

# "What I have learned in 34 years"



A transcript of Father Jorge Anzorena, speaking at the ACHR Regional Meeting in Bangkok, January 27, 2011

## Denis Murphy introduces Father Jorge Anzorena :

*I've been working in the Philippines in community organization work for forty years. My job today is to introduce Father Jorge. This amazing person is an Argentinian by birth, entered the Jesuit order and became a priest when he was in his early thirties. But I would like to speak more personally about the day I hired him as my employee. I was working with the Catholic Bishops of Asia, in their Office for Human Development. We were a small group of three or four people, responsible for developing all of Asia, if you can imagine that! Jorge came and asked if he could work with us. And of course, we hired him, because he had just finished his doctorate in architecture in Japan, and he was willing to work with us in all the poor countries of Asia, on the matter of housing. That was 1976 - that's thirty-four years ago! Now my advice to you is that if you ever have to hire someone, you should look for someone like Father Jorge. Why? I'll give you four reasons :*

- **Look for someone who will never stop working.** We asked Father Jorge to begin work in 1976, and he has never stopped. We've never asked him to stop and he keeps on going. He's long past the retirement age of 65 and he's still working.
- **Look for someone who will do a fantastic job and win you prizes and respect.** And Father Jorge has done a terrific job. In the work he has done in Asia, for all of us, he has received the Magsaysay Award in 1994. And what higher recommendation could there be of your work than that prize?
- **Get someone who doesn't make any enemies or create any friction.** Everyone who is capable effective or possessing of a strong personality cannot help but alienate some people, no matter how good-humored you are. But as far as I know, Jorge has no enemies and no critics. That's the kind of employee you want, because you will avoid all kinds of trouble.
- **Get someone who works for nothing.** This is probably Father Jorge's most potent recommendation, for he works for nothing. Seriously! We never gave Jorge anything. Even his room and board he doesn't ask for. And on top of that, he will bring you money! Jorge has brought millions and millions of dollars into Asia, into housing work. And that money has reached all corners of the poorest countries in Asia.

## Father Jorge : What I have learned in thirty-four years

*(with PowerPoint)* There are one billion slum dwellers in the world, and 600 million of them are in Asia. This is the situation that has moved many people to do something - activists, professionals, community leaders, architects, planners. And a large part of the work I have done over the last 34 years has been to find these people who want to do something, in all the places, and try to support them by visiting their work, writing about their work, teaching about it, perhaps finding a little money to help them continue, introducing them to others working in other places. I have learned a lot from all of you, over the last 34 years. Here are some of the things that have really impressed me and changed me - and some things that I feel are very good for the future, and for the future of the people.



**Community organizers :** Some of the first groups to begin working in slums were the community organizers, in the 1970s. For example the Buraku Liberation League (BRR) in Japan. Then Herbert White, whom Denis invited to come to Asia, first to Korea in 1968, then to Manila in 1970, and later to Bombay in 1980, where he began the PROUD project in Dharavi. The first community organizers in Manila. These groups were very creative: in November 1970, they negotiated for the Pope to say a mass in the Tondo slum in Manila, at a time when the government was trying to evict 40,000 people there, to draw attention to the situation. This mass was against all the wishes of the Marcos dictatorship, but it happened. For several years the resistance continued, and as result, some 30,000 families were able to stay in the same place, or at least move to land that was close by.

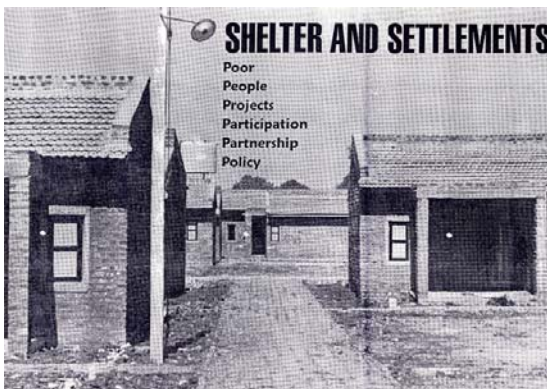


**Under-bridge communities in Bangkok :** Some of the poorest slum communities in Bangkok were those built under the traffic bridges in Bangkok. What did the community organizers like Ek (from the NGO POP) and Suwit (from the Human Settlements Foundation) do? First they surveyed all the under-bridge settlements in the city, then they tried to organize them, one bridge at a time, and then in a network. Then they got support from other communities and initiated a movement, in which finally, after a lot of work, 330 under-bridge families were able to obtain secure land, with the support of CODI, and to build their new communities. This case was very important for other countries to see, that it was possible for people in a very difficult situation get something from their society.

