



Special Habitat II Edition

Newsletter of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

20 Years of Urban Poor Housing in Asia

The GOOD

Community based development

unrealistic planning*globalization of markets*inaccessibility to water*air pollution*AIDS*overcrowding*government bureaucracy*unregulated privatization*exclusion of women*violence*drug addiction*corruption*environmental degradation*slave labour*exploitation*prioritizing private vehicles*unbalanced rural urban growth*discrimination*centralization*urbanism



Inadequate shelter, water basic needs

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Demolition of homes and forced evictions

Reflections on Housing for the Poor in Asia over the past 20 years
Stories from the Grassroots Urban Poor in Asia
ACHR News: Eviction Watch, AWAS, TAP, Young Professionals



20 Years with Asia's Urban Poor

by Fr Jorge Anzorena

It is around twenty years ago that I began to be involved in housing for low income people and to record their activities.

At that time the official reaction in front towards the squatters and slum dwellers was in general hostile and sometimes violent. Services, education, etc were denied.

Community organizations very much related with ACPO were struggling against eviction in Korea, Philippines, India, Hong Kong, Thailand. In Dasmariñas, Freedom to Build was supporting the housing activities of the relocated people. In India, ASAG was already in the implementation of large projects working through the programs of the local governments to reach local communities in a meaningful way. In Seoul, the Bogum Jahri Community which later became a housing movement from the experience of the slum began their first project. There were some small experiences with the poorest building houses with soil cement blocks in Sri Lanka, and Pakistan and bamboo houses in Indonesia. In Mangalore there was the one hundred dollars roof project.

In India, ASAG with SELAVIP organized a moving seminar in Bombay, Hyderabad, Calcutta, New Delhi and Ahmedabad. For the first time, local governments accepted the organizing of local workshops in each place to discuss and evaluate with local and foreign NGOs the last ten years of the housing for the poor. There were moments of tension but a lot of interaction.

Later in Bangkok, the Building Together Association was organized with inspiration in the FUNDASAL experience in a very professional project in which the participation of the University and government gave the Housing of the Poor movement respectability. Professionals in Surabaya, Bandung, Bangkok, Ahmedabad, etc began to experiment with new approaches to improve the slums through people's participation: slum improvement, land sharing, financing. More NGOs began to work in the slums. In India the National Housing Rights Movement put many people in contact with each other, raised the awareness of the problem and defined the housing goal: a place in which the people could feel secure and develop as human beings.

Also in Bangkok, the Right to Stay Seminar spoke of one development, centered and managed by the squatters themselves. Not long afterwards the people's federation began to act.

In Karachi, Orangi Pilot Project began its experience of learning the process of the people and give support to it in a professional way. The interaction of the university students and the grassroots gave depth to the project. When some from the government began to support the activity of the people, a new dimension was added, with the legalization of squatters settlements and the learning from the illegal subdivisions. In India, organizations of men and women from the slums began to organize themselves through savings, participatory research for action.

During these years, financing the poor has been the big innovation. Committed people in different countries through different approaches brought loans to the poor. The One Million Houses Program gave a very flexible approach to the lending process. The Grameen Bank is the giant of the area, with more than two million members receiving loans of an average of US\$100 and more than 300000 houses built. In Philippines, the Community Mortgage Program provided security of tenure for more than 56 thousand families. In Thailand, the UCDO provides a structure in which the government provides a revolving fund in which the urban poor and NGOs can participate as partners of the process of giving loans for income producing activities and housing.

With the pressure of new economic systems many governments are hardening their position towards the urban poor. Perhaps in the following years it will be important to struggle to...

1. maintain the partial gains that the urban poor have gained in recent years specially in services and credit
2. get building codes and construction regulations that are adapted more to the reality of the cities
3. keep the cooperativistic spirit in the building of ones own houses by ones self with mutual help
4. continue the dialogue of professionals and people trying to create a better environment for the poor.

Seeing the Asian social context, the slums are going to remain for a long time in many of our cities. What is possible is to make them more habitable and human?

Fr Jorge Anzorena, crusader for the poor, writer of SELAVIP Journal of Low Income Housing in Asia and the World, and in 1995, Magsaysay Award-winner for International Understanding.

Note from editors:

This issue of the ACHR Newsletter focuses on urban poor communities in Asia between Habitat I & II. All columnists are from, or closely associated with ACHR. Their views reflect the diversity of the region as well as the common problems associated with urban poor communities and cities over the region. We thank those in ACHR for their great response and apologize to those who did not receive enough advance warning and were busy either in the Habitat II process or in the field.

To readers, we hope you don't find the layout too confusing. People's stories have been deliberately juxtaposed with the views of housing professionals and NGOs. Other reasons are constraints of time, expense and perhaps talent.

Views on Habitat II within ACHR vary greatly. We wish all participants well. The final judgment will be whether its impact will improve the lives of urban poor and enhance their efforts to find a decent place to live.

Views from the Grassroots

From Klong Toey, Bangkok

"20 years ago, most of the people living here were from the rural areas, here to sell their labor." In Klong Toey, Bangkok's largest slum, 56 year old community activist, Kaew Promporcheunbun, looks back on the development of the community. "The people were poor, but there was a lot of work available....It was not very crowded and the houses were spaced apart from each other....Yet, the people's lives were lived very individualistic; people did not know each other nor help each other."

He believes that the present situation is better in many ways, "There has been development in the area, such as the roads, homes, etc. There is unity among the people many of



Since Habitat I,

By Arif Hasan

Twenty years ago the Habitat Conference accepted that the major problem in Asian cities was shelter for the poor who constitute over sixty five per cent of the population in urban Third World Asia. It was acknowledged that this problem could not be solved by conventional means and that innovative strategies were required.

It was recommended with great passion that there should be no eviction and demolition of squatter settlements. Instead they should be upgraded and regularised. Sites and services programmes were promoted and technical advice and loans of both materials and money were proposed for low income communities. A lot of emphasis was laid on lowering infrastructure standards and on participation of communities in project planning, implementation, management and subsequent O&M.

Many of these concepts led to the creation of projects at great expense. However, very few of these became effective national programmes and even those that did made little difference to the

scale of the problem. This scale has increased over time, both in terms of absolute numbers and in percentage terms, and the bulldozing the squatter settlements has not only increased, but has acquired a sophistication that did not exist twenty years ago.

In recent years, liberalisation of the economies of Asian countries and structural re-adjustment have given these countries First World economies with a Third World wage structure. The poor have become poorer, requirements have increased, and the new economic policies have created a boom in the real estate market.

This has increased the value of land and made it impossible for the poor to have access to it in appropriate locations. They are being pushed out of the cities and their current places of residence are being turned into commercial and residential plazas for the rich. Asian planners have failed to protect land for housing the poor or for the environmental benefit of their cities.

Meanwhile, due to conventional land use

planning, the formal city is being divided into commercial, industrial and residential areas. This increases distances to and from work; emphasises class divisions; creates rich and poor ghettos; and promotes crime and violence. The poor are the major victims of these trends.

A democratic political culture that could help in tackling these issues has yet to emerge. The politician - real estate developer - police - city administration nexus makes a mockery of democratic institutions and of the planning and implementation processes. Twenty years of massive technical assistance, loans and numerous experts have certainly not helped the poor. Nor have they been able to produce planners, architects and administrators who can deliver "community participation" and "innovative strategies". However, there has been positive changes as well which are going to lead to a better future. **Where people have been able to develop to negotiate successfully with government and to effect decision making, things have improved.** Similarly, there are indications to show that through collective savings, poor communities can access what the formal sector has to offer. And again, some professional institutions are struggling to develop professionals who can plan in a manner that the poor can benefit.

These are foundations on which one can build.

Arif Hasan is an architect and Director of the Orangi Pilot Project - Research Training Institute, Karachi, Pakistan

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Views from the Grassroots - People's stories from urban Asia

whom willingly participate in the various community activities, including the drug control group, the AIDS group, the co-operative store, the savings and credit group, and the community library. If we have problems in the community, we all work together to solve them."

Yet, there are two issues that loom over them. One is the increase in unemployment and the other is eviction. "Just as our lives were getting better, we are now being evicted. For the people in the slum, this means that our life will go back to the way it was when we first got here...With no money, no work, no home, it will be very difficult... If we were asked, "Do you want to move?" Most people would answer "no." This is our home and we love it. Lots of people were born here, raised here and have relatives here."

Much of this change is due to the interest of further developing the Port Authority of Thailand's land on which the Klong Toey Slum rests. Kaew states, "the government has developed the country a lot. But this form of development is only about industrializing the country. Development of the people is lacking. The people who have gained most from this type of development are the rich. The poor people haven't gained anything from this. The government doesn't take care of its poor people."

If it wasn't for the issue of eviction, Kaew believes that the community has developed for the better. Yet, in facing this problem, the community's future is uncertain. They have begun



organizing in order to make sure that the Port Authority of Thailand includes their needs and concerns in its decision-making processes. Many have decided not to move until their needs are considered. Only time will tell. From: Akiko Minami.



Reflections and Challenges

by Somsook Boonyabancha

Shortly after Habitat I in 1976, I entered the field of housing for the urban poor by joining the Slum Upgrading Office, National Housing Authority in Thailand. It was, perhaps, due to the mood and international influences at that time that the Thai Government started a new approach, but still under its old organization. This involved moving from heavily subsidized, complete constructions or high rise housing, to a strategy of improving existing slums and implementing sites and services projects.

I learned later on that these changes had emerged throughout the region, more or less, and in various forms during this period. I assumed it was an international influence and an effective and impact resulting from Habitat I. In general it seems, the global direction in housing the poor, over the past two decades, has changed its emphasis from heavy construction by the state to become more of an attempt at "housing by people".

Another major trend, though less important has been the emergence of a powerful role for the private sector in housing production but this has rarely

penetrated below the middle classes. **The new exciting direction of "housing by people" on a large scale has had limited success; instead, there has emerged complex problems of eviction in most slums.** Institutions ranging from UN, governments, municipalities or NGOs have not been able to move very far from Habitat I. Problems developed because of institutional arrangements which were top-down, bureaucratic, conventional, complex and rigid. So, policy became irrelevant to the people, the situation and the reality. This caused stagnation and an inability of the system to be creative and flexible in seeking solutions that could keep pace with the rate and scale of problems emerging.

Since entering this field with the new movement, I strongly believe in the **people as key actors, key subjects to the processes and the key in how to find the right kind of housing process and forms to fit.** With this strong belief, though life changed, up and down, I have encountered many exciting experiences. I have learned so much from the people and their rich

and diverse ways of finding housing solutions derived from their poverty and ingenuity. I have also participated with people in a number of interesting innovations, new solutions and found gratifying scope to change things and attempt to overcome the present limitations.

I think the challenges of today is not in the absence of many good ideas. Plenty of ideas are generated and can be accessed in the avalanche of documents and at so many expensive meetings. More important is **how to do and how to make things work from the existing situation and present reality in a given political context.**

It is a new challenge to understand the strengths and positive energy in the process and in the people involved, and to use such strength to develop and energize the processes in other related areas. The challenge for us is, how to find the right supporting mechanism to facilitate such a change process by people on a large scale?

