

NEWS on TAP

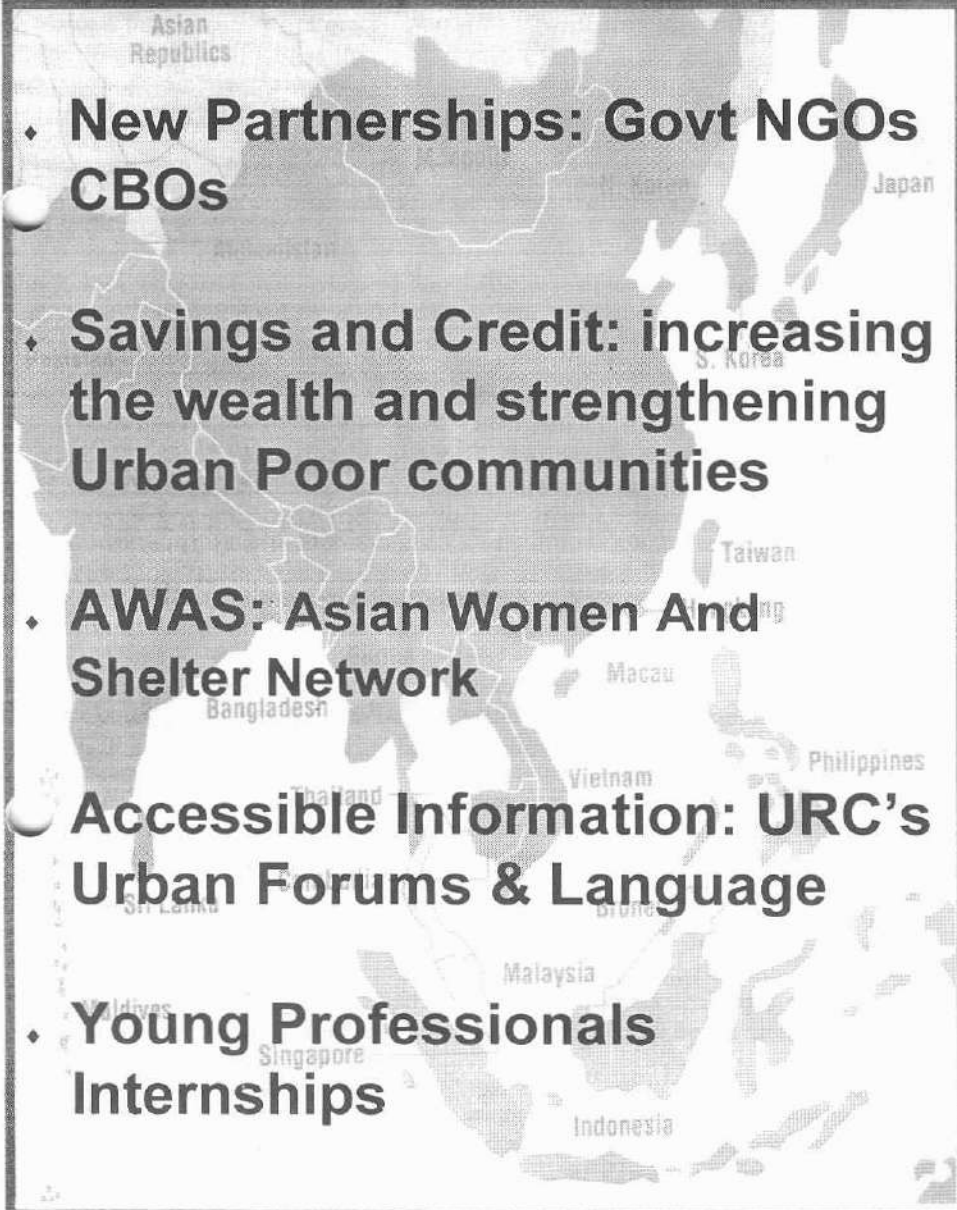
*Newsletter of the
Asian Coalition for Housing Rights'
Training & Advisory Programme*

Vol. 1 No. 3

September 1996

Community Based Savings & Credit Potential for Large Scale Change

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**Activities Review 1995-6 and New Activities for TAP 2
Regional Project & Issue Based Workshops
Skills Development: Savings & Credit, Community
Organizing, Sanitation & Solid Waste Management.
Young Professionals, Support, Advocacy, New Initiatives
Communication and Information Processes, Translations,
Urban Resource Centres, Urban Forums,
Impacts, News and Views**

In many Asian cities, various aspects of poverty are becoming more apparent and serious. Although the issues of urban poverty, poverty alleviation or even slums and squatter settlements have been recognized, analyzed and publicized for decades, effective methods to deal with and keep pace with the associated and



increasing problems still lag far behind. In some cities, the gap between problems and solutions is noticeably increasing.

It is timely to explore new possibilities and processes that can, qualitatively and quantitatively, deal with urban poverty on a larger scale.

In exploring new approaches it will be valuable to draw on some interesting contemporary and past experiences and process that illustrate potential for fashioning new, realistic approaches to engender substantive future changes.

The substantial development of Community Based Savings and Credit and its extension to the development of housing finance activities amongst urban poor communities throughout Asia has become a very promising and innovative development by people themselves in the progress toward alleviating the various aspects of urban poverty.

In September this year, a TAP Issue Based Workshop on people-centered Savings and Credit will attempt to explore processes and models that have emerged in Asia over the past decade. It will attempt to analyze and increase understanding of this development. It will also explore the emergence of new kinds of organization of partnership set up to manage and facilitate savings and integrated credit schemes among urban poor organizations. In analyzing the institutional frameworks based on a people centered approach the workshop will explore possibilities to trigger a development process by people on a regional scale. (page 6 for details)

The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights was established in 1988 by non-government and community-based, grassroots organizations, professionals and individuals actively involved in housing concerns of the urban poor. It is a regional coalition with members in 12 Asian countries and is the Asia representative of the Habitat International Coalition. ACHR is an action oriented organization primarily concerned with the shelter rights of the poor and those under threat of eviction or who have been displaced or dispossessed and are trying through various means to find a decent place to live. Over the years since its inauguration ACHR has established a network of experience and knowledge of successful Asian projects and processes relevant to low-income urban communities. Recently, in an attempt to extend this experience, it has initiated the Training and Advisory Programme [TAP]: a program of sharing and learning for combinations of communities and concerned groups in Asia in order to broaden and strengthen their capacities in a stronger people-based housing process.

Function Units

- Housing Rights & Eviction Watch
- Asian Women & Shelter Network
- Training & Advisory Programme
- Community Organizing
- Savings & Credit
- Young Professionals
- Research & Publications

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Experimental and Experiential Sharing

TAP 1 & 2 Overview

The first 3 years of the Training & Advisory Programme attempted to introduce new concepts and approaches to implementing people centered programmes through sharing experiences between urban actors and practitioners of participating CBOs, NGOs, professionals and partners in government. It also sought to strengthen, broaden and assess the effectiveness of methods of supporting urban, community-based development.

The project based regional workshops were designed with the understanding that to create the basis of large scale change, people from a cross-section of institutions i.e. government, NGOs, CBOs need to feel equally committed to participating in a transforming process. Between 1993 - 1996, during TAP 1, opportunities were given for "integrated 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 they returned to their countries. TAP 2 (the second 3 year programme) will continue to give similar opportunities - see page 3.

TAP 1, through its Skills Development component, attempted to continue the successes of ACHR's original people's dialogue by giving scope for grassroots, people to people exchanges in the region. Some exchanges were between communities in the same city, others in-country and there were also regional exchanges involving Cambodia, Sri Lanka, India, Korea, Thailand, Philippines and Laos. In the process CBOs have become the trainers promoting a new development paradigm and enhancing capacities to transfer their experiences. TAP 2 will offer similar opportunities for Savings and Credit and Community Organizing. To broaden the scope of skills, methods and models available for training requirements TAP 2 will also hold regional Issue Based Workshops on Savings and Credit and Community Organizing and Strengthening - page 6. These will impact on the Skills components bringing dynamism and new groups into the regional process. TAP 2 will also see the introduction of a new skills component to provide opportunities for communities in need of Sanitation, Health & Solid Waste Management Skills page 7.

TAP 1 initiated a Young Professionals programme in an attempt to redress the imbalance between government, academics, NGOs and the urban poor in putting forward the issue of poverty alleviation. It is vital that decision makers of the future develop greater understanding of urban poor processes and the links between all urban actors. TAP 2 will put increased emphasis on providing internships for student and practicing YPs to have direct involvement with the communities pages 14 - 17. It will also continue to support a regional network of YPs, and use ACHR members to influence the curriculums of universities and colleges.

TAP 2 will link with the newly formed Asian Women and Shelter Network - AWAS - which will inform the whole programme on gender issues. pages 8 - 11. Through other linkages with organizations like ESCAP, CITYNET, UNDP, AP2000, IIED and others, TAP 2 will create scope for collaborative training processes. pages 4-5, 12.

To make information more accessible TAP 2 will initiate an Information and Communications component to explore new methods of making information more accessible to grassroots groups including a focus on language translation and Urban Resource Centers. pages 18-19.

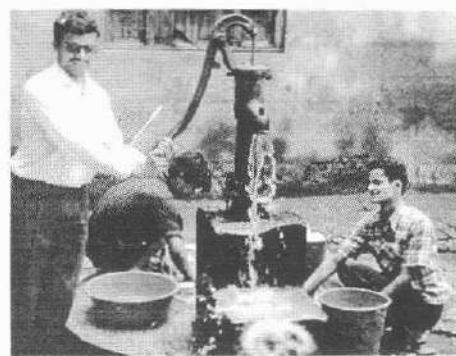
This is the third TAP newsletter. In each issue we have had an increasing number of articles written by and for grassroots groups and practitioners. We encourage groups and individuals to write to us and tell us what they are doing so that we can share with others.

Finally, I wish to thank the vast number of individuals and organizations in the region who have contributed to the programme and the urban poor who have provided the knowledge and experience from which the programme draws its strengths.

Maurice Leonhardt
ACHR TAP Coordinator

TAP 2

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



TAP Activities 1996 -1999*

Issue Based Workshops

CB Savings and Credit Sept 1996
Local Partnerships 1996 - 1999
Community Organizing & Strengthening 1997
Women and Shelter 1997

Project Workshops

CB Processes in Sri Lanka 1997
Surabaya and KIP 1998
CB Processes & Land Sharing in Thailand 1999

Skills Development

Community Organizing
CB Savings and Credit
Sanitation, Health, Solid Waste Management

Young Professionals

Internships, Workshops, Lectures, Networking

New Initiatives, Support & Advocacy

Central Asia, Mongolia, Burma
Responding to Needs

Information & Communications Processes

Urban Resource Centres Workshop
Promoting URCs and Urban Forums
Translations, Experimentation - audio visuals
Documentation of Training and Good Practices

* Subject to change by TAP Steering Committee



In its first 3 years TAP linked in partnership with a number of regional and international organizations involved in various types and methods of training, sharing and exchange: UNDP, AP200, ESCAP, UNVA, IIED UK, CITYNET, ODA UK, MISEREOR.

