

Post conflict housing reconstruction: housing needs and expectations of conflict affected communities

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Abstract

Post conflict housing reconstruction plays an important role in establishing the country's development and prospect of peace. Despite this importance, it was identified that there are inconsistencies between the provision of built housing and the needs of the users. Therefore many post conflict housing reconstruction projects lead to dissatisfaction on the part of residents and remodelling by themselves or rejection and abandonment. Hence it is important and necessary to address conflict affected communities' housing reconstruction needs in post conflict housing reconstruction. With regard to this, it is worthwhile to examine the concept of housing needs in general and to explore the housing needs of conflict affected communities. Therefore this paper aims to present a synthesis of housing needs literature relevant to usual and post conflict contexts. In relevance to housing needs in general, housing preferences in a market context and adequate housing measures were identified. Following this, housing needs of conflict affected communities were identified. In a market context, housing needs were exhibited in terms of the subjective preferences of households. Adequate housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Hence adequate housing measures identified certain aspects of housing that must be taken into account for this purpose in any particular context. Whilst most housing considerations of conflict affected communities were similar to adequate housing measures, conflict affected communities gave greater importance to their social, cultural and religious values in post conflict housing reconstruction. In addition they considered the aspects of safety and security as being vital, and various perceptions of these communities in relation to housing reconstruction and post occupancy evaluation were important in post conflict housing reconstruction. Nevertheless, no relevant data on special housing needs of disadvantaged groups in post conflict environments were found.

Keywords: Post conflict housing reconstruction, housing needs, housing preferences, adequate housing, housing considerations of conflict affected people

1. Introduction

Conflicts continue in many parts of the world. Hewitt indicates that there have been around 150 wars, each with more than a thousand violent deaths, since the Second World War (1997 cited El-Masri and Kellett, 2001). Most recent conflicts have been internal conflicts rather than conflicts between two states (World Bank, 1998; Goodhand *et al.*, 2002; Zenkevicius, 2007; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010). Conflicts have a number of direct and indirect impacts. The more direct effects of war are the fatalities and population displacements (Cuny and Tanner, 1995; Rugumamu and Gbla, 2003a). Moreover, widespread destruction of properties is typical during conflicts. Physical structures are often damaged in conflicts (Cuny and Tanner, 1995; Rugumamu and Gbla, 2003b; Food and Agricultural Organisation, 2005; Grant, 2005; Nkurunziza, 2008). Economic ruin is another impact of conflicts. Above all conflicts often weaken institutions at all levels and they exhibit little capacity to carry out their traditional functions (Cane, 2007).

As conflicts have a greater impact on the built environment of a country, post conflict reconstruction requires repair and reconstruction of housing and the social and economic infrastructure of the affected countries. Among the reconstruction of physical structures, housing reconstruction remains important as housing reconstruction after war plays an important role in establishing the country's development and peace. Despite this importance, it can be seen that there is considerable inconsistency between the provision of built housing and the needs of the users. It is claimed that post conflict housing reconstruction projects that overlook users' needs and local variations in physical and socio economic conditions lead to dissatisfaction on the part of residents, and ultimate remodelling by themselves or rejection and abandonment (Barakath, 2003; Barakath *et al.*, 2004). These factors highlight the importance and necessity of addressing conflict affected communities' housing reconstruction needs in post conflict housing reconstruction. With regard to this, it is worthwhile to examine the concept of housing needs in general and to explore the housing needs of conflict affected communities. Therefore this paper presents a synthesis of housing needs literature relevant to usual and post conflict contexts. To clarify, housing needs are sometimes referred to as housing requirements or demand for housing. As an example, Kitchen and Milbourne (2006) define housing need in terms of housing units as "the quantity of housing needed to house those households currently lacking their own housing, or living in unsuitable housing, and who cannot afford to buy or rent housing without assistance" [see also (Commission for Rural Communities, 2006; Pawson and Tuckley, n.d.)]. However in this study, housing needs are referred to as the factors that satisfy the requirements of occupants.

