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PROGRESS REPORT ON CONTRIBUTION OF AIDED SELF-HELP TO HOUSING
PROGRAMMES IN AFRICA

Note by the secretariat

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INTRODUCTION:

1. The problem of housing in Africa is not only of enormous dimension but also of great complexity. An estimate of the housing needs of the continent for the period 1960-75 has been attempted. The study reveals that it should be necessary to build every year about 10 dwelling units per 1,000 inhabitants.^{1/}
2. There are few, if any countries on the continent however with sufficient financial resources to overtake the construction required to remedy the existing deficit let alone that to offset obsolescence and to house the population increase.
3. The problem is further complicated by the considerable shifting of population that takes place from time to time.
4. Rural dwellers, drift into towns swell the already over populated areas and worsen accommodation conditions to crises proportions. Adding further weight to this already complicated situation is the fact that the bulk of the people needing accommodation can contribute little in a financial sense towards assisting themselves. These workers live at subsistence level and use the barter system to secure most of their needs. Hence, there is a paucity of cash to undertake any requirement, however pressing.
5. Despite the enormity and complexity of the situation however, over the past four years many countries have been making commendable and significant inroads on the problem and the system of self-help^{2/} has increasingly been used as a major contributing factor in an attempt to find a solution to this many-faceted problem.

^{1/} Source: World housing conditions and estimated housing requirements, para.35

^{2/} In Annex 1 a brief description is given of self-help as applied to housing i.e. aided self-help.

SELF-HELP AND MUTUAL ASSISTANCE:

6. This self-help approach has more recently been further strengthened with the assistance provided by the Economic Commission for Africa through its housing, building and planning section in helping countries to implement the recommendations of the General Assembly that member states should "as part of their national plans, institute or accelerate programmes to promote the construction of low-cost housing and stimulate active participation by the people in the programmes through self-help, mutual aid, cooperation and similar measures" (General Assembly, Resolution 1393, (XIV)).

7. The United Nations has recently published and circulated a "Manual on Self-Help Housing" which sets out in simple but effective language the practical steps to be taken in the carrying out of self-help housing programmes.^{1/}

8. The introduction of a number of low-cost housing pilot projects has helped to further release the creative potential of the people through the introduction of self-help activities in one form or another.

9. Throughout Africa and particularly in rural villages the community spirit is strong and self-help and mutual assistance as a means of tackling local problems well understood especially where they are directed to construction of an indigenous nature.

10. In aided self-help programmes these traditional skills are properly harnessed and channelled in a more disciplined way and coupled with governments assistance and direction to meet the requirements of modern construction. The result is more satisfactory and permanent dwellings built by the people in their leisure time and at a cost they can afford, the acquiring of new and worthwhile skills which may be further used towards providing solutions to the problem of housing, a considerable saving in construction costs thereby creating the possibility of a greater spread of the limited funds appropriated by government for the purpose.

11. Coupled with the foregoing the satisfactory completion of any self-help scheme usually creates a new community of persons full of enthusiasm and ready, willing and able to grapple with any of the problems that may

^{1/} Manual on Self-help Housing: United Nations, New York 1964; published in English and French.

confront them and eager to overcome through cooperative action whatever new obstacles may arise on their march towards the better things of life.

AIDED SELF-HELP:

12. To fully exploit this particular approach, however, qualified personnel is required and a limiting factor in applying these methods has been the shortage of trained personnel on a sufficiently extensive scale.

13. The United Nations has assisted several countries with the provision of local experts, equipment and funds for pilot projects,^{1/} while ECA has helped with training and the provision of the technical information and follow up necessary for this particular branch of housing.

14. The several countries whose self-help programmes are treated in brief detail hereunder have however introduced the self-help construction methods as an integral part of their housing policy and have already either built a number of units on this basis or are putting up pilot projects in order to start their self-help operations on more formal lines. In all these areas UN assistance is provided in one form or another while ECA collaborates and attempts to ensure that the criteria for successful operation are met.

COUNTRY REPORTS:

15. The reports which follow while limited to projects in aided self-help housing or to programmes in which some measure of self-help has been introduced also make reference to some of the factors, contributing to the problems that give rise to the projects and indicates the possibilities inherent in the situation for the introduction of orthodox aided self-help measures.

