HOUSING
byPeople
IN ASIA

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PRACTICING PARTNERSHIP: EACH DOING WHAT EACH DOES BEST . . .

The problems of land, housing and services in Asian cities are too big and too complex for either communities or cities or development professionals to solve alone. It takes lots of groups to make change. Good solutions to these big problems require partnership, but partnership isn't easy. Especially between the poor and the state, who have a long history of mutual mistrust to surmount.

One of the principles of any good partnership is finding a way that each partner does what he does best and letting others do what they do best, so the parts add up to a workable whole. This kind of problem-solving is many-sided and makes for some of the richest solutions, but it takes time, and can only be developed *through practice*.

There are many things which poor people can do better and more efficiently than the state. Informal communities already contain, in atomised parts, all the expertise that goes into building cities and infrastructure - masons, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, labourers. If the skills housed in slums can build cities, they can be channeled to improve the living environments of those large populations in Asia's cities which have been left out.

This is not only a matter of equity, or "rights", but of fundamental urban equations. All parts of the city are interconnected. If the city's infrastructure, for example, allows soil and garbage from half the city's population to go into the river untreated, that's not only bad news for the under-serviced poor, but it's bad news for the city as a whole. When you plan for poor people's housing and basic services, it's good for the whole city, good for everyone.

Poor communities and federations of communities around Asia continue to negotiate for land and resources, build their cooperatives, save their money, and prepare themselves for exploring new ideas, new technologies - *and new partnerships.* This issue of *Housing by People in Asia* is a fat one, and we've got dozens of stories which provide dozens of good cases for the student of partnership. The obstacles are still immense, the conditions are still bad, the numbers are still staggering, but there is one question that no longer need be asked: *Can poor communities and cities work together?*

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

PARTNERSHIP WITH PRIVATE DEVELOPERS

In Cebu City, Philippines, poor communities work with the municipality, NGOs and private developers to plan resettlement projects in which land, housing and infrastructure costs are shared by those who profit from the people's relocation.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH LOCAL AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

In the old city of Lhasa, Tibet, low-income tenents living in state-owned historic buildings work with local government and international preservationists to improve their living conditions and consolidate their tenure.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH CITIES AND TRANSPORT AUTHORITIES

In Bombay, thousands of families living along the city's railway tracks negotiate resettlement solutions which poor people plan themselves, with full support from the city, the state, transport authorities, the NGO and the federation.

PARTNERSHIP WITH HOUSING AGENCIES AND SUPPORT NGOS

In Bangkok, 67 communities living under the city's traffic bridges work with NGOs, the National Housing Authority, finance institutions, the national government and a nation-wide network of poor communities to plan people-managed resettlement to four sites close by.

COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE :

When the urban poor can make a buck, cooperatively.

Asian cities have always been, above all else, market places, where just about everybody, up an down the economic ladder, is either buying or selling something. At one end are the poor, doing something at rock-bottom wages or making something at rock-bottom rates which somebody else profits from. Then the broad spectrum of middle men, contractors, agents, exporters, investors - who despite their distance from the actual making and doing, are the ones who really clean up.

Self-employment is one way out of these inequitable equations, and judging by the scale and vitality of Asia's informal sector, it is the urban poor's preferred ticket to better livelihoods. But without capitol, stock, space or the bargaining power of scale, tiny businesses run by indivual poor people are seldom able to tap the larger markets and supply systems, where the real money is. In the next few pages, we look at eight groups around Asia that are using the power of numbers to run enterprises which challenge these inequities and lead to clear benefits :

- **MORE JOBS** and higher incomes within the community.
- **MORE MONEY** stays inside the community, circulating locally, indirectly supporting other spin-off enterprises.
- **MORE STRENGTH** - communities get strong-er, more enterprising, better organised
- **MORE EFFICIENCY** - Cooperative enterpri-ses make more efficient use of overheads when members can share space, tools, machines, get bulk discounts on raw materials and form networks that can negotiate on behalf of members at larger scale.
- **FEWER MIDDLEMEN** - "Economies of scale" also help communities to kiss-off middlemen, keep more of the profits, and increase their negotiating power with distribution and marketing links.

Another community enterprise story from Korea, about the NonGol Clothing Cooperative in Seoul, on page 31.

Thailand : 3 Community enterprises in Bangkok

*Thailand's **Urban Community Development Office (UCDO)** has been working to promote community business enterprises which will have a greater range and intensity of economic and development impact - stepping up loans to community cooperatives, strengthening networks which eliminate middlemen and enhance access to markets, and setting up training courses in basic business principles and legal issues. Things are just getting going, and there are plenty of hurdles, but a few kinds of enterprise have shown potential :*

1. Bangkok Community Handicrafts Promotion Center

"You may not know it but the thing you use every day was made by an artisan who lives and works in a slum." When the Thai Sporting Goods company received a concession to produce and sell souvenirs for the 13th Asian Games in Bangkok, Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister proposed bringing artisans from poor communities into the project. As the country's first community craft cooperative, the *Bangkok Community Handicraft Promotion Centre* was subsequently awarded a big contract to produce bonzeware souvenirs for sale at the Asian Games.

The *BCHPC* was set up by five communities of bronzeware artisans in Pradittorakan. Khun Sankit has been making bronzeware for 40 years, and is the cooperative's chairman. "Middlemen deal with craftspeople individually, so the price stays low," he says. "People have no power to negotiate conditions when they work separately, can't push up their price. We came together for clear reasons. It makes business sense."

The cooperative now provides a legal umbrella to groups in 22 poor communities involved in enterprises to produce handloom silk, cotton, clothing and artificial flowers. Plans are on to establish a similar centre in Chiang Mai, a city rich in craft skills but short on cooperative entrepreneurship. As additional centres come into operation, collaborations will be possible to further strengthen negotiating power.

2. Pooying Power : School Uniforms Contract from BMA

Thailand's economic crisis, says Phong Saisa-art of the ***BCHCP***, has left many community people, especially women ["*Pooying*" in Thai], without work. To deal with the problem, the cooperative has worked with the *Housewive's Savings Groups* in 13 poor communities around Bangkok to set up a school uniform tailoring project. Using the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority's policy to support community enterprise by awarding contracts to poor communities, the cooperative sucessfully negotiated for a contract to produce a whopping ***232,000 school uniforms***.

With a 2.7 million Baht loan from UCDO for fabric, buttons and zippers, hundreds of sewing machines in communities around Bangkok hummed into high gear. The project is expected to provide employment to 300 poor families with income of two million Baht. Plus, if quality remains high, bigger contracts may follow next year.

Complications set in, though, when the BMA backtracked on its clear policy and passed up the cooperative's bid in favour of one of it's old sweatshop contractors. These contract systems, which involve closed networks and numerous pay-offs, are notoriously hard to break into, but the women were not ready to wave the white flag yet, petitioned the BMA Governor, and *got back a bigger-than-before contract!*

3. Fair-price goods at Rom Klao Zone 8

The *Rom Klao Zone 8 Provisions Shop*, in the large NHA relocation colony at Lat Krabang, at Bangkok's periphery, was started by the community's savings group to provide lower-cost rice, vegetables, condiments, soap and medicines, to generate additional income and to strengthen the group through a joint initiative. The shop is run as a cooperative, and is owned and managed by its members. To start, 50 members purchased shares in the shop at 10 Baht each, and took a UCDO loan of 250,000 Baht to establish the shop and purchase stocks.

Afer only eight months of operation, the shop had generated 225,000 Baht in assets, a 42,000 Baht profit, and had repaid over half of it's five-year loan! The cooperative is now expanding operations, and shares are being sold to community members at 100 baht each. The committee has persuaded NHA to rent land for storage and will take an additional loan from UCDO to construct a storage building.

It costs about seven or eight thousand Baht to buy a new sa-leng cart, or about three thousand for a second-hand one. Some rent a sa-leng for 20 baht per day, while others have done well enough to invest in much snazzier motorized sa-leng. On a good day, a sa-leng might make upwards of 200 Baht, but during the rains, when materials get soggy and waste-picking is particularly bad, might make nothing.

Thailand : Sa-leng Center in Khonkaen

A lot of Thailand's garbage is collected by informal waste collectors called "Sa-leng" (Chinese for "three-wheels"). With gloves, hats, flashlights and steel hooks, they criss-cross the country's cities and towns on their 3-wheeled carts, and help keep them clean by collecting, sorting and recycling waste. It's no easy job - barked at by dogs, muscled into the kerbs by traffic, hassled by policemen, exposed to toxins - earnings are small and lives are hard and often short. Here is an account of a cooperative enterprise in northeastern Thailand, which is finding ways to support the sa-leng, drawn from notes by Diana Mitlin, from IIED in London.

The community network in Khonkaen, *Saha Chumchon* [Communities Together] has undertaken an ambitious plan to develop a garbage collection and recycling centre. The *Sa-leng Centre* opened in February, 1998 and now serves 70 or 80 *sa-leng* each day, who bring their harvests of paper, plastic, glass, cloth and metal to the centre, where it is weighed and purchased, and later sold to local industries.

Malee-Ohn is *Saha Chumchon's* secretary. "The *sa-leng* have an isolated struggle. They work alone, they are at the mercy of the buyers who cheat on weights and pay the lowest prices. We wondered how to organise so people could work together to develop their lives *in every way* - working conditions, income, health, housing. We don't have much experience yet, but we decided to just start!"

With a grant from DANCED, they built the centre, and opened up membership, which so far is free, and which entitles *sa-leng* to access to the centre's health care

services and a share in the profits, but non-members are also welcome to use the centre as a "fair-price" buying station. The details of the cooperative mechanism are still evolving, but the people are firm in the centre's main objective, which is to improve the lives and working conditions of the *sa-leng*, above and beyond profits.

Like most businesses, the *Sa-leng Centre* ran a deficit in its early months, but is now turning profits of at least 40,000 Baht a month. The centre has good waste-collection contacts with schools, markets and municipality. The Centre's manager Khanchai says, "We know the good spots for collecting, and which factories pay the best prices for materials." Trade has been so brisk that they are already short of space for sorting and storage. Plans now include buying machines to process recyclable materials, so they can get higher prices for material, and setting up a network of sub-centres where *sa-leng* in other parts of the city can bring their materials. For the Khonkaen municipality, the *sa-leng* are a real boon, and the municipality has pitched in by advertising the centre, encouraging householders to sort their garbage, helped search for a site to extend the centre's operations, and has awarded municipal contracts to manage solid waste in several communities.

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Sama Sama :

Cooperative soap-making subsidizes a community's own redevelopment planning . . .

The *National Government Centre (NGC)* in Quezon City was a relocation site for families evicted from informal settlements around Manila. Later, the govern-ment decided to take the land back for other projects. The twenty years since have been thick with demolitions, barricades, court cases, compromises, policy flip-flops and showdowns between successive administrations and a community of 45,000 families which wants to stay put and to manage its own development.

At the eye of the storm has been the ***Sama Sama Credit Cooperative***, which is now fighting the city's latest dumb idea, a *"commercial zone"* development which would entail evicting thousands of families and destroying the community's already-thriving "commercial zone." *Sama Sama's* negotiating weapon? ***A viable alternative*** in the form of a comprehensive development plan for NGC, which includes secure tenure, reblocking, housing, basic services, livelihood and health.

The soap making is a spin-off of *Sama Sama's* savings collective, which has financed hundreds of small enterprises in NGC - rug making, handicrafts, tailoring, beauty parlours, shops. The soap cooperative, though, was set up specifically to subsidise Sama Sama's community development work and to free it from dependence on external support. So after learning about mixing, moulding, curing and packaging of soap, they set up their production. Their hand-made soaps use special vegetable oil, and extracts of lemon, jasmine, and *sampaguita* flower and sell for ten pesos - comperable to cheaper brand-name soaps. The women are now working to tap wider markets and increase production. They take turns in the workshop, paying themselves only a minimal daily allowance, and the profits all go into the collective.

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COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE :

Philippines : Recycling Resource Center under-way at Payatas :

All around Payatas, you see kids on skate-boards made from hubcaps, chickens inside fences made from mattress springs and men playing checkers with bottle-caps. In home workshops, people make scrubbers from fish nets, doormats from cloth scraps and dust-pans from cookie tins. The ***Payatas Scavengers Association*** is translating this kind whimsy and creativity into cooperative plans to supplement and upgrade the recycling which is the lifeblood of Payatas.

The ***Recycling Resource Centre*** will be a place to experiment, a place where many things will happen, including further proces-sing of waste materials, so materials will fetch a higher price in the market. This requires space, tools, machinery and good water supply, which single recycling entrepreneurs can't provide, but a larger operation can.

They've got 2 hectares of land, donated by the church, about a half-hour's walk from the dump. That's not far, but if you're lugging a heavy sack-full of material, it's too far to come for sorting or selling, so the association is looking carefully at separating tasks that are best done *individually* at home and at the dumpsite, and tasks that are best done *cooperatively* at the Recycling Centre or at a network of cooperative buying stations around the dump, which are also being planned.

The Association is keen to not interfere with the free-wheeling informality of waste-picking, which has advantages for many newly-arrived poor migrants, and see the Recycling Centre clearly as a supplement to and not a replacement for the systems by which thousands of scavengers survive.

The idea is to keep things loose, and see what collective elements work best for the sca-vengers. They also see the recycling coop-erative as one part of a wholistic scavengers redevelopment that covers land, livlihood, houses, health and basic services - *the works*.

The store has been carefully laid out to provide for security and convenience. The only access into the store is through a back door which opens right into the busy community centre, so there's always some-one to keep on eye on the shop. Sales are made through a screened window out back, so business can go on with-out disturbing meetings going on inside.

South Africa : Informal sector debuts in Cooperative provisions store at Victoria Mxenge

Here is some news about a new revolving loan fund for community enterprises which is helping South Africa's informal sector make a come-back. This news is drawn from notes written by Sheela Patel, from SPARC in Bombay, during her visit to South Africa last June.

Asian cities have always teemed with informal enterprises selling goods and services wher-ever the smallest marketing opportunity presents itself. It's hard to imagine Asia without the informal sector, or the urban poor without the flexible, bottomless income opportunities it provides. South Africa, on the other hand, has little history of informal sector business activities - white colonial business interests made sure of that, with regulations which effectively squashed the country's native entrepreneurial spirit long ago. Even after five years of majority rule, in most of South Africa's poor settlements, the absense of small, locally run shops means people still have to travel long distances to big supermarkets for daily provisions like meat, vegetables, bread, salt, medicines and soap.

uMfelandaWonye *(the South African Homeless People's Federation)* has recently negotiated a grant from the Social Welfare Ministry to set up a special revolving fund within the uTshani Fund for economic loans to communities, to boost incomes by helping start individual and collective business enterprises.

The federation's savings groups have always been strong on housing saving, but reluctant when it comes to lending for income generation. Without much confidence in their own entrepreneurial abilities, members worry about businesses going bust or loans not being repaid. Plus, communities still have little collective understanding of how these loans can help them, *unlike in India, where there are many takers for these kinds of loans!* The revolving fund comes at a time when the savings groups are finally ready to make the entrepreneurial plunge.

A range of possibilities is opening up. One of the most exciting is the community provisions shop which a group of women from the Victoria Mxenge settlement have set up in a small space at the back of the community centre. The shop employs five women and sells good quality, day-to-day commodities to the community at fair prices, and still earns enough money to give dividends to the members. Now the challenge is to balance the "rule-making" within the fund management with allowing communities room to begin exploring what they can do with these new resources.

India : When street kids become culinary entrepreneurs . . .

Even street kids grow up, and part of making a smooth passage into adult-hood means finding a real job. Members of Bombay's Sadak Chaap Federation have been exploring several occupational possibilities. Planning and cooking meals for the 150 to 200 children at the Sadak Chaap night shelters around Bombay has kick-started Bombay's first street-kids' catering enterprise.

Besides taking orders for dinners and wedding parties, the kids have started catering NSDF/MM meetings. They really earned their stripes last September at Mahila Milan's model house exhibition, in Mankhurd, where they cooked meals for upwards of 7,000 visitors, using pots big enough to swim in. Nobody anticipated so many people would show up. The team just kept cooking and cooking, and somehow, everybody got fed.

(more Sadak Chaap news on page 19)

New book from Women's Bank :

"Real Voices in Development"

Amongst the shelves and shelves of development literature, there isn't much material which comes direct from poor people, and which describes in their own words their initiatives to improve their lives and communities. Most of the stuff is by somebody else, who seeks to interpret the needs of the poor and speak for them. For the primary-source-starved, here's a new book of stories from 100 poor Sri Lankan women, describing their lives and their experiences as members of ***Kantha Sahayaka Sewaya*** *(Women's Bank). The stories were compiled and translated by Nandasiri Gamage from the Women's Bank, which since 1989 has helped poor women (and some men!) to pool their savings and create a capital fund through which they can invest in micro-enterprises and increase their incomes. The following exerpts come from two women who are members of two of the thousands of savings groups in the Women's Bank.*

We in our village come from different parts of the country and lived without much association, traveling on the same road without much talk among ourselves, as though we were in a foreign country. Before, most of the villagers were selfish and biased against women, not prepared to listen to women who were needy. We could not do any sort of transaction on trust.

I am the treasurer of our saving group. We save a few rupees every week. That may be a small amount, but the returns we get from it are not small. Now we are closer to each other as brothers and sisters in the same family. It was that small group of ours that made this change among villagers. Now we don't feel frightened to go to the big city, Colombo, since we have our sisters and brothers there. We will never lose our way in Colombo. We can spend nights there and come back to our village in one piece! Our leaders are now visiting everywhere in the country, helping to start new savings groups. *(Preethimala Sumanaratna comes from the village of Damanewewa)*

Word about the Women's Bank's small savings groups fell on my ears when we were going through some hard times as rice farmers. Almost all the villagers were in the same situation, and nobody could afford to assist others. Under any circumstances, poor farming families like ours have to run after money lenders when we need loans during bad times. We borrowed a thousand rupees, but had to pay back two thousand a few months later. The grasp of the money lenders is fearful in this area. One time, when we had pawned our paddy land to this loan shark, I came to know about the savings group. It was like a drop of water on drought-ridden land, but even that drop was needed. Several of us started with just five rupees each and formed a savings group. Now we have a bank branch for our village. *(Bisomenike, who comes from the same village)*

CONTACT : For a copy of *"Real Voices in Development, A Hundred Stories of Women's Bank Members"*, contact Nandasiri Gamage at Women's Bank, Community Resource Centre, 151/13, E-Zone, Seevali Pura, Borella, Colombo 8, SRI LANKA
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SRI LANKA :

Community sweat and WB subsidy for Mahawatta . . .

Mahawattha is an informal settlement of 240 houses on Colombo's Torrington Canal. For nearly 30 years, people have shared a few leaky municipal taps and almost no toilets. In 1997, Mahawatta was selected as one of five pilot settlements to be upgraded under the World Bank-financed *Clean Settlement Programme.* Sevanatha was contracted to assist the process and provide technical assistance. The idea was that communities would decide what infrastructural improvements they need and then plan and carry out the work themselves, with 80% of the budget coming as a subsidy from the WB scheme and 20% coming from the community, in cash or labour. Work included installing individual metered taps and composting pit latrines in each house and building a community centre.

For Sevanatha, this was a chance to strengthen Mahawatta's already existing Community Development Councils (CDCs). The CDCs were set up in the 1980s as part of Sri Lanka's innovative *Million Houses Programme*, as a means of decentralising the planning process and strengthening capacities within the community. The programme is now dead, but 600 of Colombo's informal settlements still have active CDCs.

All five pilot upgradation projects were successful, but when it came time for extending the project to other settlements, official committment to this kind of a community-managed settlement improvement approach shifted to old-style urban renewal with medium rise buildings.

"Toratulu Malla"

Toratulu Malla *("Information Kit")* is Sevanatha's quarterly news-letter. This Singhalese language publication is filled with drawings, and photos and has been very successful in spreading around Sri Lanka news about community improvement initiatives, housing projects, savings and credit activities and people's stories. Sevan-atha is now planning to produce a bilingual English-Singhalese version, so people around the region can get the news as well.

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PHILIPPINES :

Philippines Homeless Federation holds first national assembly in Payatas :

Members of poor communities from around the Philippines came together last September for the ***Philippines Homeless People's Federation's*** largest-yet gathering. Held in the settlements which encircle the mountainous garbage dump at Payatas, in Quezon City, the assembly brought together some 1,000 local members and over 200 visiting members from across the Philippines - Mandaue, Cebu, Calbayog, Samar, Ilo-ilo, Davao, Surigao, General Santos City, Pili, Bicol and Metro Manila.

At least eight languages were spoken and dozens of sharply different local realities were enumerated at the assembly. Some groups were new, others were being revived, some were church-related, others were mini-federations in their own right. All communities represented manage their own savings and credit programs and use savings as the central means of strengthening their communities and securing land and houses.

The assembly provided a venue for defining support mechanisms needed to strengthen all these organizations and discussing such issues as access to loan programmes, land title problems, land conversion problems, land acquisition strategies, evictions, negotiating with local governments and landowners, dealing with NGO partners.

When poor communities do it :

Managing on event of this scale is no easy thing. The assembly was hosted on a shoe-string by the *Lupang Pangako Urban Poor Association*, with grace and thrift *(and without hotels, caterers or per-diems!)*. Visitors were put up in community homes, ate home-cooked Filipino meals in four special kitchens and were spirited through a full schedule of tours, discussion sessions and project visits. Visitors from outside Manila pitched in by bringing along specialties from their regions to contribute to the community kitchens - bundles of *pili-nut* sweets, squash and long-beans, baskets of durian, tender asparagus, huge deep-sea tuna from General Santos and bunches of fortifying *"saba"* bananas from Mindanao.

The Homeless People's Federation is now producing it's own newsletter! For a copy of "KATAS", or for any information about Payatas, contact Father Norberto Carcellar, Vincentian Missionaries Social Development Foundation, Inc. (VMSDFI)

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The savings programme aims way beyond financial benefits. *In Father Bebot's words, the constant interaction of daily saving and communal decision-making "works like glue" to bring communities together, so they can talk, identify common needs and finance individual and collective improvements.*

Daily "Doorstep" Savings at Payatas :

The common denominator of the Homeless People's Assembly was *savings* - saving for land, for livelihood, for community improvements. As senior federation, the *Lupang Pangako Urban Poor Association (LPUPA)*, which hosted the assembly, had plenty to teach participants from fledgling savings groups in other parts of the Philippines, who came to learn the nuts and bolts of managing a community savings and credit system. During the assembly, participants were "walked through" all the rituals of community savings scheme management :

- the round of daily "doorstep" collection of savings deposits and loan repayments
- recording and cross-checking of savings deposits and loan disbursals in passbooks, registers and in the computer system back at the savings office
- making collective decisions about loan applications
- using *community techniques* for dealing with defaulters and roping in non-savers.

In just over two years, LPUPA has grown from a small church-managed micro-credit programme to a savings federation with over 7,000 members in 680 savings groups, with savings crossing the 50 million peso mark, managed entirely by its members. The association is recognized by the National Housing Authority and part of the *Slum Dwellers International*. Father Bebot and his team of Vincentians now take a backseat and support the federation by helping organize community exchanges, raising funds and providing technical back up to the savings scheme.

Some very busy Pesos :

The total amount saved in Payatas during the month of July, 1998 was about 1.4 million pesos. The amount given out in loans was also about 1.4 million pesos. What that means is that all the money circulates, gets used to make more money. There is both self-lending within each small savings group, and inter-lending between savings groups. All this in a community with an average household income of just 3,500 Pesos a month.

The smallest unit of the savings scheme is the group of 7-10 members, who collect daily savings among themselves and remit them to the savings office once a week. Members agree to save regularly and to pool their savings for future loans, determine their savings and loan guidelines and share responsibilities for maintaining the group. The savings schemes are :

- **Group-based**, depending on neighbourly information and peer-pressure as substitutes for loan collateral.
- **Savings-based**, as the member must have invested some amount of savings before getting a loan. The maximum loan amount is 1.8 times one's deposit for regular users, and up to P50,000 for those who have established a good track record after a year of membership.
- **Non-subsidised**, as it charges market interest rates to discourage a *dole-out* mentality and to maintain financial sustainability.

Besides access to emergency and income-generation loans, savings members can also open special individual land-purchase savings accounts and take part in the federation's just-started health insurance scheme, in which members can invest in pre-paid health services which include hospitalization, medical consultations, and discounts on medicines. Unlike most insurance schemes which avoid high-risk groups, this one will include even the most vulnerable of Payatas residents - the scavengers, disabled persons, and the elderly.

Green thumbs and hard work :

Community land acquisition strategies at Payatas . . .

Nearly 18,000 families, in federation member groups through-out the Philippines, are in the process of acquiring secure land - saving, forming homeowners associations, identifying land, negotiating prices, sorting out titles, planning layouts, exploring loan sources. Land acquisition is the topic ***numero uno*** *in a country with no intermediate forms of secure tenure for the landless poor. So it's not surprising that some of the Homeless Assembly's most vital and most specific discussions occur-red when visitors met people in the thick of their own land acquisition projects :*

Two decades ago, many of the hills around Payatas were still jungle. When the Marcos government began resettling families evicted from inner city slums around Payatas, it parceled up the available hills into relocation sites. Planning was haphazard and land-owners didn't always know what was going on. One relocation site fell within the catchment area of the city's reservoir. Engineers warned that it jeopardized the city's water supply, so the deal was that evictees could stay only if each one planted 20 trees, to help retain ground water. Those were orders, not suggestions.

Over 300 families agreed, and each planted their 20 trees, built their bamboo shacks and settled in. Many survived by scavenging recyclable materials at the new garbage dump nearby. Over time, more families moved in, children grew up and made their living in the fast-urbanizing area - *and those trees kept growing*.