The second three years see many links already re-established through activities outlined in this newsletter.

Some organizations have substituted or integrated their regular "institutional training" for grassroots involvement arranged through TAP.

If your organization is interested in sharing the knowledge of community based urban practice in Asia we welcome your collaboration.

ACHR TAP gratefully acknowledges the support of the Overseas Development Administration, South East Asia Development Division, United Kingdom, and particularly to Dr Michael Schultz of ODA for his advice and encouragement.

Are NGOs, CBOs and Government Ready for Effective Partnerships?

"Studies by the World Bank show that development projects that local people help to design and carry out tend to work better than traditional top down projects do. The policies and projects most likely to succeed are those that invite input from key stakeholders, including traditionally excluded groups." Jonathan Lash, President World Resources Institute.

Governments are increasingly recognizing their inability to solve urban problems by themselves: even if they have the political will their resources and skills are inadequate. Some innovative government offices are attempting to build new structures of partnership with citizen groups to help them accomplish the tasks that have been neglected. If grassroots groups and NGOs are to initiate and join such processes they need to be able to propose viable options that address the problems they are so aware of. This may require new skills from government that enable participation, and from NGOs and grassroots groups that strengthen abilities to articulate their needs and negotiate skillfully. In participating in partnership with CDP \ Asia, TAP hopes to identify the skills necessary for successful partnership and develop skills transfer materials and programmes to support NGOs and grassroots groups who wish to strengthen their capacities to contribute.

NAGA CITY: Partnership in Action

Mayor Jesse M. Robredo began an urban poor program in 1989 called *Kaantabay sa Kauswagan* - a Bicolano phrase which literally translates to Partners in Development. This program has a tripartite partnership of (1) the city government, (2) the urban poor federation and its associated groups 3) private landowners

The program is a social amelioration program primarily designed to empower the urban poor sector by responding to two main problems of urban poverty: (1) the absence of land tenure, and; (2) the lack of basic infrastructure and facilities in their communities.

It is based on the principle of "growth with equity". This means "giving equal importance and strong commitment to socio-economic programs that increase people's equity and expand their role in development efforts." It states that equity is not anathema to economic growth. To empower the urban poor means that this sector needs to be brought back to the mainstream of society.

The program aims to institutionalize a mechanism that will provide permanent solution to all land tenurial problems involving the urban poor.



The Mayor of Naga City Jesse M. Robredo (centre) attending his first TAP regional workshop in Surabaya Indonesia with partners in development Henry R. Gandelaria and Honesto B. Perez.

For the short term, it seeks to uplift the living conditions of the squatters and the slum dwellers in the city; eradicate arbitrary ejection and minimize incidence of eviction and demolition; explore alternative modes of land acquisition.

For the long term, it intends to empower the urban poor sector in Naga City by providing home-lots, basic infrastructure and services, as well as livelihood opportunities to all in need; strengthen the urban poor sector and heighten their participation in local governance; and integrate the urban poor in the mainstream of development and make them productive members of society.

Partnerships Dialogue in Mumbai [Bombay]

The experiences of Bombay, as reflected in a report by Youth for Unity and Action [YUVA] show that there are concrete instances of the community, particularly among the marginalized and vulnerable sections of society, organizing and taking charge of its own future. People have got the state to respond to their needs through collaboration with local authorities. Despite some limitations, YUVA concludes that their case studies illustrate that collaborations are an effective way for the community and state to move into the future. Case studies presented include: Mumbai Mohalla Committees - Partnerships for Safe Neighbourhood; Securing a Foothold - Tenancy Partnerships; Ration Kruti Samitee - Partnership for influencing the Public Distribution Systems; Partnerships in the Health Sector; Partnerships in Waste Management; Partnerships in Education. (Contact YUVA for details back page). In strategizing for new partnerships the YUVA dialogue concluded:

Partnerships:

- are strategy to empower local communities;
- encourage transparency and accountability;
- are a sharing of control over decision making;
- are for fulfillment of social objectives.

Partnerships are NOT:

- contracting out delivery of services;
- NGOs taking on the functions of the state;
- privatization.

TAP / CDP Asia

Actions on Partnership Processes NGOs, CBOs & Local Authorities

TAP and the UNCHS Regional Community Development Programme for Asia (CDP/Asia), will jointly organize a series of workshop on local partnerships in the course of 1996 - 1999. The CDP Asia is focusing on partnerships at the local level between communities, local authorities, NGOs, academic and research institutions, and civic groups as well as private sector when appropriate and possible, as a central part of its programme of work. Therefore, it has been agreed that this activity under the TAP Programme would be an ideal opportunity for ACHR / TAP and the CDP/Asia to work in partnership through 1996 and beyond. Both have considerable experience in this field which can be beneficial to the process of building solid and productive partnerships within urban contexts.

Partnerships Why and How by Peter Swan

Partnerships between various actors in the spheres of shelter production, urban development, environmental protection and poverty alleviation can and are providing new possibilities for effective and sustainable action. However, the frequent calls for partnerships in international and regional meetings are meaningless and distracting if each 'partner group' i.e. community organizations, municipalities, NGOs etc. do not have the occasion to think through and articulate their own priorities and develop concrete commitments to work with their fellow organizations in the first instance and with the new found partners in the second. One way of injecting some realism into the rhetoric is to bring the prospective partners together at the city level to address existing problems and hammer out a set of mutual commitments to new partnership based solutions. This is essentially the rationale for the partnership workshops.

The obstacles to partnerships should not be underestimated. The historical hostility that central and local government institutions have demonstrated toward slum and squatter communities in most countries over the past three decades has inevitably made many community organizers and members suspicious and guarded in their responses to the more recent overtures to work with government. Attitudes are hard to change on both sides and though the policy climate has evolved in more enlightened directions, old problems like graft and bureaucratic arrogance still persist. Therefore, encounters at the proposed workshops need to be frank and practical rather than formal and theoretical. Similarly, it is important that such workshops focus on follow-up actions that put into practice and test respective partner's commitment and capacity to work on a partnership basis rather than on patron-client or authority-beneficiary basis.

The first workshop to be conducted will be held in Songkhla, **Thailand**, where the municipality has been actively working on solving city problems with communities and civic groups. It is likely that a similar range of partners from one or two other cities from the Southern region of Thailand will participate. It is hoped that the workshop can be held in early August 1996 and that additional workshops will be held in **Sri Lanka** and **Nepal** by early 1997.

Drawing on the results of the three national level workshops, a **regional workshop** will be organized in 1997 to compare the outcomes within different national contexts and to engage the interest and initiative of potential partners in other countries in the region.

Contact Peter Swan and / or TAP for details - back page for contact information.

If your grassroots group or NGO has been involved in successful partnership with government authority please write and let us know so we can share your experience with other groups in the region. Contact details - back page

PARTNERSHIPS IN ASIA



Habitat International Coalition [HIC] has commissioned a number of case studies of NGO-GO partnerships throughout the world. Kirtee Shah has begun coordinating the documentation of 10 case studies for Asia including the following: Urban Community Development Office Thailand; Grameen Bank, Bangladesh; KIP Indonesia; Naga City; Maharashtra Emergency Earth-quake Rehab Pgm, India; Community Construction Contracts, Sri Lanka.

Detail includes: Actors involved, impacts and lessons learnt. Contact Kirtee Shah for more details- back page..

From the Grassroots ..



Patricia Matolengwe South African Homeless People's Federation during the TAP workshop, Sri Lanka, Nov. 1995

"The community is always left behind in conferences or debates on the NGO role. We are like a boat to development: all NGOs are trying to catch it.

We try to implement what they want to do, but we need to do so in our own time, with our own understanding of it. There are always minor tensions among ourselves. We need time...

What NGOs and others impose on us, we need time to tolerate it and understand it because it is our life. NGOs are in-between, accountable to the donor rather than the communities. They think it is easy to transform.

It is important for them to give us a chance to get the skills, but in our own way of working."



Community Based Savings and Credit Regional Workshop

India
September 1996

The Community Based Savings and Credit process will be the first in a series of TAP regional Issue Based Workshops to be conducted over the next 3 years.

In this article, coordinator Celine D'Cruz outlines the rationale and detail.

The plan is to bring together community representatives of groups who have done at least 5 years of savings and credit to share and exchange strategies, and examine what regional strategy groups may wish to adapt to help them in their local process.



Why the Savings and Credit Process can be so Powerful?

Savings and Credit along with Community surveys and data collection by people are two sides of the same coin. The belief is that money and information is monopolized by those who are powerful in society however few they may be and used to control the majority who don't have access to these tools. Generally those with money also have the instruments of knowledge and information. So the rich and educated become the dominant culture and are more powerful than those not rich and not informed. So if money and knowledge mean power, then poor people need to create their own systems to get access to both money and knowledge. This process of designing access and controlling the process is empowerment. It allows people to make choices for themselves.

Therefore for poor communities, savings and credit does not limit itself to becoming just a bank, it becomes the space and time for collectives of women to redefine their priorities and find ways of handling this present situation in which they are and which they want to change. Communities know and realize that in order to find a solution for their problems, they need to create an information base, to be able to make informed choices. So savings and credit becomes a tool to mobilize communities, it builds capacities of women to manage and deliver new options for their communities, and in that process they get the recognition of the community that they are and have always been central to the problem solving process in the community.

Once this process is developed, it becomes the basis for addressing a range of issues in the community whether it be housing sanitation, solid waste or whatever. This process begins to build the confidence in communities to take on any issue.

Who will be involved in September in India?

The Savings and Credit workshop will involve two kinds of participants

- Groups who have worked in S&C for a long time in a substantial way: Cities of Bombay, Bangkok, Phnom Penh, others in India, South Africa and Sri Lanka.
- Groups who have begun recently, or wish to begin such as those in Kathmandu, Dhaka, Karachi, Vietnam.

What would we do there?

- 1 Look at the different experiences which communities in the various countries have developed, and seek to understand and explain to each other how and why they work, what factors make them grow? and analyze the similarities and differences.
- 2 Examine who are the actors in these experiences, what roles do they play, and what are the linkages that exist between the CBOs, NGOs and the state.
- 3 Examine the need to create opportunities for groups to expand and flourish, and to see what action needs to be taken, locally, regionally, and nationally to assist the groups. How can all this be done so that community control and decentralized functioning remain?
- 4 How can we all work together to further build community capacities in our country to expand this process?
- 5 What role can be ascribed to NGOs and ACHR to strengthen this process?
- 6 What are the nitty gritty issues which sustain the savings and credit program? e.g. book keeping, collection systems, training process, decision making, etc.
- 7 How to deal with NGOs who feel threatened when CBO's take charge? How can CBO's facilitate partnership instead of patronage? Can we help NGOs see that they have an advantage if they "let go"?
- 8 What follow up can we plan to strengthen each other?

Opportunities on: Low Cost Sanitation Orangi Pilot Project

Poor sanitation and lack of water are the chief characteristics of slums in Asia. This lends itself to a host of health problems, like typhoid, malaria, diarrhoea, dysentery, scabies, etc. especially among children. This in turn drains a substantial portion of poor people's income to medicines. People's income is also reduced further when they are unable to work due to ill-health.



