Habitat International Coalition

The Limuru Declaration

Limuru, Kenya, April 1987

NGOs convened in Limuru, Kenya, in 1987, committed to reversing current trends toward ever increasing homelessness, over-crowding, lack of basic services and other forms of social and economic deprivation. More than a third of the world's population is seriously affected. Poverty is our constant emergency. Adequate, affordable shelter with basic services is a fundamental right of all people. Governments should respect the right of all people to shelter, free from the fear of forced eviction or removal, or the threat of their home being demolished.

We, the participants from 45 Third World based NGOs and 12 international NGOs, have convened in Limuru, Kenya, committed to reversing current trends toward ever increasing homelessness, over-crowding, lack of basic services and other forms of social and economic deprivation. More than a third of the world's population is seriously affected. Poverty is our constant emergency. Adequate, affordable shelter with basic services is a fundamental right of all people. Governments should respect the right of all people to shelter, free from the fear of forced eviction or removal, or the threat of their home being demolished.

Governments should also respect urban citizens' right to a land site on which a house can be built, to credit, infrastructure, services and cheap building materials. Their right to choose their own forms of social and community organizations in building, planning and use of materials should also be respected.

Adequate shelter includes not only protection from the elements but also sources of potable water in or close to the house, provision for the removal of household and human liquid and solid wastes, site drainage emergency life- saving services, and easy access to health care. In urban centres a house site within easy reach of social and economic opportunities is also an integral part of an adequate shelter.

As a group, we declare our opposition to people's forced eviction from their homes, neighbourhoods and communities. Such forced evictions are taking place on an ever-increasing scale. Forced eviction is an intolerable breach of human rights, most especially when those subject to such evictions are already suffering from inadequate income, inadequate access to social services and other manifestations of poverty.

The scale of evictions worldwide is but one reflection of the inequality in resource distribution and of the powerful forces and vested interests whose policies and actions infringe on each person's right to adequate shelter It also reflects urban housing and land markets, and the norms and codes of building and planning standards, which exclude the poor majority from the possibility of buying or renting an adequate shelter. Governments should support institutions and initiatives to defend people's right to an adequate shelter against land speculation and developers - and NGOs have an important role in providing legal advice to those facing eviction.

Low-income people as city builders

Worldwide, it is low-income people who are responsible for the planning and construction of most new houses. In cities, low-income groups and the community or neighbourhood undertakes most additions to the housing stock organizations that they form. In many nations, Third World based NGOs play significant supporting roles in working with the community-based organizations and in helping such organizations' development efforts. Such NGOs also play important roles as originators, enablers and implementers of new ideas and models. Their research has contributed much to our understanding of the scale and nature of shelter problems. And their collaborative efforts as coalition builders is now evident in many nations, as such coalitions seek to influence government policies and priorities.

Governments should recognize the intrinsic rights of people everywhere to form community-based organizations and NGOs to address their own needs and to demand secure tenure for housing and basic services.

Governments as Enablers

Governments should recognize that appropriate support for individual households and the community-based organizations that they form and the NGOs with whom they choose to work in their efforts to improve shelter and environmental conditions, represents the most innovative and effective strategy to reverse existing trends. Government programmes to build houses for the poor- misunderstand their needs. Such programmes waste scarce resources to little effect. Governments' role is to ensure that land sites are affordable and freely available in appropriate locations, and that low-income households have access to credit and cheap materials. Their role is to ensure that all houses and residential areas have the services and facilities noted earlier as being integral parts of adequate shelter. And their role is to ensure that such enabling policies are backed with appropriate legislation norms and codes.

Community-based organizations and NGOs cannot solve all the problems of homelessness and inadequate shelter. But supported by the enabling approach outlined above, much can be achieved. It is heartening to note that certain governments have changed their policies toward such enabling approaches.