The community's struggle to buy the land they occupy began in 1993 with the formation of the *Golden Shower Homeowner's Association*, named after the flower-ing tree which festoons the area with dripping clusters of lemon-yellow blossom.

While negotiations with the land-owner began, the people started housing savings, mapped and enumerated their settlement and paid to have a physical survey done. With a little friendly persuasion from their parish priest, they haggled the land price down to 1,000 pesos per square metre, and made a downpayment. Tasks now include saving for the next payment and going through the complicated business of obtaining three different land titles.

Golden Shower's enthusiastic chairman, Jolly, loves spreading out blueprints of the community's carefully-worked out redevelopment plans for visitors. Only slight readjustments will be made to the existing layout, to widen roads and equalize plot sizes to 60 square metres. Only a few of those fabulous trees will be cut for road widening, and many new ones will be planted. There will be space for a community centre, playground and pre-school

From the beginning, all *Golden Shower's* planning has been carefully cropped to remain within a strict budget of 60,000 Pesos per family, which everyone knows is the loan ceiling on the two low-interest loan schemes available to Philippine's urban poor. As things stand now, that will be just enough to pay for the land. The community is now weighing pros and cons of the two loan schemes, the C*ommunity Mortgage Programme* loans at 6% annual interest (25-year mortgages and no downpayment) and the MMP-NHA loans at 12% annual interest (15 year mortgage, 10% downpayment).

Twenty years later, *the by-product of one authoritarian gesture and 300 green thumbs is something that looks more like a botanical garden than a poor settlement, a catalog of the Philippines' botanical diversity - fruit trees, hardwood trees, flowering trees, coconut palms, acacia, mahogany, tamarind, mango. The trees create a micro-climate that is degrees cooler and more fragrant than surrounding areas, and feels like heaven after the smoke and stink of the nearby dump.*

Working Children . . .

Factoring in the needs of Payatas' smaller scavengers :

You see a lot of kids with unusually light, blondish hair around the Payatas dumpsite. That's not genetic, it's malnutrition. If they were getting enough to eat, their hair would be black. This is what Father Bebot calls "the human cost of urbanisation." In these four off-shoot programmes of the Savings Federation and Scavengers Association, communities around Payatas are finding their own ways of looking after the needs of their most vulnerable members - working kids.

1 **The Scavenger Kids Centre** is located at the edge of the garbage dump and run cooperatively by the mothers, with help from Ray, the centre's full-time *big brother*. Many kids work the dumpsite at night, when competition for materials is less intense, so the centre is open round the clock. Kids can come play, get first-aid, have something to eat or shower after scavenging. They can even sleep there - there is no fixed agenda. Every morning, the mothers prepare hearty snacks (like *Champorado*, a delicious hot porridge made of chocolate, rice, sugar and coconut) and teach classes. Some kids have been trained as junior paramedics and carry around first aid kits with them while they work on the dump and can treat cuts and infections.

2 **Savings scheme for scavenger kids :** Many kids who work the dump-site are on their own, independent of families. For this free-wheeling group, there is a special savings scheme. The kids have their own savings groups and pass-books, collect their deposits daily and bring them to the savings office. *But unlike the other savings schemes, most of them blow it on movies and sprees at the shopping mall over the weekend!*

3 **Infants Savings Scheme :** Earlier child-sponsorship programmes in Payatas created a host of bad feelings between those families whose kids got the goodies and those who didn't. So the women decided to pool their resources and use them to bring benefits to *everybody*, through a special *Infants Savings Scheme*, which is really a saving scheme for working mothers, who save on behalf of their children. The scheme has been running for two years now and has over a thousand members, most of whom are scavengers, and they all save at least 40 pesos a month for their kids.

4 **Day-care centre :** With their collective savings, the mothers have built a day-care centre, which they run themselves, on a voluntary basis, without any kind of external subsidy. The kids come into the centre in batches, and the mothers take turns teaching classes and feeding the children a simple, nutritious meal, which they cook in the little courtyard outside. It was the women's decision to pay themselves the interest on their savings deposits in rice - rather than cash - to combat the constant spectre of malnutrition and to help carry member families over the ups and downs of the scavenging business.

PHILIPPINES :

Land sharing :

"A little piece of land" at Sitio Pajo . . .

Nena Bago is president of the *Sama-hang Sitio Pajo 1.6 Hectare Home-owners Association*, a poor community of 120 families in Manila which is now buying the land they have occupied for 50 years. *"We developed this land,"* Nena proudly tells, *"We built houses, built our concrete road with our own hands. We have two day-care centres and a chapel. We made it all."*

A few years back, the land-owner, National Power Corporation (NPC), decided to use the site for staff housing. Eviction notices went up, but nobody budged. A negotiation pro-cess began in which NPC proposed construct-ing medium-rise buildings in one corner where community members could buy small units. But as Nena says, *"We like to keep one foot on the ground,"* and community members persisted in their determination to keep *"a little piece of land."*

First they surveyed the land, formed a homeowners association and with the help of some young archtitects from *Panirahanan*, worked up their own land-sharing plan, in which the community would purchase 1.4 hectares of the land for small row-houses, and return the rest to NPC for its staff housing. The com-munity's "reblocking" plans call for only slight readjustments to the existing layout, to squeeze into less area, equalize plots to 32 s.m., and bring road and alley widths to 6 and 3 metres. In addition, the land will be filled by a metre to avoid flooding.

Armed with this plan, they went back to the negotiating table and finally won the NPC's agreement. Now the community is going through all the paperwork, and haggling down the land price to their budget limit of 800 Pesos per square metre. People will take CMP loans to buy the and are now saving for building houses.

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Turnover Ceremony *was held in October 98, when the land title was officially signed over to the association. The 1.7 hectare community buzzes with pounding, sawing and the scrape of the masons trowel. Virtually every house is in some stage of construction or disassembly.*

Reblocking wizardry at SEPVHOA :

Another land-aquisition story is winding up in Ibayo-Tipas, Taguig, one of Metro Manila's 6 suburban municipalities. Ten years ago, most of the 234 families in the *Southeast People's Village Homeowner's Association (SEPVHOA)* were impoverished migrants from the Visayas, in southern Philippines, but are now the owners and developers of the land they once squatted on.

The land was owned by the *Far East Bank and Trust Company*, and when the community began negotiations to buy it, the bank said yes. The local government agreed to act as "originator" to help the community buy the land through the CMP Loan Programme, but at some point got the idea of playing developer itself, constructing multi-story blocks and scoring a profit by selling costly rooms to the community. The people cried foul, the court intervened and the people were given 60 days to submit the cumbersome paperwork for CMP. The landowner and the municipality agreed only in the certainty that the people couldn't make the deadline. But with perserverance and some help from the *Foundation for the Development of the Urban Poor (FDUP), they made the deadline* and plans roared ahead.

The homeowners association's president, Rene Raagas, describes the remarkable redevelopment process which followed, in which the community transformed itself, *without anyone ever leaving the site*. Work has been organised by committees for surveying, reblocking and financing, which comprise equal numbers of women and men, and carried out in phases, at a pace which works for a community of working families. Plans include 48 s.m. plots, drainage lines, 22 shared water taps, a day care centre and a full-sized basketball court.

To save money, people did everything themselves, starting with the laborious process of filling 1.7 hectares of land by 1 metre, without earth moving equipment or hired labour. Using free infill material wangled out of a local gravel company, they started with the roads - marking out and filling them first, so that trucks could get in easily with more fill. People also constructed their own drainage system, septic tanks, and obtained subsidized electricity connections through a MERALCO scheme for "depressed areas." With all this accomplished scrimping, development costs so far have been kept below 100,000 pesos, total.

The community's reblocking plans, with parallel lanes and equal plots, required that most houses had to be moved. Rather then breaking down and reassembling each house, they decided to simply *pick them up and move them*. A schedule of 2 or 3 house-movings per week was settled, as plots and foundations were made ready, and in each session, 30 or 40 men would station themselves around the house, and with a great heave, lift the thing up and literally carry it to its new position.

Bayanihan *[is the Tagalog word for "working in cooperation." When the term is thrown around in the Philippines, this is what they're talking about.*

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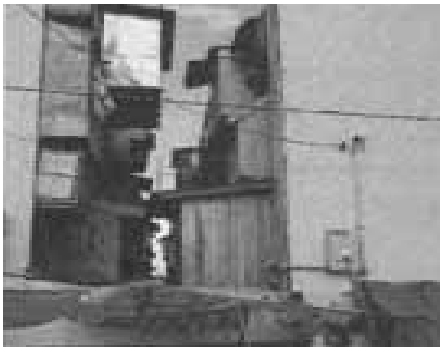
NHA's Vitas Housing in Tondo :

A study in how NOT to design a medium-rise building for the poor . . .

What happens when poor people who live on the ground, move into flats that are up in the air? There are some obvious benefits in "going up," since more people can be packed into less land. But it's expensive, hard to maintain and the complex web of connections which knit poor communties together do not always survive the transition from street to sky.

The National Housing Authority's enormous *Vitas Housing Project* was built in Tondo, Manila, in the 1980s to resettle families displaced by the Port Authority's new container terminal. Ten of the project's 27 buildings were allocated for socialized housing while the rest were sold on the open market. The brand-new, engineer-designed, pink-painted buildings were inaugurated in 1990, and marked a revival of NHA's medium rise housing programme.

A recent study by ***Urban Poor Associates*** examines the project's planning, design, construction and management, and uses extensive interviews with residents to find out how the occupants are adapting to a "vertical environment." In a time when many slum redevelopment programmes are opting for similar high-density housing types, the study makes a valuable catalogue of all the things *NOT* to do in an MRB.



It's hard to imagine a project going more wrong than *Vitas*, which in just nine years has deteriorated into what one Manila journalist called "*a nuthouse*." The buildings are falling apart, uncollected garbage is piling up, walls and roofs in every unit leak, drains are clogged, broken sewage stacks ooze excrement, stairways are crumbling, gangster-like syndicates have taken control of the supply mains and extract fees for water and electricity. 43 percent of the occupants are no longer paying their rent or making their mortgage payments, and nearly half perceive their stay in*Vitas* as temporary, "until they can no longer bear to stay, or the NHA throws them out for not paying." Court cases *against* the NHA, and *by* the NHA, abound.

Almost every aspect of the project seems to destroy community rather than create it. Physical segregation of different types of "beneficiaries" has exacerbated "*us and them*" divisions within *Vitas*. Some residents are extremely poor relocatees from nearby Smokey Mountain, who continue sorting recyclable waste within the grounds, to the chagrin of better-off neighbours who bought their units at market rates, and who resent their mortgage payments subsidizing these scavengers.

Contact between neighbors on different floors is due mostly to quarrels. In one instance, a woman hacked down her upstairs neighbor's door with a *jungle bodo* when there was a leak. Unoccupied buildings elsewhere have been invaded by squatters and social divisions throughout the project have made the entire area into a war-zone. Drugs, crime and violence are getting worse, kids are kept locked inside their small units for safety. Only 33% of the residents belong to one of the 18 residents organisations which have formed in different buildings. There is no project-wide community association.

What if ? *Not surprisingly, the real bad guy at Vitas is not design, as such. The buildings there aren't much different from the kind of standard walk-up tenements you find all over Asian cities, and not all of them have deteriorated to this state. What if strong, organised communities had been central in the planning, allotment and management of the Vitas housing project? If people had felt they had a stake in Vitas, if they felt this was their own community, would things have gotten so out of hand?*

Filipinos enjoy many lively media, in which the big issues are discussed right beside the lurid scandals. UPA is tapping these vital and entertaining conduits of Philippines news to spread around information about the urban poor.

Community radio for the urban poor . . .

"Buhay Maralita! Urban poor, wake up! Why are they sleeping along the river, on the road, beside the rail tracks? Have you seen these people living along the stations, under the bridges? Pushing a cart or scavenging for garbage? They are also us, they must be heard . . . So come and listen, to the Buhay Maralita Programme, and to Nanay Luz, right here on Veritas 846 . . . ."

Every Saturday afternoon for the past two years, the community radio programme *Buhay Maralita!* [Wake up Urban poor!] has been airing on Radio Veritas 846, the nation-wide Catholic radio station. *Buhay Maralita* is broadcast in Tagalok, the national language, and is aimed at the urban poor around the Philippines, and seeks to increase awareness about the problems they face - housing, eviction, land-rights, basic services, laws, employment.

The programme is a co-production of the people's organisation *DAMPA (Damayan ng mga Maralitang Pilipinong Api),* the *Catholic Media Network* and *Urban Poor Associates'* enthusiastic young media team, led by Ananeza Aban. Anchor persons, Nanay [mother] Luz and Roger Espregante are both leaders in poor communities that are part DAMPA. Their talents are supplemented by a staff of free-lance radio professionals.

Each programme is organized around a skit, which delves into a particular issue of concern to the urban poor such as eviction, children's rights, savings and credit, land aquisition, housing-related laws and relocation. The lively programmes include music, interviews, call-in discussions and news briefs from poor communities around the Philippines.

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CEBU CITY :

Pagtambayayong : 25 years of innovation and partnership-building . . .

Cebu City, in the southern part of Philip-pines, has been the site of many precedent-setting slum re-develop-ment and relocation schemes which have brought poor communities, municipality, pri-vate businesses, landowners and NGOs to-gether into remarkably effective partnerships.

Informal settlements in Cebu are seldom evicted any more. A growing set of practical alternatives to eviction have been tested and have become established options : land-shar-ing, land-swapping, buying-back, voluntary relocation and on-site rede-velopment. How did Cebu get so smart? *Not by accident!* It took years of building strong communities, a municipal administration open to suggestion, a seminal-thinking bunch of NGOs and a city-wide capacity to forge working partnerships.

One of the most creative and energetic forces behind Cebu's innovative approach towards the city's poor communities has been the ***Pagtambayayong Foundation***. For 25 years, this NGO, founded by Bimbo Fernan-des, has worked with the municipality, with other NGOs and with poor communities on land acquisition, so-cial housing, housing finance and affordable build-ing materials. Pagtambayayong has demonstrated through many projects that when the housing needs of the city's working poor are met, it's good for the poor, and it's good for the city as a whole. *Here are a few precedent-setting schemes Pagtambayayong has helped develop . . . .*

Most people at Sareehay built their own houses at the new land. Many used timber, bamboo, roofing sheets, doors and windows from their old houses at the hospital site, but a few who could afford to take out extra loans hired Eco-Builders to construct new houses using compressed earth blocks and concrete roofing tiles made in Pagtambayayong's materials workshop in Kalunasan.

Cebu : "Buy back" scheme at Sareehay

THE SITUATION : A small squatter community of 60 families was settled on land behind the Cebu Hospital, which the land-owner wanted to clear and develop. Pagtambayayong helped the community to successfully negotiate for alternative land everyone approved, 2 kilometres away in the tree-lined suburb of *Sareehay*.

THE DEAL : In exchange for the people's agreement to vacate the settlement where they had lived for many years, the land owner agreed to "buy back" the land from the families at a much-negotiated rate of 1,000 Pesos per s.m. (calculated according to house size), as compensation for the cost of moving and rebuilding. In addition, the land-owner agreed to buy and fully develop the alternative land after the community approved the site. The new land would then be turned over to the community's *Sareehay Sanciangko Riverside Homeowners Association*, and "parcelised" into individual titles in each family's name.

THE PROJECT : Through a contract with ***Eco-Builders*** (Pagtambayayong's construction offshoot), the land-owner paid for the new land to be surveyed, and for roads, drainage and water supply to be installed at Sareehay, according to the community's own site plan, drawn up in working-sessions, with help from Pagtambayayong. Plans include a community centre, a big playing field in the middle and plot sizes of 36 and 54 square metres, depending on whether families were tenants or "owners" at the old settlement.

Keeping the Community Mortgage Program alive . . .

Between 1993 and 1997, the Philippines' **Community Mortgage Programme (CMP)**, under the government's National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation, provided low-interest loans without collateral (via originators and community as-sociations) to 46,000 squatter families to buy land and regularize their situation.

But changes of administration, lack of interest, inefficiency and corruption by public officials and powerful developers continue to jeopardize this remarkable programme, the country's only housing programme which directly reaches the urban poor. Although CMP has inspired similar loan schemes in Thailand, India, Cambodia and South Africa, commitment to the programme within the govern-ment, especially within the NHMFC, has been pretty shabby. *Why?*

Some say that since CMP supports *real community initiative* and not patronage, nobody gets any political mileage out of the programme. And since the ex-tremely low-budget, community-managed projects involve neither contractors, nor developers, nor middlemen, nobody gets any cuts or makes any money on it.

Pagtambayayong has been *originator* for dozens of CMP loans. Together with a strong consortium of NGOs and community organisations, Pagtambayayong has struggled hard over the years to keep CMP alive - campaigning, demon-strating and finding ways of improving the programme's administration and expanding it's lending to reach more families.

This may seem like an almost impossibly "squatter friendly" deal . . .

. . . but as Neeto, from Eco-Builders, explains, the market value of that hospital land, which is prime real estate, on the main thoroughfare, is well over 20,000 Pesos per square meter. So even with all this giving of compensation and buying and developing of new land, that land-owner is still going to make a mint when he develops that land. Sareehay has helped set an important precedent in Cebu, where land-owners who profit from clearing land of poor families accept responsibility for providing alterna-tive land and assisting the community's resettlement pro-cess. *So everybody wins.*

THE HOUSES : People used their "buy-back" cash to build new houses, and some took CMP or Pag-Ibig loans to supplement their bud-gets. The houses at Sareehay range from super-cheap bamboo huts on stilts, to very solid 2-story block residences. Most families opted to build their own houses, re-using materials from their old houses, but about a dozen contracted Eco-Builders to build solid, cost-effective row-houses using locally-made compressed earth blocks (CEBs) and micro-cement roof tiles (MCRs), and designed with high roofs and interior volumes with room for adding a second floor later, when people can afford it.

Cebu : Land swapping at Kasambagan

THE SITUATION : When one of the Philippines largest commercial developers, the Diala Company, was in the last stages of constructing the "Cebu Business Park", it needed to quickly clear some additional land for an access road which ran through a large informal settlement. When it became clear that 120 households would come in the way, Pagtambayayong intervened to help organise the families, broker the resettlement negotiation and help the community to form a homeowners association and plan the new site. The four-sided negotiations involved the *Panadaid Homeowners Association*, Cebu City, the developer and Pagtambayayong.

THE DEAL : The "land-swapping" solution that was hashed out, through extensive negotiation, again acknowledged that when poor communities are dislocated by commercial development, it is both equitable and financially feasible for relocation costs to be shared by commercial interests which profit hugely from the land the community vacates. Plus, no new slums are created elsewhere. In exchange for clearing their settlement to make way for the access road, the people got :

- **a fully developed plot close to their old settlement.**
- **individual land title for their plot at the new site.**
- **relocation compensation of 20,000 to 100,000 pesos.** *(depending on house size)*
- **a "starter house" at the new site.**

THE PROJECT : The relocation project was a joint venture involving the com-munity, Pagtambayayong, the Cebu Municipality and the Diala company. Diala bought the land for "swapping" (2 kilometres away at Kasambagan) and paid 1.2 million Pesos (via a contract to Eco-Builders), to develop the new site - asphalt access roads, concrete underground storm drains, water supply and electricity. The city chipped in with speedy permits and loans of heavy earth-moving equipment. The people planned the layout and built their own houses.

STARTER HOUSES : Because of the rush, Diala also agreed to pay for the construction of 120 "starter houses" on the new site. These extremely simple 12 s.m. units were designed by Eco-Builders and consisted of 4 pre-cast concrete columns, a timber and tin-sheet roof and a septic tank - no walls, no doors, no frills. The idea was that when people came to the new site, at least a simple shelter would be ready for them, which they could wall-up using materials from their old houses, and expand later on. They could even squat over the septic tank, if necessary, until they could build a proper toilet. The cost of building these starter houses was 7,500 pesos each.

Remains of only a ver few "starter houses" (seen above) are still visible at Kasambagan. *Most of these shelters have been subsumed within stoutly-built houses of great variety and delight. The neighborhood now looks more like a well-established and flower-filled sub-division than any kind of "housing project."*

Buena Vista Housing :

Multiple innovations have been brought into this affordable, low-end private-sector housing project . . .

Pagtambayayong has a subsidiary, profit-making construction company, ***Eco-Builders****, set up to provide "lower middle" income housing, as a means of subsidising the Foundation and promoting alternative building technology. Eco Builders is nearly finished with its first big contract in Cebu - 350 houses built for a private developer, on a hilltop overlooking the city. Buena Vista is not housing for the poorest, but the project showcases many of Pagtam-bayayong's innovations :*

1 **Testing the Balanced Housing :** The Philippines *Housing and Urban Development Act* stipulates that developers must allocate 20% of all land they develop to low income housing. This is called *Balanced Housing* and is almost universally ignored by developers. Buena Vista is one of the first schemes to actually implement this law, and may be the first to show that housing that is affordable to lower-middle income families can be profitable. The developer in this case is San Miguel Properties, which subcontracted the 20% to Eco Builders.

2 **Planning cheaper housing :** To keep Buena Vista's houses within a selling price of 180,000 Pesos, which dovetails into government housing finance schemes, the compact row-houses come partially finished, with internal volumes that leave room for adding second floors and stairways later. The basic house includes a single room, a small kitchen area, shower, toilet and a tiny court-yard at the back. For a further 20,000 Pesos, people can add the stair and second floor.

3 **Using locally-made materials and maximising local labour :** By using locally-made construction materials which maximise use of local labour and minimise use of imported materials (like steel and cement), Eco-Builders is able to bring down the cost of walls and roofs and employ more people in the housing process.

4 **Subsidising NGO's involvement in social housing work :** All the profits from Eco Builders go back into cross-subsidising the foundation's other "non-profit" work, and helps reduce dependence on the whims of overseas donor organisations.

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VIETNAM :

Harnessing the power of people's participation in Vietnam's cities . . .

The following comments are drawn from several reports prepared by ENDA-Vietnam.

Asia's economic crunch is bad news all around, but for poor communities in Vietnam, particularly those targeted for eviction, it's a welcome relief. Dwindling foreign capital and reduced pressure on inner-city redevelopment have opened a little space for exploring alternatives to costly relocation of poor communities, like in-situ upgrading.

There are moves in the government to promote greater community participation in commune, town and ward levels, but there are still big gaps between the good intentions of these "Partnership" policies and their practical implementation. The concept of community-based development is still something of a new path in Vietnam, but is gaining, since everybody is looking for more efficient ways of delivering urban housing and basic services.

There is no doubt that a much more community-oriented approach is need-ed to meet the shelter needs of the urban poor. In the face of increasing financial constraints and growing population, the state will have to learn to harness resources already available within poor communities, like the most important and accessible - the people themselves.

But the capacities in Vietnam's poor communities to organise themselves and carry out their own initiatives are still a bit weak, after decades of relying on a centralized government and a strong socialist welfare system. But there are signs of community self-management systems that show promise, where poor communities have pooled their own resources to establish revolving community funds and to make infrastructural improvements in their settlements - paved lanes and pathways, sewage lines, storm drains and common toilets - *and now some new possibilities for full community-managed settlement upgrading are emerging.*

Tan Dinh Ward Project : When poor communities stay where they are and upgrade . . .

The ***Nhieu Loc - Thi Nghe Canal*** winds through the middle of Ho Chi Minh City. Since 1993, it has been the target of an enormous urban rede-velopment project, calling for the eviction and relocation of thousands of families in slums along the canal, to make way for multi-story housing blocks.

Such inner-city slum areas have become hot real estate in recent years. The trend has been to redevelop them with contractor-built "mixed" housing, in which some units are sold at market rates and other "subsidized" units are sold to evictees. There have been big problems, though. Many poor families displaced by these projects lose home and livelihood and do not qualify for relocation benefits because they aren't officially registered there. And for those who do qualify, housing designs and construction quality vary considerably, and even with the subsidy, the monthly mortgage payments are too high. Many are forced to sell their apartments and move back into slums. The process hasn't actually reduced poverty, but caused slums to grow and squandered state resources. *The only winners are the construction companies.*

Two NGOs, ***Enda Vietnam*** and ***Villes en Transition***, have been working with ***Vietnam's Central Youth Union*** to learn from past mistakes and explore community upgrading alternatives which minimize displacement and make more efficient use of national resources. Their idea? A pilot housing support programme aimed at helping the poor in one ward to improve their housing and environmental conditions, *in situ*. When Tan Dinh Ward was selected as target area by the Chief Architect's Office, the project became official.

Most of the densely-crowded slums in Tan Dinh Ward are built on stilts over marshy floodland adjoining the Thi Nghi Canal. Conditions are bad - lack of toilets, drainage, walkways, water-supply, electricity. The idea is to upgrade the community's infrastructure, widen roads and make only slight readjustments to the layout, so everyone can be resettled within the same ward. It will be the residents themselves who plan and manage the redevelopment.

This is the first time the city has agreed to modify its official plan to make room for a community-based housing and neighborhood development process. The context for such projects is becoming more favorable, as the government begins to recognize the wisdom in scaling down ambitious plans and relying on local resources.

The first step was a socio-economic survey of the area. Nobody was surprised by what they learned the Tan Dinh Ward residents wanted :

- to stay in the same neighborhood where they now live and work.
- to build better houses which are affordable and do not drive them into debt.

The project will be financed on a cost-sharing basis, with donor organisations and local authorities footing most of the bill for infrastructure improvements, and individual families contributing some funds and labour to the environmental improvements as well as upgrading their own houses, or helping pay for collective rental housing, via credit schemes.

