# An Alternative to Squatter Communities

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# Abstract

Although various strategies have been adopted and initiatives taken for housing the poor, squatter communities continue to grow in urban areas. The poor unsheltered people for whom our present shelter strategies have tried to reach have failed. The poor therefore, continue to take housing matters into their own hands and build squatter communities on vacant land in the urban areas. It is therefore, essential that architects take a fresh look at the present shelter strategies and investigate what new directions we may take to over come some of these major problems of housing the poor.

To overcome these difficulties, the strategy needs to be shifted to the Self-Help Empowerment (SHE) housing which is based on empirical analysis. SHE housing suggests that the poor who inter into the group participation programme experience an individual impact on their interpersonal and community self.

The question that arises is whether any of the strategies outlined in the SHE can meet the shelter needs of the poor and if so, whether they will control the growth of squatter communities. The answer to this question in our South African project seemed to be YES. The strategies outlined in this paper may be able to provide a practical solution to persons who have acquired some social and economic stability by participating in the SHE through training at the Housing Support Centre (HSC). A solution for curbing the growth of squatter communities is a major problem and the SHE programme provided through the HSC is only one solution.

The HSC concept adopted by Dr Steve Burroughs is a step down from the government built homes which is not affordable in the developing world countries but one big improvement on the squatter communities. The HSC can deliver housing to the poor in a shorter time period as well as empowering them with many social, community and personal skills that will carry them forward in today's society. The HSC is a sequential set of steps through training that matches the needs of the poor.

This paper emphasises that, when we address housing we are dealing with continuing and ever changing process and not just with projects that have distinct starting and finishing points. The masses understand housing to be something the government supply as a product, like a stick of furniture. But it must be emphasised that the people must take the responsibility to train and develop the skills required to build there own housing. The HSC provides the process wherein the services and community facilities will provide the training and expertise for the SHE which in turn will gradually provide the housing itself.

**Background**
1987, the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless proposed by the United Nations a target of an adequate home for every family in the world by 2000. All governments were urged not only to provide a house for very family but amenities and services as well. It was estimated at the time to provide basic amenities for squatters and slum dwellers in developing countries alone would cost US$116 billion.

With a few notable exceptions such as China, Cuba, Singapore and Hong Kong most public housing programmes in developing countries have not succeeded in providing adequate shelter and services to urban citizens. Housing agencies have often built houses that fulfil only a fraction of public housing targets. These houses are usually priced way above the capacity to pay of the average urban family. When the public sector subsidizes housing, the units often go to people who are not the intended beneficiaries. This happens because of political favouritism in housing allocation or the selling of "rights" of occupancy by those who are allocated units. Moreover, public housing tends to suffer from hight rates of payment defaults, lack of maintenance, rampant vandalism, and general mismanagement in most countries. It is a heavy drain on the public treasury because governments are rarely able to recoup their housing investments. While public housing has sometimes met the needs of special groups such as civil servants, the military, pensioners or war veterans, it has failed to respond to the needs of the urban poor. Ti is not surprising, then, that in most developing country cities; a large part of the housing stock is built by squatters and slum dwellers themselves.

In October 2003, the United Nations reported that nearly a billion people - almost a third of the world's urban dwellers and a sixth of all humanity - live in absolute squalor in slums. In The Challenge of Slums, the UN predicted that within 30 years that figure could double to two billion.
Although the concentration of slum dwellers is highest in African cities, there are at least 187 million in Africa. The Challenge of Slums says residents of slums constitute a staggering 78.2% of the urban population of the least-developed countries and about a third of the global urban population. The world's highest percentages of slum dwellers are in Ethiopia (an astonishing 99.4% of the urban population) and Chad (also 99.4%). Poverty used to be mostly a rural issue, but it's become much more urban as most people in the world have migrated to cities. The UN report predicts that in addition to the growth of giant cities in all continents, up to three-quarters of future anticipated urban population growth will occur in some of the world's smaller cities, defined as those with current populations between one and five million. So, while there will be mega-cities with more than eight million people, and hyper-cities with more than 20 million, much of the population growth will take place in the already overburdened smaller cities; these simply can't accommodate such huge numbers of people. Many of them lack enough water, electricity, and sanitation services, particularly in Africa. Without sewage disposal, disease is widespread: aside from the high incidence of HIV/ AIDS, the UN estimates that two out of five African slum dwellers live in poverty that is considered "life-threatening."

