

UGANDA'S EXPERIENCE IN IMPLEMENTING ENABLING SHELTER

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ABSTRACT

In order to implement the Global Shelter Strategy, Uganda was identified as one of the countries to participate in the Shelter Strategy Support Programme implemented by the UN-Habitat in 1986. This meant formulation of a national Shelter Strategy and its translation into a viable and replicable shelter programme under the broad umbrella of enablement. Under this approach, the Government pursued complimentary policy objectives and strategies to improve the housing conditions in the country, so as to address the country's housing need that was so great that it could not be met through other efforts.

This paper reviews the background to, and implementation of enabling strategies since the formulation of the National Shelter Strategy in 1992. It argues that enablement per se cannot firmly address the challenge of the housing problem because there are certain sections of society who need direct intervention for them to access decent and affordable housing.

Finally, the paper discusses the challenges that have been faced and the lessons learnt in implementing enabling shelter strategies in Uganda, and the implications for policy. It concludes that the enabling policy had good intentions but the weak institutional structure and low technical capacities at local governments have made it a hard task to achieve. Additionally, the poverty levels at both national and household level have rendered the enabling approach inadequate in addressing the housing challenge.

Key words: Enabling Strategy, Habitat Agenda, Housing Policy, Human Settlements, Shelter Strategy

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Uganda was one of the countries identified by the UN-General Assembly in December 1986, to participate in the Shelter Strategy Support Programme implemented by UN-HABITAT (Government of Uganda, 1992a). Under the programme, technical assistance was provided in the formulation of national shelter strategies and translating them into viable and replicable shelter programmes. The government therefore adopted the enabling policy approach whereby Government facilitates the participation of a wide range of actors in housing development and improvement. This meant that Government was responsible for creating an environment in which households, firms, NGOs and community groups could operate effectively and efficiently. (Government of Uganda, 1992a: 1992b).

Under the enabling approach, the Government was to pursue complimentary policy objectives and strategies as highlighted in the National Shelter Strategy (1992), among them the following:

- To rehabilitate the housing industry and renovate factories producing building materials
- To increase the housing stock through cooperative effort, self-help, private sector development and public housing agencies
- To improve housing conditions generally through improved access to infrastructure and services
- To divest government from the commitment to provide housing to civil servants and to put in place a system of housing allowances to assist civil servants to meet their housing needs through the private sector and individual home ownership
- To foster a health housing finance environment and facilities in which government would use public funds to generate and support policy measures that would encourage private sector participation and community initiative in housing finance development

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This paper examines the extent to which the enabling shelter strategies in Uganda have been implemented. The methodology involved studying and evaluation of literature and archival documents from different sources on Uganda's housing environment, examination of the policy framework on housing, housing programmes executed by the Government of Uganda and conducting interviews with key persons from Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development and scholars on the subject.

3.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHELTER STRATEGY

The housing sector in Uganda is multi-faceted, with different institutions, including the private sector. There is, thus, need for effective coordination of all the stakeholders involved in housing development and provision of related services in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Responsibilities in implementing the shelter strategy in Uganda

Services	Responsible Person/Organ
▪ Land Accessibility	Private landlords, Land Registrar, Uganda Land Commission (ULC), District Land Boards.
▪ Planning- both Spatial and non-spatial	Physical Planning Department by local authorities and Ministry responsible for housing and Local authorities
Infrastructure Provision eg Water, Sanitation, Drainage, Solid Waste and Roads	Ministry of Lands, National water and Sewerage Corporation, Local authorities, Developers, owners, private sector
▪ Maintenance	Private sector, Individual households and Ministry
▪ Management	- Private sector, Local Governments, Ministry
<i>Source: The Constitution of the republic of Uganda, 1995.</i>	

The role of the Central Government is to establish policy, legislative, institutional and financial frameworks that can enable the private sector, both formal and informal, NGOs, CBOs and Households to make and optimize their contribution to the national shelter delivery system. The

Ministry responsible for housing handles formulation of policies, legislative tasks, establishment of Standards, capacity building, provision of technical support as well as monitoring and evaluation of policies, programs and projects. Responsibility for service delivery in Uganda lies with the local authorities and private sector.