2. Housing needs in general

In reviewing the literature, very little data was found on the definition of housing needs. Morris and Winter (1975), claims that housing needs are seldom explicitly defined. They further

indicate that for some writers the definition of housing needs appears to be based on biological needs for protection from weather and predators. However they argue that housing needs may be reasonably equated with cultural norms for housing. Therefore this section presents the literature which addresses housing needs in various perspectives.

2.1 Housing preferences in a market context

This section describes the preferences of housing in a market context. The literature on housing markets is voluminous and wide ranging. However this section mainly identifies the aspects and attributes of housing and key determinants of housing preferences.

2.1.1 Aspects and attributes of housing

Housing attributes and related factors play a crucial role in consumers' housing decisions (Opoku and Abdul-Muhmin, 2010). Therefore in a market context, it is required to understand the aspects of housing and factors or attributes that differentiate these aspects. Within this context, different housing market literature was reviewed in order to identify the different aspects of housing. As a result, three main aspects of housing were identified: as dwelling/housing units, neighbourhood/location/surroundings and housing tenure and these are described below.

2.1.1.1 Dwelling/housing unit

The aspect of dwelling reflects the characteristics of the physical housing unit. Wang and Li (2006) in their study of how individuals in urban China make housing decisions in a market context select five attributes; namely, price, orientation, layout, dwelling type and whether a management fee is needed to define the dwelling. They believe that these are among the most salient variables/attributes of a dwelling that structure the housing preferences of the urban Chinese population. When setting the different levels for the above attributes, the following factors are considered.

- *Price*: price levels are defined in order to provide a full range of prices for respondents.
- *Orientation*: north, south, east and west
- *Dwelling type*: detached house, apartment building of 4 stories or fewer, apartment building of 5 stories or more without lift and apartment building of 5 stories or more with lift
- *Layout*: small living room but large bedrooms and large living room but small bedrooms
- *Property management*: presence/absence of management fee

Moreover, Cho (1997), in his study of findings of the major determinants that influence housing choices in the city of Chongju, Korea, identifies dwelling type as an attribute of housing. He classifies the dwelling type as detached dwelling and multiple dwelling. Opoku and Abdul-Muhmin (2010), in their study of exploring the housing preferences of low income consumers in Saudi Arabia use dwelling types, public living space, private living space, building design,

aesthetic attributes, outdoor space and financial factors as important factors for consideration. The levels of the above attributes are set as follows.

- *Dwelling type*: apartment, duplex and small house.
- *Public living space* : size of living room, size of kitchen, availability of storage room, size of the building, size of windows and arrangement of rooms
- *Private living space*: number of bedrooms, size of bedrooms and number of bathrooms.
- *Building design*: number of floors and type of air conditioning
- *Aesthetic*: type of finishing, quality of finishing, and type of neighbourhood
- *Outdoor space*: presence of garden, size of garden
- *Financial factors*: Price, payment terms

In considering the above literature findings, common attributes which are relevant to the aspect of dwelling/housing can be identified as price, orientation, layout, indoor space, dwelling type, aesthetic, outdoor space and management fee. Further definition of these attributes into various levels or variables depends on the market context where the study is focused.

2.1.1.2 Neighbourhood / location / surroundings

Immobility causes the location of the house to be an important determinant of its value, since the purchaser buys both the dwelling and the site where the house is located (Keil and Zabel, 2008). Wang and Li (2006) again use four attributes to define neighbourhood; namely, accessibility, living convenience, security and district. Each attribute is further defined as follows.

