

Organized self-help housing: lessons from practice with an international perspective.

Arroyo Ivette¹, Åstrand Johnny²

Abstract

There is an urgent need of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers until year 2020. The Habitat Agenda has identified self-help housing among other enabling housing strategies. This paper focuses on mapping organizations and different types of organized self-help housing (OSHH) projects since year 2000 with the aim of analyzing important lessons from practice. An international survey was implemented to selected housing experts and practitioners from developing countries; and qualitative data analysis was conducted. Results show that dweller-control over the OSHH process contributes in achieving better quality settlements and homes whilst empowering the urban poor. This process also helps to improve community skills and local construction techniques. Asian CBOs and NGOs have implemented OSHH for slum upgrading and reconstruction after natural disasters. Organized self-help housing has been combined with other support tools such as micro-credit or organized savings, production of construction materials, training and community capacity building. OSHH housing has the potential for fostering the development of social, technical and financial sustainability in human settlements in developing regions.

Keywords: Organized self-help housing, slum upgrading, reconstruction, dweller-control

1. Introduction

There is an urgent need of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers until year 2020 as stated by the Millennium Development Goals. In developing countries, governments have not been able to cope with rapid urbanization and housing needs (Jenkins, 2007). The poor have solved their housing needs through self-help housing without technical assistance producing shelter that has been highly affected by natural disasters. Kreimer has highlighted the vulnerability of slum dwellers due to the lack of resources and opportunities (Lyons & Schilderman, 2010). This argument is confirmed when comparing the damage of a 7 magnitude earthquake in Haiti with 80% of population living below the poverty line (Thurman, 2010), with the damage of a 8,8 magnitude earthquake in Chile³ where only 20% of the population are considered poor.

¹ PhD candidate; Housing Development & Management; Lund University; ivette.arroyo@hdm.lth.se

² Director; Housing Development & Management; Lund University; PO Box 118 SE-221 00; johnny.astrand@hdm.lth.se

³ In the 8,8 magnitude earthquake in Chile there were less than a thousand deaths. In Haiti, 1,5 million people were left homeless, and 27% of the houses in Port-au-Prince were destroyed (Chege, 2012).

Harris (1999) has tracked the history of aided self-help housing to Sweden in 1904 and then to other European countries for reconstruction purposes after the First World War. Geddes (Harris, 1997; Harris, 1998), Crane (Harris, 1997), Abrams (Abrams, 1969) and Turner (Turner, 1972; Turner, 1976) have argued the importance of two main features of housing and urban development in the rapid urbanizing South; firstly, incremental growth, and secondly, self-help housing. John F.C. Turner proposes three main issues based on his experience in the *barriadas* in Lima. First, the concept of “housing as a verb” in which he emphasizes the importance of the housing process. Second, he highlights the importance of “what housing does for people” over its physical characteristics. Third, Turner proposes that the value of housing was related to “dweller-control” more than to its physical features; hence, people deserve “freedom to build” (Turner, 1972; Turner, 1976; Marais, 2008). Organized self-help housing⁴ (OSHH) has been implemented by CBOs and NGOs as a way of addressing the housing needs of the poor as stated by the Habitat Agenda in 1996 (UN-Habitat, 1996). OSHH as a process has the potential to develop human skills and strengthen community development. The OSHH process is important for *what it does with people* because it also contributes in building the capacity of the community; and therefore, in increasing their resilience when facing natural disasters. There are different terms used to describe organized self-help housing such as community-led housing⁵, community-driven housing⁶, community-driven development⁷, assisted self-help projects, etc. The information regarding OSHH is scattered in different organizations which affects negatively the learning process by different stakeholders. This paper is an attempt of mapping key organizations and identifying the project types in which OSHH has been implemented since the year 2000. The aim of the paper is to analyze lessons learnt from the current practice of OSHH.