The Orangi Pilot Project-Research and Training Institute has been working for the past 15 years in Orangi, one of the largest squatter settlements in Karachi, with a population of one million people. They have effectively demonstrated that people can finance and build their own underground sewerage systems. Out of the approximately 7,000 lanes in Orangi, nearly 6,000 lanes containing over 76,000 houses have laid underground sewerage lines and mobilized about US\$ 3 million in the process.

The OPP-RTI gives technical and social guidance to people of low income settlements on how to lay these underground sewerage lines. Their research has brought down the cost to make it affordable to people. The impact of their efforts has extended to other low income settlements in Karachi as well in other cities of Pakistan and elsewhere in Asia. In some cities the OPP-RTI has worked in collaboration with the government. They continue to be a partner in the Sindh Katchi Abadi Authority's (government squatter settlement upgradation agency) upgradation programme.

The OPP has developed a package of programmes for low income settlements consisting of low cost sanitation, health education and family planning and credit for business and generation of employment. In addition, the OPP has developed effective systems of documenting its work and of getting communities to monitor their work. ACHR-TAP and OPP-RTI are providing opportunities for organizations in need to apply for exposure to the OPP training programmes by contacting ACHR TAP with an outline of specific needs and the potential impacts such training is likely to have on urban communities.

Community Sanitation and Environment Process in India

SPARC along with Mahila Milan and NSDF are presently working on a very unique project in Lucknow. Together with the City of Lucknow, the State government of Uttar Pradesh, the British ODA and communities who live on canals along the Gomti river, they are working to explore possibilities by which:

- the pollution along the canals is reduced
- communities get a better sanitation and solid waste system
- river pollution decreases

Andrea Cook, who worked with ACHR in Cambodia, is also associated with the project. She now works in the ODA Water and Sanitation Project. Reports about this are available from SPARC.

TAP Skills Development

TAP 2 Some Changes

Over the past three years TAP has organized many project based workshops. In each workshop 5 to 7 teams from different countries participated. Not only did they learn from the local process and /or project, they were able to share their own process with others and learn what other groups in other countries were doing. The workshops gave an understanding of the local processes to a large number of groups in Asian cities.

In TAP 2, it is proposed that, while retaining some project based workshops, we would also give opportunities to more focused groups to visit different projects and have a more direct, in-depth training related to an expressed and demonstrated need by organizations applying.

The process of these workshops would be that TAP would circulate the variety of processes in different Asian cities that continue to have a positive impact on the lives of the urban poor; groups in cities who require training to enhance their knowledge and skill to develop their own process in their city could apply to TAP to spend time with that particular project. The first of these trainings cum exposures will be hosted by the Orangi Pilot Project - Research and Training Institute.

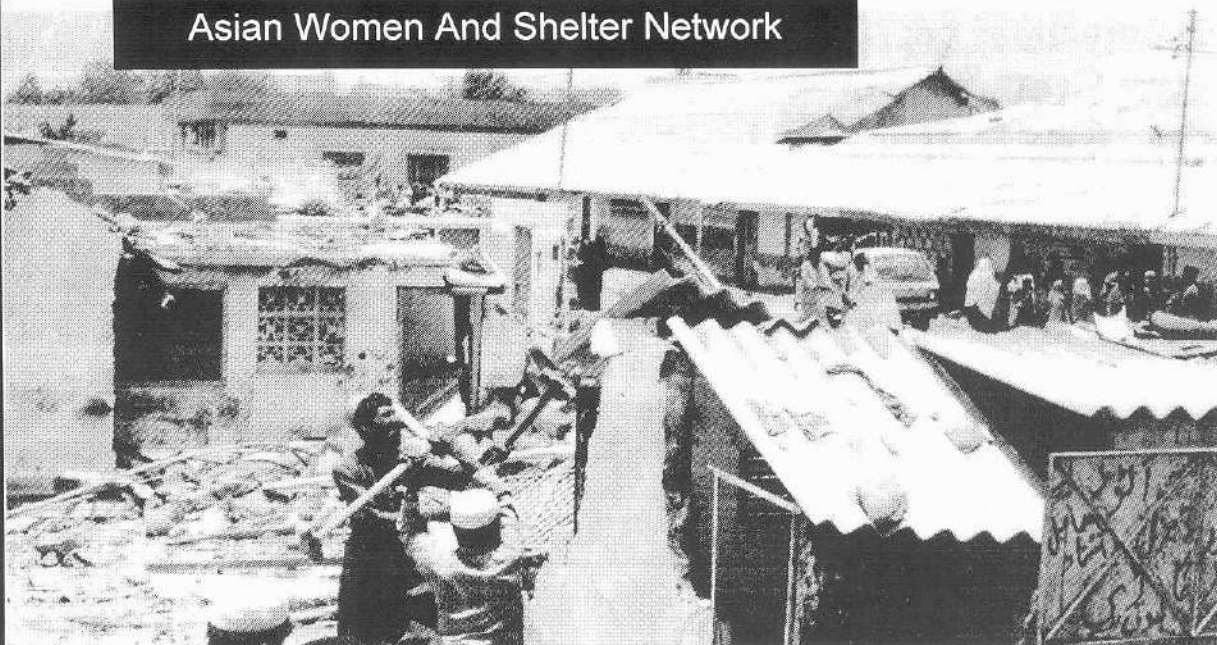
The training will be structured to suit the needs of the applicants and a maximum of two countries can participate at any one time. Opportunities to participate will occur approximately 3 times per year. The training will be in-depth, focused and add to the visiting groups local process. The participant mix would be similar to the previous project based workshops viz. each team comprising at least one representative from a CBO, NGO and government. Organizations wishing to apply can request further information from ACHR-TAP.

TAP 2 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

**C-B Savings & Credit
Community Organizing
Sanitation, Health and Solid
Waste Management**

100 million women and children in the world are homeless and up to 600 million live in inadequate shelter
U.N. Estimate

Forced Evictions continued during Habitat II in Karachi, Bombay and Manila.



Even while we were discussing and lobbying against forced evictions in Istanbul, communities were being evicted forcefully in Asia. Above: a scene from Lines Area, Karachi, 5th June. The URC predicts that more evictions are expected to make way for infrastructural development. What now Habitat II?

AWAS AT HABITAT II

One objective of AWAS at Habitat II was to get together a global mix of people in a forum and float some new ideas that had developed in Bangalore and advocate community-government collaboration initiated by women in the region. At the forum entitled Strategies for Women's Advocacy, Anita Gurumurthy, a speaker from India presented an alternative framework for evaluating whether development programmes are effectively bringing about a change in the status of women. Myrlie Navarro from Lihok Pilipina and Chandra Ranaraja spoke of how women, communities and government have successfully tackled issues of urban violence and infrastructure development.

We then invited everyone to organize themselves into smaller groups and share what they have been doing collectively in their countries for urban development, how they go about it and what alliances have they formed to support their actions.

A few days later, a second workshop was organized to go deeper into what women were doing at local grassroots level in Asia and how AWAS could help strengthen what they do.

Other AWAS workshops on Women and Local Governance opened the discussion to participants across regions. Nora Fernandes, AWAS.

'We have returned with a stronger commitment to our community'

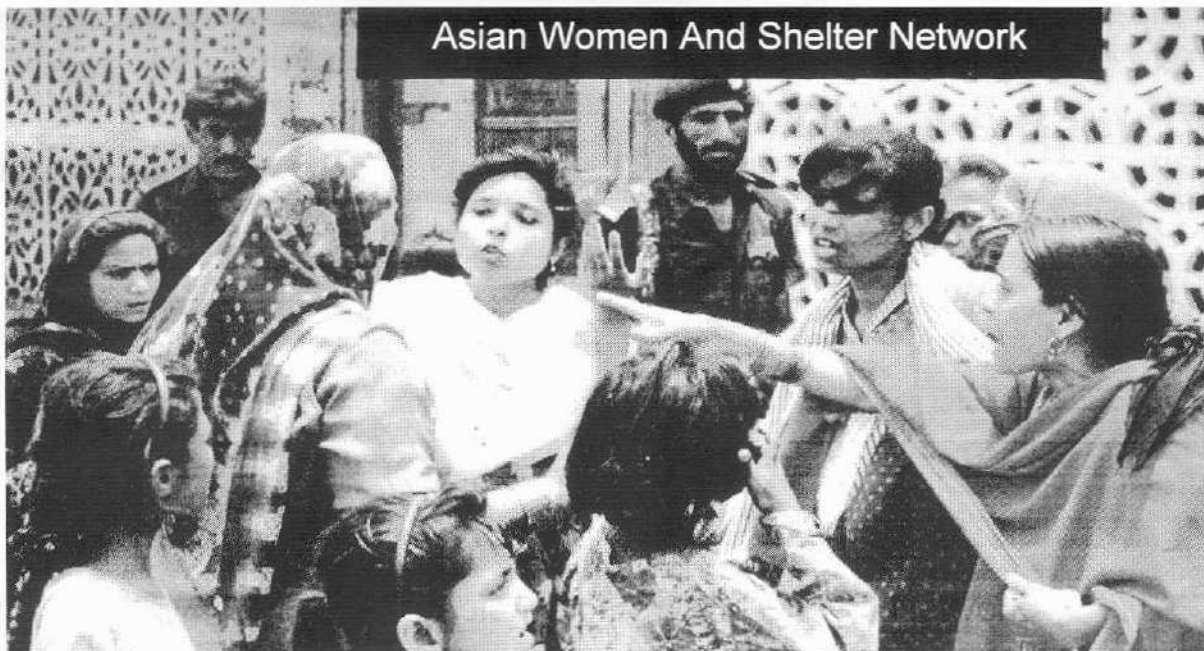
Community organizers from Jakarta reflect on Habitat II

"The thing I liked most about the conference was the opportunity it provided us to meet and share with people from different parts of the world", Tukinem reflected. "Before, I did not realize that eviction was also experienced by poor people in other countries, even a rich country like Japan. The Conference had strengthened my commitment to organize the people in our community, knowing that we have many like-minded friends all over the world." Dedi, while agreeing with what Tukinem said, added his observation: "For me, the opportunity to participate in the culture show, mass action, and the workshops on our focused issues, i.e. housing right and anti-eviction was incredible." That's right", Edi said. "But I think the mass action and culture show that we did together with our friends from the Asia-Pacific region were the most interesting; and I feel I could participate more there than the workshop especially since English is a real problem for me."

In other words, there are four main opportunities the Conference provided:

- 1 to build up and strengthen network and solidarity with regional and international NGOs;
- 2 to raise and share our main issues and concerns;
- 3 to be exposed to and learn from various ideas, strategies, and information presented in the Conference; and
- 4 to develop the triangle collaboration - the NGOs, the media and the artist - as a useful strategy to raise an issue or concern; the strategy has indeed made the Asia Caucus visible.

Now we are back in our community, we feel refreshed and energized. There are activities we are planning to do soon, among which are the strengthening of the grassroots organization and network especially among communities facing eviction or which have been evicted already; the development of a working mechanism for local and national eviction watch; and of course to socialize the Habitat agenda and other information concerning the Conference to our community and others. We believe that public awareness will be a good start to develop pressure to our government to really implement the agenda that they have ratified in Istanbul.