Writer Mike Davis makes similar points in an article called "Planet of Slums" in the New Left Review (March/April 2004). In 1950, there were 86 cities in the world with a population over one million; today, there are 400, and by 2015, there will be at least 550. "Cities, indeed, have absorbed nearly two-thirds of the global population.

## Defining the Problem

If housing for the homeless (slum dwellers) is to be achieved as a societal goal, there is a need to formulate basic housing strategies and implement them.  By basic housing, we mean a process by which even the poorest of families are able to have access to affordable shelter and services.  Basic housing does not mean the physical shelter.  Rather, it involves the ways and means by which the efforts of the individual, the family, the group, the community, government agencies and other entities combine to make shelter and services available to even the poorest of the poor.

To make basic housing accessible to most people, self help housing or reciprocal aid is needed.  These concepts encompass the efforts of individuals, families and groups.  Self-Help defined as "the use of a participating family's skills, labour, organizational talents and managerial skills in the construction and improvement of its own home".  Reciprocal Aid, on the other hand, is "the cooperation of all participating families in teamwork to construct project infrastructures of the basic parts of a home".

Governments and Professional mostly take a conventional view of housing in that, it is designed by an architect, built by a contractor, constructed by carpenters, masons, plumbers, electricians and financed by a lending institution.  The idea of self-help goes against this delivery of housing as a product approach.  In self-help the design of the house is done by the prospective owner and family members often in accordance with traditional notions or "vernacular" housing.  The actual construction depends on the efforts and skills of the owner, friends, relatives and others who assist in a collaborative undertaking.

To some who advocate self-help and reciprocal aid, housing is only an indicator of general social and economic well being.  Thus, in the eyes of  Dr Steve Burroughs and his Housing Support Centre concepts for housing the poor housing through his process is a methodology for  "improving more general social and economic changes in the condition of the urban poor" rather than merely a means of producing so many housing units.  If the ethos of self-help and reciprocal aid becomes generalized in a society, quality of life will improve.  Using self-help and reciprocal aid in housing is only an entry point in the general uplifting of societal conditions.

## Community Sites and Service projects

Four the last forty years people concerned with housing have advocated that affordable housing and services could be achieved through programmes of community upgrading of cites and services.  Many years and several hundred projects with millions of dollars in projects later, the shortcomings of these approaches have become apparent and recognizable that they have been a failure in the broader sense.

## Under Site and Service

Community upgrading involves the introduction of basic services such as water, toilets, drainage, garbage collection and disposal, electricity, schools, streets and footpaths, in an existing slum or squatter area. Physical layout of the community is "rationalized" often by a grid pattern of streets and footpaths and the realignment of houses. Rationalization requires that people be moved out of the community and major problems are brought to bear on the implication of this process.

Sites and services involve the opening up of new land and its subdivision into serviced residential plots. Standards of urban service vary, some projects might have water piped into each home and others would have standpipes for every four to twenty homes. Sanitation ranges from pit toilets to complete underground sewerage systems. Plot sizes may range from 45 square metres to 150 square metres. Some projects might have finished homes on site; others would have only a "core home" with perhaps a toilet and wet kitchen. The concept behind most sites and services projects is that people will improve them as their needs require and their resources allow.

Both examples above depend on self-help and/or reciprocal aid. Organized community efforts are important elements in public participation in planning of community services, in formulating housing and physical plans and even in actual construction activities such as digging of drainage canals, road works, and construction of community centres. Self-help and/or Reciprocal Aid are regarded not only as effective ways of lowering building costs. Because they instill community identification and civic pride, they are seen as important assets in the continued functioning of the community.

Despite great expectations from community upgrading and sites and services as solutions to the shelter problem, actual experiences has revealed several shortcomings. The most important problem is that even the lowest cost project interventions were beyond the reach of the poorest families. Evaluations of projects in various countries show that even the lowest cost project interventions were beyond the reach of the poorest families. The best efforts of project designers and housing administrators had high rates of failure. In some cases, this was because the project had become the arena for confrontational battles between government and social activists.

## Land

A quick review of the housing problem in most developing countries quickly reveals that the main problem of housing can be obtained with training and development of skills. One of the real barriers to affordable housing, however, is primarily land.

