

ACHR e-news

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

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

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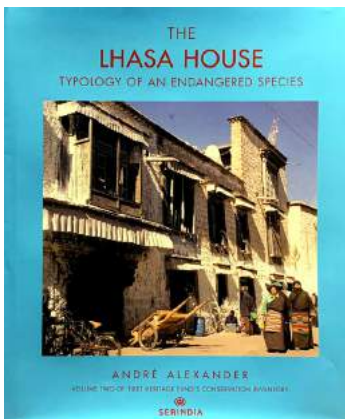
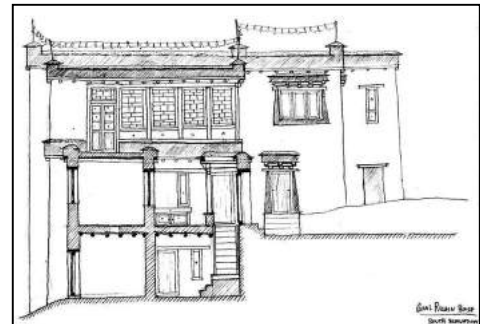
DECEMBER 2019

- Saving Tibetan buildings and artisanship in **INDIA**
- World Habitat Day celebrations stretch into the months + new CODI English website in **THAILAND**
- Canal-side community breakthroughs in **THAILAND** and **INDONESIA**
- News from the Asian Community Architects Network - **CAN**
- ACHR makes a splash at the seventh Asia Pacific Urban Forum in Penang, **MALAYSIA**
- 2 New ACHR regional projects: 5 Model Cities + Collective Housing in Asia
- Updates on two ACHR research projects: KNOW study + Food Security Study
- Community Development Funds are still active in 8 cities in **VIETNAM**
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SAVING TIBETAN BUILDINGS and ARTISANSHIP and CULTURE

Tibet's religion, culture, language and architectural heritage are all under serious, serious threat inside China, but Tibetan communities in India and their champions in the Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) are doing everything they can to preserve them. Some news from our intrepid friends Pimpim and Yutaka in THF:

1. Artisan's Center in Leh, Ladakh, India: Some years ago, THF and its local partner in Ladakh, the Leh Old Town Initiative (LOTI), had begun restoring a small Tibetan house with a big courtyard that had been abandoned for long time, with the idea of making it into an artisan's training center in the historic Old Town of Leh. The owner lives in Leh, but there were problems getting all the family members to agree to allow the house be used that way. So the team looked for another house. Finally, they found the very dilapidated Gotal Rigzin house, a branch of one of the largest remaining historic Tibetan buildings in Leh's Old Town. The owners agreed to allow the house to be restored and used as an artisan's center - for at least eight years. Last spring, the team began the restoration process, and has been looking for funds to complete the project, which will cost about \$70,000, which includes \$45,000 for the restoration and \$25,000 to start the center.



2. Andre's book on Tibetan Houses is launched in New York:

Pimpim sent us a press note about an event organized in New York City, on March 6, 2019, "to

celebrate the vital, lifelong work of the late André Alexander and his colleagues at the Tibet Heritage Fund in the preservation, conservation and documentation of traditional architecture in Tibet, with a launch of a new publication, *The Lhasa House: Typology of an Endangered Species*. Published by Serindia Publications, *The Lhasa House* is the long-awaited second volume after *The Temples of Lhasa* (Serindia 2005), and is a comprehensive survey of the vernacular architecture of Lhasa, based on the THF's five-year conservation project in Tibet. The book offers the most detailed documentation of its kind yet published, and is an important contribution to our understanding of an architectural typology that is vanishing." This was the book Andre was working on when he died in January 2012, and Pimpim and Yutaka worked tirelessly to carry on with the task of preparing the manuscript for publication.



For more information, please contact Pimpim de Azevedo at THF: pemamarpo@yahoo.com.hk

NEW OCTOBER 2019 ISSUE of the SELAVIP NEWSLETTER

The Selavip newsletter, called officially the *Journal of Low-Income Housing in Asia and the World*, has for four decades been a labor of love for Father Jorge Anzorena, a gentle crusader for the urban poor and an old friend to many of the groups and people fighting the good fight on issues of housing and poverty in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the rest of the world. This is one of the longest-running and most information-rich catalogues of interesting projects, important breakthroughs and community strategies on the scene. Any issue is like a primer on some of the most important work going on in community housing.

For many of us, Father Jorge's twice-yearly newsletter has come for most of our working lives like a regular and sometimes much-needed multi-vitamin supplement. This is documentation at its most accessible - the articles are short, cleanly-written and loaded with ideas and illustrations. Inside the front cover of every issue is a logo that sets the newsletter's tone - it shows four interlocking, clasped hands, and beneath it are these words: "*This publication is not covered by copyright and may be quoted or recopied in part or in full, with or without acknowledgement or notice to its authors and publishers, although such would be highly appreciated.*"

For many years, Father Jorge was able to support groups doing promising work with small grants from the SELAVIP Foundation - funding that came with a lot of flexibility and trust. But it is in his role as *super networker* that Father Jorge is best known. When he wasn't teaching in Japan, Father Jorge was out travelling, visiting projects, meeting groups, introducing people to each



other, learning and collecting material for the newsletter. To the task of *telling about what he's learned*, he brings warmth, enthusiasm and an encyclopedic awareness of who's doing what with housing the poor around the world.

Well, Father Jorge is getting on in years now, and he's weathered some health scrapes lately which confine him to his home-base with the Jesuits in Tokyo. But that hasn't stopped him from keeping up on things over the internet and email, or from gathering stories for the newsletter, with his long-time co-conspirator Bimbo Fernandez, at the Pagtambayayong Foundation in the Philippines. The October 2019 issue, which runs to 103 pages and features 19 articles, has just come out. The newsletter is no longer being printed and mailed out, but both current and past issues can be downloaded from this link: <http://bit.ly/SELAVIP2019OCT>

Please write to Father Jorge and keep sending him your interesting stories or articles:

- Father Anzorena: anzoranajorge@gmail.com
- Bimbo Fernandez: pagtamba@yahoo.com

A LITTLE NOTE ON THE SYLLABLE "CO"

Co-mmunity, **co**-llaborate, **co**-ordinate, **co**-llective, **co**-operative, **co**-creation, **co**-development, **co**-production, **co**-learning, **co**-authorship. Have I missed any? You're going to see a lot of that little syllable "co" in this e-news bulletin. And that's not for nothing. "Co" comes from the Latin *cum*, which means *together*, or *with*, or *mutual*. And in a world where we are all increasingly alone, and the systems by which we survive are increasingly individual, doing things together is taking on an increasing urgency. These days, you could choke on a peanut and turn purple in the Bangkok subway and nobody would notice, for the hundreds of people all around you are so lost in their smart-phones and far, far away. All the isolation being brought on by capitalism and technology is turning us into hermits and ogres. We are losing our capacity to do things together at the same time our need for each other has never been greater. That need is especially acute for the poor, who cannot get most of what they need individually. We have a lot to fight against.

