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RURAL PROGRESS

Vol. VI No. 2— 1987

Published by the Social Development
Environment and Human Settlements
Division

United Nations Economic
Commission for Africa

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Editorial

SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS

"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Math. 8:20). These words of scriptures, spoken some twenty centuries ago continue to generally remain a sad reality in the twenty-first century. Pope John Paul II felt obliged to quote these words recently to express his concern over the increasing number of the homeless around the world.

The number of pavement dwellers and those who must sleep on door-steps, sub-ways, or simply under the sky has swelled into millions. In addition to them, there are the millions of slum-dwellers, who lack a real home. It is estimated that one in five of our fellow human beings has no decent shelter. According to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT), by the end of the century almost one billion people in the developing countries will live in squatter colonies, without any kind of permanent, decent shelter and without basic amenities of life. This is a sobering number. If their problem of shelter is unresolved, it may pose a threat to peace and development of the Third World.

Shelter is not just bare four walls or a leaking roof over head. It is a comprehensive concept. It includes physical structure, the service infrastructure and the associated modes and mechanisms of production, distribution, land tenure system, employment, health, nutrition and educational facilities. The multiplier effects of the housing sector within overall national socio-economic development will have to be seen in the same manner as those derived from, say, agriculture or industry.

Shelter so defined is relatively limited in Africa. Whatever is available is disproportionately concentrated in resourceful, powerful and vocal enclaves of the urban sector although Africa is essentially rural and may remain so beyond year 2000. It should be pointed out that the word, "urbanization" in the African context today is largely an euphemism for rapid drift of rural population to urban areas in search of jobs, extension of squatter, slums and abject poverty. Hence, it has a negative connotation in the sense of structural and spatial imbalances in the economies of most of the member States of the region.

Rural Progress is a journal intended for all those who are concerned with rural development and transformation in Africa. For further information, please write to: The Editor, Rural Progress, P. O. Box 3001, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

It is the rural sector, which accommodates more than three-fourths of the African population. They live in it from cradle to grave. Decent and adequate shelter is beyond the reach of most of them.. They provide convincing evidence of the consequences of distorted priorities, of disparity aggravating allocation of investment funds. It needs to be stressed that shelterless people are unstable, volatile and unproductive.

The estimate of the rate of construction of new housing units in Africa varies from two five per thousand population per year as against the United Nations recommended rate of ten on the basis of the rate of population growth of the region. It indicates serious shortfall in supply and explains the high rate of over-crowded room occupancy rate, which varies from three to four in the cities. In 1980 African countries' total housing requirements were estimated to be nearly five million new units. The shelter situation in other developing regions, specially Asia is no better.

Hence, the United Nations, being the nerve-centre of global conscience and consensus, decided by its General Assembly resolutions 37/221 of 20 December 1982 to proclaim 1987 as the "International Year of Shelter for the Homeless" (IYSH). The objectives of IYSH are to improve the shelter and neighbourhood of some of the poor and disadvantaged by 1987 specially in the least developed countries in accordance with national priorities and to demonstrate by year 2000 ways and means of improving the shelter and neighbourhood of all the poor and disadvantaged.

The implementation of the programme clearly needs enlightened political commitment and action to reverse the deteriorating shelter conditions of the poor. The focus has to be on utilization of new and existing knowledge and relevant experience gained since the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, 1976, to carry out programmes of modest improvements for all rather than major improvements for a few. The role of Government will be critical in this respect.

It has to be the "enabler, provider and guarantor" of a range of requirements implicit in the concept of shelter.

However, such role of the Government can only be supplementary. People themselves have to individually and collectively carry out their part of the obligation. Shelter, after all, is the heart of a family's economic and social life. Collective action is an invaluable African tradition. It could be institutionalised to facilitate and accelerate the process of solving the housing problem for the low income population. In fact, many African countries are actively encouraging this method of self-reliant socio-economic development.

A partnership and dialogue between the people and the Government may be a pragmatic course to realise the objectives of the IYSH and to ensure that IYSH projects and activities;

- (i) serve populations below the poverty line and make visible improvements on the shelter of some of them by 1987
- (ii) are replicable within and outside the countries and
- (iii) balance what is ideally desirable and technically and administratively attainable (by making optimum use of local tools, skills and materials) and affordable by the poor.

The beginning of such partnership has already been made in Africa. In fact, as many as forty-five countries of the region have designated National Focal Points to coordinate the activities of IYSH. One hundred twenty IYSH projects are in various stages of implementation in the region. International co-operation is strengthening this partnership. Forty-five per cent of HABITAT's on-going projects are in Africa.

This collaborative effort should lead to more political commitment and effective action within and between nations to enable millions of the poor all over the world to have better

shelter and neighbourhood. This will be a step forward in the right direction to integrate them into the process of socio-economic development.

IYSH is thus an ambitious beginning of a continuing attempt to solve the shelter problem going well beyond 1987. It is a benchmark. The performance of subsequent years or decades will be assessed against this benchmark. The lessons to be learnt in this process will enable a more pragmatic approach to provision of "shelter for all" to be adopted. The success in attaining this objective will, of course,

primarily depend on actions of all concerned at the national level. Their actions must be conceived within a socially sensitive institutional structure to guide and sustain a shelter policy; which will no longer oblige any right-thinking person anywhere in the world to lament that "son of man has nowhere to lay his head" even when foxes have holes and birds of the air their nests. It is heartening to note in this regard, that the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has embarked on preparations of a GLOBAL STRATEGY FOR SHELTER to the year 2000.

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

24 JUN 1983

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II. CAUSES OF POPULATION MALDISTRIBUTION

2. Africa has a land area of 28 million sq. km., which is 20.6 per cent of the world's total. The difference between the percentage distribution of population and land area highlights the unevenness in the population distribution in various sub-regions of the Continent. The Eastern and Western sub-regions have larger share of the total population of Africa than they have of its total land area while the other three (Central, Northern and Southern) have larger shares of the total land area than they have of the total population. However, in terms of absolute amount of divergence

THE IMPACT OF POPULATION DISTRIBUTION ON THE RURAL SECTOR OF AFRICA

By Ita I. Ekanem: Chief, Planning and Policies Section UNECA Population Division.*

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The estimated total population of independent Africa was about 520 million as at mid-1985. Of this total, 355 million (or about 68 per cent) lived in rural areas. The associated annual growth rates were 3.0 per cent for the region; 5.0 per cent for the urban areas; and, 2.2 per cent for the rural areas. This total population is rather unevenly distributed within the region and between rural and urban sectors. The increasing role played by Governments at different levels of economy and society during the last decade or two along with the decentralization of decision-making have combined to create a greater demand for spatially disaggregated data which are vital for planning and management, particularly at the regional and local levels. This new interest in the spatial distribution of population derives, on the one hand, from the growing interest in regional development in most African countries and, on the other, from the awareness that population distribution aids and is aided by programmes of regional development. This paper reviews briefly the consequences of population maldistribution on the African rural areas and the policy implications for rural progress.