Above: Chaos prevails as families find they are to lose their homes. Women of Lines Area frantically consult each other - what to do? Photos by Adnan Farooqui, URC, Karachi. Evictions also took place in Bombay during Habitat II. In Manila evictions are currently under way to make way for the Asia Pacific Economic Commission (APEC) Meeting.

AWAS
formed in 1995,
aims to:

Centre-stage
women's
concerns in the
habitat
movement.

Support
community
based women's
initiatives.

Assist lobbying
and advocacy
efforts of women

The City of Istanbul Impressions from Grassroots infrequent travellers

by: Jelambar Baru Urban Poor Consortium, Jakarta

The Jelambar Baru Urban Poor Consortium (KJB) of Jakarta, Indonesia sent a group of twelve people to attend the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul last May-June 1996. The group consisted of five community organisers from Jelambar Baru, six NGO persons from three NGO members of the Consortium, and one artist.

A week after we came back from Istanbul, we conducted an evaluation session on our participation in the Habitat II Conference. Apart from the things we learned and were exposed to, our hopes and future plans, we could not help returning to the strong impact that the CITY of Istanbul itself had made on us. We would like to share the points that came up about the memories of the city.

Kurnia, one of the Jelambar Baru community organisers, began by stating the following: "Since I was a child, far away places outside the village where I was born always fascinated me. The older I am the more I realize that to travel to those places is beyond my reach especially since it costs much much more than my income as a factory worker. When my plane landed at the Istanbul airport in 29 June 1996 -- it was the first air travel I have ever experienced -- I felt as if I was dreaming, I still did not believe I was actually in Istanbul, thousands of miles away from my kampung (traditional settlement / community) in Jakarta." Edi, Inem, Dedi, and Nardi, the other four community organisers, agreed with Kurnia.

When we reflected on Istanbul as the venue of the conference, we all agreed that it was the right place for at least three reasons. Firstly, Istanbul is a city where Asia, the cradle of the great religions and civilizations, and Europe, the root of which the modern culture is developed, are one. A habitat conference in the city certainly benefited from and was enriched by the cultural and historical backgrounds. Secondly, Istanbul that has been a metropolitan since the 8 century (by that time its population was already one million people) fits very well into the theme of the conference, i.e., the urbanizing world. We can learn a lot from the way the city is planned and managed since centuries ago. Here we were amazed that even a poor settlement that we visited has a beautiful view towards the blue sea -- in Jakarta, only the rich can afford a place with such a view. Thirdly, the current socio-political situation of Istanbul or Turkey in general, especially the marginalization and eviction of the Kurds as an ethnic minority, has given a context to the main issues of the conference, namely, anti-eviction and housing right as human right.

Last but not least, Istanbul is a very beautiful place with beautiful and friendly people, we felt privileged to be able to visit and organize activities in it.

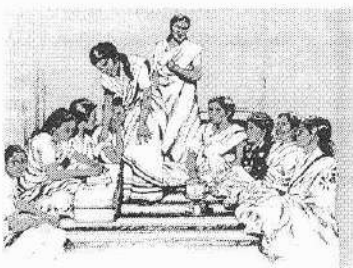
AWAS Contact List

Anastacio, Mylene: KPML, POBox 782, Kalookan Central Post Office, Kalookan Central, Kalookan City, Philippines Fax 632-3639008
Bagasao, Fides: see UPA (back page) Tel 632-987001 Fax 632-966755
Barot, Nafisa: Uthman, 36 Chitrakut Twins, Near Management Enclave, Vastapur, Ahmedabad 380015, Gujarat, India Tel 6750213
Bashir, Seemin: SCOPE, D-28 Al Falah Society, Shah Faisal Colony 3, Karachi 25, Pakistan
Casanillo, Lolita W Babak Committee, Miranda, Babak, 8118 Davao Del Norte, Mindanao, Philippines
Choudhry, Rashida: ADAB, 1/3 Block F, Lalmatia, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh
Contractor, Nasreen: see YUVA back page, Tel 388-9811 Fax 9122-385-3139 email YUVA@INBB.GN.APC.ORG
Fatima, Zehratal: Aurat Foundation, 5-B First Floor, Block 2, PECHS, Karachi 75400, Pakistan Tel 9221-4536762
Fernandes, Nora: see list on back page
Fernandez, Tessie: Lihok Pilipina Foundation, 102-P Del Rosario Ext., Cebu City 6000, Philippines Fax 6332-217974
George, Susanna: AP2000, UNDP Malaysia Tel 603-255-9122 Fax 253-2361
Gopalan, Prema: HIC Woman and Shelter Network, c/o SPARC India Tel 3093730 Fax 9122-4950505
Gowri Mohan, Swarna: Women's Voice, Behind Jyotirmahal, Bangalore 1000, India Tel 9180-4478
Gunasekera, Neela: No 15, 1st Lane, Gangadara Mawatha, Sirimal Uyana, Ratmalana, Sri Lanka
Gurumurthy, Anita: National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Science Cam pus, Bangalore 560012, India
Hafidz, Wardah: KJB, Jelambar Ilir RT09/RW10 No34, Jelambar Baru, Jakarta 11460, Indonesia
Joshi, Rita: Mayor, 1 Sarojini Naidu Marg, Allahabad, India
Ka Wai, Tsang: see SOCO back page
Kamal, Zainab: 259-B, Block 6, PECHS, Karachi 75400, Pakistan Tel 9221-4542857
Karanjit, Mangala: Federation of Business and Professional Women, GPO Box 11673, Bhotabahal Kathmandu 21, Nepal
Manandhar, Lajana: Lumanti, Nepal, see back page
Menon, Gayatri: see SPARC back page
Navarro, Merly: Women's Action Group, Guinabson, Barangay Basak Ng Sn Nicolas, Cebu City, Philippines
Ng, Cecilia: JPSB, c/o AP2000 UNDP Malaysia
Patel, Sheela: SPARC, India see back page
Rahi, Rehana: ARM Welfare, Haji Peer Mohammad Road, Near 8 Chowk, Behind Sarbaz Travel Agency, Baghdad, Lyari, Karachi, Pakistan
Ranaraja, Chandra: Kandy Municipal Council, 18 Rajapilla, Mawatha, Kandy, Sri Lanka Tel 225638
Shah, Esha: Wastewise Bangalore, 373 Hundred Feet Road, HAL Second Stage, Indiranagar, Bangalore 560008, India Tel 9180-5255543
Sharada, Kolli Mayor: Guntur City 522 003, AP India Tel 91863-221902
Shefali, Mashuda: Khatun, NUK, 22/18 Khilji Road, Block B, 2nd Floor, Mohammadpur, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh Tel 880-2-325756
Shrestha, Gurjeshwari: Society for Urban Poor, GPO Box 7508, Kathmandu, Nepal Fax 9771-225767
Tiglaio, Raquel: Women's Crisis Center, POBox 2150, NIA Road, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines Tel 9216783
Zuberi, Samia Raasta: 3-C Commercial Lane 2, Zamzama Boulevard, Clifton, Karachi 75600, Pakistan Tel 9221-5870735

Engendering Development...

by Prema Gopalan,
SPARC, India

Put a hundred activist women together and watch the air sizzle with stimulating ideas, successful strategies for survival and sister-bonding! The range of skills was wide: from hand-pump mechanics and grain bankers to money managers of savings groups: so much more for exchange and learning.



Lajana Manadhar (left) and Savitri Shrestha, from a local organization, Lumanti work with the urban poor of Kathmandu and Lalipur on eviction watch updates, gender issues, information dissemination and savings and credit activities. For contact details see the back page.

Asian Women And Shelter Network

In March 1996, at the consultation on Engendering Development in Bombay. Over one hundred women activists, leaders and organizers from grassroots organizations in India and members of AWAS network from six countries participated.

The consultation explored the many different ways in which women have been brought into the center of development processes and how women's concerns have been integrated into mainstream development. As we shared our thoughts, we found much in common.

We learned how:

- informal collectives provide space for participation and for women to collectively intervene in development processes.

- tribal women and communities formed a grain bank to address food security needs and progressed to anti-liquor campaigns and struggles on livelihoods and forests

In drought prone areas, lack of water meant that men were concerned about lands not being cultivated but the women insisted that practical needs of **drinking water** should be addressed first. This changed community views on how women can contribute.

The re-negotiation of women's roles within communities is a protracted process whose starting point is usually resistance from men as women make the transition from merely working on community issues towards managing and controlling resources. For

instance, women who trained as hand-pump mechanics, slowly gained support from community men who were earlier opposed to women getting out of their houses. Re-negotiating gender roles within communities and settlements was linked not only to economic gains for women. It was clearly a process when men in communities moved from feeling threatened to supporting women's leadership and new roles within communities first.

Accessing government schemes can be strategically useful in creating mechanisms that make state institutions more accountable to women's concerns. In Gujarat, organizations advocated alternate approaches, technologies that are people oriented and thus influenced state water management policies.

Interaction with officials in banks, administration can be a learning experience in itself. Slum women in Bombay city go part of the local committee to the police station and demand information.

Women's presence in local government bodies itself means nothing. Those women who have participated effectively in institutional structures even at the most micro-level have drawn considerable strength and support from their collectives. In many cases it has been the **savings and credit groups that have supported and encouraged members to enter into local governing bodies.**

South Asia Conference of Mayors and Local Authorities

At the three day conference (8-11 April 1996) in Kathmandu, mayors and officials from local authorities met to discuss innovations by cities in Asia. This was the first such meeting of its kind to bring together NGOs and women mayors from small and medium sized cities of India and the enthusiasm of all the participants was an encouraging sign.

Informal sessions and formal proceedings were enriched with sharing of innovations on a wide range of urban management issues: waste management, public distribution, housing and basic services, self-employment for development, slum networking with city infrastructure and urban environment projects for green cities.

Despite monumental odds, these women who were first timers in local governments achieved success through

active involvement of ordinary people, women's groups and organizations. Their concern for women was translated into encouraging banks to give credit for self-employment, ensuring women's names in land titles, creating women's cells in police stations and setting up liaison cells for poor women to deal with city administrations.

They were keen to interact on habitat concerns and collaborate with organizations to implement new projects. This meeting has thrown up a challenge to us at AWAS to facilitate meetings which include experiences of women in local city governments across countries in Asia. At SPARC we are planning to hold a consultation with women mayors from small and medium sized cities in the coming months. ACHR, AWAS and CITYNET and other networks can help this alliance to grow. Prema Gopalan, SPARC

SEVANATHA and the Sri Lankan Women's Bank



Building Capacities at the Regional Level

Previous reports on regional workshops have concentrated mainly on lessons learnt by participants and resulting impacts on communities. This time we decided to take a different approach. Since one of the aims of TAP is to build capacities of local NGOs and grassroots groups to share information/skills with other groups in the region, we asked the host teams of the TAP Community-Based Habitat Processes Workshop in Sri Lanka to share with us the impact the workshop had on local organizers and processes. Local hosts Praja Sahayaka Sevaya (PSS) - the Women's Bank and SEVANATHA Urban Resource Center responded. The report was compiled by Saman Ratnayake and Athula Ranasinghe

TAP/ACHR Steering Committee and the local organizers have decided to hold a second regional workshop and incorporate additional emphasis on building local partnerships through participatory processes and the SEVANATHA Urban Resource Center.