So let's take a few minutes to **co**-llaboratively celebrate a whole bunch of new projects and possibilities in the region to make housing **co**-llectively, to **co**-learn about poverty and food security and inequality, and to **co**-create and **co**-develop housing and civic design projects that make the city better for all **co**-mmunities in our cities.



WORLD HABITAT DAY / MONTH / MONTHS in THAILAND

The United Nations has designated the first Monday of every October as World Habitat Day. The community networks and CODI in Thailand have for many years taken this occasion seriously and used it to showcase housing projects around the country, draw in support from politicians and local government officials, and generally use festive ground-breakings, first-column-raising, project inaugurations, MOU signings and housing seminars to advance the politics that always goes with a national, community-driven housing process. They became so adept at this that World Habitat Day in Thailand began stretching into a week, then into weeks, then into a full month, with fully-booked schedules of gala events all over the country throughout October. And this year, the already very crowded World Habitat Month has cheerfully spilled over into November! Here are just a few highlights from the 2019 World Habitat Month(s) in Thailand:

1. WHD launch at CODI on October 10: World Habitat Day was launched this year at the CODI office, with a community products fair, an exhibition of collective housing around the country, and a two-day regional seminar on "Collective Housing in Asia", organized jointly by CODI, ACHR and the Swiss NGO urbaMonde. Among the distinguished guests were Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Jurin Laksanavisith, the Director of UN-Habitat's regional office in Fukuoka Mr. Atsushi Koresawa, representatives from UN-ESCAP and UN-Habitat, and leaders from collective housing federations in Europe, Canada, Latin America and 11 Asian countries. CODI's national Baan Mankong community-driven housing program was showcased during the event, with field visits the day before to the Baan Mankong project in Ladprao 101, and to the collaborative scheme to upgrade all 51 canal-side communities along Bangkok's Klong Ladprao. *(More details in stories below on canal-side upgrading and collective housing in Asia)*

2. Post-disaster housing repair in Ban Phai on October 26: Ban Phai is a small town in Khon Kaen Province, in Northeastern Thailand. The citywide housing development had been going full steam ahead, with ten Baan Mankong projects either completed or underway, providing secure land and housing to about 80% of the city's poor families (1,042 out of the total 1,295 households). There were active savings groups and an active urban community network. But then in August 2019, the town was hit by a terrible storm and flash floods which swept away houses and left the whole town under water. The floods came so fast that many people didn't even have time to gather their belongings, but just ran for their lives to higher ground. But since then, an extraordinary collaborative project to help affected families rebuild or repair their houses has been going on in Ban Phai, with the community network, the *Chang Chumchon* community builders, the CODI architects and engineers and volunteer teams from Army all chipping in with labor, expertise and materials to help people rebuild. The World Habitat Day event in Ban Phai (October 26-27) focused on community people affected by those floods and included a seminar on community-based post-disaster management and rebuilding, with the Deputy Minister for Social Development and Human Security. The WHD event also provided a hands-on activity which gave participants a chance to roll up their sleeves and actually help rebuild and repair some of the flood-damaged houses, alongside the community network, the army volunteers and the community builders.

3. Rural Baan Mankong project launch in Klong Hinpoon on November 14: In this new rural Baan Mankong project, a group of 40 poor and landless families in Sakao Province will get free land from the government's Land Reform Department to develop a new self-sustaining community for themselves. Each family will get a plot of 1,600 m² for their house and kitchen garden, and another 8,000 m² of land for cultivation, which will be managed collectively. The idea of these rural Baan Mankong projects is not only to provide land and housing to the landless poor, but to enable them to use their community power to develop ways of sustaining themselves and



living well in their rural communities - without having to migrate to the city. This project is being implemented in a ward that has already been managing its own land reform fund, through its active community council, which links together all the community savings groups in the ward. The fund gives loans to members to help alleviate agricultural debt - a chronic problem in rural areas and one of the main causes of landlessness. The fund also acquires public and private land to use as a "land bank" for farmers who do lose their land. In this way, the rural network in one ward has made strategic use of their community council, since it has the legal status to buy and sell land and act like a land developer - something the community network can't do.

4. MOU to do citywide Baan Mankong in 14 Bangkok districts signed on November 28. In the 16 years the Baan Mankong program has been in operation, about 100 housing projects have been implemented in Bangkok, scattered across the city's 50 districts. That's only about 10% of the city's total urban poor in need of secure housing: not a very handsome record. Especially given that many other Thai cities are now close to solving 100% of their housing problems. Megacities like Bangkok are notoriously difficult, though. So CODI and the community networks have signed an MOU with the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) to break down this gigantic city into more workable units, and implement a district-wide housing process in 14 districts. This new process was launched at the BMA office, with the district authorities from those 14 districts, CODI, community network leaders, some key landowning agencies and universities in the target districts. Now they are doing district-wide surveying and developing comprehensive plans to address the problems of all the informal communities and scattered squatters and room renters in each district. As part of this collaborative process, teams in each district are also planning a more holistic poverty alleviation which includes not only land and housing but employment, welfare, education, transport and relationships with other actors in the district.



NEW CODI ENGLISH LANGUAGE WEBSITE in THAILAND

The Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) in Thailand continues to be a beacon for the kind of innovative and demand-driven government housing finance institution that many countries wish they had: an institution that uses state funds to support what poor communities do, at scale. CODI has a lot of fans around the region and around the world. Besides visits,



exchanges and publications, the CODI website has been an important window into the organization's work. But over the years, a chronic shortage of English-speakers and tech nerds on the CODI staff has meant that the English part of the CODI website has fallen into disuse and gathered cobwebs. But CODI watchers outside of Thailand need not despair. In the past two years, ACHR has worked with a committee at CODI to revive their English website, gather some up-to-date information about CODI's various programs and expand the library of downloadable CODI documents.