- *Accessibility*: though accessibility is usually defined in terms of distance to work, here it is defined as access to public transport: (i) highly accessible, with public transport connections to all districts in the city; (ii) reasonably accessible, with public transport connections to major business centres; and (iii) limited accessibility, with very few public transport links with the rest of the city.
- *Living convenience*: refers to the convenience of daily goods shopping. Three levels of living convenience are specified: fresh and daily goods markets available within 500 m, within 1000 m, and beyond 1000 m.
- *Security*: To gauge this influence, two security levels were defined: 'good public order' and 'poor public order'.
- *District*: The district attribute is included to capture the unmeasured components of neighbourhood features such as social class composition and district reputation.

Also Opoku and Abdul-Muhmin (2010), in their study use neighbourhood, local environment, and proximity to relatives, street location and air quality as important factors for consumers. These attributes are defined as follows.

- *Neighbourhood*: low class, middle class, high class
- *Local environment*: location close to schools etc., width of adjacent street

- *Proximity to relatives*: Location close to own family, spouse's family
- *Street location*: location on a main street, inner street
- *Air quality*: location away from industrial areas

In considering the above literature findings, common attributes which are relevant to the aspect of neighbourhood/location/surroundings can be identified as accessibility (distance to work/ accessibility to transport), living convenience (ease of access to shopping, schools, healthcare facilities and social facilities), security (public order), social class/reputation of the area, proximity to relatives and environmental quality (non polluted area).

2.1.1.3 Housing tenure

Opoku and Abdul-Muhmin (2010), in their study identify the tenure types as owning and renting. Koizumi and McCann (2006) describe three housing tenure outcomes as own, rent and plot purchase for future house building. They claim that there are often various forms of housing tenure possibilities in developing countries which do not exist in developed countries (Koizumi and McCann, 2006). As an example in the case of Panama, there is a possibility of purchasing plots of land. These land plots are purchased and then households erect temporary shelters on these plots in which to live, with a view to building more permanent housing in the long run on the same plot at some stage in the future. Therefore common attributes which are relevant to housing tenure can be identified as own, rent and plot purchase for future house building.

2.1.2 Determinants of housing preferences

In a market context, housing preferences are varied according to the individuals' position in the family life cycle (age and dependents) and their socio-economic status (education, occupation, income) of people. It has also been suggested that national, social, cultural, religious and environmental factors play a significant role in the relative importance of various housing attributes.

Socio-economic factors were found to be influential in housing preference formation in many housing studies (Koizumi and McCann, 2006; Wang and Li, 2006; Opoku and Abdul-Muhmin, 2010). As an example, Wang and Li (2006) found that the low and medium income groups show stronger preference towards the inner core districts and place more importance on living convenience and accessibility to public transport in China. Those in the high-income groups, however, were more willing to move to outlying districts and pay more attention to the quality of dwelling such as orientation and property management.

In addition, the pattern of housing choice turns out to be dominated by the age of the household head and having school-age children, reflecting a life-cycle influence on housing choice (Cho, 1997). Koizumi and McCann (2006) also suggest that the age of the head of the household and the number of dependents are the key factors in determining whether a household will rent or purchase real estate. For instance, Wang and Li, (2006), found that the younger age group are more prepared to trade familiar surroundings for an environment endowed with better amenities.

On the other hand, the older group shows greater concern for neighbourhood familiarity and hence security (Wang and Li, 2006).

In the Middle Eastern environment, social values and religion have a big influence on housing preferences and the relative importance of housing attributes to consumers (Opoku and Abdul-Muhmin, 2010). For instance, Opoku and Abdul-Muhmin (2010) found that Saudi Arabians give high priority to privacy and they consider private living space as highly important. However they give low priority for exterior space. This could be attributed to the country's hot and dry weather. Therefore Saudi Arabians would not consider spending much time in the garden.

The aspect of gender appears to have no explanatory power in terms of housing attributes. However (Opoku and Abdul-Muhmin, 2010) found some gender differences for interior layout, private living space, aesthetics, and exterior space. They claim that these factors are more important for females than males as females will be more attracted to interior layouts and aesthetics than men. The loss of a spouse may also modify the household's preferences (Bonnet et al., 2010). They suggest that widows downsize to adjust their dwelling to the income loss due to widowhood and tend to live closer to a child and in a larger municipality as a means of facilitating access to care.