The unmet needs of women and children

The housing needs of women and children have been ignored or given too little consideration. Yet women, children and youth usually account for around three-quarters of the total population. Women and children are the most intensive users of housing and the people who suffer most from deficiencies in structure, services and facilities. Special note should be made of the shelter needs of de facto women-headed households. These often represent a high proportion of all households; especially among the poorer households often they are denied secure tenure of land sites, access to low-cost housing schemes, access to construction skills, employment and credit.

The multisectoral approach

One of the strengths of NGOs working to improve housing conditions is that their approach is usually multisectoral. The causes of poverty and ill health and of environmental degradation fall into many sectors; so too do successful actions to reduce them.

Relations between NGOs, CBOs and Governments

Some basic principles

The group notes that there is often a gap between governments' positions and the aspirations of low-income groups and the community-based organizations they form; it is within this gap that NGOs work and have a role.

NGOs define their lines of action based on an understanding of one essential principle: that all people have the right to control their own destiny with a preference for shelter solutions based in their own community After 20 years' experience from all over the world, NGOs have arrived at a point from where they can reflect upon past work and achievements New guidelines are now being drawn up, based on systematic evaluations of past experiences. This collective reflection has been much helped by exchanges of experience at local, regional and international levels.

Definitions of NGOs and CBOs

An NGO can be distinguished from a community-based organization by the fact that its sphere of action goes beyond the local level. Many NGOs work as technical advisors, linked closely to community-based organizations NGOs actions are usually small-scale, based on a 'step by step' approach so as to respect and follow the slow consolidation process of community-based organizations.

In some instances, community-based organizations which have gone further in their process of autonomous consolidation, have an evolution similar to that of NGOs. But they need support from specialized NGOs.

NGOs play an intermediary role between the demands of community-based organizations for adequate shelter (or other needs) and the local authorities to which these demands are addressed (usually municipal authorities). This role is translated into action by promotion, mobilization and technical, social legal and administrative assistance.

NGOs' action must aim to promote the rights of community-based organizations to obtain access to practical decision-making and planning processes, with the aim of finding solutions to their collective problems NGOs have a duty to pass on to community-based organizations their knowledge and resources.

Practical problems between NGOs and CBOs

NGOs, moving from a position of interventionist management to a position of support for community development, must work out a positive way of relating to CBOs to avoid paternalism and its resulting dependency. NGOs that accept what government policies are doing risk adopting a top-down approach in NGOs area of activity and considering their level of resources there are various possible dangers:

- the manipulation of CBO initiatives-having their actions shaped to serve the interests and influences of political and economic power and

- breaking or at least weakening the strength of CBOs.

Conditions for the implementation of human settlement projects rarely give enough attention to the identification of wider issues and to the specific needs of CBOs. This can lead to confusion between NGOs' socially oriented objectives and the everyday survival needs of the CBOs.
CBOs can be supported in solving their own specific problems with concrete solutions. NGOs' precise actions do not in themselves help the slow process of a CBO becoming autonomous. To achieve this progressive consolidation integrated methodologies on how NGOs' knowledge, resources contacts training and planning skills can be passed on have to be devised The process of passing on such knowledge and techniques requires work plans for which the results may not become immediately obvious. The relationship between NGOs and the funding agencies does not always help this process of CBOs becoming autonomous.

Relations between NGOs and Government

Government is one of the key social actors with whom NGOs interact but the way in which NGOs relate to the state at national or local level is quite different from nation to nation. Such relations are influenced by widely differing historical, cultural and economic contexts, and the organizational experiences of NGOs in their relations with government take many forms. But they can be divided broadly into four categories: cooperation; complementarity; critical appraisal; and open confrontation or conflict.

NGOs and (where they exist) their federations, have widely varying levels of influence in different nations. And the nature of the relationship between government and NGOs working in human settlements is also dependent on the characteristics of NGOs and their networks or federations. When discussing relations between governments and NGOs, perhaps the key question is: who is responsible for meeting social collective demands, which include all the elements of an adequate shelter, like secure tenure for housing and basic services and facilities? The answer is clear.

