Improving a Shanty Town

Context
This version develops the decision making aspect of the strategy further. It has been used successfully as a small group activity with all our GCSE classes when looking at improving the quality of life through self-help schemes in squatter settlements on the urban / rural fringe in an ELDC. Although the ability of this particular class was mixed it was weighted towards the top end. It was one of the most enthusiastic GCSE classes I have ever taught. They were excellent at whole class discussions and responded well to debriefing sessions and seemed to gain much from them.

In previous lessons they had looked at:
- the problems and pressures in shanty towns;
- why people live in shanty towns and why they continue to migrate to the cities;
- a brief look at the different methods of improving the quality of life in shanty towns.

The exercise was designed to achieve 2 aims:
1. To allow the students to see the difficulties facing ELDCs in improving the quality of life in their less fortunate urban areas, as well as the difficulties facing the people who live in these areas in improving their own quality of life, but who still manage through ingenuity and hard work to do just this;
2. To give students an insight into the complexity of decision making. It must be done at a range of scales, short term and more long-term. Priorities need to be established and justified.

The shanty town in the Exemplar is modelled on squatter settlements in general and could therefore be used in the context of any ELDC.

This took a double lesson (100 minutes) and homework.

Preparation
Print Resources 5, 6 and 8 on paper and the options for development of the shanty town (Resource 7) on card which should be cut up and made up into envelope sets. Students will manipulate these as they might with a Mystery. It has been our experience that pupils like the opportunity to change their minds without having to rewrite anything. The process of moving the pieces of paper allows them to explore meaning in an unthreatening way. It helps them to think.

Launching
I often try to start a lesson with a visual stimulus, so I projected a slide of a shanty town on the screen and had the following question written on the board ‘If you lived here what daily hardships would you have to put up with?’ We had a quick discussion of the problems and grouped them into categories such as health, education, living conditions and so on. Many were very keen to say that it was not clean and I eventually put another slide up showing the inside of an immaculately kept squatter settlement house to provide a different perspective.

I then wanted to think about criteria. I showed them three ways of cleaning the board. Firstly I wiped it with the duster, secondly I used my hands and thirdly I attempted to blow the chalk off the board. There was some laughter at a very red faced Scotsman. I then asked them to tell me which method was the best. ‘The first one.’ ‘Why?’ ‘Because it was the best.’ ‘Yes, but why?’ The discussion went something like:
‘cause it's quick’
‘so's the hand one’
‘it's less messy’
‘the third one's stupid’; ‘Why?’; ‘cause it doesn't get it clean’

...and so on. I then summarised that speed, mess and effectiveness were criteria identified for judging the three methods. We then talked about how criteria were important in evaluating a piece of work and why it was important to know them before trying to do the work. Sometimes when they say they don’t know what to do, they mean they don’t understand what it is that you, the teacher, are after.
Instructions
The students were then told that they were elected members of the Community of Ariba, a well established squatter settlement in Mexico City, i.e. they would represent the interests of the community, not themselves alone. The residents wanted to improve the quality of life in Ariba for themselves by starting a self help scheme.

I gave the students the map of Ariba; the price list for improvements to a shanty town; the information sheet on shanty towns in general and on Ariba in particular; and the planning sheet. (Resources 5, 6, 7 and 8)

This class knows about prioritising: they do it all the time when organising their homework. So I asked them to study Resources 5, 6 and 7 and discuss the relative importance to the community of its various problems such as crime, education, health, employment, and building quality. They then planned what their priorities would be for the 3 time periods and entered them into the ‘Priorities for development’ box on the planning sheet. (Resource 8)

They were then told to begin planning their spending of their shanty town points (STP) which, I said, had been donated by a non-governmental international development agency, but with so many real emergencies occurring around the world, there was no guarantee of more in years ahead.

Managing the activity
Once underway I had to whiz around the groups to ensure that everyone was doing the prioritisation of the problems first. As I had expected, some were already starting on the ‘shopping list’, so I stopped them and went through the instructions again. From then on it went smoothly.

