

DEVELOPING A NATIONAL SHELTER STRATEGY: LESSONS FROM FOUR COUNTRIES

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FOREWORD

The provision of adequate shelter to all sectors of the community is a complex and a daunting task, which can only be realized through harnessing of all resources at the disposal of a nation. The formulation and implementation of national shelter strategies based on the principle of an "enabling" approach, is therefore the cornerstone of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. National shelter strategies should provide an evolving framework for national and international action and for the allocation of scarce national resources.

Since the available global experience in the formulation of comprehensive and integrated national shelter strategies is limited, this study on developing national shelter strategies was undertaken as a first step towards developing a systematic body of knowledge on the subject, reviewing the experience of four countries which have attempted, prior to the adoption of the Global Strategy for Shelter, to develop a national housing strategy of their own. Pooling of global knowledge and experience, as well as development of a national and global feedback system, will provide countries with an opportunity to learn from each other, and improve profoundly, each country's performance in improving the shelter conditions of its people.

The study, as could be expected, does not lead to the recommendation of a step-by-step formula for shelter strategy formulation, which when followed diligently, would assure success. On the contrary, it supports the view that diverse approaches and processes, which reflect the unique socio-political needs and parameters of individual countries, are capable of producing solid and effective shelter strategies which address the urgent shelter issues facing the country. At the same time, the study also identifies several distinct patterns that would guide other countries in the process of formulating their own national shelter strategies.

I wish to thank the Finnish International Development Agency and the United States Agency for International Development for financial assistance made available for the study and also the Urban Institute, Washington D.C., and the team of consultants who undertook the study. A special word of thanks is also due to the Governments of Barbados, Jamaica, Kenya and Zimbabwe for the co-operation extended in this work.



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Under-Secretary-General
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PREFACE

This report has been prepared by Richard J. Struyk, based on monographs prepared by separate writers as described below.

The work reported on is very much a team effort. The experience of each of the four countries included has been documented in a separate monograph prepared as part of the overall project. These monographs have been the essential inputs for this analysis. Three of the four authors of the monographs - Marja Hoek-Smit, Margery A. Turner, and Christopher Walter - participated in designing the content of the study generally and the monographs in particular. In addition, after the monographs had been drafted, they were part of lively discussions about the common points and differences among the four countries and what these implied about doing better in the future. The author of the fourth monograph - Sara Wakeham - could not participate in these events because she lives in Nairobi. Nevertheless, her contribution goes beyond her monograph. During the final work of preparation done by Raymond J. Struyk, she provided a broad and wise perspective on national policy development.

Beyond these four authors, other contributors deserve recognition. Members of the staff of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) saw the need for this type of analysis and vigorously supported it throughout, giving insightful comments at every stage. Howard Sumka of the United States Agency for International Development was a key force behind the Agency's early efforts to assist countries in developing national housing strategies and a consistent supporter of the present publication. Outi Berghall, of the Finnish Ministry of the Environment, provided helpful reactions to the early plans, participated in the field visit for the Jamaican case study, and gave thoughtful and thorough comments on a draft. Lastly, a great vote of thanks is owed to all those people in and out of government in the four countries who gave generously of their time in helping reconstruct the details of the strategy development process and in making observations on where improvements might be made.

This study was undertaken by the Urban Institute, Washington, D.C., and a team of consultants, in co-operation with the Governments of Barbados, Jamaica, Kenya and Zimbabwe and with financial assistance from the Finnish International Development Agency, the United States Agency for International Development and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). Publication and distribution of the team's report by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) does not imply that the concerned Governments or the Centre necessarily agree with all the conclusions contained therein.

Mention of firm names and commercial products does not imply the endorsement of the United Nations.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the team which produced it and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Secretariat.

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SUMMARY

The extraordinary challenge faced by developing countries in providing minimally adequate housing for their citizens is widely recognized. In 1988 the General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously adopted the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 which calls for a shift in national housing policies in the direction of mobilizing the full potential and resources of all the actors in the shelter sector, with governments creating the conditions under which the private sector - formal and informal, individual families, businesses, non-governmental organizations, and community groups - can more effectively contribute to the shelter production and improvement process. It also calls for countries to engage in serious planning efforts at the sector level to increase the efficiency of housing production. Central to these planning efforts is the development of national shelter strategies.

In the years prior to the adoption of the Global Strategy a few countries had developed a national housing strategy, often with donor support. As part of the present study, detailed reviews of four of these strategy development processes were conducted, i.e., those in Barbados, Jamaica, Kenya, and Zimbabwe (a summary of each case study is annexed to this document). This report summarizes the lessons that can be drawn from these experiences so that other countries and the donor community can draw upon them to improve the process of developing national shelter strategies.