This was the first project-based regional workshop held in Sri Lanka under TAP/ACHR and the largest one organized by the two NGOs. Of the 40 participants, 29 were from nine countries (Bangladesh, Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, India, Pakistan and South Africa). Most country teams had members representing government, CBO and NGO. This combination was useful for Sri Lanka to further their understanding of the importance of urban partnerships.

The workshop focused on four major community processes over ten days:

- Community Action Planning (CAP) methodology
- Community savings and credit
- Community built and managed sanitation projects
- Community construction contracts for infrastructure provision.



Participants from Bangladesh, Nepal, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, South Africa and hosts Sri Lanka

The local NGOs benefited immensely from the workshop just by having to organize a regional level workshop as this involved building relationships with not only regional but also local organizations and persons. One spin-off for host teams was the strengthening of local urban partnerships as local NGOs, CBOs, government local authorities and universities became involved in the process of organizing and hosting the international participants. There was a general belief amongst these groups that most urban problems can be solved through people based development.

Another important outcome of the workshop was the local-local and community-to-community dialogues. After the workshop, several local organizations contacted SEVANATHA and PSS to obtain information about Women's Bank and sewage disposal systems. For example, one NGO participant in the Kandy sessions is now using the CAP methodology for community-based environmental improvement and according to this NGO, the TAP exchange and experience helped them later obtain a small grant from the Japanese Embassy in Sri Lanka to implement a community-managed sewage disposal system in Kandy, using SEVANATHA technical advice.

South African community leaders who participated in the TAP/ACHR workshop built strong links with the Women's Bank and in July this year, eight community leaders from the South African People's Dialogue visited Colombo to learn directly from the Sri Lanka experience.

For the host team, the organizing skills strengthened through the TAP Workshop have been in regular demand: in the six months since the workshop, SEVANATHA has been invited to host three other workshops.

The first was sponsored by the United Nations Center for Regional Development (UNCRD) for a Japanese NGO group interested to learn about activities of local development NGOs in Sri Lanka.

Another sponsored by UN-ESCAP was for a group of local authority and community leaders from Laos. This group was particularly interested in community built and managed sewer disposal systems implemented by SEVANATHA and the PSS.

The third was for WASTE Consultants from the Netherlands who are working on community based management.

The Regional Urban Development Programme of UNCHS has already selected SEVANATHA and PSS as contact points in Sri Lanka for implementation of a two year programme.

The TAP workshop gave us the experience to manage and host such exchanges with confidence and an efficient process. Since many local groups were also involved, it not only gave due recognition to their organizations, but also enabled them to benefit from sharing experiences with international groups.

Regional Exchanges

When the TAP programme began 3 years ago ACHR members strongly debated whether exchanges between grassroots CBOs and NGOs would be an effective method of promoting and strengthening community based urban poor improvement processes or would it be an expensive travel rort for poor people. Given the success of the limited number of experimental exchanges previous to 1993, and discussions at a number of ACHR regional meetings, ACHR endorsed a further 3 year experiment of community, city, national and regional exchanges. For this issue of News on TAP we invited exchange participants to write about their exchanges and impacts. Next issue will follow up with the focus: if they are worthwhile, what elements make them more effective.

Tales from SPARC, Mahila Milan, NSDF



Laos India Thailand Sri Lanka ESCAP UNDP ACHR AP2000 Supporting Peoples' Processes in Vientiane, Laos Adnan Aliani

This exchange programme and initiative is an example of a unique partnership between organizations of the United Nations and ACHR TAP. ESCAP identified a space to initiate community based development in the UNCHS executed Sihom Rehabilitation Project. Essentially a Civil Works Project, covering seven sub-districts (Baans), had acquired the services of Nild Van der Brink, a community development UNV, and allocated a small amount of money almost as an after-thought. A joint ESCAP-ACHR-TAP team was sent on a fact finding mission to Vientiane in early 1994. After discussions with community leaders (Nai Baans) and government officials, it was decided to initiate a community based savings and credit scheme in the seven Baans. Inputs on community based savings and credit were initiated by an advisory service from SPARC.

This was followed up by a study visit to Bangkok organized by UCDO and the Klong Toey Slum Federation. After the initiation of the scheme, an advisory service from Klong Toey Slum Federation and UCDO was also organized. As a result the Sihom Project Saving and Credit Scheme (SIPSACRES) was established. It has been operational for about 10 months. During the first six months participants were asked to save. Loans have been issued in the last four months.

So far the repayment rate is 100 per cent and as of June 1996 SIPSACRES's profits were estimated to be about 20 per cent. As of June 1996, 272 families are members of the scheme and have saved a total of 10,357,000 KIP (US\$ 11,527). The members are the poorest of the poor in the seven Baans. The goal by January 1996 to increase membership to 500 families.

Impressed by the success of the scheme the Lao Government has requested that the sanitation and secondary drainage component of the programme now be implemented on a community-based approach.

As a result, a government-community delegation participated in the TAP workshop in Colombo and Kandy and then as a follow up a larger team of community leaders and government working staff went to Colombo to study the programme in greater detail. As a result the Community Contract system and community based development of sanitation is being tried out in Vientiane at present. UNCHS and the Lao government are also considering building upon the community development experience to develop an urban community development resource centre which will be able to replicate the experience in other parts of Vientiane and in other Lao cities, as a follow-up of the Sihom Project.

The regional inputs were organized by ESCAP and ACHR-TAP, with funding coming from ESCAP, ACHR-TAP, and AP2000. This partnership approach has proven that when different organizations combine resources and work together, successes can be achieved even in countries where experience in community-based approaches was virtually non-existent. For more information contact: Adnan Aliani

Many years ago, **Father Jorge Anzorena**, our housing ambassador visited SPARC, Mahila Milan and NSDF and suggested to us "why don't you go visit all the places you are talking about." At this time, in 1985 we were undertaking our first housing training with women pavement dwellers. [For those who want more information on that ask SPARC for its write up **Beating a Path** 1998.]

At that time there was a discussion about various slum projects taken up by government and we were discussing all this on the basis of what we had read and what

we had heard other people say. He said Selavip will give you travel expenses to visit all the places.

That period of ten days remains a benchmark in the lives of the 11 Mahila Milan leaders, NSDF and SPARC representatives who traveled.

Everyone learnt three major things apart from all the information that was squeezed out of those days.

Seeing is believing

Many times others write based on what they think is correct, it's not necessarily what is good for you. So if a scheme has to be assessed for its usage to poor women, then representatives of poor women talking to

Impacts and Insights: from Sri Lanka to India

Mani Mistry, YUVA.

Mani Mistry (far right) with Gamage Nandasiri (Women's Bank) and Aungkana Parntarathong (UCDO Thailand) attended the TAP regional workshop in Sri Lanka last year. [see page 11]. Mani sent a report to ACHR (extract below) explaining how it helped concretize Bombay's Youth for Unity and Action's (YUVA) experiences and consolidated their planning.

Upon return from Colombo, we organized a workshop to share insights and plan actions with participants from cities of Mumbai, Pune and Nagpur. The community action planning model as well as the experience of poverty alleviation programmes from the Sri Lanka workshop were useful and relevant to those areas where YUVA were designing new initiatives such as the Urban Initiatives in Nagpur and Pune and the work on community cooperatives being undertaken in Mumbai. This report (extract) however focuses on the insights gained vis-à-vis the Women's Bank which have been fed into the Savings and Credit programme of YUVA.

While small savings groups had been formed prior to the workshop; we faced problems of sustaining the interest of the members and in developing effective and efficient systems to sustain and take the savings groups forward. It is these critical areas that exposure to the system within the Women's Bank helped considerably.

The six months following the visit to Sri Lanka also saw a number of meetings held with CBOs aimed at promoting the involvement of more activists. These meetings also enabled a common understanding of the systems to be followed to emerge across different CBOs as well as test some of our new ideas for such systems. A new structure is being implemented; one which is decentralized but will enable CBOs to federate in the future.

Similar to the Women's Bank structure, small groups of 5 -15 persons, homogenous in terms of gender, savings capacity and if possible age, living in clusters are being promoted. All members save the same amount which is decided by the group. A savings group becomes eligible for loans only after six months of formation. Training programmes are designed to enable a common understanding of philosophy, rationale and systems of the Credit and Savings groups. The Women's Bank Sri Lanka say the key to their success is not only the dominance of women but also the transparency of the bank's operation - all members know how the system operates.

Once about 20 such small groups are formed, they would be encouraged to federate into a Credit Society for the area. An animator would be selected and be responsible for about 12 groups. YUVA would give support for around two years by which time capacities would be developed within the Credit Society to take complete responsibility. (Write to Mani Mistry YUVA for more details -see back page)



TAP Exchanges Review

Letter from the Philippines International Grassroots Exchange in South Africa

"The experience we had with the people in the communities we visited in South Africa will surely reach to our country, and may this serve as an enlightenment not only to our sector - the urban poor and so called 'squatters', but also to our government as well. ... though hectic our schedule was, the learning experience more than compensated. What we in the Philippines have been struggling for more than a decade - security of land and housing rights, our African friends have come close to doing in two years of the new government. It is the hope of the Philippines exchange participants that the political dynamism in favor of the disadvantaged we saw in South Africa will be sustained by the awareness and empowerment of our homeless friends.



On behalf of the Philippines delegation I would like to say thank you very much for the greatest opportunity ACHR and the Homeless People's Federation have given to us." From Lucita Vendiola and Adelaide Magayon Photo: Lucita Vendiola and Adelaide Magayon from SAMA SAMA and GANDHI INC (contact C/UPA see back page) with Homeless People's Federation members in South Africa.

poor women who were presently using that facility remained the best manner of assessment.

Each "thing" has a history, a process

and many actors who act out that process. Many times the output or products is not what you are looking for, **the process is the solution.** That cannot be obtained from case studies written by consultants as often these have outcomes and success stories, not how they came to be that way. If communities of the poor want to become innovators, they need to share processes, they need to know how things are done. Exchanges fulfill that.

Exposure cannot be substituted

Most learned people in any society are those who have moved into a world which is different from one they inhabit everyday. They visit this new world, by reading, by seeing pictures, by visiting different places. It has a profound impact on them. In a world where everyone is traveling, government officials, politicians, administrators, even NGOs, Community leaders also need a similar exposure.

Since that time, a very large part of NSDF and MM training budgets are spend in doing three things.

- 1 Helping enthusiastic communities to try doing things which solve their problems.
- 2 Assisting them to visit other groups who are either doing similar things or have done such a thing,
- 3 Once groups achieve something useful to others, help them link to those who need these ideas.

Our entire 21 city network in India has emerged from this approach, and in the last 5 years, the same approach informs the India - South Africa Exchange. Hopefully in the coming years we will be able to do the same in the savings and credit training process.

Write to SPARC for more details (back page)



Coordinator: Mayumi Kato

YP Dynamics

In the past three years of TAP 1, the Young Professionals Programme has gone through a dynamic growth. Through a variety of exchange activities and workshops, the programme has gradually extended its outreach to young professionals and students not only in this region but also to some in Europe.

