



HOUSING BY PEOPLE IN ASIA



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Asian Grassroots Women form Shelter Network

GRASSROOTS WOMEN from 10 different countries in Asia met for the first "Asian Women's Dialogue" in Bombay.

A "Grassroots Women Network in Asia" was formed as a result of the Dialogue.

Women from India, Thailand, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Philippines attended the dialogue which was organised by the Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) and Mahila Milan.

The dialogue discussed various issues. Below are reports of the discussions:

HOUSING EVICTIONS AND DEMOLITIONS

Women are often at the forefront in the fight against housing evictions and have to bear the brunt of such brutalities. They are often physically manhandled by thugs hired by governments as could be seen in evictions in Seoul.

The women not only protect the men from police harassment but also deal more tactfully against violence in crisis situations.

Various strategies were adopted against evictions by women. They include organising rallies, demonstrations, making representations and submitting memorandums to the authorities, proposing alternative plans, building community support and other support networks in the neighbourhood like the creation of a federation of urban poor groups at the city level.

Hence housing demolitions are no



Grassroots women meet in Bombay to discuss common problems on women and shelter.

QUOTES

"Women have to face more problems than men in everything, that is why our role in everything is so important." — *Supra-nee* (Thailand)

"We have to understand the power of women. Women as a woman, a sister and a mother. So we have 3 powers together." — *Jenita*

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more the issue of a single settlement but becomes a rallying point for all the urban poor in the city.

WHY WOMEN?

The important role of women as leaders and partners in community building often goes unrecognised.

Women's participation is most evident in crisis situations. Large members of women always show up in struggles against evictions, in rallies or demonstrations and at public meetings. Although they are recognised as a force quantitatively, they are however not seen as leaders or partners in development. The potential, quality and strength of women as leaders is not as yet fostered.

THE NETWORK

From the dialogue, it was found that women in Asia shared similar problems but knew little about or shared little with each other.

The same legal, land, shelter and eviction problems are encountered in different Asian cities by women, but many women's groups have not been able to relate to each other to create a common struggle against these problems.

It was felt that networking based on issues is a good method as communities and people are often brought together by a common understanding of problems and issues. It was also felt that slum and pavement dwellers and squatters come together more readily than political groups or NGOs.

Networks of such are already existing in some cities like Bombay, Bangkok and Seoul to fight against evictions and other shelter problems, but not across the Asian region.

Some specific suggestions and plans for the network include:

- O To generate data about poor women from studies by urban poor.
- O To disseminate information about the situations in different countries through publications and newsletters.
- O To support each other during emergencies and crises such as evictions through campaigns and with a "hot line".
- O To function as an international pressure group calling for more meaningful urban policies which give housing rights to the urban poor.
- O To promote training and education in order to strengthen women's awareness and women's organisations.
- O To establish federations of pavement and slums dwellers at the local, regional and international levels.

QUOTES

"Women are always in the forefront of any struggle. If men go to the front, there is a lot of fighting with the police, so the women go in front. Because of us women coming together, we have won many struggles, both on private and government lands." — Woman from Bangkok

"Women are particularly important to housing issues. Women love their homes more than men. They clean the home and look after the belongings." — Supranee (Thailand)

EDITORIAL

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this newsletter. This is our first attempt to bring to you news and work of various Asian people and groups which are trying to solve the massive housing problems in their respective countries.

Conventional housing approaches have failed to solve housing problems in the Third World. Millions are homeless. Most critically affected are the urban poor who have to live in miserable conditions and whose housing rights are denied by unjust laws and development policies, and by brutal housing demolitions and evictions.

This newsletter will document the work of grassroots Asians and groups who are struggling to find a place to live in often very oppressive societies. Most of them survive outside the law and are thus "illegal" because they are part of the informal system in which the majority of Third World people survive.

The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) attempts to bring together various grassroots people and groups in Asia in their common struggle for housing rights and housing solutions. And the Third World Network which comprises of concerned individuals and groups working on Third World development issues supports this important initiative.

We hope that this newsletter will forge links not only amongst the grassroots people and groups who are part of the movement for housing of the poor, but will also forge links and solidarity amongst other people's movements around the world in the fight for a just, ecological and humane world.

Please contact us if you want or have interesting information or news. If you need help for campaigns or other struggles please also contact us. We may also need your help in the future. For our contact address, please see the back page.

Editor

ASIAN URBAN POOR SPEAK UP

Urban poor people from nine Asian countries met here in Seoul to examine together what it means to have a home and a community, continue the struggle and demand our basic right to a place to live.

