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UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
HOUSING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT UNIT

S I T E A N D S E R V I C E S C H E M E S,
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INTRODUCTION

The present analysis of existing and planned site and service schemes in Kenya was carried out in response to a request from the National Housing Corporation in order to develop prototypes and standards for the planning and operation of the large number of new schemes already programmed for the coming years, in accordance with the development plan 1970-74, which states:

(site and service schemes): These schemes will be a significant part of the housing programme in urban areas. If no alternatives are available, the lowest-income families will build the temporary houses they need anyway, as witnessed by the existence of large and expanding illegal squatter areas near the urban centres. It will be the responsibility of the local authorities and the NHC to ensure that this activity is channeled into proper self-help schemes on serviced sites, lest the task of removing them or providing them with services later on becomes a grave problem.

The degree of servicing of such sites will vary from the mere laying out of sites for houses and spaces for communal facilities to a fully developed service system commensurate with the type of community envisaged..... (p.519).

The first site and service schemes in Kenya date back to the early sixties, the time just before and after Independence, when the influx to the urban areas began, and were mainly intended for the re-settlement of squatters who had lost their land and jobs during the Emergency.

The rate of completed and planned site and service schemes has been increasing slowly in the intermediate years until, in late 1970, a total of 1200 plots were completed and a further 600 planned or under construction, corresponding to a population of approximately 30,000 occupiers. A further 8,000 plots, roughly corresponding to 135,000 occupiers, are programmed for the next development period.

The concept of 'site and service', together with that of 'incomplete housing' of which it is a part, must be seen from the point of view of the public authorities, and in the light of the assumption that the construction of housing for the lowest-income groups, earning up to Shs. 400/mth, is a public responsibility. The construction of serviced plots, possibly including sanitation blocks and/or parts of dwellings, is an alternative to the construction of the complete dwellings, an alternative implying a more even, and more effective, distribution of public resources, and a proportionately larger investment of private resources.

The term 'site and service scheme' has probably never been defined adequately. The definition given in Kenya's Development Plan 1970-74: 'low-cost self-help schemes comprising houses costing up to K£ 450', may be criticised, especially for the use of the term 'self-help', which may be interpreted: 'the occupiers' participation in the erection process', which very rarely is the case in urban areas.

The definition which was used tentatively in this survey was: 'schemes providing plots and services for low-cost houses financed from private resources'.

It was found early in our investigation that the term 'site and service' had been used very liberally, and that many different standards had been accepted as being covered by the term. It was therefore decided to use as wide a definition as possible in order to include the maximum number of existing schemes, and to let definitions, classifications and minimum standards derive from the survey eventually.