It is important to look beyond Habitat II, to concentrate more seriously on creating new mechanisms to support diverse processes by people on a large scale; mechanisms which are flexible enough to deal with the variety of problems that exist from the simple to more complex forms of growth, and which lead to gradual internal and external structural change.

Somsook Boonyabancha is Secretary General of ACHR and the Deputy Director of the Urban Community Development Office, Thailand.



Is the Situation Improving?

by Kenneth Fernandes

Some time ago, an NGO worker was overheard commenting on the situation in an inner-city settlement in Karachi: "It's a real shame that there has been no improvement here yet." The local community activist he was speaking to was at once up in arms: "What do you mean no improvement: we have new and broader roads, people have improved their houses and far more children are going to school. Yes, there may be still a lot of problems, but we will overcome these in due time."

Men and women who migrated to cities in the sixties and seventies, and settled on any available land, have by sheer hard work developed these settlements. They acquired land, built houses and started

small-scale enterprises. They built schools for children, and found solutions to health problems through traditional healers ... all this despite government harassment and discrimination as 'illegal' and 'squatter' citizens in their own country.

Through self-help efforts some have gained confidence and no longer are cowered by government strategies to evict settlers. These men and women claim a legal position in the city and are willing to defend it. They have an increasing say in the political process.

On the one hand, the city is being shaped less and less by governments and more by developers and real estate managers. Speculation continues unchecked, distorted

land prices make land unaffordable to low-income groups. Migrants who settled on the periphery of cities twenty to thirty years ago find that today these areas have high commercial value and many of them are now faced with eviction.

As government agencies become stronger the vulnerability of the poor increases. The legal system is used against the poor. A functioning city that caters to the elite and growing middle-class is a goal that most city managers want to achieve to attract foreign investments and companies.

These two situations are juxtaposed. **The organizing process in low-income communities need to be strengthened so that they can continue to gain ground in determining the development process of their cities.** An alliance needs to be developed between middle-class and low-income community organization, to reclaim the city as their own, to make it livable.

Kenneth Fernandes is Coordinator of ACHR's Eviction Watch and Housing Rights Programme and was Director of the Urban Resource Centre.



Reflections from Japan

by Mitsuhiro Hosaka Japan

Twenty years ago I was officially still a student in Japan and occasionally went to the university library, reading John Turner and hearing a bit about ZOTO's struggle in Tondo. Unofficially I was working in the informal sector doing many types of odd, temporary, sometimes underground, jobs. In 1977 I ended up working in the UN system.

In 1984 I moved to Bangkok. As the Thai government claimed that the serious flood in the previous year was caused by illegal occupation on canal banks, squatters were being evicted day by day. Probably the Vancouver model of squatter upgrading was then gradually being eroded world-wide by new interests in urban land.

My turning point was perhaps in 1986 when Fr. Jorge Anzorena invited me

to a regional meeting where I met several of the Anzorena mafia who later became "ACHR old timers". At the meeting we discussed whether the next meeting could be for people themselves to gather. According to John Daly, "people" were defined to be non-English speaking. I was not fully convinced whether it was effective to arrange people-to-people exchanges beyond language barrier, and whether desirable to single out particular leaders from communities for international travel. But at least I became less cynical, and interested in trying, on my part, to change UN programmes toward that direction.

It was fantastic to work for people-to-people sharing within an environment around the UN at that time. Some governments prevented our NGO friends from attending UN meetings. An embassy

in Bangkok did not believe that Mahila Milan members from Bombay were delegates on UN tickets, looking at some of their passports with thumb stamps in place of signatures.

All in all we have been in a global stream. The most significant trend, to me, during the last twenty years was the people coming to the fore with their own approaches. They communicate, share and support each other, locally and trans-nationally. I certainly witnessed this while working in Sri Lanka.

What I now try is to bring the community network over to people in Japan. There do exist informal processes in gaps of this excessively formalized society. Earthquake victims in Kobe could be encouraged to learn from our Asian friends that "illegal" occupation on public lands is not something to be afraid of, but is a step forward. These twenty years have perhaps seen the increasing isolation of Japanese people from global thinking of community processes, while I have been isolated from Japanese society.

M Hosaka has worked for ESCAP in Bangkok, UNHCS in Sri Lanka and now lectures at Nihon Fukushi University, Japan

Views from the Grassroots - People's stories from urban Asia

From Kathmandu, Nepal

20 years ago at the time of Habitat I, Vikhar lost his small plot of farmland when a government project put a water canal through it. He received no compensation.

In a market in Kathmandu, a group of vegetable sellers explain how they came from the Terai (the plains area of Nepal). Vikhar told us he had lived in Kathmandu for the past 20 years after losing his small plot of farmland when a government project put a water canal through it. Like many others who also lost their land, he received no compensation. He never thinks about bringing his family here; "The cost of living is far too high in Kathmandu," he explained. Vikhar visits his wife and two children once a year, while the others return to their homes during the farming season.

Like many single men in Kathmandu, he rents a small room which he shares with three others. Later in the day he took us to the room. It is damp and gloomy with no window. As the urban population expanded house owners transformed the ground floor of their traditional homes to renters' quarters. In business or tourist areas, the poor are gradually evicted and shops are established. Many of the poor find new homes in squatter areas or sweepers communities where rooms are sometimes cheaper. Up to 12 men can occupy one room.

Shushila Rana began squatting on marginal land many years ago, with the permission of the government. Now she and 23 other families are surrounded by houses of the middle class. Her husband has tried to secure house registration, but after many attempts gave up, admitting "the process is unfathomable".

This young family (pictured right) were formerly squatters until their house was demolished the same day as their baby was born. The young mother earns 16 NR per kilo for spun carpet wool. She can spin 2 kilos per day. Her husband has been unemployed for the past year. Their rented room is about 500 NR per month.





ARE WE FIGHTING A LOST CAUSE?

by Adnan Aliani

We are entering a new age which is characterized by the weakening of the nation state and the hegemony of free market ideologies. With the signing of the General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs (GATT) and the rapid formation of economic blocks such as ASEAN, EU, SAARC, APEC and ECO, the private corporate sector, particularly the multinationals in determining national policies is being strengthened. Profits rather than human rights, justice and fair-play are increasingly determining relationships between countries of the region. An example of this trend is the recent decision of the Clinton administration to grant China Most Favoured Nation trading status in spite of its deplorable human rights record and its repression of popular movements in Tibet. The outcries of developed countries against child labour and environmental controls in developing countries is not aroused by any sympathy for the children concerned or any fear of deteriorating environmental conditions, but rather because the prevailing labour conditions and lack of environmental controls makes it cheaper to manufacture goods in developing countries. Increasingly cities, rather than nation-states will become key players in this global economic network. Already, Bangkok, Jakarta, Manila, Kuala

Lumpur, and Seoul have more in common with each other than they do with their rural hinterlands. One sees the same department stores, the same glass faced sky-scrappers, and the same traffic jams with the same cars.

In addition to this new, aggressive, money-before-people new world order, we are witnessing another, perhaps more profound revolution: the advent of the information age. Twenty years ago, live telecast of a cricket match was a rare event. Today receiving CNN, BBC or Star TV every day, twenty four hours a day seems normal and expected. One can sit in Bangkok and communicate, in real time, with the White House in Washington DC through the Internet or download tons of information from the various web sites on the information highway. Billions of dollars are being transferred every day at the flick of a button. A single trader in Singapore can destroy a two-hundred year old bank in London in a matter of months, forcing the lay-off of hundreds of staff.

This new world we are moving into will enrich those who have access to information and capital and impoverish those who lack these. In other words the gap between the haves and the have-nots will grow wider. **We are in danger of creating a permanent under-class of nations, cities, and**

people. After two decades of work the conditions of the poor have improved marginally. Evictions are still taking place and the poor still do not have decent housing. Corruption and the role of organized crimes in our cities have, in fact increased. Our efforts to promote self-help approaches have had the effects of a pebble in a pond: they have caused ripples on the surface, but the waters below remains undisturbed. Is there hope for those of us working on behalf of the poor or are we fighting for a lost cause?

These trends wherein lies the added misery of the poor also have the kernels of hope for a better and more equitable future. There is a shift in philosophy towards poverty alleviation, from paternalistic, charity-based, government-initiated approaches to those emphasizing individual responsibility and community empowerment. There is also a shift towards decentralization and strengthening of local governments. We are also seeing greater political freedoms in the Post-Cold-War era. The poor have become more organized, aware, and vociferous in their demands for change.

The atmosphere is right to build upon our collective experience and launch a region wide movement for change which will seek to empower the poor by helping them to:

Build collective mechanisms: Several programmes have shown that organized, united, and articulate poor communities can resist negative pressures and form strong and equal partnerships with government and other civil groups.

Develop technical and managerial skills: Organizations of the poor need assistance in acquiring skills in managing organizations and interacting

Views from the Grassroots - People's stories from urban Asia

From Lyari, Karachi

MAI KHAN (65) has lived in Lyaris inner city settlement all her life. Water has always been a major issue for the 1.6 million people living in the area.

"In the beginning, our area was a river. There was water all over. Kalakot was a graveyard. Then people came from Makran and they filled the area with mud and stones and levelled it. They built shacks.

The water problem is beyond our understanding. Ten years ago we were getting water in Bhutto's time and then again in Ziaul Haq's time but now nothing. We pay all the bills, water, electricity and gas but now for the past two years we have not received a water bill.

We walk about 4 to 5 miles to fill water, somewhere near Crown Cinema, Mauripur. We fill the water in containers and carry them back one at a time, making five to six trips daily. The men do not help us because they are ashamed to be seen doing women's work.

The men in our area go to solve the problems of the community but they are not successful. They went to the MNA for our area, but he did not do anything. The men try to get the roads repaired but no one listens to them.

I have tried to solve the problems of the area. When we had a problem with the sewage overflowing in the area, I went to the municipal office nearby and asked them to do something about the problem. They sent us to the zonal office. We were twelve of us. First they said we had come to the wrong office. Then we met a man who is our relative. He told us to go to another officer. He listened to us and gave instructions to send a municipal worker to clean the gutter. They treated us with respect. But we went to the zonal office because that time all of us had a problem with our gutter lines. That's why the women were ready to come.

Contributed by Rehana Rahi, Karachi

group environments in addition to education and occupational skills.

Create wealth in their communities: most poor are not without income what they may lack are mechanisms to build their savings and access credit within their communities

Building partnerships with other actors: The poor cannot improve their living conditions alone and must therefore build partnerships with middle class professionals, other civil society actors and the government. This requires a fundamental shift from the traditional confrontational strategies used by NGOs in the 1970s to strategies which emphasize pragmatism, compromise and consensus building.

At the same time we need to prod and assist governments in changing their role from providers to enablers. In this endeavor global forces will be working in our favour.

Structural Adjustment Policies emphasize the role of the government as an enabler and a regulator, rather than a provider. However, we must ensure that local governments are strengthened, particularly because these levels of government are closer to people and influencing and forming partnerships with these levels of government is often easier. We also need to advocate for increasing democracy and people

participation in government and service delivery institutions, rather than privatization of government functions.

