



**The John Turner Archive:**

**Tarime Development Project, Tarime District, Tanzania.** Rural people improve their housing in Tanzania.

Building Community: a third world case book, Ed. Bertha Turner, Building Community Books, London, 1988

# Rural people improve their housing in Tanzania

Documentation and Text:  
Paul Bottelberg  
c/o COOIBO  
Naamsestenweg 573  
3030 Leuven, Belgium.

## Tarime Development Project

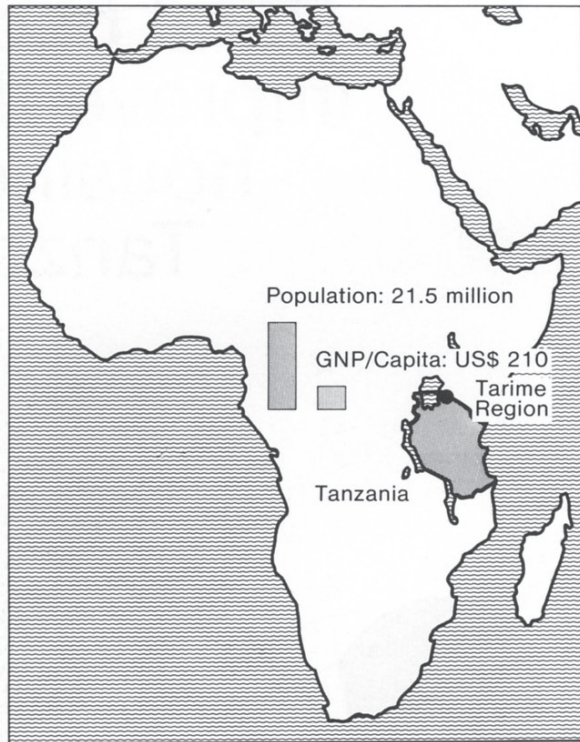
Co-sponsors:  
COOIBO and PGC-HS,  
Belgium.

Advisor and Text:  
Han Verschure, PGC-HS  
KULeuven, Belgium.

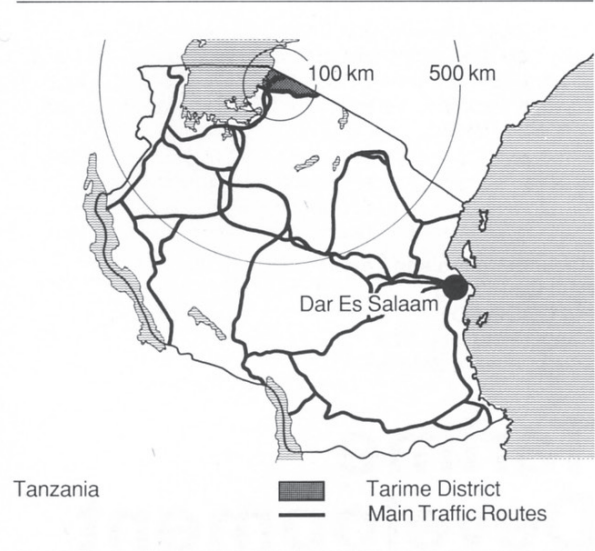




TARDEP



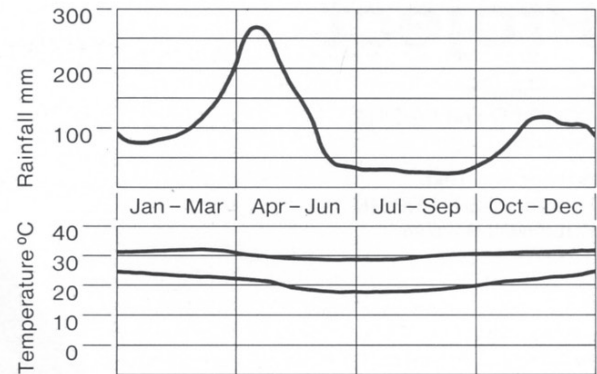
Population Tarime District: 300,000



**Income Distribution:**

Detailed statistics on income distribution are not available. Only a small percentage of the Kuria people in the Highlands earn less than subsistence income, whereas among the Luo people of the Lowlands, this group is larger (between 10 and 20%).

In both areas the majority of peasants earn up to twice the subsistence income, and only a small fraction more than that.



