

04

SHELTER

Introduction

Access to shelter at a level adequate for family health and well-being was declared as one of the basic human rights by Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10th December 1948. However, even today, more than six decades later, access to shelter for all is far from being universally realized. Its complex nature is rarely understood by scientists even in the most technically advanced industrialized countries.

Shelter is often seen as a mere 'product', which is an inadequate vision that needs to change if progress is seriously sought. Shelter is in fact multi-dimensional where it is as much a 'process' as it is a 'product' which also needs to be spatially defined. In Sri Lanka this latter spatial dimension calls for a broad geographic differentiation of shelter. The location of dwellings whether they are in rural or urban settings, coastal or hilly locations, in agricultural or plantation areas and also whether they are within the wet zone or dry zone make a considerable difference.

Shelter must also be seen as being an essential component of human settlement systems in which social and physical infrastructure and services are an integral part. The nature and types of these systems should ideally vary according to their geographic settings. While the shelter sector in totality should cover the needs of the upper, middle and lower income categories of our people, the focus here will be on the last, that being the most difficult and urgent. The ultimate objective of the

strategy will be to enhance the health, wellbeing and productivity of the people at large, increase GDP and thereby provide strong support to the national development effort of the government.

Sri Lanka has a long history in attempts to define affordable housing strategies and technologies. Unfortunately, there has been a fragmentation of institutions dealing with shelter almost with each political regime change. The consequence has been that it has adversely affected institutional memory and continuity of policies. Presently, information on past experiences is not readily available. Thus, there is a need for a comprehensive bibliography of relevant literature especially in the context of the need to identify and develop research programs.

The process of shelter provision for the poor, in all its detail, is often managed by an agency, usually of the State or sometime by an NGO. Alternatively, the participation of the target communities could be sought in varying degrees. Housing programs will not be successful without having the participation of people particularly in the case of shelter for low income groups. Effective mechanisms should therefore be sought for the participation of people based on studies of past experiences. Although many cost effective technologies and materials have already been developed locally, these techniques and materials are not adequately popularized.

Sub Areas, Issues and Relevant Interventions

Table 1: Sub Areas and Justifications

Sub areas	Justifications
1) Shelter as a process and an integral part of human settlements	Access to shelter was declared a basic human right by Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in Paris in year 1948. It should be considered as a process, as providing shelter involves intentions, decisions and actions. It is an integral part of human settlement systems also which should be considered along with community architecture (user involvement in design and construction) and participatory planning in provision of basic infrastructure for human settlements. The whole process also involve political, social and environmental aspects.
2) Housing projects	Every citizen of a country has a fundamental right to housing, which ensures access to safe, secure, habitable and affordable home with freedom. Annual housing requirement of Sri Lanka is 50,000 units. It is mandatory to have a shelter for every citizen which guarantee that they have this right to live in security, peace and dignity. With the limited suitable land available for residential purposes, housing projects should be considered as a mean for fulfilling these basic rights of citizens.
3) Shelter as a product	Product is an object created as a result of a process and serves a need or satisfies a want. Construction of low-cost housing by using low-cost building materials increase the access to houses by low-income groups. Low – cost housing can be achieved by efficient planning and project management, using low-cost materials, economical construction technologies and use of alternative construction methods.

Table 2: Issues/Problems, R&D Needs and Relevant Interventions

Sub Areas	Issues/Problems	Research and Development Needs	Relevant Interventions
<p>1) Shelter as a process and an integral part of human settlements</p>	<p>I) Large portions of Sri Lanka’s rural and urban populations live in substandard and under-served settlements.</p> <p>II) Lack of community participation in planning and management of human settlements</p> <p>III) Inaccessibility of documented materials on dry zone settlement systems consequent to the stalling of the Mahaweli development areas</p> <p>IV) Loss of institutional memory resulting from the fragmentation of institutions</p> <p>V) Inadequate guidelines on settlement planning</p> <p>VI) Providing sustainable houses for internally displaced people due to natural disasters</p>	<p>i) Preparation of literature surveys, bibliographies and precedent studies of the Sri Lankan experience with programmes where community participation has been prominent.</p> <p>ii) Finding suitable lands to provide proper housing structures to suit the geographical area</p>	<p>Policy Studies</p> <p>a) Improve and expand human settlement planning</p> <p>b) New models of planning and management, which involve greater partnership between public sector, NGOs and more involvement of the community</p> <p>Capacity Building</p> <p>a) Include subjects to postgraduate studies relevant to human settlements</p> <p>b) Establish a Research centre with knowledge management platform as a central point of contact for R&D</p>
<p>2) Housing projects</p>	<p>I) Inadequate lands suitable for housing with the increasing demand for houses</p> <p>II) Lack of community involvement in design and construction of housing projects</p>	<p>i) Development of barren lands for residential purposes</p> <p>ii) Establish community architecture by promoting</p>	<p>Policy Studies</p> <p>a) Government incentive programmes for investors for social housing (encourage private sector to invest in social housing)</p> <p>b) Improve urban and regional planning in a systematic and sustainable manner</p>

Sub Areas	Issues/Problems	Research and Development Needs	Relevant Interventions
	<p>III) Lack of proper understanding of community and social needs of inhabitants</p> <p>IV) Most of the housing projects are concentrated in urban areas</p> <p>V) Inability of social-housing projects by the Government to meet the increasing demand</p> <p>VI) Lack of access by low-income groups, even for social housing</p> <p>VII) Issues in community adaptation to multistory apartment buildings including community management of public entities</p> <p>VIII) Lack of teaching materials and curricular for community architecture teaching programmes</p>	<p>community mobilization</p> <p>iii) Access foreign research and teaching experience on design of syllabi for community architecture</p> <p>iv) Sociological survey research into appropriate local projects along with the studies of experience in Third World countries</p>	<p>c) Introduce new and more flexible tenure for social housing</p> <p>Pure and Applied Research</p> <p>a) Research on housing projects programs in Sri Lanka</p> <p>b) Research into sustainable use of under-utilized lands</p> <p>Capacity Building</p> <p>a) Enable community to involve in design, construction and management of housing projects through awareness creation</p> <p>b) Promote postgraduate research on community adaptation to multistory apartment buildings</p>
<p>3) Shelter as a product</p>	<p>I) Available building materials are generally wasteful in energy use in manufacturing and too costly for low-income families</p> <p>II) Several useful materials and innovative techniques developed in the public sector are very poorly marketed</p>	<p>i) Development of low-cost, energy efficient and easy to use building materials and construction techniques</p> <p>ii) Develop energy-efficient and environment- friendly green architecture</p>	<p>Pure and Applied Research</p> <p>a) Research on low-cost, energy efficient and easy to use building materials</p> <p>Indigenous Knowledge & Intellectual Property Rights</p> <p>a) Research into local knowledge on building techniques and traditional building materials</p>

Sub Areas	Issues/Problems	Research and Development Needs	Relevant Interventions
	<p>III) Variable and sometimes sub-standard quality materials and components</p>	<p>iii) Establish institutional arrangements for marketing of new products developed in the public sector</p> <p>iv) Establish quality standards for shelter provided for low-income groups</p>	<p>Testing, Standardization and Accreditation</p> <p>a) Develop quality standards for building materials as well as shelter provided for low-income groups</p> <p>Popularization</p> <p>a) Popularize low-cost housing construction materials developed by the public sector</p>