We also need to ensure that future professionals have the ability to study and learn from existing processes and realities on the ground rather than relying on models and solutions from developed countries.

At the same time we need to instill a culture of experimentation and innovation in government, where failure is measured by the lack of effort and entrepreneurship. Governments have historically resisted reforms. To bring about these changes we would also have to activate middle-classes to become more closely involved in addressing urban issues because these have an immense potential to catalyze change.

In short the message we need to get across is that we are entering an era of increased interdependence; that now more than ever, what affects one group in society will affect other groups; and that the responsibility for good and effective governance lies not with the government but with the people and that people's groups have to become organized, articulate and vociferous if the needed reforms are to be achieved.

Adnan Aliani, Human Settlements Officer United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia- Pacific



Korea & Hab II

Dr. Seong Kyu Ha

On March 1995 the Korea NGO and CBO forum for Habitat II was born and approximately 30 NGOs and CBOs joined. The forum has organized several conferences and workshops for Habitat II in order to exchange views and lobby the government.

We think that the Habitat II agenda and the Korea National Plan of Action for Habitat II has not dealt with the issue of community participation for the shelter and settlement policy. And the Korea National Plan was not supported by the community and local leaders and NGOs. It was written by the central government without consultation of NGOs and CBOs.

In Korea many NGO and CBO people (about 75 persons) will participate in the Habitat II conference for lobbying and exchange of views and experiences. We are very interested in the issues of housing rights and eviction. The Korea NGOs Forum has focused on "anti-eviction" campaign and we are organizing

Views from the Grassroots - Peoples' stories



From Bombay, India:

Mahila Milan Bombay,



Korean NGOs organize for Habitat II

Samina Sheikh is about 48 years old. She and her husband came from Bihar soon after they were married and they have since lived at Jhoola Maidan in Bombay, in a hut on the pavement. **Their house was first made from Samina's sari (six yards of cloth) draped from a compound wall to give privacy. It was gradually transformed into a shack made of thin plastic and wood.** Samina has worked for over 18 years as a domestic help and her husband pulls handcarts.

In 1986 Samina joined SPARC's training programme out of curiosity, and gradually her absorption in what she was learning led to a rearrangement of her work schedule so that she could be at the area resource centre every afternoon. Soon she was an informal caretaker of the Byculla office. She also supervises street children who hang around the centre, collects loan repayments for Mahila Milan's savings and Credit scheme and sits on various M-M committees.

She has undergone masonry training and has traveled extensively, sharing her knowledge as part of a M-M's training team. She has supervised the construction of the first toilet to be built in Bombay for pavement dwellers and went to Kampur to train women from Mahila Milan collectives to develop various programmes.

Samina also assists communities who go through a housing training of how to manage finance, and material management. She also travels with teams of trainers to South Africa and Cambodia to assist federation building.

To Samina and to women in the collectives of Mahila Milan it does not matter where the settlement is ... next door, or in the next continent. The excitement is to expand the number of poor communities' collectives, especially women, to participate in the quest for secure habitat.

an "anti-forced eviction" workshop with mass action during the Habitat II Conference.

We believe that visualization of the issue of forced eviction and housing rights is very important through performance, film show, pictures, music, etc. Therefore we will bring along a short video film on eviction in Seoul, traditional drum and various kinds of instruments. We are now preparing a NGO's position paper for Habitat II and a paper on forced eviction in Korea. The Korea NGOs and CBOs Forum for Habitat II will join various activities in Istanbul and encourage dialogue with other partners and international NGOs.

Prof Ha is the Director of Korea Centre for City and Environment Research, and Director of Korea National NGO-CBO Forum for Habitat II

The Founding of a Grassroots International Federation of Homeless Poor

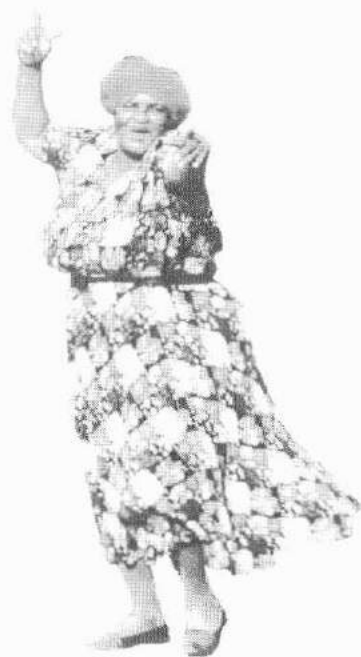
The South African Homeless People's Federation together with its support NGO People's Dialogue, invited members from across the country to reflect on its first 5 years of operation. Squatters and slum dwellers from international grassroots organizations in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines, Cambodia, India and Brazil were also invited. Amongst the outcomes was a renewed commitment to people's processes involving the strengthening of grassroots savings and credit for housing and the initiation of an International Homeless People's Federation.

On the first day of the exchange one of the Cambodian squatters, upon hearing of the inequality of power and wealth between the races under the old apartheid regime responded: "Were there many complaints about that?" By week end, he was fully cognizant of the struggle as were the Africans of the suffering of the Cambodians over the past 20 years. One of the squatters remarked that, between the groups, language was a difference but not a barrier. When speaking of housing savings schemes and the problems of poverty, wealth and land the 'language' was the same.

In workshops throughout the first 3 days of the exchange the Filipinos were able to identify with the Africans in the conversion to attempting to work with a somewhat sympathetic government which replaced the former dictatorship. From Marcos to Cory and from Apartheid to Mandela required new strategies and brought new frustrations.

History of South Africa-Asia Urban Poor Links

The first attempted exchange between South African and Asian grassroots groups concluded abruptly when the South Africans were denied entry into Korea for the Asian People's Dialogue in Seoul. In 1989 they succeeded in gathering in Bangkok for another People's Dialogue. In 1990 an international team of 10 from Asia, Africa and Latin America participated in People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter in Johannesburg. In 1991 Joel Bolnick of People's Dialogue (South Africa) explored the ACHR network of grassroots and NGO organizations throughout Asia to see what lessons could be learnt for the newly formed homeless poor movement in South Africa. From his travels he carefully selected an experienced coalition working the pavements of Bombay: SPARC [NGO], Mahila Milan [women's grassroots group] and the National Slum Dwellers Federation. Since then over 17 exchanges have taken place between South Africa and India.



particularly violent eviction in their country over the past days in which authorities had shot and killed a number of the poor who were resisting the destruction of the homes. In an emotional moment the Brazilian's shared their music of African roots with the gathering. Later the South African Minister for Housing, Sankie Nkondo was to explain to the international guests, music and song had sustained the people through their struggle.

The group from India were already familiar with the ever present songs and dances of solidarity and spiritual healing for they had been in South African for the past month or so helping communities construct their own houses, financed from their own Housing and Savings Schemes. In fact the link between Indians and South Africans goes back to the beginning of the South African Homeless People's Federation and the Indians were the honored guests in this fifth year celebration.

The conference was closed by the popular South African Minister for Lands Derek Hanekom, who renewed his commitment to partnership processes already established with the Federation.

Following the conference the international teams traveled to different provinces of South Africa to spend days in the communities and continue the people's dialogue on land and shelter.

The teams met later in Johannesburg where they fully endorsed the setting up of International Federation of the Homeless Poor which would bring together groups involved in savings and housing schemes and which emphasized the dominant role of grassroots women in the housing process. The main secretariat will be People's Dialogue, South Africa. ACHR will coordinate south east Asia. SPARC south Asia, and an exploratory process to strengthen links with South American groups will begin. The process will be directed by the masters of survival, the poor themselves, with technical support from NGOs.

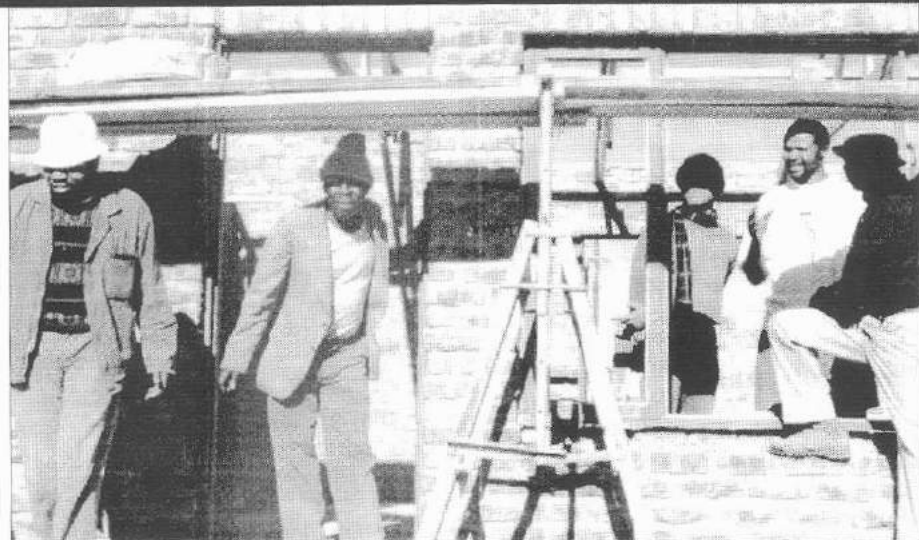
The Federation and People's Dialogue will not be attending Habitat II but wish their brothers and sisters from poor communities throughout the world every success.

The Thais emphasized a message that the Africans learnt on their first exchange visit to India: that democracy doesn't bring homes to the poor. In Thailand, despite a decade of annual economic growth rates consistently above 8%, the poorest 25% of the population receive an increasingly smaller percentage of the wealth. [The trickle up effect. "The rich get richer, the poor get the picture."] The key strategy the Thai's emphasized was for the poor to organize themselves particularly in area of savings and credit and then, build alliances with the few good people in government.

The Sri Lankans, from the grassroots Women's Bank emphasized that the key to their success was first of all, the dominance of community women in the bank and secondly, it's transparency. All members could articulate the banking process and had been involved in its continual evolution. Nandasiri Gamage said the strength of this exchange was that it was the poor themselves who were invited; the voices of the NGOs were rarely heard.

The Brazilian team received a message of sympathy and solidarity on arrival as they had come directly from a

SA People's Process: AMANDLA IMALI NOWLWAZI Power of Money and Knowledge: Survey, Savings, Housing



Terance Ndanda (second from right) helps volunteers and federation builders complete a house at JCC Camp Community in Mossel Bay, South Africa. .

Eldridge Gerry, National Secretary of the Homeless People's Federation, gave a briefing to the international guests on the Federation's approach to community based improvements: While giving full credit to the value of international exchanges and particularly on their successful links with India, Gerry stressed the value of knowing well the local context in which you are operating.

In South Africa for example the political context is unique and all our members have various political ideologies, so we in the the SAHPF are influenced by this, but we are definitely not a political organization and do not direct our energies this way. Our focus is to empower communities to develop themselves.

