

ACHR e-news

News from groups around Asia about what's happening in the region . . .

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

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JULY 2010

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REGIONAL COMMUNITY ARCHITECTS MEETING IN CHIANG MAI

"The energy of the young, their maturity and subject strength, richness of ideas, environment of togetherness and belonging, spirit of sharing, scale (23 countries!), variety and promise - all that was stunning and inspiring to me. It is working! It made me feel young again!"

Kirtee Shah

Senior architect, ASAG, Ahmedabad, India

The Regional Community Architects Meeting which ACHR organized in Chiang Mai last week (June 12-16) may very well have been the biggest-yet gathering of community architects in Asia. Some 125 people joined the meeting, which was hosted by Chiang Mai University's Architecture Faculty, and held (at least initially) in the leafy, open-aired "Umbrella Courtyard" of the faculty's donut-shaped building. It was mostly community architects and planners, and mostly youngish and idealistic ones, but there were also some mid-career and senior community architects from around Asia in the meeting, with a few friends from southern Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Colombia. There were also community leaders from several Asian countries who are veterans of their own community design and construction projects, as well as a team from the Chang Chumchon ("Community builders") network in Thailand.



The groups converged at Bangkok, and spent the first day making the 750km bus-ride up to Chiang Mai, with stops along the way to visit community-driven projects to revitalize a traditional market (at Sam Chuk in Supanburi), to upgrade informal settlements in Nakhon Sawan (the Chamlongwit and Ronachai communities) and to upgrade a historic temple in Lampang (Wat Pongsanuk).



Most of the 4-day meeting was given to presentations and discussions about the interesting and diverse work Asia's community architects are doing with poor communities, in some 20 countries, as organized in panel sessions on participatory planning and urban regeneration, community upgrading, rebuilding after disasters, and the poor in historic urban neighborhoods. But each day's sessions in the meeting room ended mid-afternoon. Our hosts in Chiang Mai organized a series of afternoon visits to historic temples, the new "walking street", an informal community upgrading project near the city's earth wall, a historic neighborhood-wide revival, and a dinner and culture show with the Mayor of Chiang Mai at a Lanna-style restaurant complex.

There was, of course, plenty of news shared, plenty of projects described and slides shown, plenty of good discussion and setting of plans for future community architects activities in the region. But for most, the important part of this big gathering was simply getting together, meeting others who are working in this somewhat new, somewhat vaguely-defined corner of the design profession, and feeling a little less lonely, a little more part of a large, new movement.

Two young Thai architects, Nad and Tee, were the key organizers of the meeting, and they prepared especially for the meeting a colorful 96-page book which describes in detail the work of some of Asia's key community architects. Copies of this book are available from ACHR. A report the meeting is now being prepared and will be up on the ACHR website soon.

ACCA ASSESSMENT TRIPS OFFER "TWO-WAY LEARNING" for EVERYONE

Since Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA) program completed its first year of implementation, with projects in some 64 cities in 14 countries, we began organizing joint assessment trips, with mixed teams of community leaders and their NGO supporters from several countries, who travel together to take a deeper look at the progress of ACCA projects in one country and compare notes with their peers in the implementing communities. The idea of assessing the projects in this way is to bring groups together so that they can see for themselves, learn more about the projects, see how they are progressing, compare notes and discuss together what the strong and weak points of the projects have been. ACCA assessment trips are organized to be a friendly but rigorous opportunity for horizontal learning and mutual "2-way" assessment, between poor community people who are struggling in their different contexts to upgrade their settlements and lives.

FIRST ASSESSMENT TRIP : Philippines in January 2010. In this first assessment trip, community groups came from Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam, including local groups from the Philippines. During the 5-day trip, from 24 – 29 January, the participants visited projects in Quezon city, Navotas, Baseco (Manila), Iligan city (Mindanao), Malibu Community (Mandaue), and Ilo Ilo city. *(A detailed report on the Philippines assessment trip can be downloaded from the ACHR website).*

SECOND ASSESSMENT TRIP : Vietnam in April 2010. In early April we organized the second assessment trip to look at ACCA projects and community process in Vietnam. The trip took place during 2- 6 April, with the participation of community groups from Nepal, Mongolia, Laos, Cambodia and Sri Lanka. The groups looked at different ACCA projects in 4 cities: Vinh, Hai Duong, Viet Tri and Lang Son. After the 4-day trip, the participants also stayed to observe the ACCA Committee Meeting held in Lang Son, 7-8 April. The meeting was attended by about 65 people from 11 countries. Several new ACCA projects were proposed, and after reviewing and discussing them, a total budget of US\$ 252,600 was approved to support new projects in 5 cities in 4 Asian countries (which include 20 small upgrading projects and 4 big housing projects). *(A full report on the Vietnam assessment trip is available on the ACHR website).*