ALGERIA

16. The proliferation of slum dwellings on the outskirts and within the leading cities of Algeria has presented a major problem to the Algerian authorities. This process of concentration has been accelerated by the seven years of war preceding independence. The Algerian authorities immediately after independence set in motion two experiments in 1962 aimed at correcting these very unsatisfactory conditions.

^{1/} A separate report entitled "Progress report on pilot projects in the field of housing, building and planning" is being circulated as document HOU/WP/13.

17. The plan provides for the construction of 800 new dwellings to rehouse the slum families in the district and to restore some 600 units and introduce roads, water supply, play grounds and communal facilities in the area.

18. The construction operation was carried out on a semi self-help basis although the units were intended for tenants rather than owner occupiers. Nevertheless the unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled operations were so introduced that maximum savings in cost resulted and buildings were completed on "a level of expenses relatively low compared with the prices imposed by the private sector in Algeria".

19. The success of the experiment indicates that in Algeria the people have the capacity as well as the desire to assist themselves in the construction of the houses on self-help basis. Moving from these unorthodox self-help experiments it is possible for the authorities to secure even greater results by introducing in a maximum way the tried and proven principles of organized self-help in their low-cost housing programmes.

CAMEROON

20. Although the housing problems appear to be not quite acute in this country as in other parts of Africa, it nevertheless presents quite a formidable proposition. It is estimated that only 10 per cent of urban dwellers are satisfactorily housed. Two development plans, one in 1947 to 1953 and the other 1954 to 1959 concentrated on the urban and rural areas respectively. With the increased services brought about by the implementation of these plans and the investment put in urban housing construction received considerable assistance and particularly so in the cities of Douala and Yaoundé. In the rural areas families continued to construct the houses mainly on self-help basis although little was done to boost the volume of houses to be built as was the case in the towns.

21. More recently the authorities have taken action to make funds available for financing rural construction and to introduce stabilized earth blocks and train local personnel in the use of these materials as an aid to construction.

22. A United Nations expert has been assisting in the training of personnel and in the construction of demonstration housing using the CINVA RAM stabilized earth blocks.

23. With the programmes of self-help housing now being undertaken and the establishment of building cooperatives on a long-term basis by the housing service in the Ministry of Public Works the problem of housing the low-income groups in this country should in the foreseeable future be reduced to manageable proportions.

CONGO (Brazzaville)

24. The first five year plan for economic and social development of the Congo (Brazzaville) includes a housing policy, the implementation of which could possibly draw upon aided self-help techniques.

25. The main idea is that public money should not be used to build dwellings for the happy few, but to create the social and technical equipment for all. On this basis, which means a decisive improvement of the environmental conditions, it would be possible to help the inhabitants in improving the design and the construction of the traditional houses which for the next few years will remain the most important type of construction. Obviously this could be implemented through an appropriate self-help programme.

ETHIOPIA

26. In Ethiopia while statistics in housing are insufficient to make any correct assessment of the problem, there is abundant visible evidence as to the unsatisfactory nature of the situation in both the urban and rural areas. The government has taken steps aimed at remedial action and the current five-year plan (1963-1967) makes provision to:

- (a) encourage inexpensive housing project by means of a credit policy whereby inexpensive credits will be made available to Municipalities and cooperatives undertaking low cost housing schemes;
- (b) to cause the various government agencies to work out standard projects for the mass construction of moderate and low-cost healthy dwellings, while using traditional cheap locally available building materials;

27. Many projects of self-help have been undertaken in the provinces and several successful experiments in the construction of schools, clinics, community centres and communal facilities carried out. In the forefront of these activities has been the Ministry of Community Development and the Ethio-Swedish Institute of Building Technology.

28. The Institute has recently completed a national training course in aided self-help methods for twelve candidates drawn from the municipal extension services with practical instruction given in the construction of three types of low-cost units built of chica, claybricks and hollow concrete blocks.

29. A sub-regional training course in aided self-help housing, run in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa, will be undertaken in November. This course, which is planned to extend for three months, will provide trainees from Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Tanganyika and United Arab Republic with knowledge of self-help methods and techniques. The

trainees will assist in constructing self-help units along with the families participating in the project.

