

HOUSING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT UNIT  
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

SITE AND SERVICE SCHEMES IN KENYA

by

J. J. van Straaten

Site and Service Adviser

National Housing Corporation

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## INTRODUCTION:

The term "site and service" has probably never been defined very accurately. As a result a variety of concepts illustrating various technical standards and degrees of government financing have all been liberally covered under the same term. Variations in technical standards included: ablution blocks on the plots, each plot connected to water mains and sewer system, each plot to be connected to water mains / sewer system, communal services e.g. water kiosks and toilet-blocks, roads with various standard of finishes, streetlighting supplied or not, just to mention a few.

All these various concepts are based on the assumption that the construction of housing for the lowest income groups, although being a public responsibility, cannot realistically be done by the government alone. Therefore, as an effective alternative to the construction of complete low cost dwellings completely financed by public funds, for which the low income group cannot pay, the construction of schemes providing plots and services alone, financed from public and private resources has been introduced as a realistic approach for low-cost housing called "Site and Service Schemes".

## EXPERIENCE:

The first site and service schemes in Kenya date back to the early sixties, when the influx to the urban areas began. These schemes were mainly intended for the resettlement of squatters who had lost their land and jobs during the emergency. Upto 1970 approximately 1200 plots were completed, corresponding to a population of approximately 20,000 occupiers.

The concept of site and service was first officially recognised in the 1970-74 Development Plan which states:

"These schemes will be a significant part of the housing programme in urban areas. If no alternatives are available, the lowest income families will build the temporary houses they need anyway, as witnessed by the existence of large expanding illegal squatter areas near the urban centres. It will be the responsibility of the local authorities and the NEC to ensure that this activity is channelled into proper self-help schemes on serviced sites, lest the task of removing them or providing them with services later on becomes a grave problem. The degree of servicing of such sites will vary from the mere laying out of the sites for houses and spaces for communal facilities to a fully developed services system commensurate with the type of community envisaged .... (page 519).

As a result of this recognition 8000 plots were planned to be executed in this plan period.

The majority of the plots were constructed in the bigger Municipal Councils, e.g. Nairobi, Kisumu, Nakuru, etc. The schemes had a variety of standards and in some cases a "roof loan" was provided to the plotters to assist them in building their house. A lot of difficulties were experienced in the implementation of the schemes and plotters satisfaction varied from scheme to scheme. The local authorities most frequently recommended the construction of sanitation blocks and extended supervision.

#### Development Plan 1974-78 Programme Implementation.

As a result of the past experience and faced with no other alternative the concept of site and service received an increased recognition as a realistic approach to meeting the residential needs of the greater portion of the urban population. According to the Ministries Planning Guidelines the programme was to be spread over the 38 major town centres throughout the Republic and the average cost per unit should not exceed KES530.

In the beginning of this plan period it was thought to develop plots in site and service schemes with ablution blocks and provide plotters with a materials loan for the most expensive materials such as doors, windows, roofing sheets, etc. The cost of administration also had to be covered by the KES530 per unit. Due to the steep increase in the price of building materials since 1973 the average cost per plot for this standard exceeded the KES530 and therefore in order to bring down the average a proportion of the plots had to be developed with pit-latrines and water kiosks instead of piped water.

Doubt was expressed about the wisdom of using pit-latrines in 38 towns and the Ministry of Housing was requested to issue a written directive. As this directive had not been received by the end of 1974 the planning was restricted to the plots with waterborne sanitation only.

In mid 1975 the NHC secured the services of Dr. Robert Merrill to advise and assist the Corporation in establishing the appropriate machinery for implementation of the site and service policy. During his visit a survey was made of Site and Service schemes in approximately 15 local authorities. This survey illustrated the following major problems:-

- lack of funds for house construction;
- too high construction standards required;
- a high % of absentee - landlords;
- lack of administrative procedure;
- slow development of the plots;
- criticism of house design;
- delay in cadastral survey.