



South Asia
Regional Knowledge Platform

Discussion Summary

TAMIL NADU, PONDICHERRY, ANDHRA PRADESH

STATE CONSULTATION

Draft National Rural Housing & Habitat Policy

5th- 6th February 2007

Background

One and half day consultation on the “Draft National Rural Housing and Habitat Policy” was organized by Architecture & Development (A&D) and basin-South Asia Regional Knowledge Platform, on 5th – 6th February 2007 at Hotel President, in Chennai. This was the eleventh in the series of state consultations conducted so far. The Consultation was attended by participants from various stakeholder groups like PRIs, Educational Institutions, NGOs, CSOs and Media.

Presentation of the Regional /District Level Consultations

Before organizing the state level consultation in Chennai, ISED, a partner organization of A & D conducted three district level consultations on National Rural Habitat Policy in Madurai (19th January’07), Mayiladuthurai (25th February’07), and Erode (31stFebruaray’07). Mr.K.Loganathan of ISED made a presentation on the inputs received from the district level consultations. He shared the various aspects of the housing schemes that were discussed by the participants like corruption, wrong selection of beneficiaries, and delay in the land acquisition which are major factors that lead to the failure of most of the rural housing schemes meant for the marginalized section of the society.

Discussion on Social Housing Schemes

A session on social housing schemes opened the house to discuss the popular housing schemes for rural communities in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Pondicherry, like Group Housing scheme, Innovative Stream Of housing, Samagraha Awas, Indira Awas Yojna (IAY).

Discussion on Specific Action Areas of the Policy

The group discussed the contents of the proposed policy in smaller groups formed around action areas proposed in the working draft.

The key features of discussion on Social Housing Schemes:

- The area of house as per IAY is inadequate.
- The grant provided to the poor is inadequate. Expenses are increasing but there is no proportional increase of the fund/ the money given to the beneficiaries.
- Only those with *pattas* can avail IAY, making it difficult for the marginalized to get a house.
- Often inappropriate construction technology gets promoted.
- A house is not enough; a dignified house is that what matters.
- There is scope to get additional money from the Group Housing Scheme.
- Those eligible for availing one scheme should not be prohibited from availing other schemes.

1. Land – Access and Management

- Clear definition of 'houseless' and 'landless' is required.
- Land use planning and management should be undertaken at the local level with a system for inputs from resource agencies.
- Lands assigned to Schedule Castes and other marginalized sections cannot be alienated for other purposes.
- Adequate provision of land for future growth is needed.
- Right of women to have property in their name is important .However there was debate on this as some of them objected to such kind of classification of sections on the basis of gender.
- Acquisition of fertile agricultural lands for non-agri purposes should be discouraged and fallow, waste lands should be used.

2. Access to Finance

- Grant based schemes for the poorest must continue.
- It is difficult to identify sections of poor people as there are poor even amongst the rich and rich amongst the poor. So the policy needs to tactfully deal with this.
- Fund allocation for habitat management is critical.
- Definition of 'poor' is a must to identify them.

3. Legal and Regulatory Reforms

- Housing as a subject of action by the Panchayats should be devolved to the Panchayats in accordance with the Panchayat act.
- Appropriate minimum standards for habitat should take into consideration the regional cultural characteristics.
- Minimum standards for area of homestead land considering livelihood activities in residential space as well as minimum standards of basic services in rural areas would be developed and implemented.

4. Infrastructure: Reinforcing the 'Habitat' Paradigm over a Focus on 'Housing'

- Private sector should be encouraged to participate in habitat development; they should be monitored by Panchayat leaders, SHGs
- All influencers :traditional Panchayats, power centres should be involved in decision making processes besides the elected Panchayats
- If rural people are subjected to displacement, they would be compensated with equal size of plot, house and equivalent site conditions.
- Community based provision is critical to address the gap in basic services

5. Reorganizing Delivery Mechanisms

- Appropriate materials for construction needs to be promoted. The SHGs should be encouraged to produce such cost-effective building materials and use of these materials by the community should be made mandatory.
- There should be codes and building standards accountability factor with regard to state sponsored schemes – people should know the codes.
- Traditional construction practices in eco-sensitive / disaster prone areas need to be adapted for safety norms and codes revised.