Table 2. Responsibilities in housing development.

Service	Responsibility
Quality assurance	Government
Maintenance	Private/Government/Local government
Mobilisation	Local authorities/NGOs/CBOs
Sensitisation Program	Government/Local authorities and community

Source: Ministry of Works, Housing and Communications Ministerial policy statement 2003

Current legislation pertinent to housing development includes the Decentralisation Act (1993), the Land Act (1998), the Public Health Act (1964), the Condominium Property Act (2001), the Building Societies Act, The Building Control Bill (2002), The Local Government Act (1997), the NEMA Statute (1995) and the Town and Country Planning Act (1964), The National Land Use Policy (Draft) (2011), The Physical Planning Act (2010).

The decentralisation policy in Uganda started in 1992 and is fully entrenched. It is a framework for sharing obligations, competencies and revenues, and above all, moving decision making as close as possible to the citizens. The 1997 Local Government Act provides further details for the operationalisation of the decentralization policy (Government of Uganda, 1997). However, there is inadequate quantity and quality of staff at lower levels.

The Land Act (1998) which vests all land into citizens of Uganda poses tremendous challenges for orderly urban development. This is especially the case where local authorities do not have resources to compensate owners. Implementation of the Land Act has also met problems arising out of controversy and misunderstandings owing to inconsistencies in land use planning requirements in the country (Busingye, 2002).

The Public Health Act empowers the Local Governments to undertake planning and determine their own priority programmes. It is nevertheless important to note that many local governments are passive to ensure planning and provision of services yet they levy property taxes.

The Condominium Property Act (2001) provides for ownership of flats and management of common property by co-operation. A total of 350 condominium plans were prepared by the Government and submitted to the local authorities for approval to enable the public access property under this Act (Government of Uganda, 2005). However, there is need for further sensitisation of the public to increase awareness about this Law and how developers and investors should be interested in investing in Condominium Properties. This would help optimise on use of land and economise on the cost of infrastructure costs.

In the absence of large real estate developers, individual household developers have played a significant role in increasing the housing stock. The formal private sector does not, however, develop rental housing for the urban poor in urban areas. The informal sector, therefore, responds to meet the needs of the urban poor by building sub-standard un-serviced housing rentable at low rents.

4.0 KEY ASPECTS OF HABITAT AGENDA ADDRESSED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF UGANDA

The Habitat Agenda is a global call that sets out approaches and strategies towards the twin goals of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development (UNCHS, 1996). Uganda embarked on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda as an integral part of the overall fight for the eradication of poverty (Government of Uganda, 2000: 2004). The following analysis is based on key national strategies and projects undertaken by Government of Uganda and they include:

4.1 The National Plan of Action for Human Settlements: This was formulated within the overall framework of the Habitat Agenda (1995a). At the National level it has contributed to the realization of the goals and principles of the Habitat Agenda. The NPA recognizes the strong inter-linkage between housing development, economic development and environmental management (Government of Uganda, 2001). It therefore identified the following as key priority areas for development of human settlements: Eradication of poverty and job creation, Access to land and shelter for all, and Promotion of integrated environmental infrastructure and services

4.2 The National Shelter Programme: This programme was formulated to operationalise the National shelter strategy. It had several projects earmarked for implementation. However, due to financial constraints, only a limited number of projects have been implemented (Government of Uganda, 2005).

4.3 Low Cost Housing and Slum Upgrading Projects: The Government of Uganda with support from the Development partners has been able to implement Slum Upgrading Projects as described:

With funding from UNDP, the **Namuwongo** low-cost housing and slum upgrading project was conceived as a strategic intervention to improve the living conditions in the Namuwongo slum in Kampala. The land was acquired, planned and demarcated into 1,000 plots, which were then allocated to beneficiaries. The beneficiaries were given loans to buy the land and building materials for house construction (Government of Uganda, 2008).