30. A pilot project in low-cost housing and financed by the United Nations, Sweden and the Ethiopian Government will be constructed in the latter part of the year. The self-help portion to run concurrently with the training course. This project is intended "to demonstrate how to create an economically and socially sound environment for low income families". Sixty of these units will be built on an aided self-help basis and the trainees from the sub-regional course will be engaged with the participants in constructing the houses.

31. The Economic Commission for Africa is helping in the training course with the loan of a regional officer as director and provides consultative service in relation to the pilot project.

32. In Ethiopia, self-help techniques are fairly well understood and particularly where it forms a part of community development programme. In the field of housing however, greater care must now be taken to ensure that projects built on this basis are not only low in cost but high in standards. This is the direction in which the Institute and other protagonists of the system must look if self-help is to make its maximum contribution to the country's programme.

GHANA

33. Self-help methods have been used fairly extensively in Ghana in order to meet the housing needs of the people. There are hundreds of rural housing societies and these with the aid of the rural scheme have been instrumental in the erection of several thousands of homes throughout the Republic.

34. The use of self-help methods are well understood and with the strong community development programme as its base the idea of self-help in housing construction for lower income and rural groups is well rooted.

35. An imposing record of self-help achievements has been established with the building of schools, houses, clinics, roads and bridges and community centres.

36. The Volta Dam resettlement project has also incorporated the self-help idea in re-housing of 60,000 families displaced by the construction of the Dam. A core house is provided each family and this nucleus is completed and expanded on a self-help basis by the families to meet their requirements.

GUINEA

37. In Conakry a housing pilot project was introduced with the use of traditional and non-traditional materials and having the following objectives:

- a) to demonstrate in urban and rural areas, how traditional building materials could be improved;
- b) how the prefabrication of core or skeleton houses can be used to mobilize the potential of self-help building in urban areas and
- c) how building research can develop and improve productivity in the use of local materials and techniques.

38. A United Nations housing expert is at present at work in the area in the implementing of this project and it is envisaged that the completion of the project could lead to the establishment of a regional housing training centre for French speaking African countries in housing, building and town planning.

KENYA

39. Housing in Kenya has always been acute and particularly in the capital city of Nairobi where there has been a considerable influx of rural dwellers. To meet the situation Government has built several low-cost housing units and has attempted to introduce a form of self-help in

housing in which service plots are provided to families who are allowed to build according to certain standards laid down by the authorities. This approach has not been successful as it lacks the required supervision and as a result lends itself to considerable abuse.

40. Recently, a private pilot scheme has been started under the aegis of the Ministry of Health and Housing in which some 30 units are being constructed in the orthodox self-help manner. If this scheme is a success, there are plans to extend it to 200 units and lands are available to introduce several thousand units on a similar basis.

41. The major limiting factor here is the absence of qualified personnel with the necessary expertise to assist the people in putting the project across although there are officers and participants who are by no means lacking enthusiasm. The authorities also revised its request for a self-help housing expert and as a result forfeited the grant covering the cost of importing special materials and equipment. This revision will have a limiting effect on the progress of the self-help programme. Arrangements have been made however for four officers of the Department to receive training in self-help method and techniques at the sub-regional training course to be held in Addis Ababa later in the year.

LIBERIA

42. The government of Liberia has made a significant start in its housing programme. A new housing law was promulgated in 1960 to facilitate the construction of improved housing in both the urban and rural areas.

43. Many aided self-help projects have been started throughout the country. The most outstanding of these is the Fisebu Town project in which a village of 560 families, having been destroyed by fire, was completely replanned on modern lines and the houses and communal facilities constructed by the people on a self-help basis. The materials used included soil cement blocks, preserved thatch, stuck and earth, sand cement tile, wood and concrete.

44. In the rural areas some 19 demonstration projects have been built. These include schools and houses for the teachers. In the construction of these buildings, self-help is combined with contract labour. Families procure the soil, sand and rocks and make the blocks and the contractor builds the units.

MALAWI

45. With the movement of Malawi into independence, housing pressure in the urban areas has increased to alarming proportions. The Government, through the recently established Malawi Housing Corporation has initiated a programme of low-cost housing with aided self-help as one of its major features.

