

# SOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES IN LOW- INCOME HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS: A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY PRESERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (CPDC) IN THE UNITED STATES

FSP Expert Tijen ŞAHİN<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Housing is among the one of the most basic needs of human-beings. As a result of this, different countries in the world apply different methods to address housing needs of low-income people by considering the consequences of the housing efforts. Generally, these low-income housing projects are under the risk of being ruined, becoming crime and drug dealing areas.

In order to deal with this risk, some countries prefer to disperse the social housing units in different neighborhoods for avoiding ghettoization problem; whereas some countries prefer to develop concentrated low income housing projects and provide social support programs in these housing complexes. In this article, the projects of Community Preservation and Development Corporation (CPDC), which is a nonprofit organization pioneered in combing real estate development to social support programs in the U.S., will be evaluated as an example of social support programs in low-income housing complexes.

**Keywords:** social housing, low-income housing development projects, social support programs, poverty, concentrated low-income housing projects

<sup>1</sup> Family and Social Policy Expert

## DÜŞÜK GELİRLİLERE YÖNELİK KONUT GELİŞTİRME PROJELERİNDE SOSYAL DESTEK HİZMETLERİ: ABD'DEKİ TOPLULUK KORUMA VE GELİŞTİRME KURUMU (CPDC) ÖRNEĞİ

### Öz

Konut insanların en temel ihtiyaçlarından biridir. Bu nedenle, dünyanın farklı ülkelerinde düşük gelirli insanların konut ihtiyacını karşılamak için konut sağlama çabalarının sonuçları göz önüne alınarak farklı yöntemler uygulanmaktadır. Genel olarak, düşük gelirliye yönelik konut projeleri, harap olma ve suç ve uyuşturucu ticareti alanlarına dönme riski altındadır. Bazı ülkeler bu risk ile mücadele etmek ve gettolaşma sorununu önlemek için sosyal konut birimlerini farklı mahallelere dağıtmayı tercih ederken; bazı ülkeler yoğunlaştırılmış düşük gelirli konut projeleri geliştirmekte ve bu konut projelerinde sosyal destek programları uygulamaktadır. Bu makalede, kâr amacı gütmeyen bir organizasyon olan ve ABD'de gayrimenkul sektörü ile sosyal destek programlarını birleştirmeye öncülük eden Topluluk Koruma ve Geliştirme Kurumu (Community Preservation and Development Corporation-CPDC), düşük gelirli konut projelerinde uygulanan sosyal destek programlarının bir örneği olarak ele alınacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** sosyal konut, düşük gelir grubuna yönelik konut projeleri, sosyal destek programları, yoksulluk, kümelenmiş sosyal konut projeleri

### 1. Introduction

Housing is among the one of the most basic needs of human-beings. As a result of this, most countries in the world provide social housing for disadvantaged people. In order to address changing human needs in constantly changing environment, new policies and solutions should be formulated in the provision of affordable housing. Poor people are unable to afford houses at market rates. As a result, affordable housing for poor people has been the part of the social policies starting from the 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to improve the living conditions of poor (Kunduracı, 2013, p. 53). Different countries in the world apply different methods to address housing needs of low-income people by considering the consequences of the housing efforts. Generally, these low-income housing projects are under the risk of being ruined, becoming crime and drug dealing areas.

As a solution to this ghettoization problem and avoiding it; some countries such as Belgium and Austria prefer to disperse the social housing units in different neighborhoods (Coşkun and Kunduracı, 2013, p. 15). In this way, low income houses and middle or high income houses co-exist in some neighborhoods. This is expected to provide social housing residents with improved physical housing, increased safety, better community amenities, and a more economically diverse population (Chaskin, Joseph, McCormik and Voelker, 2013, p. 1). Even

though some of the challenges of social housing were overcome and several benefits are involved in mixed income housing developments, some other problems and challenges have emerged. Integrating social houses into mixed-income neighborhoods in order to eliminate the negative consequences of the concentrated housing projects have problems associated with exclusion by high income neighbors and screening by security officers (Chaskin et al., 2013, p. 4).

In concentrated low income housing complexes, providing social support programs is considered as an innovative approach and an alternative to protect the low income housing complexes becoming ruined. Countries such as Saudi Arabia provides social services to residents of the social housing in order to make them self-sufficient through job training and career projects (Coşkun and Kunduracı, 2013, p. 58). Residents of Social Housing are generally perceived as representatives of *'urban underclass'* and residents experience social and economic exclusion (Chaskin et al., 2013, p. 1). This could be considered as a stigma for residents by society. For example, even giving their address to someone or some organization, which reflects their income level and underclass neighborhood; people in these concentrated units might feel bad and face exclusion from rest of the society (Chaskin et al., 2013, p. 1). As a result of this, it is necessary to make these neighborhoods as livable and stable places for the residents. Social support services for affordable housing residents is a mean to help them to live more improved and stable lives. The community support services in these housing complexes aim to support families in these neighborhoods. These community services contribute to social support services in general and address the problems on-site. These services help residents to deal with economic, social, cultural and psychological problems they face as a result of being poor.

