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**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS**

**AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF SLUM SETTLEMENTS**

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# AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF SLUM SETTLEMENTS.

## *Introduction*

The major focus of this paper is based on field work studies conducted during the first six months of 1988 in Kenya. Two settlements were studied (Mathare in Nairobi and Chaani in Mombasa) on issues related to settlement and dwelling patterns among the urban low-income households.

The case studies used offer a differentiation, both socio-culturally and climatically, which is best suited for comparisons and a broader application of the findings.

Two issues have been analyzed in this paper. The first examines the settlement case studies for the following information:

- for the rural-urban migrants, what traits remain after the process of cultural distillation, and how they are reflected as underlying regularities patterning settlements and dwellings.
- resources available for household and community life, identifying the deficiencies and possibilities of how best to incorporate them into redevelopment processes.
- felt needs and aspirations of residents and how they can be satisfied if replanning of their settlements were to be embarked on.

The paper also draws from existing literature on informal settlements in developing countries for a theoretical frame to examine the broader aspects entailed in self-help housing, as a process that is applied to the problem of making a livelihood as well as producing dwellings.

## *A Literature Review*

Converging views have been expressed on the importance of informal (slum) settlements. Among them is the observation which notes that the rapid growth of population in metropolitan cities of developing countries tends toward a situation in which these settlements are the dominant form of habitation. But, "there have been several misconceptions about informal settlements, such as viewing their residents as a social burden, that must be cleared away before effective action can be taken". The effective action, therefore, should include government support, especially in granting security of land use (or tenure) and provision of vital infrastructure elements: water, sewage, road access and electricity. This view of government support to informal settlements seems to be the latest threshold of policy change in the more recent literature.

The new approach is premised on the realization that in concentrating on construction of additional dwelling units, governments of developing countries often overlook possibilities for upgrading existing housing as a means of improving overall housing situations. In essence, the value of informal housing tends to be similar to those of conventional "formal" sector dwellings, as has been shown by a number of studies conducted on informal settlements of cities in developing countries.<sup>2</sup>

The rationale for combining housing (shelter) with its broader perspectives: employment opportunities, infrastructure and services, is due to the realization that most cities in developing countries will not be able to expand their "formal" (modern) economic sectors rapidly enough to absorb all of the migrant labor market entrants. Indeed, housing is but one of the key factors influencing the ability of low-income households to succeed in an urban economy. Prevailing views, mostly by economists now stress the economic role and impact of housing in low-income urban communities of developing countries. The argument is that housing, as a process, under certain circumstances, could be a direct income generating activity and not merely a consumption good, or at best, an indirect contributor to welfare.<sup>3</sup>

In extending the perception of housing into an economic framework, some economist writers have tried to forcefully reiterate views which have been expounded for