**Self-managed homeless shelters in Bangkok :** We can all learn from the self-managed homeless people's shelters in Bangkok. Here, the Human Settlements Foundation NGO did a survey of the homeless people. Then, with the homeless who wanted to form a community (and with support from the Human Settlement Foundation, CODI and the Bangkok Municipal Authority), they created four homeless shelters, all of which are managed by the homeless themselves. In most countries, there are growing the numbers of the street dwellers. This community-style solution in Thailand is a very important one for wealthier countries, were the official shelters run by the government are very unpopular with the homeless.



**Million Houses Program and Women's Bank in Sri Lanka :** In the end of the 1970s, there were some housing initiatives that were impressive, like the Million Houses Program in Sri Lanka, in which people from the government worked with the grassroots community committees to bring about a big transformation in the urban slums. After the project ended, one of the promoters of those grassroots development committees, Nandasiri Gamage, launched the Women's Bank in the late 1980s.



**Kirtee Shah's work and the "rolling seminars" in India:** In the India of the seventies, Kirtee was one of the central figures - a person who knew all the key groups working in India at that time. He was a young architect at that time, and the government allowed him to build some of the government projects, like the project to construct 5,000 houses at the relocation colony at Vasna, for flood-affected families from riverside slums in Ahmedabad. He was one of the pioneers to experiment with housing design processes in which the community people took part in designing the two or three house model. At that time, we also organized a "rolling seminar" in five Indian cities, in one month, where the government and NGOs in each city presented the work they had done during the past few years. Usually the work of the government and the work of NGOs was completely separate, with no link, no sharing, - so this exchange of experience was very fruitful.



### **The work of John Daly and Jei Jong Ku in Korea :**

From the nineteen seventies began the massive evictions, which continue until today in Korea. But the work of John Daly and Jei Jonku showed an alternative - and they were able to show for the first time how people who had been evicted from their neighborhoods were able to build three villages themselves - not by developers but by the people themselves.



### **The Kampung Improvement Program in Indonesia :**

Especially in Surabaya, the work of Professor Johan Silas, and his students at ITS, were able to improve the implementation of this government program. This was a very important project in several ways: it was one of the first government programs to support the on-site upgrading of urban slums, at a time when slums were being evicted all over Asia, and the first to show how the communities could participate in the upgrading process.

### **Community-based savings and credit in Bangladesh and Bombay :**

In the early years of ACHR, groups from many countries went to Bangladesh to learn about community savings and credit from the Grameen ("Village") Bank in Bangladesh, started by Mohammad Yunus, and later from the Mahila Milan savings groups in Bombay, which were supported by the Bombay-based NGO SPARC. When these visiting groups went back home, many of them started their own community savings movements, which took different forms, but these two projects were important early inspiration for others.



**\$300 self-sufficiency houses in Bangladesh :** The Grammeen Bank provided loans in materials to its members to build simple houses themselves, using pre-fab posts, tin sheet roofs, bamboo panels and a toilet. The cost of the house was \$ 300 and was repaid in 10 years. Some 600,000 houses were built this way.



**Building Together project in Thailand :** In Thailand in the late 1970s, Solly Angel and Paul Chamniern were in AIT together, and they started the first project of mutual help in which the slum dwellers shown that they were able to do a very good quality house by themselves. The National Housing Authority. participated iand the project of the squatters has influence in the society.. Before this project, NGOs were not allowed to work in slums (to build schools, clinics or do any kind of social or housing work) in Thailand, but through this project, the country's urban slum development process began.

**ACHR formed in 1988 and people-to-people exchanges begin :**

People from all the groups around Asia started to come together. The organization didn't have much money, but the basic idea was "Let's help each other. Let's learn from each other." And exchanges have been a very important way to do this. When a person like me goes around to visit different places, every time meet the poor and the activists learns and changes a little. Why shouldn't poor people from slums also visit each other and learn *with their own eyes* how other people do?

