

Blending Traditional Earth Building Practices and Construction Standards Requirements to Build Capacity for Public Acceptance of Earth Buildings in Developing Countries



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ABSTRACT

Earth building tradition is as old as the history of man living in man-made shelter. They came in different forms and shapes over time and across many geographic zones of the world. Three major inherent problems affected the progressive use and acceptance of these earth buildings over time – the earth material’s natural weakness to water erosion and compressive stresses – coupled with its predominantly roundish architecture.

Through researches and design changes, earth buildings have been variously improved and found to meet modern construction standards. Researchers and earth building experts see these improvements as providing the most viable, sustainable, alternative option to providing quality low-cost housing for the teeming world populations, especially among the developing countries. This improvements notwithstanding, long years of introduction and use of cement- and steel-based construction materials, which became accepted as standard, relegated earth buildings to a symbol of the poor rural dwellers. This poor image of earth buildings is posing a major hindrance to the acceptance of these improved earth buildings technologies for qualitative construction designs and programmes in many developing countries.

There is need therefore to carry the prospective earth building owners and occupants along in this search for quality alternative sustainable housing. There is also need for incorporating the good in our earth building heritage and to blend surviving/existing practices to improve the quality of the earth building. Social psychology and bias against our traditional earth buildings, which did not grow or will vanish over-night requires definite steps to deal with them, thereby creating the enabling environment for incorporating these improved earth buildings technologies into on-going housing programmes. Other areas for this capacity building include development of a national earth building standards, effective dissemination of research and other related information to contend with social biases based on pure ignorance. clear government policy and standards for the incorporation of the good in building with re-engineered earth building materials

KEY WORDS :

Traditional earth building,