II. CAUSES OF POPULATION MALDISTRIBUTION

2. Africa has a land area of 28 million sq. km., which is 20.6 per cent of the world's total. The difference between the percentage distribution of population and land area highlight the unevenness in the population distribution in various sub-regions of the Continent. The Eastern and Western sub-regions have larger share of the total population of Africa than they have of its total land area while the other three (Central, Northern and Southern) have larger shares of the total land area than they have of the total population.¹ However, in terms of absolute amount of divergence

Central Africa ranks highest (share of the land area exceeds share of population by 11.5 percentage points).

3. Available statistics reveal an extremely patchy population distribution exemplified by large areas of low population density and small areas of high population density in the region. The estimated average population density for the region was 16 persons per square kilometre in 1981. This uneven distribution of population is attributable to a variety of factors among which is the pattern of migration before, during and after colonization. These movements during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence eras have had a significant influence on the population distribution of the African region.

4. The typology of the internal movements in Africa is rather complex. The major flows include rural-to-urban migration, planned and spontaneous migration to the zones of frontier settlement, changes in settlement patterns, transfers caused by individual development projects, replacement and return migration. Consistent with the pattern of migration identified as characterizing the developing countries, these various internal movements in the region can be grouped into urban-urban, rural-rural, urban-rural and rural-urban movements.

5. Besides the factor of rural-urban migration, the other factors accounting for the maldistribution of population in the region include: (a) the environmental difficulties posed to man by large inhabitable areas of the continent, such as deserts, semi-deserts, humid forests, savanna woodlands, etc.; (b) the very

* The opinions, figures and estimates set forth in this paper are the responsibility of the author, and should not necessarily be considered as reflecting the views or carrying the endorsement of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

¹ UNECA, "Population distribution and urbanization: ECA member States" in African Population Studies Series, No. 7 (UNECA: Addis Ababa, 1983).

localized historical evolution of peasant civilizations; (c) the emergence of a plethora of small human groups, with distinct languages, economic activities and social customs, causing internal schisms and considerable political instability; (d) the variable demographic impact of external influences from the Arab world and Europe, early phases of demographic decline associated with conquest, destruction, disease and slavery being succeeded by periods of population growth associated with economic and social development, medical and sanitary improvements and urbanization; (e) the peripheral and "islandic" locations of modern economic development based upon mines, oilfields, commercial crops, ports and capitals which provoke strong regional inequality between the coast and the interior and are epitomized by the largely peripheral distribution of primate cities which are very attractive to migrants; (f) Inter-continental movement associated with the slave trade in pre-colonial days; (g) colonial socio-economic system, which led to large voluntary movements of people into mining towns, centres of plantation agriculture and urban commercial administrative centres; and, (h) political upheaval, leading to population movements between national frontiers.

III. CONSEQUENCES OF POPULATION MALDISTRIBUTION — THE RURAL AREAS

6. In most African countries, the population distribution problem can take one or more of four different forms.² It can take the form of a disproportionate size and rate of growth of the metropolitan centre; it can lead to diminutive size and rate of growth of population within the remaining components of the urban system; it can relate to the proportion which the total urban population represents within the total population; or it can arise from the configuration and density of the rural population within the national territory. By far the most important and most visible of these population distribution problems in African countries is the disproportionate concentration of the urban population and sometimes of the total population, in one single metropolitan centre which is usually the capital city. This problem underlines not only

the enclave nature of development and prosperity on the continent but also the pauperization of large areas of the rural sector.

7. Rural-urban migration has lowered agricultural productivity. In Ghana and Cameroon for instance, the resulting rural depopulation has seriously affected agricultural production.³ There is also the mismatch between the distribution of population and resources. Whereas large tracts of fertile agricultural lands in Nigeria and Ghana, for example, are sparsely settled, less favourable areas are densely populated. Food-crop producing areas like the middle belt of Nigeria were neglected by the colonial administration and consequently are sparsely settled.

8. The evidence regarding the effects of migration on the rural structure, however, is tentative. The effects of migration on the rural areas can be conveniently divided into five categories: the effect on rural incomes, on rural capital formation and technological change, on rural income distribution, on modes of rural production and on rural fertility. In each case migration could be an equilibrating or disequilibrating phenomenon, and analysts differ sharply on which tendency dominates.⁴

(a) Effect on rural incomes

9. A declining labour/land ratio often provides a new environment conducive to changing rural production techniques; the transfer of labour into the more productive urban activity eventually generates a growing demand for rural output and thus alters the rural-urban terms of trade, raising agricultural prices relative to those of urban goods. The

² A.L. Mabogunje, "Effectiveness of population redistribution policies the African experience", International Population Conference, vol. 2: Solicited Papers (Manila, International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, 1981), pp. 527-420.

³ K.T. de Graft-Johnson, "Inter-reaction of population policy and aspects of development", Social Science Research on Population and Development (Papers presented at a Ford Foundation Conference, New York, 29 and 30 October 1974), pp. 155-161.

⁴ A.S. Oberal and H.K. Manmohan Singh, *Causes and Consequences of Internal Migration: A Study in the Indian Punjab* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1983), chap. 2.

increase in agricultural prices, in turn, is likely to stimulate agricultural production and raise rural income.

10. Remittances from urban areas are also likely to raise rural incomes and may not only increase levels of consumption, but also encourage technological change that further raises rural incomes. Although it is generally assumed that remittances made by migrants to their remaining family members increase rural income, this increase depends on the volume of migration, its family composition, its destination and the social standing of migrants.⁵ In the case of circulatory migration, where the ties between migrants and the community of origin remain high, remittances are generally higher than where out-migration is permanent. Remittances from international migrants also tend to be higher than those from internal migrants. But in the case of better-off migrant families, the support received by migrants from the family members staying behind tends to be greater than possible remittances.