The refurbished English website is now up and can be visited at www.codi.or.th (click the "English site" link at the top of the first page to enter the English portion of the site)

BANGKOK'S CANAL-SIDE COMMUNITIES GET A BIG BOOST

In 2015, faced with increasing flooding problems, the Thai government announced a policy to upgrade Bangkok's major canals and build concrete embankments along their edges. Initially, the policy called for evicting the hundreds of informal communities that fill the narrow strip of public land along these canals. But inspired by the success of the *in-situ* housing upgrading project in the 13 communities alongside Bangkok's Bang Bua Canal, CODI proposed to upgrade these settlements instead, and the proposal was accepted. For the government, this was a chance to upgrade the city's drainage system, and for CODI, it was a chance to boost the community-driven upgrading of more canal-side communities, using a special budget from the government. The new *Baan Pracharat Program* ("Government of people") was officially launched on Klong Ladprao, a 31-km-long man-made canal that is one of the city's principal drainage canals. CODI began working with the 7,000 poor families who live in 51 squatter communities along Klong Ladprao. Besides improving the city's drainage, the community-driven housing process on Klong Ladprao is providing people with secure land and housing, better environment and infrastructure, and stronger social and economic opportunities, and it involves an extraordinary collaboration between various municipal and national government agencies, the canal-side communities, CODI, universities, architects and other local stakeholders.

Mostly on-site upgrading, with very little displacement: Most of the communities are reconstructing their housing on the same site, with housing loans from the Baan Pracharat Program, which are made in bulk to the housing cooperatives the communities must all set up to access CODI finance. All the land along the canal is public land, and the government grants long-term collective land leases (30 years) to the community cooperatives, at nominal rental rates of US\$ 1 - 4 per m² per year. In the few cases where there is not enough land for on-site reconstruction, some households have to relocate to other areas nearby. So far, only seven housing projects have involved some relocation of households to other areas nearby. Two standard house designs have been adopted in the Ladprao canal housing projects, to make new housing affordable to everyone: a single-story house (24 m²) for poorer or smaller families, and a two-story row-house (56 m²). The houses cost between 200,000 and 500,000 baht (\$6,250 - \$15,625) per unit, which is about 25% of existing market prices.

Financing: Housing loans from the Baan Pracharat Program (through CODI) are made in bulk to the community cooperatives, at 4% annual interest, repayable over 20 years. Monthly loan repayments are between 1,500 and 3,000 baht (\$46 - \$93) per family, which is affordable to most urban poor households. The special canal program also provides four kinds of subsidies to the projects (similar to Baan Mankong projects):

- Housing subsidy: 25,000 baht (\$760) per household
- Infrastructure subsidy: 50,000 baht (\$1,520) per household (combined and managed collectively in one fund)
- Temporary shelter subsidy: 18,000 baht (\$545) per household
- Moving subsidy: 54,000 baht (\$1,635) per household
- TOTAL subsidy: 147,000 baht (\$4,455) per household

By October 2019, housing projects had been approved and were underway in 38 canal-side communities on Klong Ladprao. 3,000 houses had been constructed and another 1,000 were under construction. Meanwhile, CODI has been working with the government to begin a similar housing upgrading process in communities along a third major canal in Bangkok, the Prem Prachakorn Canal, and an additional budget of 200 million baht (US\$ 6.25 million) has been allocated to CODI to implement similar community-driven canal redevelopment in other cities.

For more information, please visit the CODI website: www.codi.or.th



BREAKTHROUGHS for JAKARTA'S RIVERSIDE KAMPUNGS TOO

Here's another riverside community upgrading story that comes from Gugun Muhammad, a community organizer who works with the Urban Poor Consortium (UPC) NGO in Jakarta:

Jakarta is another very watery city that is filled with rivers and canals and has serious problems of flooding. And like Bangkok, many of those waterways are lined with densely-packed informal settlements which are often wrongly blamed for the flooding. For the past few decades, the city's only solution to the problems of these riverside slums was to evict them and push the people into far-away blocks of public housing flats. Most refused to go, and those who did go found it so hard to survive out there that they ended up moving back to slums in the city.

The UPC works closely with a network of 38 urban poor communities ("kampungs"), street vendors and pedicab drivers in North Jakarta called *Jaringan Rakyat Miskin Kota* (JRMK). Several of the JRMK communities are riverside kampungs. We started in one riverside community - Kampung Tongkol - with an upgrading project, with support from a small grant of \$40,000 from the Selavip Foundation. The pathways, public spaces and houses were improved in that project, and the river-frontage was made beautiful with trees, landscaping, community cafes and brightly-painted house fronts. That project made a strong example of how riverside kampungs can in fact become beautiful settlements, and it stopped an eviction that was planned for the area. The people began to have the confidence that they can change things.

The JRMK network and UPC began using the Kampung Tongkol project to organize more communities, advocate for on-site community-driven upgrading with politicians and local government officials, and campaign to get the media on our side. A lot of newspapers and television news programs used to write bad stories about illegal squatters and criminals in the riverside slums, but now they tell a story of transformation. Finally we were successful, and the Jakarta Government has accepted our on-site upgrading model as the city's official policy for riverside and canal-side communities.



The city government has also agreed to provide a sum of 3 million Rupiah (US\$ 230,769) to each kampung in a pilot program to replicate the Kampung Tongkol process by recognizing and upgrading 21 riverside and canal-side kampungs in Jakarta, according to a participatory planning process. 16 of those kampungs in the pilot program are JRMK members. We still have a lot of work to do, because these funds are only for upgrading common infrastructure, not for improving the housing. And the land tenure question is still not clear. But another strategy the Jakarta government is using shows some promise, in which Indonesia's Agrarian Land Reform Program is being used in an urban setting to allow three kampungs in Jakarta to form cooperatives and design and reconstruct their housing in the same place, with budget from the government. If that model can be adopted in other riverside kampungs in Jakarta, the problems of land and housing can be solved quickly, using the power and creativity of the kampung residents themselves.

For more information about Kampung Tongkol, please contact Gugun: gugunmuhammad21@yahoo.com

And to read two very good articles about the Kampung Tongkol project in the Guardian (Nov 2016 and April 2018):

<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/nov/25/jakarta-kampung-tongkol-eco-future-river-community--green-to-fight-eviction-threat>
<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/apr/04/jakartas-urban-poor-have-found-a-new-way-to-fight-city-hall-and-win>

NEWS FROM the COMMUNITY ARCHITECTS NETWORK (CAN)

It's been nine years now since the Community Architects Network (CAN) was launched in Chiang Mai, in June 2010. The network continues to expand, bringing together architects, planners, community-based builders, lecturers and volunteers across Asia, who are working with the urban poor in different ways, on community-driven processes of participatory design, planning and construction across Asia. By acting as a platform for sharing, learning and mutual support, and by linking local groups with international networks, CAN is sustaining and amplifying a movement of community architects that used to be scattered. Community architects are now working with poor communities in many very different contexts and on all sorts of projects, but one thread that runs through this great variety is a belief in the power of participatory design and planning to bring about a development that really belongs to people and transforms their lives. Over the years, CAN has helped to develop, document and share a growing set of practical, borrowable tools and techniques for bringing community participation into the processes of settlement upgrading and housing design - techniques like mapping, house design workshops, budget planning and community-led construction management.