46. The arrival of United Nations expert in the field has seen the commencement of preliminary arrangements for the self-help pilot project to house 20 families in the village of Ndirandi. Plans are also completed for the training of four senior officials in aided self-help methods and techniques. Research has been undertaken in the use of local materials to be used in the construction of houses and various designs suitable for the use of aided self-help techniques developed.

MOROCCO

47. Because of the remarkable growth of shanty towns and uninhabitable districts in and around the urban areas of Morocco, the present five-year plan (1960-1964) was aimed largely at eradicating this situation. Estimates in 1960 indicated that some 90,000 persons required rehousing.

48. Government has undertaken a considerable number of housing programmes and has also encouraged private initiative in the construction of dwellings to help overtake the demand. This construction usually takes one or three forms:

- a) the economic plot,
- b) the evolving plot, and
- c) the system "Castor".

49. All three systems provide for some measure of self-help although in the Castor system the degree of self-help is likely to be greater than in the others.

50. Along with the foregoing there is the "improved sanitary network". On the framework of estates equipped with the necessary technical and social facilities, the Ministry of Public Works builds one room and a sanitary floor; this core house is let for 2-3 dollars a month. This scheme provides a basis for aided self-help programme for really low-income people (the next form of State assistance is actually designed for people being a little bit better off).

51. In the rural areas self-help activity is an integral part of the Community Development Programme and although in the urban areas the principles of self-help in housing construction are well understood there has been no official policy to properly channel these efforts in an orthodox manner. However, there are enough projects being undertaken with a sufficiently strong self-help bias, to provide the foundations on which future successful aided self-help projects may be built.

NIGER

52. In Niger a number of experiences in the field of conventional building showed the usual deadlock in the region: the so called low-cost houses are too expensive for the low income people and their standing is not high enough to satisfy those able to afford to pay the rent involved. In the framework of the development plan, it is now intended, on a general line similar to that of the Congo (Brazza), to use public resources to create the equipments, both technical (road, water supply, sanitation etc.) and social (schools, clinics, etc.); a further step

could be to build, within this frame, serviced plots with a sanitary block and possibly a concrete floor. The building of the dwelling will be the responsibility of the occupiers. Here again, there is an obvious possibility of helping to implement this policy with a sound aided self-help programme.

NIGERIA

53. Housing ^{/shortage} in Nigeria is particularly acute in the urban centres. This comes as a result of the constant movement of migrants from the rural areas to the city. Very commendable attempts have been made by the Government to tackle the situation with the setting up of low-cost housing scheme through the Lagos Executive Development Board and the provision of loans for housing to the Nigerian Building Society and the African staff Housing Fund.

54. A fair measure of self-help is undertaken but on an unorganized basis. Lands are made available by Government on a freehold and leasehold basis to members of the Public and Civil servants on which they can construct their houses. This has the effect of encouraging house ownership. The practice however is not sufficiently widespread to make significant impact on the total housing situation.

55. A pilot project for a new residential neighbourhood has been proposed for 1965. A number of units will be constructed on a self-help basis for demonstration purposes. The project will be financed by the United Kingdom, Denmark and the Nigerian Government. The United Nations will also provide an expert and funds for materials and equipment.

SENEGAL

56. Senegal has had a successful programme of both rural and urban construction on the aided self-help basis. The pressure of rural workers on the towns however, has caused Government to change its policy and establish a building industry that could provide multi-storied flats for housing low-income families as well as providing much needed employment. Despite this change a fair number of units in the urban areas are still being built on a self-help basis.

57. In the rural area a training institution has been set up to provide instruction in the methods and techniques of self-help housing and this has helped to expand the rural self-help housing programmes.

58. Today Senegal is in the forefront of African countries using aided self-help as an important contribution in the solution of its rural and urban housing problem.

59. The training of qualified personnel has not kept pace however with the demand for housing construction and consequently this omission has inhibited the progress of aided self-help construction particularly in the urban areas.

60. In the rural areas a pilot project has been established and is being used for training field workers. At present there are many satisfactory examples of aided self-help construction in housing to be seen both in the urban and rural areas of this Republic.

SOMALIA

61. In 1960 the Government of Somalia decided to do a preliminary survey of housing conditions to meet the rapidly expanding requirements for housing accommodation both in Mogadiscio and in the rural areas. Because of this unusual demand for the very limited accommodation construction costs and rental had increased out of all proportion to the ability of the masses of the population to overtake.