These are the responsibility of governments - as are the definition and implementation of the legislative and institutional framework to enable collective social needs to be met. NGOs can demonstrate alternative solutions to meeting such needs through specific projects or programmes. In turn, these can point to approaches that have a wider application. Of course, for the right kind of development, NGOs are guided by the low-income groups with whom they work and the community-based organizations that they form. This incorporates a political democratic process that goes beyond any particular context For this purpose, it is also important that NGOs work with those municipal governments that are representative of the citizens within their jurisdiction. NGOs can help strengthen such local levels of government by working with community-based organizations to define needs and priorities and by helping to train community-level workers.

The relationship between the state and community-based organizations that tend toward organized movements is characterized by points of tension and potential conflict. In such instances, NGOs have a key role to play. They have to help translate social movements into political presence, but not into a party. NGOs and community-based organizations should act and influence government policies in the short, medium and long term. They must be autonomous vis-à-vis the state and they should be wary of their possible co- option by the state. Such co-option can mean repression of community-based organizations and NGOs, but the former are likely to suffer most. Strong relationships between community-based organizations and NGOs should be developed as a protection against such cooptation.

This is a special moment for trying to take full advantage of the International Year (of Shelter for the Homeless, 1987) to seek international support for Third World-based NGOs working to increase the proportion of people with adequate shelter. Such international support can help neutralize national factors, which prevent or inhibit NGO action at a local level for this purpose, NGOs must build coalitions with other pressure groups such as trade unions, neighborhood movements, professional associations women's movements and human rights movements, in pressing the government to meet their social responsibilities in regard to shelter.

NGOs who work with low-income communities must go beyond the community level. This implies a relationship with local and central government and with other actors in society. NGOs should become more vocal publicly, but always as catalysts for lower-income groups and their community-based organizations. NGOs should not seek to replace the voice of the homeless or of those with inadequate shelter, or indeed of any underprivileged group in society.

International donor NGO strategy for the future

1. In relation to total aid flow from the North to the South, the amount devoted to improving shelter conditions and tackling homelessness is insignificant According to the United Nations, for the period 1980-84, just 5 per cent of concessional aid (grants and soft loans) and 6.5 per cent of official nonconcessional loans went to projects that sought to improve shelter. Thus the sum of all projects for housing, urban and community development (including upgrading existing houses), water supply, sanitation and garbage disposal and building materials represented around one-twentieth of total flows.

2. This percentage represented around US$3 billion a year, but only a very small percentage of this went to NGOs.

3. Given the scale of homelessness and the number of people with inadequate shelter, and the positive role that thousands of Third World NGOs play in human settlements, NGOs have a responsibility to raise the awareness of the international donor community on how to establish far more effective and efficient shelter programmes for the poor.

4. First and Third World NGOs need to develop a dialogue and seek a more effective partnership in this area with the donor community and with local governments.

5. NGOs should try continuously to mobilize international technical and financial support from a variety of sources. This can allow them to go beyond relatively small-scale and experimental scales of action in working with community-based organizations to improve housing and living conditions.

   Nonetheless, there is a real danger that NGOs might be pressurized by international agencies to move beyond their capacities, limits and nature. This danger grows when governments or state agencies refuse, or are unable to assume their responsibilities in shelter and basic services.

6. Donors and NGOs should be clear that the ultimate aim of their cooperation is to contribute to integrated development and to promote social and structural changes needed to achieve that. Much can be achieved by supporting new models of community development that can work with the poor and homeless to achieve adequate shelter. Those institutions responsible for funding solutions to homelessness and inadequate shelter can succeed when they replicate such approaches.

7. This requires technical and professional excellence combined with the social commitment of the NGOs. This formula is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition. Technical aid and learning must go both ways between NGOs and donor agencies. There is also the need to strengthen NGOs' institutional capacity and their ability to have long-term perspectives and programmes, and not to have their workload continually fluctuating as they rely on project-by-project funding.

