
The Management of Squatter Upgrading: the Case of Lusaka

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Introduction

Site and services scheme and squatter upgrading are now widely accepted as appropriate responses to the rapidly expanding needs for shelter and services in third world cities. The purpose here is not to discuss the merits and shortcomings of these policies but to explore their management implications.

Failure to attend to the organisation and management consequences of development projects is commonly held to frustrate their realisation. But the hypothesis goes further: it suggests that these two policies, particularly squatter upgrading, have distinctive management implications, compared to those of conventional public 'low-cost' housing projects, which must be recognised if they are to be successful. The experience of the Lusaka Squatter Upgrading and Site and Services Project is used to support this argument.¹ The discussion will focus on the upgrading component of the project where the argument is best illustrated.

The project, which started in late 1974, covers the upgrading of the three largest squatter complexes with a total population of 130,000 (i.e. about one third of the city). Upgrading means the provision of infrastructure at basic standards, community services, building materials loans and land tenure. Those displaced by insertion of services in existing areas are settled in adjacent overspill site and services areas, which also allow for some growth. Upgrading is not merely a temporary alleviation of service deficiencies, but envisages long-term evolution of a permanent settlement. A second component of the Lusaka project provides 4,400 site and services plots at a somewhat higher range of standards. The development phase of the project is nearing completion in 1979. It is financed jointly by the Government of Zambia and the World Bank.

The management implications of a project of this kind are partly those of any large-scale housing scheme. But this is project management

with a difference. Three characteristics of squatter upgrading give rise to distinctive management needs. First squatter upgrading is a partnership in development action: it includes the management of self-help. Secondly it is a partnership in development management: the community participates. Thirdly the development takes place on and adjacent to an existing settled site: it is not a 'greenfield' location. In summary these characteristics add social dimensions to the physical process of housing and infrastructure development.

An analogous situation exists in Britain where modifications to conventional housing development organisation and procedures have been called for by the trend to rehabilitation policies such as General Improvement and Housing Action Areas.²

Project organisation

The first management issue faced by the Lusaka project was institutional structure. Two alternatives were considered: a special project unit under the National Housing Authority, and a similar unit within the Lusaka City Council. The latter was adopted mainly as a result of the pressure exerted by the Council. The association of the project with the local elected representative body, which is also the housing authority, has proved successful. A largely self-contained project unit, in the form of a department with special status, comprising divisions for Engineering, Social Services and Finance and Procurement has distinct advantages so far as achievement of project objectives is concerned. The Housing Project Unit (HPU) is a good example of an organisation whose success and innovative capacity are due partly to the differential level of resources and manpower and the special powers with which it is endowed. The alternative of undertaking the project through the Council's existing departments and normal committee procedure was not considered. Such a solution would have tackled the problem of longer-term institution-building, which HPU has begun to face as the project nears completion. But it is difficult to see a project of this

¹ The writer undertook a study of the project in 1977. The results of which are published in *The Management of Squatter Upgrading: a Case Study of Organisation, Procedures and Participation*, Saxon House, 1979.

² See J. T. Roberts, *General Improvement Areas*, Saxon House, 1976, chapter 8.

scale and urgency being undertaken other than in a special unit, where functions can be integrated, and this arrangement has also enabled HPU to make the innovations which are essential to the management of squatter upgrading.

Staffing

The distinctive staffing issue in squatter upgrading is not the professional engineering, planning, survey and financial personnel, but the field staff to handle relationships both with individual participants and with community groups. Managing self-help involves a variety of tasks: briefing and communication with participants, plot allocation, loan applications, resettlement, building advice, and the supervision of community self-help contributions to infrastructure. Managing participation involves communicating with representative groups and fostering their capacity to support development and make decisions. This adds up to a new form of urban extension activity which cannot be covered by existing urban or rural cadres without reorientation. The Lusaka project has successfully met these needs by developing two cadres, Community Development Staff and Construction Advisers. Zambia is fortunate in having an urban CD tradition on which to draw, but the project has largely created its own style for the purposes of a participatory housing programme. The Construction Advisers are drawn from the building trades, but have also to acquire social skills. At the professional and management level it is less a question of skills than of attitudes, which must be adjusted to accommodate the role of self-help activity in physical development, the standards affordable by the community and the social and political context of the project; these will entail modifications to planning, building control and even contract procedures.

Squatter participation

The process of development management is not one in which the public agency plans and implements a complete package with little or no participation as in a low cost housing estate or new town; instead the social and political organisation of the previously autonomous settlement is involved in a partnership. The scope of this partnership may vary from consultation to a range of decision-making or executive powers, but it is unlikely that upgrading can be undertaken in any community without some participation in management: if it is, it will fail to exploit the organisational resources that are available. The development agency must therefore take

action to develop community structures, and must adjust itself to relating to them. Lusaka had a choice between the City Council's Ward Development Committees and the political party structure of UNIP. The weakness of the former, and the strength and intensive organisation of UNIP in the areas, made the party the obvious choice using the three tiers of organisation: constituency, branch and section. A highly effective partnership between HPU and the party structure has evolved.