As seen in the articles here by young professionals, we are very lucky to be attracting the right persons. The growth of the programme is deliberately one of self evolution rather than a structured time bound plan. These young professionals who became involved over these three years were willing to take their own initiatives to work with communities.

For the next two years, the idea of internship has been proposed as a major focus of the Young Professionals Programme. So far we have seen that the internship has grown in a very natural way. The major reason for this is that the programme has tried to be flexible enough to understand the individual needs of the communities as well as the young professionals who contacted us.

Another focus of the YP programme in TAP 2 is to advocate and work for curriculum change in academic institutions: for curriculums to become more in touch with the realities of Asian cities; and that means the urban poor as it is they who make up the majority of their populations. It is our challenge to develop this line, of outreach to institutions in the region, while maintaining programme dynamics and flexibility.

YP's Experience in Phnom Penh,

by May Domingo

My involvement with the urban poor and housing dates back to my university days, when some students and myself initiated a student organization that questioned the social relevance of architects and promoted sharing and exposure to human settlements issues, particularly the urban poor.

Soon after, we had the opportunity to become involved in a housing project for urban poor families in Magsaysay Village, Tondo, Manila. This was our first direct experience of working with the urban poor, and we started seriously questioning our role as architects. Given our backgrounds and fixations brought forth by our training it took time to realize what the people themselves could do and how we could share ideas and skills. We learnt new things everyday, trying to understand the different dimensions of the problem, and together with people, trying different solutions. What is exciting about this business is that the more you earn, the more you realize there is a lot more to learn and understand, not only about housing, but about people's lives as well. For this, I didn't mind sticking it out.



It was in the latter part of my involvement in Tondo that I learned about ACHR and the got involved in some of its activities. Getting to know friends in the network, (a lot of them architects) and hearing stories about their involvement and about processes going on in different parts of Asia to address problems of urban poor and housing, was a good thing. It motivated me to stay longer; my interest in gaining cross-cultural experience grew as well. I thought an experience of the same problem in another part of Asia would be very helpful for me to see things more broadly. I was then given this opportunity by ACHR.

My first two months were spent in looking at the housing situation and successful solutions in cities like Songkhla, Karachi, Bombay and Calcutta, after which I decided to stay in Phnom Penh for the rest of the year.

In Phnom Penh, my first months were spent mostly trying to understand the situation - ways

What we did ...

Over the past 13 months I have learnt and had re-enforced many insights about working with the urban poor, as I became involved in a number of concrete processes and actions such as:

- A cataloguing survey where students from the Faculty of Architecture and people from different squatter communities worked together on a survey of all of the 187 squatter settlements in Phnom Penh, to gather information about the physical, housing and land tenure situations in each community. This was expected to yield a useful reference material for the urban poor and their development endeavors.

- Assisting a housing process in Kim Son community through holding a workshop to draw up a step-by-step process of how the people could be actively involved in planning and implementing their own housing; and more recently giving technical assistance.

- Organizing a Summer School Workshop at the Faculty of Architecture entitled "participatory Planning with Phnom Penh's Urban Poor", where architecture students and community people were made aware of urban development problems, particularly squatting; and where both (would-be) professionals and community people had hands-on exercises in collaborating

Cambodia

Photo: Students and community members during a YP practicum with the university.



people think and do things (which is not easy given the unique history of Cambodia and the current problems being faced); during which I tried to involve myself in initiatives already ongoing at the Faculty of Architecture and the local urban sector groups.

I gradually gained confidence about how I understood the situation and together with two other young architects started a "Land and Shelter Initiative" where we worked with the urban poor on their proposals for land and housing. This was not a project but more a process where people work to address their own problems and make their "own" projects, and gradually gain skills and confidence in themselves. In Cambodia, I think this is particularly important as the many decades of war have buried their creativity down into dormancy.

The learnings were endless. But looking back, from Tondo to the study visits and being in Phnom Penh, there are many insights that get confirmed and revalidated every now and again in spite of the differences in culture and context:

One should hold in regard and importance the role and involvement of people in solving their own problems. And as a professional, learning when to make a step or two back to give way to people's ideas and ways of doing things. It sometimes takes a lot of unlearning to be able to get used to this, especially, taking the backstage and helping create the environment and opportunities for people to think, do, create for themselves.

Another would be not to worry about not being able to "do" too much, in an unfamiliar situation such as being in a new culture. This of course is not without frustrations but I have learnt that there will always be moments when I just have to be there and be content with understanding problems and situations - and just learning a lot from the people we wish to work with.

Having a good deal of experience first in my own country and culture was very helpful for me to appreciate and respect the processes and experiences of another culture. It also made sharing of ideas and experiences more enriching.

Lastly, working in a team has been very helpful and more effective as well. This has helped as well in not feeling isolated in a new culture and experience. As I've been told before, "your own team is your most reliable support system".

May Domingo, Phnom Penh.

with each other, in learning participatory skills and techniques in gathering community information and planning for community improvements and/or land and housing development.

- Through the Land and Shelter Initiative: interacting with local grassroots groups in identifying sites for re-settlement which they can propose to government, by assisting and sharing with them technical knowledge and skills in assessing the feasibility of sites for resettlement; holding "land-finance" workshops in squatter communities, where people made a study of their community savings, made calculations on how much and how long they need to save to enable them to purchase land, and discussed workable schemes of savings and loan repayments; assisting two colleagues in an ongoing process of imparting housing design and drafting skills, and raising community knowledge and awareness in housing design issues, as part of technically equipping and preparing people in making their own housing proposals.

- Linking and assisting a number of students interested in studying or gaining experience in urban poor issues.

- Keeping regular contact with local urban poor groups and communities, assisting / supporting in organizational, financial or technical matters, where and when needed and often linking them with other interested and relevant professionals.

TAP Young Professionals

Second Philippines YP Workshop

The second workshop for young professionals in the Philippines was held last April in Cebu. The first was organized in 1994. It was a week-long workshop on low-income housing; a combination of exposure and practicum in selected communities in Manila and Quezon City.

Young architects and planners from different parts of the country, working with NGOs, government organizations and private firms came together in Cebu.

The workshop began with a lecture on the Global Housing Situation by Fr. Jorge Anzorena who has been continuously visiting slum communities for the past twenty years. In addition to the Filipino participants, there were young professionals from Cambodia and Thailand.

In conjunction with lectures, the workshop organized practicums in 10 urban poor communities. Participants were divided into groups and each was assigned in a community. Each group dialogued with the residents of the to develop ideas for housing and land alternatives to eviction. Presentations of the practicums concluded the workshop.

The workshop, generated many ideas for follow-up. For example, participants from Naga and Legaspi City plan to organize a follow-up workshop this October, hopefully in partnership with local government of Naga. Recently local government of Legaspi passed a resolution to waive its rights to public lands, giving the poor communities occupying those lands the opportunity to acquire it. YP workshop participants are now starting to work with two communities as volunteers, assisting the community subdivision scheme in preparation for land acquisition. Naga participants who are engineers are assisting the community and architects in a geodetic survey. The case in Naga and Legaspi city illustrates how the YP network is expanding through exchange and mutual help activity. We hope that this will continue.

A TWO-WAY LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Community Mobilization and Planning in Songkhla, Thailand

- with a little help from a couple of architects

Imagine an Italian and a Thai architect coming from a Master course in development practices in Oxford and ending up in a slum in Songkhla, a small city in the south of Thailand, with the 'objective' of doing something about the living conditions of the people there. Since this was the first "real" development project that we had ever done, it was different from what we have learnt in the course in Oxford. The difference was...easy to guess, that it was "real" and we had more questions than answers, especially after having been told all that was wrong with development but almost nothing on what to do about it. It was great!

But how do you imagine the two 'fresh', 'pure' architects would feel about all this? To be honest, we were excited because the site was in the city in the south of Thailand, near the sea side, beautiful white beaches (in fact, we did not manage to go for a swim in the four weeks we were there). After a sleepless overnight journey, we got off the train with the most hopeful faces you can imagine, and as soon as we reached the NGO's office in Songkhla, with all our enthusiasm, right away, we started the project. After a few initial disagreements on how to set about the project, we organized the first meeting the following evening with the people of Bor-wa, a small community living along the canal. It was great! So many people attended, and we discussed with them about what we had to do together in the next four weeks.

The following morning, we started the mapping of the settlement of Bor-wa: with the collaboration of a group of students from the community and a few tape measures, we measured out every single structure in the settlement. The physical survey was followed by a census of the entire population living in the settlement. For this, some of the students in the community went around filling questionnaires and asked all sorts of questions. This first phase took the best part of the two weeks and gave us the opportunity to enter every single house and chat with the people about their problems and our 'objectives'. In doing so, at least one person in each household had an idea of who we were and why we were there, and in

a short time, we became a well-known sight in the area.

Community workshops vs soap operas

Once we had what can be called an 'accurate' database and a map to refer to, we could start the workshops. Problems which emerged from the survey were used as a base for collective discussions between residents, so that possible solutions could be considered and explored by the people, with our support. For two weeks, almost every evening, we met to talk, discuss and have some good laughs: some women even told us that the workshops were more fun than the evening soap opera on television, so we were not to worry about overlapping times!

Each activity in the different phases of the project was preceded by a community meeting in which the 'why' and 'how' were explained. This was followed by a meeting in which the results of the work were presented to the people, sometimes by some of the residents.

Finalizing the plans

Once the community reached a certain degree of agreement on what to do about some of the most relevant issues like garbage collection, drainage, walkways, public spaces and public lighting, we edited the outcome in the form of a report and a map containing the project proposals. The idea was to present the plan of the community to the competent authorities, other communities and anybody interested in them. Some of the people in Bor-wa felt so confident about the proposals that four of the women who had participated in the workshops volunteered to present the proposals to the vice-governor of Songkhla, something unheard of in the district. To our knowledge, this was the first time in Songkhla that a slum community developed and presented to the government authority a comprehensive programme for the improvement of their own community.

The professional 'attitude'

During the whole process, we did our best to restrain our professional attitude, deriving from years of university indoctrination, and we decided to let people come up with solutions for different issues even if sometimes we could not agree with them.



However, on more than one occasion, we felt that in a system in which professionals are considered to be the one 'who knows', we were put in a situation in which we had no other choice but to take decisions on behalf of people, even when the community could have done it by themselves if the opportunity was created.

Moreover, as we found out, the level of commitment required from the professional involved in such kind of job has to be very high, regardless of the economic rewards, or the team work will be negatively affected.

Undoubtedly, six weeks are an extremely limited time for such activities, but we managed to do all we wanted to, thanks to the unreserved support of the local NGO staff and community leaders. But even if the project was short, we believe that the whole process was successful in giving the community new insights on possible ways to find solutions to their problems - our main objective. This belief was supported by the fact that at the end of the six weeks, some of the people in Bor-wa asked us for more group-workshops to address their housing problems and we decided to.... From:

Patama Roonrakwit & Giuseppe Damiano

YPs in India: Hard Work or Observing

In the last year although SPARC, Mahila Milan and NSDF have not used the Young Professional programmes to assist in its work, many young people, Indian and international have worked with the communities helping put together a wide spectrum of experiences. Usually this experience begins with the person finding out about SPARC in some data bank, directory or newsletter which floats into the university. In the letter we usually have earnest strategies of what they can do for us, how they would be useful and so on.