11. On the contrary, it is equally possible that rural-urban migration may lead to the lowering of rural incomes because most of the rural-urban migrants are generally young adults and relatively better educated. Their movement involves a sizeable transfer of human capital out of the rural sector which might adversely affect agricultural productivity and incomes, and thus encourage more migration. The net effect of migration on rural incomes will, however, depend on the ability of the rural community to adopt and change traditional divisions of labour, and on the type of technological change that follows rural out-migration.⁶

(b) Effect on rural capital formation and technological change

12. Out-migration from rural areas is likely to push up wage rates and encourage labour-saving technological change and/or greater work participation by the remaining family members. Technological change would also be stimulated to the extent that out-migrants

repatriate savings to the rural areas in the form of remittances or capital equipment. Some studies have argued that since migration occurs partly in response to the lack of investment opportunities, due in large part to the shortage of financial capital, remittances are potentially an important means by which growth of agricultural production and technological change could be stimulated by migration.

13. But the net effect of remittances on technological change is difficult to determine a priori. Remittances may be used for productive investment, better housing and education, or be spent on conspicuous consumption. In Sierra Leone it has been shown that rural expenditure is directed disproportionately to rural produced goods and services, which suggests that remittances to rural areas may invigorate the rural economy through important multiplier effects. A study of small farmers in Kenya and Uganda concluded that urban-rural remittances constituted a significant source of working capital.

14. Rural out-migrants who either return occasionally, or remain in some form of direct or indirect contact with their origin households, are also likely to transmit some new ideas back to the areas of origin. Several studies attribute technological change to the dynamism of the returning migrants, who bring money as well as knowledge and experience of alternative production techniques.⁷ They may possess skills required to overcome bottlenecks inhibiting technological change, notably mechanical skills which are rarely available in remote rural areas. But the

5 A. Adepoju, "Issues in the study of migration and urbanization in Africa South of the Sahara" in P.A. Morrison, ed., *Population Movements: Their Forms and Functions of Urbanization and Development* (International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, 1980).

6 D.E. Hathaway, "Migration from agriculture: the historical record and its meaning" in C. Eicher and L. Litt, eds., *Agriculture in Economic Development* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1970).

7 J.C. De Wilde, *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1967); see also M.P. Miracle and S.S. Berry, "Migrant labour and economic development", *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (March 1970), pp. 86-108

impact of return-migration largely depends on the type of migrants who return.⁸ If most returned-migrants are those who have failed in the urban or other rural areas to which they had migrated, they would be the least productive. Also, many of them may merely return to retire, thus contributing more to consumption needs than to production. They are also more likely to return with an increased preference for urban consumption goods, which leads to an outflow of rural income.

(c) Effect on rural income distribution

15. Some studies have concluded that migration results in an improvement of household income, while others have concluded that it worsens it⁹. The overall effect is extremely hard to gauge since it will depend on the period over which an assessment is made, and on whether both direct and indirect effects are considered. Above all, it depends primarily on the relative propensities of migration among different segments of the rural population, and on the flow of remittances and return-migration. If migration is concentrated among the fairly rich and the fairly poor, then income inequality may tend to grow. However, if the very poor migrate as whole families pushed from the rural areas by debts and loss of land, the beneficial effect on wages may reduce income inequality. But on the other hand, if migrants from richer households predominate, and the remittances go to relatively prosperous farmers who can, as a result, introduce technological innovations leading to higher output and incomes, migration will eventually tend to increase inequality in income and land ownership distribution, and may induce further out-migration. Again, much depends on changes in prices, wages, productivity and technology resulting from rural-urban migration.

(d) Effect on modes of rural production

16. Rural out-migration tends to be associated with greater reliance on wage-labour. The out-migration of young adults changes the age composition of the rural family and often raises the effort price of labour on family farms of the remaining members, who will be

encouraged to hire wage-labour, especially if the migrants send back remittances that can be used to pay wages. Migration may also lead to commercialization of agricultural activity, which is further encouraged by favourable changes in commodity terms of trade and extension of markets. Technological changes and capital investments resulting from migration via remittances contribute to increasing monetization and mechanization of agriculture, and also increase the wage-labour component of total employment.¹⁰

(e) Effect on rural fertility

17. Migration is likely to affect rural fertility behaviour by influencing changes both at the micro- and macro-levels. First, migration affects the level and distribution of income in rural areas, and income distribution is known to be an important determinant of fertility and aggregate population growth.¹¹ Secondly, migration of young unmarried males of working age might result in severe imbalance of the sex ratio in rural areas and influence the proportion of persons able to find marriage partners. Thirdly, large-scale emigration of males in search of employment opportunities can have adverse effects upon the family structure, frequently contributing to its effective dissolution. Separation of husbands from wives during the crucial life phase, when couples are fertile and economically active, may have the effect of lowering the completed family size. Fourthly, the decision to migrate or to start a family tends to occur at about the same age period. Since marriage, migration and labour force participation are conscious decisions of the individual, migration through

⁸ B. Dasgupta, "Migration and rural employment", Land Reform: Land Settlement and Co-operatives, No. 1 (Rome, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1979), pp.23-34.

⁹ I. Adelman and S. Robinson, Income Distribution Policies in Developing countries (Stanford, California, Stanford University Press, 1977).

¹⁰ A.S. Oberai, Changes in the structure of employment with economic development (Geneva, International Labour Office, 1978).

¹¹ G.B. Rodgers, M.J.D. Hopkins and R. Wery, Population, Employment and Inequality: BACHUE-Philippines (Wezmead, Farnborough, Hants, Saxon House, 1978).

vidual, it is possible that a person may delay his marriage so that he can migrate and help increased contacts with the more modernized sectors may influence the value system of the rural communities, and rural inhabitants may internalize lower fertility norms. Returning migrants may also spread new values and information about family planning and may introduce new family size concepts.

IV. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

18. Given the aforementioned population redistribution problems, African countries consider radical policies of intervention as extremely appropriate. Broadly, the policies which have been adopted to stem the problems of population distribution in these States can be categorized into (a) those affecting international migration; (b) those designed to induce internal redistribution; and, (c) those affecting spontaneous redistribution. Among the policies in the first category are those aimed at removing customs barriers so as to allow the free movement of people and goods. Policies aimed at inducing internal redistribution include land colonization and settlement (e.g., the Mokwa and Shendam schemes in Nigeria), farm settlement, sedenterization of nomads and new town development (e.g., Dodoma in the United Republic of Tanzania and Abuja in Nigeria). Policies affecting spontaneous redistribution include restriction of migration to the cities, rural education, development of growth poles (e.g., in Senegal, Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast) and rural development (e.g., in Egypt, Liberia, Ghana, Gabon, Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana, Swaziland and Lesotho).