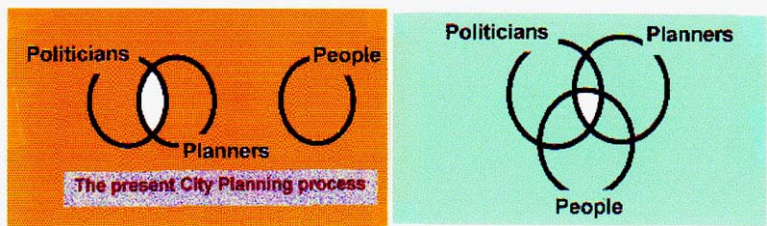


**Orangi Pilot Project in Pakistan :** Here, OPP says to a poor community, if you want to make a sewer system in your community, we will not pay for it or build it for you. You need to organize yourselves and pay for it yourselves - we will only help you with technical support. When Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan died, Perween Rahman and Anwar Rashid, who are here, continued the work. Besides sanitation, they also support communities with better house design and housing materials, informal schools and access to credit, first in Karachi and then in other places. This is an important group for us to learn from because they never expanded their staff and built a big, heavy organization. If other groups in other cities wanted to do the same kind of work, the OPP people didn't expand, they taught those others how to do it and helped them to set up their own OPP-style organizations. So the model expands, but the organization doesn't. Now there are many partners

spreading this work, and they have a very large network now. This network was very useful when the recent disasters - earthquake in Kashmir and more recent floods - happened. Through this network, they could reach a tremendous number of people very quickly and efficiently and cheaply. Another thing that is very important in OPP is the mapping - this is the first case where they got young people from the slum areas to be involved in mapping, and the maps these young people make are the most professional I have seen in our groups! They use the maps for planning the sanitation, and they also use these maps to get many communities to be recognized by the government, so they are a tool to secure land tenure and land titles from the government.

**Arif Hasan's idea of bringing people into the planning process :**

If you try to put the people into the planning process, and with some help from these professionals and technicians, that has become possible. In many countries now, this is beginning to happen now. There is still a long way to go, certainly! Those old systems continue, where the planners and politicians and planners plan in isolation. But after so many years, this concept of bringing people into this formula is something very hopeful.



**Kuda Ki Bastee Project and Slum Regularizing Program in Pakistan :**

In the 1990s, Tasneem Siddiqui, who was from the government, helped to develop a government program which provided undeveloped, low-cost land to poor families at very cheap price. The houses and the infrastructure were developed incrementally. This site and services program developed incrementally was borrowed from the informal settlements. Tasneem was also involved in the program of regularizing the poor communities which already existed, and the mapping was very important in this process, since the maps showed very precisely the investments people had already made in developing their infrastructure and housing in these large informal settlements. And these maps helped facilitate the process of giving the land title to these families.



### **Community Mortgage Program (CMP) and Land Proclamations in the Philippines :**

In the cities in the Philippines, 30% to 40% of the population live in slums, because land in that country is controlled by very few powerful families. At the time of Cory Aquino, Bimbo Fernandez was invited to help solve this problem,. He devised a governmental loan scheme for land and housing. So if the people are squatting on private land, the government will buy the land from the owner, and the people will repay in 25 years. And if the people are squatting on public land, in some cases, the president can "proclaim" that land for social housing purposes, and the people can then buy that land from the government, also sometimes using loans from the CMP. In all these years, about 1 million households have been able to get secure land and housing via the CMP or from Presidential Proclamations. Hundreds Thousands of families has profited from this programs.



### **Young professionals in Philippines involved in universities:**

May Domingo was one of the first young architects in the Philippines, and her followers, like Arlene Lusterio from the TAO-Filipinas group, are teaching in several universities, and organizing workshops in which the students are involved with the problems of the slum areas.

### **The work of the SPARC / NSDF / Mahila Milan alliance in India :**

In India, the work of the NGO SPARC, which works very closely with the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) and the Mahila Milan Women's Savings collectives, has been very important. They began their work with the poorest group in Bombay, the people who lived on the pavements in Byculla. That was tremendous work because they were able to maintain a momentum of the interest and participation of large numbers of poor women.. There are three key people in this work: Sheela Patel (who directs SPARC), Jockin Arputham (who is the leader of NSDF) and Celine D'Cruz (who also worked for SPARC). Jockin has tremendous charisma to mobilize the slumdwellers in every place - not only in India, but in other Asian and African countries. He was one of the people who has been influential in saying that people need to be the initiators and the owners of the projects. Sheela and Celine were able to organize the first group of women on the footpaths of Bombay. And this was very difficult, because the women didn't believe them at first, but once some of the poor understood them the movement expanded quickly. Sheela was also able to link kind of work, in which the people do things by themselves, with different funding agencies and governments.