It is sometimes difficult to appreciate that the concept of absolute land ownership so enshrined in Western legislation just started with the Code Napoleon and customary individual rights. All over the world, people have evolved customary land tenure systems more responsive to housing needs. Socialist countries take land as a common good and manage the "rights" to use it rather than alienating it for an individual's private gain. Even English common law, which has eve loved over the last 800 years, incorporates limitations on private land ownership.

If housing through self-help and reciprocal aid is to become a reality, private ownership of land has to be re-evaluated.  In almost all developing countries, land now constitutes a disproportionately large share of the total cost of housing.

Location and the services and improvements made on land are the key elements in enabling people to build their own housing.  Since these factors ultimately determine the "value" of land, their planning and regulation provides the key intervention point in enabling strategies.   In most cities, a purely economic rationale for land use will probably push low cost housing out of cities because more "productive" alternative uses can be found.  Typically, therefore, low income housing has been pushed to the periphery, adding problems to low income people whose service sector jobs are often in the central city.  This approach, of course, inevitably increases social costs of urbanization in terms of building more highways, providing public transit, extending urban services farther out into the suburbs and inflicting long commuting hours on everyone.  Short of land reform where land is confiscated for public uses, there are precious few measures to make land available for the homeless.  In the long run, of course, it must be recognized that the supply of urban land is finite and that uncontrolled land development inevitably creates environmental consequences.  One of the most alarming trends in developing countries is the rapid loss of farm lands, parks, nature areas and green belts due to urban expansion.  If the appetite for urban land is not curbed, the quality of life in cities will inevitably suffer.  For this and other reasons, state intervention in land development has become necessary despite legal traditions and appeals to private property rights.  The greater good of the greater number should, in the final analysis, become the touchstone of what is right in any society.  In the case of land, the urgent need of the urban poor for serviced building sites that will enable them to sue self help and reciprocal aid in availing themselves of housing should be given due consideration.

## Sharing the resources with the poor

It has been estimated that, no more than 1 out of 10 of the urban poor have been benefited by such projects of site and servicing.  Because these projects benefited only a limited number of people, governments, professionals or project administrators have not been able to prevent trading in "rights of occupancy" and speculation in project units.  In quite a number of countries, original project allocates have sold their rights to the plots and houses, enabling families with higher incomes than those targeted by the authorities to own homes and/or sites.

## Enabling the Poor with Policies and Strategies

From Dr Steve Burroughs point of view observing projects around Africa it is obvious that the most successful self-help and/or reciprocal aid efforts to achieve shelter for the homeless are still those where the urban poor take matters in their own hands, set up their homes on neglected or unwanted lands, build their homes and community structures themselves, tap public services directly and organize their own communities to maintain peace and order and achieve community cooperation.

In some regions, city slum dwellers are taking charge, trying to improve their own lot.  Many of them are part of Slum Dwellers International (SDI), a loose network of

people's organizations from a number of developing countries. SDI affiliates all are organizations of the Urban Poor, ranging in size from a few hundred in Zambia to more than a million and a half in India. So using this basic concept why not let us as professional band together with these the poorest of the poor and help them to help themselves. When offering a self-help housing programme in South Africa I discovered over the period of one year that several things were missing in the housing process. Some of these items will be described in this paper. We have examined the old traditional problem namely, the order of sequence in which people, land, service or housing would property be sequenced. It is noted here that this topic alone constitutes a paper and I would be happy to address this issue at a later date.

## Finance

The usual source of finance for housing in developing countries is current savings, accumulated assets and credit. The bulk of the urban poor, leading a hand-to-mouth existence, usually have no savings, have little or no accumulated assists, and have no access to credit. Worse, when governments pursue their periodic campaigns of slum clearance and squatter resettlement, the meager accumulated assets embodied in self built shanties might be destroyed, employment may be disrupted and savings might be used up just to survive the government-instigated crisis.