In HCMC, most poor neighborhoods include many families which are not officially registered there - especially squatters and pavement dwellers. The government does not recognize their right to be there, and so will not officially assist them when the redevelopment juggernaut rolls in. In Tan Dinh, one of the project's main goals is to find ways of making room for ***everyone in the district****, whether registered or unregistered.*

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Tan Dinh Ward Project :

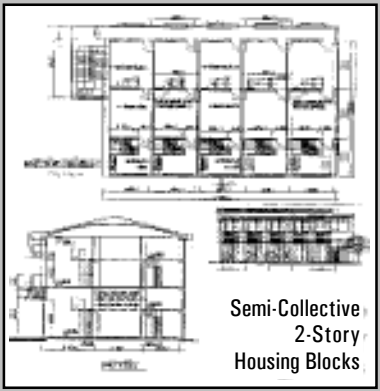
Communities explore on-site upgrading possibilities . . .

The Tan Dinh Ward project is now in the implementation stage. Modifications to the District's Master Plan have been approved by the Chief Architect of HCMC, and District 1 has agreed to support part of the costs of upgrading the infrastructure. In Sub-Wards 5, 6 and 7, the ***Central Youth Union's Centre for Youth Social Work*** *is organising activities which provide a venue for community people to sit together, discuss possible housing solutions and formulate their plans. The people have built scale-models of their communities, and using these as a tool, have explored a several different housing and comunity redevelopment options :*

Option one : Land-sharing

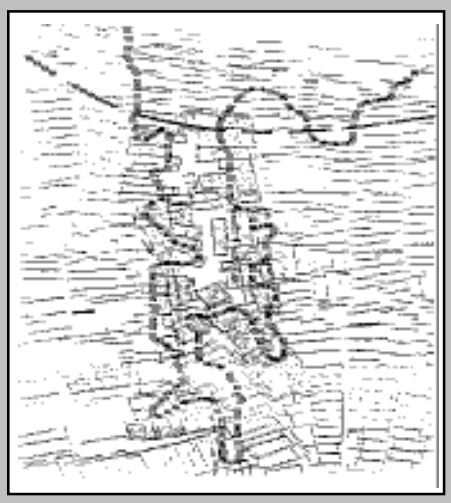
A marshland that will be cleared, located between the three sub-wards 5, 6 and 7, has been allocated to the project. The idea is that households in these three extremely crowded areas will rearrange their community layout in such a way as leaves enough room for road alignment, sewage lines and electric poles, etc. This approach is new to people whose habits of living separately make them reluctant to break their houses and "share" some of their land with others. The uncertain legal status of squatter households and very high density of population are also complicating factors.

Option two : On-site small collective houses



Semi-Collective 2-Story Housing Blocks

The communities have explored two options for this alternative. The first option is to build small, collective, medium-rise apartment blocks for 16 to 20 households each, which will be designed by the members, and financed through community housing credit groups. This option can accommodate greater densities and reduce the amount of land used, but will mean higher unit costs than the second option, which is to build low-cost, 2-story "semi-collective" apartments. This solution is not quite as dense as the first, and requires a little more land, but could make use of very simple construction tech-niques which would allow people to do a lot of the building themselves, but requires more land.



Before and after : *before (above) and after (below) plans for the Tan Dinh subwards 5, 6 and 7.*

The history of a canal in Saigon , from a six-year old child's point of view . . .

This little account was written by a 6th grade student, Pham Minh Khang, about the canal which runs alongside his community in Binh Dhanh District, and was translated by Le Minh Kha, ENDA Vietnam.

It was here even before I was born. No one knows when this old canal came into the world, even the oldest man in our village, Uncle Hai Thin. He only knows it isn't like it was before. He says that at the time when there were few families in our commune, the canal was like a wire connecting the households scattered along its banks. Back then, the water was clean and clear, and brought freshness even to the dry land where it ended. He says people used the canal water for washing and bathing, and at certain times of day, it became a common meeting point.

Then, lots of people migrated to the city, and it got crowded along the canal. Whenever epidemics attack people, that old canal gets the blame, that cradle of germs, mosquitoes and flies. They blame the canal, but keep pouring in their rubbish.

Uncle Hai Thin heaves a long sigh whenever he talks about the canal, as if he'd lost something precious. "The canal is no longer itself," he says, "It's water is darkened, it flows along tiredly, carrying plenty of rubbish. Nobody knows where all the waste comes from or where it will go." If the canal had three wishes, one would be enough : ***"Give me back my freshness!"***

Exposure visit to Thailand's canal-side settlements :

Last December, a team of community people and ward officials from Tan Dinh Ward came to Thailand and visited canals in Songkhla, Chiang Mai and Bangkok, where people are working with the city to redevelop their own communities, clean up their klongs, and consolidate their right to stay in the process.

One Thai observer found the practical-minded Tan Dinh women much more enthusiastic about this alternative form of community development than the systems-minded ward officials, who wondered where such community-managed redevelopment would take the city. But in Chiang Mai, the former Chief of Tan Dinh Ward (who is now the Vice President of District 1) couldn't hide his enthusiasm about the spirit of partnership that he saw between the canal people and the city.

INFORMAL TRANSPORT:

Q. Who moves more people and goods around Asia?
A. Informal transport

Who could imagine Asian cities without the astonishing variety of vehicles which fill their streets and keep their goods and populations moving? A lot of those vehicles and a lot of that movement falls under the flat-sounding category of *"informal transport."* But there's nothing flat about this sector, with its popu-lation of camel carts, horse carts, bullock and mule carts; cycle rick-shaws, pedal rickshaws and auto-rickshaws; tuk-tuks, cyclos and tempos; push-carts, barrows and wagons; back-loaders, head-loaders and yoke-loaders; motorcycle taxis, jeeps and jeepneys; not to mention vans, buses, trucks and cars. *Whew!*

But the people who keep this sector going are often poor, often live in under-serviced slums, and often get less then their fair share of urban prosperity. Plus, municipal govern-ments are often reluctant to acknowl-edge their contribution to keeping cities moving and com-merce flowing, and create rules and policies which clash with and even destroy these much-needed transport systems. *Here are a few notes, with some good news and bad, from the Asian Informal Transport file :*

Meet SUSTRAN . . .

The past few decades have seen cities all over Asia being gobbled up by massive, ecologically disastrous transport pro-jects and policies that are displacing millions of people and driving cit-ies deeply into debt - *without* solving the basic transport problems. Since 1995, the *Sustain-able Transport Action Net-work for Asia and the Pacific (SUSTRAN)* has brought together groups looking for alternatives to all this madness, and promoting more people-centred and sustainable transport policies.

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***On Karachi's 750 kilometres of roadways**, you enter into a wild dance with at least 12 million people, a million motorized vehicles, and every imaginable kind of non-motorized conveyance - bicycles, rickshaws, carts drawn by horses, bullocks, mules and men. But moving 12 million people around the city is a complicated task, and the informal transport sector is bearing the lion's share.*

Karachi's Tongas : Down but not out . . .

For the past few years, the URC in Karachi has plunged into virtually every aspect of the city's transport - researching existing transport systems, parking, highways, trains, vehicular pollu-tion, getting out vital information on city transport plans that mean eviction and mayhem, lobbying against ill-conceived transport ideas and proposing their own solutions for improvements in the city's transport (many of which have been adopted!). An astonishing 70% of Karachi's transport needs are met by the informal sector, and URC continues gathering information about these immense informal systems which keep Karachi moving - from private buses, to renegade trucks, right down to push-carts and rickshaws. Here are a few notes on one of Karachi's oldest, but fastest-disappearing forms of informal transport - the tonga - drawn from URC reports.

The *tonga*, or traditional horse-drawn passenger cart, is one of Pakistan's most economi-cal and environmentally friendly means of short-distance commuting, but *tongas* are rapidly disappearing from Pakistan's cities. The bustling Lea Market is one of the last places in Karachi were *tongas* are still plying the roads and bylanes, charging only three rupees to carry a person to various parts of Lyari.

In Karachi's pre-automobile days, as throughout much of South Asia, when *tongas* were the only form of individual, for-hire urban transport, the streets were filled with the cheerful clip-clop of thousands of *tongas*. The carts themselves are still beautifully crafted from wood and iron, gaily painted with flowers and geometric patterns, and fitted overhead with sun bonnets. The small horses which draw them wear smart harnesses, fitted with blinders and ornamental plumes, while the *tongawallahs* sling sacks of green grass underneath for fodder breaks.

But over the years, the Lea Market has become one of the most congested areas in Karachi, as well as its most busy bus terminus. Almost every building around the market contains a *godown* or some kind of storage facilities in its ground floor, and these bring in large numbers of heavy trucks to load and unload goods, day and night. All these large vehicles not only cause traffic congestion, air and noise pollution, but make the streets quite hazardous for *tongas*. Plus, a large area, which for a hundred years was the city's official *tonga* stand, has been given over to buses and commercial development.

"Now it is very dangerous to ply a *tonga* on the city roads," one *tongawallah* named Kuchwan reports. "We are unable to compete with fast moving vehicles. The roads are broken and accidents are common." The number of *tongas* is gradually decreasing. According to Kuchwan, there were over 400 *tongas* in the early 80s, but now they number less than 100 around Lea Market. Despite these facts, a large number of Karachi-wallahs still prefer travel by the gentle *tonga* over the more available buses, putting those few *tongawallahs* still in business in great demand. One never sees a *tonga* waiting for commuters, only commuters waiting for *tongas*!

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Three more for the road . . .

1. Cart pushers in Kathmandu

Thelagada is the Nepali word for push-cart, an ancient means of transport which, along with donkey-carts and back-loaders, still carry a great quantity of goods around the three municipal areas of the Kathmandu valley. In a city of narrow lanes and maze-like alleys, push-carts can carry goods where trucks can't, without polluting or using expensive fuel imports.

Cart-pushing is hard work, but offers ready employment to poor men, especially new migrants from the hills. *Thelawalas* work in teams of two, one steering and one pushing the load, and cluster around the city's wholesale markets, where a team can make 100 to 150 Rupees for carrying a full load of construction materials, foodgrains, furniture or dry-goods one kilometre. For a cart-pusher, better health and stronger legs means more loads and more income. They all rent their carts, on a contract basis, for 500 or 600 Rupees a month, and take home around 2,000 Rupees (US$35) a month, most of which goes to families back in the village, while the thelawalas curl up under a shawl and sleep right on top of their carts at night.

But Kathmandu's remaining 346 thelawalas are finding less space and greater dangers on the streets, increasingly filled with motor vehicles. A 1998 study on push-carts by Nusha Raj Shrestha blames a decline in push-carts on Transport planning and investment in Kathmandu, which has focused on motorized transport, ignoring the needs of older, more sustainable forms of transport, like the thelagadas. *(Contact ACHR for more details about Nusha's cart-pusher study.)*

2. Moto-dub drivers in Phnom Penh

In a city like Phnom Penh, which has no public transport system, crossing the city leaves you few choices. You either walk, bicycle, hire a cyclo or jump on one of the city's thousands of motorcycle taxi, called in Cambodia *"moto-dub"* (a Khmer version of the French *moto-double*" : motorbike for two.) A *moto-dub* can carry 1 - 3 passengers or transport goods lashed on the back or loaded into connected trailers.

Motos are gradually replacing *cyclos* (single-passenger cycle rickshaws, with the passenger sitting in front) as the city's chief people-mover. In 1997, the number of motorbikes in the city had topped 115,000. *Moto* drivers wear the characteristic "p-cap" and sit in front of hotels, schools, temples, markets and at street corners, raising their hands and calling *"Mo-to?"*. A *moto* is a cherished investment and a moto driver never leaves his *moto* unattended, since theft is *moto-dub's* biggest fear. The market is a bit saturated these days, and competition for fares is cut-throat, but a moto-dub can still earn about 7,000 Riels (US$2) a day, which in impoverished Phnom Penh isn't bad for a day's work. *(Contact the URC in Phnom Penh for a copy of their study on Moto-dubs. See page 25 for contact details.)*

3. Tuk-tuk cooperatives in Korat

Taxis in Thailand are no longer regulated, but *Tuk-tuks* (three-wheeled motor taxis) are still subject to corrupt quota systems and registration fees which make it almost impossible for tuk-tuk drivers to obtain registrations or to own their own tuk-tuks. A group of tuk-tuk drivers in Korat, though, has formed a cooperative and negotiated as a group to buy registrations for their members at a reduced cost, and taken UCDO loans to buy their own Tuk-tuks.

● **Jakarta's Pedicabs :** For another informal transport stroy, see page 35.

Dhaka's "artistic" bicycle rickshaws . . .

Nazrul Islam, from the ***Centre for Urban Studies (CUS)*** *in Dhaka, Bangladesh, spent a month in nearby Calcutta recently, and was struck by some differences in the two city's informal transport systems - par-ticularly their colourfulness. These remarks were drawn from an article he wrote for the CUS Bulletin, Number 34 :*

Public transport in Dhaka is dominated by pedal cycle rickshaws, while Calcutta offers a lot more varieties of public mass transport - the subway, more buses, more taxis, more trams, more commuter trains, which run much more frequently in Calcutta, making life easier for the city's workers.

But even though traffic in Dhaka is absolutely chaotic, the look of its vehicles is not only more attractive, but more *artistic.* The majority of the city's 250,000 cycle rickshaws are like a moving art exhibition, beautifully decorated with elaborate ornaments and paintings which have evoked the interest of many art critics and writers at home and abroad. In contrast, the rickshaws of Calcutta (which are no longer so numerous) look very dull and sad.

Most of Dhaka's 50,000 auto-rickshaws (or *baby taxis* as they are locally known) have also adopted the tradition of rickshaw painting. The buses of Calcutta also provide an extremely uninteresting and *inartistic* look. They are hardly even painted! Only the state buses are painted in red, but generally covered in dust. By contrast, even the oldest public buses in Dhaka are painted with multicolored patterns. The new ones, especially the luxury buses, and the inter-city coaches, are lavishly and beautifully painted.

for a copy of the study conducted by the Centre for Urban Studies (CUS) on Dhaka's cycle rickshaws, contact Nazrul Islam at :

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INDIA :

Bombay's Railway slums: Years of saving, planning and preparing pay off in Kanjurmarg . . .

Since 1988, the ***Railway Slum Dwellers Federation*** has been working to negotiate resettlement solutions for the 30,000 families who live in danger and insecurity along Mumbai's rail tracks. When the huge World-Bank funded *Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP)* was launched to expand all the city's transport systems, including railways, it meant moving thousands of families to make room for new tracks. This might have meant massive evictions, but the WB stipulated that everyone displaced by MUTP be rehabilitated.

The rehabilitation strategies which were subsequently made official emerged from many years of work by *National Slum Dwellers Federation* and *Mahila Milan* : communities agree to move 50 feet from the tracks, in exchange for basic services, secure land on long-term lease and permission to construct their own housing.

The MUTP project got bogged down in complications, but the Railways and the Government of Maharashtra decided to go ahead and start work on *the 5th and 6th Corridors*, even without World Bank financing, and to try the NSDF's resettlement strategy with communities along this stretch.

he 5th and *6th Corridors* on Bombay's Central Railway run between Kurla and Bhandup. RSDF helped survey the area's 1,910 households, and found land for resettlement at nearby Kanjurmarg big enough to accommodate the first 913 households. As the rail lines are expanded, families will shift to the new land, in phases. By the time Kanjurmarg is full, new sites will be found for the remaining households. *This enormous project involves unprecedented co-operation :*

- **State Government** provides the land.
- **Railways** level and develop the land.
- **Municipality** provides off-site infrastructure and allots the land to community co-ops.
- **22 Co-ops** design, construct and finance their own houses and on-site services.
- **HUDCO** provides house-building loans through SPARC.
- **RSDF, SPARC, NSDF and Mahila Milan** assist the whole process.

A report called *"One David and Three Goliaths"* describes the NSDF/MM/SPARC alliance's negotiations with the World Bank, Indian Railways and State Government of Maharashtra for the resettlement of households along the railway tracks, and is available from SPARC in Bombay.

Moral of the Story: *The Kanjurmarg project shows that improving the city's infrastructure need not be at a cost of poor people being forcibly removed, but with some investment of creativity and cooperation, it's possible for the city to provide secure, permanent homes for poor communities. So both the city and the communities win.*

Kanjurmarg : When a resettlement process is planned and managed by communities themselves

The resettlement strategy at Kanjurmarg, which has been crafted by communities and adopted and supported by the Indian Railways and the Government of Maharashtra, is not only for Mumbai. Initially, RSDF brought together slums on railway lines only in Mumbai, but is now gradually linking with railway settlements in other cities - Pune, Kanpur. Hyderabad and Pondicherry. Here are some notes about the progress in this extraordinary people-managed resettlement, drawn from CITYWATH: INDIA, and SPARC's ***Taza Khabar*** *["fresh news" in Hindi] :*

1 **Formed Co-ops :** The railway communities organised themselves into 22 cooperative societies, which are the basic units of planning and transferring of land ownership. Each day, huge groups come from the co-ops to Byculla for meetings in which they discuss all aspects of planning their new communities.

2 **Chose Land :** At first, the government was unwilling to provide relocation sites nearby, but the railway communities were firm in their intention to stay in the same area. So they did their own land search, and found the 2-hectare government land at nearby Kanjurmarg, which eventually became the first resettlement site.

3 **Organised ID cards and family lists :** Keeping track of 1,400 families in a complex relocation and community-building process is no easy matter. For land ownership, all members of affected communities had to provide proof of identity, in the form of ration cards or voter registrations. Since not everyone could furnish this proof, SPARC helped prepare special family photo ID cards, and the people's own family lists, from the survey, were accepted as the official roster of participants.

4 **Saved for Housebuilding :** Mahila Milan collectives formed and housing savings began in 1996, and by the time the communities began moving to the new land at Kanjurmarg 2 years later, most had saved Rs. 3,000, some up to Rs. 7,000. This may be used as deposit with HUDCO for house-building loans.

5 **Built Site Office :** The land at Kanjurmarg was marshy low-land and the first step was to fill a small patch and set up a site office. The societies in Ghatkopar have been the first to move, and the rest will move in phases. This is used by the federations and the Railway officials who come to the site.

6 **Planned the Transit Camp :** Nobody wanted to repeat earlier relocation disasters where people were dumped in transit areas without services or housing. As part of the project agreement, the railways agreed to provide 13.8 Million rupees to develop infrastructure and transit houses at Kanjurmarg, where people will live while the buildings are being constructed. At first, contractors carried out the work according to NSDF/MM plans, supervised by the railway communities, but later, the Mahila Milan construction collective took up contracts to build some of the houses.

7 **Planned New Housing :** The railway communities moving to Kanjurmarg will design their own houses, using a 225-sq. ft. version of the Mahila Milan-designed house, stacked up into 3-story buildings with courtyards, community centres, day care spaces and playgrounds with shade trees for the children.

8 **Moved Belongings :** As part of the agreement, the city provided each family with a truck to transport their belongings to the transit houses, which the women had cleaned and made ready. People's committees worked out the plans for scheduleing all this transporting to the new site.

Pune : Suryodaya Cooperative builds . . .

For the past two years, we've followed the Rajendranagar Mahila Milan through their carefully-planned negotiations with the city, which transformed a municipal demolition into a concrete resettlement plan. This unstoppable community has now completed construction of their ***Suryodaya Cooperative Housing Society****, Pune Mahila Milan's first community-managed slum resettlement scheme, and demonstrated to the city a viable resettlement option.*

The resettlement site at Dattawadi was close by and well-serviced, but it's small size and poor soil conditions meant the women had to look at 2-story design options and reinforced concrete frame construction, which is expensive. Keeping their houses within the Rs 35,000 budget meant using every cost-saving trick, and deciding to provide all unskilled labour - *every bit* - including manufacturing their own wall blocks, pre-cast floor beams and funicular shells.

Community labour at Suryodaya makes a good example of the kind of fine-tuned management systems only tightly-knit communities can do. ***Here is how they did it :*** the 50 families divided themselves into three groups - each group would work two days a week. One member from each family in the group would work on site (leaving others to earn), so there would always be at least 16 people working. *"Show up or pay up"* was the blunt labour motto. Anybody who didn't work on his day had to pay 50 Rupees to a *badli* (a substitute community labourer). A few regular *badlis* made a handy living off a few regular shirkers, and things balanced out nicely. In the final accounting, community labour knocked a whopping Rs 5,000 off the cost of *each house*.

The construction process required huge amounts of labour, much of it back-breaking, dirty and repetitive. But in practice, everybody worked over-time, extra family members chipped in, and Mahila Milan members from all over Pune came to help out and learn. The site hummed from sun-up to long after dark. This is what happens when a project *really belongs* to a community.

With women at the helm : *Some of the particulars of how community labour was handled in Suryodaya came from women being in charge :*

- The labour committee was headed by women (and all the other committees, too - finance, society registration, materials).
- Daily pay for female and male *badlis* was the same (compare to standard Indian construction, where female workers are always paid less).
- Women and men were both trained to do *all the work*, so family members can take turns on the site, a practice unheard of in standard construction situations.
- Women and men share all labour tasks equally, the drudgery and the more interesting stuff - making *laadis*, mixing concrete, carrying water and blocks.

Rooms at Suryodaya get ample daylight and cross-ventilation through tall, open corridors and a central courtyard. They are a stacked-up version of the Mahila Milan house model, first developed in Byculla 15 years ago, with 14-foot ceilings, internal lofts, small kitchen and bathing spaces. Toilets on each floor are shared, one toilet for every 4 families.

"Moving Mountains"

Busy NGOs are always looking for quick and easy ways of documenting the complicated community processes which they assist. Many simply can't find the time and give up on documention altogether. This is a shame, because nobody else gets a chance to capitalize on your experience. Shelter Associates, a small NGO in Pune, has been experimenting with simple, lively ways of documenting the work of the Pune Mahila Milan's work. Their publication *Moving Mountains* is a kind of detailed, annotated photo album of the resettlement process at Suryodaya. Copies are available from Shelter Associates in Pune.

Pune's riverside slums : old problems and new possibilities . . .

Here's another story about the power of creating a federation around a common problem. This one comes from Pune, where poor communities along the river have used a bad flood to organise themselves and negotiate resettlement opportunities which work for them.

To the hundreds of poor families who have lived for decades on the banks of Pune's Mutha River, floods are nothing new. But nothing could have prepared them for the fury of last year's floods. On August 23, after a night of heavy rain, they woke to find brown water swirling around their beds, and only had time to grab their families and run, before their houses were submerged.

When people returned two weeks later, 847 houses had been flooded, many swept away entirely. Those left were filled with a muck of silt, sewage and garbage. People faced the expense of rebuilding and the disheart-ening question *what about next year?* Afterwards, the Chief Minister announced plans to look into the problem of river-side settlements, and Pune's Municipal Commissioner asked the NSDF/MM to survey flooded settlements.

This was the first time a federation of poor people in Pune were being invited to collect base-line data and explore long-term resettlement options for river-side communities, in collaboration with the city.

The carefully-organized survey involved numbering and surveying each house, drawing up house registers for each settlement, and holding meetings. The whole thing took a week. Women from Pune Mahila Milan helped teams of veteran surveyors from Bombay and got their first exposure to a large survey process, organized by slum-dwellers like themselves.

The survey generated enormous energy in the communities and now the federations are working with the river-side settlements to prepare full plans for resettling the 847 flooded households. Work includes :

- starting Mahila Milan savings collectives and opening housing savings accounts.
- searching for alternative land nearby.
- exploring housing finance possibilities.
- extending the survey to other river and canal-side communities.
- using the process to build a federation of river-side settlements.

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INDIA :

The latest model house exhibition in Kanpur : Using people's ideas as a basis for negotiation . . .

Over the past eight years, the ***Kanpur Slum Dwellers Federation (KSDF)*** has saved, surveyed, negotiated with the city for water supply and constructed community-managed toilets. The toilets gave a big boost to the federation and showed officials that communities can help solve many problems the city can't. But then last year, a spate of demolitions came like a jolt out of the blue, and forced the Kanpur federation to steer its focus to the issue of land tenure.

Instead of pleading for security, they decided it was time to show the state what they were capable of doing, and organised a model house exhibition to propose this simple partnership - in which the state gives secure land tenure, the city provides infrastructure and the people build their own houses.

Since the first one in Bombay, back in 1986, model house exhibitions have become one of the NSDF/MM alliance's standard tools for negotiating with the state, and have been held in cities all over India, as well as in Cambodia and South Africa. Big, clamorous, public events like this are a live demonstration of poor people's capacity to develop viable solutions and to prepare by organising them-selves, saving money, planning houses and refining management and construction skills.

Plus, model house exhibitions give poor communities a chance to talk with the government - out in the open, not in an air-conditioned office. "This is the difference between the NGO and the people's concept of negotiation."

In this case, the strategy worked: at the end of the exhibition, the Kanpur Development Authority asked the NSDF/MM to build 51 houses, with KDA funding!

Besides municipal and state officials, over 2,000 people turned out for this enormous event, along with community people from 21 Indian cities and eight countries. It was a milestone for the Kanpur federation, and for the ***Slum Dwellers International (SDI)*** network, which teamed up with *ACHR-TAP* to bring community leaders from Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia, Philippines, Indonesia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia. Inspired by the exhibition, the youngish *Homeless People's Federation* in Zimbabwe and the *Underbridge Community Network* in Bangkok will both be holding their first model house exhibitions this year, too.