1.1 From aided self-help housing to organized self-help housing

Sites-and-services implemented by the World Bank around the world lack “dweller-control” which is considered the most novel contribution of Turner (Harris, 2003). These projects have been structured around state control – recently in South Africa (Marais, 2008); and miss the potential of community development through the process. They are based on a top-down approach in which the community only participates in self-construction activities. There are three negative aspects of the site-and-services approach of the World Bank. First, sites-and-services have promoted urban sprawl due to minimizing investment costs in building one storey housing. Secondly, core housing needed to be built incrementally, but microfinance for subsequent housing improvements has not been available. Finally, the self-help housing process has been focussed on community participation for producing core housing instead of improving the skills of the people and empowering them over the process.

⁴ Organized self-help housing: self-help housing with technical assistance (Abrams, 1969).

⁵ See Homes and Communities Agency community-led housing programme in the UK, Community Right to Build, <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/community-right-to-build>

⁶ See Community-driven housing initiatives in South Africa, <http://www.afesis.org.za/Sustainable-Settlement-Publications/community-driven-housing-initiatives>. See Community-driven Housing by Hunnarshala Foundation, in Bhuj, India,

⁷ See Using Community-Driven Development to Rebuild Housing in Haiti, [http://pnpm-support.org/sites/default/files/Using_Community-Driven_Development_to_Rebuild_Housing_in_Haiti\[1\].pdf](http://pnpm-support.org/sites/default/files/Using_Community-Driven_Development_to_Rebuild_Housing_in_Haiti[1].pdf)

UN-Habitat (2005a) recognizes several qualities of self-help housing with technical assistance such as its potential for saving investment costs, how communities acquire important skills through the process, its financial affordability and housing flexibility for incremental growth. For Rodriguez & Åstrand (1996), OSHH is important because “it promotes the enhancement and organization of the resources of the community and institutions involved, to make community development possible”. Bredenoord & Van Lindert (2010) argue for new pro-poor housing policies that include the power of self-help efforts of the poor; and provide the institutional, financial and technical framework. Some of the most active organizations internationally that have implemented different approaches to OSHH in the last decade are Slum/Shack Dwellers International, Habitat for Humanity International, Homeless International, and Gawad Kalinga among others. These organizations have been inspired by Crane, Turner and others. In this paper, organized self-help housing is defined as a process that involves the community’s active participation and decision making in planning, design, self-construction, and post-project activities with the technical assistance of a facilitating organization.

2. Methodology

An exploratory international survey was conducted to establish the state of the arts of organized self-help housing in developing countries. The study included the following research strategies: a) literature review b) test of a pilot questionnaire c) questionnaire to Housing Development & Management (HDM) alumni, other housing experts and practitioners, d) and Internet survey of shelter federations/organizations. For this paper, three categories of the questionnaire were selected: organization, project type and lessons learnt. The main criteria for the first selection of housing practitioners and experts from developing countries was to have participated in the International Training Programme (ITP) *Organized Self-help Housing: planning and management*. The 137 alumni of the OSHH course are professionals working with housing and urban development in 34 developing countries from Latin America, Asia and Africa; and share concepts and approaches to organized self-help housing. A pilot questionnaire was applied to this target group. Then, a snowball sampling was applied for distributing an improved version of the questionnaire and for the Internet survey. The summary of how the questionnaires have been applied to different target groups from 2008 to 2010 is shown in Table 1. It was possible to obtain primary information from 29 different developing countries through 84 questionnaires. The Internet survey aimed at a) obtaining further information about the organizations and projects referred by the respondents to the questionnaire b) and as validation of the primary information obtained through the questionnaires. This survey focused on websites such as UN-Habitat, Habitat Awards, Asian Coalition of Housing Rights, Slum Dwellers International, Homeless International, and Habitat for Humanity International among others.