62. As a result of the survey a pilot project was undertaken in 1962 with the following objects:

- a) to plan, organize and administer the Government Housing Programme;
- b) to establish a training programme to provide necessary administrative and technical personnel for the housing office;
- c) develop improved methods of producing local building materials such as sand, crushed rock, lime, coral stone and gypsum to replace imported materials;
- d) establish a training programme for the local construction workers so as to initiate more effective site and construction work;
- e) develop a self-help housing programme with additional United Nations assistance if necessary, so as to reduce the cost of construction to the barest minimum and
- f) develop a long range housing programme which would include an effective financing and repayment plan.

63. Fifty seven houses have been constructed in the project and as a result of the cost saving methods introduced such as the simplification of design, elimination of wasted space, reduction of room sizes and increase in workmen's efficiency house costs have been progressively reduced.

64. The project was jointly financed by the United Nations and the Somalia Government. An additional contribution of \$50,000 was made possible through the United Nations by the American Society of Friends. Several United Nations experts assisted in the carrying out of the Survey and in the constructing of the pilot project.

SUDAN

65. The Republic of Sudan has made many attempts to ease the acute housing situation in Khartoum, Omdurman and Khartoum North. A department for national housing has been established as a branch of the Ministry of Local Government and funds set aside for the construction of small houses.

66. In the rural areas houses are built on a self-help basis. These houses are constructed mainly of local materials and cost little. They are badly planned however, and lack adequate facilities for the introduction of fresh air and sunlight. A school for the training of skilled workers to meet the shortage in the country has recently been opened at Khartoum.

67. Plans are in the process of completion for the construction of a pilot project of some 20 to 30 houses for demonstration and training purposes.

UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC

68. The 1960 census indicates that there is a total of approximately 5,820,000 dwellings in the United Arab Republic. Of these, 3,600,000 are in rural areas. The figures show that there is an urban need of 95,040 dwellers annually to take care of replacements, increases in population and relief of overcrowding. In the rural areas the policy "envisages the entire reconstruction of the traditional mode of dwellings in which the majority of the rural population dwell".

69. The government in its programme of rural reconstruction has given consideration to the building of houses on a cooperative and self-help basis. Loans are made to farmers through the village cooperative societies to assist them in the construction and repair of their homes.

70. The Ministry of Health and Public Utilities is at present engaged in carrying out the initial stage of the 30-year plan of rural reconstruction for the 4,000 villages of the United Arab Republic. The plan emphasizes the use of self-help methods and techniques in helping the villagers to secure more satisfactory housing accommodation and communal facilities.

71. A pilot project for the construction of 60 units in the village of Nazlet^{El} Ashter will spearhead the plan. The United Nations has loaned an expert to assist the Ministry in implementing the plan and ECA provides consultative help through its regional advisor.

72. While self-help methods are well known in the rural areas of the UAR these are being entirely restricted to traditional construction methods and the present programme is intended to introduce the new disciplines, techniques and skill required for the construction of more satisfactory and modern housing requirements.

73. The Arab States Fundamental Education Centre has given training in Community Development techniques and has helped through its trainees to establish the foundations on which more up-to-date self help efforts are being organized throughout the country.

74. The success of the pilot project in Nazlet El Ashter should see a rapid increase in the self-help housing projects to more and more villages in the Republic.

TANGANYIKA

75. Within the past years the Government of Tanganyika has been given priority to its urban and rural programmes as a means to satisfying the great demands for the housing of the masses in Dar-es-Salaam.

76. In the rural areas, through community Development programme, many self-help projects have been successfully carried out in the building of schools, dispensaries, roads, etc.

77. Early attempts using volunteers to construct phases 1 and 2 of a pilot scheme for improving and constructing new houses of permanent materials in Dar-es-Salaam proved effective in building the units but left a number of unhappy volunteers as there were many more volunteers than houses.

78. The Government has decided to extend its programme in and outside the city and 5,000 units will be constructed in and around Dar-es-Salaam under a five-year programme to be undertaken by the National Housing Corporation.