19. The ineffectiveness of most population redistribution policies in Africa may be ascribed to the economic structures of most of the countries; overall development policies which prompt rural-urban migration by favouring urban consumers; the relatively inadequate information base on which they are often predicated; and weak policy formulation and inefficient co-ordinating machinery. On these bases, it is difficult to

draw general conclusions from a review of case studies of countries in various parts of the continent. Nevertheless, while firm conclusions or policy guidelines cannot be reached, the following tentative conclusions to guide future thinking on population redistribution policies in the region are pertinent.

20. First, firm policies designed to slow city growth can emerge when current trends in migration and urban concentration threaten national development goals. Secondly, direct prohibition of migration is not necessary to slow metropolitan population growth, and it also infringes on basic individual freedoms. It is much more efficient to oblige urban dwellers to bear the full cost of urban amenities, and to avoid subsidization of food prices. Thirdly, the most effective policies are those which co-ordinate administrative and economic measures both at the urban destination and the rural source.

21. In the light of the above conclusions, certain general principles may be enumerated for ensuring that population distribution policies (PDPs) at least work in the right direction. The major elements of such principle, inter alia, are:

(a) The development of a long-term PDP and strategy that is agreed upon by the vast majority of those involved and which is consistently followed from one government to another;

(b) Recognition that PDPs are less likely to work if they are strongly in opposition to counteracting market forces. Since early phases of economic development are associated with spatial polarization, PDPs aimed at dispersion are unlikely to succeed in low-income market economies;

(c) Rural development programmes should be directed towards increasing incomes and rural welfare rather than at population retention itself. Whether this would involve less migration or more will vary from case to case. Rural development policies should be framed in the broader context of regional development strategy, emphasizing rural-urban linkages;

(d) Appreciation that an effective PDP must involve simultaneous action in both urban and rural areas, preferably with the goal of raising incomes and welfare for all households, regardless of where they live;

(e) A comprehensive strategy is likely to combine measures to slow down the growth of the primate city, the promotion of development in other urban areas (especially small towns and intermediate cities) and rural development strategies;

(f) A national PDP based upon urban and rural complementarities and dealing with all levels of the urban hierarchy will need to give some attention to investment in transport and communications. There is no general guideline as to whether intraregional or interregional infrastructure should receive priority.

22. The increasing attention being given to population distribution problems by African countries is clearly a step in the right direction, for a sound PDP is an important

aspect of overall development strategy. However, it is necessary to devote an equal amount of attention, if not more (in each country), to reaching agreement about "what PDPs should be trying to do, what strategies and instruments should be deployed, and how PDPs should be evaluated. . . . it is very important to evaluate the variety of experiences, to improve the effectiveness of PDPs and to discover what strategies and instruments can be replicated from one environment to another", specially in the rural areas.

23. It should be recognized that the key explanatory variable for poverty, hunger and malnutrition in Africa to-day, which is largely rural, is the imbalance between population growth and its productivity. The balance has to be restored, if not tilted in favour of development. And this means, inter alia, a vigorous implementation of a policy of responsible parenthood and even dispersion of population within and between the African States, consistent with the resource base.

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

Africa's development has been the focus of world attention and publicity in the past couple of years, culminating in various programmes of socio-economic recovery and development by African countries themselves and by the international Community at large. It ought to be recognized, however, that any programmes of development and improvement of the quality of life has to acknowledge human settlement — the territory of man — as the object of central concern.

It is intended in the following brief discussion to survey the nature of the processes affecting human settlements in the contemporary African development situation, Governments responses to developments in the sector and the contributions of international agencies to human settlements development in the region. Probable contributions and impacts of human settlement development to the over-all socio-economic development of the continent are identified and by way of summary, some policy and strategy elements to improve the human settlements situation are outlined. This discussion is with special emphasis to rural human settlements, since over 70 per cent of the African population still lives in such settlements, and since the urban aspects of the problem are already well known, better analysed and documented.

Nature of the phenomena and processes affecting Human Settlements in the Africa Region

A very important phenomenon and one with the most ramifying impacts on human settlement conditions and development is Urbanization and the very rapid rate at which it is taking place. Although a majority

of the African population still lives in rural areas, the urban population has continued to increase rapidly since the early 1960's. This rapid growth in urban population was initially a response to the real or perceived economic and social opportunities in the cities. Later on, it was accelerated by reduced incomes in the traditional agricultural sector in the rural areas. In practically all African countries, for example, the ratio of urban-rural wage income is at least 2:1. In many countries, in fact, this ratio ranges between 4:1 and 8:1 (e.g. Burkina Faso, Lesotho, Swaziland, Kenya, Senegal, Nigeria and Gabon)*. Thus, the income opportunities in the cities are much higher than in the rural areas. The intensification of "desertification" since the 1970's, especially in the sub-Saharan zones, has had the additional effect of reducing the economic, agricultural and ecological sustainability of much of the rural farm lands, and consequently has been forcing an increase in the rural-urban migration stream, as people continue to desert the devastated and drought-ravaged rural agricultural setting for a life in the cities.

Another factor exacerbating the urbanization phenomenon is armed conflicts within and between African States. Wars, internal disturbances and tensions are responsible for the displacement of large populations from their traditional habitats. These forced displacements have resulted in food shortages, famine and general economic breakdowns. These have more severely affected the rural areas and the rural economy in the affected countries.

While therefore the overall annual population increase of Africa averaged 2.9 per cent over the 1970-1980 period and 3.1 per cent in the 1981-82 period, the urban population

* The opinions, figures and estimates set forth in this paper are the responsibility of the author, and should not necessarily be considered as reflecting the views or carrying the endorsement of the United Nations Center for Human Settlements, HABITAT.

+ ILO/ASPAs Reports (various)

had been growing at an average of between 6 per cent and 8 per cent per annum. Since the early 1970's, urban population growth rates in excess of 10 per cent per annum are not uncommon. Sub-regional figures show highest annual urban growth rates in Central Africa (8.0 per cent); followed by West Africa (7.7 per cent); North Africa (7.2 per cent) and East Africa (5.6 per cent).

This rural-urban migration level has had tremendous impacts on both rural and urban settlements.

Effects of the nature of Urbanization on rural settlements and economy

The immediate effect of the continuing rapid rate of rural-urban migration is to drain the rural areas of the younger, more educated and virile segments of the population who would have served as the modernizing agents in the rural economy. The impact of this drain is all pervading.

