



# UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

Faculty of Architecture,  
Design and Development

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE

## TEACHING RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community based education is emphasised within the Architecture Course at the University of Nairobi. The present report has evolved from a programme at 3rd year level, in rural community development. Its aim is to document the learning/teaching experience gained as well as to provide a reference for future similar courses.

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## FOREWORD

One of the challenging tasks of this University is the development of curricula oriented towards the basic needs of the East African region. Most of the population here live in rural areas. Therefore the rural environment must be a focus in the education of young architects.

The present report proposes a method for teaching architectural students planning and design skills related to rural community development. It is based on the experience gained by the application of this method during a planning and design project focusing on three Kenyan rural communities in Ukambani, Muisuni, Kakuyuni and Kitwii.

The main elements of the programme are an introduction to village technologies, field work techniques such as problem identification, setting of priorities and project formulation which finally are applied in project design.

Students of the Department of Architecture actively participated in the project. Their own evaluation, which is included in this report, shows that the programme achieved its main objective in generating awareness and involvement in the satisfaction of rural needs, mainly focussing on housing, farm buildings and community facilities. The identification of priorities and potential solutions was transformed into project designs, some of which were included for the benefit of interested communities.

It is hoped that not only the students but also the studied areas and their population, totalling almost 15,000 people, derived benefits from this common teaching and learning experience.

The foundation created by the present work should form a sound basis for future research and training in the vast and important field of rural development.

Whilst this report has been prepared to fit the conditions in Kenya, it is hoped that it will be useful for those preparing similar documents in Africa and the other regions, in such cases there should be adaption of the text and illustrations to the local conditions in these countries.

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INTRODUCTION

As in most African countries the majority of Kenyans live in rural areas. National Development Plans, to a growing extent, not only aim at economic growth but also at the improvement of social conditions. Therefore, rural development is being given an increasingly higher priority.

A large number of rural development projects and (in Kenya) in particular the implementation of district development plans require trained personnel. This implies that the training programmes in different disciplines be oriented towards rural problems.

In the past rural development programmes mainly focussed on the increase of agricultural production. The experiences however show that intergrated rural development also implies an improvement of the settlement structure, community facilities and the individual homestead. Physical planners and architects traditionally oriented towards urban settings must therefore commit themselves also to rural development tasks.

To equip architects for these tasks, the development of an appropriate curriculum is imminent. This document records an attempt to develop a suitable teaching method for training architects in this area.

The leading principles are to impart basic knowledge in appropriate technology, create awareness and involvement in field situations and to apply gained experience in a design exercise.

OBJECTIVES

Main objectives of the programme are:

- To acquaint students of architecture with basic physical needs of rural communities.
- To understand the principles of appropriate village technology for rural water supply, sanitation, food and water storage, production and use of local building materials and home improvements of simple rural structures.
- To allow students to identify together with a community their basic needs, to set priorities and to suggest appropriate ways of implementation.
- To design facilities for a community which are appropriate in the sense of corresponding to felt needs, of being produced with local inputs and of being locally manageable.

METHOD

The programme consisted of lectures, visits to outside institutions, group discussions with administration and community organisations, planning and design work in studio and literature study. At the same time techniques of fieldwork such as problem identification, site analysis, brief formulation, as well as planning and design methods were acquired.