

FOCUS ON HOUSING FOR MINERS

TOWARDS A HOUSING POLICY FOR MINeworkERS

The policy of migrant labour system has brought hardships on mineworkers who are forced to live in single sex and overcrowded hostels far away from their families.

The NUM has been fighting this system in an attempt to create decent living conditions.

The process of developing a housing policy is gaining momentum as facilitated by the NUM's Housing Commission.

In line with the NUM Congress resolution, mineworkers are pursuing the policy aimed at dismantling the migrant labour system. Housing policy development is aimed at giving mineworkers family houses and decent single accommodation for others.

The main guiding principle is that workers should be able to choose the type of accommodation suitable to their needs.

Options on Housing

Our objective is the creation of low cost housing for the majority of workers who cannot afford the houses given under different mine housing schemes. There are key elements which have to be taken into account in this process.

Design of a New Living Environment

The restructuring of hostels has to be done in a manner that would allow workers to enjoy basic freedoms and normal standards of living. Workers should enjoy freedom of movement and have the places accessible to non-residents.

Space provided has to meet higher standards and make room for privacy and communal activities.

Easy access to transport should be taken into account while facilities for washing, cooking, cleaning and eating have to be provided. Division between local communities and mineworkers has to be ended by integrating such housing into community settlements.

Security of Owning a House

Houses given to mineworkers should not be linked to their jobs on the mines.

Mineworkers should have the right to own their houses even if they are no longer mine employees.

No Displacement of Workers

The process of restructuring hostels should not lead to other workers being left without accommodation resulting from this.

It is within these broad guidelines that mineworkers should be looking for different forms of housing.

We have to give serious consideration to the following arrangements:

Establishment of Land Trust

The purpose of forming a Land Trust is to put a piece of land aside for the building of houses which cost less money. Under this arrangement the ownership of land remains in the hands of the Trust. Plots of land can be given to those who want to build their own houses.

Advantages of this scheme are:

- the cost of land is excluded from the cost of the house;
- residents have the full right of owning the house and are free to sell it;
- the Land Trust makes it possible for the whole community to decide how they want to develop their dwelling place; and
- each resident is free to make improvements on his house as much as one can afford.

Forming Housing Associations

Formation of a Housing Association that

would register as a non-profit making company. Such a company would own houses for renting.

The Housing Association would set the terms within which housing is rented out and will enter into a contract with each tenant.

Rentals should cover costs of Housing Association and if possible, after a period of time, to have a fair rent system that can guarantee extra money to improve communal facilities and the building of more houses.

A reserve fund could be created to cover rentals for workers during times of job losses due to retrenchments or unfair dismissals.

Collectives for Housing

Workers could group themselves to form a co-operative to help one another in sharing the labour and costs of building each one's house. Such grouping could buy building material in bulk and save costs.

We have to consider how best we could ensure that these proposals are implemented.

Mineworkers have to enrich these ideas to develop a housing policy by discussing them in their meetings and give suggestions to union structures.



Terrible conditions of living in mine compounds are a legacy of migrant labour system. Time has long passed for this form of slave labour to go.

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