Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)

Tanzania: Lack of Lights in Streets Encourage Criminal Incidents

Tagged: East Africa, Legal Affairs, Tanzania
BY HASINA MJINGO, 16 JULY 2011

STREET lighting and street naming is an integral part of a modern city. It is with this in mind that people call for improvement and having effective street lights and street names to promote and enhance safety and security.

Countless crimes have occurred due to lack of street lights and street names. For instance, if a person is attacked on a street without a name, their location cannot be accurately communicated to the police. If street naming had been pursued hard, the information provided by the potential victim could be fed into the system, which could then immediately show the area where the robbery victim is with precise location.

Dar es Salaam is now estimated to have 5 million people. With the population growth, the crime rate has also increased. There, however, is an initiative project conducted by a non-governmental organization (NGO) called International Centre and Network for Information on Crime - Tanzania, which is established under the Gender Inclusive Cities Project.

This project decided to start naming streets in Keko and Ubungo. A study shows that in Keko, out of the 72 women interviewed, 48 per cent expressed concern about personal risks in the form of muggings or with sexual harassment. Bertha Kisanyi, who lives at Keko Magurumbasi is a beneficiary of the project. She says: "The streets are much safer after naming them. There are no hoodlums and thugs and we can now hang out our clothes to dry even after dark and no one steals them." Reports of women complaining of someone having stolen their phone are rare today in the area. Mugging too has declined, they say. It is the presence of street lights and their names that have brought the security development because victims can give the police their exact positions.

Phillipo Maganga of Keko A ward office said that security is crucial for people. He therefore encouraged the project to name other streets so that the areas could be safe. Community infrastructure Upgrading Programme (CIUP), a programme that was established in 2005 for upgrading the basic infrastructure in low-income settlement estimated that 85 per cent of the city settlements are not planned and many of them lack the necessary social and infrastructure services.

Therefore Community International Development Partners (CIUP) collaborated to introduce numerous initiatives aiming at improving the living condition of the city residents in such settlements. One of the projects linked to CIUP provides a safer city. It also shows that more than 90 per cent of households within the project areas (Temeke, Ilala and Kinondoni district) are connected to power supply and almost all streets remained unlit. This darkness on the streets has encouraged petty crime and brutality in the areas, night-time walks unsafe. It was with this thinking that CIUP considered putting street lights in three districts, namely Kinondoni, Temeke and Ilala. According to Margaret Mazwile, the co-ordinator, the programme is implemented in two phases. The first phase was successful by installing 1,624 streets lights in three municipal councils.

Kinondoni had 420 lights installed, Temeke 694 and Ilala 510. In the second phase, they are planning to install 1,622 lights in three municipalities. Ms Mazwile says: "Our aim is to improve security in all CIUP beneficiary wards. For instance, in the streets where we have installed lights people, especially women, feel safer."
"Sandali Street was previously known for robbery, women feared to walk along the street because they would be robbed of the phones or luggage, but today the street is safe. You can walk there at night and you won't be attacked." More development for security is still coming. Paul Mbembela, Chief Executive Officer of Ilala District, confirmed that very soon, probably next month, there will be an on-going programme for creating Identity Cards.

The programme will include street naming as well. "The new identity cards will show the street where the individual lives. That is why we hope to start with naming streets for safety reasons, but doing so will also help postal offices for delivery. Supportive of the project, the police says the dark gives criminals ideal environment to operate in.

Temeke Regional police Commander (RPC), David Misime, says that owing to lack of streets lights muggers take advantage to commit crime because they cannot be recognized. "Mandela Road is a good example. The new street lights installed along the road have helped reduce crime," he explains. Streetlights and naming is very important to collect information from people about their geographical locations, which can help in analyzing incidences of crime.