2.2 Adequate housing measures

Several measures that are needed to ensure that everyone's housing is adequate have been identified in the literature. Adequate housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OHCHR, 1994). Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing, and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control". Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes: "the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing and to the continuous improvement of living conditions." While adequacy is determined in part by social, economic, cultural, climatic, ecological and other factors, the committee believes that it is nevertheless possible to identify certain aspects of the right that must be taken into account for this purpose in any particular context (OHCHR, 1991). Habitat for Humanity (2009), also reinforce this and claim that any definition of "adequate housing" will need to be highly contextualised and country-specific and international law can provide, at best, only general guidelines, such as the seven essential components listed below. The following section discusses the measures of adequate housing.

2.2.1 Accessibility

Adequate housing must be accessible to those entitled to it. Disadvantaged groups such as the elderly, children, the physically disabled, the terminally ill, HIV positive individuals, persons with persistent medical problems, the mentally ill, victims of natural disasters, people living in disaster-prone areas and other groups must be accorded full and sustainable access to adequate housing resources. Thus, such disadvantaged groups should be ensured some degree of priority consideration in the housing sphere. Both housing law and policy should take fully into account the special housing needs of these groups.

2.2.2 Habitability

Adequate housing must be habitable, in terms of providing the inhabitants with adequate space and protecting them from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health, structural hazards, and disease vectors. The physical safety of occupants must be guaranteed as well. The committee encourages countries to comprehensively apply the health principles of housing prepared by the World Health Organisation.

2.2.3 Affordability

Personal or household financial costs associated with housing should be at such a level that the attainment and satisfaction of other basic needs are not threatened or compromised. Steps should be taken by countries to ensure that the percentage of housing-related costs is, in general, commensurate with income levels. Countries should establish housing subsidies for those unable to obtain affordable housing, as well as forms and levels of housing finance which adequately reflect housing needs. In accordance with the principle of affordability, tenants should be protected by appropriate means against unreasonable rent levels or rent increases. In societies where natural materials constitute the chief sources of building materials for housing, steps should be taken by countries to ensure the availability of such materials.

2.2.4 Location

Adequate housing must be in a location which allows access to employment options, health-care services, schools, child-care centres and other social facilities. This is true both in large cities and in rural areas where the temporal and financial costs of getting to and from the place of work can place excessive demands upon the budgets of poor households. Similarly, housing should not be built on polluted sites or in immediate proximity to pollution sources that threaten the right to health of the inhabitants.

2.2.5 Availability of services, materials, facilities, and infrastructure

An adequate house must contain certain facilities essential for health, security, comfort and nutrition. All beneficiaries of the right to adequate housing should have sustainable access to natural and common resources, safe drinking water, energy for cooking, heating and lighting,

sanitation and washing facilities, means of food storage, refuse disposal, site drainage and emergency services.

2.2.6 Cultural adequacy

The way housing is constructed, the building materials used and the policies supporting these must appropriately enable the expression of cultural identity and diversity of housing. Activities geared towards development or modernization in the housing sphere should ensure that the cultural dimensions of housing are not sacrificed, and that, *inter alia*, modern technological facilities, as appropriate are also ensured.

2.2.7 Legal security of tenure

Tenure takes a variety of forms, including rental (public and private) accommodation, cooperative housing, lease, owner-occupation, emergency housing and informal settlements, including occupation of land or property. Notwithstanding the type of tenure, all persons should possess a degree of security of tenure which guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats. Countries should consequently take immediate measures aimed at conferring legal security of tenure upon those persons and households currently lacking such protection, in genuine consultation with affected persons and groups.