In the United States, nonprofit organizations with government support develop housing projects for low-income groups. This is a good mean to deal with the outcomes of living in poverty and making poverty a temporary concept (Coşkun and Kunduracı, 2013, p. 35). Community Preservation and Development Corporation (CPDC) pioneered in combining real estate development to social support programs in the U.S. (Hoffman, 2009, p. 5). Affordable housing projects are especially important in the U.S. for avoiding homelessness problem. In this article; first, CPDC and its unique approach in affordable housing units will be described. Later, the important elements of social support programs in low income housing development projects of CPDC will be considered. Lastly, final remarks will be provided.

## 2. Community Preservation and Development Corporation (CPDC)

One of the prominent examples of the social support programs in housing development projects is the CPDC, which is a well-known nonprofit housing development company in the United States (the U.S.). CPDC is established in 1989 and was famous for its pioneering efforts at bringing together community service programs and housing (Hoffman, 2009, p. 5). CPDC had two lines of business including housing development and social support programs and each branch had its own expertise, leadership, organizational structure and financial means (Hoffman, 2009, p. 8). Within CPDC, financial support for social services was provided by housing development projects and grants from several different organizations. After yielding positive results and public approval, several grants from various organizations that were operating in different areas were received. For providing social support services for residents, CPDC started to work with federal, state and local government agencies; private corporations; foundations and universities; and nonprofit organizations (Hoffman, 2009, p. 9).

The CPDC's programs were expanded from housing development to social services when they realized that some of their low-income housing developments are ruined in a very short time (Hoffman, 2009, p. 5). The idea behind this was that by responding to social needs of poor residents, these housing complexes could be saved from becoming ruined. Moreover, it is considered that social support services could be delivered more effectively, when these facilities are close to the beneficiaries' residences (Hoffman, 2009, p. 5). Because basically low income residents of these housing units are the ones who need social support services such as job training and education.

CPDC describes its goal as '*our goal is to provide individuals and families with access to high-quality housing they can afford and to help build opportunities for our residents to grow and thrive*' (CPDC Annual Report, 2013, p. 3). CPDC's job does not end once they provide affordable housing to low income residents. CPDC also works for improving the residents' lives and their surroundings.

As it is understood from CPDC's goal, in addition to providing affordable housing; CPDC also concentrates on 'developing communities' in the low income housing development projects which are vulnerable to criminal activity and suffer from deteriorated conditions (Hoffman, 2009, p. 1). If the necessary measures are not taken in social housing projects, these housing complexes may end up as poor neighborhoods, where social exclusion and crime rates are high (Keith, 1973, p.

24). These housing units become the places where poverty and low education levels are transferred between generations and residents face social exclusion and high crime rates including drugs (Kunduraci, 2013, p. 61). In order to prevent poverty and poverty related social problems, these housing projects should be equipped with several social protection services.

CPDC aims to transform these places into safe and lively neighborhoods. While doing this, CPDC engages the residents of housing complexes through supporting them with several programs that enable them to play an active role in their community and develop a sense of being a part of the community (CPDC Annual Report, 2013, p. 6). For example some of the residents of CPDC housing complexes have established tenant associations, organized voter registration, improved their school performance, got office skills, improved their employability, and established electronic villages (CPDC, n.d., para 3).

Community rooms at housing complexes of CPDC are built in order to '*foster resident engagement and greater social interaction*' (CPDC Annual Report, 2013, p. 2). Social support programs in CPDC's housing projects include computer rooms, which could be used for studying or connecting with other residents through the intranet; job training for increasing income of residents; children classes; day care centers; recreational youth center and music studio (Hoffman, 2009, p. 1). These computer skills provided new education and training opportunities for residents. According to 2003 study, it was found that the income of residents tripled after the completion of the career-training program (Hoffman, 2009, p. 7). This reveals the success of the CPDC's unique approach.

CPDC has developed and sustained lively neighborhoods by adopting the model below that includes comprehensive resident services aimed primarily at youth and seniors since 1989. These communities support residents every day.