CAN has recently published two substantial additions to their library of books about how architects around Asia are finding new and creative ways of bringing their design-thinking and idealism to vulnerable communities to address issues of housing, upgrading, settlement mapping, and historic preservation.

1. CAN Profiles: A Collection of Community Architects' Work Across Asia.

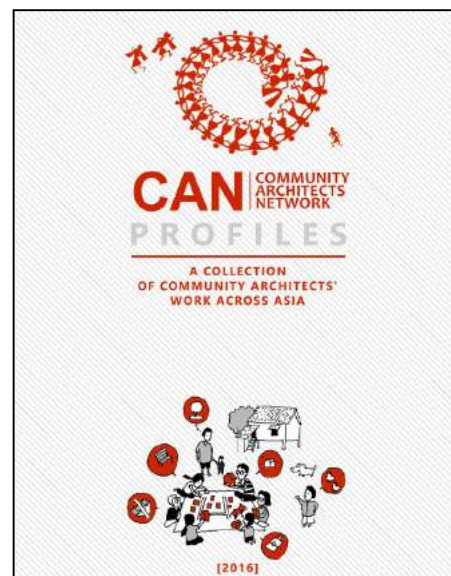
This 250-page book - in glorious full color - brings together stories of the community architecture work being carried out on the ground by dozens of local groups in twelve countries across the Asia region. The book is the result of a long process of writing, documenting, gathering and distilling of stories, information and pictures, and was produced by a very big and far-flung team of people in the CAN network.

2. Community Voices: Preserving Local Heritage. The first half of this 180-page book presents six stories about how local (and mostly poor) communities are working with teams of community architects to find practical ways of taking active part in preserving their historic neighborhoods, in the face of intense development pressures to destroy them. Case-studies include the revival of a canal-side community in southern Thailand, a 200-year old settlement of wooden houses in central Bangkok, a beautiful Newari urban village in the Kathmandu Valley, an ancient Tibetan mountain-top city in the Himalayas and a sixteenth-century walled community of silversmiths in Yogyakarta. The second half of the book describes several cases where marginalized communities in several cities in Malaysia and Thailand, some of which have already been declared UNESCO World Heritage sites, are working with local architects, academics and activists to make those top-down preservation efforts more participatory and more people-focused.

The introduction was written by Pimpim de Azevedo, from the Tibet Heritage Fund, who speaks from decades of experience helping vulnerable Tibetan communities in China, Mongolia and India to save their historic buildings and settlements and revive their traditional building culture. All over the world, Pimpim writes, historic villages, towns, and cities, which have been made by skilled craftsmen, designers and planners, are under threat. "These historic sites are the footprint of our identity as people, communities, and nations. They tell us about the life and society of the past, and tell us the story of where we came from and what steps we took to reach today." Cities have always developed and changed over time, but until lately, those changes took place slowly. In the past few decades, Asian cities have experienced an explosion of development that puts new pressures on historic areas, and on the people who live in them. Some heritage sites have fallen into decay, while others have been listed as World Heritage Sites and restored to a high polish, but in both cases, the people who live in those places find themselves being pushed out.

CAN "Co-Creation" workshops: Over the past two years, the Community Architects Network has been busy organizing a series of regional hands-on community design workshops, in several cities, with support from the German funding agency Misereor. The CAN groups work very hard to cast off the old idea that architects are the ones who plan and design things for others. In their work in their countries and in these regional workshops, they are trying to show a new way for architects to work with poor communities, with cities and with other stakeholders to "co-create" designs for houses, community layouts and civic amenities. Here are some notes from Tee (one of CAN's regional coordinators) about two of CAN's recent "co-creation" workshops:

1. Regional CAN workshop in Jhenaidah, Bangladesh (June 2019) Seven days of working on the ground with poor communities, civic groups, local professionals and government officers in Jhenaidah to co-create designs for three civic projects:



the rehabilitation of a historic British jail for public use, the design of a riverside promenade and a project to create pedestrian green spaces along a major road. These three projects were used to unlock people's energy and build a shared vision for a better and more participatory city. This workshop was jointly facilitated by Co-Creation Architects, POCCA and CAN, with support from the Jhenaidah Municipality and the Deputy Commissioner. After the workshop, Jhenaidah's mayor committed to implementing the roadside improvement project, which included improvements to pedestrian spaces, planting native trees along the road, organizing local shops and kiosks along the road, creating resting areas for children and the elderly, and constructing clean and safe public toilets for women. The commissioner and mayor also agreed to establish an inclusive and citywide platform for Jhenaidah's citizens (including residents of informal settlements) to share ideas and discuss more development plans for making the city better for everyone. Here is a link to a lively video film which documents the workshop in Jhenaidah:

<https://m.facebook.com/2036323026479852/videos/426189268098047/?refsrc=https%3A%2F%2Fm.facebook.com%2F2036323026479852%2Fposts%2F2306715376107281%2F&rdi>



2. Regional CAN workshop in Yangon, Myanmar (November 2019) This workshop was organized specifically to set guidelines for implementing community-led housing projects on land that is being given free by the government in several locations around Yangon. The project targets about 60,000 poor families in Yangon, and comes after the women's savings groups and their NGO partner in Yangon, Women for the World, have developed 11 very low-cost housing projects. On the strength of those 11 projects, they have managed to convince the government to give free land and allow people to develop their own housing on it, instead of building it for them. South Dagon Township is the one of the city's six townships that is ready to work on this housing policy. The women's saving groups, the local authority of South Dagon Township, Women for the World and CAN worked together during the workshop to formulate guidelines for housing, settlement upgrading and relocation, and explored community-based financial mechanisms that could help in the development of sustainable low-cost housing. The workshop helped build a better collaboration between communities, government and architects in design and planning for the city.



Most of CAN's publications and news can be downloaded from the CAN website and / or facebook page:

- www.communityarchitectsnetwork.info
- <https://www.facebook.com/CANCommunity-Architects-Network>

For more information or to get involved in the network, please contact either of CAN's regional coordinators:

- Chawanad Luansang ("Nad") at chawanad@hotmail.com
- Supawut Boonmahathanakorn ("Tee") at supawut77@gmail.com

ACHR GOES TO APUF-7 IN PENANG in OCTOBER 2019



Since 1993, the Asia-Pacific Urban Forums (APUF) have gathered urban stakeholders, policymakers from local and national governments, finance institutions, NGOs, grassroots groups and private sector actors to discuss and promote innovative solutions to the region's urban development problems. ACHR has taken active part in organizing several of these regional forums, and Somsook sat on the steering committee for the 7th one, which was held in Penang, jointly organized by UN-Habitat, UN-ESCAP and the Government of Malaysia. APUF-7 provided a platform to discuss how well we're doing in implementing the New Urban Agenda and various other global and regional agendas. The Asia Pacific Urban Forums used to be modest events, but they get bigger every time, and are starting to look more like adolescent versions of the World Urban Forums, with thousands of participants, cavernous exhibition halls, mega schmoozing and deal-cutting, and days of tightly-scheduled networking events, "deep dive" sessions and plenaries - as well as

an annoying new custom of not printing any schedule, so those without smart phones stagger around like lost molecules.