The institution of a Road Planning Group for each major area, comprising largely party officials and councillors, has grown out of the project's early experiences in the detailed alignment of roads and location of community facilities. The representative groups at all levels have been informed and consulted at each stage of development. This process not only engages the party leadership in significant development activities, but also begins the transition to a new relationship of partnership between the Council and the previously autonomous settlement, which must aim to achieve stable form in the post-project phase. As the project nears completion the outstanding problems are the role of the Ward Development Committees and their relationship with the more effective party structure, and how to harness these community structures to the maintenance phase. The latter might involve engaging the community in aspects of service maintenance and development control as well as in self-help contributions to improving community facilities. But the first maintenance task in which the community and its leadership has been involved is the crucial one of collecting service charges and loan repayments. Rebates are offered as incentives to party sections which pay on time, and physical sanctions in the form of disconnected standpipes are imposed in conjunction with the efforts of leadership and the influence of social pressure.

Internal management

Turning to the internal structure and management style of HPU, organisation by professional divisions is conventional for project units of this kind. HPU's successful innovation has been firstly in developing the corporate teamwork that is essential if social and physical streams of action are to be harmonised, and secondly in emphasising the field level of management. At the top teamwork has been achieved through a Weekly Progress Meeting involving not just division heads but all concerned at management level, with a comprehensively structured agenda.

At the field level Field Teams for each complex bring together all staff working full-time in the area, together with headquarters staff involved on a part-time basis. Field Teams are not merely coordinating bodies which meet fortnightly, but have assumed the status of organisations in their own right under Field Team Leaders with a measure of responsibility for implementation in their area, leaving the headquarters organisation to perform a planning and supportive rather than a directive role. The achievement of teamwork did not come without the efforts and influence both of leadership and training, but the attitudes and values of those with a CD background proved fertile ground on which to work. No project of this kind can afford not to emphasise horizontal relationships and to establish clearly the relationship of area teams to the headquarters structure and its functional divisions. Field management has acquired further strength through the development of work planning procedures for the CD and Construction Adviser teams which allow for a measure of participation by junior staff and rely for their success on motivation rather than direction.

Work programming

HPU is not unusual in experiencing difficulty in using network analysis, a management technique suited *prima facie* to a complex and urgent project. Without specialist staff, the initial experiment proved technically difficult, and was also frustrated by uncertainty over the duration and interrelationship of activities in an entirely new situation. Simpler forms of programming were adopted, but the search continues for an intermediate technology to meet this need. The interrelationships between different streams of activity, especially between community development and engineering, are particularly intricate in squatter upgrading and occur at many points in the development process. A network diagram is a useful way of presenting these relationships.

Training

Training is an important element in a project of this kind. The main training effort has been aimed not at the senior professional or management levels but at the field extension staff. The junior levels of CD staff have received ten months of training, half on a specially designed course and half on the job. The innovative nature of the training methods used appears to have been a favourable factor in achieving commitment of staff to the project and attuning them to its participative methods. For other categories of staff

reliance has been placed on regular in-service workshops and seminars of varied duration ranging from a weekend to four weeks. Their purposes vary from pure training in the longer programmes to a largely management purpose in the short ones which have been devoted to the review of current operations, and of organisation and management procedures. Training for community leadership has been another important activity, here again in conjunction with consultation and participation in short workshops held at different stages of the project's progress in an area. HPU experience suggests that in a project of this kind learning by experience accompanied by an imaginative system of on-the-job training can be as effective as larger doses of external training.

Conclusion

It is not sufficient in squatter upgrading to provide good management, organisation and training of a conventional kind. The significance of the Lusaka experience is that the social dimensions of the project and its clientele have been appreciated, and their implications integrated into the conventional system of physical project management. Field extension cadres, technical and social skills, field organisation procedures and teamwork, strengthened community structures, and partnership between government and community are some of the requirements. HPU's achievement has been aided by favourable manpower and financial provision and significant technical assistance or expatriate contributions. But the Zambian contribution has also been substantial, especially in the community development cadres, and expatriate and Zambian alike have been in a learning situation. Whether the systems that have been evolved can survive beyond the creative phase into a lasting feature of Zambian urban management is not easy to predict, especially when HPU in its present form does not have an assured future.

The relevance of the Lusaka experience for other countries will depend on several factors. The form of project organisation will depend among other things on the scale and geographical distribution of the work, and a different structure is already envisaged for Zambia's next project of this kind covering seven towns. The Zambian one-party system might be held to be a factor rendering the example of only limited application. Clearly the experience is most relevant to other one-party states in Africa. But the need for extension cadres and procedures, and for

identifying and strengthening community structures remains the same for almost any squatter settlement: it is complicated rather than eliminated in a situation of multiple structures. Differing traditions, practices, and allocations of governmental responsibility for land, housing finance, housing management, and community development may be more important in deter-

mining whether the particular cadres used in Lusaka and integrated in a single agency could be used elsewhere. Further research is needed to explore the way in which the management of squatter upgrading is affected by differing governmental situations and social environments, and also by the differing scale and content of upgrading projects.