ACCA MEETINGS

ACCA / ACHR Committee Meeting in Surabaya, Indonesia, October 2009. This third ACCA / ACHR committee meeting marked the end of the first year's implementation of the ACCA (Asian Coalition for Community Action) Program. The meeting was attended by about 50 people from 13 countries. Several new ACCA projects were proposed, and after reviewing and discussing them, a total budget of US\$ 457,000 was approved to support new projects in 22 cities and districts in 10 Asian countries (which include 77 small upgrading projects and 3 big housing projects). The two-day meeting was preceded by a day of field visits in Surabaya - first to community upgrading projects being undertaken in river-side settlements that are part of the Stren Kali Community Network, and later to a meeting with faculty and students at the Surabaya Institute of Technology and a field visit to a community that has been upgraded under the Kampung Improvement Program (KIP). *(A detailed report about the Surabaya meeting, as well as a report on the field visits to upgrading projects in the riverside communities that are part of the Stren Kali Network, can be downloaded from the ACHR website).*

ACCA / ACHR Committee Meeting in Lang Son, Vietnam, April 2010. As mentioned above, this ACCA Committee Meeting was held right after the Vietnam 4-day ACCA assessment trip. In this meeting, it was announced that the ACCA program can cover more projects, more cities and more activities than originally planned, thanks to an infusion of additional funds from our donor. This extra funding support will allow us to implement the ACCA Program in at least 50 more cities, and to implement 50 more big projects, bringing the total to about 100 big projects. This supplementary budget will also allow us to have additional budget for community-driven disaster response and capacity building. In the Lang Son meeting, several new ACCA projects were proposed,

and after reviewing and discussing them, a total budget of US\$ 252,600 was approved to support new projects in 5 cities in 4 Asian countries (which include 20 small upgrading projects and 4 big housing projects).

Summary of ACCA finances, up to 31 March, 2010 (as presented in the Lang Son meeting)

Country	No of cities	Total approved ACCA Budget	Big Projects	Small Projects	City Process Support	National Process support	Understanding Cities	Community savings / funds	Other city / national processes	Disaster	Strengthening regional processes	Total amount disbursed	Balance yet to be disbursed
CAMBODIA	11	465,000	240,000 (6 projects)	160,000 (93)	30,000	20,000			10,000	5,000		197,000	268,000
FIJI	1	28,000	--	15,000 (5)	3,000	10,000						20,000	8,000
INDIA	2	121,000	80,000 (2 project)	30,000 (12)	6,000		5,000					20,000	101,000
INDONESIA	4	155,497	80,000 (2 projects)	40,000 (11)	9,000	10,000			16,497			52,997	102,500
KOREA	1	68,000	40,000 (1 project)	15,000 (5)	3,000	10,000						17,000	51,000
LAOS	2	84,000	40,000 (1 project)	30,000 (10)	4,000	10,000						27,000	57,000
MONGOLIA	12	253,320	105,120 (3 projects)	65,700 (22)	36,000	20,000	15,000	9,000	2,500			225,640	27,680
MYANMAR	3	251,510	80,000 (2 projects)	42,000 (10)	6,000	10,000		5,000		92,800	15,710	193,856	57,654
NEPAL	3	205,100	120,000 (3 projects)	45,000 (16)	9,000	10,000			21,100			101,000	104,100
PAKISTAN	1	5,000	--	--					5,000			2,360	2,640
PHILIPPINES	13	505,000	220,000 (7 projects)	129,000 (46)	36,000	10,000	17,500	6,000	6,500	80,000		362,100	142,900
SRI LANKA	3	191,500	120,000 (3 projects)	45,000 (15)	9,000	17,500						143,500	48,000
THAILAND	2	86,000	60,000 (2 projects)	10,000 (4)	6,000	10,000						56,000	30,000
VIETNAM	10	305,264	95,000 (3 projects)	120,000 (41)	27,000	10,000	15,000	6,000	22,464	9,800		218,764	86,500
TOTAL	68	2,724,191	1,280,120 (35 projects)	746,700 (290 projects)	184,000	147,500	52,500	26,000	84,061	187,600	15,710	1,637,217	1,086,974

For more details of the outcomes of the Lang Son ACCA meeting, please see the full report at www.achr.net

ACCA FIRST YEAR REPORT NOW AVAILABLE : A 96-page full-color publication called "64 Cities in Asia: The First Yearly Report of the Asian Coalition for Community Action Program" has just been printed in hard copy and online. Besides describing the concepts behind the ACCA Program and outlining the progress and breakthroughs in the program's first year, the bulk of the report is given to detailed stories about the small upgrading projects, big housing projects and city-wide development processes that were well underway by December 2009, when the program's first year ended. (For a hard copy of the report, please contact ACHR, or download the PDF version - in three parts because it's so big! - from the ACHR website.)