Experience over the years has shown, however, that to meet the housing and service needs of the very poor, there is no escaping the need for subsidy. As already mentioned, even the cheapest sites and services and community upgrading interventions can still not reach the bottom 20 per cent of families in urban areas. If housing is seen as a basic need, and governments are sworn to help provide the means for meeting the basic needs of people, then, low income housing must be subsidized. This subsidy might be clearly indicated in housing programmes like Dr Steve Burroughs set out in his Housing Support Centre Concepts for Nigeria in conjunction with the Nigerian Architects Institute. The urban poor are an integral part of societies in developing countries and they will not go away just because public and private agencies do not help them. On the contrary, the poorer the cities become, the greater is the tendency for the rural poor to move to them. Better economic opportunities and improvement of housing and urban amenities, at least, might attract the talented and more ambitious to migrate to cities, thus enhancing urban development potential.

## Building Materials

In building material laboratories all over the world, there are exciting discoveries that could be used for improving building materials that would enable self-help builders to construct low cost housing. However, the formal nature of the construction industry hinders the mass production of these materials to make them readily available to everyone. It is mainly in the so-called informal sector, where self builders, artisans, small-scale contractors and traditional builders are active, that indigenous materials are commonly used.

When properly encouraged, the use of indigenous materials could greatly assist shelter programmes. For example, in many developing countries bricks, tiles, sand stone and timber are produced by the traditional sector. In principle, there is nothing to prevent the use of these indigenous materials in housing and doing away with

dependence on imported materials. As Dr Steve Burroughs describes in his Housing Support Centre concept the developing country only has to decide to transform its University and Government testing laboratories into testing indigenous materials and improving on there sustainability and their engineering. This would encourage the use of these materials and market mechanisms that will make the materials readily available to the poor. Dr Steve Burroughs has encouraged the testing and use of recycled industrial waste by-products for use in housing and small commercial building construction. Where indigenous materials such as clay, sand, stone, volcanic ash can be mixed with rice-husk ash, fly-ash, petrol by-products, paper pulp waste, sugar cane waste and others encourage the use of these materials and improve the distribution and market mechanisms that will make the materials readily available to self-help builders. These strategies developed by Dr Steve Burroughs have encouraged an enabled shelter projects to flourish. Aside from making indigenous building materials more readily available, there is also a need for changing building standards, codes and regulations to encourage the use of such materials. One common complaint in regard to indigenous materials is the lack of quality control. Building standards can be promulgated that would require minimum standards of manufactures before their products could be used in tenders or contracts. Innovative technologies could be made available to small scale manufactures to enable them to fulfill the standards. The potential of moving into the construction sector by meeting building standards would then serve as an incentive to manufacturers to produce better building materials.

Finally, encouraging use of indigenous building materials require innovations in housing design and contraction technologies. Traditional materials have been mainly used in vernacular housing. Unfortunately, such housing is more suited to rural environments than the dense habitations of cities. Still, such materials as stabilized earth bricks made with various waste products have shown to have great potential in the design of urban housing. What is mainly needed, after the introduction of innovative designs, is the rationalization of the capacity of the building industry and in particularly the Architects to use the new production techniques. This is another of Dr Steve Burroughs concepts in training all Architects in the use of indigenous building materials combined with waste by-products. In this manner the professional architect will carry the process forward and train the builders who will in turn train the trainers which will then flow onto the very poor in the self-help housing schemes as outlined in the Self-Help Empowerment (SHE) Housing Concept by Dr Steve Burroughs.


## Planning and Housing Design

It is in the field of planning and housing design that professionals have largely failed the homeless of the world. For some reason, the creative energies of architects and planners have become obsessed with the design of a finished home. For example, to solve the housing problem of vagrants and street dwellers in America cities, someone came up with a cardboard house that could be delivered, complete, for $250 each to a city's welfare department. This tendency to design a self-contained unit is most visible in the field of demonstration housing in South Africa. For example, there is a cluster of houses consisting of concrete igloos made by spraying a plastic material over a rubberized inflated skin or houses built with used tyres or concrete and timber panels. The Buckminster Fuller-inspired geodesic domes gleam in the heat of Dar-es-

Salaam in Tanzania twenty years ago, standing there, unoccupied and abandoned. These homes were designed by well intentioned architects and designers but unfortunately no one asked the locals and they do not want to live in them. The sins of inappropriate housing design are compounded when they transformed into complete building systems as mentioned above.