We learned that the housing situation of the urban poor is basically the same across the face of Asia. Rural people come to the cities by the millions because there is no future for them in the countryside. In the cities they are forced to settle illegally on government or private land because they cannot afford to pay the rents charged in available legal housing or purchase a house and lot of their own.

The migrants to the cities are poorly educated, unskilled, so the work they find pays very little. They work hard, but they can barely feed and clothe their families and send their children to school. Over all their days hangs the threat they will be evicted from their homes when governments or private landowners care to develop the land. Often their evictions are very brutal. They destroy not only homes but damage people, especially the young, for life.

Government policies, laws and programs favour the rich. Many countries have no realistic housing programs for their poor citizens. Governments do not know how to tell the poor what plans there are, and more seriously, do not listen to the people when they draw up the plans.

However, over time people have learned on their own how to solve their problems. The key to these solutions is forming strong community organisations that bring people together and give them an effective voice on the issues that affect their lives.

Governments must listen to the people. Permanent solutions to the housing problems of countries can only be had when poor people participate and initiate in the planning and implementation of projects. This requires governments to be truly democratic, or the voices of the people can't be heard.

We fear the situation is growing worse in Asia. As land becomes scarcer and more expensive there may be too much housing for the rich and none for the poor.

We see housing as more than "four walls and a roof". It is protection from the sun and rain, but it is more. A decent home and community, that is, a decent place to live, is a basic human right. Without such a home there is neither security or safety. Without such

The urban poor of 11 Asian countries gathered together in Seoul to share among themselves and express to the world what a 'place to live' means to them. Their expressions will give new meaning and impetus to the growing global awareness that the right to a place to live is not just a human right. It is an absolute precondition for the fulfilment of all other human rights.

Below we reproduce the final statement from "A place to live: Asian People's Dialogue", held in Seoul on June 14-20, 1989.

homes we are less than human. Housing should be near people's work, allow them to send their children to school, and contribute to the health of the whole family.

The home is especially important to women and she will do almost anything to protect it. Women in different countries have shown tremendous strength in acquiring and protecting their home and should therefore be involved in all matters relating to the home and community.

People from the different countries had varying ideas of what good housing looks like, but they are one in stressing that such homes are absolutely essential to building good families.

Because a home is so important we oppose all involuntary evictions, especially when the people are beaten and driven away like animals. If land is needed for the genuine needs of the whole city, then the people must be given alternative housing and time to prepare for the change.

Renters and sharers must be given the same rights as homeowners when development plans are being made.

Housing should be included in every country's constitution as a basic fundamental right for all women, men and children. The inclusion of this right in the constitution should be augmented by adequate policies, legislation and programs.

We find the Korean people are beautiful. We were impressed by their solidarity, hard work and courage. They



live under very oppressive conditions. They sing, dance and laugh. They were wonderful to us and it was largely because of them that we were able to communicate with one another though our languages and cultures are so different. They taught us that we are one people deep down. We all have the same feelings and feel the same pain. Communication is not difficult when we all have such feelings. We extend our support to the Korean people in their struggle for a better way of life. Fight on for democracy and the people!

We must remember the poor are the majorities in our countries. Governments must serve their needs first of all. We ask the Korean government, for example, to see how its insistence on economic growth at all costs has hurt the people for whom all the country's wealth exists. We strongly urge that the Korean government stop all forced evictions and give the vendors the freedom to make a decent living.

For the future we recommend that ACHR should strengthen solidarity among the urban poor of Asia, that it have a newsletter and have further meetings such as the dialogue we have just finished. Future action should also focus on education and lobbying of governments.

For ourselves, we pledge to work as hard as we can for better housing for all of Asia's people. We think the final report of this meeting should be sent to all the Asian governments.

Let us learn from one another!

Let us unite!

Let us struggle to achieve decent housing for all Asian people!

LAND INVASIONS

Where survival outside the law is the only solution for the poor

TO BECOME LEGAL is no easy task for the poor.

A research group in Peru found out that it took 289 days to get a licence for a small workshop and that cost 32 times the minimum salary earned by a worker.

To get a piece of land from the government would take more than seven years and 56 times the basic salary.

When the laws and bureaucracy do not serve the poor. The poor have no choice but to survive outside the law.

The law seems to keep poor people out of the formal system so that only the rich and organised sectors of society can become legal and get a legal hold of the resources, whether it is the right to land, housing or other forms of licences or rights.

The legal system also seems to benefit only a few and promote inefficiency and corruption.