The **Malukhu** Integrated Poverty Eradication Project was conceived in 1992 and implementation started in 1996. It was intended to benefit 460 households in Malukhu slum in Mbale, eastern Uganda. The beneficiaries were given building materials loan to enable them construct decent affordable houses. In addition, members of the community have also benefited from the business loans advanced and there has been tremendous improvement in loan recovery due to intensive community sensitization and involvement (Government of Uganda, 2008).

The **Oli** Low cost Housing project was started way back in 1995. The first phase was intended to benefit 180 households in the Oli community in Arua Municipality in the first phase. It was funded by the Africa Housing Fund. So far 151 houses have been built. Most of these are occupied and others are at different stages of development (Government of Uganda, 2008). The project is still ongoing. However, owing to the civil war in Northern Uganda, loan recovery has been a big problem.

The **Masese** Women's self Help Project was conceived in 1989 to benefit the residents of Masese Slum in Jinja who were very poor and inadequately housed. The majority were women employed in the informal sector. The project was funded by DANIDA and was intended to benefit 700 households. Some 400 houses have been completed to date, and 60 are at different stages of development. The project has a building materials plant for imparting skills to the project community (Government of Uganda, 2008). The members were also offered business loans to support their income generating activities. However, due to the high levels of poverty among the project beneficiaries, loan recovery has been a big problem.

The Naalya Housing Project was conceived by National Housing and Construction Corporation of Uganda to develop a fully integrated housing estate to benefit the low, middle and high income earners. It involved acquisition of land, its planning, provision of infrastructures (water supply, sewerage, electricity and roads), Construction of houses and linking the buyers to Housing Finance Company of Uganda for financing. The downside to this project is that it has ended up benefiting only middle and high income earners, leaving out the low-income earners.

New housing projects. The Government of Uganda has embarked on developing new housing projects – Otuke Housing Project and Kasooli Housing Project, where 50 proto-type plans have been developed for use (Government of Uganda, 2012). However, careful planning and implementation of the projects will be vital if mistakes experienced in similar past projects are to be avoided.

4.4 Eradication of Poverty Housing - Habitat for Humanity

The eradication of Poverty Housing programme was started in the early 1990s targeting the poorest of the poor in the urban and rural areas. The beneficiaries are mobilised into “affiliate groups” sensitised and then given a loan in form of building materials for houses according to standard plans. Beneficiaries are expected to contribute “sweat equity”, for example, providing unskilled labour, making their own bricks etc. The loan ranges between Uganda shillings. 1.5 to 1.8 million (Approximately US\$ 1,000) repayable over a period of ten years at no interest. However, the success of the programme with respect to loan repayment and sustainability is yet to be determined.

4.5 Land Use Management

In 2007 the Government of Uganda adopted a National Land Use Policy (2007) whose objective was to achieve sustainable and equitable socio-economic development through optimal land management and utilisation in Uganda, little has been achieved. Under the Act, local authorities are engaged in the process of land use management and physical planning of the developments in their areas of jurisdiction (UN-Habitat, 2010). District land boards were established after being recognised in the 1995 constitution to handle land matters within their areas of jurisdiction.

5.0 CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Government of Uganda adopted the enabling approach to play an active role in economic development in general and human settlements in particular. However, many challenges have been faced, lessons learnt, and implications for policy have emerged as follows:

5.1 Urbanisation

The rate of urbanization in Uganda is estimated at 5.87 percent per annum (UN-Habitat, 2003). These urban areas are developing with no planning or proper guidance. Development of such settlement poses a big challenge as it contributes to the growth of the informal settlements. There is, therefore, need to evolve a National Urbanisation Policy to guide the urban development.

5.2 Capacity to plan, guide and manage urban development

There is inadequate capacity at both the national and local levels to plan, guide and manage urban development. At national and local levels, the departments responsible for planning and management of human settlements are grossly understaffed and under-funded. The situation is aggravated by weak institutional co-ordination and lack of appropriate institutional structures at the district level. There is therefore need for public intervention in supporting capacity building of local authorities by working together through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). Government delays in dealing with policy issues have also undermined the development of the housing sector. For example, the review of the National Housing Policy has been on for over ten years and to date it is not yet near completion. At the same time, the Landlord –Tenant bill and Uganda Land Commission Bill that were prepared some years back are yet to be considered by cabinet (Government of Uganda, 2012). Likewise, the National Land Use Policy is still in draft form.