In mobilizing communities we share our experiences and develop training programmes. This cannot be training by intellectuals .. it must be training with which people are comfortable and sow confidence so that people can deal with the problems themselves. The need is for housing and land. So (rather than demand from government) we have a community based housing savings scheme that has gone through a process of firstly, surveying the area of the community. Basically the survey is part of our training programme where people in the township go around and collect information. ... how many houses, families, how many women, men, children: this information is very important when you start to negotiate with government or with the private sector because nobody can tell you what is the status of your community. You have that information and you know exactly what your community is. We measure the size of the houses, the rooms, the plots, the community. This empowers the community so when someone talks to the mumma about square metres she knows exactly what's going on, and she can talk back, so this is nothing foreign.

A common problem in most of our countries is that all of us aspire to have big things. We all want to drive BMW's; and have big houses; but we cannot afford it. So in our training programme we ask the women what kind of house they want : oh! they want a five bedroom house; a family room and lounge; and a double garage .. So we say OK can you afford to pay 5000 Rand a month? So they gradually scale it down to say this is what I can afford. They make models of their houses and become familiar with design concepts. Eventually they are involved in the building process.

The savings scheme itself is very much run by and focused on the women of the communities. People are encouraged to save regularly and in the process of collection news on community issues spreads. There is also training on how to deal with accounts. We use very controlled book-keeping methods, because we're dealing with amounts of 150 - 200,000 Rand. We now have over 15,000 families saving.

We have teams of builders whose target is 1200 houses built by 1996.

South African Govt Housing delegation to visit Thailand's UCDO

Late News: South African Government housing officials will visit Thailand's Urban Community Development Office whilst on their way to Habitat II in Istanbul. Their intention is to study the structure of UCDO as a semi-independent government organization that works in partnership with NGOs and community organizations. The partnership process will be adapted to the South African context. This will speed the process of government partnership with the SAHPF which has an effective grassroots network of Housing Savings Schemes.

Bombay NSDF/MM host South African Land Minister

India-South Africa exchanges lead to breakthroughs for the Homeless People's Federations in South Africa

Since 1991, slum dwellers from India and South Africa have been learning from each other as part of an exchange programme between the NSDF/MM and the South African Homeless People's Federation (SAHPF).

In April 1995, the Bombay NSDF/MM hosted Derek Hanekom, South Africa's new Minister for Land Affairs in Nelson Mandela's cabinet, on an "unofficial" visit to the city, with four leaders from the Homeless People's Federation, to see life through the eyes of the poor.

Mr. Hanekom is not your ordinary "ministerial" type by a long shot. He is a white man, a member of the African National Congress (ANC), and a veteran of the South African freedom struggle. In Bombay, he stayed right in the middle of Byculla, and spent eight days visiting the worst of Bombay's slums, talking to people, inspecting latrines, trudging along the railway tracks, visiting NSDF/MM projects, and tiring out his Indian guides with his insatiable curiosity about how the poor in India live.

In South Africa, the centuries-old colonial system of apartheid, which marginalized black people and dispossessed them of their land, ended with "majority rule" in 1993. Since then, land tenure has become one of the biggest issues in a country where the majority of people still live in slums called "black townships."

Black townships are the most visible symbol of apartheid. Black people have been herded inside these settlements and often forced to live without access to basic services. The townships are home to both "legal" settlers and to large numbers of illegal squatters, called in South Africa "back-shack dwellers."

The Homeless People's Federation is now the official representative of the homeless on the National Housing Board, and has the clout to get the new government to really deal with issues of displacement and segregation, with land rights and tenure.

During the Bombay visit, NSDF helped negotiate for Hanekom to visit settlements which are part of the Homeless People's Federation back home in South Africa. He kept his promise and made headlines later when he bucked ministerial protocol and spent the night as the guest of a family of squatters in Durban, Kwa Zulu-Natal.

Now, he has gotten together with the new Housing Minister, Sankie Nkondo, to create a special team of government officers to clear proposals for the redevelopment of squatter settlements. They have invited proposals from all groups, and SAHPF has submitted proposals for rebuilding 11 of its settlements. For the first time in the history of South Africa, there is a working interaction between poor people's federations and the government on issues of land and housing rights.

From CITYWATCH, PUNA, INDIA



The HABITAT II Process in Nepal

by Prafulla M.S. Pradhan

Nepal participated in the Vancouver conference in 1976. Although the conference was of global concern, for Nepal it was a quiet event and was only the concern of a couple of people who were involved in the preparation and participation of the conference. Probably that was the reason nothing much happened in Nepal after the conference. Specially very little has been achieved with respect to the issue of housing settlements of the poor. Some small scale programmes of limited scale were executed in recent years to improve the quality of life for the urban poor. The Best Practices presented by Nepal for Habitat II highlighted those activities. However, compared to other countries in the region, Nepal still has to put enormous efforts to improve the situation of the poor and can learn from experience in the region.

The process adopted for the preparation of Habitat II is different, ie more participatory and housing settlement

for the poor has been one of the themes included in the National Plan of Action. For a country like Nepal, the Habitat II process itself is quite important. **If His Majesty's Government of Nepal is determined to execute the National Plan of Action (in a real sense) and to localise the Habitat process by translating the recommendation of Habitat II within Nepal, continuation of the consultation process after the conference is equally important.**

It may be relevant here to highlight the process adopted by Nepal. For the in-country preparation, the Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning (MHPP) formed a high level multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral National Preparatory Committee, chaired by the Minister of MHPP. Similarly different forums such as NGO/CBO, professional, private sector, local authority, youth, urban forums were established. All these forums organized a series of consultations and seminars, and con-

tributed to develop the National Plan of Action. Although it is difficult to judge whether the National Plan of Action will accommodate the viewpoints of all forums, the process is more important and has to continue even after the Habitat II conference. For example, the National Preparatory Committee can continue as Habitat II Follow-up Committee. Similarly all the forums which have been established need to do follow-up activities and continue consultations. If the Habitat process can be continued as a Habitat movement (after the City Summit) Nepal will be in a position to fulfill its commitment.

It is interesting to note that during the two day National Seminar organized to get input for the preparation of National Plan of Action, representatives from NGOs, CBOs, private sector, professionals, local government etc participated and contributed effectively. Most of the participants expressed that it was the first time for them to participate in such a seminar and they took it as a good opportunity to put forward their viewpoints. The participants further suggested that such consultation will help clarify misunderstandings and help to build up partnership to execute the National Plan of Action effectively.

Prafulla Pradhan is Director of Urban Development Through Local Efforts, and Lumanti, Nepal



Twenty Years of "Improvements" ??

by Fr. Joe Maier CSSR

Twenty years - 1976 to 1996. Of course, Bangkok's Slums have improved. They have moved. Been moved. They have been eradicated and we no longer see them. They can't stay in the city any longer.

And of course they are not supposed to come back. At least right here. They can go some place, anywhere, but not here. And Government has even set up a Housing Authority. A National Housing Authority to remove Slums surgically. Maybe we should say, Housing Surgery. But some Slums are stubborn and remain. And they have improved.

The money lenders see improvement because more money is in circulation and Slum Interest Rates are at an all time high. In the Slaughter House part of the Klong Toey Slum..., a friendly rate of interest is 5 baht on the hundred per day.

And nicer houses now 20 years later, which means you can mortgage them and go much deeper into debt than ever

before, and now organizations and associations (read "Local Mafia") lend money with the houses as collateral. So, lots of Slum Folks no longer own their own houses. The local syndicates own them, and charge rent.

Slum people no longer consider a House a Home and a Sacred Place. So many of them have been evicted 2 - 3 times, and they are afraid to believe in a House is a Home anymore. One of the pillars of Society is gone.

Plus land. We have land improvement: at least in Klong Toey - which used to be the biggest Slum. Not anymore. Now we have "Futures".

If your Slum House is painted with a red house number, that red number means that you - a house owner - will own a plot of land outside the City in the coming evictions by the Port Authority. But lots of folks have borrowed money with their houses as collateral, and not paid back the money. They have therefore lost their houses and a plot of land in the future.

Some groups now own pieces of paper that will give them large land holdings on land still vacant, but to be used in the near future.

And Slum Drugs have improved. And Slum Gambling because more money is available. But then everything costs more. People work harder nowadays. And live in much more pollution, mostly air-borne.

But yes, absolutely: better houses /cement walkways/water and electricity /some garbage pick-up - a better standard of living - children go to school. None of this existed twenty years ago.

So once again: Twenty years - has Klong Toey improved? By a peoples measure, things are better. There's a women's group which is growing stronger every day, and they are trying to do something about the financial situation in the slums.

Most everyone reads and writes is politically aware. In fact, the slums are inundated by Politics. Slum people have better jobs.

Finally the Port Authority after over 40 years is actually evicting the Slum Dwellers and they will move to form new Slums.

What of Mom and Pop Slums? The friendly ones where almost everyone knows each other, and it is really a neighbourhood. Like Mom and Pop stores, they are being eaten up and are going. Its Hard times and no Parole for Bangkok Slums.

Fr. Joe is Director, Human Development Centre, Bangkok. He has lived over 20 years in Bangkok's largest slum Klong Toey.



The Last 20 Years in Pakistan

by Tasneem A. Siddiqui

In the last 20 years Pakistan has seen the unprecedented phenomenon of population explosion and hyper-urbanization. This has resulted in urban sprawl of gigantic proportions. Its natural concomitants are shortage of housing and basic infrastructure, congestion, environmental degradation, unemployment in educated youth, and high rate of crime.

Government's failure in providing affordable land to the poor has resulted in rapid growth of squatters' settlements and illegal subdivision of land. Not that the government, its development authorities and private sector did not try to solve this problem, but their attention remained focused on the rich and the middle classes. For example, the built up units and site and services schemes were thought to be the appropriate response, but it did not solve the problem of the deprived groups, i.e. the lower middle classes and the poor.

Unfortunately, the government functionaries, planners, economists and politicians did not try to understand the

dynamics of urbanization and its natural consequences for the low income groups. They kept on concentrating on the conventional approach in housing which did not work.

Emergence of large number of squatters' settlement in urban centres did force the populist politicians to look at this problem sympathetically, and in mid-seventies they accepted them as a reality. Previously these settlements were being bulldozed in order to resettle the squatters at the periphery.

During the last 20 years, a number of regularization and improvement programmes for squatters were started but they have progressed very slowly. **There is no political commitment and priority to solve the problem quickly and on long term basis.**

On the other hand, because of huge demand for unserviced urban land, new forces have emerged on the scene and have started parallel activities. The growth of 'informal' sector and its success in providing affordable land to the needy is phenomenal in Pakistan. In

most areas, it not only provides affordable state land (in collusion with government functionaries and the local influentials) to the urban poor, but also lobbies for basic infrastructure. During the last 20 years, the role of 'informal' sector in big cities has tremendously increased in all social sectors. It is not only the main provider of jobs to the poor, it also runs transport, arranges credit and assists people in constructing their houses.

Emergence of support organizations and NGOs during the last 20 years is another important phenomenon which is worth mentioning. These organizations organize the communities for a variety of jobs, and some of them also provide technical support enabling the people to solve their own problems.

