



Mathare Valley
a case study of uncontrolled settlement in Nairobi

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MATHARE VALLEY

A CASE STUDY OF
UNCONTROLLED SETTLEMENT IN NAIROBI

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SUMMARY OF GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOGNITION

Better two-way communication is needed to enable the authorities to respond to the needs of low-income families living in urban areas. 'National Pride' rejects modest housing solutions, yet no alternatives are proposed.

POLICY TO REDUCE THE CAUSES OF UNCONTROLLED URBAN SETTLEMENT

The main causes of uncontrolled urban settlement are rural-urban migration, population growth, urban unemployment and the acute shortage of housing. Excepting the use of police control, rural urban migration can only be reduced by offering economic alternatives to subsistence farming. Population control as a national policy must be included as part of a comprehensive solution. Present efforts to reduce unemployment and raise urban incomes should be intensified and accelerated. The housing deficit is made up by illegal housing built by the people themselves; instead of being outlawed, this effort should be encouraged and guided by the authorities.

POLICY TO DEAL WITH EXISTING AREAS OF UNCONTROLLED SETTLEMENT

'Improvable' areas offer the new city-dweller an opportunity to consolidate his status: although earning a regular income, he is still unable to afford an officially approved house. 'Deteriorating' areas, like the western end of Mathare Valley, provide a bridgehead for those who are attempting to gain an economic foothold in the city. 'Improvable' areas of uncontrolled settlement should be made legal, and essential improvements set in motion. 'Deteriorating' areas should only be demolished if alternative accommodation or land is made available, e.g. temporary rental accommodation with shared public utilities in central areas of the city. Premature eradication of single-room tenements can only increase overcrowding elsewhere. Movement from 'deteriorating' areas to 'improvable' areas should be encouraged.

BUILDING AND PLANNING REGULATIONS

New legislation is required to enable gradual improvement of public-utilities (water, sewage-disposal, electricity, and roads, and the quality and size of individual dwellings. Such 'Improvable Minimum Standards' should be written in Swahili and illustrated in such a way that African developers or tenant-cooperatives can understand them. The regulations should continue to permit single-room dwellings provided that adequate environmental conditions are provided e.g. cooking space, public utilities, ventilation, outdoor play-space, refuse collection etc. Construction of such dwellings should not be restricted to 'permanent' materials as it is at present.

ORGANISATIONAL RESOURCES

Popular developers have produced impressive numbers of illegal housing units. Means must be found to include and develop this organisational energy so that it can operate within the established system. In order to reduce exploitation, the formation of 'tenant co-operatives' or 'plot-owners' associations' should be encouraged.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Money available for housing in the public sector should go first towards the acquisition of land and proper planning. The phased provision of public utilities and support for buildings should follow. Urban unemployment will be reduced by allowing the low-income sector to continue its participation in housebuilding and site development.

TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES

Professional and technical advice is not easily available to those who need it most. 'Intermediate' and 'advanced' technology should be considered neither as opposites nor alternatives. Various 'levels' of technical innovation and assistance are required to stimulate the already significant achievements of African entrepreneurs.

MATERIAL RESOURCES-LAND

There is no shortage of building-land in and around Nairobi. The Government should buy underdeveloped land before its price inflates and sell or lease it to co-operatives and other development groups at a fair price. This would avoid development 'panic' and ensure the best location and control of development.

MATERIAL RESOURCES-PUBLIC UTILITIES

After water supply, other public utilities should become part of the phased development of 'improvable' housing areas. More research is required to determine the most suitable type and capacity of temporary latrines which will precede water-borne sewage disposal in some areas.

MATERIAL RESOURCES-BUILDING MATERIALS

In areas of 'improvable' housing, there should be no restriction as to the type of construction materials, provided that fire-precautions are observed. If public housing is to replace 'deteriorating' areas for families with very low incomes, it should provide no more than essential utilities and a durable enclosure capable of subdivision by the tenant.