Why make a splash at APUF-7? Since this was a very big event for Asia, and key policy stakeholders would be there, we felt it was important to help bring some balance to an agenda which might easily tilt towards conventional top-down urban issues and practices and to bring in the voices and experiences of the urban poor, who urgently want change and are already making change, and make their work and their ideas more visible by letting them speak for themselves. By bringing in the voices and experiences from grassroots urban poor organizations in Asia, ACHR hoped to change the APUF-7 meeting's tone - not by grumbling about problems, but by using the forum's various sessions as an opportunity for this group to speak for themselves, and show how they are already being part of the city development process in a variety of proactive ways.

With funding patched together from SEI, urbaMonde and DPU, ACHR was able to bring a team of about 60 people, including community leaders, professionals and government officers from Indonesia, Nepal, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Switzerland, Canada, Uruguay and UK. With friends from partner grassroots networks (SDI, Huairou Commission and WIEGO), we made a substantial grassroots presence at APUF-7, and took part in a variety of dialogues, side events, round-tables and panel discussions on issues of collective housing, housing finance, urban inequality, partnership, waste management and disaster recovery. A few highlights:

GRASSROOTS ASSEMBLY: The Grassroots Assembly on October 14 gave people from four participating networks (ACHR, SDI, Huairou Commission and WIEGO) and others a chance to meet each other, hear what everyone's doing and discuss in greater detail some of the key issues they face in their lives and work. The assembly included breakout sessions on land and housing, community finance, grassroots community resilience in disasters and climate change, community participation in city management and planning, women's leadership and access to economic opportunities in cities. *An edited transcript of the lively discussion that took place during the grassroots community resilience breakout session can be downloaded from the ACHR website:* <http://achr.net/download.php?ic=4>

COLLECTIVE HOUSING SESSION: ACHR and urbaMonde jointly organized a side event on October 15 called "Collective housing: building active people and engaged communities," and at this session, ACHR's new project to promote collective housing in the Asia region was announced. *(This lively session is described in the "collective housing" story above, and a full transcript of the discussion can be downloaded from the ACHR website)* http://achr.net/upload/downloads/file_12122019141022.pdf

PATHWAYS TO URBAN EQUALITY SESSION: On October 17, ACHR and research teams in four Asian cities (Yangon, Danang, Nakhon Sawan and Jogjakarta) presented the work they're doing as part of a global study which explores the issue of rising inequality and looks at the innovative ways communities and their networks are countering those forces, cultivating partnerships, addressing their housing and poverty problems and making their cities more equal in the process. The Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW) study is being overseen by the Development Planning Unit at the University College of London, in UK.

OTHER EVENTS: Many of the grassroots community leaders and their supporters in our group were invited to take part in other sessions during the APUF-7 event, including high-level roundtables, side events on disaster risk reduction and recovery, "deep dives" on urban resilience and innovative financial mechanisms, inclusive cities and other topics. In the closing plenary's "Declare your actions" session, Ruby Papeleras, from the Philippines Homeless People's Federation, gave a rousing call to arms on behalf of the urban poor in Asia, to let people lead the change.

EXHIBITION: ACHR booked a double-size booth in the exhibition hall, just around the corner from the CODI booth. We lined the booth and some freestanding kiosks (made by Ploy and her team of community architects from colorful PVC pipes and clothespins), with posters which showcased many of the collective housing and settlement upgrading projects communities around Asia have implemented. The ACHR booth served as our headquarters for meetings, impromptu dialogues, lunch-breaks and for distributing all the brochures, newsletters, flyers and DVDs we brought with us (which mostly disappeared by the first day!).



NEW PROJECT to BOOST the CITYWIDE HOUSING STRATEGY in 5 CITIES

Some cheering news from the ACHR secretariat in Bangkok: we have just gotten word from our friends at the SELAVIP Foundation in Brussels that our regional "5 Model Cities" project has been approved. The two-year project will allow ACHR to support a process of citywide, people-driven and partnership-based housing in five cities. These cities will become models and learning centers for the region, to show the various aspects of our citywide process with much greater strength and consolidation - and more tools - than in our ACCA Program cities. A couple of paragraphs from the proposal:

The "5 Model Cities" project will build a comprehensive, citywide and ongoing system for solving the land and housing problems of all the urban poor settlements in five model cities, in five poorer Asian countries, between 2020 and 2022. The project will demonstrate concretely how the implementation of community-driven housing and infrastructure upgrading projects can bring about substantial structural and relational changes in those cities. The project draws on the ACHR network's long working experience in Asian countries and its substantial knowledge about how to craft housing interventions which solve immediate housing problems at the same time they address the larger structural causes of those problems, by strengthening the involvement of poor communities and building collaborative mechanisms which can continue solving problems of poverty and housing after the intervention ends.



Instead of following the conventional project-based approach, the 10 housing projects and 50 much-needed infrastructure improvement initiatives implemented in this project, in five cities, will be part of a larger set of activities which will create new opportunities for urban poor communities, local authorities and other stakeholders in those cities to work together, build their common understanding of the problems and solve *all of them*. Instead of treating only the *symptoms* of poverty and inequity in cities, the *5 Model Cities* project will treat the *causes* at the same time. The project will link closely with other key international and regional development agencies.

The regional process of finalizing the criteria for selecting the cities is now underway. It has been agreed with the donor that the five cities will be chosen from seven of the poorer Asian countries that have serious problems of urban poor housing, but are also searching for solutions to their serious problems of housing the poor: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Philippines. Groups in those seven countries are now beginning the process of determining which cities to propose. Proposals will be due in mid-January, and at the end of January, we'll organize a small regional meeting to jointly review the proposals and select the five project cities. In February, the five cities will develop their citywide plans, and in March, the activities will begin in earnest. For each city, the project provides funds to partly support two housing projects, at least ten small common infrastructure upgrading projects, a citywide survey and mapping of settlements and possible land, and other citywide processes like partnership building, meetings, workshops, training and local documentation.

For more information on the "5 Model Cities" project, please contact ACHR.