79. The arrival of a local low-cost housing expert from the United Nations has resulted in plans being implemented for the early construction of the pilot projects of 20 units on orthodox aided self-help lines. It is hoped that the success of this project will indicate a means whereby the volunteers in phases 1 and 2 of the scheme may secure suitable accommodation through participation. Training is being given several members of the staff of the National Housing Corporation in self-help techniques so that they can assist in helping to expand the scheme.

80. Plans are in hand also for the construction of 200 units in the township of Dodoma using self-help methods and techniques.

81. The people of Tanganyika are very keen on the use of self-help and mutual assistance in the construction of houses. What is required is a larger number of qualified personnel capable of directing their efforts in a satisfactory manner. Four staff members of the National Housing Corporation will attend the sub-regional training course in Addis in November.

TOGO

82. Housing conditions in both the urban and rural areas of Togo have for many years presented the authorities with a vast and unmanageable problem. The country lacks many of the important elements for a sound housing programme, e.g.: a housing administration, development of local raw materials which are plentiful, improvements of existing processed materials and components, building documentation such as standard specifications and by-laws, town and regional physical plans and trained personnel.

83. Working in conjunction with the United Nations the Government is attempting to remedy these deficiencies. As a first step a pilot housing project designed to demonstrate the feasibility of erecting, in urban and rural areas, low-cost dwellings from locally available materials is being undertaken.

84. A low-cost housing expert provided by the United Nations is in Togo and is demonstrating with the construction of a set of houses in Lomé how self-help and mutual aid methods can considerably reduce the cost of urban dwellings. Demonstration houses will also be erected in rural areas to show to the villages how improved dwellings may be built on a self-help basis with the use of local materials.

UGANDA

85. The Government in Uganda has attempted to satisfy its requirement for urban housing with the setting up of a number of housing estates. With a view to spreading as widely as possible the funds allocated for housing construction experimental schemes of limited self-help application have been attempted in the construction of Grade II type houses. The plan provides for a clearance and levelling of the land by the householder. The erection of walls, fitting of joinery and putting in of floors after the department has provided and erected the frame and roof of the building. Future plans provide for the introduction of orthodox self-help techniques in the construction of houses for the low-income groups and to that end four officials are being sent for training in the sub-regional course to be held in Addis Ababa later in the year.

86. Planning studies are now being undertaken by a five man team from the UN and it is anticipated that following on the planning proposals a pilot project might be developed.

CONCLUSIONS:

87. The foregoing reports indicate that in a number of countries in

Africa aided self-help methods and techniques are being increasingly applied with varying degrees of success to the finding of solutions to the problem of providing satisfactory low cost houses for the masses of the population.

88. While the period under reference has been short and the number of projects relatively scant in terms of the total problem to admit of proper comparisons nevertheless, sufficient evidence is provided to indicate that given the conditions confronting most of the Governments concerned, this particular approach can go a long way towards assisting in overtaking the requirements of the people.

89. What appears necessary at this stage of development is a clear and precise understanding of what is implied by the term self-help housing when used in its orthodox sense and a delimitation between that and the self-help undertaken in the time honoured and traditional way, geared to conditions with which the people have long grown accustomed and which needs no more assistance than the willingness of the doer and his helpers in order to be applied to most indigenous situations.

90. With the introduction of improved living conditions necessitating a dwelling intended to be more permanent and functional yet at the same time satisfying the requirements of modern construction standards, new disciplines must be developed, new skills acquired and new techniques conducive to the meeting of these demands put into operation.

91. While the capacity for cooperative effort and the desire for creativity characterize in a large measure the approaches of the masses of the population to the problem, these are but the foundations on which a proper structure of aided self-help activity may be built. What is required to make the programme really effective is a large pool of qualified personnel capable of directing and channelling the activities of the people in a meaningful and productive way.

92. Further, despite the accomplishment of self-help methods to date and its long record of finding solutions to problems in housing that are peculiarly related to persons of limited means there is still a good deal of confusion and speculation in the minds of even its protagonists as to the real possibilities of the system.

93. In many quarters the view seems to persist that self-help should have no permanent place in future planning since "it must be foreseen that self-help housing settlements may develop into slum areas, which have to be cleared out in future and replaced by modern dwellings".^{1/}

94. An objective evaluation of this statement will show that it could be applied not so much to self-help construction but to any housing programme in which certain minimum standards have not been maintained in construction or in which the occupants have been moved out from slum areas into new housing settlements without having been previously oriented in the requirements for living under the new and improved conditions. The rapid deterioration which follows would be as true of a self-help scheme or the best constructed project built by a skilled artisans under contract.