3. Housing considerations of conflict affected communities

Barakath (2003), claims that construction of new settlements after conflicts must address the aspects of housing design, location and construction methods. In addition, El-Masri and Kellett (2001) discussed the housing preferences of people who were affected by war in Lebanon while Barakath et al. (2004) discussed the housing preferences of people in Palestine. Based on these literature findings, the following describes the key considerations of settlement reconstruction after conflicts.

3.1.1 Dwelling design

Housing preferences at dwelling level can be identified in terms of layout, indoor space, outdoor space, materials and privacy as follows.

- *Layout*: a major consideration is the way that space within the house is used (Barakath, 2003). In some cultures, spaces within the household have various uses during the day and night, and even according to season. The issue of sanitation and the location of the lavatory or latrine are particularly sensitive. Attempts to modernise the way communities live by locating the lavatory inside the house must be resisted, particularly in areas where there is no running water, or where the local culture/religion dictates that toilets are placed far from people's homes.

- *Indoor space*: in an assessment of the achievement of the Elkarama housing reconstruction project in the Gaza Strip, Barakath et al. (2004) found that reconstructed flats consisted of either two or three bedrooms with a living room, guest-room, kitchen, toilet and bathroom. While many housewives from the project complained that the kitchens are too small to be practical, others objected to the small rooms, and the limited washing and drying areas. Furthermore, very little provision for accommodating an extended family was given. Barakath (2003) points out that the size of the household is a key factor when designing houses. He says that in many rural communities, residence in extended families is still the norm and housing should reflect the cultural values attached to it.
- *Outdoor space*: it was found that the people who were affected by war in Lebanon preferred a terrace and garden around the house, a well to collect rainfall, and the possibility of future extension (El-Masri and Kellett, 2001). Barakath et al. (2004) found that people preferred sufficient space between buildings to allow people to move around and speak freely. Also they were concerned about sufficient car parking and shared socialising spaces. Space for future extension is also considered here.
- *Privacy*: Many housewives from the project complained that there was inadequate account taken of the need for privacy (Barakath et al., 2004). Especially when an extended family is living in a house, local housing design is likely to accommodate this pattern through forms of subdivision that allow for privacy. Therefore reconstructed housing also should consider this aspect as an important factor.
- *Materials*: The material used is more likely to be culturally and socially appropriate, as well as being familiar (Barakath, 2003). Traditional materials are more suitable and durable in the local climate. In terms of the materials, people preferred traditional materials, but only if along with the building skills, they can be obtained at a 'reasonable cost' (El-Masri and Kellett, 2001). However, it was found that a mixture of modern and traditional materials was a compromise, and which could respond to the socio-economic changes and to the different age and gender groups.

3.1.2 Location

Location is by far the most important factor in determining the success or failure of new settlement programmes. Dimensions to be considered under location are as follows.

- *Access*: access considers the condition of the access road and ease of access to economic and social services. According to El-Masri and Kellett (2001), people considered the accessibility to the village or settlement and access to education and social facilities are more important in village reconstruction.
- *Infrastructure*: the existing infrastructure facilities are considered here. As El-Masri and Kellett (2001) found, water supply is one of the major concerns of people.

- *Safety and security*: this considers the distance of new settlement to a border or other potential flashpoints. In addition it must consider the potential natural hazards like floods, winds, earthquakes, volcanoes etc.
- *Social, cultural and religious inclusion*: grouping communities from culturally diverse smaller settlements into one or more larger settlements has proved unsuccessful. Cultural and religious structures must be observed when planning larger grouped settlements.
- *Environment*: Quality of the natural environment is assessed under this.
- *Ownership*: Ownership of the land where new settlements are constructed.
- *Acceptance*: Level of acceptance of land amongst the target groups, host community and local authorities is important. This is considered in terms of the associated religious and cultural use of the land.
- *Space*: Sufficiency of land for the desired density of housing and space to provide livelihood and employment opportunities are considered here. Barakath (2003) also finds that the house is also likely to have an important economic function, or to have a key role in livelihoods. In rural areas, this may require accommodation for livestock and storage space for food and equipment. In urban areas, space may be needed for a small workshop or for storing goods to be sold in markets. In addition they expected a solution for the compact nature of the village when reconstructing. In fact people believed that reconstruction was an opportunity to create a better society, which would help to avoid the problems of the past and respond to future development.