They come to learn by doing. *Even groups that had never been exposed to housing model exhibitions before all left there - maybe they didn't understand all the dynamics, all the behind-the-scenes activity that such exhibitions involve, or the goal of the communities linking with government. But they walked away saying, "This works, we should do it out ourselves."*

Kanpur : Hammering out "people's standards"

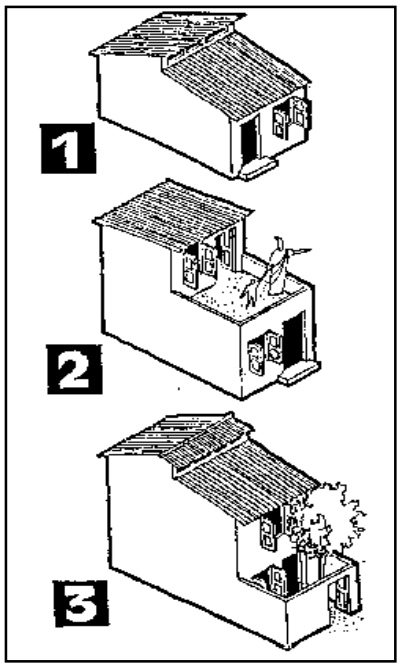
The Kanpur women designed three different houses, carefully planned for low budgets, small plots and self-building technology, and built full-size cloth and timber models of these houses. During a break after the exhibition was over, NSDF's president, Jockin, had these things to say about the Kanpur house models :

The idea with the exhibition was how people could develop solutions based on their capacities - using *conventional* materials, but with *non-conventional* management and *non-conventional* building specifications. This is import-ant, because the way "conventional building standards" work is this: they say you have to do it like this and do it like that - all kinds of restrictions are there, which make people think housing is something which they cannot do themselves or afford.

MUD : And as a result, in cities all over northern India, you still have people going for traditional mud houses - not only mud walls, but also mud roofs! They just lay wooden pieces across, put leaves on that, and then keep covering it with the mud - two, three, four times. Every second monsoon, these roofs collapse, and after a few years, the walls collapse, too. But after collapsing, they re-use the same material in the same way! ***People knowingly creating a calamity!***

This is because people don't have any other options. In Uttar Pradesh, bricks are cheap and good, but aggregates are expensive so reinforced concrete construction is very expensive. So we're looking at different kinds of simple load-bearing masonry, and these pre-cast beams and funicular shells ("laadis") which use very little steel and cement, but the women can make themselves.

All three models evolved out of the kind of houses people already build, using tin sheets, planks and plastic, and had the highest involvement of women - this is important because they are the ones who chose where to put the drain, the platform, the windows, the ventilating grilles, the loft.



With such extremes of heat and cold, Kanpur can't build the same houses as in other cities. In Bombay, the climate varies little - except for the monsoon. But in Uttar Pradesh, you need a house that keeps you warm for five months, and cool for seven. So, we had three houses - all with proper ventilation, some with roof terraces for sleeping in summer, one with an *aangen* (a small, walled enclosure in front of the house, a traditional element in most UP houses). When you design for this, it pushes up the cost of a house, so we have to take time to get a *balance* between good design and cost effectiveness.

The Kanpur people were able to see that this is within their means, that they can build these houses and manage the construction themselves. And the recognition these designs got from KDA and from the authorities is increasing their flexibility.

For more information about Kanpur, and housing exhibitions in general, contact SPARC for a copy of "Land Tenure : The House Model Exhibition Strategy."

Bangalore : Taking children's toilet needs seriously at Viyamshala Gymkhana . . .

*The **Karnataka Slum Dwellers Federation** and **Bangalore District Mahila Milan** alliance in Bangalore is now active in 53 slums. Ten settlements are preparing to build new houses, six have built common toilet blocks and 30 water taps have been installed. A working dialogue is on with the Karnataka Slum Board and the Women and Child Department. Here's an interesting story from Bangalore, taken from the NSDF/MM/SPARC alliance's publication, **Citywatch: India**.*

Viyamshala Gymkhana is one of the oldest, most crowded slums in the heart of Bangalore, five minutes from the imposing granite Municipal Corporation. Until this past year, the community's 300 families had no functioning toilets. This children's latrine and 6-seater community toilet were designed and built by members of the 200-strong Viyamshala Mahila Milan. Some of them visited Bombay, where they met poor women who are the veterans of dozens of toilet-building projects around India, and saw the toilet block at Dharavi where the federation first tried incorporating a children's latrine into a community toilet.

In crowded slums like Viyamshala, kids get elbowed out of long toilet queues and end up soiling the ground outside the toilets. This is a big contributing factor to deteriorating common toilets. The Bangalore Mahila Milan understood this and took the needs of small children seriously when they planned this special children's latrine, on the site of a former garbage dump.

Soo-soo from a child's point of view :

In the children's latrine at Viyamshala, there are no cobwebs, no lizards, no unlit stalls and no deep latrines to be afraid of falling into. Mothers can keep a look-out nearby, while they wash clothes at the tap or chat with friends in the queue. Plus, the latrine's boundary walls have been jazzed-up with Mickey Mouse tiles and inset with patterns of pebbles, so kids can practice counting during the performance of their daily duty.

The latrine cost just 7,200 Rupees and is technically very simple: its ten positions have sturdy handle-bars, and drain into a central channel and into a single gully trap down at the end. Both the kid's latrine and the adjacent toilet block drain directly into city sewers. A few bucketfulls of wash-water is enough to flush the whole thing, and everybody shares in the task of keeping the latrine clean. All 300 families chipped in 25 Rupees towards the cost of building the new toilet and children's latrine.

When ideas actually get built : *The latrine inauguration last February was the occasion of much curiosity, from community people and from city and state officials, who had never seen anything like this. The latrine at Viyamshala has since inspired the construction of similar kids latrines by other MM collectives around India.*

Sadak Chaap night shelters for street kids :

*The **Sadak Chaap Federation** now manages several shelters around Bombay. Here is how Celine D'Cruz, from SPARC, describes these unusual places:*

The shelters are places which belong to the children. The ethos and energy in each shelter is determined by the boys themselves. These are spaces where they can be themselves, and they give them a security they don't find in the streets. Since they define the function of the place, every shelter has its own character.

- **The Byculla Centre** is used during the day by the Slum Dwellers Federation and the local pavement dwellers federation. At night, the boys use the same space to cook their meals, watch television, play and sleep.

- **The Churchgate Shelter** is used only by the boys, both during the day and night, sometimes as many as 200 boys stay here. The older boys go to work during the day, while the younger ones and those who don't have work hang around the shelter. The older boys who stay back help cook the meals and look after the shelter.

- **The Mulund Shelter** is used as a con-valescence space for children who are sick, especially the younger ones. Kids who rag-pick get lots of skin infections, and there are always colds, fevers, hepatitis, gastro and respiratory infections.

- **The Dadar Shelter** is in a main railway terminus and caters to a transit population. Most kids who are new to the city find their way through this station, but move on to other shelters or find their own way of life. Kids who do petty vending also use this space during business hours, and kids who sell goods on the local trains also use the shelter when it suits them.

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TIBET :

Bringing Lhasa's poor tenents into the process of rehabilitating the city's historic Tibetan core :

For years, a small group of Europeans and Tibetans had watched the continuing demolition of traditional buildings in the old city of Lhasa - almost 40 buildings a year since 1993. Together with a network of like-minded people, they surveyed every aspect of conditions in the old city, identifying problems and trying to devise solu-tions, first through the ***Lhasa Archive Project***, then through the ***Tibet Heritage Fund***.

First priority was stopping the demolitions, then repairing and renovating a few houses, to generate interest and demonstrate to the municipality that renovating old build-ings was politically *"harmless."* They started with toilets and water supply, since deteriorating infrastructure was one of the area's main problems, gradually began making emergency house repairs, and moved on to pilot projects in house and neighborhood renovation.

In 1998, years of energetic fund-raising, quiet diplomacy and hard work paid off when THF won state approval for a project to preserve and renovate nearly all the surviving historic buildings in old Lhasa, in such a way as allows their mostly poor Tibetan tenants to remain and to help manage the renovation process. The project covers 76 houses and several hundred families, and combines urban poor housing improvement with tenure security, historic pres-ervation and cultural regeneration. The project is now exploring the possibility of tenants forming housing sav-ings groups and tapping new government schemes which allow tenants of state housing to buy their houses.

A book by Andre Alexander and Pimpim de Azevedo, *"The Old City of Lhasa - Report from a Conservation Project"* is a fascinating chronicle of this process, filled with beautiful photos, maps, drawings and details about the traditional building culture of Tibet.

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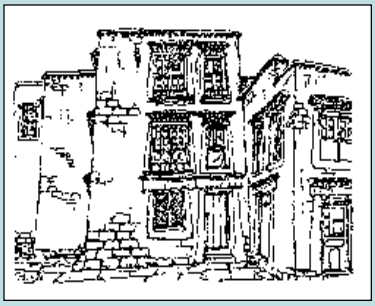
The "Arga women" use clay, mud and stones to fashion the traditional flat Tibetan roofs. *Part of this ancient and highly-skilled process involves dancing and chanting in unison, as they make their way across the new roof, compacting the stones with long mallets. Dozens of such specialized crafts go into making or repairing traditional Tibetan houses.*

TIBETAN HOUSES : "A whole culture con-tained in the craft of building . . ."

The old city of Lhasa is now a kind of low-rent Tibetan neighborhood. When the People's Republic of China came in the 1950s, Lhasa was like a village, with only about 500 houses clustered around the base of the great Potala palace. After forty years of expansion under the PRC, the old city now accounts for only 3% of Lhasa's urban area. Oddly, much of the new state housing, built by Chinese contractors, has been made to resemble traditional Tibetan houses. But making or even repairing the *real thing* is not so easy.



At present, the *Tibet Heritage Fund* is working on several houses in one "model conservation area." With the help of MISEREOR, a 250-year old building with 8 tenant families has been fully rehabilitated, water supply and sanitation have been upgraded and a communal solar-heated shower has been installed.

Revival of craft : One of the project's most difficult tasks has been finding artisans to carry out the restoration work and train younger craftspeople. For this, they have had to range all over Tibet, searching for master carpenters, stone masons, wood carvers, painters and roof-makers. The project's large crew now employs over one hundred Tibetan artisans, in five different teams, and for almost everyone involved in the work - both foreigners and Tibetans - *it's a labour of love.*

Many crafts go into the rebuilding of these houses: intricate stone masonry, timber joinery of windows and superstructures, carving of wooden columns and balus-trades, roof-making, painting of colorful ornamental friezes and window trim. When the enthusiastic Gregor Meerpohl, from MISEREOR, returned after a visit with the renova-tion crews last July, he had this to say : "In one building, the master carpenter is 77 years old, and his apprentices are 40 and 50! These tra-ditional carpenters are still there in the rural areas, these ways of building are still alive - dif-ferent crafts and differ-ent styles in different ar-eas."

"And how they love what they are doing! Such an atmosphere you find on at the building sites. Here is a fascinating as-pect of *real development work* - the reactivating of tra-dition and artisanship to repair buildings, keep-ing all this knowledge alive and creating struc-tures to transfer this knowledge."

Grameen's answer to natural calamities and non-repayment? *MORE LOANS!*

Bangladesh is one of the most disaster-prone parts of the world. All those cyclones, famines and floods have not prevented it from becoming one of the most densely populated, but have helped it remain one of the poorest. Last year's devastating floods were the worst in recent memory and tens of thousands of Bangladeshis lost everything - houses, cattle, crops, livelihoods. Many of those affected by the floods were Grameen Bank borrowers, and when rumours began circulating that many were having a hard time repaying their loans, and widespread defaults were putting "the bank for the poor" in jeopardy, micro-credit skeptics around the world smelled blood. Here is how the Grameen Bank's founder, Mu-hammad Yunus, responded to one "I told you so" editorial which appeared in London's Financial Times on October 1, 1998 :

I am distressed to see that the *Financial Times* has got the story wrong about the impact of the recent floods on Grameen Bank and other micro-credit programmes. In the aftermath of the floods, we estimate that we'll need $100 million immediately, not for Grameen's survival, but for assisting in the survival of Grameen borrowers who have been badly hit by the floods. For us, a natural disaster is a challenge and an opportunity to demonstrate how effective a micro-credit system can be in helping affected people get back on their feet.

Grameen Bank's survival has never been an issue. It is a robust and well-managed financial institution. Grameen has lent more than $2 billion in Bangladesh to more than 2.2 million borrowers, with an average monthly lending of $35 million and a repayment rate of 98%, making the credit quality of it's portfolio considerably stronger than that of US credit cards.

"This is not the first disaster we have ever faced. Even when Grameen was much smaller and less experienced in disaster management, we successfully coped with disasters which badly mauled Grameen's less-prepared borrowers. Floods in 1987 and 1988 and cyclone in 1991 were great national disasters we had to face in our 22-year history. Grameen Bank is institutionally built to cope with disasters and has developed lending and recovery procedures which can accommodate these kinds of crises."

It is true that many Grameen borrowers did not pay their weekly installments during the flood period. But what the report didn't mention is that they were not required to pay those installments during the flooding, under our special *"disaster rules."*

To find the required $100 million, we have already approached the Central Bank of Bangladesh for a short-term loan while we are looking for a long-term loan internationally, at commercial rate. We are not looking for a $100 million bail-out from grant funds or low-interest loans. Our business is borrowing and lending. We view commercial viability as an essential feature of Grameen style micro-credit programmes.

(exerpted from "A Response to Financial Times Editorial", by Muhammad Yunus, in Grameen Dialogue Newsletter, Number 37, January 1999.)

In order to meet it's goal of ensuring that two-thirds of its borrowers are "poverty free" by the year 2005, *Grameen Bank has introduced several new kinds of credit. Besides general and housing loans, people can now get seasonal loans, equipment leasing loans, and loans to finance the entire cost of higher education for children of borowers.*

BANGLADESH :

Housing loans to 450,000 rural families :

Building strong, cyclone-proof houses for the same amount poor women spend repairing their houses each year . . .

Poor families in Bangladesh mostly build shelters of jute stick, straw, thatch, bamboo and dried mud. Every year, after the monsoons, they have spend at least $30 repairing these houses. For the same amount, they can repay a housing loan and build a strong, cyclone-proof house of 20 square metres. *Grameen Bank's* housing programme was established in 1984 and since then has made loans to a whopping 450,000 poor rural families to build houses.

The loans are repaid over a ten year term, in weekly installments, at a simple interest rate of 8%. The rule is that the title must be vested with the woman, as a means of helping improve her financial security and status within the family and society. Recovery on these loans is 98%.

Grameen has two standard house models - a smaller one costing $300 and larger one costing $625. Both have high plinths and structural components designed to withstand cyclones, heavy rains and normal flooding, with four reinforced concrete pillars at the corners, six intermediary bamboo or concrete posts, bamboo tie beams, wooden rafters and purlins supporting corrugated iron roofing sheets. Every house must have a latrine and many also have electricity connections.

To get housing loans, families must follow the main design elements and build with the basic structural components of these models. But since families build themselves, with help from neighbors and sometimes hiring skilled carpenters to

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WORDS FOR SLUM :

We were thinking about the SDI acronym, and how it's good that the name is convertible, so it can read "Slum" or "Shack Dwellers International, depending on where you are. That got us thinking about other words for slum, not all of which begin with an "s". And that got us thinking about how all these different words describe a lot of different, sometimes culturally sticky atti-tudes towards poor settlements, and towards poor people's right to be there. Words can pack a real propaganda wallop, and even the most harmless-sounding term can subtly influence our attitudes towards the cities we live in and the problems they face. Let's take an etymological tour around Asia and see what's behind some the words for slum in common use.

CAMBODIA

1

The older Khmer word for a poor settlement is **sahakhum**, and the people who live in them, **Nea Kreikror Tikrung** *(poor urban people).* But after forty years of war, upheaval, genocide and poverty in Cambodia, there's a newer, creepier term : **Samnong Anatepatai** *(an illegal, lawless or anarchic building or settlement)*, used to describe squatters and squatter settlements. It isn't always easy to distinguish between *squatters* and *owners* in Phnom Penh, a city which was emptied out by the Khmer Rouge, and reclaimed five years later by whoever was brave enough to crawl out of the jungle and claim a room or a house or a piece of land as their own. In a context where *everyone* was very recently a squatter, and anarchy was the rule, no wonder nobody wants to be identified by **Samnong Anatepatai** or **squatter**. When Phnom Penh's municipal cabinet chief, Man Choeurn, returned from a trip to Thailand and India last year, he called a meeting of the city's district chiefs, and described how the exposure visits had given all of them a greater understanding of potential solutions to the city's poor settlements and announced that "squatters" would henceforth be officially "urban poor who are a legitimate part of the city and need to be integrated into the city's development." SUPF followed up with their own name change from *"Squatter"* to *Solidarity for the Urban Poor Federation*.

KOREA

2

Muhoga Chongchakji *(settlement without permission)* is the legal, technical term city planners use, who find it more convenient to look upon poor districts of Seoul as illegal rather than as traditional or alternative housing. **Taldongne** and **Sandongne** *(moon village)* and *(mountain village)* are more recent and more poetic terms for the informal settlements which came into the city with the flood of rural migrants in the 1960s. These terms probably refer to the location of Seoul's poor settlements, many of which were built on the steep hill-slopes and undevelopable hilltops throughout the city, where the moon was indeed a bit closer.

MALAYSIA & INDONESIA

3

Bahasa Indonesia and *Bahasa Malaysia* are similar languages, and have most slum words in common. In both languages, **kampong** is the word for village, community or settlement, and **rumah** is the word for house. **Kampong kumuh** is a **kampong** with legal tenure but bad living conditions, and **kampong liar** is an illegal settlement. In Malaysia, **setinggan** is a specific word for squatter, or one who illegally occupies a place, and although used officially, it's a bad word and carries connotations of criminality. A new term for informal settlements, though, is making inroads in Malaysia: **Hak milik** *(rights owned by the people).* Here is a case where a people's movement has coined and extended it's own term for their situation, as a means of moving away from the old equations.

JAPAN

4

The official term for an illegal or informal settlement in Japan is **huho sengkyo** *(illegal occupation).* Another not-so-nice term for illegal settlement suggests crime and lawlessness, and carries a stigma of shame : **hin min kutsu** *(gang of poor people).* **Dambo muro** *(cardboard village)* is a specific term for the cardboard settlements which line the underground walkways in Tokyo's Shinjuku Station, and **tento muro** (tent village) the term for the temporary vinyl houses built by homeless construction labourers along the Sumida River. The men who actually live in those vinyl houses or in those subways, though, might prefer to refer to themselves as **nojuku rodosha** *(sleeping outside labourers)*, a more neutral description of their situation, or **rojo seikatsu** *(on-the-road livelihood),* which describes with some pride the kind of homeless workers who are mostly male, single and unattached, and emphasises their *work* rather than their *homelessness*.

THAILAND

5

Fifty years ago, Bangkok was a city of wooden houses, squelchy bogs, rickety boardwalks and muddy klongs, just like the rest of this very watery country. A little embarrassed of its humble, pre-urban past, the glitzy modern urban Thailand tends to stigmatize what is old, small and wooden, and glorify what is new, huge and concrete. The word **chumchon** *(community)* is a little vague - it doesn't necessarily mean poor or run-down, doesn't necessarily mean illegal. **Chumchon bukruk** *(illegal community)* is the old term used by government officials for illegal squatter settlement, but people never used it. **Chumchon bukberk** *(pioneering community)* is a term people preferred, since it puts a more upbeat light on the process of informal settling. These two terms, or simply **chumchon**, were the terms in commun use until 1982, when the National Housing Authority adopted the more descriptive and less political **Chumchon Aai-aat** (*crowded community*) as the official government term.

PAKISTAN

6

The Urdu word **katchi** is a widely-useable word - it can mean variously *unfinished, rough, simple, unofficial, temporary, uncooked*, even *unripe*! But **katchi** carries along few negative connotations - it's a straightforward, workaday descriptive term. **Abadi** means quarter or neighborhood or settlement. Perhaps that's why **katchi abadi** has become the official and common term for the informal settlements that are home to nearly half of Karachi's population, with an entire government department devoted to **Katchi Abadi** Regularisation. The opposite of **katchi** is **pucca**, which can mean proper, official. They also use the Urdu word **basti** for small settlements, and the English word **colony** for big ones.

SOUTH AFRICA

7

The English word **shack** *(where black people lived)* has colonial overtones which naturally call to mind the **villas** and **bungalows** set in their a big gardens *(where white people lived).* But English is the first language of only nine percent of South Africa's 38 million people. Besides the other colonial language Afrikaans, there are at least ten main black South African languages. One is Zulu. **UmKhuku** is the Zulu word for chicken coop, and this vividly descriptive term is commonly used to describe both shacks and shack settlements. **uMjondolo** is the more proper Zulu word for shack, and the name for *South African Homeless Peoples Federation* in Zulu is **uMfelandaWonye WaBantu Base Mjondolo** *(togetherness of the people who live in shacks).*

INDIA

8

There are dozens of languages spoken in India, and in a country so filled with slums, you can bet there are hundreds of terms for poor and informal settlements. In Marathi, for example, a language in Western India, the term city officials use for a slum is **gallicha wasti** *(dirty settlement)*, but slum-dwellers drop the **gallicha** and just say **amchi wasti** *(our settlement),* and call a **hutment** (*which is itself a word peculiar to Indian English*) in a wasti a **zopadi**. Alkabai Kamble is a *Mahila Milan* leader in Pune. She lives in a slum which has successfully negotiated for alternative land, and has now finished constructing it's own two-story housing block. Alkabai has been trying to get her daughter Chaya married, but is waiting to start inviting marriage proposals until *after* she moves into the building. She knows that Chaya's status and position in the marriage market will rise sharply the minute she becomes a girl from a **building**, instead of from a **wasti** and, as a result, will land a much better groom. A **wasti** *(according to Alkabai)* is a place where people live who are *"bad, dirty and poor!"*

SRI LANKA

9

The official term for shanty settlement in Singhalese is **palpath**. The first **palpaths** appeared along the canals in Colombo in the early 1960s. It's an ugly term which emphasises illegality and temporariness, and *nobody* living in informal settlements uses it. **Muddukku** is the term for legal, privately-built, rental housing, which for over a century was the main source of affordable housing for Colombo's poor labourers and port workers. Most **muddukkus** were built in the form of lines of single-room row-houses, with shared water taps and toilets, and most are in bad shape now, congested and deteriorated, their open spaces filled with extra squatters (*palpaths*). **Watta** *(garden)* is the euphemism Sri Lanka's **muddukku** and **palpath**-dwellers prefer to call their settlements. So you have slums with names like **Polwatta** *(coconut garden)* and **Kurundwatta** *(cinnamon garden).* But you can be sure there are no **wattas** in these **wattas**! This bit of wishful thinking suggests pride-of-place and hints at aspirations to the more *garden-like* housing colonies of wealthier Sri Lankans.

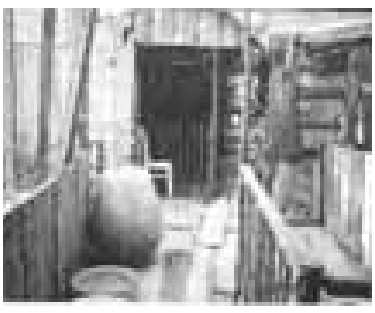
VIETNAM

10

During the Vietnam War, a new term for the house of a poor person became widely used : **Nhaa o chuot** *(house for rats) and* **Khu nha o chuot** *(a settlement of rat's houses).* The more formal, legal terms for slum houses and slum communities are **Nhaa tam bo** *(temporary house)* and **Nhaa lup xup** *(precarious house)*. More specific terms for houses found in Vietnam's many canal side slums include **Nhaa ven song** *(house along the river)* and **Nhaa ven kinh rach** *(house along the canal).*

A FEW OTHERS

11



In Bangladesh, **sukumbashi** is the word for squatters, or people without shelter, and **sukumbashi basti** is the term for a homeless people's settlement. And a little North of Bangladesh, in Nepal, the word for shack or poor-quality house is **chapro**. Lots of the poor settlements in Kathmandu are occupied by members of the same caste and bear the names of their caste-inhabitants or that caste's traditional task, so there are *sweepers colonies*, *butchers colonies*, etc. In Nepal, official bodies have borrowed the English words **squatter settlement** and **slum**, and use them generally to distinguish between settlements which are illegal and settlements which are dilapidated but have legal tenure. The Philippines is a bit of an etymological disappointment, perhaps owing to "*300 years of colonial Spanish rule and 50 years of Hollywood*." All efforts to unearth words in Tagalog or other Philippine languages proved fruitless. Everyone we know seems to have taken to the standard terms from "NGO-Speak" - *slum, squatter, squatter settlement, informal community, etc*.

CAMBODIA :

A lesson in team work :

Phnom Penh's first people-managed and municipal-supported community resettlement project is getting close to being finished . . .

For the past two years, we've all been watching the progress of a resettlement project in Phnom Penh, in which 129 poor families from the roadside settlement at Toul Svay Prey have put years of insecurity, evictions and squalid living conditions behind them and moved to new land at Boeung Krappeur (Khmer for *Crocodile Lake*).

Here's how it worked: the Phnom Penh Municipality bought the land at Boeung Krappeur, which community members had chosen themselves, the UNCHS project supported the development of the site and infrastructure through a series of "community contracts" and the people built their own houses, with loans from the brand-new *Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF),* which was itself a joint venture of the federation, the municipality and ACHR. Eventually, individual land title will be handed over to each family.

This very complex resettlement process has brought together a wide range of stake-holders. For the ***Solidarity and Urban Poor Federation (SUPF),*** the Boeung Krappeur resettlement project is the fruit of years of saving, organising, planning, federation-building and partnership-building. For the municipal government and for the city's 45,000 poor families, the project has made community-managed, government-supported resettlement a known, viable option and a more lasting alternative to eviction.