Climate Graph Tarime District (1,200m)



Abbreviations:

CDTF	Community Development Trust Fund
COOIBO	IBO Development Co-operation
Nyumba Bora	Improved Housing Campaign
TARDEP	Tarime Rural Development Project

Bordering on Lake Victoria, Tarime District is a three-day trip away from the Tanzanian capital and business centre, Dar es Salaam. Poor communications along with critical shortage of fuel and transport, materials and household goods increase Tarime's isolation.

Ninety-six per cent of the District's 300,000 people live in villages and engage predominantly in subsistence agriculture. The two major ethnic groups have different housing arrangements, but most of the villagers' houses have mud-and-pole walls and grass thatched roofs, which last about seven years. Traditional building materials are now becoming increasingly scarce and villagers aspire to a modern house of industrially produced materials. The need for shelter can no longer be satisfied in the usual way; demands for industrial materials and new skills are increasing.

**Government policies fall short of aims**

Tanzanian development policies are guided by the principle of 'ujamaa' and self-reliance. The efforts of the government towards villagers' participation have proved valuable in political, educational and medical matters. But as far as housing is concerned, official policies did not achieve their aims. There have been various efforts such as the 'villageization policy' and the 'Nyumba Bora Campaign' for improved housing, as well as the setting up of national institutions. Although well-meant, these programmes proved to be too formal. The effects, therefore, have been minimal. The reasons were mainly a shortage of building materials, loan conditions set too high, poor information to the villagers, understaffing and poor staff motivation.

**NGOs to the rescue**

In 1979 a Belgian NGO, COOIBO (IBO Development Cooperation) and a Tanzanian NGO, CDTF (Community Development Trust Fund) joined forces to assist local authorities. The Tarime Rural Development Project (TARDEP) took off, emphasizing improvement of housing and living conditions.



PHOTO: COOIBO, BELGIUM

*Typical rural housing in Tarime district.*



### A consistent participatory approach

TARDEP contains a strong foreign presence in the form of both COOPIBO volunteers and funding. The District Authorities provide local staff, intending senior members to take over when COOPIBO withdraws, ensuring integration of the project and its management with local government. The project team of local and foreign personnel works with village governments and groups in preparing, implementing and evaluating development plans.

*A variety of houses: traditional, improved, modern.  
Left: the much preferred, but scarce, corrugated iron roof.*



### Phase one 1979-82: identifying and tackling the problems

The team started in selected villages, surveying housing and discussing related problems with the villagers. Problems were identified as low cash incomes, a scarcity of industrially produced materials, lack of transport and skills. Particular attention was paid to the villagers' own priorities, when looking for solutions. 'Bottom-up' participation was stimulated by regular meetings with villagers. This led to activities which made the 'Nyumba Bora' campaign a reality in the selected villages.

The Supply of Industrial Materials Section used a revolving fund to provide villagers with materials at controlled prices. It also supplied basic carpentry and masonry tools to local craftsmen. A lorry was made available for transport. Training was provided to local craftsmen in order to improve their skills and to organize village building. Finance was provided in innovative ways. As the Tanzanian Housing Bank caters mainly for urban people, programmes had to be developed which would identify income-generating projects and to achieve savings through self-managed building and the economic use of materials and skills.

### First results

Previously, government action alone had very little impact on housing improvements in Tarime's rural areas. TARDEP enabled about 300 households in 10 villages to obtain durable houses by the end of 1982. In addition, the animation, motivation and training of village leaders and craftsmen undoubtedly contributed to their becoming more skilled and better informed.

The TARDEP experience in its first phase has shown that government policies can benefit by the presence at grass-roots level of a well-equipped organization specializing in a participatory approach which worked through animation and motivation of the local people. Government departments operate on a less urgent, larger scale and at a physical and social distance from the people they serve. Without an intermediary, communications break down and conflicts often arise, resulting in a deadlock. These problems are mainly structural, resulting from two different and conflicting scales of organization. TARDEP is able to provide this linking function, co-operating successfully with many individual officials.

### TARDEP strengthens its mediation role between government and villagers

During the first phase of its intervention in Tarime, COOPIBO paid great attention to safeguarding the continuity of the project by integrating with the governmental set-up. TARDEP was able to gain the goodwill of both government and villagers and to collect the information necessary for formulating more appropriate policies.

A 1983 assessment by the TARDEP team confirmed that reliance on formal 'top-down' channels of participation and the concentration on scarce and expensive industrial materials and related skills led to the promotion of a house type which is out of reach for most rural people. The critical condition of the Tanzanian economy and the goodwill generated by TARDEP led the team to challenge existing views on housing. TARDEP would focus on spreading information on the production and use of local materials and would seek to increase the participation of the people in greatest need.