The rural economy and productivity inevitably decline as rural human settlements are left with largely dependent segments of the population — the aged, women and children who cannot keep up with agricultural activities and production that is the base of the rural economy. The farms get smaller and smaller as the older farming generation get older and drop out without replacements. Labour to even harvest some of the crops become scarce and costly.

With the migration of the younger generation to the cities, there is a critical decline in the capacity to provide some rural infrastructures like roads and footpaths which were formerly usually provided by communal labour as well as decline in the capacity to build new houses, or maintain existing ones — activities which were usually cooperatively and communally done. Consequent on these, the quality of rural human settlements keep deteriorating, with inadequate access between farm and markets as roads become inaccessible to vehicles for evacuation of farm harvests.

Furthermore, with the exit of the better educated and more articulate segments of the population, there is little political pressure on the government to improve the quality of living in the rural areas. Rather, the pressure is to improve the quality of urban human settlements which contain the most articulate and most politically vocal segment of the population. Governments usually succumb to this urban bias both as a result of the pressures as well as on considerations of the visibility of investments. One African country, for example, has explained its concentration of housing programmes in urban areas on the grounds that "Urban conditions require more sewage and water facilities than are needed in the rural areas, construction standards are more exacting, and houses are more expensive to build".

Ordinarily and with the best of intentions, provision of basic public services and facilities is made difficult by the nature and characteristics of rural human settlements in African countries. In a substantial number of African countries, the vast majority of the rural population lives at very low densities in villages of scattered homesteads, so small that public services and facilities cannot be efficiently and economically provided. A vast majority of these villages and homesteads, individually, do not have the threshold populations to support a wide range of commercial and productive activities. Governments sometimes consider these characteristics of some rural areas as forbidding impediments to improvements of rural habitat and use same as excuse for doing nothing.

While it could be said that with the exception of areas affected by natural or climatic disaster or armed conflicts, the shelter component of human settlements, at least in quantitative terms, is not such a cause for concern, the services and facilities aspects (water, good roads, electricity etc.) are of critical concern in rural human settlements. Rural areas have very little of these and people (mainly women and children) have to travel several kilometres to fetch water for drinking, generally from unsafe

water sources. In many cases, the same applies to cooking fuel.

Owing also to the desertion of rural human settlements and environment by the more virile elements of the population and the apparent official neglect of these areas, services and facilities in them have continued to decline and deteriorate. The quantitative and qualitative inadequacy of shelter in many parts of rural Africa has greatly worsened in recent years as a result of inadequate maintenance, as well as by depletion of existing shelter stock, exacerbated in recent decades by almost continuous ecological and man-made disasters — mainly through drought and desertification which have forced large populations out of their traditional habitat, and by internal and external wars, disturbances and tensions, within, between and among African countries, resulting in extensive destructions of existing housing and human settlements and consequent displacements of large population in several parts of the continent.

The State of Services in rural areas

It is estimated that in the rural areas of some Sahelian countries, only between 5% and 15% of the population have access to drinking water and less than 5% have access to any form of sanitary excreta disposal facilities.* In the East Africa sub-region, it is estimated that about 29% of the rural population has access to safe drinking water and that sanitation coverage of the rural areas is about 18% on the average.* Generally, service coverage for drinking water in North (Mediterranean) Africa and countries South of the equator are estimated to be slightly higher. All things considered, conditions of employment, housing and community facilities in rural settlements are such that they

* International Drinking Water and Sanitation Decade: Regional External Support Consultation 25-28 Nov. 1985, Cote D'Ivoire Paper entitled: "Africa - Regional Resource Mobilisation Profile" (p.6).

* UNCHS (Habitat) (1986): "Infrastructure Provision in Shelter Programmes" (A Background paper for the East African Sub-Regional Meeting on the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH) (P. 3). (Nairobi 10 - 13 March 1986).

have not helped to counter the attractions of urban migration.

Although most governments in the region have programmes directed at improving rural human settlements and the rural economy, a significant part of the predicament of rural human settlements derives from some ill-advised government policies and strategies. In particular the tendency of many governments in the region to concentrate industrial development and expansion of government activities in the few large cities increases their power to attract ever-increasing numbers of rural immigrants, thus depopulating and weakening the rural areas while at the same time making the plight of these large cities, already characterised by huge deficiencies in the whole range of urban public services, more appalling. The most important cause of the shift of population to the urban areas is certainly the increase in employment opportunities due to the concentration, rapid growth and expansion of the economy in the few major cities. It is this concentration of public resources and investments that explains the fact that in ten African countries (Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda, Tanzania, Angola, Libya, Benin, Guinea, Senegal and Togo), more than half and up to 83% of their urban population are concentrated in the largest city. In thirteen other countries, at least one-third of their urban population lives in a single city.

Development Programmes in the Human Settlements Sector.

Human Settlements problems have attracted public policy attention and action in Africa since National Independence in the 1960s. So also has it attracted the attention of and responses from bilateral and multilateral agencies. The effectiveness of the policies and strategies adopted by each of these in addressing the human settlements development problems remain however, an open question.

(a) Governments Policies and Programmes

African Governments have invested and taken varying policy and programme actions on the human settlement sector. These have usually included investments in and policies on rural development, preparation and implementation of urban and rural physical (master) plans, shelter policies and programmes, development of social and economic infrastructure and the provision of various basic public services and community facilities as well as on training programmes and institution-building relevant to human settlements development and management. A recent study* indicated that African Governments have over the years allocated on the average 10 per cent of their National Development Plan budgets to the human settlements sector. There is of course a wide range of variation among the countries, generally ranging between 5 per cent and 25 per cent. The same study also calculated that, when all human settlements elements in the various other sectors of National Development Plans are taken account of, the average proportion of human settlements development investment in the plans stand at a little over 15 per cent of total planned national investments. This would seem a relatively fair share of national investment resources, given the competitive demands made on government development resources by other more generally acknowledged critical sectors like agriculture, education and industry.

While this is a fair level of investments allocation to the human settlements sector, the bulk of it is usually in the major cities and other urban centres, to the relative neglect of the rural areas.

There have, however, been increasing efforts on the part of governments in recent years to implement rural development or rural improvement programmes. Practically all African countries today have rural development programmes. Enhanced priority has

been given to rural development in the last decade with rural infrastructural development — construction of roads, provision of rural water supplies, electricity and increased provision of rural community facilities — educational, health and recreation. Some countries have created whole Ministries of Rural Development to underscore the importance of this aspect of development that affects a majority of the continent's population. If the current level of public policy emphasis placed on rural human settlements development is commensurately translated into actual achievement, the quality of rural habitat would improve considerably.