Considering that this study is still ongoing, it will lead to more organizations and other types of OSHH projects, approaches and lessons. For the analysis of primary information, the questionnaires were classified by country; and qualitative data analysis was conducted on the following categories: organization, project types, lessons learnt. Questionnaires that failed in providing information about organizations and types of projects were left out of the analysis. The results and discussion section focus on a) discussing the results of the

international mapping with an emphasis on lessons learnt from organizations working in Asia and Africa; and b) the case of Indonesia. There were two main criteria for selecting Indonesia as a case. First, questionnaires have been mostly collected from this country. Second, the scale of destruction of the 2004 tsunami had affected Indonesia heavily and the government supported a people-centred reconstruction process.

Table 1: Details of the international survey

| Description | Target group | Date | Number of responses | Percentage | Number of countries | Countries |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------|------------|---------------------|---|
| Pilot questionnaire | 137 alumni OSHH courses (2002-2007) | October 2008 | 16 | 11,67% | 12 | Bangladesh (2), Bolivia, Brazil, India, Indonesia (2), Nepal, Sri Lanka (2), Swaziland, Tanzania, Venezuela, Vietnam and Zambia (2) |
| Questionnaire | 153 alumni SDD courses (2006-2009) | April 2009 | 49 | 32% | 22 | <i>Latin America 9 Q:</i> Bolivia, Brazil, Cuba (2) , Ecuador (2), El Salvador, Nicaragua and Uruguay; <i>Asia 16 Q:</i> Indonesia (6) , Nepal, Sri Lanka (3), The Philippines (5), Vietnam; <i>Africa 24 Q:</i> Botswana, Egypt (2), Ethiopia (2), Kenya (3), Malawi (4), South Africa (2), Swaziland, Tanzania (4), Tunisia and Zambia (4) |
| Questionnaires | 93 housing experts and practitioners | January 2010 | 19 | 20% | 12 | Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Chile (3), El Salvador, Guatemala, Indonesia (4), Nicaragua (2), Nigeria, The Philippines (2), Tunisia, and Uruguay |
| Total of questionnaires | | | 84 | | | |

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 OSHH with an international perspective

The international survey has identified 75 organizations that have implemented different types of OSHH projects; 33 organizations in Asia, 20 in Africa and 16 in Latin America. Organizations such as Habitat for Humanity (United States), Homeless International (United Kingdom), Swedish Cooperative Center (Sweden), German Technical Cooperation (Germany), Universidad de Sevilla and Universidad Politénica de Catalunya (Spain) have supported other CBOs or NGOs in implementing OSHH projects in developing countries. In Latin America, Federación Uruguaya de Cooperativas de Vivienda por Ayuda Mutua (FUCVAM), Fundación Salvadoreña de Desarrollo y Vivienda Mínima (FUNDASAL) and Un Techo para mi País have transferred their experience to other countries in the region. Fundación Promotora de Vivienda (FUPROVI) in Costa Rica and Programa de Desarrollo Local (PRODEL) in Nicaragua have inspired many organizations internationally.

3.1.1 OSHH in Africa

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 62% urban residents live in slum-like conditions (Acioly, 2012). A summary of 20 organizations working in 9 countries, from which 7 are Sub-Saharan Africa is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Key organizations implementing OSHH projects in Africa where the source of information is specified (Q: questionnaires; and I: Internet)