The project at Boeung Krappeur has shown that relocation to undeveloped land in the city's periphery is a costly solution, for both the poor and the city, and that in the long term, there is an urgent need to explore more on-site community redevelopment strategies in Phnom Penh.

But the process has also provided a much-needed *live laboratory* for poor communities to experiment with ways of working together, managing money, con-structing affordable houses and basic services, and testing innovations in a city where there are still very few known solutions to the problems of poverty and housing.

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Boeung Krappeur : Diary of progress

Since the Toul Svay Prey community's resettlement process began, we've kept abreast of this remarkable project through a constant stream of reports, coming in from Phnom Penh by fax, phone, E-mail and word-of-mouth from several quarters - from the community's leader Men Chamnan, Somaly at UPDF, Heng, Kosal, Visal at URC, May and Mike at UNCHS, young foreign professionals Hallam and Keke. Here are a few milestones from the bulging Boeung Krappeur file :

November 1997 : Chea Sophara, the Governor of Phnom Penh Municipality announces the municipality will purchase land at Boeung Krappeur for resettling the 129 families in Toul Svay Prey roadside settlement. Families will get 54 sq. mtr. plots with land title.

March 1998 : SUPF organises 2-day workshop with Toul Svay Prey community to talk about how to lay out the new community, what common amenities to make room for, how to build good, inexpensive houses. The *Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF)* is officially born, with a capital of $75,000, of which the first $5,000 came from the communities.

July 1998 : Ground level at the new land is raised by nearly 1.7 metres to bring it above flood levels, with support from the UNCHS project, and 129 pit latrines are constructed, with help from SAWA, according to the community's layout plan.

September 1998 : Young architects help community design and build two model houses on the site to generate ideas. Community people from all over the city, government officials and NGOs come to see. The CATDG group builds a 2-story, semi-detached house with soil-cement blocks costing $650. The URC builds a 2-story, semi-detached *"core house"* consisting of a foundation, six brick columns, one common wall and a roof for $350 - people add walls, floors and openings later.

December 1998 : Loans from UPDF go to the first 55 families, who have now moved to the site. Nine houses are finished, 26 under construction and 20 about to start. Money goes first to the treasurer committee, then to materials purchasing committee. Loans of $400 come in materials (gravel, sand, bricks, wood, tin sheets, concrete, steel bars) which are purchased in bulk. Each family gets enough to build the basic "core house" and then makes adjustments and fills in the rest according to its own capacities and ideas. Families build in groups of four or five at a time, all helping each other.

February 1999 : Community leader Men Chamnan presents community contract proposal for developing roads, grass and tree-planting, electricity, water supply, community centre to the UNCHS, through the SUPF Khan committee.

March 1999 : The people finish planting trees and special grass to help stabilise the earth and reduce erosion on the steep banks at the sides.

April 1999 : 120 families are now living on the site, the place is like a beehive. 70 houses are finished, and the rest are under various stages of construction. Streets are starting to look like streets, and everywhere are piles of bricks, sand, gravel and steel. Special house-blessing ceremony (*Sangkateein*) is held on Khmer New Years day, and the community invites nine monks to have lunch and bless the new community.

What is a community contract?

Last September, when the first batch of houses were being built at Boeung Krappeur, there was much discussion about the series of community contracts with the UNCHS project, through which the resettlement site would be developed. Other communities around the city were also designing, costing and carrying out their own settlement-improvement projects - bridges, walkways, drainage, community centres, garbage cleaning, canal dredging - under similar community contracts. The concept of community contracts, as a more efficient, appropriate alternative to expensive, top-down, contractor-driven community improvments, is new to Phnom Penh. Here are some exerpts from an E-Mail to SUPF from Jockin in India, about how he sees community contracts working in Boeung Krappeur :

The idea of a community contract is that the benefits of the contract go to the community, and not to a contractor, middle man or development agency. And quality control should be by the community. By giving financial incentive to the community, a community contract should assure people's participation in the work. In these community contracts at Boeung Krappeur, three main actors have to be part of the contract - the community itself, the city-wide federation (SUPF) and the skilled and unskilled labour in those communities.

If the communities do not benefit by way of employment, and if the benefits are not going towards these three actors, then there is no meaning in the community contract.

A community's labour force is its main qualification to take on work under a community contract. If only a few community leaders are hired to act as "supervisors" on the project, that is just paying lip service to the idea of community involvement and community benefit. By community involvement, I mean that people will *physically work* on this contract - *together*. This approach will bring about a transformation of skills and build a stronger community. Toul Svay Prey should start identifying their own community members who are jobless or earning very little to work on these contracts - this has to be sincerely explored.

Then, the district (*khan*) level federation should find skilled and unskilled labourers within the larger *khan* who can obtain work and earn a minimum wage on these projects, which will be managed and supervised by the Toul Svay Prey community. In every aspect of the contracts, we have to ask how many communities will participate in Boeung Krappeur's physical development.

Another approach would be to give the work on a piece-work basis (like tree and grass planting, road-laying or well-digging). This work could be contracted to three or four other settlements, the labour costs decided by those communities and used to help support their own programmes. Other SUPF communities should also be encouraged to come, in good numbers, to chip in some free labour on the site, not only as wage-earners, but also in solidarity, without expecting wages. Then at least their transport and food costs should be covered, in lieu of wages. One of the main benefits of this approach will be that several other communities will be motivated to propose their own community improvement contracts.

"If the communities do not benefit by way of employment, and if the benefits are not going towards these three actors, then there is no meaning in the community contract."

The dance of life - *A friend in Phnom Penh found this little motif, woven into the border of a very old Khmer silk sarong. She thought it symbolised the enormous adversities Cambodian people have faced, during decades of war, genocide and upheaval, as well as the persistence of what is human, nourishing and good during all the trouble. On the top, a soldier on a horse goes galloping by in one direction, on the bottom a war-elephant goes rumbling by in the other direction. And in the middle of this thundrous, clamorous battleground, the beautiful Apsara continues to perform her delicate, cosmic dance - which is the dance of life . . . .*

SUPF conducts its fifth enumeration of Phnom Penh's poor communities :

Over the past six years, the *Solidarity for the Urban Poor Federation* has conducted four enumerations of poor settlements in Phnom Penh - each more accu-rate, more comprehensive than the last, each representing a milestone in the federation's ownership of information about the city's poor. SUPF's 1996 survey yielded the most de-tailed, comprehensive picture yet of the city's poor settlements. A lot has happenend since then - SUPF is growing, new savings groups, lots of activities, new faces, new projects on the bubble, joint-ventures with municipal and district officials. Now the federation is using resources from a UNCHS-ACHR training contract to help support a new survey, which will refine the community information base and will provide another tool to strengthen the growing federation and help prepare for redevelopment projects to come. This time around, the survey process is being broadened considerably to include:

- **Settlement profile** for each community
- **Household enumeration** in which family information about all of Phnom Penh's poor families will be gathered by the federation *(That's around 40,000 families!)*
- **Survey of vacant land** in each district including area and ownership
- **Mapping of each settlement**, showing each house, land area, basic services
- **Computerising survey data :** Volunteers at the URC are helping enter the survey data into special software programmes developed by the federations in India.

The "Lotus Flower"

A new quarterly bilingual Khmer-English news-letter is being put together by Phnom Penh's Urban Resource Centre, and brings together community development stories from many sources in NGOs, community groups and aid organisations.

Lotus Flower's format is friendly and readable, filled with photos and drawings, and is reproduced by simple photocopying. The March 1999 issue has stories about waste pickers, recycling, community mapping, board-walk and road-building, and Khan development councils.

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PAKISTAN :

Karachi Urban Resource Centre at work : Helping democratize the way the city plans and grows . . .

People are often startled to learn that Karachi's ***Urban Resource Centre (URC),*** which plays an increasingly important role in the way Karachi develops, is managed by a staff of only four - an architect, a social organizer and two administrators. But keeping administratively light-footed is part of the plan, for the URC's object is not to build another institution but to create a space where all the players can come together for a dialogue about planning decisions which affect everybody. This is a way of *democratising the city's development* and breaking the monopoly on big decisions traditionally held by poli-ticians, developers and international agencies.

Whenever necessary, the URC draws on con-siderable resources and expertise from a host of volunteers, activists, community organi-sations, university students, professionals and academics, forming a broad network of people working to make Karachi a more sensibly, transparently and equitably planned city.

The URC compiles detailed information about most major urban projects, analyses them with the help of various stakeholders, then pre-sents this analysis to communities, interest groups and government agencies in public forums. Forums are also held on issues of concern to Karachi's poor, where community people can meet and form links with NGOs and professionals who can assist their initiatives. All forums are documented and summaries are made available to the press.

"Facts & Figures"

The URC's monthly publication ***Facts & Figures*** has been coming out for years and is a gold mine of solid, brief, readable information and analysis about all aspects of Karachi's planning - plans, projects, transport, water supply, sewerage and sanitation issues, employment, informal sector, municipal budgets, environmental and energy issues, evictions. Articles analyse information coming from various sources : official documents and plans, newspaper clippings, research papers, case-studies, community survey data. *Facts and Figures* is published in English and Urdu versions and can be sent out by post or E-Mail.

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"Planning, like politics, is the art of the possible. Planning can only be effective if it relates to the social, economic and political realities of the society and place it is meant for.... The more equitable the relationship between the various actors in the development planning drama, the more appropriate and realistic planning will be."

- *Arif Hasan*

The high cost of not knowing : Opening up the smoke-filled back rooms in the planning process

Here are some thoughts about the rationale behind an Urban Resource Centre, drawn from notes written by Arif Hasan, one of the founders of the Karachi URC :

Urban development plans in most Asian cities are made by a powerful nexus between politicians, bureaucrats, formal sector developers and international agencies and their consultants. Communities, citizen groups and informal interest lobbies, who are often the victims of these plans, are never consulted about them. In the absence of transparency or participation, corruption becomes an essential part of the planning process.

Communities and citizen groups usually learn about these plans only after physical work on them has already begun. And even if they knew about these plans earlier, they lack the expertise to analyse those plans, to voice their concerns in the right vocabulary or to present viable alternatives. When people petition against insensitive projects, they are usually told that there is no alternative, that these plans are in *the "larger interests of the city."* The lobbying process then becomes an exercise in demanding through political agitation, which seldom succeeds, because those demands don't relate to larger planning issues.

But wherever plans come out of consultation between various interest groups, who also supervise their implementation, they are almost always better - more sensitive, more appropriate and more in keeping with ground realities. And wherever protests or proposals from communities or interest groups come backed up by a solid awareness about government plans, professional advice and viable alternatives, they are taken seriously and their recommendations are more likely to be accommodated. So how can a good URC make this happen? An urban resource centre can do many things which help create a movement for more appropriate, more transparent, more realistic and more people-friendly urban planning :

1 **Knowing what's being planned and making those plans public :** All government plans must be collected and analysed in terms of how they will effect the city and the communities they cover. The results of this analysis should be taken to communities, officials, interest groups and the press. All newspaper information should be catalogued, subject-wise, over time and analysed, so this knowledge can also be shared with communities, interest groups and the press.

2 **Working out alternative plans :** Alternatives to government plans, along with costs, should be developed and made public *(see next page).*

3 **Bringing together all the actors :** A space should be created, nurtured and institutionalised for interaction between all the relevant interest groups, people and government agencies involved in urban development decisions. Also, support organisations in different disciplines must be identified to help communities in preparing their requests and protests.

New book : **Community Initiatives: Four Case Studies from Karachi**

Here is the story of four Karachi low-income communities which have struggled to improve their social and physical environment. In the process they have had to deal with self-serving politicians and bureaucrats, touts of profit-making contrac-tors, incompetent and currupt local bodies, ruthless informal-sector entrepreneurs, and their own flamboyant and sometimes ill-intentioned leaders. The four case studies, written by five development activists and edited by Arif Hasan, cover Welfare Colony, Manzoor Colony, Nawalane in Lyari and Ghaziabad in Orangi.

(Contact Karachi URC for more details)

Transit overkill vs. thrift and common sense

Officially, most plans for Karachi have quite sensibly emphasised managing and building on what is already there. But in practice, priority has been given to promoting grandiose projects that are capital intensive, environmentally disastrous and incompatible with the city's social and economic realities. Most of these grandiose projects are not implemented, even though millions of rupees go down the drain designing and promoting them.

Since 1993, for example, the city has been pushing the *Karachi Mass Transit Progamme (KMTP)*, which involves the construction of six elevated bus corridors, costing a staggering US$668 million and guaranteed to put the city in debt for decades. Besides noise and air pollution, these elevated corridors would also cause immense environmental degradation to Karachi's historic centre.

From the very beginning, the URC involved itself with KMTP, first bringing the plan into the full glare of pubic scrutiny by circulating information about it to the press and to all the concerned actors. The URC helped form a citizens forum which raised concerns over the proposed plan - particularly that it was too expensive, that it didn't significantly extend transit links to the city's low-income housing and working areas most in need of them, and that four of the six proposed corridors ran almost parallel to the existing Circular Railway. As a result of careful lobbying, the government was forced to make some minor changes - but these were not enough.

So together with the citizen's forum, the URC went to the drawing board and prepared an alternative proposal, which effectively addressed these crucial issues of cost and coverage. In their alternative plan, there are no evictions, bus ways are converted into light rail, bridge widths are reduced from 30 to 16 feet, existing tracks in the historic city centre and circular railway are revived and extended to reach more of Karachi's low-income areas - *all at roughly one-fifth the cost of the KMTP.*

With this alternative plan, the URC lobbied for the revitalization of the Karachi circular railway and its extension into other areas. A long battle between citizens, government and international donors followed, but as a result of strong and consistent lobbying, all the donors (including the World Bank and Canadian High Commission) withdrew their funding commitments for the pro-ject. KMTP is not yet dead, but the controversial project has become something a hot potato for the government, politically committed to implementing the plan but unable to find donors. Most of the main points raised against the KMTP by the citizens forum and URC have been considered by the government planners and incorporated into the plan, but the alternative proposal has not yet been accepted.

Another lesson in sensible and non-sensible urban planning :

	the Government's Plan	*the URC's alternative*
Plan	KMTP Corridor 1 & 2	Reviving the city's existing Circular and Main lines
Cost	US$ 1,400 million	US $ 268 million
From	Karimabad to Tower Orangi to Cantonment	Almost everywhere to everywhere
Serves	Mainly commercial areas (less than 20% population)	Most commercial, residential and working areas (covers at least 60% of the city's population)

URC Library : Keeping track of the larger picture . . .

Most information about urban conditions and processes developed by NGOs, professionals and academics is scattered. Unlike official information, it isn't publicised or easily available, so it seldom feeds into the official planning process or into awareness-raising.

On the other hand, the printed media carries lots of reports on various subjects related to urban issues and official plans, but these reports are so spread out that it's hard to relate them to each other and to keep track of the larger picture. From the begining, the URC has worked to bring all this material together, and to make it widely available, so it can feed directly into the planning process, and especially into more effective people's involvement in the planning process. *Here are a few aspects of the kind of services and resources the URC Library offers :*

- **Clippings :** Keeps issue-wise files of news clippings about transport, sewerage, government pojects, city budgets and all sorts of urban problems. These are analysed periodically and organised so that a throrough reading of them gives a broader sense of their causes and repercussions.
- **Official information** about government policies, plans and programmes.
- **Professional materials**, books, reports, academic theses.
- **Directories** of who's who and who does what in the Pakistani urban development scene.
- **Research**, case studies, project profiles.
- **Eviction statistics**.

ACHR Newsletter translated into Urdu :

And talk about spreading around information "to all concerned actors" - for the Urdu-speaking actors hungry for community news from around the region, the URC is producing Urdu-language editions of "Housing by People in Asia". The stories are translated, typeset and pasted-up with cut-outs from the original, using scissors and glue, and printed at Orangi's City Press. Quick, cheap and no fuss. In Urdu's flowing Arabic script, sentences are read from right to left, and books from back to front, so this first page is actually on the back!

MANAGING EVICTIONS

What kind of things do communities do when the bulldozers show up?

We talk a lot about the progress of people's organisations, the housing projects and land tenure breakthroughs which are the up-beat side of *"Housing by People."* But while the good work keeps happening, the eviction of poor settlements continues around Asia. There is still a lot of work to be done to find more and more ways preventing this, the most down-beat side of "Housing by People."

The violence, fear and dislocation of an eviction are not the best conditions for clear thinking or reasoned negotiation. Because of this, some of the most effective eviction management strategies emphasise preparations BEFORE the event, which help avoid or forestall the actual crisis of forced eviction: developing community-based alternative solutions, initiating dialogues with local officials and landowners and building strong networks of communities and their supporters from different sectors to work on many levels to find alternatives to eviction.

There are many kinds of tools NGOs, pro-fessionals and people in various agencies use in the fight against evictions - monitoring evictions, gathering statistics and distributing reports at eviction conferences, organising letter-writing and media campaigns directed at governments which allow their cities to grow so inequitably, citing laws and UN declarations on housing rights. Unfortunately, these strategies may not be enough, and evictions go on.

What about the poor communities themselves? How do they deal with evic-tions? To forestall them before they happen, and to manage them while they're actually happening? Here are three very different eviction-management strategies coming from community organisations in three different countries - India, Thailand and Korea.

The bad news on evictions in Asia :

- **At least 254,172 Asian households (1.5 million people) were evicted in 1996 -97**
- **It is believed that for every "monitored" household evicted, another two are evicted and not monitored. That means about 750,000 Asian households (4.5 million people) have been evicted in the past two years.**
- **Another 2.5 million people in Asia are under imminent threat of being evicted.**

These figures are quoted from the report "Forced Evictions and Housing Rights Abuses in Asia, 1996 - 1997" - the publication of ACHR's Eviction Watch Programme. Copies available from ACHR.

The Pavement dwellers in Byculla are depositories of considerable eviction management wisdom. One strategy involves dismantling your own house before the demolition crews arrive. When they come, you ask, ***"What is your purpose in coming here?"*** *And when they say "To demolish your house, which is illegal," you can answer "Well, I have already done that, so you can go." This is a way of taking over control of your own eviction, deflating their power, and keeping track of your own belongings.*

Advice from Bombay's pavement dwellers :

Getting your act together BEFORE the demolition . . .

Last October, inspired by the second Mumbai pavement survey, the Mahila Milan women's collective in Pune began enumerating settlements along the city's roads and railway lines. No sooner had they begun, though, then a big municipal demolition scare occurred. So the Pune MM hustled together a frazzled group of pavement dwellers and brought them down to Mumbai to learn some strategies for managing demolitions from the demolition-survival experts. For two days, they sat with women from footpath settlements in Byculla and Mahakali, where the women had just been through a massive demolition.

The Mahakali story is a classic example of urban development that doesn't solve problems but only postpones them, hoping they'll go away. The 226 houses in the Mahakali pavement settlement were part of a larger slum that was cleared years ago, to make room for a new arterial road in Worli. Back then, most of the families didn't qualify for resettlement, and those who did were unable to survive out at Malvani, where the city dumped them. So many of them ended up right back in Mahakali, living on the pavements this time.

When they began building their Mahila Milan collective, with help from the Byculla pavement dwellers, they knew rough times were ahead. And sure enough, a few years later, the Mahakali settlement found itself again in the path of urban improvement, this time for a road-widening project. Despite urgent negotiations, the municipal demolition trucks finally came and hundreds of huts were destroyed. The Mahakali community remained steadfast, throughout, and is now planning it's resettlement, which the new SRA policy entitles them to. *Here's the advice they gave to the Pune pavement dwellers, as drawn from SPARC's publication CITYWATCH: India, No. 6 :*

How to survive a demolition :

1 Before any demolitions, do your homework :

- save your money together and gather together resources in your community.
- number all the houses in your community.
- keep a detailed house list with all your documents and proofs of residence.
- get to know local and city police and municipal hierarchies.

2 When there is a demolition :

- make sure nothing is taken away and keep detailed accounts of what is taken.
- keep a record of all previous demolitions.
- get other communities to come as a morale-booster.

3 Use demolitions to strengthen :

- The demolition crisis is a chance *to make the city respect you*, by strengthening your community organisation and developing your skills.

4 Plan for the future :

- The most powerful weapon against the immediate threat of demolition is to focus on the long-term goal of secure houses. Use your collective planning for the future to strengthen women's skills and confidence. These are your trump cards in negotiations with the city, the police, land-owners and with state authorities.

Thailand's grassroots "Eviction Hotline":

Drawing assistance from within the community networks . . .

In Thailand, poor communities under threat of eviction have found solutions in the power of numbers. The Thai Community Network has developed a nation-wide strategy for handling evictions which draws on expertise from within the network, from poor people who have personal experience with eviction. They call it ***Eviction Hotline****, and it is referred to as the network's special "fire-fighting" department.*

The *Eviction Hotline* is one of several ways the national, regional and city-wide levels within the Thai Community Network (*which is BIG*) can rally resources and expertise to support individual communities (*which are small*) when they need help.

The Hotline has proven to be not only an effective eviction preventer, but also a potent community network-builder. In the process of stopping the eviction of settlements along the klongs and railway tracks, the Hotline has helped build national federations of klong-side and railway settlements, with enough clout to win the right to stay and redevelop their communities.

The first priority is always finding an alternative to eviction - alternatives which community members plan themselves. This might involve negotiating a land-sharing or resettlement agreement, or preparing a reblocking plan. Perhaps a rapid household survey might be called for, setting up a savings group, or negotiating with the land-owner or municipality. If the situation is more urgent, then the network can help plan demonstrations, rally large numbers of people from other communities to lend support, or (less often in Thailand) take the case to court.

If solutions can't be found at city or provincial network levels, or in an emergency, national network leaders can negotiate directly at ministry level in Bangkok (especially if the eviction involves communities on public land) and can summon considerable legal and political assistance at a moment's notice. A team of senior community leaders around the country, veterans of countless negotiations and demonstrations, comprise a formidable group of eviction experts within the *Hotline* system, and are available to assist communities in the hot seat.

The *Hotline* now has eviction management committees working within each provincial network, and three national coordinators. When there is an eviction threat, these committee members are the first to go talk to the community, bearing the most important message: *Don't be afraid! You're not alone!* They can talk to stressed-out community people about how to organise, how to talk with officials, how to present alternatives, how to understand the legal steps and how to play various roles effectively.

An important ingredient in the *Hotline* strategy is collaboration between the network and key officials, NGOs (like POP, HSF and BTA) - where everyone knows each other and has each other's phone numbers memorized. In eviction situations, mobile phones all over go beeping and support to communities in trouble can be launched at several different levels at once, beginning with the provincial level. Thailand is not such a big country, and the human loop which supports this community-driven eviction management system is a very tight and far-reaching one.

Inherent Eviction Management : *The hotline is based on the idea that you can't create an effective, long-term "eviction buster" without building large, strong people's organisation. Because dealing with eviction, like dealing with land, houses, toilets, water supply, credit or employment, is something individual people or individual communities cannot significantly change alone.*

Korea : Front-line resistance strategies under siege . . .

Since 1996, Korean law entitles renters in "redevelopment zones" to public rental housing in the same area. But while the public rental housing is being built, which can take years, most renters are pushed out to peripheral areas of the city, and never get back. The demand for temporary on-site housing for renters during redevelopment has become the focal point of Seoul's housing rights movement.

Korea's rental laws allow homeowners to evict renters on a month's notice, after which the forced eviction of tenants who refuse to leave is legal. Many homeowners in these "Redevelopment Zones" are actually speculators who live elsewhere. For political reasons, the government seldom carries out forced evictions itself. Instead, construction companies, which are big profit-makers in the redevelopment process, contract special eviction agencies to do the dirty work.

Most evictions are of poor, long-term renters who refuse to move out of redevelopment areas because they have no housing alternatives. Their first response over the years has been to bodily resist eviction until adequate alternatives are offered, a strategy which many feel has been more effective than hearings, lobbying or media coverage.

A video produced by KOCER contains some hair-raising footage of a recent confrontation between community people at Din Daeng and thugs hired to evict them. It graphically illustrates the kind of battle tactics people have been forced to adopt to stay in their own neighbourhoods :

- **Many of Seoul's remaining informal settlements are on hilltops and make natural fortresses. When besieged by the eviction agencies, people block access lanes and erect bamboo towers to keep watch and broadcast alarms.**
- **Using soft dirt-clods and water hoses, they drive back the thugs without hurting anybody.**
- **Placing women at the front lines reduces violence and cramps the eviction thugs' intimidation tactics considerably.**

KOREA :

Eviction at Towon-dong neighborhood in Seoul :

The twenty-year-old battle between the city's low-income renters and Seoul's process of urban redevelopment goes on, although Asia's economic crash has slowed down construction considerably, and hence the pressure to evict. But last March, a violent eviction in the quiet suburb of Towon-dong brought renewed attention to the plight of the city's low-income renters.

After a year of buy-outs and intimidation, most of Towon-dong's old rental housing had been cleared and demolished, to make room for lucrative middle-class high-rises. A handful of tenants, though, refused to budge until their demand was met for on-site temporary shelter during redevelopment.

They holed up in a 20-metre tower at the site, from which they hurled rocks down at hired eviction agents, while police rammed the tower with water canons and a giant crane. These terrible scenes made their way into all the media. In April, the exhausted defenders were forced out. One of the resisters still camping out at the edge of the construction site is Chai Pyung-hwa. "The redevelopment law says there should be alternative housing," says Chai, "but Seoul City says this doesn't apply to renters."

"All we want is permission to live here temporarily. We will provide our own housing. We know all about Korea's economic problems and we're not after a handout. But we have lived and worked here legally, and yet have been unable to get basic decent housing. That's a real unfairness in the system."

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How the people at Songhak Village struggled for - AND GOT - their temporary housing . . .