Many are surprised when we suggest that instead of being hard working, they should come to spend time with us and try and observe what we do, and see within that what they can contribute.

Why do we say this? It is because the most unique part of the MM NSDF work is that communities develop systems in which they are the doers. Professionals assist in helping refine these processes, but communities are the real originators of ideas and strategies. This seems easy to understand when on paper, but in practice, it is very hard for energetic enthusiastic young people to sit back and see what people do.

Most young professionals stay with us for three months to a year. Several have come back and are ready to face the challenge of working at a deeper and intense level. Most leave the experience excited at what they have seen communities do.

Shelter Associates in Pune represents three young architects who came to work in that fashion with us. Instead of working with us, we suggested that they set up their own organization, and NSDF and Mahila Milan would assist them in Pune to work with communities. Now in Pune, the federations and Mahila Milan units are being built and Shelter Associates has begun to work with them.

Asia Pacific 2000 & YPs

A fellowship programme has been initiated by Asia Pacific 2000 for young professionals, to facilitate social change in their own contexts. Five committed individuals will be selected to develop a 12-24 month programme from October 1996. Contact Anwar Fazal or Susanna George for more details (see back page)



Denis Murphy

News on Community Organizing

Community Organization is a general name for varied ways of bringing people in an area together to work for the common good. It is characterized in general by large numbers of people (or at least a high percentage of the residents of the community), democratic decision making, of the ability to exert pressure on the powerful to do what the people want, and at the same time to generate self help programs with the community. It seeks to take care of all the community's problems, beginning with the most pressing.

There are obviously many different ways of doing all that suited to the concrete situation: one group may stress militant pressure for land, another self help; forms of exerting pressure vary, as do the self help efforts that areas may take up -- one area may do savings schemes another construct footpaths.

At an Asian wide CO training program in Baguio, Philippines in 1993, sponsored by TAP, the beginnings of an Asian CO network were discussed. At meetings in Delhi September 1995 and Antipolo, Philippines (April 1996), a clear structure was put together.

The name of the CO network is LOCOA, that is **Leaders and Organizers of Community Organizations in Asia**. The current supervisory committee is Corazon 'Dinky' Soliman and Denis Murphy (Philippines), Na Hyo Woo (South Korea), Rabial Mallick and Minar Pimple (India), Ho Hei Wa (Hong Kong) and Paul Chamniern (Thailand). In August the committee will meet in Hong Kong to make concrete plans for the next two years and to clarify the committee's roles and functions.

LOCOA should play an important part in the Eviction Watch program of ACHR. Only organized people are able to resist evictions and struggle for housing rights.

LOCOA intends to run a workshop in Thailand along the lines of those it has run in the Philippines, South Korea and India. These workshops bring together veteran and newer COs to evaluate the work to date and to plan for the future.

For more information contact Denis Murphy / Dinky Soliman (address back page)

Rabial Mallick CO Workshop in Calcutta

A six day CO Workshop was held in Calcutta for community organizers from different parts of India. This was a follow-up to the workshop in Baguio, Philippines. It examined the new challenges faced by organizers. Special emphasis was put on "evaluation" of community organizers. It was hoped that the participants would provide feed back to prepare a manual for community organizers giving information for community organizers on how to find solutions in tackling local and national issues.

The workshop deliberated on: How people's organizations can be strengthened; making leadership powerful; revitalizing old leaders; gender issues in the communities; the destructive impacts of the new economic policies on the poor; strategies to make communities responsive; and plans for future actions.

For the Workshop Report write to Rabial Mallick (contact details back page).

CBO NGO Management: Explorations of Models

The various alternative models and practical examples of management style of community organizations and non-government organizations will be examined by a small group from the Orangi Pilot Project headed by Arif Hasan. They have prepared a series of questions to act as a guideline for organizations to prepare case studies of their own organization's management procedure. OPP will disseminate the guideline and compile case studies from replies and analyses. CBOs and NGOs who wish to explore alternative styles of management to make them more responsive to changing circumstances or those who face dilemmas over management may choose between the varying models and arrange training through TAP.

For more information contact Maurice Leonhardt or Arif Hassan (contact details back page).

URCs Strengthen Community Efforts



"Communication and Information Processes" is a new component of TAP 2 although the process has been an integral part of TAP 1. It allows opportunities to explore ways in which information can be made accessible to grassroots level practitioners. It will focus on:

- Transfer of skills through print, audio and video, translation processes and
- Urban Resource Centres.

A TAP regional workshop on URCs is planned for 1997 as a first step to look at the various URC models and explore the potential need to promote, link and strengthen resource centres within the region.

Newsletter English - Hindi

City Watch, India is a newsletter which is printed twice a year so far. It has two languages English and Hindi. This is good for communities who speak Hindi as well as outsiders who may not speak Hindi.

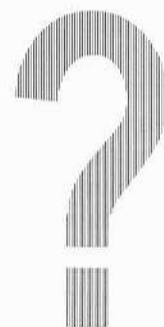
News on TAP Bi-lingual Version

TAP will use the above model for a modified publication of this issue of News on TAP. ACHR Bangkok will translate appropriate sections into Thai, SEVANATHA into Singalese, SPARC into Hindi. Other groups interested in experimenting with this translation process should send a note to ACHR TAP in Bangkok. We will send a modified template of this news letter in English with a column blank on which a local language can be pasted, and then printed. It can then be photocopied and sent to local groups.

Grassroots Video

Video is fast becoming a low cost accessible communicative technology. Making multiple tapes can be cheaper than duplicating slide sets or photocopies of documents. Sound-tracks can be translated and recorded making them accessible to grassroots groups in local languages. A draw-back is that they can be a passive form of learning and unless thorough de-briefing and discussion occurs then many learning opportunities are lost. TAP 2 will experiment with such technology.

Can the government evict us legally?
Are there laws that protect our right to stay on this land?
What can we do?
Where can we go?
Who will help us?
How can we improve our efforts in education and health?
Can we get credit to buy land, build houses or business?
What can we do to improve the basic services in our settlement?



Community based groups in low-income settlements want to learn more about ways to improve their work, to get the settlement regularised and access resources from government and others to develop the community. Government and other institutions are not usually accessible to the poor. Yet this information is vital to strengthen community efforts.

Urban Resource Centres (URCs) set up a pool of specialised information on programmes, projects, research studies and related literature, resource persons and experiences related to urban issues. URCs promote interaction between various actors in the urban drama to improve programme, influence policy and develop alternatives.

Resource centres understand what people are doing to improve their lives and strengthens it.

Relevant and pertinent information related to people's lives strengthens community organisations and brings people together to improve the local situation or lobby for review of policies or projects impacting negatively on people and the environment. Resource centres look at macro urban issues to understand its impact on the city and the urban poor.

An urban resource centre is a support group to various urban actors, with a very clear bias towards the poor.

It strives to give people, particularly the poor, information on plans and programs of government and encourage people's participation through debate and open forums. Through this interaction programs can become relevant to people's lives. URCs assist by creating linkages with other groups, communities or professionals working on similar issues, fostering a people-to-people learning process. Centres involve socially concerned and sensitive professionals to develop alternatives based on ground realities and to support community initiatives.

Information is a powerful organising tool.

Communities need access to : (a) social information which is a research process enabling a better understanding to maximise collective resources, both human and financial; (b) technical information support which enables people to improve work and physical environment in cost-effective ways e.g. information on house building, sanitation, lay-out, financial and resource management, etc.

The TAP workshop on Resource Centres in 1997 is being planned as a first step to promote, link, and strengthen resource centres in the region.

Urban Resource Centres in Asia

Urban Poor Associates, Manila, Philippines
Urban Resource Centre, Karachi, Pakistan
Urban Resource Unit, PERMAS, Malaysia
SEVANATHA - Urban Resource Centre,
Lumanti Action Group for Shelter, Nepal

Korean Centre for Environment and Research, Korea.

Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), Bombay, India.



"Tell us what you do .."

Urban Forums in Karachi create space for debate and exchange

Two weeks ago, while in Karachi, I dropped in at the Urban Resource Center and received an invitation to attend an urban forum scheduled for the next evening. Gulli Tamasha (Street Play), a relatively new drama group was to present drama as a medium to raise awareness on settlement issues.

Gulli Tamasha actors (men and women) are members of a parent group, RASTI (Religious and Social Training Institute) led by Francis Rufi. The group began with six members but today has 15 representing different minority Christian bastis (communities) from Karachi.

Activities of RASTI include environmental improvement (planting and caring for trees in Usmania Colony) and writing and presenting plays to seminar groups and in low-income Christian communities and Christian schools. Drama topics include: water, electricity problems, environment and responsibility, drama for social change, non-formal education, women's awareness.

About fifty people (40 men and 10 women) must have been present at the URC that evening when Gulli Tamasha made its 30 minute presentation. And then the questions came rapidly: do you take money from people, how do you select your issues, what follow-up action is taken, what drama techniques do you teach, etc. RASTI is proud that they do take funds from agencies but their expenses are covered by the communities in which they perform.

Amazingly (particularly in Karachi, where distrust and insecurity are the legacy of three years urban violence) the questioning was not hostile but one which invited transparency and openness to other views and methods.

This is not the first urban forum held at the URC. A year ago, the URC had conducted a series of forums for CBOs to present what they were doing and how they were tackling settlement issues. The forums succeeded in generating debate, action and interaction among CBOs and NGOs for months after they stopped, due to the worsening law and order situation in the city. This year, the URC has organized forums on forced evictions, inviting leaders from evicted communities to exchange experiences and look at the issue collectively.

TAP Workshop Review

Osaka's BLL has important lessons for the region's urban poor

Japan is a model of development for many Asian countries, yet there are many homeless people and many day workers whose life is as poor as the poorest in other countries. It was therefore appropriate for the Osaka City's BLL to host a regional workshop on **Community - Based Processes- Experience of Buraku Liberation League**. The focusing was on the key factors for the development of improvement processes in low income communities. The workshop was a mutual learning process for local groups and participants. The local situation and movement provided a context and an extra dimension for learning.

The programme included discussions with local communities and experts, site visits to low income urban communities and options such as dialogues with migrant workers from various Asian countries and exposure to the earthquake rehabilitation areas of Kobe. Each activity illustrated strategies and processes to overcome social and economic problems of urban poor minority groups in Japan.

Below are some of the participants impressions:

Rabial Mallick from Calcutta (CISRS): In India the scale of urban poverty is enormous; discrimination (the caste system) affects not just 1-2% of the population as in Japan but up to 60% of residents in some cities. Mallick said, "we heard from the BLL of new strategies relevant to discriminated groups particularly in education such as the adult literacy classes (which we saw); as well as opportunities to educate the wider community at local, city and national levels." Mallick also emphasized the BLL's ability to make the best of each opportunity as it was presented and knowing very well the wider political and social context in which the movement was operating. Both these factors allowed the BLL to catalyze the energies of the people to the maximum.

