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Subscription Expires: 31-DEC-09



Landless Citizens Scheme, Berakas

Brunei Darussalam

Good Practice

New for 2002

Categories:

- Urban and Regional Planning:
 - cultural heritage conservation
 - regional planning
 - regional resource planning
- Housing:
 - affordable housing
 - land tenure and security
- Land Use Management:
 - land development
 - land-use planning
 - urban/suburban renewal

Level of Activity:

Ecosystem:

Summary

The original settlement area in Brunei Darussalam was along the Brunei River banks; people lived in traditional semi-aquatic form of houses, called Kampong Ayer (Water Village). The city was built entirely on water and the houses were constructed of timber and built up from the ground on stilts. The city was relocated to the mainland in 1906 but the people remained in their traditional dwellings despite being encouraged to move to land. A second attempt to resettle the population was made in the 1950s to stem the growth of the Water Village as well as to promote agriculture. Only 359 families opted for the chance to move to the land up to the late 1960s.

The Government ensured the provision of schools, medical clinics and electrical reticulation to ameliorate the steadily worsening effects of Kampong Ayer. These new facilities led to rapid growth of the city, which exacerbated the problem. The proximity of kampong Ayer to the city saw new wooden dwellings spring up along the banks of Brunei River and in deeper water using concrete piling. These basic wooden dwellings built in close proximity to one another have always been subject to frequent destruction by fire, made more prevalent today by illegal electrical wiring system and introduction of liquefied gas utilities.

With the desire to improve the welfare and happiness of the people, the Government launched a vigorous programme to resettle those citizens, they selected eight resettlement areas located throughout the state in 1984. The scheme was well received by the public and it was a success story. A second phase of seven different areas was selected in 1995 to continue with the resettlement programme.

Narrative

Situation before the Initiative Began;

Most of the city's population was residing in the seemingly squatter-type structures that comprise Kampong Ayer. The effluent and household waste was disposed directly into the river. Frequent fire destruction and poor health prevailed among the residents of the Water Village. Kampong Ayer is rated poorly against western standards of housing construction, sanitation and fire safety. Kampong Ayer had a population density of up to 500 people per hectare and was linked by network of narrow wooden bridges. The only access to the Commercial Business District was by private boat or water taxi.

Establishment of priorities;

In 1984 the Government of Brunei Darussalam set a mandate to provide housing (on land) for the landless citizens within the low and middle-income groups. While doing this, they intended to create and retain a high quality landscape, minimise the risks of erosion, flooding and other ecological drainage during and after construction. The partnership is evolved between the People and the Government, the private sector participation is very minimal.

Formulation of objectives and strategies;

The main objective of the Government is to fulfil the desire of the Sultan to improve the welfare, health and happiness of his people by providing them with basic necessities in life. His Majesty took the initiative and directed his Government in 1984 to provide houses with all the amenities for a modern living to all his citizens who do not own any land in the country.

To achieve the objective, the Government provided the necessary funds through its Development Plan to develop the land and infrastructure through its Government Agencies and then build the houses based on the people's requirements. Two Government Agencies were given the task of implementing the projects with the assistance of other Government Agencies. The task was to accomplish housing for two categories of people, namely

1. Indigenous citizens, that is where they have been born in Brunei but do not own any land.
2. All citizens of low and middle-income families who do not own any land.

These two schemes are similar but implemented by two different Departments. This report deals with the first category of development to resettle mainly the people living in the Water Village and others who are indigenous citizens but do not own land.

Mobilisation of Resources;

The Government provides the necessary funds through its Development Plan to develop the land, for provision of services as well as for the construction of the houses. Once the houses are constructed and are ready for occupation, they are handed to the people chosen from an approved national list and who are bestowed with a land title. The people who get the houses pay the Government the cost of construction at a subsidised rate over a period of 25 years. The money received from the payment of the houses goes back to the Government as revenue; it is not kept separately to re-finance the scheme. The Government however ensures that the fund for the housing continues under the National Development Plan so as to continue with the scheme.

Technical and Human Resources come from the Government Agencies skilled in Urban Planning, Project Management and Construction. Infrastructure works are designed by the respective Services Departments within the Government Agencies with an emphasis on the principle of plan for the future and schedule only for the present needs. The houses have been designed by the Architects from the Government Agencies with an emphasis on low cost but with the use of acceptable standard housing material and adaptability for future expansion by the people.