The CPDC model concentrated on 5 important areas. The detailed community programs provided by CPDC are given in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Community Programs of CPDC (CPDC Annual Report, 2013, p. 7)

Economic Development	Education	Environment	Health and Wellness	Resident Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Access to job placement and training</li> <li>- Financial literacy workshops</li> <li>- Access to transportation</li> <li>- Access to technology and computer training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early school readiness programs</li> <li>- Youth development programs</li> <li>- Parent engagement initiatives</li> <li>- Adult literacy program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Energy efficiency education and incentives</li> <li>- Recycling programs</li> <li>- Water conservation education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health education and awareness</li> <li>- Nutrition and fitness classes</li> <li>- Access to social and human services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fostering civic involvement and volunteerism</li> <li>- Promoting neighborhood leadership and participation</li> <li>- Supporting cultural exchange initiatives</li> </ul>

Coupling affordable housing with social services such as training programs and educational programs mitigates the effects of poverty further. Moreover, it could be considered as a permanent solution to housing problems of the residents, since these places are under the risk of becoming ruined and crime areas. Efforts of CPDC are proved to work well for the residents in their housing complexes who face complex challenges in their lives related to poverty, including unemployment, crimes including drug sale and drug use and low education levels. The community involvement and living conditions of CPDC residents have improved (CPDC Annual Report, 2013, p. 7). Residents of CPDC housing projects are supported and they have easy access to supportive services to help them have safe and improved lives. In these units, residents have opportunities for social and community interaction and participation (CPDC Annual Report, 2013, pp. 2-3).

Resident Services and Community Engagement Program of CPDC succeeded to improve the lives of the residents in the housing complexes and their neighborhoods through *'high-quality, tailored, site-based programs and services'* (CPDC Annual Report, 2013, p. 6). Recently CPDC is *'systematically engaging residents to identify the programs and services they want and need'* as a means of *'inclusive decision making'*; instead of a *'top down'* approach (CPDC Annual

Report, 2013, p. 6). In this way, CPDC also matches the talents of residents to community needs (CPDC Strategic Plan, 2014, p. 1).

In addition to guidance and counseling services; preventive, educational and developmental services are offered to the residents in these community support facilities. Conflicts between spouses, parent-child relationship problems, psycho-social and economic problems are handled in these centers. Recognizing the problems and producing solutions to these problems are done in collaboration with relevant institutions and organizations. In this way, a healthy family life could be developed; however, further efforts are necessary to ensure continuity. Individual work, family work, social group work, seminars, conferences, discussion groups and similar studies are used to raise awareness and knowledge of family members on their needs. Moreover, women residents are provided with child-care training. The training of poor women in child care area is also important for breaking the chain of poverty. Because, educated women are effective in improving the lives of their children.

### 3. Main Elements of Social Support Programs in Low Income Housing Development Projects of CPDC

There are two main elements of Social Support Programs in low income housing development projects of CPDC. The first one is the organizational capacity of the CPDC including expertise both in the social support programs and housing development, and funds to cover cost of social services. The other main element is the elimination of the 'one size fits all' approach in different housing development projects with differing neighborhoods and differing demographics. In the following part, these important aspects of the CPDC will be explained in detail.

#### 3.1 Organizational Capacity

CPDC has the necessary organizational capacity including the **expertise** for providing social services and **funds** to cover the costs. When expanding services to social services, the areas where the CPDC has necessary expertise were selected. Providing social support services is costly and requires extra funds. With its innovative approach CPDC was not encountered any fund raising problems. In contrast, a lot of grants became available for CPDC's use and the real issue was to

manage these grants (Hoffman, 2009, p. 10). Moreover, CPDC was successful in **planning** by carefully arranging new services based on organizational capacity. If necessary, CPDC collaborate with public, private or non-profit organizations in order to improve the community support services offered by CPDC.

CPDC's organizational capacity is supported by operating principles which guides decision making processes within CPDC. The operating principles of CPDC are as follows: (CPDC Strategic Plan, 2014, p. 3)

- **Innovation:** *Adopting innovative practices and approaches across all business units.*
- **Financial rigor:** *Maintaining a high standard of financial rigor in our transaction analysis and business operations.*
- **Partnerships:** *Developing and maintaining intentional, long-term partnerships to assist in accomplishing the initiatives outlined in the strategic plan.*
- **Organizational efficiency:** *Increasing organizational efficiency by building systems and processes, as well as developing people to accomplish the strategic plan.*

### 3.2. Elimination of 'One Size Fits All Approach'

It is not possible to apply 'one size fits all approach' to all housing development units in terms of provision of the social support services. Because different housing complexes have differing needs, those social support programs should not be replicated in different housing complexes. Recognizing the distribution of the population and priorities of residents is important for determining the needs of the residents of the particular housing project. By this way, effective social programs can be developed and beneficiaries of the services can be engaged in the decision making process for social programs. As a result CPDC developed site-based resident solutions which promote individual growth and community development (CPDC Annual Report, 2013, p. 6). In some complexes training, retraining and adult education could be needed; whereas in some other complexes, there could be a need for daycare or preschool for children whose mothers attend to training programs or work. Similarly, youth or children education and development could be needed in some complexes. Psychologists, sociologist, social workers and family consultants are employed in the community



support centers provide high quality service to low income residents. CPDC was successful in addressing to different needs of residents. Instead of ‘one size fits all approach’, CPDC preferred innovative-customized resident services and community engagement initiatives. In each property of CPDC, social services for community are specifically tailored to the needs of the residents, with ‘*a focus on the priorities of economic development, education, environmental stewardship, health and wellness, and resident engagement*’ (CPDC Annual Report, 2013, p. 7).

