

Compromising Quality of Life in Low Income Settlements: The Case of Ashrayan Prakaalpa Prakaalpa, Khulna

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Abstract : Ashrayan (shelter) Prakaalpa - a fully subsidized 'integrated poverty eradication program' through the provisioning of shelter of Bangladesh Government (GoB) targeting the internally displaced and homeless. In spite of the inclusiveness (poverty alleviation, employment opportunity, Tenure ship and training) of the shelter policy, dwellers are not merely questioned by the issue of 'the quality of life'. This study demonstrates how top-down policies, ambiguous ownership status of land and dwelling environments lead to 'everyday compromise' by the grassroots in both subjective (satisfaction, comfort and safety) and objective (physical design elements and physical environmental elements) issues in three respective scale macro (neighborhood) meso (shelter /built environment) and micro(family). It shows that by becoming subject to Government's resettlements policies and after becoming user of its shelter units (although locally known as 'barracks' rather shelter or housing), the once displaced settlers assume a curious form of spatial practice where both social and spatial often bear slippery meanings. Thus, Policy-based shelter force the dwellers frequently compromise with their provided built environments and spaces within the settlements both in overtly and covertly. Compromises are made during the production of space and forms, whereas interesting new spaces and space-making practices emerge. The settlements under study are Dakshin Chandani Mahal Ashrayan Prakaalpa located at the Eastern fringe area of Khulna, Bangladesh. In terms of methodology, this research is primarily exploratory and assumes a qualitative approach. Key tools used to obtain information are policy analysis, literature review, key informant interview, focus group discussion and participant observation at the level of dwelling and settlements. Necessary drawings and photographs have been taken to promote the study objective. Findings revealed that various shortages, inadequacies and negligence of policymakers make a compromising character of displaced by the means of 'quality of life' both in objective and subjective ground. Thus the study ends up with a recommendation to the policymakers to take an initiative to ensure the quality of life of the dwellers.

Keywords : Ashrayan, compromise, displaced people, quality of life

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