We can conclude by saying that there is apathy, incompetence and lack of vision on the part of the government to tackle the shelter related issues, but more and more poor people are organizing themselves and accepting the fact that they have to solve their problems themselves. In this process, some NGOs are playing a major role. At political level, people have little hope, but at social level there are strong indications of change.

Tasneem Siddiqui is the Director General of Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority, and the author of Khuda ki Basti an incremental development housing scheme for low-income communities.

Views from the Grassroots - Peoples' stories from urban Asia



Hong Kong Madam Chan Yin

A thriving commercial centre, Hong Kong is viewed as a place of great wealth and opportunity. But many people miss out of the fabled prosperity. For them, a cage is the place they call home. Madam Chan Yin has lived in her cage home for over thirty years. She is 82 years old. Asked what her most important possession is, Chan Yin has no hesitation in patting the bed - a

hard board covered by a thin mat. Cage beds usually come in three decks. The first time Chan Yin moved here, she lived on the upper deck for more than 10 years. The upper deck is only about one metre below the ceiling, so she always hit her head. The next ten years she lived on the middle deck. Now, she has moved into the small cubicle as she can no longer climb up the ladder. Until recently, there were fifteen elderly single people living there. "This year," she says, "some old people died, so they took the beds away. So now it is a little better than before."

The protection of the Hong Kong government to the poorest people is very minimal and the system only favours the rich. However, Madam Chan Yin has discovered a new role late in life as a political activist. Chan Yin has joined marches and signed a petition about housing conditions and stays in touch with others in similar situations. Recently, the cage people (as they are called) presented a model of their homes at the opening of the government's new exhibition centre. The government was covering up housing history by ignoring the miserable conditions they were forced to live in. Waving placards and banners, the residents shouted, "WE DEMAND DECENT HOUSING."

Some facts on the cages in Hong Kong

Cages have existed for the past thirty years. About 10,000 people, mainly the elderly, live in cages. One sixth of the population live in inadequate housing conditions i.e. cages and cubicles. The government says, "the cages are necessary as it provides affordable housing to the poor."

Contributed by Kalina Tsang, SOCO, Hong Kong



Eviction Watch & Housing Rights Network

by Kenneth Fernandes

In spite of recent efforts from many organizations, inspite of a positive tendency towards housing programmes for the low income, and inspite of the categorical denial of many governments, forced evictions still occur in most Asian cities.

In 1993, ACHR's key contact groups came together to share ideas and experiences regarding evictions. The need for a systematic and coordinated approach to this growing problem was expressed and a network established. Denis Murphy, Philippines and Minar Pimple, India, coordinated activities in South-East Asia and South Asia respectively. In January 1996, Kenneth Fernandes became regional coordinator.

Eviction Watch & Housing Rights Activities

1. Monitoring Evictions

Centres in twelve cities monitor evictions. The countries are: Pakistan (Karachi), India (Bombay and Calcutta), Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand (Bangkok), Malaysia, Indonesia, The Philippines, Hong Kong, Korea and Papua New Guinea. According to reports, in the past ten years nearly 2 million people have been forcibly evicted in Asia.

2. Fact Finding Missions

Following reports on gross violations of people's housing rights, a fact finding mission is conducted. This is an indepth investigation into the evictions. The reports are widely circulated, especially to the concerned government. The report is sent to the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), Habitat International Coalition which has consultative status at the UN Human Rights Commission. Since 1993 fact finding missions have been conducted in Malaysia, The Philippines, and Calcutta.

In March 1996, a fact finding mission was conducted in Manila, The Philippines on the request of Damayan ng Maralitang Pilipinong Api (DAMPA), an association of 15 people's organizations and 5 federations of the urban poor communities. The Japanese team investigated the situation of people being affected or liable to be affected by the Japanese Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF) funded infrastructure projects in Metro Manila. The report of the findings is available from UPA (Urban Poor Associates), The Philippines and ACHR.

3. Legal Study in Selected Asia Countries

Attorney Joey Mendoza conducted a legal study relating to housing in Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Hong Kong, Burma and Thailand. A team comprising of Atty. Joey Mendoza and Ted Anana from the Philippines visited these countries to meet groups and collect material for the study. The draft report has been circulated to groups in these countries and others (Asian Human Rights Commission, UN Rapporteur on Housing Rights, COHRE, etc.) for feedback and will be published.

4. Information Dissemination

Centre reports are compiled and circulated. Some are condensed and included in ACHR's newsletter "Housing for People". The reports have also been compiled into a book by Denis Murphy and Minar Pimple, entitled "Eviction Watch Asia: Forced Evictions and Housing Rights Abuses in Asia" published in November 1995.

5. Asian Poor People's View of the city

EWHR alongwith UNDP's AP2000 supported a Regional Consultation, **People's View of the City: Localizing Habitat II**, from 15-17 January 1996. NGO activists representing cities from Asia and the Pacific met in the Philippines. The final statement is available from UPA, The Philippines and ACHR.

6. National Workshops on Evictions

Groups have been invited to suggest ways and means to highlight this issue in their country and develop a mechanism through a consultative national process and get broader involvement. Todate, Nepal and Calcutta have responded with plans to organize three day workshops with grassroot groups to develop a plan of action for the country. Groups in Kuala Lumpur are evolving a plan of action. Hong Kong and Manila have a good monitoring system as they concentrate on this issue.

Eviction Watch News

1018 Pavement dwellings demolished in Bombay

Since November '95 to 13 February '96 ten pavement communities have been demolished and the total number of dwellings is 1,018.

This has special reference because the newly elected state government as per its election manifesto has promised to give free housing to 4 million slum and pavement dwellers. Once elected as ruling party of the State of Maharashtra, they appointed a committee under the chair-manship of Mr. Afzalpurkar to give recommendations on how 4 million people can be given free housing.

The Afzalpurkar committee report was tabled on 20 July 1995, at the state Assembly. One of the recommendations of the report was that the pavement dwellers also be included in the 4 million free housing scheme.

After this a number of changes in the legislation were made to facilitate the implementation of the scheme. Once again the issue of pavement dwellers was taken up by the cabinet and the statements of the Chief Minister flashed on every news paper, reaffirming the inclusion of the pavement dwellers in the scheme. Meanwhile in various slums and pavement communities demolitions continued to take place.

From: Navtej K.B, YUVA Bombay

Objectives of the Eviction Watch & Housing Rights Network

To strengthen local grassroots organizations to protect their right to adequate housing.

- * Promote housing rights on the region's agenda
- * Identify & link with grassroots organizations and individuals
- * Advocate, & lobby concerned institutions
- * Monitor & publish housing rights issue
- * Access information on these issues

Eviction Watch News

The Urban Resource Centre in Karachi, Pakistan has been monitoring in the city since 1992. In March 1995 URC engaged Gasper Daniels to work part-time to meet the communities who have been evicted. Thirty-one communities were identified. A meeting was held with the affectees and those who were threatened with evictions.

The situation in the city being tense, representatives from only three communities could attend. They shared their stories of what had happened to them. They were quite surprised that other

communities had also gone through the same misery of being uprooted.

Another 2 meetings were arranged, however strikes and the tense situation in the city prevented all but a few from attending. For the time being, until the law and order situation improves, not much can be done.

The URC continues to document eviction trends in Karachi. So far the scale of evictions is not large. But now due to new developmental projects more communities are under threat. One major issue is how to provide legal assistance.

Usually lawyers do not take such cases. The lawyers working for human rights organizations are too overloaded with work to take eviction cases. We may hire a consultant advocate for such cases.

URC is organizing a meeting with organizations working on these issues to find ways we can effectively deal with this issue. We will also invite communities under threat of evictions. We kindly request case studies from other countries, it will be helpful for us.

Fax URC Fax 922 21 568 4223 or send to ACHR Report from Mohammad Younis

Eviction Watch News

I write briefly of a probable eviction that may take place in Kathmandu. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the UN, the construction of a 'UN Park' is planned in the belt of the Bagmati river. The condition of the river is no better than sewerage. The objective of the construction is to visually improve and preserve the Bagmati river. There are squatter settlements in the proposed area.

Notice has been given to the public not to carry out any plans and programmes within the area. Recent news published in the national Nepali daily newspaper, Gorakhpatri, says that people who do

not hold any valid ownership papers will be given notice of 15 days to vacate the area. Then the UN Park Development Committee will take action according to the decision made by the Ministry for Housing and Physical Planning. However, some concerns were also shown about the existing settlements. The mechanism for working there has not been finalized.

The squatters organization, the "Society for the Welfare of Unemployed Squatters", is very concerned about the whole issue. Two years ago one settlement in Kathmandu was evicted for road construction. The society lobbied very strongly against the government. As

a result they were able to make an agreement with the Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning that real squatters would not be evicted without any relocation. Because of this agreement the society is quite confident that evictions without relocation will not take place in Kathmandu. But with the publication of the above news on the construction of the park this is not very certain.

Please share with Lumanti your experiences in order to strengthen our efforts. The address is Lumanti Support Group for Shelter, P.O. Box 10546, Kathmandu, Nepal. Fax: 977-1-535722, Attn: Lumanti Report: Lajana Manandhar



The Urban Poor and Shelter Instability

by Nandasiri Gamage

The strategy of modern urbanization is a tragedy, because the poor are not involved in the planning process. Hence their voice is not heard. This makes their lives unstable and vulnerable and this in turn perpetuates their living conditions. Within the context of Sri Lanka, as a community leader, I feel the urban poor's instability.

Before the 1980's, when the provider based housing policy was the only option we had in Sri Lanka, the urban poor had to "wait and see" until they could get a house from the government 'someday'. Therefore the poor had to dream of their home all the time. The only positive response the poor had to own a house was the space created by the Ceiling of House and Property Law 1973. Many poor

families became owners of their house. This was a very progressive step taken by the government towards housing the urban poor. But to own a government built house was only a dream for the majority.

The urban poor had many hopes with the implementation of the Million Housing Programme in the mid-eighties. The regularization of occupied land by the poor, resettlement programmes, upgrading of settlements, loan packages for the poor, hundreds of workshops run by the poor with the help of the NHDA (National Housing Development Authority) and relevant authorities were green lights of housing the poor within their original living place in order not to ruin their socio-

economic roots in the city.

But by now, the latter part of the 1990's the hope of a house for a poor person has again become a dream. The supporter has again become the provider of housing, so the poor have nothing to do with their house. They have to "wait and see" until someday...

Have all these policies and practical changes transformed the plight of millions of urban poor? Have measures taken by the authorities changed the fear of eviction or instability in the minds of the poor? NO. Absolutely NO is the answer.

The newly emerging condominiums, skyscrapers, security zones, houses for the elite, housing flats for security personnel are being given the spaces of the city. The poor residing close to these spaces are constantly under threat of eviction and feel highly insecure. Many of the poor families who got the land and housing loan from the NHDA are yet to be given title deeds to prove their ownership.

There should be a guarantee and security of tenure for the poor. Their right to live in the city should be accepted by the authorities.

Nandasiri Gamage is a community leader and President of Community Resource Centre, Colombo, Sri Lanka.