The Contributions of International Agencies

International Agencies, particularly U.N. system Organisations have made significant contributions to human settlements development in the region. The World Bank, I.L.O., UNICEF, UNESCO and UNHCR have variously provided advice on and sponsored some human settlements programmes and projects in countries of the region. So also have some donor countries and said agencies outside the U.N. system. Most of these have, however, been in the urban sector of human settlements.

The United Nations Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat) which is the U.N. Agency charged with harmonizing and co-ordinating human settlements activities in the United Nations system has over the years given special attention and emphasis to human settlements development in the Africa Region. It has been assisting several African countries in various aspects of human settlements development — training and institution-building, demonstration projects using local building materials and appropriate construction techniques, provision of guidelines for planning of Rural and Urban Settlements and infrastructure, the preparation of National Physical Development Plans (in Ghana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, Cote D'Ivoire, Burundi, Liberia etc.) and in the preparation of development plans for secondary cities (in Burkina Faso, Uganda, Burundi, Congo, Sierra Leone etc); in the

* Okpala, D.C.I. (1986): "Investments in Human Settlements Development in the National Development Plans of African Countries", (A Draft Discussion Paper)"

revision of building codes and regulations, and promoting community participation and cooperative actions in human settlements development.

As of September 1986, for example, UNCHS (Habitat) was implementing 69 on-going projects in 36 sub-saharan African countries.* A good number of these consists of rural settlements programmes and projects.

It is currently undertaking about fourteen (14) rural human settlements projects in several African countries, including Benin, Ghana, Rwanda, Chad, Somalia, Comoros, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Gambia and Algeria. These consist of pilot/demonstration projects for integrated rural development, rural infrastructural planning and development and rural housing and environmental projects. Similar projects are also planned for Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Somalia and Mozambique.

As already noted, the urban population in the Africa Region is heavily concentrated in the larger cities and there are few towns of intermediate size. Recognizing that great opportunities exist for using secondary urban centres in stimulating rural development, UNCHS (Habitat) is also actively supporting African Governments in efforts to identify and develop secondary settlement centres (i.e. centres for marketing, food processing, storage and provision of other services) which are needed if the agricultural sector is to increase productivity.

It is perhaps pertinent at this juncture to call attention to the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH) which UNCHS (Habitat) is also charged with implementing.

The United Nations had declared 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (IYSH) for purposes of focussing world attention on and sensitizing world opinion to the persistent and growing shelter and human settlements needs of the homeless, the poor and the disadvantaged. The objective is to improve the shelter and neighbourhoods of some of the poor and

disadvantaged by 1987, particularly in the developing countries, according to national priorities, and to demonstrate by the year 2000, ways and means of improving the shelter and neighbourhoods of the poor and the disadvantaged. *While highlighting the plight of the real homeless, the year (IYSH) is also envisaged to highlight the plight of hundreds of millions who lack a real home — one which provides protection from the element; has access to safe water and sanitation; provides for secure tenure and personal safety; is within easy reach of centres of employment, education and health, and is at a cost which people and society can afford. UNCHS (Habitat) is the lead agency for the implementation of this programme and has been assiduously organising and implementing it. Under the IYSH programme, Governments are expected to identify and designate human settlements demonstration programmes or projects whose distinguishing feature would be their replicability, with demonstrable feasible options for meeting the basic needs of the homeless.

Over 400 such demonstration projects have so far, been designated world-wide,* and more than 120 of these are in 45 countries in the Africa Region.— These demonstration projects or programmes address one or more of the Year's (IYSH) action areas of shelter, services, construction, employment, legislation and regulation, management and finance, research and education, and training and information.*

* Statement of the Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat) to the Fourth Meeting of the Joint - Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment, E.C.A. Addis Ababa 9 - 13 February 1987.

* U.N. General Assembly Resolution 37/221 of 20 December 1982.

* Commission on Human Settlement (1987): Progress Report on National and International Action in Implementation of the Programme: Report of the Executive Director. (Doc.) HS/C/10/3/Add. 1 of 16 January 1987. (p2)

* Statement of the Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat) to the Fourth Meeting of the Joint Intergovernmental Regional Committee on Human Settlements and Environment, E.C.A. Addis Ababa 9 - 13 February 1987.

Towards Improved and more Productive Human Settlements Development.

Considering the magnitude of national and international attention and resources allocation going to human settlements development in recent years, the quality of these settlements should remarkably improve if appropriate policies, strategies and approaches are adopted at the national level and if the right priority balance could be struck between the rural and urban allocations and locations of these investments. In this respect, the following facts may be useful in guiding such policies, strategies and approaches.

(a) An improved organisation, development and management of human settlements, especially rural human settlements, is crucial to the realization of African economic development. In particular, the development and maintenance of feeder, access and service roads and bridges are basic to the development of agriculture which is key to Africa's economic development. Many African governments are often confronted with the dilemma of choosing between the concentration of investment in support of specific productive activities or in physical infrastructure. However, generally because basic infrastructure is a prerequisite for almost every type of production, these investments are not contradictory but complementary. Since the starting point of African economic development is the regeneration of the agricultural sector, it is imperative that the necessary physical infrastructure and services be provided in the rural areas in order to support such an effort. Furthermore, effective rural development may not come about in Africa without technical change. Change is required in the current tools and procedures used to produce goods and services, especially in agriculture. Massive infusion of new inputs and technologies are required to transform agriculture. In this connection, development of rural roads constitute perhaps the most important infrastructure needed to assure distribution of those inputs.

(b) In a number of African countries, the majority of the population lives in small

housing clusters, so widely dispersed that services and facilities cannot be efficiently and economically provided. This calls for some sort of reorganisation of rural settlement patterns to enable services and facilities to be provided at reasonable costs. Reorganisation (regrouping and consolidation) of such rural settlements may prove a very difficult exercise, but it is one which is necessary for efficient long-term development. This is all the more necessary in areas where farming land is in critically short supply. In addition to facilitating more efficient provision of public services, village regrouping and consolidation may release more land for farming. The nature of a people's spatio-temporal organisation can aid or retard and hinder its aggregate rate of adoption of innovations. Likewise, communities of widely-dispersed homesteads, and of very low densities are slow adopters of innovation. In either case, the rate of innovation adoption is reduced at least by logistical problems: it is inefficient and uneconomic to provide roads and other facilities of changes (schools, hospitals etc.) to a community that is constantly moving or that is widely dispersed. A threshold degree of permanence and concentration of homesteads is essential for efficient provision of services and for development.