In Lima alone, the informal sector gives 439,000 jobs, runs 83% of the markets, and 95% of the transport system. And more than half the population in Lima builds their houses informally.

This situation is not peculiar to Lima alone, but is found in most Third World cities.

Informal settlements acquire houses in a way that is reverse to the formal process. A vacant plot is seized, then the house is built and finally if possible the land and house are legalised.

Invasions are of two forms — the gradual, unorganised invasions or organised invasions.

This article will focus on how organised invasions are done in Peru.

The organised invasion of land is done by the people themselves or by syndicates who offer their expertise in exchange for political support or economic gains.

The group is formed and the site is chosen for its good location and its chances of a permanent occupation. 90% of land chosen is unoccupied and deserted government land.



The process of invasion is as follows:

1. The organisers get a critical number of families involved in order to minimise repression by the police.
2. They draw up plans for subdivision and distribution of land by engineers or students.
3. They determine the expenses and what payments are to be paid by each family.
4. They determine roles to be played in negotiations, planning the distribution and defense of the settlement.

Leaders are elected for each role.

5. Lawyers are sometimes hired to file petitions to possess the land and to get a compromise that the land is in writ of injunction.

6. They occupy the land at night and in days of national celebration to avoid swift government reactions.

7. The invaders hire trucks and get the necessary poles and mats to build temporary houses.

8. National flags are raised to show that they are not transgressors but are citizens who want land redistribution and social justice.

9. The leaders divide the land and children and women help to clean the land.

10. In a few hours the land is distributed and small huts are built.

11. During the first few days, pools are set up to cook food and nurseries to give mothers more freedom of action.

12. Some groups are armed with stones and poles for defense. Women and children form the first line of defence when police attacks.

13. The settlement is named after an important person like the president or his wife in order to minimise repression.

Obtaining the property rights

IN THE BEGINNING the basis of the right is the actual occupation of the land and the constant physical presence of the occupants.

There are 159 administrative steps before the legalisation of the land, which take an average of 20 years to be completed. Each step accomplished gives more stability and security to the occupants.

When it is clear that the government will not evict the occupants, the people begin to build permanent houses. The people invest more money in the houses when there is more security and less money with less security.

The value of a construction with legal title has about nine times the value of a construction without it.

The informal organisation

USUALLY the organisation of the settlement is democratic. They have a legislative body which is the general assembly and an executive branch constituted by the leaders elected in the general assembly.

One of the most important functions of the informal organisation is to negotiate with the authorities (land, infrastructure, etc). The leaders need to know the way of the bureaucracy and the politicians, to get information and invest time.

The organisation also deal with discipline and order. First in the invasion and the defense of the site. Second in the ordinary life, in case of emergency, people come together to capture and punish delinquents.

Besides the official leader there are also mother clubs, association of fathers, passageway organisations, etc.

The evolution of informal settlements in Peru

1. Illegality of the formal settlers

In the beginning of the century, the formal settlers began the illegal process by building against the existing laws through bribes, privileges of their class, political influence and other illegal methods.

No permissions were asked for, contracts were of dubious legality and infrastructures were not given.

2. Recognition through relocation.

From 1920 to 1950, gradual unorganised land invasions began. In 1932, the Rimac river floods destroyed large numbers of houses which were built informally.

The government which had ignored the informal settlements until that incident, gave to the flood victims, a place for the resettlement in Leticia.

3. Political recognition of the land invasions.

From 1940, informal settlers increased. Politicians began to have increasing interests in this sector for political support.

This new interest gave the informal settlers a better bargaining position with the government, against intervention by the police, for recognition of their occupation of the land, and for better services.

Politicians themselves began to organise invasions in 1945 in order to gather popular support. These settlements were not easily evicted by the police.

The informal housing sector grew from 15 in 100 houses in 1945, to 19 in 100 houses in 1948, to 28 in 100 houses in 1954 and to 41 in 100 in 1961.

4. Legal Recognition

In order to put some order in Lima, a law was made in 1961 in which existing informal settlements were recognised with some conditions and after which invasions were prohibited.

The invasions continued. The next government of President Belaunde began a large scale low cost housing program. But the informal housing sector grew.

5. The first massive confrontation with the government

The military government imposed a neighbourhood organisation on the informals to control their activities of informal trade and manufacture, and to prohibit the sale or rent of

informal houses.

From 1968 to 1970, the police evicted 79% of the new invasions. In April, 1971, tens of thousands of people invaded an area called Pampolina during an International Economic Meeting in Lima.

The police intervened, one leader was killed and many were wounded.