If architects and planners are to assist self-help builders in producing adequate shelter, there has to be a change of attitude away from the designing of a finite unit called a house to a process orientation that seeks to facilitate the creative energies of self-help builders themselves. Until we embrace new concepts of the housing, there are few chances for real innovation. Because of the great diversity in the backgrounds, skills, income levels, tools, construction capacities and aptitudes of would-be home builders, planners and architects should not set finite units for them to construct but sketch out open-ended processes and procedures that would lead toward the attainment of their housing needs and aspirations.

As Dr Steve Burroughs lays out in his SHE Housing concept proposal the design process should encompass the whole range of activities from determination of housing needs to architectural renderings, assembly of materials, manufacturing of materials, training in the construction process using those materials, finishing, maintenance and further renovations. The Self-Help home is never complete, it should continue to evolve in response the peoples' needs and wants. The Housing Support Centre (HSC), therefore, will provide a "support mechanism" for making this evolution possible. Building materials, construction process, tools, financing schemes, self-help building, training manuals, access to professional services, codes and standards should be geared to respond to the needs of the poor and self-help builder. This is the ultimate in enabling strategies.

In the long run, of course, design and planning depend on the value orientations of architects, planners and housing officials themselves. What has become obvious of late is the need for a new type of professional who respond to the demands of self-help and reciprocal aid housing. This brings us to the area of training and technical assistance in the field of self-help housing.


## Training and Technical Assistance

Conventional housing management approaches, based as they are on traditions of regulation and control, have proven inadequate for solving housing problems in developing countries. Raised in the tradition of minimum housing standards, zoning ordinances, building codes and licensing of housing activities, most housing officials are quite incapable of providing the motivational, catalytic and even inspirational roles demanded by self-help housing.

In most countries, the housing manager is seen as carrying out the following functions:
Overseeing the completion of a housing project from the architectural design stages to actual construction;
Allocating units to qualified applicants using pre-determined criteria;
Looking after the maintenance of the project; and

Setting up an effective communication system to anticipate and solve tenant's problems.

From the above functions, it is clear that the primary goal of housing management is "service delivery," with the housing system designed to produce so many units or to provide so many services. Effective housing management can be easily assessed in terms of cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness measures. The housing manager, therefore, should be trained to maximize results and minimize costs. Efficiency is a favourable mathematical ratio.

If self-help housing is to become a reality, however, a new type of housing professional is called for. Such a professional must first assume that the people (not he or she) know what is best for them. The professional has to respect the values, perceptions, abilities, energies and decision-making abilities of the poor. He or she must see the role of the professional as primarily involving "enabling" action—helping make it possible for people to achieve their own home construction and basic needs.

In stead of relying on a book of standards and regulations, the new housing professional must learn to elicit from the poor what they want, what they can do, what resources they have and how much time they need to accomplish their tasks. Should some of the peoples' wishes require translation into visual, procedural or technical renderings, the housing professional must help in preparing such schemes, making sure that plans so prepared are faithful to the real wishes of the people and not merely be reflections of idealized standards or tributes to the designer's ego.

Assuming that the technical skills of the professional are adequate to distill the people's wishes into a scheme, there still remains the task of helping convince policy makers and administrators about its viability and wisdom. The professional has to accomplish this in the role of "catalyst" and adviser instead of him or her assuming the leadership role.

The skills demanded of the new housing professional, then, are human relations and bargaining talents that seek to bring together what could be the antagonistic interests of landowners, unions, old residents, local governments and the shelterless. What is demanded of the professional's more than just technical skills? Sometimes, an advocacy role might be required. Compromise and practicing the art of the possible may be needed. Tin the long run, the professional's role is to faithfully reflect the needs and demands self help builders in order to assist them to achieve their goals.

## Institutional and Organizational Structures

Even if planning schools and professional training programmes succeed in turning out the new housing professional needed by self-help housing, their efforts will still be insufficient if there is no change in the institutional and organizational structures that impinge on housing and urban services. In many countries, policies and programmes still reflect traditional orientations of regulation and control. As one of the key elements in an enabling strategy, these institutional and organizational structures must be reformed.

To begin with, an explicit statement of the need for self-help in housing provision must be reflected in statutes, rules and regulations. This orientation should be operationally incorporated in laws and regulations related to housing finance, building codes, materials standards, zoning, subdivision regulations, and regulation of professional activities and licensing standards. In these statements, a supportive and enabling strategy rather than a control-oriented and regulatory stance should be indicated.

