

THE APPLICATION OF THE AIDED SELF-HELP HOUSING METHOD IN TURKEY *

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INTRODUCTION

Aided self-help method is a process of house building through which the efforts of the families to provide housing for themselves on a self-help or mutual aid basis have been supported technically and financially by the state. The essence of this method is the labour contribution of the families to meet their housing needs, through self-help or mutual aid projects mobilizing their unused manpower.

Two elements are of prime importance in this process :

- 1) Active participation of the people concerned, by working in the construction of their houses or of their neighbours.
- 2) Support of the state, by providing technical, financial type of aid towards the efforts of the people helping themselves. Participation of the families covers :
 - Working in building their houses
 - Contributions from their savings
 - Acting as a construction agent, undertaking the building of their houses

State Support Covers;

- Organization of self-help housing programmes,
- Encouragement of families to participate in these programmes,

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- Provision of infrastructure and public utilities,
- Procurement of technical personnel and skilled labour,
- Education of families in building techniques,
- Provision of trainers and instructors,
- Credit facilities,
- Site for construction.

This method through its introduction to the First Five Year Development Plan, succeeded in occupying a place in the housing policy in Turkey. However, the necessity of the application of this method had already been suggested by the foreign and home authorities before the initiation of the planned development. Phase Meanwhile, some experimental actions pertaining to that field had been taken by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Resettlement. However, while determining the place of this method within our horities before the initiation of the planned develeopment phase had also to be taken into consideration. Therefore, we think it is worth investigating this development in two separate phases.

The Situation Before the Planned Phase

A gradual development in various approaches to the evaluation of the citizen's efforts in house construction is witnessed during the years in which the overnight built houses (shanty towns) problem began to penetrate into the big cities. Prof. Dr. Gerhardt Kessler, who had been a Faculty member at the University of Istanbul for some years, had, in 1949, expressed his deep appreciation for the «gecekondu» builders by describing them as those who had found solution in taking self-help measures in house construction. This painstaking effort is an evidence for their devotedness, their solid determination and self sacrifice.

Prof. Dr. Reşat Belger, a former Health Minister, in the legislative document of the Draft Law for Sanitary and Low-Cost houses had expressed his opinion on the Turkish people, saying, «The noble Turkish people who have proven great determination and ability in building houses within one night's time, will doubtlessly succeed in reconstructing the whole country, should the required assistance to a reasonable length be provided for them». By this statement he tried to prove the necessity for providing national, support alongside with the individual effort of the citizens. Prof.

Ernst Egli, who had taught City Planning at the Faculty of Political Sciences for two years, between 1957-1959 refers to the old Turkish tradition, pointing out the fact that the peasants build their own homes themselves, in one of his reports dated 1954. He adds that only the windows and doors are obtained from the market. As Egli, again points out, «The realisation of the whole construction process by the peasant himself reveals the existence of a considerable amount of capital. No matter how low the bargaining price is held, it can't be lower than the production cost». In the light of these circumstances, the whole attention must be concentrated on the facilitation and the perfection of the peasants work. Provision of the necessary equipment and material and furnishing the peasants with sample projects and useful brochures will enhance realisation of these objectives.

Prof. Egli, in the abovementioned report also refers to the nucleus type of house tradition adopted by of the peasant. These nucleus type of houses should be built in such a way that as the number of the family members shows an increase, the house must be suitable for being enlarged to meet the new demand.

Another foreign expert, Bernard Wagner, who has carried out a thorough investigation in this field in our country for a considerable length of time, suggests, in his report, that aided self-help housing method be applied. According to Mr. Wagner, who points out some of the requirements concerning the implementation of this method, the below mentioned sources must be referred to in case the possibilities available are lacking :

1. Use of material which is present or obtainable at the construction site,
2. Evaluation of the local work power and especially the recreation hours,
3. The proper technical and financial support of the local material and the unemployed labour power to reach the goal.

Within the same year, the world famous city planner Charles Abrams, who had prepared a report upon his investigations held on behalf of the United Nations in 1954 in Turkey, stresses this natural ability of the Turkish people in building houses on their individual efforts. After explaining that most of these overnight built houses made of bricks or stones or pieces of wood gathered from the vicinity are erected in one night, he says, having seen this pain-

staking toil, it is unavoidable to respect these people». Charles Abrams also states had at the beginning some assistance in the planning of local services been provided, more qualified materiel been used, more time been spared for the construction, the work been controlled and saving assurance been provided, the foundation of a very suitable worker's quarter was within high probability».