COLLECTIVE HOUSING in ASIA with URBAMONDE



Another exciting new project and new collaboration is taking off in Asia, which will allow us to both study and promote collective, community-driven housing, in all its variations, across Asia. The Swiss-based NGO urbaMonde advocates for community-driven and collective housing models in Switzerland, in Europe and around the world. urbaMonde has been working with key groups and networks in Europe, Latin America, Africa and North America to support the creation of a global collective and cooperative housing movement. Part of this work includes supporting the documentation of collective housing projects around the world and the development of a website "platform" which will make information about all those housing projects accessible to everyone online. For the past several years, ACHR has been working with urbaMonde to develop a three-year project to study the collective housing models here and bring Asia into this global collective housing movement.

It's taken quite a while, but the project has finally been approved (with funding from an unusual source: the city of Geneva!) and was officially launched in our regional meeting on collective housing that took place in Bangkok, in October 2019.

As part of the new project, which will be implemented collaboratively by ACHR groups around the region, teams in each country are being invited to survey and map the collective and community-driven housing projects and models which already exist in their

countries, and to document some of the striking collective housing projects in more detail. The project also offers funds to support training workshops, learning exchanges and meetings, to boost the collective housing movement in each country and in the region as a whole. Community-driven and collective housing has been at the core of ACHR's work for thirty years, and we all felt that building this global collective housing movement was something we'd like to support and take part in. The new project is both important and timely, since individualized and market-driven housing models are overwhelming everything and making housing ever less accessible, less affordable and less human.

Regional collective housing meeting in Bangkok October 9-11, 2019: The new collective housing project was launched in Bangkok, in October, when ACHR and urbaMonde organized a 3-day regional meeting to review the collective housing models and projects around Asia and to set our plans together for implementing the 3-year project. The first two days of the meeting were hosted by CODI, with field visits to two collective Baan Mankong projects on the first day and a gala launch of the World Habitat Day in Thailand on the second. The third day of the meeting, at the hotel, was given to setting plans to prepare the housing project case-studies, the national surveys of collective housing, and the national process to promote collective housing locally. About 70 people joined the meeting, with mixed teams of community leaders, NGO partners, architects, academics and some local government officers from 15 countries. A detailed report from the Bangkok meeting has been prepared and can be downloaded from the ACHR website at this link: http://achr.net/upload/downloads/file_19122019140138.pdf



Collective housing seminar at APUF-7 in Penang on October 14: Right after the Bangkok meeting, most of the group got on the plane and flew down to Penang for the seventh Asia Pacific Urban Forum (October 12-17, 2019). During the APUF-7 meeting, on October 15, ACHR and urbaMonde jointly organized a side event on Collective Housing in Asia, which drew a crowd of about 80 people. In this lively session, our grassroots community groups described their community-driven initiatives which show new ways for urban poor communities to develop permanent housing solutions, in which the projects are planned, built, financed and owned collectively, in a variety of ways. The session emphasized the importance of making housing and owning land together, as the best way to ensure that even the poorest can be included, and to make sure that housing will not be invaded by the market forces which so often push poor people out. A full, illustrated transcript of that session can be downloaded from the ACHR website at this link: http://achr.net/upload/downloads/file_12122019141022.pdf



For more information about the ACHR-urbaMonde project, please contact ACHR.

KNOW RESEARCH PROJECT UPDATE



The Development Planning Unit (DPU) of the University College of London has been conducting a four-year global research program which is looking into the new directions around the world in housing, inequality and urban development. The program is called Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW), and it is being funded by the Economic and Social Research Council under the Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF). Part of the KNOW Program involves conducting deeper research studies in a set of eight cities across Africa, Latin

America and Asia, in which the researchers and the local groups all study and *co-learn* together.

Over the past couple of years, ACHR has been working with the KNOW program. Initially, the DPU's plans included only two cities in Asia - one in India and one in Sri Lanka. But later on, after some discussion, the Asia part of the study was reconsidered and broadened, to allow more cities to be studied, more groups to take part and more knowledge to be generated in the region from those particular cities. Finally it was agreed that in Asia, ACHR would facilitate a comparative research study of four cities: Da Nang (Vietnam), Jogjakarta (Indonesia), Nakhon Sawan (Thailand) and Yangon (Myanmar).

The first workshop to kick off this regional process took place in January 2019, in Nakhon Sawan. And since then, there have been all sorts of meetings, workshops, seminars, draft reports and a veritable cyclone of email correspondence, involving so many partners in far-flung corners of the globe. More recently, teams from the DPU, ACHR and the four participating Asian cities (which included scholars, architects and community networks) all converged on Penang, in October 2019, for the 7th Asia Pacific Urban Forum (APUF-7), where the KNOW team from Jogjakarta organized a networking event called *"Poor communities shaping pathways to urban equality."* Detailed presentations of the research in each city were presented and discussed at this session.



1. **Da Nang:** The KNOW process in Da Nang, which is one of Vietnam's largest, glitziest and fastest-growing cities, includes a study of the traditional fishing communities whose communities are being swept away and livelihoods are being destroyed by the city's rapid urbanization, leading to increasing inequality.
2. **Jogjakarta:** The ARKOM Jogja network of community architects are working with local scholars to map informal settlements in this culturally rich and very old city and are using the KNOW study to examine the ways poor communities are organizing themselves and using their projects to upgrade their housing and living conditions to negotiate a more secure and more equal place in their city.
3. **Nakhon Sawan:** A long history of close collaboration between the urban community network, the mayor, the city government, CODI and other stakeholders has made for a lively process of resolving housing problems at citywide scale, and made Nakhon Sawan example of how a community-led housing process can bring balance and greater equality in a city.
4. **Yangon:** Myanmar has just emerged from decades of isolation and arrested development, and its capital city Yangon is now Asia's newest investment targets for those looking to make a killing on the cheap labor and inexpensive land available there. The city is full of squatters, but a network of poor women's savings groups and their NGO partner, Women for the World, have managed to make 11 self-help housing projects during this difficult transitional period, and have used that achievement to negotiate free land from the government to scale up their work. This transformation is at the heart of the KNOW study here.



For more information about the KNOW project, please contact Brenda at ACHR.

ACHR - IIED COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY STUDY CONTINUES



One striking revelation from ACHR's people-driven poverty line study a few years back was how important food was in the way community people defined poverty - the quality, quantity, affordability and availability of the food they eat. Many community groups observed that the poorer a family is, the more of their income they'll spend on nourishing themselves. Some of the poorest families, they found, spend more than half their earnings on food, and that nourishment is often inadequate. In the big words of the global development world, those poor households are experiencing **food insecurity**. And they are not alone. Some 800 million people in the world now (one out of every eight humans) aren't getting enough to eat, despite the fact that there is more than enough food being produced in the world to feed everyone.



