



Development Workshop: Rebuilding War-torn Angola

It wasn't that long ago that helping the Third World was convenient shorthand for helping them be more like us. That's the kind of thinking a group of Canadian architects were reacting to in 1972 when they formed the Toronto-based Development Workshop (DW). Their approach was different. They knew that the living conditions of millions of Third World people were terrible. But they also believed that with a bit of financing and some training most poor people could solve their own housing problems using local methods and materials.

Fifteen years later that approach to development has worked successfully in more than 10 Third World countries — from Iran, India and Indonesia to Angola, Mali and Niger. DW's main concern is to strengthen planning, building and research in the Third World so that human settlements problems can be solved in ways that are sensitive to the local economy and to local cultural traditions.

"We're careful to be as unobtrusive as possible," says DW member Susan Hurlich. "The fact that people need healthier communities and better housing is important. But we have to make sure our intervention doesn't reinforce existing inequalities. What good is being involved if those with power in the community end up benefitting and the poor are not better off."

DW has been able to convince a variety of aid agencies including UNICEF, CIDA, and OXFAM as well as national and municipal governments in the Third World that its approach is the right one. Projects have covered a range of human settlement concerns — from urban planning, slum upgrading and improving basic infrastructure to planning social services and training people to run small enterprises. Core staff includes architects, planners, engineers and social scientists.

Thorough training is a key part of all Development Workshop projects. Government workers, community residents and local leaders may all benefit at various stages. For example, a project to build a school also provides the chance to help a local group understand how to plan and carry out small-scale development projects. At the same time local builders can improve their skills using local resources.

In war-torn Angola DW is currently working on a slum-upgrading project

that combines two of its basic aims. By providing training in management and alternative technologies the Toronto group is adding to the long-term strength of community organizations. The technical assistance is being channelled through the newly-created 'Gabinete de Renovação de Musseques' (GARM) — a government department responsible for slum upgrading. The work is also being supported by Canada's Shelter for the Homeless Foundation as one of its IYSH projects.

The 'musseques' are unplanned shanty areas with few basic services that surround the Angolan capital Luanda. About 75 per cent of Luanda's 1.5 million people live in these vast slums. Development Workshop will carry out the government's first upgrading program for the 'musseques'. The pilot project focuses on 10,000 residents in Sambizanga — one of the city's oldest and most-densely populated shantytowns. The aim is to redesign the community by laying out housing plots in a more orderly pattern to make it easier for people to build and easier to provide basic services like garbage collection and piped water. Central to the project is an attempt to involve community-based organizations in self-help housing construction and improvements.

Women will also play an important role in the Sambizanga project. The Angolan Women's Organization (OMA) which focuses on maternal and child health is one of DW's partners. The OMA has already commissioned a study on low-cost, locally-based sanitation technologies for the 'musseques'.

Community participation and the use of technologies that maximize the use of local resources are DW's guiding principles in the upgrading program. These principles dovetail with Angola's recently developed policy of 'autoconstrução' (self-help) as the core of its housing policies. 'Autoconstrução' aims to encourage and support the 'informal' housing sector, while offering basic state support in planning and the provision of infrastructure.

According to GARM Technical Director Antonio Monteiro, "People want to improve their living conditions. But we realize the only way to be successful in the long run is for us to work together. They tell us what their needs are and we help in whatever way we can to bring them about." ■

provides a good introduction to Third World shelter and development problems along with practical solutions through community organization.

The slide show explores squatter and slum settlements through two grassroots projects: one in the Mathare Valley in Kenya and the other in Santiago, Chile. Just 12 minutes long, the show fits easily into an evening workshop or class and is accompanied by a brochure describing IYSH. The same programme is also available in video. Both are distributed without charge.

Changing the City, Building Community: Poster Exhibit

An imposing set of 27 wall posters on community action and the involvement of non-government organizations (NGOs) in Third World housing and urban transformation. The poster exhibit was specially produced for IYSH by the HABITAT International Council.

It focuses on two main issues:

- The way cities are changed, including 'Changing Town/Countryside Relations' and 'Ideas and Reality in Planning Cities'.
- Case studies of successful cooperation between communities, NGOs, governments and aid agencies in solving urban and rural housing problems (16 examples from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia and three from industrialized countries).

to the Search for Solution Homelessness in Canada

A progress report on the nature of homelessness in Canada, a selected solutions in Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal. The authors: Peter Oberlander and Arthur L. the UBC Centre for Human Settlements provide practical solutions, the partnership of the homeless, volu- cies, private industry and the government. A more extensive will be available in April 1988 (\$10). For copies contact: Centre for Settlements, UBC, Vancouver V6T 1W5 (604) 228-5254.

Shelter and the Homeless: Teaching Materials Kit

Prepared by Unicef Ontario this kit is intended for use with grades 4 to 6. It will find background information, contacts and audio-visual resources provide a basic introduction to homelessness in Canada and in the Third World. Activity cards and class suggestions suggest flexible curriculum units focus on homeless children. Kits from Unicef Ontario, 333 Avenue East, Toronto, Ontario M5V 1C7, (416) 487-4153.



WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Support efforts to build the new Canadian/World Shelter Coalition and find out how your organization can get involved.
2. Support the Third World projects of the Shelter for the Homeless Foundation.
3. Get your organization involved in the Canadian NGO Agenda for Housing Action Year 2000.
4. IYSH is over but the struggle against homelessness continues. Use available resources to organize a seminar, organize a luncheon speaker or a film or slide show to keep up interest in World shelter problems.



CANADIAN ACTION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS

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Write Shelter News, c/o 151 John Street, Toronto, Ontario M5V 2T2 (416) 591-1111