5.3 Human Settlements Development

Curtailling the spread of informal settlements/slums to new areas is proving a major challenge. So far the public interventions are geared towards upgrading existing informal settlements/slums which has proved to be a difficult task due to limited financial capacity.

5.4 Access to land and security of tenure

There has been significant improvement in access to land and security of tenure following the Constitutional Reform in 1995. While it is now possible to buy and sell land at an agreed price

between the buyer and the seller, the present multiple land tenure systems are not conducive for orderly urban development. There is need for Central Government to support local authorities to enable them acquire land for re-development through land-banking or consolidation schemes. Facilitating the supply of planned and serviced land with security of tenure at affordable prices is one of the biggest challenges. The provision of secure tenure for land in adequate quantities, in suitable locations at affordable prices and on equitable terms is a fundamental requirement for clearing the backlog of housing demand for the poor and meeting the rapidly growing need to house new poor families in urban areas.

Despite adoption of the National Land Use Policy (2007), there is still lack of adequate information on land use, inadequate land use planning structures and capacity at all levels in the country, lack of harmonisation of laws and policies related to land use, insufficient and uncoordinated land evaluation for suitable land allocation, poor implementation of existing policy and legal instruments related to land use and inadequate financial resources for institutions responsible for land management (UN-Habitat, 2010). In addition, although the District Land Boards were recognized and established, they still remain largely un-functional due to lack of human resource capacity and funding.

5.5 Building materials

At national level, 71 per cent of the housing stock is constructed of temporary materials, 11 per cent of semi-permanent materials and only 18 per cent of permanent materials. At the same time, there is a large discrepancy between materials used in urban and rural areas. The 2002 National Census indicated that about 59 per cent of urban dwelling units were constructed using permanent materials compared to 10 per cent in rural areas and this picture has not changed much to date (UN-Habitat, 2010).

The supply of building materials on the Ugandan market has increased in quantity (see table 3). This has been as a result of macro-economic stability and liberalization, the rehabilitation and expansion of local industries, and increased imports. Accessibility to building materials has improved largely in terms of proximity from the site of construction within 41.9 percent to a radius of 5 kilometres (UN-Habitat, 2010). However, there still remains a problem of limited quality and variety of building materials for use. Therefore, in spite of increases in production and supply of building materials, the proportion of permanent houses has not increased at corresponding rate as the cost of materials is still high. Costs of building materials have risen steadily in the past recent years and this has been partly attributed to conflicts in Uganda, Southern Sudan and the Congo, with key stakeholders describing more profitable materials markets in neighbouring countries leading to higher prices for local residents in Gulu and Kampala (UN-Habitat, 2010). Under the prevailing circumstances, it is still difficult to advocate for the use of permanent building materials in low income settlements.

The ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development plans to establish a national cost database for building materials and to supply 25 districts with equipment and specialized materials. Although this seems to be a step in the right direction, the ministry is very much limited in terms of resources. For example, the Ministry requires UGX 30 billion (USD 13,953,500) in the medium term to implement the land fund, yet only UGX 19.97 billion (USD 9,300,000) is provided in financial year 2009/10 for the budget (UN-Habitat, 2010). Government should therefore consider removing taxes on building materials to stimulate building construction.

Table 3. Trends in the housing materials supply to the market

Materials	1997(Tonnes)	2001(Tonnes)	Percentage increase
Cement, Lime	289,560	431,084	48.9
Bricks, Tiles, etc	17,427	29,570	69.7
Iron Sheets	29,710	58,054	95.4
<i>Source: 1999/2000 Uganda National Household Survey</i>			

5.6 Provision of Basic Services

According to UBOS (2005), rural access to safe water stands at 61.3 percent and 52 percent in the wet and dry seasons respectively. Overall coverage of the 19 large towns served by National Water and Sewerage Corporation, a major supplier of piped water in the country, stands at 68 percent; overall coverage of 143 small towns is estimated at 36 percent. The 2006 statistics revealed that 95 percent had access to safe water in the urban areas compared to 54 percent in the rural areas. Access to improved sanitation stood at 43 percent (2004) and about 14 percent did not have toilet and helped themselves in the bush (UNFPA, 2007). This is of great concern as it affects the quality of water that the households use. While the national figures indicate a more convincing picture, in urban informal settlements, especially Kampala, the situation is worse and deserves special attention.