8. A trend towards donor support for NGOs moving away from grants or soft loans to loans at higher rates of interest is one we view with disquiet. Social goals must not be threatened by the interest rate demanded by the international donor or by the conditions the donor places on the NGO for on-lending to project beneficiaries. A real home is a social good to which all people have a right. It should not be a commodity to which access is determined by market forces.

9. A World (Human Settlements) Fund for NGOs is needed to provide funds direct to Third World based NGOs working on human settlements projects and programmes.

10. Increased training is much needed at the following levels:

    - Grassroots craftsperson or artisan training, to allow the development process to continue after NGOs end their work with low-income communities;

-Technical and social "cadres" from NGOs to allow a more-effective financial and administrative management of projects.

The ultimate aim is for training institutions to be set up at regional and continental levels, throughout the Third World.

Research and Action

The following are the primary problems related to the development of appropriate research potential among NGOs and the action steps that the working group recommends:

Credibility of NGO Research

1. We urge donor agencies to examine the nontraditional, action research approaches that are appropriate to NGOs, and to make funds available for this research and the dissemination of its findings.

2. There is a need for funds to document nontraditional research methodologies and their role in NGO activity in human settlements.

NGO and donor relations

3. We urge donor agencies to assist NGOs working in human settlements to strengthen their organizational structure and institutional capability through the support of research.

4. We particularly urge donor agencies to support integrated, nonsectoral research approaches to human settlements issues.

Local Resources (Research and Training)

5. There is a need for the development and sustaining of research-action capacities through training at community, NGO, governmental and donor levels. Training should be viewed as a standard element of the research process.

6. NGOs must recognize that research is an integral part of action, and that all members of an organization should have the capacity to participate in research processes.

Dissemination

7. We urge donor agencies to incorporate funds for the publication and dissemination of NGO research findings, especially in South-South networks.

8. We urge UNCHS (Habitat) to provide NGOs with a research clearinghouse facility that includes NGO research, appropriate technical assistance, and information for research development.

NGOs and communities

9. NGOs must define their research in terms relevant to the communities they work with and in direct reference to programmes for action.

10. NGO research findings must be presented in languages and in ways that are accessible to community participants in research, as well as to academic governmental, and donor constituencies.

NGOs and Governments

11. We urge NGOs to make serious efforts to involve governments in their research activity, including funding, training, and the dissemination of results.

Plan of Action

1. For those evicted or threatened with eviction, the right of petition and appeal at the international level.

The aim is to investigate the possibility of support from international law and from the UN Charter for those being evicted or threatened with eviction The NGOs and national committees for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless will:

- monitor and publicize widely the cases of current or threatened evictions forced relocations and demolitions in both the North and the South;

- keep a record of the legal battles that took place over evictions and the final results, to provide precedents on how to fight evictions.

2. Media Campaign

To draw the attention of the world's peoples and to raise awareness among donor agencies of current trends toward ever-increasing homelessness, overcrowding, lack of basic services and other forms of social and economic deprivation, and to highlight the present and the potential role of NGOs in addressing such problems, especially in the context of appropriate government policies.

A strategy to interest the media in such subjects will be launched. Each national coordinating committee will carry out such a strategy for the International Year, by the Habitat International Coalition (formerly Habitat International Council) and by each NGO.

3. Strengthening the partnership with international agencies

The aims are:

- to demonstrate the credibility of NGOs and the advantages to donor agencies of partnership with NGOs;

- to discuss in detail at the policy level how such a partnership can develop and to define together a framework for this partnership;

- to increase the flow of funds channeled to Third World-based NGOs working in shelter, services and community development.

Steps to be taken include:

- The preparation of a widely based information package, to show the potentials, roles and requirements of NGOs. This information package will be widely circulated through the donor community.

