

Planning And Design Considerations for an Intergrated Urban Renewal

Kasoli Housing Project - Tororo Municipality, Uganda



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Introduction

As an economy of a given country grows the rate of urbanisation also increases and quite a number of settlers move to the urban centers for several reasons some of which are access to services and for proximity to the work place. The development of informal settlements therefore becomes inevitable as the majority of these usually are very low income earners and cannot afford: decent shelter, transport costs, to mention but a few.

These settlements once formed are not easy to get rid of without violating the people's rights, they become a threat to the neighbouring communities, and are eventually a concern and a challenge for the government and the entire world.

This paper outlines a description of issues that are of major consideration when undertaking housing projects especially those that involve rehabilitating the living conditions of the poor. Issues pertaining to housing need to be handled with

atmost care and with alot of respect for the intended beneficiaries and most especially when the target group are the poor.

Kasoli housing project is an example of an existing site where squatters have settled on government land within Tororo municipality Eastern Uganda. The approach to be used will be on-site development so that the beneficiaries are not relocated during the construction stage. It is intended that development will be done in phases starting with the vacant lots and gradually the entire site.

The aim of the project is to help improve and facilitate the living conditions of the poor and in this particular regard those that are squatting on this governmet land. Government realised that evicting them is not the solution to the existing situation as they could very well go and squat somewhere else, and is helping improve the situation as well as give the beneficiaries a chance to own a home in a properly functioning community at a reasonable cost.

The paper outlines the country's shelter situation with regard to demography, Health, Economy, Access to infrastructure and services, design, and the different players in the delivery process and their respective roles. These together are determinant of the people's standard of living. In this paper the writer identifies a design related shelter problem and makes an attempt to come up with proposals that can help combat the stated problem for sustainability.

1 Shelter Situation Analysis

1.1 Basic General Data

It is stated in the 2002 population and housing census that; Housing is one of the basic human needs that have a profound impact on the health, welfare, social attitudes and economic productivity of an individual. It is also one of the best indications of a person's standard of living and of his or her place in society. Indeed during the presentations from the different lectures and the regional continuation in Manila one can easily notice that many people who have had their homes improved exhibit a remarkable change in their ways of life. People begin to live more in a relatively modern way with improved furniture and appliances in their new homes because they are driven to work harder to maintain their home.

However the housing situation in Uganda is characterised by poor quality housing in the rural areas and low income unplanned settlements in urban areas referred to as informal settlements or slums.

Geography and Administration



Uganda is located at the equator and enjoys a tropical climate. The country experiences two rainy and two dry seasons with the sun overhead throughout the year. This makes it crucial to take into account the weather elements in the designs. The total area is 236,040 sq km with the land accounting for 199,710 sq km and water 36,330 sq km. We have about 100 Districts: 1 capital

city, several Municipalities and Towns. The country is endowed with an abundance

of natural resources - forests, lakes and rivers, rocks, and more recently oil as an enabling resource. There is generally a wide range of locally produced materials, skilled manpower and the country is enjoying political stability – a big incentive for growth.

Demography and Health

According to the 2002 housing and population census, the total population is about 30 million and is projected to be 77 million inhabitants in 2035. The growth rate is about 3% p.a and is one of the highest in the world. As the population grows the demand for housing also grows. In the rural areas and within the urban poor there is lack of sufficient clean water, the sanitation is appalling and often times causing diseases and deaths of children especially under five and expectant mothers. It is important to note that the health of a nation determines their productivity and therefore their capacity to afford decent shelter.

Economy

The economy of Uganda as per the 2002 population and housing census has been recorded at a growth rate of 5% per annum (p.a) for the previous 15 years. The country has in place tax incentives with value added tax (V.A.T) having dropped from 18% to 5% on housing.

People living below the poverty line are about 31%, having dropped from 56% in 1992. The lower the poverty levels the poorer the housing conditions and vice versa. A greater percentage of the population is predominantly rural and practicing rural methods of farming. This lowers the household's per capita income and therefore lowers the quality of housing.

1.2 Shelter Related Facts and Figures

Access to Shelter

The supply of housing in Uganda is provided by a handful of well established developers most of whom are urban based and their target population is the elite. There are now several financial institutions providing mortgage financing, and government has also as of undertaken a drive to facilitate mortgage financing by

injecting 27 billion Uganda shillings (13.5 million US dollars) in 2009/10 in Housing Finance Company of Uganda (HFCU) a pioneer mortgage company.