### **Community-managed toilets in India :**

One of the important initiatives of the SPARC / NSDF / MM alliance in India was their community toilets. To date, they have built 885 community toilet complexes (each complex with between 10 and 40 toilets, plus other facilities). This was a big apport to the urban poor, because most slums in Bombay and other cities had not toilets. This was the first case where the new toilets were planned by the people, constructed by the people and then managed and maintained by the community people. This program spread to other Indian cities, and had a lot of influence in Africa also.



### Community managed relocation, with the government, in India :

With support from the SPARC / NSDF / MM alliance, some 50,000 households in Bombay were able to relocate to secure land and housing, in collaboration with the government. Usually governments don't believe that NGOs are very serious organizations, but here, the government began to understand that here (SPARC) was a very serious organization which said, "OK, the government has a problem moving these people for various big urban transport and infrastructure projects, we will help you, but you need to provide housing that is in a place where people can survive and continue to work and the people need to be involved in every step of the process." These communities were relocated into 5 - 8-story buildings, and each building was organized like a cooperative, with savings groups and residents committees to collectively maintained their buildings and kept them clean.



### Construction of new housing in India :

The same alliance (SPARC / NSDF / MM) were also able to construct 16,000 housing units (in 7 - 8-story blocks of flats) and another 21,000 under construction, with support from a national government program. These buildings were planned and built by the alliance themselves.



**Slum / Shack Dwellers International (SDI)** A very important part of all this work I've been talking about, and of the growing links between these good groups, is that there is a breaking down of the concept of "my project," "my organization" and even "my country." It is no longer necessary for each group to sort out the problems of the world alone, in isolation, and through their own limited perspective! The work of SDI has helped to expand these same principals of sharing and mutual support between the groups into Africa and Latin America. The organization may work a little differently, but the principals which guide SDI are the same as ACHR, they are companions. That's why it is very important that there are people from South Africa and Kenya with us in the meeting today.

**UCDO / CODI in Thailand :** The Urban Community Development Office (UCDO), which was set up in 1992, was later turned into the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) in 2000. This was the first time when the mentality of the NGO could be introduced into a government organization, through their many projects - most especially the Baan Mankong Community Upgrading Program. Through the Baan Mankong Program, CODI has been able to help poor communities around the country to build over 90,000 houses. Not all the houses are completely legal: the lane widths and distances between houses may not always follow the building regulations very strictly. But I remember Somsook saying in Nepal that *the solution to the problem of the poor is not legal, it's political will*. Another important aspect of the Baan Mankong Program is that people who have experience building their own housing projects then become the knowledgeable helpers for other communities starting to negotiate for their land and plan their housing projects. CODI also supported loans for housing, and supported communities to set up their own community radio stations (there were also community radio projects in Indonesia, supported by UPC in Jakarta).







**Community-based support for their own poorest members:**

In many of our projects, people who are extremely poor or weak (like widows or handicapped or elderly without families or income) are pushed out of the project, since they can't afford to repay any land or housing loans. But the idea of trying to support these poorest community members, to be part of the upgrading projects came first in the mentality of the support organization, but then little by little also in the communities who tried to support, with some small resources, to give some security to the weakest persons in the community. Some weeks ago I visited these communities in Klong Toey, in Bangkok. And the community people themselves here were telling me that it is very important that we support the weakest, the poorest and the most vulnerable. At first, it was the activists pushing this idea, but little by little, it is the communities thinking

this way. It's a tremendous change in the people.

**Young professionals supporting community housing and upgrading projects :**

This slide shows the group of Patama working with a community in Songkhla, in southern Thailand, to help them plan their new housing project. And this slide is from a few weeks ago, in Cambodia. People from the universities are trying to work with the poor also. This slide is in Lao PDR, and there is group of young architects and students trying to do something. And this slide is from the regional community architects' meeting in Chiang Mai in June 2010. This community architecture movement is very important for me, not only for the planning, but a very important sector of society is becoming interested in the poor: usually the architects only work for the rich, and people from the middle classes and up don't like the poor and don't do anything with the big, big problems in our societies. Perhaps this is out of fear in some countries that they might become poor also! But when you have these young people who are interested in working with the poor, this may be a sign of change.