Twenty Years After Habitat I

by Johan Silas, Surabaya, Indonesia

If the development of cities in this region is observed, many have achieved remarkable results in one generation. Singapore and Hong Kong are cities which have managed to achieve dramatic change. Singapore, last year, was recognized as a 'developed country' by the OECD. Hong Kong did better in terms of Gross Domestic Product, about twice that of Singapore. Hong Kong accommodated poor migrants in increasing numbers (legal and illegal) from many parts of East Asia, while Singapore was 'exempted.' The performances of Jakarta, Bangkok and Manila are no less better. Smaller towns and cities in this region managed to improve the livelihood of their people too. The World Bank indicated last year that the economies of countries around the world (including Africa) have improved

significantly. But the most remarkable result was achieved by East Asian cities.

In terms of population growth, large cities have indicated a much slower increase. However, medium and smaller cities and towns have experienced much faster growth, but in absolute numbers is much smaller. **The favourable urban growth does not always improve the livelihood of the poor.** In the Indonesian language the capital city is called *ibu-kota* meaning *city-mother*. Indonesians when criticizing the *city-mother* say she is more cruel than a *stepmother*. Meaning that although the urban poor are in so many ways responsible for making the city function, their existence is neglected and even considered as troublesome. On the other hand in medium and smaller cities better opportunities exist

for poor to improve the livelihood faster and in a way less burdensome on scarce public resources.

Along with improved urban life, more and better models of intervention are now available to improve human settlement conditions and people's ability to look after themselves. Different than the previous models, people and community based interventions have proved effective and efficient, such as in the Kampung Improvement Programme (KIP), Community Mortgage Programme (CMP), Land Sharing in Bangkok, Orangi Pilot Project (OPP), etc.

Exchange and sharing of experiences among the models has further improved the ability of the people and bureaucrats to do more with less, and in a sustained and self-reliant way.

To further support the favourable condition, organized ways and means among people exist in assisting their endeavor to reach a better world for them and the future generation.

Prof Johan Silas is Head of the Laboratory of Housing and Human Settlements, Institute of Technology, Surabaya, Indonesia

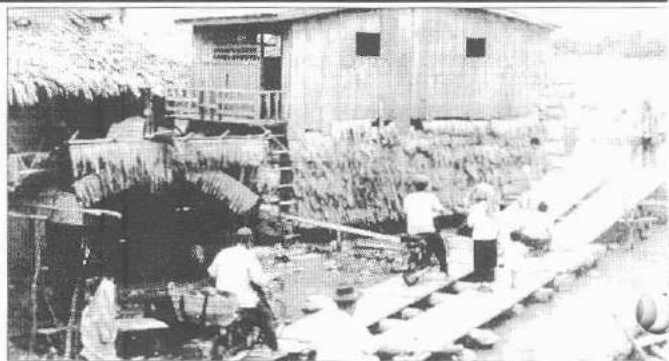
Views from the Grassroots - People's stories from urban Asia

A few months prior to Habitat 1, 20 years ago, perhaps the largest and most tragic forced removal of an urban population took place in **Phnom Penh, capital city of Cambodia**. It involved the entire population of the city. In a community of Khmer and Vietnamese squatters, near Phnom Penh's infamous broken bridge, a middle aged Khmer man voluntarily approached and began to relate the story of his 20 years.

Prior to the removal Tith belonged to a medical unit of the Lon Nol army. Before that he was a common soldier for Prince Sihanouk who had tried to keep Cambodia neutral during the American war with Cambodia's eastern neighbour. The new urban centered Lon Nol regime and their sponsors were responsible for a most savage on-slaught against the peasantry. In three years, American bombing killed, wounded and dislocated hundreds of thousands of Khmer peasants. There had never been such an intensive bombing of populated areas in any war.

Pol Pot took power on April 17th 1975. Within two weeks the entire populations of the capital and provincial towns (including those in hospitals) were forced marched to the country-side and placed in mobile work teams to do "slave labour". Tith was one of them, he told them he had been a taxi driver and remained constantly afraid that his background would be revealed and he therefore would be executed like so many others. He was evacuated to the countryside and made to work in the rice fields. He was separated from his wife and children and had no idea where they were during this time.

In 1979, after the Vietnamese had defeated Pol Pot, Tith resumed his life as a soldier in Battambang where he was re-united with his wife. In 1980-1 he left the army and the government gave him a small piece of land. Unable to make a living, he sold the land for a small price and moved to Phnom Penh where he and his wife squatted with many other families on land near by the Cambodianna Hotel. The site was known as Casino.



Tith's present community near the broken bridge Phnom Penh.

Tith became a driver for an Import-Export company in 1984 and still drives for them when the car is not in for repairs. His stay at Casino was interrupted when the government threatened to evict him and the many other families at the site. Tith told us that, after the people demonstrated against the eviction, the government promised to allocate them land and compensate them with 150,000 riels per family. The people were united, he said, because the land and money offered was so little.

Arguments and confrontations developed between the community and the police. The national police withdrew from the site, but at 4 AM one morning government soldiers surrounded the site. The community was told the police would attack those who did not leave. Police confiscated motor bikes and money. Four people were arrested, some injured. Those jailed were forced to write confessions. Tith said he was investigated, but no action was taken against him. The evicted received no land or money as compensation. He volunteered to take us to the site where the people were relocated.

The relocation site took us 45 five minutes to reach by car.->



Asian Women And Shelter Network

Report by Nora Fernandes

Regional Space for Local Efforts of Women AWAS Aims to Empower



It is estimated that 100 million women and children in the world are homeless and up to 600 million live in inadequate shelter
Photo: Women in Bangladesh

'Whatever we do, it has to benefit women on the ground; otherwise it makes no sense' was the unanimous agreement at the AWAS meeting in Bombay early in 1996. In many cities of Asia, the commitment and effort to realize this began last year...

How it began

The Asia Women and Shelter Network (AWAS) was formed when a group of activists, field organizers and researchers met in Kuantan Malaysia in 1995 to discuss the need to link women and shelter issues. This meeting was organized by ACHR with support from Asia Pacific 2000.

During the meeting, women working in the human settlements field in Asia expressed a need to create space and opportunities to talk about women's issues, and to develop a regional framework of analysis to inform the work that they were carrying out in their own local contexts. Too often women's concerns are seen as peripheral within the broader context of housing rights. Women needed to be able to participate fully within the community and family contexts.

Aims

The meeting decided AWAS would:

- * Center-stage women's concerns in the habitat movement;
- * Give support and recognition to community-based initiatives that strengthen women's role in fulfilling practical needs through strategic

In the past year, members of AWAS have:

- campaigned to influence municipal policies about women (Philippines)
- started savings and credit women's groups (India, Nepal, Sri Lanka)
- exchanged technologies on savings and credit with other countries (SPARC with Cambodia, South Africa)
- planned houses with men and women separately to maximise use of space (Latur and Bangalore)
- increased women's participation in planning in post-earthquake Latur, particularly those who have no menfolk and are by tradition, marginalised
- explored area-specific development issues through the CEDAW report (Bombay)
- worked with garment factory workers for capacity-building (Dhaka)
- set up a resource center for sharing of technical information on housing and land issues; preparing to involve women in settlement improvement (Nepal)
- explored ways in which women can play significant roles in the development of low-income settlements (Karachi)
- enabled community women access government resources and community space (Karachi)
- promoted home gardens with organic farming methods in urban Kandy
- At Beijing, sponsored community leader from India to attend; linked up with several new NGOs interested in shelter issues; gained valuable experience in lobbying at international fora.
- Disseminated books, videotapes and audio-cassettes to network members on research and analysis in human settlements (by SPARC)

solutions;

- * Assist lobbying and advocacy efforts of organizations and women's groups in national level efforts to highlight women and shelter issues.

AWAS has been able to give a number of women the space to participate, initiate, articulate and campaign on shelter issues in the past year. It has become a strategic alliance, a point of leverage and lobbying and a platform to bring into clear focus women's initiatives in urban poor communities.

As a network, AWAS will focus on building local and national networks, linking women from community-based organizations, NGOs, local government authorities and professionals within each country to work together on settlement issues. This will begin with the formation of small groups by AWAS members at the local level.

All these tasks are undertaken through three focus groups: AWAS Learning, AWAS Networking and AWAS Habitat.

Contact: C/- AWAS, ACHR

Views from the Grassroots - People's stories from urban Asia

Tith, like many others, had walked the distance before: 3 hours along the main road and 2 more down side roads to some barren looking treeless rice fields. The government relocated nearly 300 families here, Tith told us. Only about 70 have remained. Some went back to the original site at Casino. There are over 100 families there now. Others moved to stay at the old Soviet Embassy or other squatter areas in town.

It's a five hour walk to work. There is very little water at this site, even in the rainy season. A small group of men and women gathered to talk. They told us: "Women and children walk hours each morning to collect water. Sometimes we took water from the rice field owned by a government minister and later by a businessman, but we suspect that it was contaminated with chemicals because many people became ill. Children remaining here have constant diarrhea, many have fever and stomach problems, some have died. We need a well

desperately; the government promised us one and a hospital but nothing has happened. The schools are far away, but some children go to school, up to a certain level then it becomes too expensive."

They have no land here to farm, just small shacks on the edge of a dusty road in the midst of somebody else's rice fields. Some of the people walk into town looking for work. If they find it they have to stay in town because it's too far to walk back. Some of the women make brooms from small bushes collected from the surrounding fields. It's a fifteen day process to dry the bushes and make the brooms which sell for about 150 - 200 riels. A group of people can make about 2-300 brooms per month.

As we talked the 'official leader' of the village approached and the people fell silent. They then told me that they held a hope that the new government would help them.

From Maurice Leonhardt and Somporn Boonyabancha.



ACHR's Young Professionals

Recent Changes

Report by Mayumi Kato

ACHR's Young Professionals Programme seeks to provide support and encouragement for students and practitioners to become involved in issues of shelter and actions which affect the urban poor.

Among young people in the cities these days, there seems to be a common global culture developing. All over the world, traditional values and morals have been challenged by the new ones promoted by the consumerist culture. Our Asian region is not an exception. The strange thing which is happening in Asia is that while there is a feeling of commonness in this modern society created by the development and expansion of media networks and multinational corporations, a gap is being created between the perceived information and the reality of the society.

As youth born and living in this region which carries richness of culture that our ancestors have created, we acquire the special challenges to pave our original way and models of tackling the real and particular problems in the region.

Youth living in today's urban Asia are presented with a wide range of issues such as; health, employment, social order, cultural identity, sexual trafficking, and environment. While the concerns of other sectors such as women, trade unions and children are more or less clearly coming out, youth as a sector tend to be put in an awkward situation - generally youth organizations set up under the government structure (some people may call them conventional youth organizations) tend to be either politicized or just serve as leisure and recreation

facilities for the youth.

Young people of urban poor communities are the most vulnerable group in this picture. In the communities they are neither child nor adults.

In this situation, we also see a number of positive signs. Outside the structure of "conventional" youth organizations, there are initiatives by young people tackling the urban challenge. There are two interesting features in these initiatives.

One is that youth are working in partnership with other age groups. Another feature is that urban community youth who tend to be neglected in the established youth sector are taking their own initiatives.