Relating to the village houses Charles Abrams, emphasizing the construction tradition Prof. Egli had already pointed out, says, «Life in villages, to a great extent, is ruled in a way on cooperative basis». In house building in the village this understanding of cooperation could be evaluated more efficiently. This report also stresses the point that the understanding of cooperation could be utilized in a more efficient way so far as house construction in villages is concerned.

Mr. Frederick Bath, a united nations expert who prepared a report on housing problems of Turkey in 1960, pointed out in his report that fifty per cent of the houses built per year is an outcome of the citizen's individual efforts which, as he consequently stressed deserves special consideration. The United Nations Expert's Report prepared following an investigation trip made to Turkey, reveals the fact that the current financial resources are not adequate to provide normal standart houses for the peasant population. Hence the peasants are to continue providing houses for themselves on their own efforts and attempts. The report suggests that the individual efforts, be supported by simple technical advice and standart projects, local material is utilized to the greatest extent and a supported self-help policy, enhancing possibilities for providing credit for purchasing construction material which can't be procured on the site be developed.

Another report on the state economic enterprises also emphasizes the fact that in order to more efficiently utilize the sources, the individual's self help efforts should be supported.

At the Second Reconstruction Congress held in 1962 the implementation of the aided-self-help housing method has been proposed. The research report on the establishment and functioning of the Central Government organization suggests that aided-self-help housing method be utilized in cases of disaster, overnight built houses, and vilage houses.

The situation during the planned phase

This method has found its place within national housing policy through its introduction to the First Five Year Development Plan. Being the village houses and the overnight built houses, the first five year plan necessitates the implementation of this method especially in these two areas of housing.

The plan reveals the facts that the village houses are built by the peasant himself present a compactly arranged view and the aided self-help method may be implemented. According to the plan, this system enables those who live in a house where housing conditions are not favorable and who want to build houses for themselves on their own efforts to have houses built in conformity with construction techniques and sanitary conditions. Alongside with the utilization of unemployed manpower and sources, the aid that the community or the individual is short of providing, should be extended by the state, preferably in a way to inspire the development of cooperative efforts.

Among measures suggested to prevent further construction of overnight built houses and also to improve the already built ones, reference has been made to the aided-self-help housing method, too, in meeting the housing demand of the population with low income. The plan also includes aided self-help housing method among the other measures to be taken for preventing the increase in the number of the overnight built houses for improving the standard of the already built ones. The plan states that by implementation of the aided self-help housing method, the low income families shall be given the necessary support in the form of projects and technical aid provision. The annual programs scheduled for the First Five Year Development Plan shall be taken into consideration in the implementation of the aided self-help housing method in the construction of nucleus type of houses. The aid that is planned to be extended to the individual who will build his own house consists of the following points :

- a. Technical aid
- b. Land
- c. Public facilities
- d. Credit
- e. Assistance in equipment supply

The plan indicates that this system covers four phases in general which are :

1. Research
2. Training
3. Equipment aid
4. Credit assistance

The First Five Year Plan requires the allocation of a certain amount of capital for the implementation of aided self-help housing in the construction of both the overnight built houses and the village houses. The Second Five Year Plan very deliberately stresses on the point that the individual's self-help housing efforts shall be utilized in solving the overnight built houses problem. It is clearly seen that the above mentioned principle occupies an important place in the 1967 yearl schedule and also in the schedules of the succeeding years.

In this paper the implementation of this method in Turkey shall be reviewed, and possibilities of improving its deficiencies shall be considered. This review will hold light to the difficulties met in the implementation, the causes of these difficulties and also to whether the studies are carried out in accordance with the principles and rules of the method. Special attention shall be paid as to what degree the failure and difficulties are due to the inefficiency of the plan itself, to the mis implementation of it and the characteristics of the country. The study will also deal with the question of the measures to be taken pertaining to the implementation of this method in observance of the special conditions and the requirements the country yields.

A General Review of the Implementation in Turkey

The Implementation of the Aided Self-help Housing Method in Disaster Areas.

«Aided Self-Help Housing» is among the measures and means of assistance, to be extended to disaster stricken areas. This sort of assistance which can be extended in the form of an adjudication or through trustee boards has been accepted by Article 28 of the Bye-Law which regulates the allocation of the fund which has been established by the Law Number 7269.

The aid to be provided for individuals who will build or repair their houses in the observance of the concerned Bye-Law shall be considered under the below given conditions :

1. If the buildings have not been seriously damaged to the extent which will not permit residence or if the blocks in general need repair, the owners may be entitled to receive the aid envisaged in this plan.
2. The amount of payment to be made the demandant decided relying on the report of the technical expert shall be paid in whole or in installments according to the situation the preparation process yields.
3. In areas where the construction units do not have to be built on common basis, a certain amount of money not to exceed the maximum amount decided by the Ministry, is to be paid, should the owner of the damaged building agree to the Ministry instructions pertaining to the type and the project in having his house constructed.