5.7 Financing of Housing Development

The majority of the households have been mobilising their own savings to build their houses over a period of time – only a very small proportion are able to access mortgage finance. Until recently, there were only two mortgage finance institutions in Uganda, Housing Finance Company of Uganda (HFCU) and Development Finance Company of Uganda (DFCU). The terms that are offered can only be afforded by the rich who are able to pre-finance up to 30 percent of the project cost. This is not conducive for the long-term housing development. The formal housing finance institutions also lack long term savings deposits, have low capital base, high interest rates and high building costs. There is consequently, a shortage of mortgage finance coupled with unfavourable lending terms.

Some community financing efforts have been used to assist disadvantaged members of society to access housing finance. For example, through the Uganda Women Finance Trust, women groups get loans of UGX500, 000 (USD 230) repayable within four months (UN-Habitat, 2010). There is therefore, a need for Government intervention to mobilise long-term capital to support housing development programs under the local authorities, especially for the low and middle-income groups. This can be done by supporting micro-lending through micro finance institutions and Savings and Credit Co-operative Organisations (SACCOs).

The above challenges, lessons and implications can be summarised as in table 4.

Table 4: Summary of challenges, lessons learnt and implications

	Challenges	Lessons learnt	Implications
1.	<i>Urbanisation</i> High urbanisation rates, lack of planning or guidance	High urbanisation rates are leading to spread of informal settlements	Growth of informal settlements will continue in the foreseeable future unless efforts are made to address the situation
2.	<i>Capacity to plan, guide and manage urban development</i> Inadequate capacity at both the national and local levels to plan, guide and manage urban development	Capacity to plan, guide and manage urban development at national and local levels are essential for achieving organised development	There is a need to develop capacity to plan, guide and manage urban development by reviewing/developing relevant policies and building institutional framework for their implementation
3.	<i>Human Settlements Development</i> Challenge of urban sprawl	Unguided development is facilitating spread of urban sprawl	Cost of provision of infrastructure service is likely to increase, thereby negatively affecting access to decent housing
4.	<i>Access to land and security of tenure</i> Poor land use information Poor land evaluation and	Interventions so far made to regulate the land market in Uganda are still lacking	There is need to develop a functional legal framework for implementing land management

	management Un-functional District Land Boards		strategies in the country
5.	<i>Building materials</i> Poor quality and quantity of building materials	Supply of quality building materials is still lagging behind demand for the materials	Scarcity and poor quality of building materials are hampering access to decent and affordable housing
6.	<i>Provision of Basic Services</i> Inadequate provision of basic services	Level of access to basic services is still low in the country	Many Ugandans are living in unhealthy living conditions
7.	<i>Financing of Housing Development</i> High interest rates High building costs Lending terms not poor friendly	Many poor people cannot access housing loans from formal financial institutions.	Access to housing finance in Uganda is still limited.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Government of Uganda's adoption of an enabling approach in addressing human settlements is broad-based and multi dimensional. Despite the good intentions, the weak institutional structure and low technical capacities at local governments have made it a hard task to achieve. Additionally, the poverty levels at both national and household level have rendered the enabling approach inadequate in addressing the housing needs. For effective delivery there is need for Government to strengthen the housing financial institutions to adequately play their role in availing the finances to the sector at reasonable rates. The problem of rapid urbanisation is real and growing fast. Its effects need to be addressed now before they get out of hand. For this to be effectively done, appropriate studying of its dimensions and planning for mitigation measures are crucial elements for achieving a planned and organised urban environment.

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