

THE COMMUNAL SELF-HELP HOUSING SCHEME IN ILE-IFE: A PANACEA TO DROUGHT IN HOUSE OWNERSHIP IN NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Owning a personal house through the conventional methods is at present, making the dream a myriad in Nigeria, most especially the citizens in the lower and middle classes of the economy. Thus, this paper examined the organized self help housing concept, a housing scheme which in Nigerian traditional communal approach is employed to provide houses and infrastructural facilities such as market, place of worship, schools, and paths in the pre-colonial era with a view to determine its suitability in the contemporary Nigeria. Information for this study was gathered through questionnaire and oral interview. 50 members of the royal family in Ile Ife who are professionals in building technology, artisans, finance experts, administrators, etc formed the respondents to the questionnaire and oral interview. The paper outlines the problems the stakeholders faced and their roles at various stages of the scheme. The paper ultimately sought for panacea that could assist prospective governmental agencies at federal, state or local government levels to efficiently discharge their responsibilities and achieve the desired goals of providing affordable, durable and simple accommodation for low and medium income earners in Nigeria.

Key words: *Traditional, Conventional, design, construction, Housing.*

Introduction

There is a tripartite means of providing housing facilities for the citizens in Nigeria. These are, through the public, the private sector and the individual efforts, (Aradeon, 1984). Government at different tiers, Federal, State and Local have been making attempts to provide houses for different categories of their staff and for sale to different categories of would be buyers, through their agencies such as Federal Housing Authority (F.H.A) and States Housing Authorities. Federal Government of Nigeria also motivates their workers of all categories to have roof over their heads through Federal Mortgage Bank by providing long term low interest loan solely for that purpose (Opoko 2004).

At the private sector level, corporate organizations are in the business of putting up housing schemes at the Federal Capital Abuja, and the State Capitals either for rentage or for outright sale to clients who can afford them. Also the citizens with different income levels such as civil servants, professionals, business men and women, artisans and the masses dream to construct a building to house their immediate family members. The evolving development by this class of people often results into chaos, lack of adequate planning in the conception, construction of the buildings and the environment. Most of them cannot afford the cost of land in an environment with adequate layout of plots, infrastructural facilities such as road, electricity and water supply. Instead, they go for cheap virgin lands that are devoid of all the amenities mentioned above. The situation with self help housing scheme is "yourself first and community later". (Eyong, 1987)

Another major problem with this type of scheme is financing. Since the modern construction methods, cost of material, services by relevant professionals and levies to government agencies (i.e. town planning approval and levies) have taken the dream of house ownership away from the less privileged, the traditional self-help approach to housing scheme, where a young citizen is rallied

round by his kinsmen, friends and in-laws becomes the alternative. The scope of assistances rendered by the kinsmen however cover wide areas such as provision of land by the family, provision of labour, and building materials which are mostly locally sourced.

The sustenance of this practice in the modern day is however hampered by legislative restrictions, modern and expensive construction materials, and already broken down family kinship structure. Experience over the years in terms of housing the masses in Nigeria has shown that perhaps the best alternative for people in this category is the organized self-help housing concept. This approach incorporates professional support and community involvement in decision making and implementations which ensure that resulting outcome do not only evolve in an orderly manner but are technically feasible, affordable, and in tune with the participants socio-cultural values.

The Origin of the Organized Self-Help Housing (OSHH)

This scheme can be dated back to the time immemorial and it was meant to enhance and improve the living standard of the royal family members who, due to the duo factors of poverty and unnecessary social attachments to their traditional homes were exposed to various types of social and environmental hazards. The practical means of bailing them out of their social, environmental and health problems is by changing their living environment to a better one where they will be availed of most, of the parameters of good living such as, functional affordable buildings, spacious and well laid out neighbourhoods with basic infrastructural facilities, good social network that guarantees peace and tranquillity, security of lives and properties and high level of religious freedom devoid of traditional religious strait jackets and taboos (Adewale, Siyanbola, & Siyanbola, 2008)

The Modus - Operandi of OSHH

Traditionally the extended family structure is very vibrant in Ile-Ife the cradle of the Yoruba Culture, most especially among the royal lineage. Mandatorily, meetings are held in the family hall (Akodi) once in four weeks where salient issues relating to the peaceful co-existence of the family is paramount to their discussion. (Adewale, Anthony & Olamide, 2008). Also, it is on record that land is owned jointly and held in trust by the family from which individual houses are built with the family permission, and community projects such as market, meeting hall and others are constructed for mutual family benefit.