| Organization | Project type | Project summary | Source | Website |
|---|------------------------------------|--|--------|---|
| Botswana | | | | |
| Habitat for Humanity Botswana | New housing | New housing for improving overcrowding (A Hand Up...not Hand Out) | Q | http://adloc.com/hfhb/facts.html |
| Egypt | | | | |
| Central government | Aided SHH | Aided self-help housing (Build your Home-Ibny beetak) | Q | http://www.gopp.gov.eg |
| German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) | Slum upgrading | Self-help infrastructure improvement (Manshiet Nasser Upgrading Project, Cairo) | Q | http://egypt-urban.pdp-gtz.de1.cc/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Decision-makers-Guide-for-Action.pdf |
| Ethiopia | | | | |
| Habitat for Humanity Ethiopia (NGO) | New housing | New housing, renovations and repairs, water and sanitation. | Q | http://www.habitat.org.et |
| Kenya | | | | |
| Pamoja Trust (NGO) | Slum upgrading | Slum upgrading (Huruma Kambi Moto upgrading) | Q | http://www.pamojatrust.org |
| Jamii Bora Trust | New housing | Micro-finance for new incremental housing, production of construction materials and self-help housing (Kaputiei New Town). | I | http://www.jamiibora.se/ |
| Habitat for Humanity Kenya | Relocation | Resettlement of internally displaced persons (Maai Mahiu Project), new incremental housing, organized savings, micro-credit for housing. | I | http://www.hfkenya.or.ke/ |
| Malawi | | | | |
| Centre for Community Organization and Development (CCODE) and Malawi Homeless People's Federation (MHPF) | Slum upgrading | Slum upgrading and new housing, organized savings, community capacity development, composting toilets and adobe and compressed earth blocks | Q | http://www.ccode-mw.org |
| Habitat for Humanity Malawi | Slum upgrading / Rural improvement | Improvement loans for rural and urban housing, new housing for orphans and vulnerable children. | Q | http://www.habitat.org/where-we-build/malawi |
| The Malawi Alliance, Homeless International and CCODE | Relocation | Relocation housing of slum dwellers, production of bricks (CLIFF Blantyre Project) | I | http://www.homeless-international.org/Files/HOM/PDF/A/A/F/hmint107_cliff_ar12_final_lr_43783_1.pdf |
| Nigeria | | | | |
| Habitat for Humanity Nigeria and MTN Foundation | New housing | New apartment units, two bedrooms, self-construction, community capacity building (Karu Project). | I | http://www.habitat.org/lc/theforum/spanish/urbano/Viviendas_urbanas_en_Nigeria.aspx |
| South Africa | | | | |
| Built Environment Support Group | Slum upgrading | Slum upgrading and community capacity building. | Q | http://www.besg.co.za |
| Masisizane Women's Housing Cooperative (CBO) and Rooftops Canada | Slum upgrading / Aided SHH | Housing co-operative for housing improvement in slums, production of construction materials, transfer of skills and community capacity building. Partnership with South African central government to implement one pilot project for the People's Housing Programme -an aided self-help housing programme. (Project Ivory Park Ward in Mindrand, 2002). | I | http://rooftops.digcanada.com/CMS1images/file/Emerging%20Coop%20Housing%20Models%20in%20South%20Africa.pdf |
| The SDI South African Alliance: Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDUP), The Informal Settlement Network (ISN), The Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC), uTshani Fund. | Slum upgrading | Organized savings, enumerations and mapping, self-construction of community toilets, and slum upgrading. (Victoria Mxenge Housing Development) | I | http://sasdialliance.org.za |
| Habitat for Humanity South Africa | Slum upgrading / New housing | OSHH, organized savings, community capacity building, volunteer management of projects (Employers-Employee model, Orphans and Vulnerable Children Programme) | I | http://www.habitat.org.za |
| Tanzania | | | | |
| Habitat for Humanity (NGO) | Slum upgrading / New housing | Micro-credit for housing improvement (Makazi Bora house improvement loan) for supporting incremental housing improvement and/or incremental construction. | Q | http://www.hfhtanzania.org/contact.html |
| WAT-Human Settlements Trust (NGO) | Slum upgrading / New housing | Micro-credit for incremental construction and/or housing improvement, Housing Support Services (technical assistance for self-construction such as client/artisans technical capacity building); community mobilization and community capacity building for regularization projects. | Q | http://www.wat.or.tz |
| Centre for Community Initiatives (CCI) and Homless International | Relocation | Relocation project of evicted slum families, housing co-operative, self-construction and mutual help (Chamazi Resettlement Project) | I | http://www.homeless-international.org |
| Zambia | | | | |
| Habitat for Humanity Zambia | Slum upgrading / New housing | New housing, renovations and rehabilitation, community capacity building, and the Vulnerable Group Housing (VGH) program for orphaned and vulnerable children and their caregivers. | Q | http://www.habitatzam.org.zm/index.htm |
| Zimbabwe National Association of Housing Cooperatives (ZINAHCO) and Homeless International | Relocation | Relocation housing for slum dwellers, training in loan management & construction to cooperatives (CLIFF Mutare Project, Masvingo Project, Kariba Project, Harare Project, Chitungwiza Project and Bulawayo Project) | I | http://www.homeless-international.org/Files/HOM/PDF/A/A/F/hmint107_cliff_ar12_final_lr_43783_1.pdf |