Along with this trend, young students and young college graduates are also trying to share their knowledge with the urban poor and develop "alternate - professional" careers. As in the case of the Orangi Pilot Project, Karachi, Pakistan, students and community youth are trained on basic skills of surveying, documentation, leveling, estimation, and construction work. While they assist the technical preparation of community improvement projects, they also work as social organizers. Cases like this, although not as rapid as virus, are expanding in the region. The Young Professionals Program of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights is three years old - still a young programme. Our

starting point was a concern for young professionals who were sincerely committed to the community work. But from the beginning we had big dreams: to advocate for change in existing professional education models and increase the number of committed young people in the region. **We would like to see more colleges and universities whose programs enhance the understanding of dynamics of urban poor communities and close to the realities of Asian societies.** What sustained and even developed the program was these big dreams we had.

In these three years we also developed our own definition of young professionals. We include community youth and students and try to develop a scope where "young professionals" from across the region, can interact and empower each other. We started from few but now have more friends who are joining the network, which is encouraging for us. Some of our friends have married and some from NGOs have gone into the private sector to support their families. As years go by (as we get a little bit older), we are developing more diverse and dynamic groups. Our young professional friends, from late teens to mid thirties, are undergoing processes of constant change and growth as people. It is our hope the program itself grows with this dynamic and all the more encourages new friends to join our program.

Views from the Grassroots - People's stories from urban Asia

WHO REALLY OWNS THE LAND?

Batmalai (70), is a retired Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM) (Malaysian Railways) worker and urban settler for the past 4 generations. He spent most of his savings, close to RM20,000, (US\$8,000) to build his house in Kg. Chinatamby Chetty, Sentul, in the heart of Kuala Lumpur.

His neighbour N. Sellamani, now in her 60's sells cakes in a nearby golf course. She is a red Identity Card (IC) holder married to a Malaysian man who died recently. For 25 years she has been living in a little wooden shack in kg. Chinatamby.

Mary, a school teacher and her 9 siblings and other relatives have lived in this same kampung ever since she was a child. Last September, all of them along with their neighbours were served eviction notices by the Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL) (cityhall) because KTM claimed they owned the land and wanted to construct a double track rail system related project on it.

Since then, all the families have moved except for Batmalai and his wife, Sellamani and Mary's family. Those who left now live temporarily in longhouses where they pay RM45 (US\$18) monthly as rent. Eventually they will be resettled in low cost

housing costing between RM20,000-25,000 (US\$8,000-10,000) a unit.

Sellamani was denied this offer because she is a red IC holder and lives alone. Mary and her family of 10 adults were only offered one unit of the rumah panjang. She asked for 2 units next to each other so that her family could still be together.

Batmalai and his wife decided to make a stand and despite their home being torn down 3 times by the DBKL, they rebuilt each time and stayed on. Batmalai claimed the land grant was actually given to him many years ago by the real owner, but was burnt in a fire together with his house in the 1980's so he cannot prove his ownership.

All they ask for is a longhouse unit for Sellamani; another unit for Mary's family and adequate compensation for Batmalai's loss of property in the event of being evicted.

No monetary compensation was offered and no negotiation process was initiated by KTM. The DBKL tried to forcefully evict the people on three occasions. Each time, Mary and Sellamani, and Batmalai together with some concerned neighbours and friends resisted.

(cont'd page 18)



Vancouver, Istanbul, Bombay by Sheela Patel

There are many occasions, often only identified in posterity that articulate the beliefs of that moment. Habitat I is now treated as a critical milestone by those working on habitat issues as a moment when those around the world endorsed the about habitat and shelter, and began the acknowledgment long overdue (even in those times when the state provided housing was considered the solution), to the role of people all over the world in proving houses for themselves. The conference heralded the role of people in their own habitat solutions and sought to develop interventions around them.

In 1974, I was not as yet involved in housing and shelter issues. I worked in an urban community center providing welfare type of assistance to poor communities. The demolition of informal settlements, and rampant evictions in the city where I live during that decade (Bombay, or Mumbai as we now call it... trickled to my consciousness through the agony shared with me by women who were constantly defending their homes against eviction. Many of my colleagues at the center saw along with me that women who were so central in the survival strategies of their

family and community had no support and assistance in their quest for shelter, and people like ourselves working on welfare issues seeking to provide health and education to their children in the midst of these devastating demolition were like people trying to fill a bucket full of holes with water.

At the very time when Habitat I was on at Vancouver, Jockin, my colleague and dear friend, was to have gone to Vancouver. India had an emergency: the demolition of the huge township of Janata Colony was on, and he had to go into hiding to avoid being jailed. So he never went to Habitat I although he had a ticket and an invitation.

Between 1984 and 1996 we are all part of a large network trying to examine ways by which poor communities who have managed their habitat issues against all odds can get the central space in designing alternatives which improve the quality of their lives and improve the environment. We have come a long way but we have a long way to go. Governments and international assistance while recognizing the role of people continue to make the decisions on behalf of people, and more often than not forget the role and contribution of women completely.

So why is no one from the federations going to Istanbul? I am often asked. So I asked Jockin who now heads the National Slum Dweller's federation for this answer. I also ask him what he expects from this conference. His answer is very simple and stark. First he says that international conferences especially the UN type are not

designed for poor people and their representatives to participate. The milieu is different, the style of dialogue is different, all these create conditions for the poor to be notional participants often intimidated by the style and manner of debate. Secondly, while the developmental experts continue their discussions of these issues people especially poor communities are going on with what they have to do. Real change will and does occur when policy comes to people not when people go to change policy. That kind of policy never reached the poor. So the meeting in Istanbul is good for those who can get energized by this process while people like himself would wait and watch.

For myself this conference has the opportunity to address the issue of habitat squarely. It must address the question of whether the "market" will provide solutions for the housing of the poor. At the moment the inability of the state to deliver housing for whatever reasons seems to provide a legitimate reason for the state to bow out of this process... and the market, and institutions "for profit" within the market are supposed to deliver the solutions. We don't think this is the answer. **We see this as a fantastic opportunity for the state, the market and civil society to renegotiate who will do what to find the solutions** whereby people get secure shelter efficiently and economically, and where empowered communities with assistance of institutions in civil society provide them all with opportunities to negotiate for collaborative action.

Sheela is Director of SPARC, India

Freedom to Build

The Squatters are Winning? by Bil Keyes

Several years ago, under a heading, "The squatters are winning", Dennis Murphy wrote a column demonstrating that despite repression, military action, hostile legislation and general public hostility to poor settlers, the number of squatters in third world countries has inexorably grown. What had earlier been perceived as a marginal, temporary adjustment problem has continued to grow and now makes up a large proportion of the population of most Asian cities.

Numerically, the squatters are surely winning. But winning is losing because life in a squatter colony is hardly the epitome of decent human habitat.

The squatters may be winning in the

sense that they somehow have precariously achieved some degree of stability. But, in most cases, basic services are inadequate if not totally lacking and the threat of demolition and eviction hovers over the squatters like a threatening cloud.

The squatters, despite the insecurity and inadequate facilities, have chosen to stay. Why?

Because they rightly perceive that the city offers them no better alternative. The city will neither provide for them nor even show much basic understanding or concern for their plight.

Freedom to Build has been active in the field of social housing for the past twenty years; ever since Habitat I Conference in Vancouver.

We offer a simple solution of an expandable starter house which is affordable to lower level public and private sector employees. The government provides affordable mortgage funding (25 years at 9% interest). Our financial and organizational size limits us to a regular output of only 50 units monthly - a drop in the ocean of need in comparison to the

over 15,000 applicants requesting inclusion and in comparison to a national need of almost four million ill-housed Filipino families.

Freedom to Build's second goal other than the direct provision of shelter for at least some of those in need, is advocacy. **If this solution is affordable, why is it not more widely adopted by government and private sector?**

In this age of "tiger economies" national focus is primarily on growth: the safest, surest profit in the shortest possible time. This formula leaves little room for the provision of simple adequate shelter for that portion of the urban population which has little opportunity except squatting.

In our judgement: over the past twenty years, since Habitat I, the housing situation has worsened. It is not being solved because national energies are focused elsewhere.

We have tried to make a contribution but I wonder if anyone is really listening.

Bill Keyes is Executive Director of Freedom To Build, building houses for the urban poor in the Philippines.

People's Housing: Challenges and Responses

by Rabial Mallick

Suddenly housing has been the centre of debate and discussion the world over, specially because of the forthcoming Habitat II Conference. The housing shortage in developing countries as also in India has assumed enormous proportions. It is generally believed that the efforts of the government and public agencies are quite incapable to take up this massive task.

Even the Eight Five Year Plan (1992-1997) in outlining the core strategy for housing, in line with the National Housing Policy, has stressed the need for creating an enabling environment for housing activity by eliminating various constraints and avoiding direct assistance to the poor and the disadvantaged groups, including the scheduled castes and tribes, poor women and people below the poverty line. The government is seen as a provider for the poorest and vulnerable sections that cannot compete for resources or housing in the formal market. And housing for this segment of the population is the urgent requirement in this present day.

The growing number of slums, squatter settlements and pavement dwellings in the major cities of the third world, and specially in India, obviously point to the virtual incapability of governments to provide shelter to the ever-increasing population growth. According to rough estimates, not less than 70 to 80 million people in India live in slums and squatter settlements and around 40 percent live in the million plus cities.

The cry the world over to consider housing as a fundamental right after the Global Strategy for Shelter has declared its resolve to provide adequate shelter to all by the turn of the century has put up a serious challenge before the authorities. In a way, the urban poor and shelterless are destined to have a shelter, if their movement is carried forward. The rich and the poor have to co-exist in this city though the latest World Resources Report has warned that most of the world's poor

in the next century would be urban and their living conditions would be worse (than those of the rural poor). An effective strategy geared to check urbanization by balanced rural development and adequate attention to the needs of small farmers need to be developed.

The obvious answer is to take advantage of the people's efforts in housing activities. It is in this context that the use of cost effective technologies and locally available building materials have to be popularised. In fact housing for the people requires a complex mix of highly technical knowledge, business methods and sensitivity to people's needs. These attributes are rarely found in one individual or organization and need to be put together through partnerships of different agencies with their respective strengths.

Bureaucratic or mechanistic designs that do not reflect the needs and aspirations of the people for whom the solution are being designed have not and will not work. For example, a natural tendency of planners is to build houses in standardised grid-based layouts that have little or no connection with the life styles or behaviour patterns of the people.

It is here that NGOs have a crucial role in bridging the gap between the planners and community and ensuring that the design of housing units organically contributes to the life of the people. It is essential to involve the people not only for designing their own houses but also in contribution with the right technology and materials. However, it cannot be denied that innovation is needed in site planning methods, in architectural design, in materials and building techniques, financing systems and many other areas.

The NGOs would have to play the most important role of helping people to be acquainted with innovative designs and techniques and financing options so that they could build their own houses easily. The active role of the NGOs and the CBOs would go a long way in solving the shelter

needs of the people.