The high cost of borrowing from the financial institutions (16 - 20% for about 20 years) discourages the would-be large scale developers and they end up building small units or in small batches, and this increases the construction cost.

Consequently the units are offered for sale or rent at a very high price. There is a general inadequacy of decent, safe and affordable housing and more especially in the urban areas. Today the country's housing stock is about 5.28 units and a deficit of about 612,000 units.

There are high levels of room occupancy with the level higher in single roomed dwellings - this reduces as the number of rooms per household increases. While the UN recommends 2 persons per room of 12 feet by 12 feet, the majority of the households have 4 persons sleeping in a room of about 8 feet by 10 feet. This means that the majority live in overcrowded rooms with a very small floor area per person. Housing is characterised by poor ventilation and inadequate lighting.

The public sector contribution to housing supply for accommodation is mainly through provision of institutional quarters for specific departments such as the army, police, schools and hospitals among others. The 2002 population and housing census revealed that 78% of the households lived in owner occupied dwellings with the proportion being higher in rural areas (86%) as compared to the urban areas (30%), while 16% live in rented dwellings countrywide. Owner occupied is by far the most preferred as it establishes security and stability of

tenure of the household.



Housing construction in slums is characterised by building materials of temporary nature, and are regarded as temporary dwellings. According to the 2002 housing and population census, 70% of the population live in

Picture 1: Typical building materials in a Kalerwe slum.

houses built out of temporary materials. In the rural areas the figure goes up to about 80% while the urban one was estimated at 27%. Only 18% of the house holds lived in dwelling units built with permanent materials.

Access to and cost of Basic Services/Infrastructure



Picture 2: Water pipe going through contaminated water.

The majority of the population have inadequate access to basic services and infrastructure such as clean and safe water sources, health facilities, with the percentage being higher in

the rural areas. Even then these come at a high price making them unaffordable to the majority population. The unit cost of buying water from vendors in urban areas is usually high and yet the water is often times polluted.



Picture 3: Poor drainage as seen in Katanga –
kannala

Access to and cost of Education

The education sector is believed to play a vital role in promoting sustainable development through capacity building of the population in various skills, raising awareness on various issues of national development and improving general standards of living. Currently government has undertaken a drive for Education for all through the provision of Universal Primary and Secondary Education.

1.3 Housing Policy

A housing policy is being developed in Uganda to harmonise and amend previous diversity of housing problems in the country. The national housing policy is necessary to guide housing development and enable the nation achieve transformation into well planned and properly functioning communities.

1.4 Actors in Shelter Delivery and their Roles

Central government is mandated with offering technical support, incentives, capacity building, policy formulation, standard setting, sensitisation and monitoring of national programmes. The role of the government in Kasoli for example is to spearhead the formulation of the project, seek the necessary funding, provide technical assistance in terms of house designs and costing, formation of cooperative(s) and overall social and technical advice. It also plays a key role in mobilising and coordinating the different stakeholders/actors.

The local government is responsible for the mobilisation of stakeholders at district level, the physical planning of the project area, and providing backup technical support to oversee the implementation of the project together with the central government. It is also responsible for organising their members for meetings.

Professionals play a crucial role in imparting skills and capacity building of the target communities. Other players include Contractors, Manufacturers/suppliers, Real estate developers and financial institutions. Kasoli housing project is jointly financed by the UN Habitat, DFCU Bank - a development financial institution in Uganda, and the Government of Uganda. A contractor will be selected to do the actual construction together with the local community. After completion of the project the houses will be allocated to the beneficiaries on mortgage arrangement payable within 20 years. The community will work towards maintaining their individual houses and the public areas.

1.5 Shelter Design

Laws regarding physical planning in Uganda are restricted to towns, municipalities and cities that are declared as planning areas so those outside gazetted areas build haphazardly. It is important to note that a Building Control Bill has been drafted although it is yet to be passed, and a National Land Use Policy has been formulated to guide development at both micro and macro level.

Shelter Quality varies from one area to another being determined by the level of the individual's income and status in society. Little attention is paid to the Function and Safety of dwellings causing danger to the communities. Private developers who happen to be the majority in the provision of housing do not take into consideration the communities in which their developments are situated. Consequently most of the developments turn out to be unsustainable.

2 Organisation

The writer works with Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development a governmental organisation whose vision is "A sustained land use, Land tenure security, affordable and decent housing and organised urban development.