From the 20 organizations, 11 work with slum upgrading and relocation projects for slum dwellers. These CBOs and NGOs implement approaches that include OSHH in combination with other support tools like organized savings, micro-finance, community capacity building, production of construction materials, etc. South Africa has implemented an aided self-help housing programme as part of its housing policy since 1994, and slum dwellers have participated since 1991 in exchanges with Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) which has contributed in strengthening their own federations. Hence it is possible to compare the results of a top-down approach with the achievements of the bottom-up approach of the South African Homeless People's Federation. Mandela's housing programme accomplished the goal of building 1 million housing in 5 years, but the housing backlog of 4 million houses in 1994 has been addressed only by 2001. Governmental core houses are overcrowded and sometimes 9 people share one room. Conversely, for the Victoria Mxenge Housing Development⁸, women have set their own saving scheme since 1991; they have produced their own blocks and self-built masonry houses up to 72 m² with 3 bedrooms according to their saving capacity. The size of their houses is 2 or 3 times bigger than the housing provided by the government. By 2001 the federation has self-built 10,000 new houses (South African Homeless People's Federation, 2001).

3.1.2 OSHH in Asia

The results of the international survey show that organized self-help housing has been implemented mostly for re-construction after natural disasters such as tsunamis, earthquakes, volcano eruptions, tornados and floods in Asia. South East Asia Region (SEAR) countries have the larger number of people killed in natural disasters for the period 2000 to 2009⁹. A summary of 17 organizations implementing OSHH for slum upgrading and reconstruction after natural disasters in India and Indonesia is shown in Table 3. The experience in India regarding approaches and tools developed, and the scale of slum upgrading projects led and self-built by the people themselves with technical assistance of NGOs is remarkable. The 12 questionnaires from Indonesia provided information about the work of 11 organizations whose experience on slum upgrading and organized self-help reconstruction will be discussed further in section 3.2.

Asian CBOs and NGOs have been networking more than 30 years¹⁰. This exchange extended to South Africa and in 1996 originated the creation of the international network Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) with the aim of stressing grassroots democracy and challenge existing paradigms of development¹¹. The effect of long term networking is reflected in a continuous learning process based on development-trial-improvement of

⁸ Victoria Mxenge Housing Development was the first self-built housing project implemented by the South African Homeless People's Federation in the mid 1990s.

⁹ According to the World Health Organization, the 11 member countries of the South East Asia Region (SEAR) comprised 62% of the total deaths globally, which means 679,294 people. SEAR countries are Bangladesh, Bhutan, DPR Korea, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste.

¹⁰ Networking in Asia started with the work of Father Jorge Anzorena, PhD in Architecture, J.P. His work has been continued then by the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR).

¹¹ The exchanges of grassroots organizations and NGOs within the ACHR constituted the basis for the creation of Slum Dwellers International (SDI) in 1996 (Patel et al, 2001).

different tools for poverty reduction. The SDI method includes organized community savings, enumerations & mapping, self-construction of toilet blocks, slum upgrading. Community-driven development has been key to develop the capacity of grassroots organizations – through the whole project cycle: planning, implementation (including self-construction), decision making and maintenance. The SDI approach has also improved the position of national slum dwellers federations when negotiating with local governments.

