

Compromising Quality of Life in Low Income Settlement's: The Case of Ashrayan Prakalpa, Khulna

Authors : Salma Akter, Md. Kamal Uddin

Abstract : This study aims to demonstrate how top-down shelter policy and its resultant dwelling environment leads to 'everyday compromise' by the grassroots according to subjective (satisfaction) and objective (physical design elements and physical environmental elements) indicators, which are measured across three levels of the settlement; macro (Community), meso (Neighborhood or shelter/built environment) and micro (family). Ashrayan Prakalpa is a resettlement /housing project of Government of Bangladesh for providing shelters and human resources development activities like education, microcredit, and training programme to landless, homeless and rootless people. Despite the integrated nature of the shelter policies (comprises poverty alleviation, employment opportunity, secured tenure, and livelihood training), the 'quality of life' issue at the different levels of settlements becomes questionable. As dwellers of shelter units (although formally termed as 'barracks' rather shelter or housing) remain on the receiving end of government's resettlement policies, they often involve with spatial-physical and socio-economic negotiation and assume curious forms of spatial practice, which often upholds contradiction with policy planning. Thus, policy based shelter force dwellers to persistently compromise with their provided built environments both in overtly and covertly. Compromising with prescribed designed space and facilities across living places articulated their negotiation with the quality of allocated space, built form and infrastructures, which in turn exert as less quality of life. The top-down shelter project, Dakshin Chandani Mahal Ashrayan Prakalpa at Dighalia Upazila, the study area located at the Eastern fringe area of Khulna, Bangladesh, is still in progress to resettle internally displaced and homeless people. In terms of methodology, this research is primarily exploratory and adopts a case study method, and an analytical framework is developed through the deductive approach for evaluating the quality of life. Secondary data have been obtained from housing policy analysis and relevant literature review, while key informant interview, focus group discussion, necessary drawings and photographs and participant observation across dwelling, neighborhood, and community level have also been administered as primary data collection methodology. Findings have revealed that various shortages, inadequacies, and negligence of policymakers force to compromise with allocated designed space, physical infrastructure and economic opportunities across dwelling, neighborhood and mostly community level. Thus, the outcome of this study can be beneficial for a global-level understating of the compromising the 'quality of life' under top-down shelter policy. Locally, for instance, in the context of Bangladesh, it can help policymakers and concerned authorities to formulate the shelter policies and take initiatives to improve the well-being of marginalized.

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

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