Food Security is a serious global development topic now, but it is mostly very high-level professionals and academics who study it, explain it, and make recommendations about how to deal with it. What is missing from that discussion is the voice of poor people themselves. How do they define food security? And how do they understand the local food supply and distribution systems which allow them to eat? What things in their communities, cities and countries make it easier for them to eat well, or make it more difficult? And what can they do, as individual communities and as larger networks of communities, can they do to eat better?

These questions were part of an ACHR study that was conducted in Cambodia and Nepal, between 2017 and 2019. In Nepal, the study was carried out by the national network of women's savings cooperatives and their NGO partner Lumanti, and in Cambodia by the Community Savings Network and their NGO partner the Community Development Foundation (CDF), with assistance from ACHR, IIED and the urban poor community networks in Thailand. Like our

earlier studies on Poverty Lines (2014) and Community Finance (2017), the main researchers in the food study were community people themselves - and mostly women. The idea was to bring the voices and understanding of the urban poor (the *real experts* on how to feed their families with very little money!) into the larger discussion about food security, and give them an opportunity to analyze in detail their own strategies and systems for providing food to their families and communities.

The food study is now finished. Towards the end, we were able to use the remaining budget to partly finance some learning exchange trips and some experimental "action research" projects in the two countries, where communities that had taken part in the study developed projects to improve their access to safe, healthy vegetables, planting rooftop-gardens, "condo" style vegetable gardens in pots and on shelves in tight spaces, and borrowing land near their settlements to cultivate vegetables. An academic-style article which describes the food study was published in the October 2019 issue of IIED's journal *Environment & Urbanization*, and can be read on the ACHR website: http://achr.net/upload/downloads/file_08112019163535.pdf



Now, our partners Cecilia and Alex at IIED have managed to finagle a one-year extension to the food study, with additional budget to pay for more meetings, more "action research" food-production projects, and the production of a newsletter-style report on the study, with translations into Khmer and Nepali. The extension also gives us an opportunity to expand the process and link with groups in Bangladesh and Indonesia who are interested in picking up some ideas from the study and bringing the food security issue into their work with poor communities in Dhaka, Solo, Jogjakarta and Surabaya.

For more on the ACHR-IIED food security study, please contact Tom at ACHR.

CDFs in VIETNAM ARE STILL ALIVE AND RUNNING

Since 2000, ACHR has been working with groups in several cities in Vietnam to promote community savings and link those savings groups together with city-based community development funds (CDFs). The idea of these CDFs was to strengthen linkages between the scattered savings groups in each city and to boost their income-generation and community upgrading activities by providing access to some external capital. The CDFs started off on a small scale, in five cities, then expanded to eight cities. In 2001, the CDFs formed a national network.

In 2007, ACHR and the CDF network forged an important new partnership with the Associated Cities of Vietnam (ACVN), a national union of 103 towns and cities, which is in a strategic position to facilitate the sharing of ideas between cities and promoting community savings and community-driven upgrading as key aspects of its work in its member cities. ACVN began helping to coordinate the CDF network, in close collaboration with the Women's Union and local authorities, and the CDF network grew. During the ACCA Program (2009-2014), \$800,000 of ACCA funds were invested in Vietnam, and most of those funds were channeled through existing or newly-established CDFs. During the ACCA program period, the CDF network in Vietnam expanded to 16 cities. In many cities, those CDFs financed the first one or two community housing projects, and also gave small loans to communities to make improvements to their common infrastructure, like paved roads, drains and water supply.



Then in 2016, a year after the ACCA program had ended, the ACVN leadership changed, and the national process of promoting CDFs and supporting exchange learning between the cities in the CDF network tapered off. Groups in those 16 cities were left more or less on their own, and some continued their activities, according to the energy and collaborations in each city. In September 2019, a meeting in Quy Nhon was jointly organized by ACHR and ACVN to bring together representatives from the CDFs in several of the cities to see what had been happening and talk about how to continue. The meeting followed up on a study that had been commissioned by ACVN to assess the situation of the CDFs in the 16 cities.

The study brought some good news: Eight of the 16 CDFs were still functioning and were quite active. They hadn't been giving many housing loans (housing is still quite complicated and difficult in Vietnam's top-down system), but they had been giving a lot of loans for income generation and for small infrastructure improvement projects. So much so that in several of the cities, the lending capital in the CDFs had revolved many times and grown substantially. The CDF in Vinh, for example, has given loans to communities to support 106 infrastructure projects (directly benefiting 2,084 families), and the fund's original capital of \$60,000 has revolved so many times as to give loans totaling \$466,400. The study also showed that community savings activities were still going strong in seven of the cities, with good support from the local Women Unions. In the eight active cities, 36,324 members, in 1,153 savings groups, had saved a total of US\$ 5.1 million - *which is not peanuts!*

What next? Since the September 2019 meeting, ACHR and ACVN have continued to explore possible ways to collaborate in supporting the community-driven savings and CDF processes in Vietnam. In October, a team from ACVN and some of the CDF cities was invited to join ACHR's regional meeting on Collective Housing in Bangkok. This new regional collective housing project may offer another opportunity for Vietnam to become active in the regional network again, and for ACVN to put community-driven and collective housing on its national advocacy agenda in Vietnam.

UCLG GLOBAL REPORT on HOUSING POLICIES IS NOW OUT

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is a worldwide network of some 1,000 cities and 175 local and regional governments, across 95 countries, which advocates for democratic local self-government and represents the voice of local governments on many fronts. Every three years, UCLG produces an important global report which focuses on a specific aspect of local governance. Their newest report looks at housing policies, practices and the role of local governments in providing housing to all. When the UCLG invited ACHR to prepare the Asia contribution to this global housing policy report last year, we saw an opportunity to link with this active global coalition of local governments and to bring voices from the region - and from the ground - into this important housing report. But instead of contracting someone to research and write the paper alone, we decided to use the modest \$20,000 budget from UCLG to turn the project into an opportunity for sharing, collaboration and learning across the region.

Some key ACHR groups who work on housing issues were then invited to write ten-page reports which summarize the urban housing issues, trends, striking innovations and promising programs in their countries. Authors of these country reports were Bingqin Li (China), Suhailey Farzana and Khondaker Hasibul Kabir (Bangladesh), Keya Kunte (India), Johan Silas (Indonesia), Mitsuhiro Hosaka (Japan), Seong-Kyu Ha (Korea), Suraya Ishmail (Malaysia), Lajana Manandar (Nepal), Arif Hasan and Hamza Arif (Pakistan), Emma Porio and Anna Marie Karaos and Gerald Nicolas (Philippines), Ranjith Samarasinghe (Sri Lanka), Nausica Castanas and Supreeya Wungpatcharapon and Kasama Yamtree (Thailand) and Tran Minh Chau (Vietnam).