Table 3: Key organizations implementing OSHH projects in India and Indonesia where the source of information is specified (Q: questionnaires; and I: Internet)

| Organization | Project type | Project summary | Source | Website |
|---|------------------------------|--|--------|--|
| India | | | | |
| The Madurai Corporation (NGO) | Slum upgrading | Slum upgrading (housing and infrastructure) | Q | www.maduraicorporation.in |
| Hunnarshala Foundation | Reconstruction | Reconstruction after natural disasters (in India and Indonesia) | I | http://hunnar.org/cdh.htm |
| UNNATI - Organisation for Development Education | Reconstruction | Reconstruction after natural disasters in Western India | I | http://www.unnati.org |
| Prasanna Desai Architects, Urban Nouveau, the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) and the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) | Slum upgrading | Incremental Slum Upgrading (Incremental Housing Strategy, Yerwada slum, Pune, India) | I | http://openarchitecturenetwork.org/projects/dlygad2_insitu_rehabilitation |
| The Indian Alliance: The Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) and Mahila Milan | Slum upgrading | In-situ incremental slum upgrading (Yerwada Slum Upgrading: savings, participatory surveys, design and construction, community capacity building, incremental housing with technical assistance in the plots where shacks are located) | I | http://www.sparcindia.org |
| The Indian Alliance and Homeless International | Slum upgrading | Slum upgrading, research on incremental upgrading, (CLIFF: Bhubaneshwar, Puri, Pune) | I | http://www.homeless-international.org/Files/HOM/PDF/A/A/F/hmint107_cliff_ar12_final_lr_43783_1.pdf |
| Indonesia | | | | |
| Ellacuria Foundation (NGO) | Slum upgrading | Slum upgrading, participatory design and organized savings | Q | www.ellacuria.org |
| Habitat for Humanity Indonesia (Faith based NGO) | Reconstruction | Post-tsunami reconstruction , microfinance for incremental construction (Save and Build Program). | Q | www.habitatindonesia.org |
| Yayasan Griya Mandiri (Griya Mandiri Foundation) | Slum upgrading / New housing | Slum upgrading and new housing (Community Based Initiative on Housing and Local Development-CoBILD Programme) | Q | www.ygmdiy.org |
| Yayasan Pondok Rakyat (Action Research Group on Urban Development) | Infrastructure improvement | Incremental infrastructure improvement | Q | http://ypr.or.id/en |
| The Neighborhood Upgrading and Shelter Sector Project (NUSSP) | Slum upgrading | Slum upgrading (NUSSP project) | Q | http://www.adb.org/publications/neighborhood-upgrading-and-shelter-sector-project-indonesia |
| UN-Habitat and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) | Reconstruction | Post-tsunami community-driven approach to reconstruction (People's Process) and Integral slum upgrading (Slum Upgrading Facilities). | Q | http://www.unhabitat-indonesia.org/video/video_anssp.html |
| TRIACO Consultants | Relocation | Integrated slum redevelopment (Mojosongo Riverbank Project, Central Java) | Q | http://faculty.washington.edu/jhou/rim/2004/papers/AntonioRisianto.pdf |
| Urban Poor Linkage (UP-Link) | Reconstruction | Post-tsunami reconstruction, community capacity building (23 Villages in Aceh) | Q | http://uplink.atspace.org/ |
| Government of Indonesia Java Reconstruction Fund (JRF) | Reconstruction | Post-multiple natural disasters reconstruction, paid self-built housing, community capacity building (Rekompak Project or Community-Based Settlement Rehabilitation and Reconstruction-CSRRP) | Q | http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/650390WPOJRF0P00B0x361555B00PUBLIC0.pdf |
| Catholic Relief Service (CRS) | Reconstruction | Post-tsunami reconstruction | I | www.crs.org |
| JUB Uplink | Reconstruction | People-driven post tsunami reconstruction | I | www.youtube.com/watch?v=nx-Dm57aqNE&feature=endscreen&NR=1 |