- Letters sent to donor agencies, especially those ready to open a dialogue with NGOs. Such letters will request donor agencies to invite NGO representatives to attend a meeting to define together NGOs' policies and roles in the human settlements field. The identification of on-going projects and programmes that need funding and support for joint presentation to funding agencies. Invitations by Third World-based NGOs to senior officials from donor agencies to visit them, to allow a better understanding of their achievements and their aims and potential in the future.

4. The creation of "project pools" at regional level

The offices of most donors are too distant and remote from the context within which Third World based NGOs operate. Intermediate institutions at regional level should have the task of identifying NGO programmes that require funding, and providing NGOs with technical backup and help in formulating requests. These institutions would build a 'catalogue' of projects in need of funding. This would help donor agencies to identify and fund good projects and programmes without spending too long on project identification Such institutions would facilitate links between locally based NGOs and donor agencies and could provide the mechanism through which funding flows could be increased.

Networks and Coalitions

The Working Groups on Networks and Coalitions discussed the objectives of national, regional and international NGO networks and issues relating to their establishment and strengthening. It proposes the adoption of the following resolutions:

Considering that NGO networks at the national level are important because they are fulfilling, or could fulfill the following functions:

- to bring together people and NGOs with similar objectives;
- to act as a clearinghouse for the exchange of information;
- to reinforce weaker groups;
- to stimulate the creation of more networks;
- to fulfill an advocacy role in contacts with government agencies at all levels;
- to act as pressure groups, sometimes in coalitions with other groups and popular organizations;
- to coordinate production and marketing of building materials for the use of households and base groups;
- to promote participative action research;
- to disseminate information;
- to carry out training programmes for groups at different levels, including that of community-based organizations;
- to strengthen the links with community-based organizations;
- to fight for the introduction and application of just land rights;
- that in their establishment the following factors are taken into account:
    - that they be based on common issues;
    - that they work through existing frameworks;
    - that responsibilities and tasks be decentralized among members of the networks;
    - that subcommittees be created on a subnational or thematic basis;
    - that the network responds to priorities that they establish together with community-based organizations.

Further considering that regional networks are important for the following reasons:

- they are the support services and facilitators for activities at the national and international level, and the basis for a definitive consolidation of networks at all;

- they can define priorities and programmes on specific schemes and allocate tasks among their members;

- they can establish databanks, undertake training, exchange information between and among different actors, undertake joint publishing services, carry out services to national networks, and promote the exchange of technical staff and know-how with other regions.

Recommends that:

1. For the above mentioned reasons, national and regional networks should be created and strengthened where possible;

2. In so doing, the specific situation of each country and region should be taken into account;

3. In some countries and regions, the formulation of coalitions with other established groups, can be a useful method of promoting networks;

4. International NGOs should promote the formation of local groups, especially in continents such as Africa, where they are still few in number;

5. Networks be promoted in Northern countries, because, among other things, this would facilitate the transfer of experience from other parts of the world confronted with problems of homelessness;

6. Regional networks can be promoted (among other ways) in the following manner:

- the publication of periodical bulletin on specific themes

- the creation of regional publications and translation funds

- the establishment of technical assistance and of an operational fund for disaster and crisis interventions.

Considering that there is a need for:

- a mechanism for South-South and North-South relations;

- an international pressure group to deal with human settlements issues; for instance, a world-wide coalition against the existing problems of eviction and demolition;

- a global coalition built up on the basis and collective aims of national and regional networks.

Recommends that the Habitat International Council be transformed into that global coalition and for this purpose:

- the composition of the Board should reflect the incorporation of national and regional networks into its membership;

- under these conditions, HIC acts as spokesperson in contacts with international organizations such as UNCHS (Habitat) and provides information and other services to its members with the purpose of reinforcing national and regional networks;

- the name of HIC be changed into the Habitat International Coalition – NGO Alliance on Human Settlements.