UPDF in CAMBODIA WINS IYSH MEMORIAL PRIZE

In July 2009 we received the good news that the Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF) in Cambodia had won the 22nd International Year of Shelter for Homeless (IYSH) Memorial Prize for 2009 - an annual award given by the Japan Housing Association, for its work supporting the urban poor in Cambodia. The IYSH Memorial Fund was established by the Japan Housing Association in commendations of the International Year for Sheltered Homeless 1987. As one of its activities, the IYSH Memorial Prize is annually awarded to honorable individual or organization that has made great contribution to "Housing" in developing countries, to encourage its future work.

For the year 2009, among 9 nominees from 6 countries, the Urban Poor Development Fund of Cambodia (UPDF) was selected to receive the 22nd IYSH Memorial Prize. This is a great news to UPDF and all communities in Cambodia who have been working tirelessly for the improvement of the urban poor communities. This is also encouraging to ACHR and our friends around the region who have supported our direction in community development

The prize comes with a cash award of 1 million Yen (about US\$ 10,000). Over the past 22 years, this important prize has been given to many key people and groups within the ACHR network, including Father Jorge Anzorena (1988), Somsook Boonyabancha (1989), Arif Hasan and Sister Annie Abion (1990), Johan Silas and Enrique Ortiz (1991), SPARC (1992), Freedom to Build (1993), People's Dialogue South Africa (1994), Women's Bank and Pagtambayayong Foundation (1995), Human Settlements Foundation Thailand (1999), Sevanatha (2001), Shack Dwellers Federation Namibia and ASAG Ahmedabad (2002), Denis Murphy (2004), Lumanti (2006), Help-O Sri Lanka (2008)

National Community Development Fund (NCDF) in Cambodia: The UPDF was formed in March 1998 under an MOU between the network of community savings groups in Phnom Penh city, the Municipality of Phnom Penh, and ACHR. The idea of the fund was to provide revolving fund loans to support the efforts of urban poor communities to solve their housing problems and income generation through savings groups. Now in its 12th year, the UPDF has a total loan fund of more than US\$ 2 million and has provided technical and financial support to communities around the country, not just within Phnom Penh.

For the past year or so, ACHR has been in discussion with the Cambodia's National Committee on Population and Development (NCPD - a national government advisory body under the Prime Minister's Office) to bring the community process that UPDF has helped to strengthen and expand over the past 12 years to the national level with support by the government, through the setting up of a new national fund. This is a big step to institutionalize the financial support for Cambodia's growing community process. To do this, a new MOU is in the process of being drafted with the NCPD. This new MOU will lead to the establishment of the National Community Development Fund (NCDF) which will support community-driven development projects (such as housing, land, community upgrading, livelihood, community enterprise, welfare) in the country, both urban and rural. It is expected that this new MoU will be finalized and signed within a month or two.

NEW UPDF WEBSITE : After working on it for several months, Neeliyam and Visal and the team at UPDF have finally launched their new website, with both Khmer and English language sections. Many documents, reports and newsletters in English can be downloaded from the site - all of which add up to a significant archive of UPDF's work supporting Cambodia's poor communities and their savings networks over the past 12 years. www.updfkh.net/en/home.php

NEW COLLABORATIONS IN LAO PDR

ACHR has two young Thai community architects on our staff, Chawanad Luansang (Nad) and Supawut Boonmahathanakorn (Tee), who have been spending lots of time working in Lao PDR to help develop the country's community-planned and community built on-site housing upgrading project, at the Nong Duang Thung Community in Vientiane. Nad and Tee have also been using the project as a focus point for getting students, architecture professors, young architects and other professionals in Lao PDR involved the supporting communities.