Due to the scale of slums in Asia, CBOs and NGOs have developed expertise in in-situ slum upgrading projects with an OSHH component with the main aim of community empowerment and capacity building. The Indian Alliance composed by the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC), the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) and Mahila Milan have implemented successfully in-situ incremental slum upgrading (See Table 3) when “construction and cost escalations made the projects unattractive for commercial contractors...Through economies of scale and self-construction and grant support for learning aspects these projects were possible”. The in-situ incremental upgrading of Yerawada slum in Pune is an example (Sparc Samudaya Nirman Sahayak, 2012).

3.2 The case of Indonesia: OSHH for slum upgrading and reconstruction

Slum dwellers are still threatened to eviction from informal settlements despite the right to adequate housing is included in the Indonesian Constitution of 1945 (Centre on Housing Rights & Evictions, 2012). Market forces behind urban redevelopment projects are still stronger than human rights and “over 100,000 people were evicted or threatened with eviction” in Jakarta from 2003-2004 (Du Plessis, 2005). The latter although slum upgrading practice in Indonesia has provided basic services such as water, sanitation, shelter and roads; improving the living conditions of 15 million people through the Kampung Improvement Program (KIP)¹²(World Bank, 1996). Conversely, community-driven housing processes have been found to be more effective than contractor-led housing in the last decade. The achievements of bottom-up approaches to slum upgrading projects based on community dynamic planning and organized self-help housing have been shown in projects such as Mojsongo Slum Upgrading Project in Central Java (Risianto, 2004). A key respondent to the questionnaires highlights some benefits of OSHH; “...[it] creates jobs, sense of belonging/ownership, creating an ACTIVITY that develops community cohesion...OSHH is easier and better in slum upgrading mutual-help activities”.

Mobilization of community resources, seed capital for establishing a revolving fund and community professionals for supporting participatory processes are vital for the work of CBOs and NGOs when implementing slum upgrading with an OSHH component. Ellacuria Foundation integrates housing and economic development through community organized savings and OSHH for housing renovation (SELAVIP, 2009). From the questionnaires, a housing expert argues that “...the fluctuation of building material prices due to global recession [2007-2008] has significantly affected the continuity of this project. Finding and adhoc funding scheme is a currently major concern of Ellacuria [Foundation]”. Griya Mandiri Foundation is the local partner of UN-Habitat and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) working with “community-based housing” and micro-credit for slum upgrading and new housing. Another key informant from the questionnaires explains some advantages of OSHH “... [it] is effective and efficient; the cost is much reduced if all works are organized by local people. They feel that the facilities that construct by themselves are owned by them. [OSHH is] integrated and comprehensive in terms of money and the duration of works. However, [there can be] difficulty in coordination in the beginning, and [there can be] social

¹² KIP improved the living conditions of 15 million people through the provision of basic services such as water, sanitation, shelter and roads (World Bank, 1996).

complications between communities that are not involved directly in terms of works for cash [–working for money]”. Another Indonesian housing expert provides data through the questionnaires that support the argument for an organized self-help housing approach in slum upgrading as an effective tool for overcoming poverty: “I think that many cases in Indonesia show that slum-upgrading and self-help housing can improve the social capital, productivity and health. In Pekalongan, two years after the slum upgrading/self-help housing program was launched, poverty rates reduced by 27%. There was a significant improvement in health and productivity due to better quality homes. The poor could utilize part of their house to support productive home activities. Also self-help housing through micro-credit or rotating funds can improve the community’s self-esteem and confidence by providing the opportunity for them to pay back and not a charity case. The participation of the community in the project can also support the sustainability of the program, as they have larger commitment to maintain the housing environment”.