**December 2004 Asian Tsunami :**

The tsunami was a very, very big tragedy in 2004. A big, big crisis, in which 230,000 people were killed, and half a million survivors were left homeless. But it created a lot of new dynamism in this

movement. First, the NGOs and some government agencies like CODI began to work together, to do something - and then to work with the survivors. It was a new approach, at least here in Thailand. In other countries it was a little different. The victims were also participating actively in the work - this was very important, for mental reasons, etc. So they feel they are not passive, but active. At that time, they also began to deal with the deeper issue of land security. There were many land security problems that had been around a long time, but the tsunami opened up the issue and for the first time, there was an awareness about the conflicting demands for this coastal land - and people in the government and NGOs tried to support the people. The livelihood support was also important: the need was not just to provide food and shelter to the survivors, but to help them to prepare for their livelihoods for the future. The Udeep Beusaree Network of 25 tsunami-hit villages in Aceh, Indonesia was a very good example of that. These people rebuilt their villages themselves.





**ACCA Program :** And then in 2009, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation gave us this money to develop this new project in the Asia region. That was when at the time when all of us began to emphasize that the communities are the main actors. This was a concept that was much more solid by then. The idea of this large, regional intervention was not just to use the funds to make physical improvements, but to make people in poor settlements get active, to get large numbers of people to participate in making changes in their settlements. The people develop the plans, and implement the projects themselves - both small upgrading projects and larger housing projects. And the communities, which become stronger through this implementation and networking, begin to negotiate directly with the government, for land and services. And the budget is given directly to the communities, to manage themselves. It is a whole process in which the communities take more and more responsibility for more and more aspects of their city-wide upgrading process.



**The "Discipline Team" in the Haruma Settlement, in Nairobi :** I was visiting this community just two months ago. And they were explaining two things that are very important in their project: On very tiny pieces of land (16 or 18 square meters per plot), the community was able to build very good, concrete 2 and 3-story houses. And they were very happy with that. This very quiet lady in the slide, the one in the middle, explained that she was the head of the "Discipline Team." And this man next to her is the chairman of the project, "*And if the chairman does something wrong,*" she said, "*I am strong enough to say that he needs to change!*" I think that with this group, the communities are saying we need to do that, we need to have discipline. Many times, if the NGO is in charge of the money, the people don't repay their housing loans and there are lots of problems. But the moment when the communities think that these projects should continue, to spread the work to provide such houses to more people in Haruma - if that is to happen, we need to have discipline! Perhaps that is an element that we will need to keep developing. We all need to grow: people in the NGOs need to grow, people in the government need to grow, and people in the communities also need to grow. This is a people's process.



**Governments are beginning to support what we are doing, more and more :** In these ACCA projects in Cambodia, for example, the government is beginning to give more land. In Mongolia, also more support. In Vietnam, the ACVN collaboration with the ACCA process is very important. This slide shows the community housing project in Vinh, completed with ACCA support. And this slide shows the first-ever urban slum upgrading project in Lao PDR, in the Nong Duang Thung community in Vientiane City, which is being implemented now. In this project in Lao, the support from the National Women's Union has been very important. This collaboration of all the groups is extremely important.



### Tibet Heritage Fund's work in China and India :

It is also important that they are not only using their projects not only to give houses to the poor, but are keeping and reviving the building heritage and the traditional building crafts of the country - in Tibet ,Mongolia and in Ladakh.



**The ACCA assessment process :** This last slide, which shows a meeting in Birgunj, during the November 2010 assessment trip to Nepal. I think that one of the biggest assets you have developed in the ACCA Program is your way of doing assessment. In many of the usual project assessments, some people come from outside say *you have done this and that and you have to rectify this and that*. But here, the assessment of projects is done by other communities who are doing their own projects back home, and the assessment trips are a chance for everyone to learn from the ongoing projects - learning from both the problems and the successes of real projects. If we could continue this system of learning, it could bring about change continuously. *Thank you very much.*

**A minute of silence for our friends who have passed away :** During this 34 years, many people who were much younger than me have passed away. In India, Rabial Mallick died just last year. And Ken Fernandez, from Pakistan, died on January 1, 2010. And now, two days ago, Professor Yuzo Uchida, of Toyo University, in Japan has died on 26 Jan 2011. Uchida was one of the pioneers working with the Buraku communities. I would ask if we could have a moment of silence for the people who worked with us and who have passed away.