### A many-sided programme

#### Phase two 1982-7

TARDEP's new programme, which was supported by COOPIBO up to the end of 1987, was certain to face

TARDEP



resistance, as local materials do not conform to existing ideas of socially acceptable improvements, and as people do not expect a 'foreign' organization to deal in 'second-hand technologies' (their view of local materials). Using local materials has its own drawbacks. For instance, small-scale, clay tile production requires physical exertion, improved organization and consumes scarce firewood.

TARDEP felt its earlier course to be an unworkable basis for realizing the aims of district and national housing policy, and thus initiated the new programme. It started to organize villagers into newly created housing groups, according to the different house types used (mud-and-pole, adobe blocks and mud bricks). Initiatives were developed as follows:

**Animation/Motivation:** more emphasis was given to showing villagers that it was both possible and necessary to use a variety of materials and techniques and to organize themselves locally.

**Access to materials:** the supply of industrially produced materials is continued, recognizing, however, the critically low production in Tanzania. Small-scale, clay tile production units were set up in two villages, as well as production units for bricks and sisal-cement tiles. Reafforestation in several villages reflects the trend towards the production of local materials, as well as concern for the environment.

**Access to transport:** the use of TARDEP's lorry is greatly constrained by the scarcity and high cost of fuel and spare parts. Research concentrates on ox-carts and wooden wheelbarrows. The latter are produced in the villages by trained craftsmen.

**Access to skills:** central to TARDEP's programme is training for craftsmen, builders and group leaders. Together with the District and the Ministry of Education, COOPIBO

helped to set up a Folk Development College. Group leaders are invited to seminars on organization, leadership and book-keeping skills. Craftsmen and builders take part in courses with special emphasis on the quality and durability of traditional technologies (mud-and-pole, adobe blocks and others). Training is also provided on the manufacture of sisal-cement tiles, burnt bricks, wheelbarrows and on reafforestation.

**Access to finance:** the project concentrates on promoting economic use of materials and on self-help building, thus reducing costs. Some job opportunities are created in house building. Women are assisted in running reafforestation and protecting the spring water supply.

**The new programme assessed**

A provisional assessment of TARDEP's new programme, after three years of operation, is positive. The number of houses built reaches previous levels and the programme is more appropriate to the needs of the majority of the rural people. It is doubtful, however, that the authorities will change their preference for top-down participative structures. Besides, one has to take into account that at the time of COOPIBOs withdrawal, the organizational structure of the public sector will still exist.

As TARDEP is aware of these problems, it is now ensuring its relative autonomy from the governmental framework in the future through the continued presence of a local NGO. It has yet to be seen whether CDTF, a party to the TARDEP agreement, will agree that an operational Tanzanian NGO can contribute to the successful implementation of participatory development policies.

*TARDEP demonstrates locally produced clay tiles on an improved mud-and-pole house.*

*Training has resulted in better skilled craftsmen.*

*Women participating in the process, concentrating on the protection of the environment.*



PHOTOS: COOPIBO, BELGIUM



### Experiences from a rural district

#### NGOs can promote

As 'modern', industrially produced materials are at first sight considered more desirable by village people, there is a great need to provide information about the availability of local materials and to demonstrate their use, especially as regional resources are limited. The implications of whether to use local or industrially produced materials should be carefully considered before any housing action is initiated. Concentrating on industrially produced materials in an economic environment of severe production and transport bottlenecks conflicts with the policy of self-reliance, and might further endanger the traditional housing activities of the majority of rural people. However, the promotion of local materials and related techniques still needs thorough investigation to overcome organizational and technical constraints.

#### NGOs can help to implement

NGOs are essential, even in popular governments having their people's interests at heart. Although Tanzanian policy is

based on participation, a rigid and centralized approach was imposed on people from above. A 'foreign' NGO working at a local level could stimulate a consistent, participative approach, enabling a more effective implementation of policies. From their vantage point as a neutral, impartial body, TARDEP was free to comment on the severe scarcity of resources, not sufficiently taken into account by official policies.

#### NGOs can complement policies

Housing policy implementation in Tanzania should make use of NGO assistance in dealing with problems which the government has been unable to solve alone.

There is need to improve 'bottom-up' participation of rural people. Existing village organizational structures should be considered, but not used unquestioningly. The Building Research Unit, the Centre for Housing Studies, government departments and NGOs should operate as a network, to disseminate information obtained through research into local materials and their related techniques, providing a range of appropriate low-cost materials and techniques as an alternative to costly 'modern' housing materials.