*But there is cause for hope that for Seoul's low-income renters, the kind of violent and counter-productive solutions we saw at Towon-dong may become a thing of the past. A Public Forum held recently in Seoul brought government officials, housing rights groups and poor community leaders together to explore alternatives to forced evictions and to discuss a proposed Korean Housing Rights Law. Plus, some tenant communities are struggling for - **and winning** - the right to stay in their neighborhoods during the redevelopment process. Here's a story from Mun-su Park at KOCER, about a real precedent-setter at Songhak Village :*

1 The Situation : Five years ago, Songhak Village was a poor neighborhood on the fringe of downtown Seoul, a maze of ancient, hard-to-reach alleys. Then came urban redevelopment and most of the area's poor renters were scattered. But some stood up for their right to stay in the neighborhood, even as their houses were being demolished. And after a long struggle, they won the right to stay in temporary housing in Songhak Village until they can move, as a community, into the public rental housing that is being constructed nearby.

2 The struggle : As Songhak Village's tenants organised themselves and built a clear consensus about staying in their neighborhood during redevelopment, they built the kind of solidarity it takes to resist the threats and intimidation which generally precede eviction. Using rallies at the offices of the ward and developer, they demonstrated this solidarity and strengthened their bargaining position.

3 The agreement : Working in close alliance with housing rights groups, the community formed a tenants organisation and negotiated an agreement with the developer and city authorities wherein the developers would bear 70% of the cost of building temporary housing, and their *Redevelopment Cooperative* (composed of members of the tenant organisation) would provide the rest. Skilled construction workers who were cooperative members helped build the temporary housing.

4 The Temporary Village : The temporary housing is located right next-door to where the community's future rental housing is now being constructed. The community-planned "village" consists of 102 small apartments simply arranged in eight two-story blocks. The light frame buildings are clad with prefabricated insulated wall panels which allows them to be put up and taken down very quickly.

5 The future : The high-rise public rental housing into which community-members will move should be completed in a few months. Asia's economic downturn has hit Korea hard. Incomes have fallen sharply and many families in the Songhak Cooperative are struggling to make ends meet. But even livelihood was part of this intrepid community's planning . . . *(see related article on the next page)*

When communities plan together :

Besides all the basic services, such as ectricity, water supply and sewers, the temporary housing complex at Songhak Village was designed by the people specifically to include a big room for community meetings, a cooperative workshop, a day-care center, a study room, a library and a playground for the kids.

A visit to the NonGol Clothing Production Cooperative at Songhak Village :

A few months back, Hong Kyu Chon, from CONET, visited the temporary housing at Songhak Village. While she was there, she dropped in to the ***NonGol Clothing Production Cooperative****. Here is an exerpt from her report about this extraordinary community enterprise created in extraordinary circumstances :*

The *NonGol* (*"Rice Paddy Valley") Clothing Production Cooperative* manufactures traditional Korean clothing in "a style modified to be convenient for today's living." The co-op was started three years ago and is owned and managed by it member-workers. The main workshop is a chaos of roaring sewing machines, located in a special pre-fab building that is part of the Songhak Village temporary housing. Young-ki Mun is one of the co-op's founders and chairman of its board of directors. "In this poor neighborhood," he says, "jobs are hard to come by, so our first motive in starting *NonGol* was to get stable work."

The idea of starting a cooperative grew out of the community's awareness that the same group action which had secured their housing rights could also be put to use to help solve their economic problems of daily life. At first, only four people took part, and then one of those got sick and had to quit. But the other three stayed on, and now the cooperative's members number more than thirty. Mun describes the NonGol Cooperative as being, at heart, "a community organizing movement."

As membership in the co-op increased and business stabilized, there were clashes between co-workers, and maintaining harmony became difficult. "It's a fact that the most difficult part of a cooperative is personal relations," says Mun, whose response to this problem was proposing everyone *eat breakfast together!* And as it happened, that simple idea of gathering together every day, and discussing production problems over a shared meal, helped co-workers feel more like a family and encourage each other in problems of daily life.

"At present our main goal is to provide stable work, but in the long run, we want to extend operations so residents from all over *Songdong-ku* can take part in this cooperative. *How good it would be if NonGol became a model for bringing together the cooperative movement and the community organization movement*." The co-op will continue when they move into the public rental housing. "We have completed our design for 390 square metres of work space which is to be built in the basement of the new public rental housing. Our biggest hurdle now is getting enough capital, but we will overcome this."

The cooperative is now involved in a chain of clothing subcontracts, which makes for big cash-flow headaches, and are exploring the possibility of launching an independent brand of their own. By way of trial, *NonGol* has joined hands with another client to test a new production system where the main workshop continues at Songhak Village, but new jobs are created at branches in other communities.

"Three years ago, we made another effort, not only to solve our housing problem, but to open up for ourselves a new way of making a living. We decided to form a community of cooperating residents, so we could take responsibility for the problems of our daily lives."

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Death of Jeong-Ku Jei

We have another death to report in the network. The sad news came in February from Mun-su Park, a member of the ACHR Korea committee in Seoul, of the death of Jeong-Ku Jei, an important figure in Korea's housing rights movement for the past 27 years and one of the founders of ACHR.

Before the Seoul Olympic games in 1988, as many as 800,000 people were evicted from their homes to "beautify" the city for the games. It was the worst situation yet for Seoul's urban poor. Jeong-Ku Jei and Father John Daly were key leaders in efforts to stop the evictions and deal with government. A gathering of Asian grass-roots groups and housing activists, held in Thailand in June 1988, focused attention on evictions, and was a move to find ways for an international network to assist housing struggles like the one in Korea.

That was the beginning of ACHR, and Jei's struggle was one of it's central inpirations. Later, this collaboration broadened into the first fact-finding mission in Korea, and it helped open up the situation of Korea's urban poor to international attention during the Olympic games.

Jei brought two strong elements into the establishment of ACHR's working agenda - a fight for justice in relation to political process, and a depth of understanding about communities and poor people - an understanding that was very deep and human.

While Jei was in Thailand once, he had this to say to officers at the National Housing Authority. "A home is like a tree - the longer it exists, the deeper the roots go. A home has history, it has ancestors. Demolishing a house is like uprooting history and uprooting the ancestors."

In the late eighties, when things got a little more democratic in Korea, Jei made the decision to move into politics and became the *people's man in government*. He was instrumental in starting a movement of "reformed politicians" inspired by ideals rather than money, and helped achieve improvements to the urban redevelopment law.

Last year, Jei became ill with lung cancer and, after a six month's struggle with the disease, died on February 9th, 1999. Jei's death is being mourned by thousands of people here in Korea. His funeral began with a ceremony at *Bogumjahri Village*, the eviction resettlement colony where he lived very simply since it was founded. This was followed by a mass celebrated by Cardinal Kim, a funeral ceremony at the National Assembly, and finally, burial in his home town in Kyongnam Province.

JAPAN :

To be homeless, jobless and living in Tokyo . . .

Since 1992, when Japan's *"bubble economy"* began to deflate, the number of homeless people has risen sharply in Japan's big cities - Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Nagoya and Yokohama. A 1993 survey counted about 1,000 homeless men in Tokyo, and by 1994, that number had doubled. Since then, things have gotten much worse, as Japan plunges deeper into recession, and more and more people lose jobs and end up on the street. The latest survey counted 4,300 homeless people in Tokyo.

Tokyo's homeless people fall into roughly two groups: those who are somewhat "settled" in temporary dwellings of various sorts, and those "mobile" homeless people with no fixed dwelling, who sleep on the street or in the rail-way stations at night. There are a few *"pockets"* in Tokyo where considerable communities of homeless men have sprung up.

Sanya is one of those pockets, a whole district catering to thousands of low-income daily wagers who eat in the noodle shops and rent cell-like hostel rooms at rock-bottom rates of about 800 Yen (US$6) a day. The hostels provide a much-needed source of affordable housing, but many are being "renovated," which means TVs and mini-fridges are instal-led and the rents go up to 3,000 or 4,000 Yen. Those without work or money spill out into Sanya's streets and parks, where make-shift communities of homeless men are growing.

In the next few pages, we'll look at some other "pockets" of homelessness, in Tokyo and in other Japanese cities, drawn from reports by Mayumi Kato, Suzuko Yasue and Mitsuhiko Hosaka in the ACHR-Japan network.

Survey of Homeless People in Tokyo : 4,300 and growing . . .

Every February, managers in each of Tokyo's stations and public facilities conduct *"silent countings"* of homeless people, as part of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's efforts to keep track of the city's homeless problem. Their numbers might be useful, but they don't tell much about the lives of these people, or the reasons they have ended up sleeping outside.

The ***Resource Centre for Homeless People's Human Rights*** was established in April 1998 with the idea of bringing together the many people involved in the homeless issue - from backgrounds in social welfare, labour, law, religion, and also simply concerned citizens. Sazuko Yasue is one of the centre's founders. She describes the centre's twofold role this way : to increase public awareness through the dissemination of accurate information about Tokyo's homeless people, and to facilitate the joining together of all their diverse supporters into one united force. "There have been few opportunities," Yasue says, "for all these people to link up and combine their efforts to deal with homelessness in Tokyo. This has been a major barrier to developing solutions."

During the month of May 1998, the centre conducted it's own survey of homeless people in Tokyo. 84 volunteers divided themselves up and, for three days and three nights, they combed the city's homeless pockets - the train stations, riverside, streets, parks and homeless shelters. This wasn't easy, because many of Tokyo's homeless people are mobile, and have no fixed place to stay. Many were also working or out looking for jobs. Often, the late-nights were the best time to count and talk with people, when most had settled somewhere for the night.

In addition to a simple count of homeless people, the group conducted detailed interviews with 147 men in different areas. The survey results were presented at a symposium held to inaugurate the Homeless Centre, on 28 June, 1998. The survey is just a beginning, but it opens a few windows on this misunderstood group of Tokyo's citizens.

A few numbers from the Homeless Survey :

1 **Overall Findings :** The survey counted a total of 4,300 homeless people in Tokyo, almost all of whom were male, and many of whom were older than 50 years and unable to find work.

2 **Reasons for being homeless :** Of the 147 men interviewed, 70% were homeless as a result of having lost jobs or being unable to find work, 12% because of family problems and 5% because their own businesses had failed. Not surprisingly, most said they wouldn't have to sleep outdoors if they had jobs. The job situation in Tokyo is grim, but especially if you're older and in less-than-perfect physical condition.

3 **Sources of income :** Of those 147 men, 29% survived as low-paid daily labourers, 10% sold "recycled" books and magazines from the trash, 9% earned a little money by standing in long queues to buy tickets for scalpers and 31% had no jobs at all.

4 **Monthly income :** Of the 147 men, 17% earned less than 10,000 Yen (US$77), 12% earned up to 40,000 Yen (US$ 300) and 44% had no income at all. Only 19% earned more than 40,000 Yen. *(Bear in mind that Tokyo has one of the world's highest costs of living: a Coke costs 40 cents in New York, 50 cents in Bangkok, but in Tokyo, it will cost you at least one dollar!)*

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Grace in reduced circumstances : the vinyl houses along the Sumida River . . .

Not too far from the hostels at Sanya is a big homeless settlement strung out along the banks of the Sumida River. More than 600 men live in temporary vinyl houses here. Most of them are single older men who are unemployed or under-employed construction labourers.

All the pride and ingenuity of these highly-skilled, but out-of-work, craftsmen seems to have gone into their tiny dwellings, measuring scarcely two metres square. Meticulously crafted from materials scavenged from construction sites around the city, most of the houses rest on bases made from timber packing crates, with old *tatami* mats for flooring. The walls and roofs are cut from water-proof blue vinyl tarpaulins and stitched into neat panels which are then pierced with eyelets and wired to the stout cardboard tubes which make up the house's frame. Some even have sliding doors. The houses are designed to be dismantled quickly, packed up and carted away, when necessary.

Far from being an eyesore, this long line of trim dwellings has become something of a "feature" on the Sumida Rivers, like a string of bright blue toys against the gray concrete and black glass of the city that rises behind.

Once a month, like clockwork, the Tokyo Municipal Government comes along to sweep the river banks, and a day or two before, *"Caution"* signs go up along the settlement. The men then have to dismantle their houses and move them behind the fence for a day of two, to make way for the sweep, then do the same thing in reverse. For the men at Sumida, this is a monthly ritual.

Indians in Tokyo : The price of rice . . .

This past March, Suzuko Yasue and the AHR Japan team brought a group from Bombay to meet Tokyo's homeless communities. It was a cold, blustery day when they made their way to the Sumida River, where they found posted on each house a notice warning that there would be a demolition the next day. This wasn't for the monthly sweep, though, but part of the municipal government's plans to clear homeless settlements for the annual Cherry Blossom Festival.

The men were busy dismantling their houses to move behind the fence. Many were helping each other, cooking together. Some had even set up a karaoke stand where a few were taking a break in their work to sing a few sentimental songs. *This was, without a doubt, a real community.*

Jockin, from India's *National Slum Dwellers Federation*, was with the group, and he spoke with the Sumida men about how pavement dwellers in Mumbai used the same strategy of dismantling their own houses as a way of coping with demolition. The conversation moved to an exchange of details about how the poor in Bombay and Tokyo survive, and on to a big point for most Asians: *the cost of rice*. The astonishing conclusion? *The same kilo of rice which goes for 15 Rupees (45 Yen) in India, will cost you 500 Yen in Japan!*

The rocky history of Shinjuku Station's "Cardboard Village" . . .

The history of the "Cardboard Village" in the underground corridors of Tokyo's Shinjuku Station is long and fraught. There have been three evictions, one fire, four deaths, years of negotiation, one court case and countless protests. The cardboard village is one of Tokyo's largest homeless com-munities, has become a *cause celebre* for the city's homeless movement, and a thorn-in-the-side for a metropolitan government desperate to clear those shelters but reluctant to look squarely at why they exist in the first place.

The first eviction back in 1994 got everybody mad enough to *get busy*. After rebuilding their houses, they formed the ***Congress of Homeless People in Shinjuku,*** and began holding regular meetings. They also started to take responsibility for cleaning up the area, organised trips to the social welfare office to apply in groups for social benefit assistance and began negotiating with the Shinjuku Municipality for help finding jobs.

By 1997, the *Shinjuku Congress* was involved in negotiations with Tokyo's Social Welfare Bureau to set up support centres that would provide secure accommodation, support and training services to Shinjuku's homeless. The first centre opened in 1997, accommodating 60 people, and two more followed in 1998. All three centres are full, but hundreds of families still live in the cardboard village, and even those in the support centres are having a tough time finding stable work.

Changing "the rituals of Protest" : While in Shinjuku, Jockin shared his experiences in many Indian and Asian cities, where poor communities have changed the *rituals of protest*. Instead of screaming and protesting, he suggested the *Shinjuku Congress* plan a *"Homeless Festival",* call groups from different parts of Japan and have an exhibition of house models developed by different groups. Invite the press, professionals and citizens to come. Invite mayors and government to un-derstand the circumstances which create homelessness and suggest solutions. This fired everyone's imagination, and during their planning meeting next month, they'll propose this idea to the community.

JAPAN :

Homeless in Nagoya . . .

Some estimates put the number of homeless people living in the inner city of Nagoya at about 900. There have been increasing demands from conservative citizen groups and local politicians to remove this "eye sore", and the city authorities have repeatedly attempted to forcibly evict people from public parks.

A violent eviction which took place a year ago elicited a sharp reaction from the media and generated much greater public sympathy for the predicament of Nagoya's homeless. As a result, the authorities have had to adjust their tactics for clearing the homeless, and this year have used quiet, persistent coercion and harassment to disperse the homeless gradually, evicting relatively small numbers of people at a time.

And in these ways, the numbers of homeless living in Nagoya's Wakamiya Odori Park, which had been a point of congregation for the homeless, had diminished. Only five men were left, refusing to leave and struggling to resist threats from the authorities. Last Sep-tember, this tiny group of hold-outs were forcibly evicted from the park by a 250-mem-ber brigade from Nagoya City Government.

Some might call that overkill, but the message from the city government was loud and clear - that the city was determined not to let people squat on public spaces in Nagoya.

Since September, homeless people have returned to the park, this time in greater numbers. Recent reports estimate that under the worsening economic crunch, the number of homeless people in Nagoya is closer to 1,000. The authorities seem to have realised that eviction isn't solving the problem.

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Homeless in Kobe . . .

After the devastating earthquake four years ago, Kobe's earthquake victims who could not find places in official temporary housing were forced to take refuge wherever they could. Kengo Tanaka was among a homeless group who moved into Kobe's Shimonakajima Park. When it was clear that official assistance was going to be slow in coming, he helped form the **Suma Quake Survivors Association**, which held monthly meetings in the park, and negotiated with the city administration as a group.

When land near the park was made available for housing earthquake victims in 1997, it looked like the Shimonakajima community's struggles were over. But flip-flops in the government's plans made for fewer earthquake relief units and rents that were too high for many quake-survivors. After a long negotiation with the city, the plans were changed to increase the number of housing units for earthquake victims to 500, of which 67 were to be allotted to members of the *Suma Quake Survivors Association*. The survivors had gained the right to live in the place where they have lived before the quake. The *Association* is now planning how to develop their community when they move into the new rental housing later this year, and how to create jobs for the unemployed.

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Homeless in Osaka . . .

Things are not so good in Osaka either, a city of 2.5 million, where an estimated 6,000 out-of-work men live in the city's stations and parks. One slum area of Osaka called *Airin* is home to at least 30,000 of the city's poor, many of whom are forced to sleep under cardboard boxes and scavenge in waste-bins for food. Last year, 155 men died of hypothermia or tuberculosis on the streets of Osaka.

It's common practice all over urban Japan for business-owners to water the areas in front of their stores at night to prevent homeless people from camping there, and in Osaka, many restaurants mix sand into discarded food to drive away impoverished scavengers from their dust-bins.

Such mean-spirited responses are evidence of Japan's uneasiness with poverty in general, and with the root cause of most of Japan's homelessness - lack of jobs. The slump has sent unemployment to a postwar high of 4.1 percent. This rate is misleading, though, because in Japan, anyone who works at least one hour in a month is counted as being *fully employed!* To qualify for unemployment insurance, however, you have to work 26 days over a two-month period. As a result, many of Japan's "fully employed" find themselves homeless and hungry.

Homeless in Yokohama . . .

Besides visiting homeless areas of Tokyo, the Indian group also traveled to Yokohama ("Sister City" to Bombay), where they met poor men in the ***Union of Daily Wage Earners***. Union leader Masaru Hanada explained that most of Japan's homeless are single men without pensions, many over 50, who could no longer afford to rent rooms. And many have been ostracized by their families because of unemployment. He explained how many people "fell through the cracks" of the system meant to protect them.

For instance, every daily wage worker carries a special book with him, which each day's employer is supposed to stamp when paying the daily wage. The stamp is part of the system for determining employer contributions to social security, pension and insurance benefits for the worker. In order to claim unemployment insurance, your book has to show at least 26 days of work (and 26 stamps) over a two-month period. But to save paying their part of the worker benefits, many employers refuse to stamp the book. One Union in Yokohama has taken up several of these "no-stamp" cases with the local authorities and won rightful benefits for the workers, and the idea has spread to other unions and support groups.

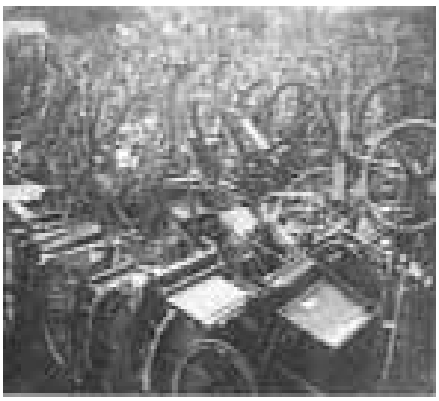
Immediately after the ban, the UPC conducted a sample poll in Jakarta, in which 86% of the people questioned felt that becaks (pedicabs) were a much-needed, inexpensive and non-polluting form of transport and should not be banned from Jakarta's streets. The poll was widely covered in the media and presented to the City Council as evidence for repealing the ban.

Jakarta Pedicab Drivers Network :

The *becak*, Indonesia's traditional three-wheeled, human-powered pedicab, can take transport two or three passengers, or carry just about any kind of goods, from sacks of rice and vegetables to furniture or tethered goats. Because they are safe, comfortable and cheap, the slow-moving pedicab is a favorite with women who use them for daily marketing and for picking up kids from school. And it's a decent job, too. Where factory workers work long hours and take home 10,000 Rupiahs a day, at the most, a pedicab driver can make up to 25,000 a day, with flexible work times.

Pedicabs have been around for half a century, but in the early 1990s, a new law banned pedicabs from Jakarta's streets, claiming they weren't safe, caused traffic jams and had a "high correlation with Jakarta's crime rate." Since then, the popular pedicab hasn't gone away, it's just gotten a lot riskier to drive one. *Confiscation* - the pedicab driver's biggest nightmare - can mean loss of job, income, investment.

Last June, amidst a worsening economic crisis and a growing pro-reform movement in Indonesia, Jakarta's newly-appointed Governor Sutiyoso announced that pedicabs would again be allowed to operate. He did this without first repealing the old law, though, and faced strong criticism from the city council.



Thousands of pedicab drivers came flooding into Jakarta from villages all over Java, and by July, more than 5,000 pedicabs were doing a brisk business on the city's streets. Some rent pedicabs for two or three thousand rupiahs a day, others borrowed from relatives and cashed in life-savings to buy second-hand pedicabs of their own for 300,000 rupiahs. (A new pedicab costs about half a million rupiahs.) But after only one week of free pedicabbing, pressure from opponents in the government and in the powerful motor transport lobby reversed the policy. Pedicabs were again confiscated, leaving thousands of men without jobs - this time hopelessly in debt.

Unless they happen to come from the same village or stay in rented rooms together, most of Jakarta's pedicab drivers don't know each other. When pedicabs are confiscated, drivers deal with the crisis alone, and most never get their vehicles back. During the ban, the *Urban Poor Consortium* began working with pedicab drivers in five communities. They organised rallies, which provided a platform for drivers to meet, organise themselves and discuss strategies for dealing with eviction squads, negotiating with the municipality.

The ***Pedicab Drivers Network*** now includes 3,000 drivers in 24 communities, and has initiated a weekly savings scheme. The ban is still on, but pedicabs are still on the street. A big demonstration in October, which resulted in the release of *all confiscated pedicabs to their owners*, has given a big boost to the drivers' struggle for their right to work.

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INDONESIA :

Meet Gopur, one of Jakarta's 5,000 embattled pedicab drivers :

A video documentary produced by UPC describes the life of Gopur, one of Jakarta's pedicab drivers, and looks at how the government's pedicab policy flip-flops have affected his life and the lives of thousands of others like him. This story is drawn from notes sent to us by the UPC's Edi Saidi.

Gopur is thirty-five years old, and lives in a tiny rented room he shares with four other pedicab drivers. Once a month, he returns to Pemalang, a small town about 300 kilometres east of Jakarta, where his wife, a seasonal worker in the rice fields, looks after their four children.

When Gopur first came to Jakarta in 1978, he worked in a factory, then later sold fruit. When the economic crisis hit, fruit prices skyrocketed and most of his customers could no longer afford his papayas, guavas and pineapples, and his earnings plunged from 30,000 to 10,000 Rupiahs a day - that's about the cost of 4 kilos of rice.

To supplement his dwindling fruit business, Gopur started driving a friend's pedicab, which he rents for 2,500 Rupiahs a day. It turned out to be his best-earning job yet. He could earn Rp.15,000 in a morning - sometimes more - by carrying people and goods around the old market at Jelambar Baru in West Jakarta. This added income allowed him to send home almost 150,000 Rupiahs every two weeks.

Gopur hopes that some day, when the pedicab ban is lifted, he can buy his own pedicab and stop worrying about the rent. he doesn't want his children to follow the path he has taken, wants them to have a better life. "Any job would do, as long as it is not pedicab driving. It is hard, you know, to be harassed every day by the eviction squad."

THAILAND :

Klong-side settlements : Canal spoilers or canal keepers?

Tailand is a very wet part of Asia, and many of its cities, built on low-lying swampland, are criss-crossed with *klongs* [canals], which not only help control all that water, but have traditionally provided vital conduits of commerce, transport and development. But since the automobile began replacing the "fish-tail" boat, roads and expressways have overlaid these older, wetter structures. The klongs, relegated to the status of open drains, have fallen into disrepair and are used for dumping sewage and solid waste, or concreted over to make way for buildings.

But as the cities keep growing, and the klongs keep deteriorating, worsening problems of flooding and pollution are putting municipal officials in the hot seat. Too often, the finger is pointed at the poor communities which line many of Thailand's klongs, to mask much deeper problems of urbanisation and poor planning. The klong-side communities find themselves accused of spoiling the klongs and threatened with eviction.

In several Thai cities, beleaguered klong-side communities are using the problems they have in common to form networks, to work together to improve their klongs and their settlements and to consolidate their right to stay by demonstrating that *they are good keepers of these much-needed water management systems - Thailand's klongs.*

"Water-soluble" networking techniques :

The principle of coming together around a common problem or land ownership has become a tried-and-tested network-ing technique for poor communities all over Asia. The waste-pickers in Philip-pines, the pavement dwellers and railway slum-dwellers in India, and many others have found that becoming part of a larger whole means greater negotiating power and more options. Here the common problem is water, the common tenure situation is the klong-side settlements, but the local situations change . . .

