

ACHR - SELAVIP "DECENT POOR" FUND LAUNCHED in ASIA

The Selavip Foundation has recently approved a grant of US\$ 90,000 to ACHR, to create a special joint program to assist some of Asia's poorest community members and help make sure they can take part in the housing and upgrading projects being implemented by communities themselves, with support from the ACCA Program. The Selavip funds have been topped up with another US\$ 10,000 from ACCA to create a \$100,000 regional funding source, which we are calling "*The Decent Poor Program.*"

The idea came from Thailand : The idea (*and the name!*) for this new regional program came from an experiment in Thailand last year, which was also funded by a \$60,000 grant from Selavip. In that program, the Thai community networks developed their own criteria and selected the beneficiaries. That new project was a tool to strengthen the awareness of the needs of the community's poorest members, and to ensure that they are as much a part of the secure housing process as those with more income. Many times in Thailand, when a community housing project is developed and the community organizes as a group and takes a loan to build new houses, the very poor get left out because they cannot afford to repay the loans. This is not the objective of our projects! Everybody has to be on board - this is the key idea. And the groups implementing the projects have to think hard about how to include everybody - even the super-poor! So the \$600 per family grant, which the Selavip project provided, could make a bridge between the poorest and the system. The project worked out very well, and the communities were very creative in how they used this small grant to help ensure the poorest can be part of the upgrading projects, and get decent houses also. Some groups used the \$600 subsidy to build a house collectively for a poor family on part of the community land, or to pay off a family's debts. Because this small fund could only support 120 households around the county - just a tiny fraction of those in need! - these few families who did get the support became examples of how communities and community networks can think more clearly about their poorest members and how to ensure they can be included in the process.



Now the "Decent Poor" program goes regional : In a similar way, this new regional-level Decent Poor Fund will be able to subsidize only a small number of households (about 200 households, in 9 countries, at US\$ 500 per household, maximum 20 households per country), but the idea of the program is to use this small money *strategically*, to get the whole national community movement in all these countries to look at the poorest people as the subject, and to see how these small funds can bring this new, inclusive way of planning-to-include-everyone into the process. The identification and selection of the grant recipients will be carried out by the community organizations, who will then propose candidates for selection by the community network or the city joint committee. The proposed grant candidates from each city should then obtain final approval at the national level. The national committee should oversee and manage the program, with clear strategic objectives for change in community awareness, and in city and national policies regarding housing for poorest of the poor. After consideration by the national committee, the proposal should finally be submitted to the ACCA Committee for final approval.



This is a strategic program, a challenge to the poor communities we work with. It's not a program to solve the problem of poverty, which is far too great for this tiny intervention! The objective of the program is not to simply identify the poorest and give them a little welfare hand-out, but to make a clearer awareness among the communities and among all the projects about the need to make room for the poorest, and find a way that nobody is excluded. The most important part of this is the process by which the community networks discuss this issue, survey and make themselves aware who are the poorest, and discuss and think of the solution together. So it's just like a kind of training, or boosting communities' awareness of how they have to regard the very poorest as essential parts of the community, family members, through the real working process.

EVERYONE IN THE BOAT! This should be one key principal for any housing project, anywhere in Asia, with ACCA or otherwise, to make sure that *everyone is included!*

(A brief information sheet on the Decent Poor Program can be found in the appendices at the end of the report on the ACCA Committee Meeting in Bangkok, January 26, 2011, which can be downloaded from the ACHR website)