In addition to these nation-wide policies, there is a need to indicate enabling actions at the level of the community or project unit. The specific roles of the government, or non-governmental organizations, or community groups and individuals and families need to be spelled out. Concrete organizational structures must be set up at all levels of common action. In these efforts, the need for maximum popular participation should be stressed.

If enabling strategies are t work, governments must be willing to decentralize real authority and power to the appropriate local government or community structure at which proper action can be carried out. For self help housing to work, full recognition of local autonomy should be given.

National authorities must help support the efforts of self-help units by providing technical assistance and training. This assistance is needed not only in the education of new professionals but in orientation programmes for community leaders and the people themselves. The genuine desire of the government to elicit community action can be easily voiced by professional community organizers and housing officials. Community leaders and the people, once they perceive this genuine desire on the part of public officials should be inspired to carry out what is expected of them.

A definite role for the private sector must be provided in the area of shelter and services. In most developing countries, the private sector is relegated to developer-built or middle income housing when it is not given the onerous role of slum landlord or exploiter of the poor. In reality, the private sector is able to contribute to low cost housing if the government just formulates policies and programmes that will tap its energies and resources. For, example, the building material market, when left in the hands of private entrepreneurs, is usually able to respond adequately to the demands of self-help builders. Some entrepreneurs are also able to set up contracting services that can provide technical skills and professional services to self-help builders.

Institutional arrangements are also needed for non-governmental organizations (NGO) to participate actively in the provision of self-help housing. In many countries, so-called "socially-oriented" housing has been made possible by NGOs who are motivated by service rather than profits. As cooperatives, collectives or other NGO institutions, theses bodies may be given tax free or other special types of status for as long as they provide socially motivated services.

These requirements of enabling strategies might sound too difficult and idealistic to many developing countries at present. However, in view of the magnitude of the need for shelter and services world-wide, the meager resources available and the limitations on institutional and operational means of providing basic housing, there seems to be very few options available to governments for achieving these goals. Already it is

apparent that there are millions of people in developing country cities at present that will probably not be able to have access to housing and service standards taken for granted as basic amenities in more developed countries. As the world's population reaches moves toward 7 billion people and half of those billions reside in already overcrowded cities, the point may be reached when no government will be able to solve people's housing problems adequately. It is obvious, then, that for people to achieve their basic needs, they have to rely on themselves. Governments would be wise to support the suggested SHE housing scheme using the HSC enabling strategies that would tap local energies and resources for the solving of common goals.

## Housing Support Centre

The HSC would be established to facilitate a large-scale residential construction phase for a community of 100,000 people. With high ideals of public participation and ownership at all levels, the housing project would be grounded in practical solutions aimed at maximising the positive outcomes for the local people. Designed to complement a National Housing Policy, the scheme would hopefully achieve great success in offering a wide range of professional advice and services to potential low-income home buyers/builders using the SHE housing concept. Indeed, the HSC will be a 'one-stop-shop' for advice on housing, legalities, products and finances.

In view of the fact that many of the beneficiaries that would be involved in the SHE housing scheme would have never before participated in the housing process, it would be considered essential that support be provided to people to enable them to make informed decisions about the type of housing they require. This would enable them to participate fully in and control the delivery process.

The provision of a HSC as a given example three locations within Nigeria as outlined in our proposal would be Lagos, Abuja and Uyo. These three locations would be seen by the Housing Authority, Government and NEPAD as an opportunity to establish three regional demonstration facilities in the country or the other consideration of NEPAD might be one HSC within several countries running simultaneously under a NEPAD banner. It would be envisaged that the HSC would also provide support to other projects outside of the SHE housing scheme. Should the building later no longer be required for a housing support centre, it would be designed in such a way that it would then be utilised as a community facility to house a day care centre, crèche, welfare centre or a HIV hospice for orphaned children of the community. The ultimate use would be decided in consultation with the community to fulfil any specific needs that they may have.