With Nad and Tee's assistance, a community architecture training workshop was organized in Vientiane in September 2009, with support from ACHR and the Lao National University. There were 95 attendants including 50 undergraduate students and 10 post-grad students and ten young architects, 15 community leaders, 10 urban planner - all Laotians. Some young architects from the Philippines, Japan and Thailand also joined the workshop. As the result of the workshop, the Nong Duang Thung community was chosen to be the first pilot project of on-site housing and infrastructure development and solving land security issue in Lao PDR. This community, located on the government land, is 50 years old. There are 84 households with 500 people. With the support of community members and the saving groups' committee, the community proposed a plan for community improvement:

- Community upgrading on existing land by adjusting the community layout for widening walkways and roads linking with the main street.
- Improving infrastructure such as roads, drainage channels, electricity, as well as constructing a community's center, library, and greening the environmental condition by plants and vegetables.
- Housing restoration
- Establishing saving groups for housing and infrastructure improvement purposes.
- Proposing to purchase the land or long-term rent to government.



Nong Duang Thung upgrading planning process



Nong Duang Thung model BEFORE



Nong Duang Thung model AFTER

MoU with the Lao National University: With the success of the above workshop, ACHR has developed an MoU with the Lao National University to expand and strengthen the involvement of young architects in community development.

Third MoU with the Lao Women's Union: On September 23 2009, in Vientiane, ACHR, CODI and the Lao Women's Union signed the third MoU to continue the "Women and Community Empowerment Project" through community savings activities and community upgrading activities into the period of 2009 – 2012. The first MoU was signed in the year 2002, targeting 3 small towns within the Vientiane city (Pak Ngum, Nasaithong, and Sangthong). The project aimed to encourage and support saving and credit activities in poor communities and to use the activities as essential mechanism for community development. The second MoU was signed to expand these activities in September 2006. At the completion of the second phase, 389 saving groups were organized (the expected outcome was only 330 saving groups). These saving groups scattered in 16 towns. Five other towns (Phongsali, Sisattanak, Janthaburi, Sikotabong and Hatsaifong which were not the signed project targeted areas) proposed to join in the project. This third MoU covers the period of July 2009 – June 2012; target areas include the cities of Vientiane and Luang Prabang, Borkaew, Phongsali and Champasak districts. Under this third MoU, the project focuses on two main goals:

- Strengthening the capacity of women and their communities to organize and manage saving groups
- Building networks of community saving groups as essential mechanism for sustainable development of communities in the following aspects: economy; culture; environment and social aspect.
- Urban poor community upgrading and housing development

URBAN HERITAGE REVIVAL : CHINATOWN IN BANGKOK



The Yaowarat conservation project is an ongoing project in the heart of Bangkok's Chinatown district, which attempts to marry conservation with development. It seeks to show that development need not mean only new buildings, but can also be the revitalization of old buildings through walking streets and use of the existing heritage. The area in question is the subject of a subway expansion plan, with the threat of expropriation of land for the subway ventilation plant, as well as a rush by developers to cash in by building apartment complexes and other developments. The land is owned by the Crown Property Bureau. This area of Chinatown is still very active, with a mixture of wholesale and retail shops, and a rich heritage of traditional shop houses which have local historical value.

When a team of academics and community architects from the Arsom Silp Institute of the Arts and elsewhere entered the area, they found that there was no local residents' organization or forum for discussion about the issues arising from the new development plans. The team also found that they faced much distrust from the local residents, who are a mixture of social groups, and who feared that the team would use the community for their own benefit. Therefore, the team sought approval from the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, to have the institutional status required to gain the trust of the local, mostly middle class, residents. As Professor Sakkarin explains, the tactic was to *"look formal, act informal"*.



The community architects started by getting community residents to tell of their family history, in order to build pride in their families and houses, and want to join in the participatory process. Additionally, the team realized that talking only of problems would infuse the process with negativity which would put people off participating, so they organized fun activities, such as a "treasure hunt" game for children to go in search of old shop signs. This activity not only allowed the community architects to learn about what shops existed in the area, but also the community "gossip" – who didn't get on with whom, which persons were most respected. The team realized that the area could not be assessed solely in terms of physical groupings, but that there were complex groupings based on commercial, religious, social, and problem-based relationships, and these groupings needed to be accounted for in plans.