With regard to Shelter Design and Development, our mission is "...to improve housing conditions for socio-economic development". This is made possible through policy making, standard setting, national planning, coordination, inspection, monitoring and back-up technical support with the help of the local governments.

Some of the projects undertaken include spearheading of low cost housing projects especially for slum upgrading, putting in place basic guidelines for the development of safe, decent, affordable and sustainable housing. This is mainly done through construction of demonstration houses and sensitisation of the stakeholders. Government ensures safety, proper and timely implementation of its programmes through regular inspection and supervision.

The writer is responsible for formulating and reviewing policies, standards and guidelines for government housing projects; preparing and documenting architectural plans for government housing projects; and rendering the necessary technical assistance in the field of architecture.

3 Shelter Problem

There is a general lack of proper planning in the quest to provide safe, decent and affordable housing for the population. There are a lot of haphazard developments with little consideration for the proper functioning of the dwellings and the communities at large.

Government of Uganda with the assistance of donors and NGO's has undertaken several urban renewal projects for example in Namuwongo in Kampala city, Masese and Mpumudde in Jinja district. The writer feels that several aspects are of major consideration.

Lack of proper community involvement

During the previous projects, there have been squatting syndicates - the beneficiaries tend to let out the houses and move to another neighborhood. This is not sustainable because as one slum is upgraded another is formed. Consequently you end up rotating from one slum upgrading project to another to another.

Lack of proper coordination and cooperation between the stakeholders

Sometimes there arises lack of cooperation between the local government and the beneficiary community. There is an example of a project where a market was built for the beneficiaries and the municipality wanted to take over its administration, but when the community was opposed to this idea, another market was put up nearby by the municipality and this overtook the one in the existing project area. Today the market within the project area does not function to its expectation.

Inadequate Physical planning

The plot subdivisions are done without any kind of rhythm to make the cadastral plan interesting. They are simply plots in rows resulting into row houses and if they have the same design then there arises the problem of monotony and the view is not very pleasing to the eye. In as much one will have solved the housing problem, the

effect on the neighbourhood arises. The writer believes that when solving the problem of housing one should also handle the aesthetics of the area.

Many times infrastructure and services in slum upgrading projects are not given the attention they deserve. There is a general lack of: clean water and sewerage facilities, proper sanitation, sufficient streets and garbage management.

The community is not facilitated with sufficient common areas where they can meet to relax and share ideas as a way of social interaction and development.

Insufficient House Designs

The projects are characterised by just one type of house design for all the houses to be constructed. Looking at these houses together can be very stressful to the eye as there is no variety. There is also lack of flexibility in the individual house designs - no consideration for future development causing haphazard increments.

4 Proposal for Change and Improvement

There is need to develop communities that are sustainable- that will not run down the drain soon after they are developed. The communities should be able to identify with the development and own it, maintain it and generally be proud of it. The communities need to be facilitated or provided with services and open spaces for recreation in order to improve the livelihoods of the people and make the area comfortable. This can be achieved through the following:

Community involvement

There is need for community involvement to find out what the peoples requirements/special needs are before implementing the project. This way they begin to identify with the project and own it. They will therefore be proud of the outcome since they will have contributed to its creation. This could be done by involving them at all the preparatory stages through:

1. Dialogue with and continuous feedback to the local leaders of the intended beneficiaries by arranging some kind of community meetings and or consultative workshops where the locals can contribute by making mention of the kind of facilities they would prefer to be availed with, there is need to find out what the most pressing needs are to enable prioritisation;
2. during the design stage, the community can contribute on overall site layout on the advise of the government technical staff on the possible location of common areas for community use for example the inclusion of a daycare, and or a community center. They also need to be informed at such an early stage of the possible cost implication of the individual houses so that issues of affordability are sought out at an early stage. where the community may indicate that the cost is high then the design can be revised to meet the peoples income;
3. Construction stage through some form of self help. This is where the community participates actively by providing labour during the construction stage – Sweat Equity. This is the only sure way for a poor person to be proud of and to own the project or house for that at their disposal; and
4. Occupation stage through formation of cooperatives and savings groups to help not only with the mortgage but also for the maintenance of both individual houses and the public spaces.

Local Government involvement

The local governments need to be involved at all the stages of the project as much as can be possible so that:

1. No parallel activities are developed with the intention of frustrating the project;
2. The project is in line with the area's development plan and government programmes;
3. But also to generally get their support - it can be very helpful when there is some form of cohesion of the different players at all levels.