#### 4. Conclusion

Social housing projects aim to provide affordable housing to poor. In social housing projects, social problems of residents should be considered and special attention should be paid to social integration and social inclusion. Providing social support services for low-income housing helps residents to achieve the initial goals of development of these housing projects such as preserving safe and lively communities through technological and educational innovations. While designing affordable housing for disadvantaged people, certain space should be saved for community social support programs and resident services program. In this way, it is possible to improve the lives of the beneficiaries of the projects. Moreover, community based supportive services are helpful to prevent physical deterioration of the housing complexes, unemployment, violence and crime. In this way lively neighborhoods and healthy residents could be realized.

CPDC is a not-for-profit real estate developer dedicated to providing safe, high-quality, and affordable housing for low- and moderate-income individuals and families (CPDC Annual Report, 2013, p. 3). CPDC aimed to create safer, more secure neighborhoods to improve the quality of their lives, by providing residents with opportunities to thrive in the economic mainstream. CPDC’s approach of providing social services to low income residents in their housing projects was an unusual approach. In line with the company’s activities in social services, CPDC continued to be as innovative as possible in these resident services. Innovation principle makes CPDC to seek “*mixed-income*” and “*mixed-use*” properties as in the case of dispersed affordable housing projects (CPDC Strategic Plan, 2014, p. 4). CPDC could be considered as a unique example of sustainable social housing projects.

In Turkey social housing developments are provided by Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKI) and include concentrated housing development

projects for poor and low income citizens. ‘*Social housing program of TOKI targets the low and middle-income people who cannot own a housing unit under the existing market conditions*’ (TOKI, n.d., para. 2). TOKI plays an important role in dealing with ghettoization problem and transforming existing slums into ‘*modern urbanized areas*’ (TOKI, n.d., para. 17). Since low income residents of TOKI social housing projects are in need for different social services, CPDC’s innovative approach of providing social support services could be taken into consideration in order to increase the well-being of the residents and livability of the housing complexes of TOKI. Differing needs of the residents in each housing complex should be taken into consideration while developing social support programs. Mixed-use property (medical, educational, retail etc.) approach of CPDC could also be considered by TOKI. Ministry of Family and Social Policy (MFSP), General Directorate of Social Assistances and TOKI could work together in provision of these services. TOKI could assign some space for social services in the social housing projects. Social support services in social housing projects not only enhance the success and sustainability of low income housing development projects, but also provide means for improving social inclusion of residents. Such a partnership of the MFSP and TOKI in this area is quite likely to improve social housing provision programs in Turkey.

## References

- Chaskin, R., Joseph, M., McCormik, N. and Voelker, S. (2013). *The new public housing stigma in mixed income developments, mixed income development study*. Retrieved from [https://ssascholars.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/mixed-income-development-study/files/chaskin\\_study\\_8\\_web\\_1.pdf](https://ssascholars.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/mixed-income-development-study/files/chaskin_study_8_web_1.pdf), on 21.05.2015.
- Community Preservation and Development Corporation [CPDC]. (n.d.) History of CPDC. Retrieved from <http://www.cpdcc.org/about-us/our-history/>, on 21.05.2015.
- Community Preservation and Development Corporation 2013 Annual Report [CPDC Annual Report]. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.cpdcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/CPDC-Annual-Report.pdf>, on 21.05.2015.
- Community Preservation and Development Corporation 2014 Strategic Report [CPDC Strategic Report]. (2014). Retrieved from [http://www.cpdcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CPDC\\_StrategicPlan\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.cpdcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CPDC_StrategicPlan_FINAL.pdf), on 21.05.2015.
- Coşkun, S. and Kunduracı N.F. (2013). *Dünyada sosyal politika ve sosyal konut uygulamaları*. Ankara: Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı Sosyal Yardımlar Genel Müdürlüğü.
- Hoffman, A.V. (2009). *The test of transition: The case of the community preservation and development corporation*. Boston: Harvard Kennedy School.
- Keith, N. (1973). *Politics and the housing crisis since 1930*. New York: Unwise Books.
- Kunduracı, N.F. (2013). Dünyada ve Türkiye’de sosyal konut uygulamaları. *Çağdaş Yerel Yönetimler Dergisi*, (22)3, pp. 53-77.
- Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı [TOKİ]. (n.d.). *Housing programs*. Retrieved from <http://www.toki.gov.tr/en/housing-programs.html>, on 21.05.2015.