The architects have drawn up diagrams illustrating how the area could be revitalized, for example by turning a Chinese Opera building into a boutique hotel and opening up a walking street, giving the locals ownership over the development of their area, without destroying the cultural and physical heritage. In this way, conservation does not mean solely sticking to the old, but allows for some development too. The next steps are for the community to negotiate a short term, 3-5 year lease over the land, which could increase their sense of belonging in this unique area, as well as to open a small community museum, and do some small-scale upgrading of infrastructure. *(For more information about the Chinatown redevelopment process, please contact ACHR)*



SOME ACHR PEOPLE NEWS

New director of Enda Vietnam: As many of you may still remember, the previous director at Enda Vietnam was Mr. Bang Anh Tuan. After he left the organization in May 2009 to follow other pursuits, Enda Vietnam's management committee, its advisory board and Joséphine Ouédraogo, the executive secretary of Enda Third World organized the selection process of the new country director for Vietnam. Finally Ms. Le Dieu Anh was selected. Here are the words from our friend Henri de Reboul: "Dieu Anh has known Enda Vietnam for many years. She is respected for her experience. She worked on a few very interesting participatory urban development projects. Her commitment to create change for poor communities is actually very strong. She started on October 12 with her new position at Enda." (Anh can be contacted by e-mail at: endavietnam@viettel.vn)

Some new faces to get to know at ACHR: ACHR has some new staff to introduce to the network :

- Two energetic young Thai architects Chawanad Luansang (Nad) and Supawut Boonmahathanakorn (Tee) have been collaborating with ACHR since the beginning of the ACCA program. They are now working as a team to take care of the young professional program of ACHR which is growing rapidly together with the expansion of ACCA program.
- In May 2010, a young land economist named Diane Archer joined ACHR to help document the stories and community processes in the ACCA program. Diane has just completed her PhD from Cambridge, where the subject of her thesis was the social outcomes of the Baan Mankong city-wide upgrading program in Thailand - particularly in Bangkok. Although her parents come from Australia and France, Diane grew up in Bangkok and speaks fluent Thai.

And sadly, the loss of some special friends : Over the past year, ACHR has also lost several very close and long-standing friends :



Kenneth Fernandes passed away on the second of January, 2010. Ken was director of the URC in Karachi before heading ACHR's Housing Rights and Eviction program. He also worked for a while in Phnom Penh for ACHR before migrating with his family to Australia, where he continued working with the eviction program as well as helping out in Fiji and Asia Pacific for ACHR. In Australia he was also an extremely popular teacher of urban poor issues in Asia. Ken succumbed to a long battle with cancer. So many friends will miss you Kenneth.



Rabial Mallick passed away on April 21, 2010. Mallick was a long-time friend of ACHR, working tirelessly in Bombay and Calcutta for PROUD. Mallick was also a member of LOCOA. As his colleague Fides Bagesao wrote, "Mallick's unceasing commitment to struggle for social change and to helping organize communities to change their conditions required much discipline, hard work and sacrifice. He combined his passion for working with the poor with close family ties and a simple lifestyle." We will miss you too, Mallick.

Khun Ja Waeng in Bang Bua : Many groups who have visited the Bang Bua community upgrading project in Bangkok over the past five years will probably remember Khun Ja Waeng, one of the senior leaders in the Bang Bua Community. It was Khun Ja Waeng who developed a grease-trap water filter to use in the community's kitchens and who persuaded community members to use this filter system so their waste water would be clean by the time it flowed back into the canal. Khun Ja Waeng passed away in June 2010, but his popular kitchen filter system, which was designed to be made easily and cheaply from materials you can buy in any local market, is now being used by communities



all over the country - and there is no doubt that cleaner water in Thailand's rivers and canals makes the most handsome memorial to the memory of this good-hearted and dedicated community leader.

Pam Dashiell, another ACHR friend - this one very far away in New Orleans, USA - passed away last December 2009. Pam was a community activist who galvanized her neighbors in the Holy Cross neighborhood, in the Lower 9th Ward of New Orleans, to come back and rebuild their houses and community after Hurricane Katrina devastated the city in August 2005. We met Pam a year later, when ACHR made it's first trip to the city, when it was still reeling from the storm. Pam was in the first group of Katrina survivors who traveled to Thailand and Indonesia in September 2006 to compare notes with communities which had survived the December 2004 Asian tsunami. This exchange between disaster survivors in the world's richest country and some poor Asian countries was a bit of an experiment for ACHR, and for the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI) in New York, who co-sponsored the exchange. Pam was a warm, curious and impassioned participant on that visit to southern Thailand and Aceh, and was a welcoming and informative host to a visit by tsunami survivors and ACHR folks to New Orleans which took place in July 2007, when we had breakfast with at the Holy Cross Neighborhood Association center, in an old church that had been restored after the storm. *(ACHR has several reports which describe Pam's work in New Orleans, and which document the Katrina-Tsunami exchanges, all of which can be downloaded from the ACHR website.)*