3.1.3 Construction technology

- *Traditional techniques*: The use of traditional techniques allows the involvement of owners, local builders and small contractors in the construction, thus maximising the local economic value of the reconstruction programme (Barakath, 2003).
- *Prefabricated techniques*: Prefabricated housing can be constructed quickly, and can provide shelter for large numbers of people. This is important when many people have been made homeless, and there are large numbers of vulnerable people in the community. However, it is not necessarily an ideal solution. Prefabricated housing usually has to be imported, so does not benefit the local economy and imposes housing designs that may differ from the vernacular. Prefabricated housing also has a relatively short life expectancy, and components are often heavy and difficult to assemble without skilled knowledge.

3.1.4 People's perceptions

In addition to preferences, El-Masri and Kellett (2001) found that people's perception of the roles of the different actors in relation to housing reconstruction should be considered. Accordingly they were willing to be involved in the reconstruction of their houses, but within the limits of their capacities (finance and time). Involvement is better described as controlling the process for rebuilding their dwellings (planning, design and supervision). Therefore they expected the support for loans and technical know-how. Furthermore they emphasized the need for fair and equal access to resources. Barakath et al. (2004) too indicates that people believe in

public participation and prefer a participatory approach to reconstruction. In addition people assert the importance of proper selection of beneficiaries.

3.1.5 Post occupancy evaluation

People highlighted the need for undertaking a post occupancy evaluation after reconstruction (Barakath et al., 2004). As Fatoye and Odusami (2009) indicate, even though the performance evaluation of built facilities has often been based on how well the physical structure conforms to design specifications, the occupant's main concern is how the constructed facility will best meet their needs and expectations regardless of how the constructed facility has conformed to the specification.

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to examine the concept of housing needs in general and to explore the housing needs of conflict affected communities through a comprehensive literature review. With regard to the housing needs in general, the housing preferences in a market context were identified. Accordingly, in a market context, the housing choices and preferences are the results of a complex interplay between aspects and attributes of housing, individuals' socio-economic status, their position in the family life cycle and social, cultural, religious and environmental factors. Then the adequate housing measures were discussed. Adequate housing was recognized as part of the right to an adequate standard of living. These adequate housing measures provide a comprehensive list of factors to be considered in providing housing units that are adequate for the purpose of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These measures are applicable to any particular context.

Finally the housing considerations of conflict affected communities were presented. Most of the housing considerations of conflict affected communities are similar to adequate housing measures recognised by the committee on economic, social and cultural rights. However, some special aspects related to conflict affected communities in housing consideration were identified. Firstly it is clear from the literature that conflict affected communities give greater importance to their social, cultural and religious values when considering post conflict housing reconstruction. This concern is highlighted not only in dwelling design, but also in choosing the location for settlement reconstruction. Secondly, conflict affected communities considered the availability of land space for their livelihood (livestock, agriculture, small trades). Next, safety and security is a major concern for post conflict housing reconstruction. Here it was considered as safety from natural hazards and conflict as well. There are various perceptions of these communities in relation to housing reconstruction. As an example, their willingness to participate in planning, designing and supervising within the limits of their capacities is highlighted. Hence they expected the support for loans and technical know-how. Also these communities indicated the importance of post occupancy evaluation as a means of evaluating their satisfaction on resettlements. Nevertheless, no data relevant to the special needs of vulnerable groups such as war widows, female headed households, disabled groups and so on, was found in relation to post conflict housing reconstruction. As these vulnerable groups are

more prevalent in a post conflict context, their special housing needs must be identified and addressed during post conflict housing reconstruction.

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