The WUNMONIJE Royal family of LAFOGIDO Ruling house of Ile-Ife is a typical family compound located directly behind the Kings Palace at Enuwa in Ile-Ife. The compound is surrounded by other ruling houses that foreclose opportunity for expansion in whatever form in any direction. Some of the compound peculiar characteristics are, Un-planned environment, closely built dilapidated buildings without facilities such as toilets, waste disposal and drainage. Footpaths are the only means of accessing the inner parts of the compounds.

In the year 2000, an all encompassing family meeting was held that focused on the self-help housing scheme and the way out, where 10 man team committee members was formed. This comprises of professionals from the environmental studies and other relevant specialization such as Law and Accountancy. The heads of sub-families who are custodians of history and culture, were made to join the committee members to serve as a link between the committee and the larger family setting.

Methodology

Through oral interviews, observations and questionnaire the under listed information were gathered for the purpose of this study:

- The social impact of the scheme
- The social structure and integration within the group
- The different income levels
- The leadership potentials.

Based on the information above, the factors that influence the participation of individuals were also

determined. The factors include:

- previous experience in similar projects
- Traits of antisocial behaviours like drug or alcoholic addictions
- Disability due to age and sickness
- Skills of family members
- Detailed information about participants occupation and occupational schedule
- Financial Status of the stakeholders
- Special contributions that the family members and kinsmen offer

The questionnaires that were drawn in English language were interpreted to those who are illiterates among the stakeholders.

Analysis of the Fundamentals

This is the feasibility analysis of the project, to further clarify the scope, as informed by the detailed planning and design of the project. It entailed the verification and update of already collected data and covered the key areas of the project as stated below. Technical Factors:

- Soil tests and analyses
- Best options for provision of the first basic infrastructural facility which is road network
- Detailed analysis of available options in actual construction system, including materials and technologies
- Collation of names of family members, who are artisans in different relevant fields such as Bricklaying, Carpentry, Electrical and Plumbing Works
- Analysis of environmental issues like pollution, flooding, that may hamper progress and likely solutions
- Articulation of criteria for Architectural designs of the housing units and layout plan
- It can be decided at this level that in addition to road network openings, an event centre comprising of a Hall and rooms accommodation must be included.
- Preliminary cost of the above can be decided on by the professionals and report given later on

Financial Factors:

To avoid project failure more analysis and probe into the veracity and sustainability of the claims of the households on their income from salaries and earnings from their employments, in public and private sectors, was carried out. This was done through pay-slips, bank account statements for the people in middle level income and verification from co-family members for the low income earners.

The above analysis was to determine the size of house and form of participation of each household on the project, moreover, the land cannot accommodate all the willing family members in the scheme.

Architectural Design:

The choice of the architectural designs was determined on the basis of factors such as the texture of the soil, environmental issues like pollution, flooding and finances, which will assist in achieving a construction of affordable and decent houses. Preliminary Architectural drawings of two prototypes for each of the three identified categories (Medium-Semi-Medium and Low Income) were produced. Also produced were the Architectural preliminary drawings of the proposed Event Centre that comprises of a multi-purpose hall and lodging apartments for the use of the family as (AKODI) and also for commercial purpose to generate fund for the family. Preliminary cost estimate of these drawings was produced by the Quantity Survey team. This is to guide the family in making a choice based not only on beauty, but on cost as well.

Technicality of the Project:

At the technical stage decisions were taken with respect to basic materials to be used for the

construction, foundation footing, foundation walls, the walls, flooring, ceiling, roofing and finishing. Due consideration was given to maintenance and future developments, where emphasis was laid on the local availability of the specified materials, the affordable cost and also the availability of local expert, (artisans) to handle the project. Also taken into consideration is the issue of climate change, its attendant effect of heavy rainfall, the likelihood to cause flood in the near future and the ability and capability of the specified materials to withstand elements of weather with little expenses on maintenance. The final technical decisions on construction materials are presented in Table 1.

