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PILOT RURAL HOUSING SCHEMES

Notes on visits to the Pilot Rural Housing Schemes
at Chuka, Migori and Kapsabet.

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Introduction

The Ministry of Housing at the end of 1972 requested the Housing Research and Development Unit to carry out User- Reaction Studies of the Pilot Rural Housing Schemes at Migori, Wamanga, Chuka and Kapsabet. The former is built of concrete blocks while the other are of a timber frame construction with an external finish of plaster and internal finishes of plasterboard.

When Mr. Mulili of the HRDU visited Chuka on 4th January he was only able to survey six houses as the scheme was only partly occupied. The User Reaction Studies of the four schemes were therefore postponed. Since then however the writer has visited, in passing, the schemes at Chuka (July 1st), Migori (July 9th) and Kapsabet (December 9th). The following notes are based on these visits together with the partial survey of user reactions at Chuka.

2

1. USER REACTIONS

1.1 General Appearance

The prevailing attitude of the occupants of the timber frame houses at Chuka and Kapsabet was that the houses "looked nice" from the outside but left something to be desired internally. Some of the Chuka occupants were unaware that their houses had a timber structure, while some of the Kapsabet occupants aware of the destructiveness of termites were sceptical about how long the buildings would last and would not have wanted to own them.

1.2 House Plans

The layout of the houses was generally liked by the surveyed occupants at Chuka; a view confirmed by the few occupants visited at Migori and Kapsabet. The relationship of the kitchen, W.C. and Shower to the rest of the house was popular but the lack of a kitchen door was a major source of complaint. The front doors of adjoining houses at Migori opened onto the same verandah and faced each other. This was unpopular with occupants for reasons of privacy - the doors had to be kept open on hot days for the purpose of ventilation - and because two semi-detached houses appeared as one.

The sizes of principle rooms were generally satisfactory and were not the object of complaint. In one multi-occupied house at Kapsabet there were objections to having bedrooms which opened directly off the living area - the same occupants also complained of the lack of locks on bedroom doors -, but it was felt that this response represented an exception rather than the rule, nearly all houses being occupied by single households.

1.3 Bedrooms

Bedrooms were generally satisfactory, the built-in cupboards being a successful feature. The shelves and hanging rod were well used, though there were some complaints that the cupboards had neither doors nor a rail for fixing a curtain. The lack of burglar guards to the windows restricted the use of the openings and was among the principle cause of complaint.

1.4 Living Room

The skylight, the lack of windows and the screen wall were the object of major complaints. The skylight caused overheating, the lack of windows meant there was no view out and led at times to their being too little light and ventilation unless the front door was open, and the screen wall allowed the penetration of rain and dust as well as tending to cause slight chilliness on cool evenings. The vehement complaints of the Migori tenants resulted in the removal of the skylight, the addition of a window and the fly-screening of openings in the screen wall. The three bedroom houses had a built-in cupboard in the living room and this was popular for storing drinks, packed foods and books. Occupants did not complain that the front door opened directly into the living room. Such an arrangement would seem appropriate where it is necessary to keep circulation areas to a minimum. Some occupants complained because the plasterboard walls were impossible to clean once dirty.

1.5 Kitchen

Occupants were unanimous in their objection to the lack of a door to the kitchen. This was principally because smoke and dirt from cooking was free to enter the living room, but the lack of kitchen privacy was also mentioned. In some houses smoke from jikos had caused severe blackening