The team from Korea: The Korean context was the closest of any participant group to the Japanese experience. The group was able to identify many learning opportunities and presented a very comprehensive comparison between the Korean and Japanese experience with urban poor processes. Korean groups have been operating for only 25 years compared with 70 years in Japan; the emphasis on how to organize was different; the large number of forced evictions in Korea had a significant bearing on Korean groups approaches to urban poor issues as did the previous style of dictatorial government. With the new democratic changes taking place in Korea the group felt there was a need for a follow up workshop in Korea to be attended by BLL representatives who could share their experiences with a wider Korean movement and give support with a close understanding of the Korean context.

Other teams from Sri Lanka and the Philippines stressed that while much of the success of the BLL lies in its participatory structure and process, it was also very fortunate to have a number of very talented leaders such as **Mr Yammamoto** who are able to lead creatively whilst keeping the movement firmly rooted to the needs of the people.

For more detail on BLL processes and the workshop contact ACHR-TAP (see back page).

Internet Links

Human Settlements in Asia

Asian Institute of Technology
<http://www.hsd.ait.ac.th>

Third World Network
<http://www.twside.org.sg>

Participatory Communication
<http://www.southside.org.sg>

Other Sites

Earthtimes
<http://earthtimes.org>

Habitat II
www.undp.org/un/habitat

"Quote - Unquote"

Just being in contact with the urban poor communities makes me wiser.
Fr. Jorge Anzorena, SELAVIP

Houses for the rich are consumption. Houses for the poor are production. Prof. Yunis Grameen Bank

Train communities to write proposals - teach them to be beggars. Dr. A.Kahn, OPP-RTI

I'm seldom in doubt and often wrong. Joe Maier Bangkok

They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one: they promised to take our land and they took it. American Indian

Poverty is never having a range of options. Mahila Milan, Bombay

TAP Contact Details

Anzorena, Fr Jorge: SELAVIP, SJ House, 7-1 Kioi-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102, Japan. Tel 813 3238 5111, Fax 813 3238 5056; e-anzore@hoffman.cc.sophia.ac.jp

Aliani, Adnan: see ESACP Fax: 662 288 1097 Tel: 288 1602; Aliani.unescap@un.org

Asia Pacific 2000 P.O. Box 12544, 50782 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. ap2000@umpap.po.my

AWAS see ACHR below

Boonyabancha, Somsook: ACHR see below.

CO-TRAIN: 14 A Manhattan, Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines. Fax: 632 987001 Tel: 987001sanayan@mnl.sequel.net

D'Cruz, Celine: see SPARC, Fax: 91 22 495 0505 Tel: 91 22 309 6730.

Domingo May ACHR see below

Deutsch, Robert: PADEK Box 554, Phnom Penh Cambodia. Fax/Tel: 855 23 26224. robert.deutsch@padektap.tool.nl

ESCAP Human Settlements Unit, UN Bdg, Rajdamnarn Ave, Bangkok, 10200 Thailand.

Fazal, Anwar: Regional Coordr. see Asia Pacific 2000 Fax 603 2532361 Tel: 2559122; anwar@umpap.po.my

Fernandes, Kenneth usg@pactok.peg.apc.org see ACHR below

Fernandes, Nora AWAS usg@pactok.peg.apc.org see ACHR see below

Gamage Nandasiri KSS C/- Com. Resrce Ctre, 151/13 E Zone, Seewali Pura, Borella, Colombo 8, Sri Lanka Tel 94 1 696742

George, Susanna: see Asia Pacific 2000 Fax 603 2532361 Tel: 603 2559122; susanna@umpap.po.my

Ho Hei Wah see SOCO Tel 852 27139165

Ha, Seong-Kyu, Prof. see KOCER Tel Fax: 82 2 535 3068; kocer@srilang.ksdn.or.kr

Hasan, Arif: 37 D Mohd Ali Society, Karachi 75350, Pakistan. Fax: 9221 4553964 Tel: 9221 432361; arif@archtct.khi.erum.com.pk

Hosaka, Mitsuhiro: Econ Faculty, Nihon University, Okuda, Mihama-cho, Chita-gun Aichi 470-32, Japan, Tel 81 26 987 211; Fax 81 569 871690

Jayarathne, K.A see SEVANATHA, Tel/f: 94 1 862148 Fax: 85 0223 Attn. Islam, Nazrul CHRB, Dept Geography< Dacca Uni, Dacca 1000 Bangladesh T 889 2 865 583 F 880 2 86 3060

Kato, Mayumi: see ESCAP Tel 662 288 1607 Fax 662 288 1097; kato.unescap@un.org

KOCER, University Dongiak-Ku Seoksul-Dong 221 Seoul Korea Tel: 82 2 535 3068; kocer@srilang.ksdn.or.kr

Leonhardt, Maurice: ACHR - see below.

Lusterio, Arlene, Panirahanan Inc. Rm.204 LTM Bldg, Romarosa Townhomes, Luzon Ave, cnr Mariano Marcos Ave, Quezon City, Philippines. Tel (63 2) 823 6426 (c/- Ms. Joann Zulueta)

Mallick, Rabial CISRS 14/2 Sudder St, Calcutta T/F 91 33 293686

Manandhar, Lajana: KHA 1/ 822 Tahachal, Kathmandu 4, Nepal. Fax 977 1 225277 Tel:271247

Murphy Denis: see UPA Fax: 632 987001 Tel: 987001; upa@phil.gn.apc.org

OPP-RTI, Orangi Pilot Project ST-4, Sector 5/A, Qasba Colony, Karachi 75300, Pakistan Tel 92 21 665 2297 Fax 9221 455 3964

Patel, Sheela: see SPARC, Fax: 91 22 4950505 Tel:309 6730; sheela@sparc.ilbom.ernet.in

Pimple, Minar see YUVA ; yuva@giasbm01.vsnl.net.in

Pradhan, Prufulla: Fax: 977 1 22 5767 Tel 22 5378; info@udle.wlink.com.np

Price, Jonathon C/- CCC Box 885 GPO Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Fax 855 234 26009

Rahman, Parween: see OPP Tel: 9221 .665 2297 Fax 9221 455 3964

Rashid, Anwar, see OPP Tel 92 21 665 2297 Fax 9221 455 3964

Samarasinghe Ranjith see SEVANATHA URC, below

SEVANATHA URC, 220/ 3 Nawala Road, Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka. Fax: 94 1 850223 attn Tel/F office: 94 1 86 2148

Shah, Kirtee ASAG: tel 91 795 46 8833 Fax 91 795 507842 ksa.dps@sm1.sprintpg.sprint.com

Silas, Johan: Surabaya Inst. of Technology, Kampus ITS Keputih, Surabaya 60111 Surabaya, Indonesia. T: 62 31 578157 F: 6231 5945713

Slingsby, Mike C/- ACHR see below

SOCO, 52 Princess Margret Rd, 3rd Floor, Homantin, Kowloon, Hong Kong, Tel 852 27139165 Fax 852 276 13326

Soliman, Corozon: see CO-TRAIN, sanayan@mnl.sequel.net

SPARC, P.O.Box 9389, Bombay 400008, Maharastra, India. Fax:9122 4950505 Tel:309 6730

TAP Resource Persons

Programme Coordination

Maurice Leonhardt

Steering Committee

Somsook Boonyabancha; Sheela Patel / Celine D'Cruz; Mayumi Kato; Corazon Soliman; Arif Hasan; Maurice Leonhardt; KA Jayaratne; Prafulla Pradhan, Nora Fernandes; Johan Silas

Advisors

Denis Murphy; Peter Swan; Anwar Fazal; M. Hosaka; Mike Slingsby; Adnan Aliani; Jorge Anzorena; Susanna George; Anwar Rashid

Workshops

Issue Based

Savings & Credit Celine D'Cruz, S'Boonyabancha

Com Org & Stgth M. Leonhardt (K. Fernandes, C. Soliman)

Gender & Shelter N Fernandes, S Patel, S George

Partnerships S Boonyabancha, P Swan,

Project Based

C-B Processes Sri Lanka KA Jayarathne, Nandasiri Gamage;

Surabaya & KIP Johan Silas

C-B Processes Thailand & Land Sharing S Boonyabancha

Skills Processes

Savings & Credit Coordinators: Celine D'Cruz / Sheela Patel

Community Organizing Coordinator: C. (Dinky) Soliman / D. Murphy

Sanitation, Health, Solid Waste Mgt Anwar Rashid, Adnan Aliani

CBO / NGO Management Arif Hasan

Communication & Information Processes

Coordinator M. Leonhardt; URC Workshop: KA Jayaratne

Young Professionals

Coordinator: Mayumi Kato; Advisors: Johan Silas; Arif Hasan; Fr Jorge Anzorena; S. Boonyabancha, Anwar Fazal, Yuzo Uchida; Mike Slingsby

YP Country Contacts: Philippines Arlene Lusterio & Armin Sarthori; Cambodia May Domingo, Johnathon Price; Japan Namiko Yasuda & Toshio Otsuki. Sri Lanka Ranjith Samarasinghe, Pakistan Perween Rahman

Country Contacts

Bangladesh Nazrul Islam

Cambodia M. Domingo, R. Deutsch, K. Fernandes

Hong Kong Ho Hei Wah

India - Sheela Patel, Calcutta R. Mallick

Indonesia Johan Silas

Japan M Hosaka T Nakamura, Fr.J Anzorena,

Korea Prof Ha,Seong-Kyu; Park, Mun-Su,

Laos Adnan Aliani, M.Leonhardt, Nilds Van Den Brink

Malaysia Susanna George

Nepal Lajana Manandha, Prafulla Pradhan

Pakistan Anwar Rashid / Arif Hasan

Philippines Denis Murphy / Dinky Soliman

Sri Lanka KA Jayarathne

Thailand Somsook Boonyabancha

Vietnam S. Boonyabancha; Tran Minh Chau

Swan, Peter: see ESCAP; Tel 662 288 1604 Fax 662 2881097

swan.unescap@un.org

Tran, Minh Chau mct8@cornell.edu

Urban Poor Associates : 14 A Manhattan, Cubao, Quezon City,

Philippines. Fax: 632 987001 Tel: 987001

Van der Brink, Nilds Tel 856 21 215603 Fax 856 21 214 819

YUVA 8 Gr Fl 33/L Mhatre Bldg., Mughbaht Crosslane, Thakurdwar,

Mumbai 400 004 India Tel 91 22 388 9811; Fax 91 22 385 3139

yuva@giasbm01.vsnl.net.in

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

73 Soi Sonthiwattana 4,

Ladprao 110, Ladprao Rd

Tel: + 66 2 538 0919

Bangkok 10310

Fax: + 66 2 539 9950

Thailand

Email: <maurice@ksc9.th.com>

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ON
TAP**

Is a publication of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights' Training & Advisory Programme. It is produced to increase awareness of the programme which has established a system of mutual learning and support based on Asian experiences and programmes for Asian grassroots community based organizations, NGOs and housing professionals. Editors: Maurice Leonhardt, Nora Fernandes. Layout & Photographs: Maurice Leonhardt