The aid is paid in installments, the first being at the initiation of the instruction process, and the rest, according to the expertise report in intervals the progress of the construction process necessitates.

As shall be understood from the above explanation, a sort of financial aid or, more precisely to say, a credit system is being applied does not greatly differ from the credit supplied by the Em-lâk Kredi Bank (Real Estate Credit Bank) or any other institution observing the «situation» principles. Any sort of technical aid exclusive the plans and projects provided by the Ministry is out of the question. The individual's contribution to the construction in the form of work power is not compulsory.

The individual's contribution in cases of disaster is limited to a certain extent, this owing to psychological situation he is in. Very frequently, the victim who is panic stricken, expects every measure to be taken by the Government. The never ending promises of the authorities which are not promptly fulfilled, weaken the willingness of the victims to participate in the actions to be taken, and furthermore, the promptness required also constitutes a limiting factor.

This situation limits the implementation possibilities of the

aided self-help housing method in disaster cases. Keeping in mind that it enables utilisation of financial possibilities in hand in the most appropriate way, and by way of providing individual's participation, it causes decrease in the production cost and rapidity in action, the advantages of the implementation of the aided self-help housing cannot be denied. From this point of view, through participation of the individual, a self-help housing in harmony with the understanding of nucleus type of house, supported by a Board of Trustees method, may be applicabic. and Projects sponsored by The Ministry of Village Affairs on an experimental basis, M.V.A. has undertaken more than 43 villags project where since 1964, in different parts of the country:

- The ministry makes development plans for the village where the project to be started
- Organizes group ready to participate and contribute in these self-help or mutual aid projects.
- Villagers are encouraged, instructed trained how to build, and.
- Provides credits to these families, on long-term (20 years) basis. Annual installments may not exceed one sixth of the family income with an annual rate of 1 %, plus 1 % commission fee for the Banking transactions.

If we aveluate the achievements in these projects, we must point out that :

- 1) This method can be used only among better off faimilies in the villages where the economic and income level is relatively higher in comparison to other villages.
- 2) Houses construction must not be organized in seasons when the villagers have to work in agricultural activities in the field.
- 3) The cost of housing may be reduced approximately in a ratio around 30-35 percent, by using collective labour, and through wholesale purchase of the building material, and equipment.
- 4) In practice, the implementation of the method is not carried out in accordance with the concept of aided-self-help method as defined above not due attention paid in educational and organizational aspects.

- 5) Instead of taking necessary measures to cut down the cost of houses, the tendency to increase the amount of the state assistance.
- 6) The contribution and participation of the people in these projects have not been at a satisfactory level.
- 7) Expenditures for the State Personnel has been around 30 percent of the total project, which is very high even for experimental purposes.

The conclusions derived from the investigation of the previous chapters reveal that practice does not coincide with the theory of aided self help housing that is to say, in practice, neither the concept, nor the definition of the method are interpreted the way they should be, and some important points such as preparation, training, organisation and various implementation phases are not fully considered.

In practice again, it is seen that the support extended by the government in enabling the individuals in having houses produced at a lower cost by encouraging contribution of their own efforts is not reinforced enough. In other words, instead of taking necessary measures to lower the production cost, the tendency, on the contrary to increase the government assistance has been encouraged.

The aided self-help-housing method, due to its low cost and 'work power encouraging' character, bears a significant place in the case of Turkey which is a developing country. During the next planning term the investments to be allocated for housing shall be limited, because of the problem of using the limited sources we have in hand in a more efficient way which we are confronted with. In this respect, we shall have to follow a policy which will facilitate and enforce the increase in the number of the house units while the amount of investment is kept stable, and hence, in such a policy, aided-self-help housing method must be given the place it should occupy.

This plan, in establishing a means for enabling more families to have a house of their own, owes its success to its ability in evaluating the limited sources in hand in a more efficient way, in other words, to its success in decreasing the unit production cost. In decreasing the unit production cost, the individual's contribution is an important factor. However, if other factors alongside

with the individual's labor is not considered, the contribution of labor alone will not meet the expenditures made by the responsible organisation with difficulty. Practice reveals that the personnel expenditures constitute 30 per cent of the unit production cost. Yet, we should also keep in mind that there are other worth considering limitations we are confronted with in both the urban and village areas. Besides, the fact that the agriculture and construction seasons coincide, also constitute a limiting factor in the individual's participation.