(c) Rural development has sometimes been viewed in isolation from urban development. It should however be emphasized that while urban programmes address the needs of the urban population, urban development must at the same time be considered in terms of the supportive functions which towns can perform in promoting rural development. The interrelationship of urban and rural settlement should therefore be appreciated and promoted. A rationalised spatial plan would be of great use in this connection. A national physical plan could facilitate the more efficient and lower cost provision of basic support services and easier access from farm to market that could aid agricultural development and improve rural incomes. The objective of such a national spatial plan and the policy underlying it should be to provide a framework for balanced development between urban and rural areas.

(d) While there is need to give greater public policy attention to rural human settlement development, the urban component should not be completely ignored. In this regard, policy reforms are required in the areas of urban building land accessibility and tenure, revision of building codes, regulations and standards to make them more realistic and relevant to the existing socio-economic and environmental situation in the region.

A policy of decentralization of the location of major industrial development investments and the location of government administrative activities would greatly attenuate

the current human settlements situation in the cities.

(e) Finally, as a matter of policy, African government should strive to properly integrate human settlement sector programmes into the overall national socio-economic plan. Programmes and projects of all sectors of the national plan, particularly their locations, have multifaceted human settlements implications, and integration of sectoral plans would allow their respective human settlements impacts and implications to be fully evaluated, anticipated and provided for, whether in the urban or in the rural areas.

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(d) Improved organization, development and management of human settlements, especially rural human settlements, is crucial to the realization of African economic development. In particular, the development and maintenance of feeder roads and service roads and bridges are basic to the development of a network which is key to Africa's economic development. Many African governments are often confronted with the dilemma of choosing between the concentration of investment in support of specific productive activities in physical infrastructure, however essential because basic infrastructure is a prerequisite for almost every type of production, these investments would contribute but complementarily. Since the starting point of African economic development is the regeneration of the agricultural sector, it is imperative that the necessary physical infrastructure and services be provided in the rural areas in order to support such an effort. Furthermore, effective rural development may not come about in Africa without technical change. Change is required in the treatment tools and procedures used to produce goods and services, especially in agriculture. Massive infusion of new inputs and technologies are required to transform agriculture in this connection, development of rural roads constitute perhaps the most important infrastructure needed to assure distribution of these inputs.

(e) In a number of African countries, the majority of the population lives in small

SELF-HELP PARTICIPATORY APPROACH TO RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHPARD)

by

S. Jugessur*

Introduction

The vast majority of the world population live in rural areas, and in the case of some regions like Africa, over seventy per cent lead their lives in villages having the minimal of basic needs. In spite of some government concern expressed occasionally, little has been done to improve the lot of these people. The urban bias in development is a reality in the Third World where any progress in rural development occurs only from the trickle down effect of development in nearby urban areas.

Economic constraints are major obstacles to any programme of rural development. The governments have little to spare after having spent most resources in 'modernization' of urban areas, often show-pieces to foreign dignitaries. The result is that basic amenities in rural areas, like roads, schools, health centres, potable water systems, markets, community development centres, are given lip services. People continue to live below the poverty line, and generation after generation, there is hardly any improvement. For too long there has been a tendency to depend on external aid. Internal generation of resources for development is completely ignored. It must be recognized that the major actors in any programme of development are the people themselves. If they can be motivated to react positively, then resources become secondary, and co-operative ventures with everybody contributing his mite, become possible. This can then arrest the deterioration of the quality of life of the people caused by the growth in population with no growth in the quantity of basic needs.

The Self-Help Approach

The basic concept in the self-help participatory approach to rural development (SHPARD) is that every earning member of a village community is the principal motor of his own development, and, if as an individual, he is weak, as a community, he is strong. What he cannot achieve alone, can be done through the community, for, as part of a community, he can benefit from the joint input of all. The community, as a unit, then becomes more powerful economically and otherwise. Apart from the muscle and brain power that the community can muster for village development projects and programmes, there is still need for financial resources. This also can be obtained if all of the earning members contribute but a small fraction of their income to a pool. It may be necessary, in some cases, to have a group of villages constitute a unit.

If the village community has one thousand earning members, and each member contributes say one rupee every month, each month the village can pool one thousand rupees. In a year, the twelve thousand rupees accumulated can be utilized for minor development projects for the village community. This financial input is only a fraction of the overall input if we consider the labour, time and other inputs of the villagers. It may be argued that twelve thousand rupees is nothing for any development activity. This is not so if we can imagine how many improvement programmes can be undertaken at village level with this seed money. If the programme is planned on a longer term, in three to five years, the village would have collected enough to handle major development activities like improvement of roads where the only finance needed would be for buying tar, cement or hiring road-rollers, while labour would be free as the villagers would work on a voluntary basis. Another example of a project that can help them

enormously is the building of a large-scale agricultural solar drier for post-harvest processing of agricultural products. A few thousand rupees can suffice for the construction of such a solar drier, and this money would be readily available under such a self-help approach. Many other projects can be similarly tackled.

Organizational Structure

The self-help approach can assume any convenient name like 'Village Benevolent Association' or 'Village Mutual Aid Organization'. What it needs at the start is a group of two to three well-motivated and dedicated village leaders who can understand the development needs and options of their locality. This group would have to make a survey of local potential resources and needs. Then they would mount a project and convince each and every earning member of the community of the need to join hands for a common cause. Naturally, there would be opposition from some quarters of the community, based on misunderstanding and mistrust. Persistent efforts should be made to convince these refractory groups. It is better to take time and get the blessings and approval of all rather than launch a project where opposition can dampen the will and fervour of the community. The bona fide credibility of the leaders would be instrumental in inspiring the confidence of the participants, and getting their continued support to the self-help projects. Whenever money is involved, one has to be ultra-cautious in managing the funds in such a way that there should be no shade of doubt as to the way in which the funds are utilized. So there is need for a proper organizational structure with committee involving men and women of sound repute. In some cases, it is necessary to register the organization so that government and other bodies can recognize it officially and lend whatever support they can.

Collection of Dues

The most difficult task in this organization is the collection of dues on a regular basis.