Physical planning

The plot subdivisions need to be done in a more creative way to make the area interesting. These can be done in clusters and in different patterns so that the view is more interesting, and even when you have row houses, they can be viewed as different smaller communities in a bigger context.

Provision of services and infrastructure in collaboration with the respective service providers. Services mainly include the following:

1. Provision of piped water – this greatly reduces the households expenditure on buying water,
2. Electricity,
3. Proper sanitation- reduces risk of contracting diseases associated with poor sanitation,
4. Efficient road network in terms of size, road-side drains,
5. Access to schools, Hospitals, markets,
6. Provision of public open areas, community hall(s), etc

Its not just about the provision of a wall and roof over ones head, but the general provision of supporting services for the people's livelihoods as we see in the book *More Urban-Less Poor* that:

"The individual dwelling is important but water, sanitation, electricity, access roads, lighting, transportation, etc are indispensable complements. "
(Ljung & Tannerfeldt, 2008)

The initial investment is surely high but we need to look at the long term effects and not the short term.

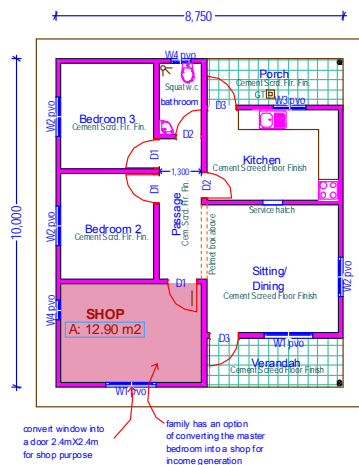
Improvement/provision of services plays a major role towards:

- raising the property value,
- reducing mortality (especially of under five)
- improving health.
- increased productivity.
- reduces unnecessary expenses.
- increased GDP per capita.

- Creation of good neighborhoods.
- Improves livelihoods on a general note.

House Design

There needs to be flexibility in the design of the individual houses to allow for expansion in a planned way and also to create variety to cater for the different income groups and user requirements.

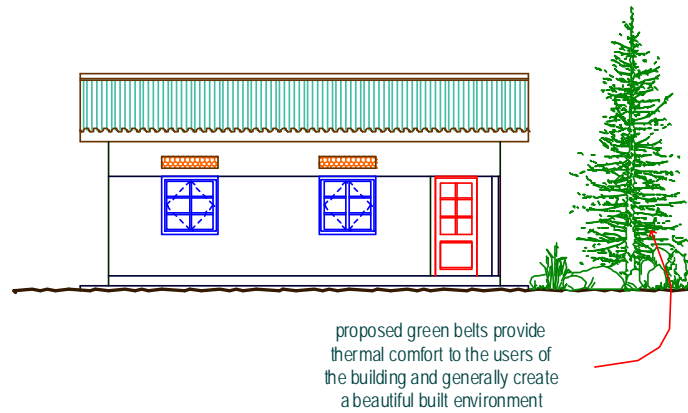


Also flexibility in a sense that a part of the dwelling could be let out so that families earn some income to help with paying the mortgage and for maintenance. For example a proposed three bedroom house could be designed to allow for one of the bedrooms shaded) to be converted into a business area like a shop for the family.

The designs should take into consideration the social-cultural aspects from household level to the community level of a given area. There is need to know how the people live, work, and their values in order to come up with a properly functioning environment and for the end users to appreciate the product.

We also need to remember that homes are also places of work and therefore the house layout needs to facilitate easy flow of activities and adequate areas for work. One should be able to work while maintaining good view of the children playing.

Climatic conditions such as wind, sun, temperature, rainfall, etc need to be taken into consideration to enable the comfort of the users, and to minimise expenditure on heating and cooling. These do vary from one area to another and need to be analysed.



Above: a green belt fronting a house (proposed) and Below photos of Gawad Kalinga community, Philippines



As we can see in the photographs above, colour can be used to create mood, evoke motions and add life to a community in which it is applied. These individual houses can have a colour scheme, however one needs to be careful when choosing colour for such projects so that the end product is does not offend the people.

Private, public open spaces and communal areas as well as green spaces are crucial to a community to facilitate relaxation, meeting areas, secure play areas and identity. However these need not to compromise the users' privacy.

Sensitisation

This needs to be done in order for the beneficiaries to understand the urpose/need for a well built environment, regular maintenance, participation, Savings groups/cooperatives, form of tenure, etc

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