As a result, since the required work power is not provided in time the construction period is extended. If it is not possible to avoid this correspondence within the necessary period of time mentioned above and thus enhance the shortening of the construction period, it is advisable to postpone the construction process to the next season after laying down the foundation or completing the roof.

Another measure to be taken into consideration for decreasing the production cost is directed to the understanding of nucleus type of house which the individual has previously constructed. In this respect the main goal must be the preparation of house projects which will meet the individual's minimum demands. In order to improve the nucleus type of house which the individual has previously constructed with the support of the government, later, the individual is expected to have gained enough experience. Even the completion of the plaster coating and white wash of the walls might be left to the individual's share.

Another means advisable for decreasing the production cost is 'trustee boards method'. Trustee boards method, especially in projects where the individuals' contribution is required may be successfully implemented as a method which enhances low cost to a considerable degree. General Directorate of Disaster Operations has been able to obtain highly successful results in 1966 from one of its implementations of trustee board method within the aided self help housing program. The wholesale purchasing of the material and its transfer by a single authority, the processing of the light construction material in their own work shops, the elimination of the contractor's profit are realized through the implementation of the Trustee Board method. In the limited implementation in the field of overnight built houses since no activities in this respect could have been carried out, the attempts have not yielded satis-

factory results. The provision of construction material in large amounts and at a low cost will also contribute to the success of the implementation of the aided self help housing method to a great extent.

The propositions concerning the utilisation of pre-fabrication from the viewpoint of preventing loss of time, facilitating technical supervision and providing a minimum standard level, do not seem to yield satisfactory results. Pre-fabrication is an outcome of industrialisation and technological progress. Meanwhile, transportation and problems of import gain importance. We should always keep in mind that we are living in a country where we are forced to improve the ways of utilizing the local material to the maximum level. Under these circumstances, it is necessary and also adequate for regional establishments which constitute a supplementary branch of the organisation responsible for implementing the method to direct their activities toward light prefabrication, standardization of construction types, within the trustee board system.

Another important factor from the standpoint of housing policy is determining the implementation areas of aided self-help-housing method. The psychological situation the disaster stricken victim is in, limits the degrees of his personal contribution. A self help housing system with the understanding of nucleus type of housing together with the trustee board system is understood to yield satisfactory results when implemented in cases of disaster, too. The victim's workpower may be used in excavations, transportation of construction materials and in other cases which require unskilled labor. If required payment of daily wages may we suggested.

Presently, we do not have a project in hand which proves that this method may be applied in cases of overnight built houses. The limited implementation in Ankara reveals the fact that the inhabitants of overnight built houses contribute to these operations to a very limited extent. By keeping within the limits of the understanding of nucleus houses and by appealing to the trustee board system, the implementation of the aided self help housing method seems to be possible in cases of overnight built houses, too. Ways of evaluating the unemployed work power of the inhabitants of overnight built houses at leisure times should be searched. For instance, these people may repair or make up for the lacking parts of their houses on Sundays and on holidays. We should bear in

mind that in the coming days the industrialisation and urbanization will continue to develop in the way that the bigger the cities will grow, the greater the problem of overnight built houses shall become. No serious measures have been taken against overnight built house construction in our country up to now, on the contrary, it has been taken with tolerance, and we should dare to say that it has even been considered legal. What we should do, therefore, is to follow a social housing policy which will permit overnight built house construction for low income citizens who have no other housing possibilities, to improve the standard of the already built shanty towns and to assist directing the efforts of the citizens, as far as construction is concerned, to a more positive direction.

However, while realizing the points mentioned above, we should avoid shanty towns construction towards cities. That is where the aided self help housing method gains importance. Therefore, we believe it is worth to initiate projects on experimental basis, concerning method to improve the overnight built housing areas. Provision of low cost area, credit facilities, measures such as compulsiveness to complete the construction once started, in the foundation of the «Yenimahalle» district in Ankara has yielded satisfactory results in the implementation of a method which bears some similarities in character to that of aided self help housing method. The setting up of this district, from this viewpoint, might constitute an example for the development of a system similar to aided self help housing.