Process;

The main challenge faced by the planners is to provide an acceptable design, which addresses the problems faced during the two earlier attempts of resettlement schemes. Prompted by the positive response to a nation wide survey conducted in 1976 towards resettlement, the states industrialisation programmes, education, the increasing housing problem and the advent of foreign lifestyle and products etc in the villages have attributed to the change of view on resettlement.

A design that preserves the traditional lifestyle and social custom of the inhabitants and at the same time meets the modern lifestyle of the present day population has been adopted to make these schemes acceptable to the people. A garden concept that resembles a village setting in large plots averaging 0.25 acres with no fencing separating each other to preserve the traditional lifestyle and customs have become the standard. Extensive empty spaces are provided within the resettlement schemes for the development of community centres, recreational facilities schools etc for future development based on the need of the people.

Five types of houses were designed in order for the project to meet the housing needs of the population. The construction of one particular housing type within a cul-de-sac or along one road has tended to stratify the resettlement into distinct socio-economic enclaves. To overcome this situation, the occupants were permitted to make minor amendments to their dwellings in order to accommodate additional family members. As time went on, the visual monotony of housing form has diminished as settlers stamp their own distinctive design upon the development by adding extensions, archways to reflect the Islamic tradition, gardens etc.

The different types of houses were designed with three bedrooms that could accommodate a moderate family of six members. However for extended families and families with more than average children the three bedroom houses were inadequate to meet the needs of most of the occupants. The houses however have been designed to stand on pillars, which serve two purposes they resemble the traditional village houses and they provide extra space to hold big gatherings as well as to add additional rooms on the ground floor with minimal cost.

Results Achieved;

The Government launched this programme as the shortage of housing was acute and the Water Village was over congested with poor sanitation facilities and frequent destruction of houses by fire. In 1984/1985 over 1000 acres of land in eight different areas located throughout the state were selected for this scheme. All these schemes had been successfully

completed in stages by the year 2000 at a cost of about \$300 million. More than 2,600 families have been resettled in these schemes with the provision of modern facilities such as electricity, communication, water, sewer treatment facilities etc in a fully urbanised setting.

In 1995/1996 another 1700 acres of land in seven different areas were located throughout the state have been selected to continue with the resettlement programme. Earthworks have now been completed at a cost of around \$100 million and the infrastructure works and housing construction have been set in motion. 300 houses were ready for occupation by early 2002 and the construction of another 800 houses has been planned in the next two to three years on these sites.

The population of Water Village has been maintained at the previous level after this initiative was put in place. Some of the villages in Kampong Ayer were rebuilt under a different scheme to meet the modern standard and lifestyle of the population with all the services but still maintained their traditional way of living.

Changes in the people attitudes and behaviours towards the resettlement schemes are visible and more and more people are registering for houses in resettlement schemes. More people have started moving out of the Water Village to build their houses with no assistance from the Government.

Sustainability;

Private investment was non-existent in Brunei Darussalam in eighties and early nineties. The schemes were started as a Government initiative and they were funded, and still are, by the Government. Initially it was intended to develop the land then to give it to the people to build houses on. This strategy was changed to make the resettlement schemes more attractive and affordable for the population who were not in the habit of savings as well as to develop the scheme in an orderly manner. The Government therefore decided to build the houses with basic facilities and to provide sufficient room for expansion in future based on the peoples requirements

The Government Agency's normal staff provide the technical services and also additional funding for the provision of supervision during the construction phase. Though different types of houses are built in a group, the scheme after couple of years of occupation looks totally different. The people use their own finance and innovative ideas to modify and extend the houses based on their needs. Respect for each other and a friendly atmosphere exists in the completed schemes, which makes more and more people opt for houses in the resettlement schemes. With continued funding from the Government, these schemes will continue for years to come.

An orderly distribution of the population preserves the environment thus avoiding haphazard clearing of land and forest reserves. The areas surrounding the schemes are developed by private sector so as to provide commercial centres etc. Community centres, schools etc are provided within the scheme by the respective Government Agencies depending on the need. The living standard of the people living in the resettlement schemes has increased tremendously.