Case summaries

The following thumbnail sketches of the experience of the four countries prior to 1989 sets the stage for the summary of "lessons" which is presented below.

Barbados: The actual strategy-development phase was essentially a continuation of a longer-term policy-development process which had begun five years earlier. Before the final phase of the strategy-development process began, general agreement on the new policy objectives had already been achieved. Strategy development was supported by funding under a sector loan from a donor, including assignment of a long-term advisor to the relevant ministry who participated fully in the process. There was strong support for the policy-development effort over its extended period (1979-

1986), including the final two years on which this study focuses. Some elements of the new policy began to be implemented prior to completion of the strategy. However, for a variety of reasons, further implementation after its completion has been somewhat stalled.

Jamaica undertook a formal strategy-development effort in a compressed time-frame so that the results could be presented at the meetings held on the occasion of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. This planning effort built on a major sectoral policy review completed in 1982. It enjoyed strong direction and continued support at the ministerial level. The donors provided a modest amount of technical assistance. Those managing the process developed a broad backing for the policies defined. The strategy was formally adopted by the Government and it is being implemented with considerable donor co-operation and loan funds.

Kenya undertook a formal strategy development effort in a compressed time-frame so that the strategy formulated could be presented at the tenth Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements held in 1987 (the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless). While those organizing the strategy-development process attempted to develop wide support for the strategy, they did not succeed, apparently in part because of the time pressures. The strategy process also failed to mobilize and benefit from direction and support at the political level. The donors provided substantial help in the form of short-term technical assistance to the process. The strategy formulated has not yet been implemented, but it has provided a substantial base for further policy development.

The **Zimbabwean** experience contrasts with the two foregoing cases in that: (a) it was a country-initiated and-led effort with no significant donor impetus or assistance; (b) it had an extended development period of about two years; (c) it has been subject to consultation and refinement during the implementation phase, rather than during development; and, (d) it was structured more as a policy paper than a strategy and therefore had a somewhat narrower scope than the strategies in the other countries. The strategy itself builds on several donor-supported technical analyses done prior to actual strategy development. In addition,

those developing the strategy had participated in broad policy-development exercises in the years immediately preceding this effort. The process enjoyed strong ministerial support throughout, and some of the policies developed are being implemented.

The strategies developed have in common that they define a greater role for the private sector in housing production and qualitative changes in the role for government agencies. The reorientation means different things in different countries: for example, the Government maintains a substantial, but significantly reduced, role in Zimbabwe compared with the situation shortly after independence in 1980.

The strategy statements generally give careful consideration to constraints to high-volume production caused by problems in land, housing finance, building and subdivision regulations, and government sector policies. However, other areas which are also important generally receive little attention. Most significantly, it is typical that insufficient information is developed on how low-income "informal" housing markets are operating. This omission is especially problematic as it means the necessary basis for truly enabling policies is absent for many components of the strategy. Moreover, housing-related infrastructure services, the demand for rental housing and the role of housing in economic growth and employment generation receive only light treatment.

Finally, only one of the statements (Barbados) contained a detailed implementation plan and schedule and therefore met the narrow test of constituting a formal strategy. The other countries

sector, and a comprehensive examination of the role of housing in the economy.

How would one calculate the "success rate" of these strategy development efforts? By almost any standard, one would classify the results in Jamaica and Zimbabwe as clear successes because there are obvious signs of subsequent programme shifts consistent with the strategy. In Barbados the development of the strategy *per se* was the best of all the countries because of its thoroughness, but a change in Government and withdrawal of support by a major donor impaired the pace of implementation. However, it is far too early to discount the ultimate effects in Barbados. Similarly, in Kenya, given a longer time-frame, it may turn out that the combination of the strategy process in 1986/87 and a new effort begun in late 1988 to look at urban land-use problems may yield significant benefits for the country. In general it seems clear that the perceived benefits of a period of concentrated policy development at the sectoral level increase over time, as the technical analyses and coalition building among the various actors involved in the shelter delivery process begin to be exploited.

Common patterns and lessons

Perhaps the clearest lesson is that diverse approaches and processes are capable of producing solid, useful strategy or policy statements which have been implemented to varying degrees. Hence, there is no single step-by-step formula which should be followed in most cases, if success is to be assured. Nevertheless, there are some common patterns associated with the development of policy analysis, strong strategy statements

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