95. The urban housing programmes in developing areas throughout the world are replete with examples of permanent houses built by aided self-help methods which have not only withstood the tests of time in relation to their construction but the occupying families have with little difficulty developed into well integrated and stable communities over the years. What is true of the people of these areas is also true of those living in the various countries on the continent of Africa.

^{1/} Housing in Africa, Problems and Policies, E/CN.14/HOUPA/3, Annex IV, para.14.

SUMMARY:

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96. It is possible therefore to summarize the requirements needed in future to ensure a more effective and satisfactory self-help housing programme as follows:

1. A better understanding on the part of those concerned with housing programmes of the principles and practice of self-help as applied to housing and as a consequence greater respect for its potentialities in the African situation.
2. More positive and effective planning in relation to aided self-help schemes and strict adherence to the tried and proven principles of self-help;
3. Greater improvement in the design and construction of traditional and demonstration units: greater care being taken to ensure that while these units are planned to be low in cost construction and living standards remain high.
4. Increased training of personnel at both the national and sub-regional levels.
5. Continuous research into the use of local materials and all elements affecting costs; greater interchange of information on these matters.
6. Wherever possible preliminary approaches to aided self-help be undertaken on an integrated basis, i.e. participants and their families should have some early orientation in community development techniques or housing projects be run in conjunction with community development programmes.

ANNEX I

Self-Help as Applied to Housing

or

Aided Self-Help Housing

1. Self-help as applied to housing in developing countries is a formula which has for its goal the provision of better and more satisfactory housing accommodation for families in the low-income groups at a cost that is economically feasible to them.

The required result is brought about by a partnership between:

- a) the people requiring the houses, who supply labour (unskilled and semi-skilled), local materials and sometimes cash, and
- b) a sponsoring body, usually Government which provides land (usually developed), technical direction, supervision such additional materials as may be required and general expertise.

2. The sponsoring body presents a plan for a house simple in design but incorporating all the features for good living and approved by the people.

3. The house is designed to be constructed of local or ^{other} materials of a permanent nature and in the use of which the people are skilled or have little difficulty in acquiring the necessary skills.

4. The participants are formed into groups and under the direction of a construction foreman are given instructions and demonstrations in the rudiments of building construction and particularly so as they relate to the houses to be built and the type of materials used.

5. The selection and training of the participants for these projects require qualified personnel. The success of the project will depend in a large measure on the ability of the sponsors to secure the services of people with the necessary competence in this field of work.

6. All the houses to be built by the group are erected at the same time. For example if 20 houses are being constructed a team of 20 would undertake to put in all the foundations, build all the walls, put on all the roofs and bring the houses to near completion before the award of a house is made to any participant.

7. Participants will draw on the completion of the units to determine which house they will receive.

In all self-help housing schemes each participant who faithfully fulfils the conditions of the project gets a house.

8. During the period of construction the participants and members of their families receive training in home improvement and other aspects of community development.

9. With the completion of the project the participant would have acquired a new skill, by assisting in the building of 20 houses from the foundation up. He would be equipped to undertake the extension of his own house to meet the requirements of his family or to secure employment in this new field of endeavour.

10. Having put in all labour and a good deal of the materials used in constructing the house the actual cost to the participant will be found to be some 40 to 50% less than if it were built for him under regular contract conditions.

11. Participants and members of their family on taking possession of the houses and with their training behind them would now be in a position to take pride in the care and maintenance of their new homes and would readily join with their friends and neighbours in helping to build a new community.

12. From the sponsors point of view self-help housing can be of importance in the following respects:

1. It enables a greater spread of the funds allocated by government for housing since about two houses may be built on a self-help basis for the price of one.
2. It advances economic growth in the country by increasing human skills.
3. It helps to eliminate one of the major areas of waste in the national life of developing countries i.e. the unutilized talents of the people.
4. It provides an opportunity for the use of local initiative and resourcefulness along with the development of a true cooperative approach in the finding of solutions to common problems.