

OPEN HOUSE INTERNATIONAL – CALL FOR PAPERS

HIV/AIDS and Settlement Development Planning

Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in housing and urban settlement planning in developing countries.

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Centre around Chimoio, Mozambique, which houses children who have lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS. Source: FAO

During recent years, HIV/AIDS has become part of everyday life in urban settlements in the developing world, and is one of the most serious and disastrous urban challenges the world has ever had to face. Since HIV first emerged in the early 1980s, AIDS is estimated to have killed 30 million people worldwide. The UNAIDS 2006 figures show that 40 million people are currently living with the virus. Over 95 percent of these people live in developing countries.

HIV/AIDS and human settlement development are directly inter-linked: At the municipal and national level, HIV/AIDS is weakening the ability of urban institutions to deliver social housing, infrastructure and other services due to loss of staff, related lack of capacities, decrease in municipal revenues (e.g. from taxes and service charges) and increasing costs (e.g. for replacement, care and death benefits). The construction sector is also suffering from the reduction of labour force, and is, as a sector, known to play a role in the further transmission of HIV. At the local level, inadequate housing and settlements place poor populations at heightened risk of HIV infection. Reasons relate to their exclusion from basic health and education services, lack of formal work, and insecure land tenure or property rights. Other factors that are critical for the spread and impact of HIV/AIDS—and which relate to the built environment—are high population densities, over-crowding and frequency of interaction. These factors are compounded by the lack of safe spaces, social cohesion and safety networks. Inadequate housing and settlements further complicate access to health care for persons already living with HIV/AIDS, resulting in improper and infrequent access to care and treatment, even when they are supplied at no cost. Left behind are AIDS widows and orphans. There are currently estimated to be more than 48 million orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa alone. Whilst war and other causes continue to add to this statistic, in 7 countries of Southern Africa at least 50% of this orphaning is attributed to HIV/AIDS. Increasingly households are being headed by older siblings who are little more than children themselves or grandparents as an entire generation is being lost. These dramatic social consequences of AIDS combine with the other mentioned problems and confront urban institutions with new demands and challenges. However, while cities are on the one hand incubators of HIV/AIDS, on the other hand they offer great opportunities for combating the epidemic.

Despite the described situation, in practice little has been done to give consideration to specific urban HIV/AIDS matters, and—when it comes to settlement development planning—hardly any projects/programmes have been carried out. This is alarming as, in fact, housing, adequate living conditions and urban governance are critical to the success of HIV prevention (decreased transmission), impact reduction, and support and care of those affected.

The interest of **Open House International** and its special issue on “HIV/AIDS and human settlement development” lies in raising the awareness for the described situation and in disseminating existing or potential responses to HIV/AIDS from the viewpoint of human settlements, which can combat the pandemic through appropriate shelter, urban planning and governance, as well as through related innovative financing mechanisms. Articles should discuss questions regarding the dynamic relationship between human settlement development and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and/or present concrete solutions that help(ed) to prevent its spread, reduce its impact, and/or support and care for those affected.

Christine Wamsler

Please submit your paper as soon as possible and latest in August 2007 to the Guest Editor, Christine Wamsler at christine.wamsler@hdm.lth.se

If you have any questions please contact the Guest Editor. For further information on OPEN HOUSE INTERNATIONAL go to www.openhouse-int.com or write to the Editor at: nicholaz.wilkinson@emu.edu.tr