Participants were present from the following organizations:

ADAUA (Association pour le Développement Naturel d´un Architecture Africaine), Burkina Faso ;

AHAS (Appropriate Habitat for Another Development), United Kingdom;

AIAI, Mauretania;

ASAG (Ahmedabad Study and Action Group), India;

AVAS (Association for Voluntary Action and Services), India;

BEAU (Bureau d'etudes d'Amenagement et d'Urbanisme), Zaire;

CCU (Centro Co-operativista Uruguayo), Uruguay;

CDG (Carl Duisberg Gesellshaft), Federal Republic of Germany;

CEBEMO (Catholic organization for joint financing of development programmes), Netherlands;

CEDEC (Centre pour Ie Développement Auto-Centre), Cameroun;

CENVI (Centro de la Vivienda y Estudios Urbanos), Mexico;

CIDAP (Centro Investigaci6n, Documentación y Asesoría Poblacional), Peru;

CLACSO (Latin America/Urban and Regional Development Commission), Argentina;

Community Development Trust Fund, Tanzania;

CODE (Consultants for Community Development), Netherlands;

COOPAN (Co-operative des Artisans de Nylon), Cameroun;

COPEVI (Centro Operacional de Vivienda y Poblamiento), Mexico;

CRAU (Centre de Recherche Architecturales et Urbaine), Ivory Coast ;

CRDC (Construction Resources and Development Centre), Jamaica ;

Development Workshop, Angola and Canada;

ENDA (Environnent et Développement du Tiers Monde), Senegal ;

ENDA, Central Africa;

ENDA, Latin America, Colombia;

FEDEVIVIENDA (Federation Nacional de Organizaciones de Vivienda Popular), Colombia;

Freedom to Build, Philippines;

FUNDASAL (Fundación Salvadoreña de Desarrollo y Vivienda Mínima), El Salvador;

GRET (Groupe de Recherches et d'Echanges Technologiques), France ;

Habitat Forum Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany ;

Haquabtir Somali Voluntary Organization, Somalia;

HIC (Habitat International Coalition) c/o IULA, The Netherlands;

Horizons Development Agency, Canada;

Human Settlements Centre, Thailand;

HUZA (Human Settlements of Zambia);

ICA Housing Committee, Sweden;

IDESAC (Instituto para el Desarrollo Económico Social de América Central), Guatemala;

IIED (International Institute for Environment and Development), United Kingdom and Argentina;

Indian Federation of Building and Woodworkers, India;

International Solidarity Foundation, Finland;

ITTA (Institut Tunisien de Technologie Appropriée), Tunisia ;

IYSH Trust (International Year of Shelter for the Homeless Trust), United Kingdom.
KKNSS, India;

Lagos Group for the Study of Human Settlements, Nigeria;

Mazingira Institute, Kenya;

Mustard Seed Communities, Jamaica;

NCCK (National Council of Churches of Kenya);

Rooftops Canada Foundation, Canada;

SERVIVIENDA (Fundación Servicio de Vivienda Popular), Colombia;

SGHAS, Department of Architecture, University of Khartoum, Sudan;

SouSou Land, Trinidad and Tobago;

Sudanese Group for Assessment of Human Settlements, University of Omdurman, Sudan;

Taller Norte, Chile;

TCPA (Town and Country Planning Association), United Kingdom;

Unnayan, India;

Urbatech, Mali;

World Council of Churches, Central Africa, Kenya;

York University, Canada;

Zimbabwe Project, Zimbabwe.

Observers were present from the following organizations:
CIDA, (Canadian International Development Agency) Canada;

DAEI, Ministry of Housing, France;

GATE (German Agency of Technical Cooperation), Federal Republic of Germany;

Government of the City of Berlin, Federal Republic of Germany;

GTZ (German Agency of Technical Cooperation), Kenya;

IDRC (International Development Research Centre), Canada;

JICA (Japanese International Cooperation Agency), Japan;

NOVIB (Netherlands Organization for International Development and Cooperation);

UNCHS (UN Centre for Human Settlements), Kenya;

UNICEF East and Southern Africa, Kenya;

USAID (United States Agency for International Development), Kenya;

World Bank, United States of America.