Lessons Learned;

During the first phase of development, the houses were designed as detached houses on 0.25-acre plots. This was to provide sufficient area for the people to have a garden to plant fruit trees etc as well as to make the resettlement schemes more acceptable for the people to move into. However the increased cost of the land and infrastructure development coupled with an increased interest among the population to resettle put lot of pressure on the available finance. The Government looked for ways and means of reducing the cost of development so that they could put up more houses with the available financial resources and there were two options to pursue. The first option was to reduce the plot size to 0.167 acres and build detached houses as before while the second was to reduce the plots to 0.135 acres and to compensate the loss of land area by building semi-detached houses with increased floor area by adding one more floor. In the initial stages of planning all factors should be considered including sustainability throughout the process to avoid displeasure among the population. In the initial stages of planning all factors should be consider including sustainability throughout the process to avoid displeasure among the population.

The planners went on with the task of developing an acceptable design despite the problems encountered in earlier resettlement schemes, the complexity of the task to adequately address the problem and the preference of the people. The final design was based on a simple Garden City Concept. Despite the diverse historical differences in lifestyle and social customs, the resettlement schemes bear more resemblance of a typical western housing estate than an indigenous Kampong. It was observed that most of the houses are modified to suit each individual taste after few years of occupation. To minimise the cost of construction and to facilitate the renovations, the costly finishes are done away with and the houses are handed over to the occupants with the basic facilities for them to develop later to suit their taste. Though one cannot freely impose predetermined solutions to the societies, with the necessary modifications to accommodate the lifestyle and customs of the people it will be acceptable. The success of these schemes is a proof of this strategy.

It was learnt that package sewer treatment works within the scheme is much cheaper than providing costly pipe mains and pumping stations especially when houses are developed in isolated areas. It was also learnt that private sector participation is possible with some changes in the Government policy towards the transfer of land title. The present system is a long lease arrangement where the land cannot be sold to another person which makes obtaining of loans to build a house difficult. This restricts the private sector participation in providing the housing needs of the population.

Transferability

The scheme is tailor made for the Brunei conditions with a small population that barely exceeds 300,000 and most of the

land owned by the Government. Despite its size, Brunei is a country of rich cultural background and having a per capita income comparable to that of developed countries. The wealth generated by the Country's oil and gas fields is passed on to the people by the Sultan in the form of free education and health system, pensions for the aged and the windowed, subsidised food and fuels and interest free loans for housing, cars, funerals etc. With this background and the Sultan's great desire to improve the welfare and happiness of his people made the decision to provide housing for all the people who do not own any land in the country. The scheme was initiated and wholly funded by the Government for its construction and passed on to the people at a subsidised price payable over a period of 25 years.

With little modifications to the system, whose concepts are listed below it could be adopted as a model of development elsewhere to be a self-funded scheme with private sector participation:

1. Provision of free hold title for the land, this would enable the new owner to mortgage the land and obtain loan for building a house from financial institutions.
2. Development of the scheme in small packages rather than developing the whole site as was the case in the earlier schemes. The provision of services to the scheme to be designed with an emphasis on the principle of plan for the future and schedule only for the present needs.
3. Creation of prime lands on the periphery keeping the housing estate as the nucleus for commercial centres and private housing and allow private entrepreneurs to develop and sell their products. Also to create some prestigious housing enclaves and sell them to private developers or to rich individuals for building houses.
4. The proceeds from the sale of part of the developed land for commercial centres & private housing could be utilised to develop the rest of the area and thereby the development becomes a self-funded.

By carrying out the development in small packages, one need not require massive funding and the benefits could be passed on to the people in the shortest time possible. This would create a lot confidence and attract private sectors into the system and relieve the financial burden on the Government. Once the basic external services are provided to the area and the Government constructs the initial phase of the housing, the rest of the scheme would develop on its own with private sector participation. The rest of the scheme could also be developed in pockets by bringing in small time developers into the arena this could boost the economic activity in the country and also attract and develop the skills of local entrepreneurs into the Construction Industry.

The new schemes are being developed in small packages with both infrastructure and housing construction being carried out concurrently. From the lessons learned in this form of development, another 300 more houses are being planned and will be executed in 2002.

Key Dates

(not provided)

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(not provided)



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