The 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami following a 9.1 magnitude earthquake killed approximately 129,775 people in Indonesia (Doocy, et al., 2007); with a scale of damages that has had no precedent. In Aceh, this worsened due to another earthquake on March 2005 and from both disasters 167,000 people were reported dead or missing, 500,000 people were made homeless, 120,000 houses were destroyed or severely damaged and 25% of the population lost their livelihood. The approaches to reconstruction from international agencies ranged from delivering turnkey houses to housing by people. Reconstruction after natural disasters has shown to be more complex than slum upgrading. The six first months after the tsunami have evidenced the lack of local institutional capacity for coordinating more than 100 local NGOs and international agencies participating in housing reconstruction (Da Silva & Batchelor, 2010); and also bureaucracy and corruption in managing huge financial resources from international aid. Through a people-centred and participative process led by the government, 125,000 permanent houses have been built. According to UN-Habitat (2005b), the physical reconstruction by the affected families has contributed to their social recovery because it has fostered community cohesion and development; and it has strengthened networks due to mutual help which is a key aspect to sustainable recovery. Conversely, some international agencies have implemented contractor-build programmes in Aceh arguing that contractor manage speed better than communities self-building by themselves. Da Silva & Batchelor (2010) argue that self-build programmes in Aceh have shown the following advantages: affected families have initiated earlier the recovery process with a sense of ownership and purpose; the process has promoted dwellers control for housing and settlement design, and construction; and, the reconstruction process has contributed to overcome trauma sooner. From the questionnaires, a housing expert emphasizes that *“at the end of the [reconstruction] project, the locals had acquired and remained with all these skills inter alia [make fire cured clay bricks... bend reinforcement bars... set levels... basic carpentry and bricklaying techniques]. They will use [these skills] to repair and renovate their houses, or to outsource their skills for income generation and poverty alleviation... in case of another Tsunami, they could handle their own reconstruction with very little assistance.”*

There are several important lessons from post-disaster reconstruction in Indonesia after the 2004 tsunami. First, the recognition of *the power of people themselves* and the technical assistance have been key resources for reconstruction. Secondly, the magnitude and

recurrence of natural disasters has shown the need of local capacity for more coordinated multi-stakeholder partnerships among government, CBOs, NGOs, international and multilateral agencies. Thirdly, the Asian Development Bank highlights that the need of improving the capacity of local communities to provide fast relief and cope more efficiently when facing natural disasters has to be prioritized (Jayasuriya, 2010). Finally, an European survey on the Rekompak project shows that dwellers control provides higher satisfaction because affected families have contributed to housing design, procurement and self-construction process achieving better quality housing (*World Bank, 2012*).

4. Conclusions

This paper concludes that in the last decade, there are many new experiences on organized self-help housing in developing countries. Hence, the need for more systematic research on the OSHH process to provide feedback to the urban planning practice and policy makers in developing countries. The scale of intervention of organized self-help housing projects has increased in the current practice in Asia, demonstrating that 'scaling up' slum upgrading is possible when the processes are led and organized by the people themselves with technical assistance of NGOs. There has been more action in terms of testing different types of OSHH projects than academic debate. This reaffirms the need for generating more systematized knowledge that allows drawing theory from empirical based knowledge, to propose ways of improving current practice and influencing housing policy. The paper has shown that the type of OSHH projects has shifted from new housing for a non-predetermined community to slum upgrading and relocation projects of specific slum dwellers who lead the OSHH process. In a slum, the community has already developed their social capital and networks – social, business, political activities – and this contributes to community empowerment of the OSHH process. Slum dwellers are more affected by natural disasters; but when they are organized and have developed their capabilities they are able to mobilize their own resources to lead and implement organized self-help reconstruction¹³ (OSHR) processes more efficiently. Investing in slum upgrading programmes with an organized self-help housing component or approach will contribute in strengthening the capabilities of the communities making them more resilient when facing natural disasters.

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¹³ Organized Self-help Reconstruction (OSHR) is a term proposed by the authors to name a type of organized self-help housing that refers to reconstruction processes after natural disasters or post-conflicts.

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