NGOs have been carrying out a sustained movement for security of land tenure and also involved in slum upgradation. Though much may not have been achieved in physical terms, in a qualitative sense the realization of improving the conditions of the urban poor has percolated deep into the government, with the result the aspirations and demands of this section is being debated all over.

The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS) has been actively working for the urban poor in the major cities of India. In Hyderabad (Deccan), it has been assisting the people in securing land and building their own houses. In Bombay 50 housing cooperatives have been formed out of which 48 cooperatives are for slum upgradation and improvement. The work of these cooperatives are progressing at a fast rate and within a short period, actual work of slum improvement would start in Dharavi slum.

In Bangalore, CISRS, has taken on the work of constructing 100 houses involving the people in Coromongale slum with the assistance of a Dutch agency and there are future plans of motivating people to construct more such houses. Similarly, in Mysore, there has been commendable work in Dalit slums where people are being encouraged to get land and build houses themselves.

A number of initiatives are taking place all over the country to activate and support informal sector initiatives and to design these in a manner that in itself can become sustainable.

In future, the NGOs have to take on the following challenges:

- 1) to select and generate, improve and adapt appropriate technologies, particularly for the poor;
- 2) to promote and sell the appropriate technologies on a mass scale and provide after sales service;
- 3) to mobilize the poor and garner their strength to build their own houses with the right technology; and,
- 4) to make available finance to the poor at very low rates of interest for building houses with cost effective technologies and locally available materials.

Rabial Mallick is Director of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society (CISRS), Calcutta, India, working with the urban poor for many years

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Views from the Grassroots - People's stories from urban Asia

Finally, on January 7, 1995, 20 DBKL officers and 10 police officers, a band of KTM officials and a bulldozer tried to clear the area of the remaining 3 houses. But the residents stood between their homes and the menacing bulldozer and enforcement officers. With the support of about 30 concerned friends from neighbouring kampungs, and concerned organisations, they managed to halt the operations.

The director of the Electrical Multiple Unit (EMU) project was finally pressured to visit the area to resolve the matter. By this time, the people had begun to question KTM's ownership of the land. The director was uninformed of the status of the land but admitted that this should be determined before negotiations could continue.

But meanwhile the residents initiated a land (cont'd p20)



ACHR Training and Advisory Programme

Report by Maurice Leonhardt

TAP aims to establish a system of mutual learning and support, based on Asian experiences and programmes, for grassroots community organizations, NGOs and housing professionals.

Brief History

One of the milestones of ACHR activity was the first grassroots people's dialogue in Seoul in 1987, when people from urban poor communities from throughout Asia came to Seoul to share their experiences. Despite language barriers and cultural diversity, community leaders and squatters could identify strongly with each others successes and failures in combating urban poverty and learning was generated on a large scale. This was an experiment in international exchange which succeeded. There followed a number of country to country exchanges amongst the grass-roots which were equally successful. Slowly grassroots groups were building a capacity to "train" and host their Asian brothers and sisters and a new form of experiential learning was beginning.

In 1991 the process was formalized into a 3 year Training & Advisory Programme -TAP. Other components were added and the experimentation in training and sharing continued. As the second 3 year programme begins new methodologies and paradigms of transferring ideas and change processes are being introduced.



Experimental and Experiential Sharing

The experiences since Habitat I indicate that to create the basis of change, people from a cross-section of institutions i.e. government local authorities, NGOs, CBOs need to feel equally committed to participating in a transforming process.

TAP designed opportunities to send "teams" of actors at these different levels to attend exposure cum training together at some of Asia's most successful community based development projects and processes - the Orangi Pilot Project Pakistan, Kampung Improvement Programme Surabaya, Indonesia, Land Sharing in Bangkok, Community Based Habitat Processes in Sri Lanka. Over 10 days the teams, usually from 7 different cities in Asia, would come to a common understanding of the urban poor situation in their city against a background of the successful project and in many cases lay the basis for new partnership processes to develop when participants returned to their countries. Through linkages with organizations like ESCAP, CITYNET, UNDP, AP2000 and others, the programme also creates scope for collaborative training processes.

TAP has tried to continue the successes of the original people's dialogue by giving scope for grassroots people to people exchanges in the region. The Indian coalition from Bombay SPARC- Mahila Milan and the National Slum Dwellers Federation formed teams which have transferred elements, of a savings and credit process with Bombay's pavement dwellers, to urban poor communities in Vientiane Laos, Phnom Penh, Cambodia and other communities in Thailand. This combined with a community based survey methodology has catalyzed and strengthened community organizations in over 60 communities throughout the region. In the process CBOs have become the trainers promoting a new development paradigm.

From the Philippines, CO-TRAIN and UPA-COPE have created opportunities for community organizers and leaders from the region to systematically reflect on the past 20 years of community organizing and develop strategies for new and emerging issues of the 90's. At a regional workshop in Baguio teams from 8 Asian countries met. Since then many have organized national processes in their own countries to widen and deepen the process. The CO team also helped initiate community organizations in Cambodia and continue to do so independently of TAP.

There is an imbalance between government, academics, NGOs and the urban poor in putting forward the issue of poverty alleviation. In an attempt to redress the imbalance it is vital that decision makers of the future develop greater understanding of urban poor processes and the links between the groups mentioned. TAP's Young Professionals programme attempts to do this by providing internships for students and practicing YPs to have direct involvement with the communities; supporting a regional network of YPs, and using the ACHR network to take part in and influence the curriculums of universities and colleges.

TAP II will focus on: creating wealth within urban poor communities; strengthening women's roles; community organizing and strengthening; building partnerships; providing access to information; and attempting to institutionalize successful urban poor processes.

TAP Programme 1996-1999

1. Issue Based Regional Workshops

Wings and Credit India Sept 96
Community Strengthening 1997
Gender & Shelter 1997
Local Partnerships - National 1996-7 Regional 1998

Regional Project Based Workshops

Surabaya KIP
Community-Based Processes Sri Lanka
Land-Sharing -CB Processes in Thailand

2. Skills Development Themes

Interested groups can apply to TAP for
Savings and Credit
Community Organising / Strengthening
Community Participation in Environment
& Health

3. Advocacy, Support and Initiatives

Explorations for linkages in "new"
countries: Central Asia, Mongolia Bhutan
Responds to needs arising during TAP II.

4. Young Professionals

Internships, Regional Workshops
Networking and Outreach

5. Communication Processes

Promotion of Urban Resource Centres
Workshop; Documentation, Translation
Services, Training media



Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

Promoting Urban Poor Actions
by Somsook Boonyabancha

1988 - 1996 ...

It was in June 1988 when the group of Asian professionals and community workers, who were deeply involved in various aspects of the urban poor's housing actions met in Bangkok and decided to set up a regional action-oriented network called the "Asian Coalition for Housing Rights". The main objective, at that early 'establishing' stage was to launch concerted regional actions on the problems of housing rights and eviction with the emphasis on grassroots processes at the core of whatever actions were taken. It was a regional response to the alarming increase in evictions in the region. Subsequently, Fact Finding Missions with region-wide participation were organized to assess people's housing situations in Korea and Hong Kong. There were some good results, both in terms of learning about commonalities and specifics of evictions in the region, as well as in terms of some changes in the policy and attitudes of the people involved.

The diversification of ACHR activities came after that early stage with the search for solutions to problems encountered related to evictions and housing. While the regional coalition still maintains activities on housing rights and evictions, other activities have evolved: National activities, drawing regional forces together to attempt to improve the urban poor situation in Vietnam, Cambodia, Bangladesh and other countries were organized. Several exchange visits and exposures were organized to give alternative perspectives to groups in need; workshops and meetings were organized on issues closely related to the grassroots and concerned urban processes. The coalition also disseminated information and documentation of case studies on grassroots and community processes. And, finally, in 1993, there was the implementation of the Regional Training and Advisory Programme which brought greater dynamism to learning, sharing and implementation of activities to a wider range of groups throughout the region.

Organizing a workable regional process is, in many ways,

similar to organizing a workable process in a slum community. There may be great diversity, dis-unity, individuals with different views, and those who perceive themselves as victims. In fact, there is also an enormous richness, creativity and unlimited strength in both the communities and within the region. The challenge is to find the right process to help facilitate and develop the strengths properly. This involves a process where people understand their relationship to the process and know how to participate and contribute communally, when needed.

Since the very beginning, we have put the emphasis on "doing" (functions, work and activities) rather than on the form or complex structures of regional organization with minimum structural form possible to help facilitate actions. It is interesting to note that such a process, with clear functions and a wide ranges of activities, with shared responsibilities by many groups in the region, is working well and expanding at an alarming rate. It is not an organization in the conventional manner where common sense and creativity is so often restricted by limit regulations, rules or constitutions, and centralized control.

However, we can define 5 elements involved in the ACHR regional working process: the regional advisory group; the regional functional units; national processes, the secretariat in Bangkok; and over 500 contact groups in the region. There are 6 Regional Function Units organized semi-independently as follows: Training & Advisory Programme, Eviction Watch and Housing Rights; Woman and Shelter Network; Young Professionals; Community Savings and Credit and Community Organizing.

ACHR is, in fact, an on-going, serious and real experiment by people in search of participatory mechanisms to facilitate and work with people on a regional scale (with little financial expense). It is part of an experiment in search of a new kind of institutional process of facilitating international, national and local perspectives and actions to suit the ever-changing reality.

Somsook Boonyabancha is Secretary General of ACHR

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Views from the Grassroots - Peoples' stories from urban Asia

search and it revealed very interesting results, that their kampung was actually built on private land, belonging to a Mr. Mudaligi Geogina Paaris.

After consulting their lawyer, Batumalai, Sellamani and Mary filed for damages from KTM for the harassment, mental anguish and loss of wages as the residents had to sometimes take unpaid leave to defend their houses.

Some weeks later, DBKL's Housing Affairs Unit (Jabatan Pengurusan Perumahan) in a letter addressed to the DBKL's enforcement unit acknowledged the claims that Kg.Chinatamby was built on private land. With this clear evidence, KTM and DBKL had no choice but to recognise the people's right to remain on the land. But for the other 15 families whose homes were destroyed and were forced to move, their eviction was indeed a gross violation of their rights and even illegal.

KTM had used the strong arm tactics of the police and DBKL to forcefully and illegally evict the people from their homes. If not for the firm resistance of the people and support from concerned

neighbours and friends, they would have already lost their homes and have quietly moved to the horrible rumah panjang. For Sellamani, she would have been forced to sleep on the streets in Sentul.

But the authorities not yet verbally apologised to the people for the unnecessary harassment, unjustified threats of eviction and bullying attitude displayed by the KTM officials and DBKL enforcement officers.

This is a landmark case where the people's perseverance for decent lives and right to a proper home, have at least culminated in some form of victory even if it may be shortlived.

Today the people are still worried that this new turn of events would probably prompt the KTM to manipulate the situation and somehow acquire the land through the land acquisition Act or some other enactment which would ultimately chase the people off the land. Contribution by Tan Jo Hann: freelance journalist, member of PERMAS, Malaysia, and programme coordinator of SEARICE. Edited version.

ACHR
Housing By
People
In Asia

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