*The city gets free help maintaining its waterways, and the communities get secure tenure and better living environments - **everybody wins.** In Songkhla, it was the first time the NHA built its standard concrete walkways according to plans which were worked out by the people.*

One community's cleaning-up of Klong Samrong leads to redevelopment, network-building and securer tenure in Songkhla :

In a flat-bottomed wooden boat, it takes about an hour to paddle along the briney four-kilometre length of Klong Samrong in Songkhla, from the inland sea on one side, to the South China Sea on the other. Besides houses, factories and tidal flats, you pass five poor settlements which have been home to fishermen, net-weavers, dockyard labourers and vendors for half a century.

These settlements had long been accused of polluting the klong, and ten years ago, plans were announced to evict them. The people got together and with help from the *Southern Urban Poor Community Development Project* (NGO) formed a federation to negotiate alternatives. By demonstrating their commitment to keeping their klong clean and improving their settlements, all five communities were able to change their future, consolidate their right to stay, trigger other community developments and set a strong precedent for other klong-side communities all over Thailand. *Here's what Songkhla's klong-keepers did :*

1991 **1991 - Research :** First they asked *why is the klong dirty?* and found factory pollution and clandestine dumping of solid waste all along the klong. What could communities do to clean it up, and what would the city and other actors have to do?

1991 **1991 - First Klong cleaning :** Anybody living on a klong knows that klong-cleaning is not a one-time proposition, but has to be done regularly. In Songkhla the communities get together once a year to remove garbage from Klong Samrong, clean the banks and pull out the plants which choke the water flow. They make it into a big gala, with banners, a feast and press coverage. It's a good start, but the pollutants in the water and silt at the bottom requires help from the city.

1992 **1992 - 95 - Reblocking community layout :** Earlier, houses built right over the water made it hard for the city's de-silting raft to dredge the klong regularly, so the communities moved their houses back, in order to maintain the required 8 metres minimum open distance across the klong. They also demolished toilets that drained directly into the klong and built new ones, with proper septic tanks, at least 3 metres inland.

1995 **1995 - Built wooden walkway :** To improve access to their houses, the people in the Bor-wa community built wooden boardwalks along both sides of the klong. The walkway cost just 500,000 Baht, and was soon followed by a 2-story timber and bamboo community centre, supported by the *LIFE Programme*.

1997 **1997 - Community planning :** Bor-wa was the first community to go a step further and prepare a full settlement redevelopment plan. During evening sessions in the new community centre, with help from a young Bangkok architect, residents mapped out their houses and used colored tapes to plan pathways, fire access, drainage, water taps, electricity, garbage collection points, lamp posts and trees. The other settlements got wind of this and pretty soon, Bor-wa was helping the other Klong communities prepare similar redevelopment plans.

1997 **1997 - Community plans officialized :** As evidence of the transformation in the klong communities' relationship with the city, these people-generated redevelopment plans were incorporated in the official municipal plan, and became the basis for subsequent NHA-built improvements to the Klong Samrong settlements in 1997.

Clean Klonging in Chiang Mai : Some good reasons to travel 2,000 kilometres to see a few little canals . . .

Klong Koowai and Klong Mekhaa, which pass through Chiang Mai's Mengrai District, are lined with six informal settlements. The water in these klongs is already polluted when it reaches Chiang Mai, where markets, hospitals and industries dump in more junk. By the time it reaches the communities, the black, smelly water is barely able to sustain a few unhappy fish. Add to this the new systems of water gates by which city water politics can reduce Klong Koowai from a wide rushing canal into a stagnant trickle, with the turn of a cog.

"It wasn't always like that" says Pi Panngam, a leader from Ha Tanwaa community on Klong Koowai. "People's lives were tied to the water, which they used for washing and cultivating. Now it's so dirty, the klongs are more a hazard than an asset." What to do? "Politicians do things in Chiang Mai and people wait," she says, "But Meng Rai district is a little better - we can solve the klong problem ourselves." So the members of Mengrai District's klong-side communities decided to use a grant from the *Urban Community Environmental Activities (UCEA)* Programme to initiate their own klong-improvement process in three phases :

1 Phase One : Klong study tour . . .

A group from Chiang Mai's klong-side communities got on the train and travelled to Bangkok and Songkhla, where they visited other klong-side communites to gather ideas about how to redevelop their klongs and boost their confidence that people *can* do it. It worked. Pi Panngam : "People saw and said '*We can do it better!*' "

In Bangkok, after a wirlwind boat tour along the Klong San Saeb, and lunch hosted by the Minburi City Hall, the group visited the Gamaloon Islam community, where one of Thailand's most high-profile community-led klong clean-ups was organised several years back. Khun Veenai, member of parlianent from Gamaloon and veteran klong-cleaner, offered this advice: "Don't expect cooperation from government at first. Start by doing things yourself, and government support will follow."

2 Phase Two : Klong clean-up . . .

The first big clean-up on Klong Koowai was strategically scheduled on the Queen's birthday, on August 9, 1998, with T-shirts, a logo, a feast, press coverage. Besides hundreds of klong residents, community groups from all over Thailand came up to help clear out garbage and cut back plants along the banks. Pi Leng, Bor-wa community's leader from Songkhla was there : "We wanted to make sure they do it properly." Big noisy public events like this are a way of *democratizing possibilities*. They can disseminate issues because larger numbers of people get a peep into the process - commuity folks, outsiders, officials, NGOs. That way, the klong clean-up process belongs to *the whole city*, not only to those few communities.

3 Phase Three : Community and klong improvements

Now, district meetings are held every month which include communities, city officials, community network, and NGOS. Mengrai District is filled with plans :

- widen Klong Koowai, construct "hard edges" to make way for municipal de-silting
- move houses back a little to redevelop the klong margins as green playgrounds
- use the silt from dredging as land-fill for a day-care centre
- reduce upstream pollution via negotiations with city and private sector polluters
- explore community-based "green" filtering systems to help clean the klong water

"See how clean the streets are, but look at the klong, a floating garbage dump. *Consolidating ownership by cleaning up the place. Pi Panngam in Klong Koowai talks about organising prople, slowly, gradually. "Start something real like the clean-up and people will come in later."*

New Bangkok Klong Community Network :

Yearly flooding in Bangkok is natural, but a big political headache for the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority, in charge of controlling it. When the BMA sub-contracted some NGOs and housing pro-fessionals to survey informal settlements a-long the city's klongs, it had plans to upgrade the city's drainage by concreting klong walls, and adding water gates and pumping stations.

The surveyors, though, saw the survey as a chance to extend the same federating principles which have brought together communities on State Railway land, under bridges, and along klongs in other cities and have led to breakthroughs in land and housing rights.

Bangkok's Klongs : The common picture

- **Number of Klongs : 107**
- **Number of settlements : 125**
- **Number of families : about 10,000**

So last year, when the city announced plans to evict half these communities, Bangkok's new klong federation was at the BMA Gover-nor's door, in force, ready to negotiate. An agreement was reached in which committees of klong residents, NGOs and city officials would be set up in each district, to work with klong residents to find mutually agreeable solutions which allowed the city to carry out it's drainage improvements and allowed the communities to stay right where they are.

In most cases, people agreed to shift their houses a little away from the klong edge, in others they re-blocked, or squeezed into smaller areas. All but six cases were resolved within this district-level process, and those six came back to the city, where the BMA ruled in favor of the communities. *Nobody was evicted, nobody had to relocate.* The BMA also agreed to grant "community status" and to support infrastructure and environmental improvements in the klong-side communities.

No community alone could have negotiated this solution with the city, only together, in organisations with the kind of big numbers and "critical mass," which is the power of a federation.

Land Sharing at Rom Klao :

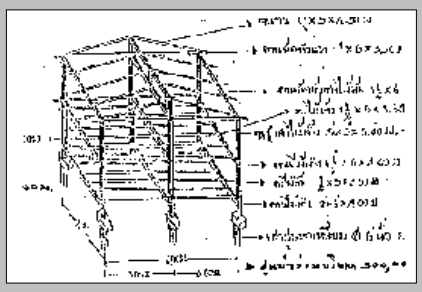
In 1994, a devastating fire leveled the community at Rom Klao, part of the sprawling Klong Toey settlement, on Port Authority land. Thai law stipulates that land leases cease to be valid after a fire, so it's no surprise that arson is often used to remove unwanted tenants. But after decades of evic-tion and arson, Klong Toey residents have found ways around this rule: build a new house, *FAST*, right over the ashes of your old house, so the next morning, when the authorities show up, you can say *"What fire?"*

Rom Klao residents used the crisis as an opportunity to negotiate a more secure future for their community. In the subsequent months, the community worked with the *Human Development Centre (HDC*) and National Housing Authority to negotiate a land-sharing agreement with the Port. In exchange for giving back some of the land to the port, the community got a long-term land-lease (without payment) to redevelop their community. After long negotiations with HDC, NHA and the Port, they came up with a "re-blocking" plan, with equal plot sizes a neat grid of lanes, a community centre and pre-school. NHA used its 17,000 Baht-per-family subsidy to build raised concrete walkways and drains and bring in electricity and water supply, according to the community's layout plan (but using NHA's contractors).

The Port continues to try to clear Klong Toey of its settlers. Ask people who live there what is the length of their lease and they smile and say, *"As long as we are strong!"*

Theme and Variations : Rom Klao's Core House package is fast, simple, cheap and very Thai . . .

After the fire, the negotiations, the planning and the land-sharing agreement, there was a need for some serious, fast house-rebuilding at Rom Klao - but the people had lost everything in the fire. To give stressed-out families a head start, the ***Human Development Centre*** helped develop a standard wooden core house which could be built fast, and people could finish later.



Structure only : The 2-story "core house" was designed to almost fill the little plots, with 24 square metres per floor, and provided only a strong timber structure. The idea was that families could add their own walls, windows, doors and roof, as and when they were able, and even those with very little money could tack up plastic sheets and have a shelter.

Loans given in materials : Instead of borrowing cash, each family "borrowed" a big pile of timber - exactly enough columns, beams and rafters to build the core house - as a materials loan from HDC, to be paid back in cash installments. They got the wood on bulk discounts and as donations, so the core house's cost was kept to a modest 25,000 Baht. HDC provided the concrete footings as a subsidy and coordinated the distribution process. The houses were built in groups, with everybody helping each other.

Bisquit tin footings : Everybody in the swampy Klong Toey settlement knows that wooden houses built over water are prone to rot, as damp climbs up into the structure. Replacing rotten supporting columns can be difficult and costly. To overcome this problem, the folks at Rom Klao came up with a cheap and whimsical solution : a 5-Baht recycled biscuit tin, filled with concrete, that acts as a moisture barrier, and prevents damp from transferring from the concrete footings down below into the wood structure above. 70% of Rom Klao's houses used this detail, and to date, they're all dry as bone.

CONTACT : Human Development Centre (Khun Rattana, Khun Choy)
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THAILAND :

"Floating" Settlement : *Rom Klao, like most of Klong Toey, is built on marshy wetland along the river. When the **"70 Rai"** area on the other side of Klong Toey was redeveloped, the land was filled in at great expense and laid with sewers and drains. To make the most of NHA's scant on-site redevelopment subsidy, Rom Klao opted to rebuild its community - houses, walkways, and open spaces - on piles, a meter above the swamp, and leave the water underneath alone. This kind of **"floating"** settlement is a tradition that goes way back in Thailand.*

Raft House Dwellers along the Nan River in Pitsanulok "move up" to dry land . . .

Life on the river goes way back in Thailand, and in Pitsanulok, there are still raft houses (*ruean phrae* in Thai) floating on the River Nan. Although these houses are a symbol of the province, it's getting harder and harder to live that way. The giant bamboos which compose the rafts underneath rot after a couple of years and have to be replaced. A single length of bamboo which once cost 3 Baht now goes for at least 45 Baht, pushing the cost of keeping these houses afloat beyond the means of most raft-house dwellers, many of whom are low-income earning families.

Nowadays, much of Pitsanulok's sewage and industrial waste gets dumped into the river, making the once clean water smelly and black with pollutants. One woman told some visitors from Bangkok that just five years ago, with only a few swirls of the alum crystal to settle the natural sediments, they could drink the river water. Newly-built dams upstream cause water levels to rise and fall dramatically and irregularly, according to turns of a cog instead of natural seasons, and this also makes trouble for the raft-houses' moorings.

It's also getting crowded. Where there used to be just a few raft houses scattered here and there, now there are 240 of them, clustered several houses deep along the river banks. With all those people come increasing sanitation problems. The municipality has tried offering self-contained "floating privies" but because these rocked so much, they were unpopular with the raft-house dwellers, who preferred their traditional toilets inside the houses, which go - *plop!* - straight into the river.

People in the city are sad to see any of these houses go, but changing times are making many raft-house dwellers consider "moving up" onto land. About 80 families are taking advantage of a new resettlement scheme in which the city provides free land in town (not too far from the river), the NHA develops the infrastructure and the UCDO gives housing loans.

The first batch of 50 households have already moved from their raft-houses into new contractor-built houses which were designed by the NHA, without much community participation. UCDO entered the process late, but has since reached a compromise plan which allows more of a people's process to guide the rest of the resettlement process. A team of young architects from UCDO will conduct design workshops with the second batch of raft-house dwellers, and they will design and build their own houses, and take part in planning the layout and basic services and common amenities like community centres and open space.

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2044/ 28-33 New Phetburi Road, Khet Huai Khwang,
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Underbridge Community Network Update :

The people who live in damp, squalid conditions under Bankok's bridges are some of the city's poorest. But now the Underbridge Community Network has se-cured alternative land, and the first 300 families are busy preparing for their resettle-ment. The land, which people chose them-selves, is in four sites, where communities from four zones will move together. Here's the update from Khun Nag, the Underbridge Network's leader, on what this energetic group has been doing over the past year :

- **Started Daily Savings : Since many won't have much money for building new houses and cannot afford to take big house-building loans from UCDO, door-to-door housing savings schemes have been running in earnest. In some bridges, deposits are collected daily, in others weekly. Even kids and students help out with the collections.**

- **Exposure trip to India : A group of 10 underbridge community dwellers went on an exposure trip to Kanpur, India last year to attend a model house exhibition put on by the *Kanpur Slum Dwellers Federation*. They were also inspired by the Mahila Milan daily savings schemes they saw being managed by very poor women who live on the sidewalks of Bombay, and are now holding more frequent meetings and pushing the housing savings.**

- **Planning Affordable Houses : Every weekend, the communities have worked with a team of young architects to plan how to build houses *very cheaply* at the new land, exploring such ideas as incremental building, recycling of old materials and unconventional building materials made of waste products.**

- **Model House Exhibition : To present their plans and ideas to the public, the network held a model house exhibition in April, which was attended by government officials, NGOs and community people from all over Thailand, and from India, Cambodia and Philippines.**

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SOUTH AFRICA :

Pule Raboroko : the homeless loose their premier urban planner . . .

"It is my subsidy you are talking about. It is you the government who promised it to us and it is you who tell us that the 15,000 Rand is all we are going to get for years of misery and suffering. And now you want me to accept it when you pour my subsidy down the drain, down your throats and the throats of developers."

- Pule Raboroko

Pule Raboroko was stabbed to death in his settlement at Kanana, outside Johannesburg, on October 25th, 1998. His young wife lost a husband, his children lost a father, the ***South African Homeless Peoples Federation (uMfelandaWonye)*** lost a national leader and the nation lost an unsung hero.

He was born in Sebokeng in the late 1950s, and, like many of his generation, grew up aspiring to overturn the apartheid regime that degraded him. He spent 15 years in an illegal "back-yard" shack in Sebokeng. On the day the ANC won the election and South Africa achieved majority rule, Pule led 3,000 homeless families out of decades of humiliation and extortion in the backyard shacks and into a promised land - 15 hectares of dry veld they called *Kanana*.

In the eyes of the new authorities, Raboroko was a land-grabber, a queue jumper, an underminer of planned development. But his action inspired thousands, and showed that no matter how much government may threaten land invaders with harsh recrimination, nothing gets government to negotiate faster than a land invasion.

First came the backyard shack-dwellers of Sebokeng. Then Small Farm, Evaton, Sharpeville, Election Park, Boitumelo, Botshabelo, Agrinette Hills. Raboroko was always there to help block out sites, lay a water pipe, dig a latrine or draw a layout plan as good as any professional surveyor.

By honouring Raboroko's memory, we honour the *real urban planners of our cities* - those men and women who have been desperate enough to occupy land, build shacks, get water and create living communities, at great risk to themselves and their loved ones.

(Excerpted from People's Dialogue, Backyard Fax No. 4, October 1998)

What are the Raboroko's of the Federation saying? That development is not a linear progression, to be mapped and regulated. It is a process whereby the poor themselves show the way to make living communities out of the haphazard whirls of life.

The story of the Kanana settlement :

Here is a story, drawn from the People's Dialogue files, which shows why Pule Raboroko was one of ***uMfelandaWonye's*** *most brilliant strategists and its first urban planner. This is what we mean when we talk about "****Housing by People****" :*

Most of the legal residents of the black township at Sebokeng supplemented their incomes by renting out illegal "backyard shacks" to informal sector workers, like Pule Raboroko, where conditions were crowded, toilets were scarce and rents were very high. In 1991, Pule helped start a backyard shack residents committee, and began looking for land.

As South Africa's first democratic elections approached, Pule and the others saw their opportunity. While the majority adopted a "wait and see" attitude, maybe hoping President Mandela would give everyone free land and houses, the commit-tee found some Provincial open land outside Sebokeng and decided to invade it. But first they went into Sebokeng and measured typical house plots, road widths, schools, clinics - even a soccer field. These measurements formed the template for their own development. On election day, April 1994, the first families moved onto the new land and staked their sites, leaving space for roads and public facilities, according to the measurements taken in Sebokeng.

They named their settlement *Kanana* - "Land of Canaan". Pule, in the finest tradition of estate agents, put up huge boards at Kanana reading "*Free Land for the Backyard Shack Dwellers of the Vaal*" and giving details on how to get a plot! Committee leaders began allocating sites, and within a month, 1,500 families were settled in Kanana and spilling over into more government land across the road.

White officials in the Vaal Region found themselves in a dilemma - the *Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act* was still on the books, white magistrates still held office and getting an eviction order would be simple. But no white official would be foolish enough to evict black squatters on the day Nelson Mandela became president! When the provincial officials did finally show up, they asked Pule and his committee members to leave, *not* because the land had been occupied illegally (that was no longer a problem), but because they were "very worried that so many people - thousands it seems - were living here without any drinking water, posing a serious health hazard!" For that reason, the invaders were given 48 hours to go peacefully, or face eviction.

"Since when has drinking water bothered them?" Pule scoffed. *"There are millions of black people in this country without proper drinking water. Are they all going to be evicted?"* So they decided that within 48 hours, there *would* be water in Kanana. They first collected 20 Rand from each family to buy water pipes. Some municipal workers who'd been on strike were then "hired" to provide details about water and sewerage systems in the area and to help tap into the water mains. With these skilled moonlighters, the community leaders bought the necessary equipment and went to work. Two days later, Kanana had 117 water standpipes.

When the officials returned with their eviction notice, they were invited to inspect the settlement's new water supply system. The officials, thrown off their guard, warned Pule's team that even though the water problem had been solved, they now faced serious charges of theft. The leaders replied that community members were ready to pay for the water - all they needed was for the council to come install meters on all these new taps. A group of very distraught provincial officials drove off in a cloud of dust *and were neither seen nor heard from in Kanana for two years.*

South Africa house construction update :

Putting all those 5,000 federation-built houses in context . . .

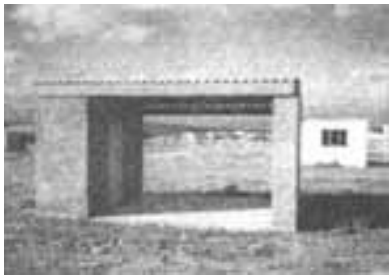
uMfelandaWonye (the South African Homeless People's Federation) has enabled more than 15,000 families to secure land tenure, and is building houses in more than sixty settlements throughout South Africa. Savings schemes have borrowed over 18 million Rand in housing loans, and built more than 5,000 houses. What does it mean when poor people themselves, not contractors or government or NGOs, design and construct their own houses? Here are a few images and cost figures to help put this enormous people-driven housing process into the context of the housing choices that are currently available to the poor in South Africa :

20,000 Rand **Although built out of old planks and ingenuity, the recurring expenses of repairing, upgrading and adding on to a shack like this one in Mossel Bay, over several years, can add up to *much more* than the cost of building a solid block house, all at one go - (not to mention the added costs of eviction, displacement and rebuilding after a fire...)**

67,400 Rand **Developer-built houses like this one, in a big subdivision behind the federation's *Victoria Mxenge* township, also eat up the people's subsidies, but when you add land, infrastructure, frills and some *very hefty profit margins*, they finally go onto the market for 67,400 Rand, which is *way* out of reach for most poor South Africans.**

37,000 Rand **These smaller 40-square metre houses are part of a small development project in Cape Town, not too far from *Victoria Mxenge*. They were built for a specific target community of poor people, *"service delivery"* style, as a contract by a local Cape Town NGO. They also use the people's 16,000 Rand housing subsidy.**

16,000 Rand **Here's what the 16,000 Rand subsidy buys you if contractors have their way. These tiny *"RDP Houses"* are built in vast clusters by developers, with people's subsidies. People call them *uVezanyawo* - *"where your feet show"* because with only 18 square metres of space, they are literally so small that your feet stick out the window when you sleep.**



10,000 Rand **And here's a federation-built house at *Victoria Mxenge*, larger than all of the others, with 4 rooms and 60 square metres. The women made their own blocks, built the houses together and planned them so that every penny of that 16,000 Rand subsidy goes into getting as much house and services as possible - *no contractors, middle men or profit margin.***

Painless densification :

The South Africa Federation"s first 2-story semi-detatched houses go up in Piesang River . . .

Most black townships and informal settlements in South African cities aren't *in* the cities at all, but way out beyond the fringe, where they were tradition-ally banished, as far from the white city centres as possible. Out there, the only way to grow was out into the veld, and there's no shortage of open grassland in South Africa. This has led to a settlement culture of separated houses, big plots, widely spaced settlement plans and very low densities.

Because of this, settlements - whether legal or illegal, formal or informal - tend to sprawl out into this landscape, with big plots, widely-spaced houses and very low densities. So far, this kind of inefficient land-use hasn't been a much of a problem.

But what happens when a large community gets hold of a small piece of land, and has to decide whether to squeeze everyone in or to throw some of its members out into the street?

That's what happened in Piesang River, last year, when community members were faced with the choice of squeezing into a small piece of land available *right in Piesang River*, or looking for larger plots in some land far out. They made the choice to stay, but with a lot of grumbling. So the federation set about showing people that there *were* options in denser situations - like making *taller houses*. At first, there was skepticism, but then the first semi-detached double-story house was built, which very comfortably housed two families on 54 square metres of land, and had lower per-unit costs than a single-story free standing federation house! The Piesang River community and local councilors now feel optimistic that a satisfactory solution to the problem of overcrowding can be implemented.

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SOUTH AFRICA :

"Federation culture"

As the scale of the South African federation's work grows, the good news comes rolling in almost weekly: news about getting land, subsidies and finance; news about better working bonds being forged with government; news about 3 million Rand being saved and news about 5,000 new houses being built . . .

But another thing is happening alongside all this quantifiable progress, which has to do with the creation of a new culture - a "federation culture" which South Africa's landless poor have created themselves, and which is something just as powerful, just as transforming as those thousands of houses.

It often happens that poor people's organisations, in the process of establishing an identity, end up chucking their own deeply-rooted ways and taking on the non-native culture of NGOs, which comes with its own rituals and tone, and is perceived as being a ticket to some kind of legitimacy.

Not so the South Africans, who've got their own ways of doing everything - their own ways of holding meetings, of reporting and keeping accounts, of relating to their partner NGO. And SONGS! They've got songs for every-thing - songs for expressing their grumbles to visiting ministers, songs to honour their Mahila Milan gurus, songs about homelessness and eviction, songs for gathering, protesting, and celebrating - songs for singing in Parliament! They even have songs for digging the foundations of a new house, whose words and music are matched to the lilt of swinging the pick-axe and heaving back the earth.

"In South Africa," says Patrick, "We've had generations and generations of poverty and homelessness, people forced to move from place to place, forced into the slavery of bonded work. We've been divided by colour, thought and creed. But we eat and live and work as communities, we think and plan as communities. Our communities were never destroyed by apartheid. We built them first to resist apartheid, to resist being divided by violence. And now most urgently we build them around fighting for our needs - houses, land, finance - through the Housing Savings Schemes. We are rebuilding our own culture."

Talking Newsletters :

Like most of South Africa's poor, federation members move around from city to city by informal transport. When they get in these jeeps and trucks, which are always packed, they get the drivers to play *uTshani Buya Khuluma* ("The grassroots people are speaking"), the federation's own audio newsletters, which combine federation news with lots of great music. This is one way word gets around a big country like South Africa.

"We're full of stories in South Africa . . ."

Whenever two people meet," Patrick says, "They start telling each other something, and it turns into a story. Things move around fast that way. We're full of stories in South Africa. The savings schemes are not just for collecting money, but an opportunity to talk, to tell stories. This new federation culture means sharing stories, telling who you are, where you come from. This is a way of building a culture, a sense of belonging, a place. This is a way of ironing out dependence. *This is our learning. This is our education*."

Not surprisingly, one of the federation's most dynamic leaders, Patrick Magebhula, is also a poet and one of it's premier story-tellers. When Patrick speaks, there's seldom a whisper or a shuffle in the room, so intensely is everyone's attention drawn to this natural communicator, whose powerful voice and diction require no microphone. Patrick uses a lot of metaphors to explain things, to make ideas come alive in colorful, vivid ways - to turn them into *stories*. These are all story-telling tools as old as human speech, and are all about *real communicating*, about opening things up to everyone, making them memorable, accessible - and *delightful*.