Bishop Bambaren supported the people. He was arrested. The church protested and the government fearing adverse public reaction, released him. The Minister was made to resign.

The people were relocated in the Villa El Salvador area and the project became a model project.

In 1975, for every 100 houses built in Lima, 62 were informal.

6. Associations and Cooperatives (1975 - 79)

The government made an agrarian reform which gave exceptions to areas which are destined for the growth of the city.

Landowners tried to incorporate their land into this area. The government gave a 5-year limit for urbanisation of lands. The landowners began to sell their land to informal associations and cooperatives in the early seventies.

7. Recognition of informal settlements

In 1979, the regularised informal settlements were recognised as ordinary districts of the city, without any restrictions.

8. Recognition of informal organisations

Informal organisations were recognised by the government and more titles were distributed to people during 1981-1983.

9. The government supported an invasion

In July 1984, 7,000 families invaded 640 hectares in Huaycan. This was organised by the municipality of Lima because the administrative processes were too slow even for the government.

10. Recognition of informal associations and cooperatives

In January 1985, laws were passed by which the informal housing cooperatives were made to give land titles to their members in 60 days. This in effect recognises the illegal sale of plots.

South Africans participate in "Asian People's Dialogue" in Bangkok

THE SOUTH AFRICAN group which was denied entry into Korea for the "Asian People's Dialogue" in Seoul, gathered in Bangkok for another People's Dialogue in Bangkok on 23 June to 2 July 1989.

Others who took part in the dialogue included pavement dwellers and people from SPARC, PROUD and YUVA from Bombay; UNNAYAN from Calcutta; and Orangi Pilot Project from Karachi besides the community groups from Bangkok.

The group was exposed to community work against evictions in Bangkok and shared experiences on their work and their housing situations. They also shared insights and strategies to empower the poor and homeless.

The participants were shocked at the inhuman brutalities of Apartheid and kept asking why the 80% of black people do not organise to topple the 20% of white rulers.

Political Struggle

The South African group strongly felt that their political struggle was the most important thrust in the struggle for housing rights of the poor, while the grass-roots participants from India and Bangkok gave more emphasis on an incremental and gradual approach to achieving housing rights. Examples of the gradual approach given included small items like housing certificate, ration cards and water problems to bigger issues like land and housing for the poor, and changing laws by proposing the Bill on Housing Rights in India and proposing a People's Slum Bill in Thailand.

Some important conclusions which emerged were:

- Rights do not mean anything if the people are excluded from the process in making these rights.

- The way the people can attain or demand these rights is by organising themselves. It is through solidarity and empowerment of the people that the rights of the people



Participants of the Asian People's Dialogue meet with Thailand's Prime Minister, when he visited Klongteoy.



The South African group performing a dance at the gathering.

can be achieved.

The South African delegates felt that they have learned much from the dialogue.

They saw that NGOs in Bangkok, despite differences in attitudes, methods or directions, can work together, communicate and help each other.

They felt the happenings and changes at the human level. Incremental and concrete improvements are happening and professional inputs are gathered helping to make this happen. This contrasted with

the South African situation where the struggle is more political and ideological.

They also felt the need to spread their experience found in Bangkok and plan to organise a South African People's Dialogue back home.

The South African situation is difficult and unique. Let us hope that this dialogue will create the solidarity and continued contact for the sharing and the struggle of housing rights of the poor in South Africa and around the world.

Statement from the South African group

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED delegates from South Africa and Namibia wish to express our sincere appreciation for the hospitality, concern, support and solidarity expressed by the following individuals, delegates, organisations and communities:

- Mr Ho Hei Wah Stephen and the staff of Soco — Hong Kong
- Ms Somsook Boonyabancha — Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
- Fr. Joe Majer and the dedicated staff of the Human Development Centre (Bangkok) including the teachers at all the schools.
- The delegates from Bombay (India) and Pakistan who shared with us valuable insights and strategies in empowering the poor and homeless.
- Last, but not least the enthusiastic and dedicated Thai community leaders, activists and their families who shared their experiences intimately with us. We also thank them for sharing their time and audio-visuals in an attempt to explain to us the strengths and weaknesses of their organisations and strategies striving to obtain a decent place for poor people to live in.

At present in our beautiful country South Africa we have a deeply divided and brutalised society. In Namibia, after many years of struggle and loss of many lives the Namibians, we finally are on the road to independence. The period after independence will be a time of jubilation and celebration. However given the realities and insecurities of Southern Africa, Namibia will still need support and solidarity in the period of reconstruction and readjustment after independence.