Debriefing
My first questions were ‘How did you decide on your priorities?’ and then ‘Did these help with deciding how to use your STPs?’ Responses concentrated on the fact that they had read the information and discussed what were immediate needs compared to those that would be nice but could be lived without. The selection and ordering of the priorities varied between groups and this provoked some discussion about justifying their ordering. I took a back seat except on one occasion, to ask a student to listen to another before having her say. They agreed that having the priorities helped, because they could concentrate on one or two things at a time which they could manage.

Two groups found it quite frustrating that they didn’t have enough STP to solve everything in one go. Some were upset that I had refused their requests for more. ‘Where from?’ I asked. They felt that it was unfair when their needs were so great. This triggered a very interesting discussion which raised and clarified some important issues:

- the responsibilities and abilities of Governments to help;
- ELDCs have competing priorities - perhaps industries should be helped to generate wealth first (and other arguments);
- some waste lots of money;
- Government support might only attract more migrants; should resources be spent on making the countryside ‘better’?
- why does the Government not make them all leave?

Students provided all the questions and most of the answers for themselves.

I then asked which criteria were important for the people of Ariba when planning how to improve their shanty, and then how they might be different for urban planners in this country. They had already looked at inner city problems in MEDC so were building on material that they had already studied. They seemed to get the idea very well and could talk at length with the odd prompt.

Follow-up
For homework they were given the task of writing up their decisions and giving reasons for having made them. The quality of the answers was expectedly variable but all the pupils mentioned priorities in some form and justified their decisions. Many also mentioned identifying criteria as a useful part of the process.
Exemplar 3: Improving a Shanty Town

Ariba: a shanty town

Key:
- Industrial area
- Edge of shanty town
- Dirt road track
- Paved road
- Shanty building made of wood, cardboard/corrugated iron, etc.

Resource 5

STREAM
INDUSTRIAL AREA
ROAD
ROAD
ROAD
A Shanty Town

Ariba is a shanty town of poor quality, self-built houses on the fringe of a large city in Latin America. As with shanties in many less developed countries of the world, it began as temporary housing, but is becoming more permanent by the day! Most residents came from poor rural areas or country towns but with few skills of use in urban areas and little savings. Others are young adults from other poor areas of the city setting up their first homes. Unemployment is not an option. They have to do something to survive.

- Infant mortality is very high
- The population of ARIBA is 465
- There is no electricity or sewerage system
- Work is often temporary, informal, and low paid
- The stream is very polluted
- Often close to industry on marginal, sometimes polluted land
- Self-built with cheap or recycled materials
- Public services like refuse collection do not come into areas that pay no local taxes
- Almost everybody that has work, works in the informal sector
- Poor sanitation so diseases are common
- Water is obtained from the stream, or from the nearest public tap which is one mile away. There are usually queues here and sometimes there is no water
- There is no school in the area
- Roads are not paved and are used as refuse dumps. In winter they turn to mud
- Many of the shacks are painted
- People keep their shacks tidy
- Adult literacy is 32%
- Only 1 woman and 2 men have a good education
- Best transport and communications
- Poor sanitation so diseases are common
Resource 7

Shanty Town Improvements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>STP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 metres of road</td>
<td>30 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prequalified teacher for a year</td>
<td>60 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity connection for area</td>
<td>30 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community centre</td>
<td>25 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small petrol electricity generator</td>
<td>20 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally run health centre</td>
<td>35 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water connection per building</td>
<td>20 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainage network</td>
<td>100 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete for 100 metres of road</td>
<td>10 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly doctor’s visit to area</td>
<td>15 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity connection to one building</td>
<td>10 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building materials for one house (concrete and wood)</td>
<td>10 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family planning clinic</td>
<td>50 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewerage network</td>
<td>100 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government advisor/expert for one week</td>
<td>40 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly nurse’s visit to area</td>
<td>5 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local water tap</td>
<td>40 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street lighting per street</td>
<td>30 STP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send delegation to City authorities</td>
<td>5 STP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember you have 200 shanty town points to spend in your first year and another 200 in your second year.

STP = shanty town points

Exemplar 3: Improving a Shanty Town

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## Priorities for development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1st year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2nd year</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Longer term</strong></td>
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</table>

## Improvements in 1st year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvements</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
## Exemplar 3: Improving a Shanty Town

### Improvements in 2nd year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvements in 2nd year</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Plans for future years

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