

Developing our Earth-building Heritage for Quality
Housing in Developing Countries.

by

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Abstract

Human shelter is a major component of most human culture. The African housing landscape is dotted with a tradition of earth-building from ancient times. The design concept, philosophy, material and workmanship, reflect the time, belief, local conditions and technology of the people and met the needs of the people. Today earth-building remain common only among the low-income citizens and rural dwellers in most developing worlds. Technology and taste have changed the face of modern housing designs, utilizing industrial materials for their functional qualities and flexibility in design and construction. Recent studies have shown that the use of these industrial materials contribute mainly to causes of high cost of house production and ownership coupled with air pollution, increased environmental noise and toxicity of the component elements. Employing developments in technology and industrial practices to the use of earth materials can produce a durable and efficient material which is cheaply available, economical and energy saving, creating jobs and generating capital for empowering citizens in our developing countries. But this is not possible under our traditional earth-building technologies, now grossly relegated to the low income and semi urban dwellers, resulting in high urban and semi-urban housing shortages. There is every need to revisit our traditional earth-building landscape to improve on the design structure, technology and processes of construction to meet modern design and construction demands. This will reduce the high cost of building materials and workmanship while retaining the natural advantages of earth as a building material, empowering a grater percentage of the citizenry to own their own quality houses in most developing countries.