In case of the implementation of this method in the construction of village houses, there are some serious limitations which can not be overlooked. We had already mentioned the limitations concerning the agriculture season. In implementation, in village communities which have not lived through an economic development the acceptance, adoption and the implementation of this method reveal some difficulties. This shows up in a sort of an artificial response. While there still are some people in our country who live cave life, it does not seem to be very realistic to direct our attention to communities who live on more developed sources. So long as we are not able to realise the importance and place of a village within the settlement and rural method and policy, it is impossible to distribute the housing investments in an appropriate manner. Therefore, the village house should first be observed within the settlement order which permits development within rural areas. On the other hand, we are to determine the priority and place of

housing within the village community development program. Here, we believe it is necessary to direct our attention to points such as the encouragement of projects which will help increase the income of the peasants and which will thus encourage savings to enable them to have a house in the future rather than making investments in fields such as house construction which from the economic viewpoint seems less efficient. Therefore, we think it is necessary to set up very close relations between housing policy and community development programs. From these explanations, we should derive the conclusion that in its implementation in rural areas the relation of the aided self help housing with both the requirements of regional and rural settlement planning and the economical aspects of the community development must not be overlooked.

What procedure should be followed in the implementation of aided self help housing in rural areas? Is it satisfactory to construct one model house in each village? If disaster and housing case is left aside, there is no necessity for villagewise implementation. Some projects might be said to owe their failure to their considering the whole village area within their scope. The tendency to include persons who need not to have houses or who have no capacity to buy a house in this manner or who are deprived of the understanding of group working within the contents of the project will later on cause great difficulties which can not be overcome. On the other hand, equipping one village only with the limited sources in hand will deprive other villages of these possibilities. However, constructing only one model house in each village and expect this to be an example for the rest is a much too optimistic view. We should keep in mind that the reason for the peasant's not being able to construct a more improved house in the village areas is not because he has not such model house before him but because his sources are limited. Additionally, management and personnel expenditures for one house only might be too high. Keeping all these points in mind, it is possible to develop a new proposition which reconcile the two views mentioned above. This may be reached by proving that houses might be constructed through supported «imece» by employing small groups consisting of families of an optimum number. Such operations carried out by small voluntary teams might be expected to stimulate the desire of the rest for imitating these exemplary teams. Relating to the economic power of the families who will avail themselves of this method, another point which needs be stressed upon is that in implementation the present

savings of families together with their prospective saving capacity has not been taken into consideration. In order not to exhaust their sources, they will necessarily tend to run into loans. This condition does not necessarily apply to cases of disaster. Yet in other fields, certain measures must be taken to stimulate the desire of those who wish to apply this method to imitate it is necessary to develop ways to tend these participating group to establish cooperative societies or saving banks.

It is quite obvious that the various choices laid here are worth trying. An attempt in experimental operations must be made which will hold light to the development of the aided self help housing policy within the first years of the third planned phase. There is necessity for serious projects relying on systematic evaluations. However, one of the greatest deficiencies witnessed in the implementations that have been carried out to this date is that these pilot activities have not given the necessary stress on education. We must avoid repetition of the same mistake in prospective implementations. The projects which contain uneducated group and leaders within their scope constitute the majority. The understanding which may not go any further than teaching certain limited construction know how and skills has been widely spread among leaders. We may dare say that the social aspect of education has not ever been taken into consideration. The people must be persuaded to admit and believe that in order to solve their problems together, group work is compulsory. In order to realise this, a special education, community development education is required. On the other hand, the technical personnel responsible for the implementation of this method, neither on central nor on provincial basis has been given the necessary training in this field in advance. There are special ways and techniques that apply to community or group work. The active participation of the technical personnel without having the necessary training in this matter in advance leads to failure. Practice reveals that the personnel with a background of social sciences education is used to a very limited extent or not at all. In prospective implementation, these points must be taken into consideration and the actions to be taken must be evaluated from the very beginning.

Suggestions for the future work

This method due to its low cost work and power encouraging to reduce cost of housing, bears a significant place in Turkey

where a developing country investment to be allocated for housing will be limited, because the problem of using limited sources available in a more efficient way by giving priority to productive sectors other than housing. Therefore we have to follow a housing policy which will facilitate to increase the number of housing units constructed with the same amount of investment allocated for this purpose.

To encourage labour contributions of the rural people on mutual aid basis, we can utilize traditional «imece», (mutual aid) prevailing in rural areas where manpower is not used properly, due to disguised unemployment and seasonal unemployment exists.

Housing must be considered as a part of community development activities which is based on co-operative and mutual aid projects undertaken by the local people, carried out through the efforts of the villagers, supported by the state. At the initial stages primary priority in the community developmentwork is given to economic projects which may help the local people to reach an income level enabling them to save for improvement of their living conditions.

Rural housing policy must pay due attention, and must be an integral part of other fundamental policies, such as land reform, rural planning, resettlement, industrialization and urbanization. Otherwise, our resources may be wasted by building houses in villages those loosing population in the coming decades, under the impact of urbanization and industrialization.