After these 13 country reports came in, another collaborative team was set up to draft the Asia-wide report (including Brenda Perez-Castro in Yangon, Hamza Arif in Karachi and Somsook and Tom in Bangkok), drawing on both the country reports and ACHR's document archive, and with advisory inputs from senior friends in the ACHR coalition. Because the report was produced by a coalition of doers who work on the ground, and not by academics or consultants, the report's core material described pragmatic housing strategies and programs, in many different contexts, that convey strongly the message that solving Asia's enormous housing problems *is possible*. After submitting our Asia regional report to UCLG in October 2018, our good friend David Satterthwaite at IIED took over the huge task of putting together all the regional reports into a global report, which David and the UCLG team have now finished.

Inviting comments on the draft global report: Andrea Ciambra at the UCLG office in Barcelona has asked us to circulate the draft report among our ACHR network and invite people to read it and send their comments or revisions to ACHR. Andrea cautions, though, that the draft report is still "a work in progress" and still has to be narrowed down a bit before being officially published. Follow the link below to download a PDF version of the draft global report. Please do read it, if you have time, and send us your comments. https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/Rethinking_HP.pdf

BAD TIMES for STREET VENDORS in ASIA

It's been a bad couple of years for street vendors in Asian cities, where hygiene, congestion and the rule of law are being used by municipal and national governments as reasons to crack down on vendors and evict informal sellers from the streets and public spaces where they sell their food and goods. A few cities like Los Angeles and Portland have legalized street vending, and UN declarations about "the right to the city" are solemnized in just about every international development forum. But for the most part, the top-down war on the poor and their informal employment systems continues to charge full steam ahead. India is the rare case of a country with a quite progressive national street vending act which requires that rules and local governance structures be created which include vendors and legitimize their right to vend. But the act continues to be flouted by cities like Delhi, Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Chandigarh, where tens of thousands of street vendors have been evicted in the last year alone.

Saddar Market evictions in Karachi: In November 2018, on orders from the Supreme Court, over 1,400 shops were demolished and 4,000 hawkers were evicted from the land around the historic Saddar Market in Karachi. Many of those shopkeepers and hawkers had been there for more than half a century, running businesses that their fathers had



established. As Arif Hasan wrote after the eviction, "The support system to these services is almost twice as large as the businesses themselves, so one can easily say that over 10,000 families lost their livelihoods in a two- to three-day period." No alternative plans for their relocation in or outside Saddar were prepared. One of the reasons given for the demolitions was the protection of heritage. But as Arif continues, "Heritage is not simply a dead colonial stone building. It is a living thing, enjoyment and a form of participation for people from all walks of life, an expression of our diversity, which planners and politicians, if they have consciousness and sensitivity, can integrate into their plans as part of a larger city culture." A year later, many of the hawkers have returned, but not the small shops. Arif and Younus and their colleagues at the Urban Resource Center (URC) in Karachi continue to work against this kind of inhumane and anti-poor stuff, but it's a tough call, when the same thing is happening, for the same bogus reasons, all over the world. Here's a link to Arif's deeply-felt response to the Saddar evictions, *The Saddar Massacre*, which was published in Dawn Newspaper on November 19, 2018: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1446517>

Street vendor evictions continue in Bangkok: The sanitizing and gentrifying of city streets continues in Bangkok as well. Before the 2014 military coup in Thailand, Bangkok was seen as a city which had found a progressive balance which allowed street vendors to flourish, and the city to become an international tourist destination for its fabulous street food and street life. A couple of Bangkok's street food vendors have even been given stars in the Michelin Guide! But since the coup, the military-led Bangkok Metropolitan Administration has systematically evicted vendors under the motto "Return the sidewalks to pedestrians." Tens of thousands of street vendors, from some 500 locations. There has been vigorous condemnation of these vendor evictions - by the vendors themselves, by the media, by food lovers and by tourism operators who see their customers dwindling. But the military government is resolute in its project to clear the city's streets, and hundreds more vending areas are on the list "to be addressed." As a popular food blogger, Chawadee Nualkhair, put it, "Street vending occupies an important place in Thai culture and history, helping to build community bonds, enabling women to work, innovating in Thai cuisine and enriching families with no opportunities otherwise. Shepherding them into 'centers' or eradicating them completely leaves a huge hole in the city's ecosystem." A team from the Bangkok Street Vendors Network and their supporters from Home-Net and WIEGO joined our grassroots group at the APUF-7 meeting in Penang and were able to tell their stories of eviction and impoverishment in their own words, in several forums.



Street vendor evictions in Manila: When we were all gathered at the APUF-7 meeting in Penang, Ruby and Sonia from the Homeless People's Federation in the Philippines told us about a recent drive to evict street vendors from public spaces in cities all over the country. We've since learned a little more about what may be Asia's largest-scale and most brutal of all vendor evictions. According to a 2013 report by the International Labor Organization (ILO), the informal economy, including vendors, makes up a whopping 72.5 percent of employment in the Philippines. In June 2019, Manila's newly-elected mayor, Francisco Moreno, set to work fulfilling an election promise to solve congestion problems by clearing the city's streets of vendors. The mayor made personal appearances at these evictions, inviting the press to showcase his administration's strong policy enforcement. Manila began to look like a changed city, with so much of its informal economic activity erased. Sadly, the brutal vendor evictions were so popular that the country's president, Rodrigo Duterte, ordered the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) to do the same thing in cities around the country. A DILG circular issued in July 2019 directed all city governments nationwide to clear their public roads of vendors within two months. 1,148 cities complied, and the DILG followed up by promising that the department would do quarterly assessments to make sure cities are complying with the circular and punish cities that don't. Nobody seems to know how many vendors have lost their livelihood and plunged deeper into poverty as a result of these evictions, but it must be in the hundreds of thousands.



SOME CHANGES AT THE ACHR SECRETARIAT in BANGKOK

After thirty years of steering ACHR's regional work, from the secretariat in Bangkok, Somsook has decided to step back from active management and let a younger and more energetic team take over. After a lot of internal discussions, it's been agreed that Nad, Tee, Ploy, Muang and the regional Community Architects Network will take over the more active work of facilitating the ACHR process in Asia. In the process, the hope is that ACHR's regional work can be brought into closer alignment with the work of CAN. ACHR now has some exciting new regional projects (including the urbaMonde-supported collective housing project and the Selavip-supported "5 Model Cities" project), and so it's a good time to allow this group of young people to step in as the core ACHR management team. Somsook will not be going away, however, and is quick to dismiss any use of the word *retirement*. She will continue to advise and assist ACHR's regional work, and will also continue to assist CODI's national Baan Mankong housing program here in Thailand. And she will continue to be ready to help out on the regional and international fronts, in whatever ways she can, whenever such help is needed.