S/NO.	Foundational Unit	Material Types	Recommended Sizes
1.	Foundation	Igneous Rock	Boulder size and ¼ Chipping
2.	Walls	(a) Sandcrete Block (b) Laterite Bricks	225m x 450mm
3.	Roof	Coconut or palm trees as roof members with Factory coated Corrugated zinc cover.	50mm x 50mm x 3.6m
4.	Ceiling	Nigerite asbestos ceiling board	1.2m x 2.4m
5.	Flooring	Cement/sand screed terrazzo Rubber P.V.C floor tiles	1.2m x 1.2m
6.	External wall Finishing	Light plastering with tyrolene for low income plastering and painting for medium and high income	
7.	Internal walls finishing	Cement/sand plastering with Painting	
8.	Doors	Fabricated metal doors for exits	1.2m x 2.1m
9.	Windows	Low and medium Income buildings: Combined Wrought iron window frame, with louvre blade carrier and burglar proof.	1.5m x 1.2m 1.5m x 1.2m
10.	External works car parks Opened ground	High income buildings: Aluminium framed glazed window unit Well compacted ground finished with roughened surface termite hill or clay Suitable grass with flower hedges	1.5m x 1.2m

Table 1: Details of Functional Units and Materials

Implementation

This is the execution stage where making alterations and changes to already packaged project document seems impossible, except in special cases where fluctuation may be unavoidable. The respondents gave the under listed vital decisions as the steps taken to enhance the smooth take-off of the scheme.

Financing the Project:

According to the respondents it was unanimously agreed that some plots of land must be sold to non-family members to offset the cost of opening up the land A saving account was opened with a Microfinance Bank. A committee was set up to handle the financial transactions of the scheme with three people appointed as signatories to the account. Accounts of the project are presented for

updating at every family meeting on monthly basis. This offers strict and transparent financial management of the project.

Construction of the Project:

This stage entails the physical construction of houses and other communal structures. Accordingly, this is in two levels; Individual household houses and the communal, multipurpose hall/lodging accommodation. By the year 2010, the opening up of the inner road network was completed, and the physical allocation of plots to members of the family ready for the construction of their house.

The respondents submitted that the household buildings are been constructed individually, however, assistance were rendered from the extended family in the forms of professional advice/service, sourcing for materials such as quarry site, good laterite for the production of bricks, family forest reserve for timbers, coconut and palm trees for roofing members and furniture works. Centrally fabricated brick moulding machines were made available for the use of would be house owners at no cost.

For the two levels of the project execution, procedures were put in place through the building committee that ensures; quality control, reduction of wastages ,strict adherence to cost budget and time Adequate project progress review charts were drawn to check and avoid sub-standard projects.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is the conclusion of this study that the greatest advantage of this laudable scheme is the successful rehabilitation of residents in the slums to a moderately planned environment with all assurances of good health, better security and improved general well-being of the people. This is evident by the fact that the hitherto barren land has given birth to an evolving virile community of people with common hope and aspirations, living together in peace and with a common goal, irrespective of religion and other sentiments. All the completed houses are powered with electricity from the public line and provided with deep well for water supply. This study is of the conclusion that the family Hall is a focal point of sense of belonging that now exist in the community; as social events of different nature now takes place at no rental cost to the family members. Some economic opportunities have started availing themselves such as shops, drinking joint, canteen and repair services. The construction works also provide employment opportunities for the artisans and non skilled workers who take advantage of site proximity to their dwellings

Therefore, to avert communal tension in the future, this paper therefore recommends that the management of the scheme in terms of fund and resources should be formalized and put in the hands of experts to reduce to the minimum, the issue of fraud and family sentiments. The Local Government Authority should be brought in to take over the maintenance of some infrastructural facilities and the community should be ready to partner with State Government to benefit from the ongoing community Project sponsorship such as health and education related projects. It is also recommended that the construction of a police post is necessary to tackle the issue of security through contact with the appropriate authority. Strict adherence to the layout as regards construction and situation of religious worship places such as churches and mosques to avoid future noise pollution and likely breakdown of the present serene neighbourliness.

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