People must be grouped into wards, zones, areas under the leadership of local people who would be entrusted with the task of keeping regular day-to-day contact with the neighbours, and of collecting the funds for the organization. Very often the initial fervour and enthusiasm of self-help voluntary movements are dampened within months because of lack of constant communication and follow up. The members of the community must be made to feel as part and parcel of the whole organization, and share-holders of a joint enterprise, with equal rights in matters of decision. It is always possible that some smart individuals would like to capitalize on such organizations by contributing more than the others, and thereby claiming more privileges. Since this is a mass-participation movement, nobody should be allowed to feel more important than the other on the basis of his economic strength, and to exploit the situation for selfish ends. Where possible a proper account of the proceedings of meetings have to be kept for reference, but the essential thing is the trust and continued support of the individuals. Weekly meetings of all the leaders of the wards, zones, etc., are essential to plan and execute strategies for village development.

Support of Elders

One crucial element in the strategies is the support of the elders of the community, for in most traditional societies, these elders still command great respect, and have the final word in the family or community. However, they should not be relied upon for the execution of the projects. Here the energetic youth should be the main actors. That is why it may be necessary to have an executive committee of young dynamic people supported by an advisory committee of elders, both committees with well thought out terms of reference. It is normal to have clash of ideas caused by generation gap problems, but if the spheres of activity are well defined at the start, such clash can be minimized. That is why the start is always very difficult, and the initial preparatory phase can last for months.

Co-operative movements in many parts of the world have had limited success because of the mismanagement of joint enterprises. Since external pressure is not possible, it is highly essential to have internal control mechanisms that can prevent such mismanagement. And in the context of village communities, the open-book approach where no information is unduly withheld, and mutual faith developed is the surest way. Where people are illiterate, verbal communication based on factual representations is essential. People must be free to express themselves openly in matters of common interest, and all sections of the community must be represented adequately in such organizations. Where there is an obvious show of genuine concern for local development, the participation of the people will not be difficult. They know where their interests lie.

Amount of Financial Contribution

This is an issue that can vary from society to society, depending on the standard of living of the people. It should be an amount that the contributor can give without feeling any pinch in his purse, and should be the same for everyone. As an example, for a family of five people earning a low cash income of five hundred rupees per month the minimum recognized in that locality, a contribution of one rupee per month will not be difficult. He can be made to realize that one rupee per month for five people, works out to a petty fraction of the rupee as his daily contribution per member of his family. At the same time, he is becoming a shareholder of a monthly fund of one thousand rupees if the community has one thousand contributors.

Possible Uses of the Fund

In the preceding paragraphs two examples of possible use of such a fund have been mentioned, namely, road construction, and construction of a solar drier for agricultural products. Naturally, the use would depend on the local priorities and the amount accumulated. However, the range of activities can be wide, and the success of a few of them

can lead to further incentives to increase the contribution to take care of major activities. Scholarships to very poor students of the locality, and to the most meritorious ones, death grants to the family of the bereaved, provision of tents, chairs, cooking utensils for major events or celebrations, construction of village halls or community centres, acquisition of communal agricultural implements like tractors, harvestors, food-processing equipments like threshers, mills, driers, construction of bridges, provision of medical help, are only a few of the possible uses of the funds from the self-help participatory approach to rural development (SHPARD).

Case Study of a Village in Mauritius

In 1970, a group of dedicated young people in a village called Bon Accueil, Mauritius, decided to launch such a programme. After almost a year of preparatory work during which weekly sessions of stock-taking and brain-storming were held in each and every local society or organization, the programme was launched. Being multi-religious, the village had over twelve local societies or religious and cultural organizations, and official meetings were held at the seat of all these organizations with the objective of highlighting the need for a co-operative self-help programme in which they would all be active participants. The heterogeneity of the population was a major drawback to the easy acceptance, as there was much suspicion as to the genuineness and viability of the proposed programme. These obstacles were removed after a long period of exchange of communication. However, some groups still did not join the organization as they claimed to have some mutual aid association of nationwide appeal, of which they were members. The village organization was launched under the name of Bon Accueil Benevolent Association (BABA)¹, and its membership has steadily grown over the years. It was duly registered with the Registrar of Associations after a formative period of two years.

Amongst its first activities, the association gave scholarships to the most deserving poor students of the locality studying in secondary

schools. These students grew up to be professionals who now sponsor this association with added vigour and give extra time to the management.

The association has bought tarpaulins and accessories for making mass-meeting tents which are utilized on occasions of marriage and death ceremonies. They also have hundreds of steel chairs which they hire to the members at reduced rate, along with cooking utensils, electric wiring for lighting, bulbs, and a host of other articles. They have provided primary health care to the local people on a voluntary basis. They have organized training classes for boys and girls, given private tuition to the weak school goers, and organized career development seminars for young workers.

The village needed a proper cremation ground, and in collaboration with the government, they have constructed such a ground for the benefit of the people. They have acquired a plot of land for the erection of a hall, and plan to undertake major development projects on their own. In order to offer gainful employment to their qualified people, they are planning to start small scale industries in the near future.

Their efforts have been recognized by local government officials and politicians. They have proved that it is not always necessary to depend on scarce government funds for improving the quality of life of their people. Government priorities are often different, and it is not possible for getting enough resources to cater for the needs of rural masses.

Now that BABA is a fully recognized body, they are in a position to bid for external contribution from government or from other non-governmental organizations. Such contribution will only complement their own resources for the improvement of their locality.

Conclusion

The above case study of a SHPARD programme in Mauritius is only illustrative of the fact that where there is a will, there is a way. The example can be replicated in different parts of the world if only there are dedicated people to lead the way. Such examples need to be highlighted at international seminars and workshops where community leaders are trained to tackle rural development project and programmes. Both governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in development work can propagate these ideas and motivate people to take care of themselves primarily through their own efforts, rather than relying helplessly on external aid. The educated elite who spend their energy on criticizing the governments for not doing this and that, could show their mettle by leading such self-help participatory programmes for rural development in their own home countries. And if they show their good will, even external help will not be a problem. There is another example of a similar project in the district of Kerala in South India, called 'Mitrani ketan, an experiment in living'², where the organization now has expanded to an exemplary world of its own. Donations can flood from outside if only they ask, but they prefer to strengthen their own capacities to muster internal resources. For by improving the quality of life of their people, they are not only looking after their economic welfare but are also building up citizens with a high degree of moral and spiritual fabric. After all, the quality of life of a people is not dictated simply by increase in GNP per capita. It will be ages before the GNP per capita of the rural masses in Africa, Asia and Latin America will rise to be a fair fraction of those in the north, but there is hope that soon their quality of life can be tremendously improved if a self-help participatory approach to rural development is followed.

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