Compare this with the kind of jargon that comes along with *NGO culture*, with all those multi-syllabic terms that tend to flatten the variety of human experience like a road roller, and have the effect of neutralizing complex human experiences, reducing to imprecise formalities what was originally direct, vivid and *human*.

A glossary of S.A. Federation terms :

English is the first language of only nine percent of South Africa's 38 million people. There are at least ten main black South African languages, and for the federation these are the living media for extending those stories and broadening this new culture. Each region within the federation has its own songs, its own slogans, it's own delightful words and turns of phrase. Here are just a few of the federation's terms, from the Zulu-speaking parts of South Africa :

- **uMfelandawonye :** means literally *"We all die together"*, and connotes togetherness, gathering. This is what the South Africans call their federation.
- **uMfelandawonye WaBantu Base Mjondolo :** *"Togetherness of the people who live in shacks."* This is the literal translation of "South African Homeless People's Federation," and a more formal term for the federation.
- **uFunduZufe :** *"Learn until you die"*, or *"You never stop learning."* This is an *inside* term, used within the federation for their area resource centres.
- **Nsuku Zonke :** means "*every day*", and is the federation's term for the daily housing savings schemes.
- **Inqolobane :** This is the word for a granary - a place for storing maize - and it's the federation's term for a whole city's collective savings. Patrick elaborates, *"We'll have our own stores to survive on, we won't rely on others. And we'll use some of these stores to plant, some to sell and some to eat now."*
- **uTshani Buya Khuluma :** *"The grassroots people are speaking."* This is also what they call the audio-tape *"Talking Newsletters"* and the printed newsletters which the federation produces with People's Dialogue.
- **uMjondolo :** This is the Zulu word for *"shack"*.
- **uMkhuku :** And this is the Zulu word for *"chicken hatchery"* and is another, vividly descriptive term they use for shacks and shack settlements.
- **Amandla Imali Nolwazi :** *"Power is finance and knowledge!"* This is one of the federation's most important slogans.

A federation meeting at Lamontville :

Joel Bolnick, as part of his work with People's Dialogue, the South African Homeless People's Federation's NGO partner, spends a lot of time traveling around South Africa visiting Nsuku Zonke savings schemes. Here's an exerpt from his notes about a visit to Lamontville, where a rousing meeting inspired these impassioned thoughts on the transforming power of language and song:

Lamontville is seven Kilometres south of Durban, a squatter settlement tumbling down a steep hill between the Indian neighbourhood of Chatsworth and the African township of Umalzi. The shacks appear where the pot-holed asphalt road gives way to red dirt. An old man in a torn gray duffel coat directed me to a safe parking spot while rain clouds gathered overhead.

The clouds darkened and bolts of lightning cracked the sky. Wind whistled through the grass, carrying the fresh smell of approaching rain. We were directed to the top of the hill, where a large shack doubles as church and community hall. Over fifty women and men were waiting for us quietly in the half light, but broke into energetic song as soon as we entered. The elder women ululated and shook outstretched hands so their beads rattled. Their song marshaled other members of the community, and the gathering swelled to over 100 people.

The meeting was charged with spontaneous enthusiasm. Every speaker was heralded with Federation slogans, shouted so loudly that it drowned out the rattle of rain on the corrugated iron roof. Speeches were punctuated with wonderful songs, and songs expanded into *toyi-toyi*, which shook that little shack to the rafters. Like all groups in the South African federation, members of Lamontville's savings scheme have made up their own lyrics and set them to familiar tunes.

My thoughts drifted back to meetings we had held that morning with government officials in Durban. I thought about language and about the way we use words. The officials we met that morning spoke without communicating. Houses became numbers, defined in terms of delivery, pre-determined by rules. People in government, preoccupied with power, cannot tolerate words that are playful. Their words only work: *laws, leaders, profits, products, terms of reference, contracts*. Compared to those grim ranks of rigid instructions, these words expressed in song, here in Lamontville, were almost defiant. Defiant because it is not *information* they convey but *authentic experience*. These women in Lamontville *live in their language*. Their words play, they celebrate life, they speak in the pure poetry of their own history. Even their most heartrendingly sad hymns are an affirmation of the wonder of being alive.

We sat singing, swaying and clapping as the women danced. Here was liberated language, breaking all the rules. In that shack on the hill, with the wind howling and the rain pelting down we recaptured music, gestures, longings, dreams.

"To those in power, these kinds of dreams are problematic, even dangerous, since it is in the nature of dreams that they can never be guaranteed by bureaucrats, bonded by bankers or transformed into commodities by developers."

***"The songs of the women in Lamontville**, like all the savings schemes, are made to create direct communi-cation, reciprocal recog-nition by all members of this national collective. The sun went down, but the singing and dancing continued. This was poetry and development in practice. Poetry which belongs to the people and it is the tool by which communities of homeless poor women can re-orientate time and space to their own ends."*

How the government got a lot of help from the poor . . .

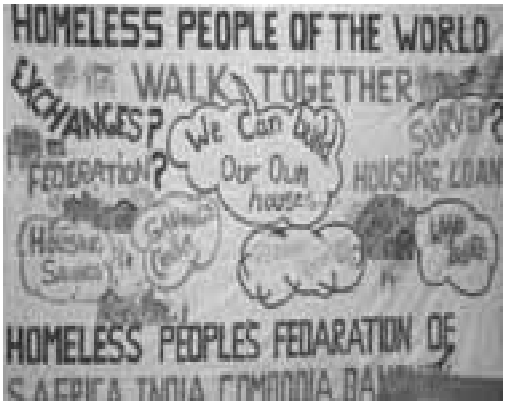
Here's an interesting "federation culture" item from an article by John Yeld, which appeared in the Cape Town newspaper "Argus" on January 11, 1999 :

Who needs commercial bankers or commercial money lenders? When it comes to providing bridg-ing finance for much-needed development projects, the poorest of the poor can also produce the necessary cash! That's the experience of the *"Working for Water"* programme of the Water Affairs and Forestry Ministry, which has struck up a flourishing partnership with the *South African Homeless People's Federation* in Cape Town.

The water programme involves using unemployed workers to remove "water- hungry" alien plants from vital catchment areas, thereby improving the volume and flow of rivers and streams. National Land Affairs Minister Derek Hanekom introduced the two groups, and one of the results is that federation members from the Macassar-Khayalitsha area started work as contractors on projects of the *Working for Water* programme this year.

But there was a minor snag: because of administrative delays, the actual contracts were not ready by the agreed dates, and so funding was not in place. The federation decided it would use the savings of its own members as "pre-finance" for salaries, and the water programme allowed it to begin work three weeks early to get the Macassar project going. During this period, the Federation paid out R 86,000.

What is remarkable is that this bridging finance came from the daily saving of very poor women - most of whom had no direct benefit from Working for Water. Only 106 out of more than 9,000 savers are employed by Working for Water, but the funds came from the savings of federation members in the greater Cape Town area. The Federation now plans to work with the Working for Water Programme in Port Elizabeth, Brits and Durban.



SDI NEWS :

What poor people can do best, all over the globe…

Shack Dwellers International (SDI) was formed in South Africa in 1996, when grassroots groups from Asia, Africa and South America came together to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the *South African Homeless People's Federation*. Over the past three years, through exchange visits, model house exhibitions, enumerations, meetings and intensifying collaborations, SDI has brought together thousands of poor women and men from the pavements of Mumbai, the favelas of Belem, the shacks of Soweto and the garbage dumps of Manila.

These interactions have begun to create a far-flung solidarity and to enable a rapid transfer of development knowledge, organisational skills and resources - from one situation of urban poverty to another. The SDI acronym is convertible! In Asia we call it *Slum Dwellers International*, and in Africa, it's *Shack Dwellers International*.

In formal institutions in Asian and African cities, there remains the assumption that poor people's organisations lack capacity, that it is the job of external agents to either deliver products or to build their capacities through guidance and training. The SDI network seeks policies and institutional housing support mechanisms which acknowledge :

- Poor people are more capable than governments and formal institutions are willing to recognise, and when it comes to housing, they can do many things better than the state.
- Capacities are built best through direct, everyday experience, not through abstract teaching by so-called experts.
- What needs to be addressed most urgently is the lack of capacity of officials, politicians, banks, planners and professionals to understand and support a people's housing process.

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The Namibian Shack Dwellers Federation

The *Namibian Shack Dwellers Federation* is officially only six months old, but the process of the poor organising themselves through saving and credit is almost ten years old. The Namibian people's process has gone from a credit-union approach (1989-93) to a service-delivery approach (1993-98) to a federation of savings collectives involved in a range of poverty reduction strategies.

In 1992, the homeless people in Namibia, who were working in various groups to obtain houses, established a national organisation, the *Namibia Housing Action Group (NHAG).* The groups started to save, raise funds and build houses with loans from the government's *Build Together Programme*. As NHAG grew, they decided to form their own savings and loan scheme, for livelihood and housing, drawing on experiences from *NsukuZonke* (*daily savings*) schemes in South Africa, and the Housing Co-ops in Zimbabwe.

They called their new community-driven savings programme the ***Twahangana Scheme***, which means "united" in Oshiwambo, one of the local Namibian languages. The groups started saving in 1996. They began saving only once a month, but soon realized the value of saving more regularly. The ***Twahangana Fund*** was established with N$ 75,000 external capitol for income generating and housing loans, which so far is being used mainly for income-generation loans.

There are now about 22 mostly-women savings groups which have saved N$ 21,300 and which hold frequent regional meetings and exchanges with South Africa. The Namibians may have slower savings and be more cautious about giving loans, but in all the SDI network in Africa, they have been particularly effective in prioritising the needs of the very poorest members of the savings schemes.

Cooperative Shops from Savings in Nepal

*Members of slum communities in Kathmandu have also taken part in several SDI events in the past two years which brought together community savings groups. A recent issue of Lumanti's bilingual newsletter, **"City Care"** ran a story about five women's savings groups in the Patan area of Kathmandu which have used group loans from their collective savings to start cooperative businesses.*

These small community enterprises have done much more than boosting their individual members' incomes, but have strengthened management capacities and ultimately enlarged the credit pool. The *Gyan* savings group, in the Khapinchhen area was the first to borrow from their savings to open a community provisions shop which sells soap, cigarettes, chocolates, instant noodles and sundries at fair prices to customers within their own settlement. The shop was a hit and the enterprise was a business success for the women who ran it. Other savings groups in the network watched the experiment and soon more cooperative shops opened. The *Smriti* and *Ekata* savings groups were next, with local shops selling milk, sugar and tea. The *Pakriti* savings group in Lonhla and the *Mahila* savings group followed with cooperatively managed outlets selling pulses, soap and provisions and various kinds of seasonal goods which are required for festivals and ceremonies.

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At the meeting, the South Africans told the Zimbabwe groups that ***"the University of Mahila Milan has sent its professors down to see what is happening, so watch out!"***

"The Zimbabwe Federation is born !"

Last December, shack-dwellers from all over Zimbabwe were joined in Harare by slum dwellers from India, Cambodia, South Africa, Namibia, Kenya and Senegal for a four-day meeting which was part SDI gathering and part launching party for the Zimbabwe federation. Here are some reactions to this historic event, drawn from E-mails and reports from the Indian team that followed, and from Diana Mitlin at IIED :

Sheela writes : Jockin has just returned to Bombay from Zimbabwe, and said the meeting in Harare was wonderful. For all the community leaders who were at Booderstrom in 1991 [*the meeting at which the South African Homeless People's Federation was born*), it had the same quality of joy, exploration and adventure. Last year, when the Zimbabweans came to India, there were only four or five saving schemes. Now they're all over the country and over 120 representatives came to the meeting.

Jockin writes : At the beginning, there were some objections about the steering committee's being mostly women. All the issues about the central partici-pation of women came into the powerful debate that followed. The committee's chairwoman sells vegetables in the market in Harare, and she and the other women were very worried. *"Tell me what to do!"* they pleaded on day one. But on day two, they were saying, *"I think I can handle it,"* and by day three, *"So, how am I doing?"* You could watch with your own eyes the transformation in attitude.

Celine writes : Such events just don't happen in Harare. The press, radio and television media were out in force to cover the meeting, and even the Housing Minister Mr. Garera showed up. Is that really him, people joked, or have you hired a look-alike from the settlements? Well, it really *was* him, and the federations presented him with a challenge : if each of the federation's 25,000 members could contribute Zim$ 5 a month to a special urban poor loan fund, how about topping that amount at three government dollars to every one community dollar? *The minister agreed, and pledged Zim$ 25 Million right away!* A meeting was set up the next day and 18 local and international people met the minister, who didn't expect such a tight follow-up. The message he got was clear : *people are ready to run, do you want to accompany them or get left behind?*

Diana writes : *Zimbabwe is sparkling!* The enumeration will start mid-April and probably run for six weks (30,000 families). The idea is then to take two weeks to produce a document for the city from the results and present this at a house model exhibition later on. The Zimbabwe Federation is bubbling over with learning, knowledge, savings, loans and singing.

What they call themselves . . .

The Zimbabwe Federation now includes over 50 savings schemes in all the major cities and towns in Zimbabwe. Saving is strong, but because it is still very young, the federation's structures are still undeveloped. This is not a problem, though, but an asset, since it makes the Zimbabwe federation very much grassroots-driven. And where but in the grassroots would you find such smile-inducing names for savings schemes as these?

- **Zvishamiso** *(Miracles)*
- **Ruzivo** *(Knowledge)*
- **Zvikomborero** *(Blessings)*
- **Kutambura** *(Strife and troubles)*
- **Zvido Zvedu** *(Be trustworthy)*
- **Tazvida** *(We like it)*
- **Betsirai** *(Help each other)*

Zimbabwe : People's survey in Victoria Falls

Community driven shack-counting and enumeration are well developed practices within the SDI network. Last year, the South Africans came to help conduct enumerations in two of Harare's squatter settlements - Dzivareskwa and Hatcliff Extension.

Later, the federation in Victoria Falls used the same process to revitalise their savings schemes, mobilise new members and engage the local council in earnest negotiations for land. Community leaders from South Africa, Namibia and Kenya came to help out. The four-day survey focused on the Chinotimba Township, a large squatter area on the periphery of Victoria Falls, where over 15,000 people live in shacks, with one toilet for every 507 shack-dwellers and one tap for every 1,350 shack-dwellers.

On the first day of the programme, the local federation used the presence of the international delegates to leverage a meeting with the Victoria Falls Town Council, which had thus far been extremely hostile to the federation.

At one point in the meeting, the Town Clerk said he opposed the savings schemes because they would only encourage further in-migration from the rural areas. The South Africans immediately assured him that he had nothing to fear, that once savings schemes were working in partnership with the Council, then the federation would help set up savings schemes in the rural areas, and this would improve people's lives so that they would be less likely to migrate to town.

Later, the Zimbabweans acknowledged that their instinct would have been to challenge the Town Clerk by saying that it was the constitutional right of all Zimbabweans to live wherever they chose to live.

The South Africans had shown that effective negotiations with government officials do not depend on scoring political or ideological points, but are most effective when discussion is carefully restricted to common interests and common strategies. What good would come of alienating that Town Clerk by challenging his prejudices? Better to side-step the debate, so that a common strategy could emerge.

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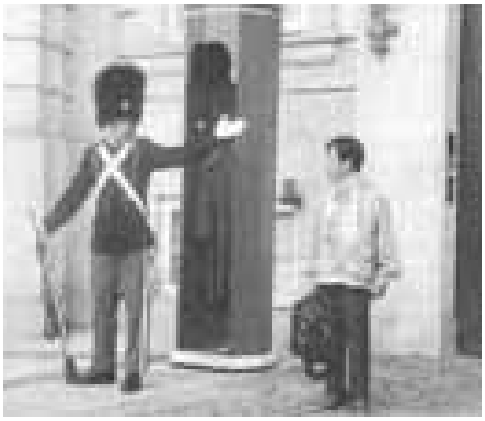

NORTH - SOUTH EXCHANGE :

"Fishing for complements"

Once it was the accepted thing that poorer countries in the *Southern Hemisphere* were the recipients of ideas and aid from richer countries in the *Northern Hemisphere.* But many of those poorer countries are turning out to be gold mines of innovation. And as the list of ground-breaking work in community-driven devel-opment gets longer, more and more organi-sations in Britain, Ireland, North America and Europe are looking South for fresh ways of tackling their own problems of poverty and social justice, and investigating the added value of *"North-South learning".*

In the past couple of years, several workshops and key exchange visits by southern community leaders and activists have helped give shape to this new dimension in the development scene. Ideas are being tested and several groups are exploring possibilities of North-South exchanges around issues of micro-finance, network-building, horizontal community exchanges, study visits.

Michael Norton, at the **Centre for Innovation in Voluntary Action** writes, *"This process challenges the conventional notion that we in the North know best. We were always ready to transfer our ideas and ways of working to Southern countries, through projects funded by donor agencies, where funding is tied to particular ways of working, certain forms of training and information, most of which is developed and organised from the North. Here, we have southern NGOs and community leaders coming to look at how we work, and setting this in the context of their ideas, their methods and their experience. Sharing ideas like this can be extremely productive, particularly where people are looking for new ideas and new ways forward."*

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Ask for a copy of the report, produced with Oxfam UK, called "Fishing for Complements: Where next for North-South Learning?"

Thailand and Denmark exchange :

How to say "Sustainable Urban Environment" in Danish . . .

Last September, a group of community leaders from the Thai Community Network spent eight days in Denmark visiting housing cooperatives and sustainable environment projects. The team also included community-supporters from Thai NGOs, housing agencies and local government.

While in Denmark, the Thais encountered a social welfare system which takes care of everybody, from cradle to grave - free education, free health care, unemployment benefits that go on for two years - even bicycle lanes! And the hefty taxes that all Danes ungrumblingly pay to finance these benefits. All this looked like something from Planet X to those coming from a country where the government gives little, and the family is still the chief social net.

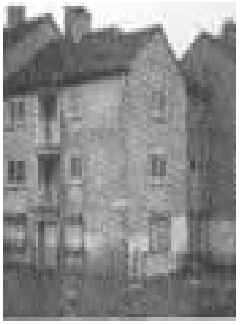
But other things they saw, like Danish experiments with sustainable energy and solid waste disposal, struck a powerful chord - things like bio-gas, recycling, com-posting, solar power, wind power, garbage power, rainwater harvesting. The Danes are serious about this stuff! These weren't just radical experiments by a few green-ers, but vital parts of the nation's energy and environmental management systems.

The example of solid waste : Take the example of garbage disposal in Danish cities: first they recycle whatever can be recycled, then compost all the wet, organic stuff into fertilizer. Most of what's left goes into incinerators, which generate steam and electricity. Forty percent of the electricity in Aarhus comes from burning garbage! Then, whatever can't be recycled, composted or burned goes into landfills. Last year, only 5% of Denmark's garbage went into landfills, and the goal is to get that down to 2% in a year or two! To people who have set up com-munity-based recycling cooperatives, organised canal clean-ups and constructed community amenities in cities throughout Thailand, *this was strong broth.*

The Denmark visit represents another kind of *North-South learning*. This was not a case of privileged Northern technology "experts" telling the poor Thais what to do with their cities. On the contrary, here was an experienced, confident bunch of project designers from poor communities, looking around for add-ons to the environmental community processes they are now deeply involved in managing and extending, on the ground back in Thailand.

The study tour was hosted by the Danish Government's Development Funding agency, **DANCED**, whose innovative form of development funding to poor communities has worked with Thailand's **Urban Community Environmental Activities Project (UCEA)** to make poor communities themselves into the managers of that aid, and the decision-makers about how those funds are used, rather than any Danish "experts".

Denmark has a long-established and diverse cooperative movement, which started 100 years ago, when industrialisation began drawing poor people into the cities, just like Asia now. By 1900, there were 500 small housing and agricultural co-ops in Denmark. The Thai group visited a range of co-ops, from tiny 8-unit "family-style" housing co-ops, to big experimental 1,000-family "sustainable village" cooperatives built out on the edge of Copenhagen.



From the slums of Bombay to the housing estates of Britain :

In the past two years, community leaders and key NGO people from India and South Africa have been invited to meet with tenant organisations, homeless groups, housing activists and voluntary organisations in Britain, Ireland, Europe and America. Some of these visits were sponsored by Oxfam-UK, The Centre for Innovation in Voluntary Action, Homeless International and Bilance. Here are a few exerpts from the lively visit reports :

"You see, our situation is special . . ."

In almost every place I visited, and with everyone I spoke, the sentence that kept echoing was *"You see, our situation is special."* This sounded familiar to me: in almost every community the NSDF works, this sentence is the preface to all discussions. Each person, each family and each community *is unique* - that's what makes the whole thing so interesting - but we do have many things in common. More than anything else, the circumstances which lead to impoverishment - unemployment, marginalisation, unfulfilled aspirations - have a root cause that is often similar. These are some aspects of the crisis that many of us face in our lives, our livelihoods and our living conditions. *(Sheela Patel, director of SPARC, has made several trips to the UK, visiting council estates and meeting with tenant and community organisations to share her ideas on community participation.)*

Getting "Recognized"

There were different homeless groups - some were single, some lived in shelters, others had some form of community in their locality. After one demolition, 80 families decided to hang on together and went to the local council and got themselves recognized as a community. This was interesting - *getting yourselves recognized!* That's something we use back home, where getting your slum *recognized* is a ticket to infrastructure entitlements and better security. These kinds of stories need to be highlighted and repeated so they become experiences from which others can learn. In India, we would have got groups from all over the country to visit them and check out how they did the negotiations with the council. *(Last year, Celine D'Cruz, from SPARC, met homeless groups in UK and Ireland with NSDF President Jockin, and with Rose and Patrick from the South African Homeless People's Federation.)*

Winston Churchill, eat your heart out . . .

Throughout their trip through Britain, the Indians and South Africans were delighted with all the attention they were getting! At the central station in Leeds, they picked up the *Guardian*, which ran a feature about "The homeless visitors coming all the way from India and South Africa to meet with the homeless in UK!" And Jockin took an especially wicked pleasure in being interviewed by the BBC - live from the main bureau in London. *"For 200 years,"* he said, *"We used to be like their slaves. Now they are calling a slum dweller from India to come and give them advice!"*

Getting better at development . . .

While Sheela was in Britain, she sat down with Michael Norton and sketched out the table shown below, which lays out in a simple, comparitive way, her thoughts on the traditional model of community development, and her ideas for a new, more sustainable one :

	Traditional approach	*A new focus*
Mode	Service delivery	Solution-oriented
Time scale	Short-term (3-5 years)	Long-term (10 years & beyond)
Style	Pragmatic, opportunistic	Strategic
Characteristics	Relief via projects	Regeneration via processes
Key partners	Governments and NGOs	NGOs and local communities
Project design	Vertical	Horizontal
Project bias	Pro-professional	Pro-poor

Contact SPARC for a copy of the report ***"From the Slums of Bombay to the Housing Estates of Britain : Community involvement in the process of community regeneration in Britain, sharing ideas and practice from working with slum communities in India"*** *by Sheela Patel. (Published by the Centre for Innovation in Voluntary Action and Oxfam-UK)*

New Yorkers in Asia :

Last August, a group of housing activists and professionals from universities and non-proft agencies in New York City visited poor community initiatives in Thailand, India and Sri Lanka, as part of a study tour organised by Nihon Fukushi University in Japan.

Kali Muhammedu is a large, powerfully-voiced woman who works with low-income tenants in her own neighborhood, in the Bronx. She helps them to organise themselves and either take-over or buy their own buildings and then renovate them, tapping various assistance programmes available in the city. In the blunt vernacular of a born-and-raised New Yorker, she had these words to say about what she saw poor communities in Thailand doing : "You know, I have traveled all over this green earth, and everywhere I go, I see what people in communities are doing to try to make things better, *and what cities are doing to screw it all up.*"

Abdur Rahman has spent over twenty years building the enormous *Oceanhill-Brownsville Tenants Association*, in his low-income African American and Latino neighbor-hood in Brooklyn. "There are four steps in building a strong community organisation," he said, "and it takes about 15 years to get to step two! After that, things start clicking." The OHB helps organize tenant associations in deteriorating privately-owned rental housing by training tenant leaders to organise, negotiate and use their legal rights and eco-nomic power to improve their living conditions.

In Bangkok, he visited people living in underbridge communities, in conditions far worse than he'd ever seen back in New York, but when the question came up of these communities needing help from "experts" and professionals, Abdur had this to say: "Listen, I graduated from UCLA - that's the University on the corner of Lincoln Avenue - and I got a doctorate in *common sense!* Now we got the biggest tenants association in New York. We got a full-time staff of 800! *Hell, you don't need any experts!*"

Some notes from the good idea file . . .

It's been said before that good ideas don't really need to be taught or "diseminated" at all - that if they are really good, they will just catch the wind and spread, without anyone having to make that happen. Well that's the case with this bit of incremental development whimsy, in which families in Manila, Phnom Penh and Bangkok have found similar ways of building new houses, like a second skin, around the older or temporary dwellings while they are still living in them.

On top is a house being built at the Southeast People's Village Homeowner's Association in Manila. After reblocking, this family literally picked up and moved their house to their new spot in the layout plan and are now building a more solid block house around the old wooden one. In the resettlement site at Boeung Krappeur, in Phnom Penh, people first built shelters from materials leftover from their roadside houses, and using the same strategy, constructed their new houses at their own pace, right around the old one sitting snugly inside. And on the bottom is a house at the cooperative community at Prekasa, in Bangkok. It has been built gradually, in the same way, and even though you can't see it in the photo, inside there are wall panels, posts and windows which have been salvaged from the old house.

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