes. "These walls must also be pulled down just as East Germans were not afraid of breaking down theirs, but democratic processes are required for the walls in our society to be brought down," he stresses.

The Berlin Wall, according to Kassala, was erected contrary to the 1948 UN Declaration of Fundamental Human Rights. "Movement of people is part of human rights. The Berlin Wall, which was built on August 13, 1961, was nicknamed Iron Curtain separating East and Western Europe," he clarifies. There are walls

preventing Tanzania from achieving its goals, he says, enumerating some of political walls as corruption, nepotism, civic illiteracy and lack of political tolerance.

Economic walls, according to Kassala, are poverty, unemployment, the gap between the rich and the poor, underdeveloped agriculture, low level of industrialisation and weak transportation and communication infrastructures. Social and cultural walls include technological and digital divide, scientific illiteracy and environmental and psychological barriers, which, he says, are almost invisible. "There is a need for mapping today's psychological walls and dismantling them calls for five requi-

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sites; namely disciplined, synthesizing, creative (bringing fresh ideas), respectful and ethical minds," he says.

Fortnatha Molle, a student at Mwalimu Nyerere Academy of Social Sciences, suddenly chips in to identify gender walls affecting all development aspects. "Gender walls still exist in abundance in Tanzania. We must devise means of destroying them, including empowering women economically and politically," she says.

GTS president Richard Shaba says with existing political apathy, Tanzanians ought to put on enough courage to successfully break numerous walls interlocking the society.

"Fearlessness enabled Germans to successfully destroy the Berlin Wall in 1989. We should not fear, but rather face the walls right in the face," Shaba says.