6. Capacity Development

- Effective and Appropriate means of communication – use of local cultural forms are important ways to build the capacity of the Panchayat and spread awareness among the community
- It is essential to develop the capacity of local level officials like Practicing Engineers, and community besides PRIs. Capacity Building of ALL stakeholders is essential.
- Rural Building Centres should be revitalised

7. Employment issues in the Housing Sector

- There should be institutionalization focus on habitat and livelihoods at Panchayat level.
- Intermediary support / specialized agencies are needed to help bridge the gap between people and state agencies.
- NREGP needs to include habitat projects.
- There should be separate committee and separate funds (like SJRY) for livelihood & habitat development at panchayat and mandal level.
- Not only PRIs and CBOs - Local officials need perspective and capacity building for understanding habitat issues and technologies.

8. Effective Monitoring and Access to Information

- The village community should be the focus of information. Only then they will be capable of participating meaningfully in monitoring. VKC / VIC
- Include simplified forms of dissemination for rural communities – e.g. posters, AVs, FAQs.
- Policy should include innovations and best practices, other than state and institutional programmes.
- MIS should track the implementation of the Action Plans at the Village level also
- A High Level Monitoring Commission (not Committee) should be set up to periodically review the implementation of the policy.
- There needs to be sensitive development of building codes for local / traditional construction

Experience-Exchange-Presentation by participants

Participants shared about on ground realities in their states related to

The key features of discussion:

The consultation also provided forum for discussion of the use of cost effective and alternative technologies in house construction

- People are not aware of the cost-effective building technologies. Even if they are aware they are reluctant to put them to use.
- Even there is no market for alternative technology. A proper market could make it more popular.
- Even if there are organizations who are associated with building cost effective buildings, they have been partially successful in terms of making model houses but people can afford them due to high cost.
- People's participation can reduce the cost of the houses.
- Some shared that the cost of the house is not the real issue, but to provide dignified houses should be the main objective. BUILD, Mumbai has constructed 1000 houses in Gujarat with basic amenities –kitchen garden, electricity, drainage systems etc.
- The design of the house is a major issue. The donor agencies often come up with a fixed design which often becomes unacceptable to the local people.

housing constructions. Three short presentations were made by Mr.R.Elango from TVSG, Mr.Loganathan, ISED and Mr.Chowdhury from NIRD, Mr.Elango talked about the innovative technologies used in Kuttambakkam village. Mr.Chakravarthy clearly stated that the needs of the urban and the poor people are different and this should be kept in mind while designing houses for the rural poor. Mr.Loganathan shared his experience where he has seen if proper mason trainings are provided, the cost of construction can be reduced.

Policy Imperatives for Rural Habitat Development in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Pondicherry.

Participants discussed on some of the components which are mandatory to ensure decent habitat. They include provision of water, electricity, roads, toilets, transport, livelihood opportunities, health, infrastructure, access to common property, educational infrastructure, burial Ground, safety shelters, recreation space, and greenery.

There was also some sharing on people's learnings, success stories, factors that act as catalyst in the development process and factors which act as constraint.

Key Discussion points:

- Community participation is a must in reconstruction of houses. This also provides them with livelihood opportunities and ensures that the houses build suit their life style.
- Housing designs should be according to people' interests and should include livelihood patterns. Consultation with womenfolk is must.
- There should be synergy between various interventions and schemes.
- Involvement of all stakeholders is essential that would take care of the fact that there is no discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, gender, age etc.
- Inter-sector coordination is also important.
- Sensitization of local people should top the priority list of the implementing agencies.
- Houses should be culture specific.
- A participatory local level master plan is important.
- IN-SITU Reconstruction needs to be taken care of.
- Often there are impractical expectations that come from beneficiaries which need to be handled tactfully.
- Expectations of donors are often in contradiction to the social realities.

The consultation ended in a positive note. It was unanimously felt that the process towards the development of a policy that would cater to the housing and habitat needs of the rural poor should not end but the dialogue between Government and Civil Society Organisations must go on.