The housing component materials that would be manufacture on site and the training would be under the supervision of Dr Steve Burroughs in conjunction with local professional organizations i.e. Nigerian Architects Institute. This ensured that the required standards were met and ensured the quality of finish achieved. It is proposed that this be structured in such a way to enable people who intended constructing their own houses to gain access to training and materials manufacturing facilities. People could, for example, be employed on a basis whereby, for every five blocks they manufactured, one would be utilised for the Housing Support Centre and the other for their own house. Those people wishing to participate in the construction of the building could do so and undergo the requisite training. They would then be

employed by the "contractor" during the construction of the building. The skills acquired could then be used to construct their own homes and/or possibly used to train others or become builders themselves.

## Self-Help Empowerment (SHE) Housing

Philosophy of the SHE, self help housing is about people gaining power over their lives when they previously have not had control over the decisions that affect them. Individual growth and collective strength are about transferring power (resources, information, and opportunities) to the powerless.

This is based on the idea that all people irrespective of their sex, disability, age, sexuality; ethnic background; health condition, unemployment or low income should have equal access and opportunities within the community, which they live.

It is also based on the principal that people define themselves rather than being described and categorized by their needs and the role given to them by others, e.g., "client or helper". People in self-help housing groups develop their own personal identity according to their own ideas and the way they see themselves.

Similarly, self help groups see the problem as being part of society and not the problem of each individual. Rather, they recognize that the individuals who are the victims of the system are also used as scapegoats and blamed for things over which they have no control.

Involvement in self-help groups implies working to gain control over their lives and their future so that this process does not continue. It means a commitment to the rights of people rather than giving crumbs to the "deserving".

Self help housing proposes and alternative way of organizing society, which does not discriminate against, people on arbitrary grounds. It proposes a society where changes come from the "real world", or grassroots rather than being imposed from above. This approach has been described as "bubble up" instead of "trickle down"; it suggests a different way of looking at the world, and a different way of making changes.

## The Purpose of the SHE

The purpose of the project is to establish a project based around the completion of the HSC and to provide training in manufacturing and construction of home building, in addition to providing low-income families with access to an alternate form of housing delivery which could also provide business opportunities in housing and construction.

Housing provision provides a tremendous potential for economic development. Designed in the right way a housing program can provide long-term job creation, promote skills transfer and stimulate entrepreneurial development. The process should also examine and utilise the most appropriate methods of construction in order

to maximise the very limited finance available to maximise local skills training and to provide an opportunity for home owners to extend and improve their housing in the future as their financial situation improves.

The purpose of the SHE therefore, to target those involved in housing delivery at community level and through a process of training, impart new skills to them to enable them to develop their own small enterprises in housing provision. The project will also ensure that women and people previously excluded from the house construction industry are represented and given the opportunity to actively participate in the housing process.

## The Training for SHE

As mentioned above the trainees would be trained by the trainers who built the HSC. The trainees would be placed in groups depending on the size of the housing project but for argument lets assume in this case family blocks of ten. The family blocks of ten would go through the manufacturing and training phase together. They would build their ten homes together and additionally help train the group following them. The training and building process may have twenty or thirty stages lasting from one to four weeks in duration. Each phase would be completed two times as the first group after completion of the phase number would stay and repeat the phase again giving assistance to the group behind them. Each set of families therefore would not have only manufactured and built there own homes but also helped the other nine families in there group and also helped the ten families following them in the process.

## Summary

This paper has explained some of the problems related to housing the poor of Africa and made suggestions for altering the thinking processes evolved in squatter communities. It must be emphasised that no one person has the answer to housing the people of Africa. But it is through training and understanding that one can take a step toward achieving one small step in this long walk of success.
The HSC and then following the SHE Housing scheme would provide the following positive steps in that long walk for helping the poorest of the poor in Africa.

- Provide professional development programmes in the form of workshops, seminars and create interaction encounters for professionals in housing industry,
- Provide training of technical levels within the housing institutions and development,
- Develop curriculum, training models, manuals, audio-visual teaching aids for professionals, contractors, builders, trainers and trainees,
- Provide technical support for pilot demonstration and community housing projects,
- Promote, in-house, professional and university research. Develop new methodologies for housing neighbourhoods and urban and project/policy impact assessment,
- Act as a resource centre, library and documentation for professional, builders, trainers and trainees and other institutions in the field,
- Promote excellence in the field of housing by setting examples of quality workmanship and outstanding reputation.

Dr Steve Burroughs associates the retraining of the professionals in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as one of the major key to solving the problems of the homeless and poor of Africa.

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn". Alvin Toffler

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