The "reform" process in our country has not lead to any fundamental change in the official government policies and lives of our people. Instead we have seen a renewal of the three year old state of emergency (Martial law), with its host of severe measures to curtail individuals, communities and organisations striving to build a non-radical, democratic and equitable society. Under the state of emergency numerous effective and non-violent community leaders and activists have been silenced, restricted, banned, harassed and intimidated (all of us in this delegation work under these threats of arrest, banning, harassment and even death). Nevertheless, driven by our faith in the Father almighty, the power of truth and justice, the solidarity expressed by you all and most importantly the will of our people to be free, we shall persevere and remain committed to empowering the poor to obtain secure

and decent housing and setting the downtrodden free.

The solidarity expressed by the people of Asia gives us renewed strength to persevere and remain steadfast in our struggle against our insensitive government and selfish land-owners. We hope that the networks and contacts created by our visit will enable the solidarity between the poor in South Africa and the poor in Asia to grow in strength. We must share learning experiences, promote on-going dialogue and give each other spiritual, emotional and material support whenever possible.

We appeal to our friends in Asia to do whatever is humanly and practically possible to exert pressure on our government to leave the state of emergency, release all political detainees, stop evictions and forced removals, unban the ANC and negotiate with legitimate and credible leaders to dismantle apartheid and find a solution to the crisis in our country.

Listed below are some ideas communities and groups in Asia could think about in exerting pressure on our government and expressing solidarity with the poor and oppressed in South Africa.

- Establish an ongoing dialogue between progressive Asian group/activities and South Africa's
 1. Messages of support to communities under threat of eviction or removal. Organisations in South Africa will communicate timely details concerning communities under threat of eviction or removal.
 2. Diplomatic letters of protest
 3. Economic pressure
 4. Sport
 5. Culture
 6. Exchange information on a regular basis
 7. Asia could print bumper stickers and T-shirts posters that highlight and support the struggle in South Africa. But these must circulate within Asia.

In conclusion, we would like to express our solidarity with all those communities in Asia facing evictions or other hardships.

Mr Protas Madlala, University of Natal
Mr Eric Apelgren, the Archdiocese of Durban
Mr Kleophas Katuuu, Social Unit - Katutura
Fr Enoch Shomang, Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre
Rev. Timothy M. Ncubi, Network for Homeless
Mr Bahle Sibisi, National Committee Against Removals
Mrs Sandra Dowling, Cape

Pavement Dwellers win case against Bombay Municipal Corporation

BOMBAY: The Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) was recently ordered by the courts to pay to the pavement dwellers Rs 10,090 (US\$531) as compensation for the belongings of the pavement dwellers which were unlawfully seized during a demolition.

The BMC and its officers were found guilty of contempt of court. They had refused to return the belongings of the pavement dwellers when they were issued court orders to do so. They had even denied that they had taken their belongings.

The demolition occurred in November, 1988, when no less than 40 huts were demolished. In the demolition, the meagre belongings of pavement dwellers were deliberately taken away.

Fortunately the women had the foresight to take photographs of their belongings being taken away. These photos were to later play an important part in the contempt proceedings.

The Bombay High Court also witnessed a unique and unprecedented scene of illiterate women pavement dwellers giving oral evidence and denouncing the officials of the BMC for their deception and cruelty.

The judge praised the hutment dwellers for their simple and straightforward evidence which was not shaken in cross examination.

The judgement also deprecated the total lack of procedure to safeguard property and the totally callous and inhuman manner in which the demolition took place.

For further information, contact MAHILA MILAN/c/o Municipal Dispensary, Meghraj Sethi Marg, Byculla, Bombay 400008 India

A PLACE TO LIVE

Address by **Cardinal Stephen Kim** of South Korea to delegates of *A Place To Live: Asian People's Dialogue* held in Seoul, Korea, June 14-20, 1989.

Every country in the world neglects the poor.
Many countries pretend you don't exist.
Some countries even persecute you.

Someone has said that the Urban Poor are Invisible People.
You build our big office buildings and apartment houses;
You clean our streets, cook our food, wash our clothes;
You drive our buses, trains, subways, private cars;
You carry to stores and markets, sometimes on your backs,
The food we need to live.
And yet,
We never see you.
Or rather, we see you without really seeing you.

Happily, you have suddenly become visible —
Both here and around the world.
So first of all, I congratulate you.
Secondly, I thank you for becoming visible.
Because by showing us who you are, you have shown us
Who we could and should be.

In your faces and your eyes, through your words and your gestures
I see and hear many things:

You have shown us gentleness, compassion, industry, intelligence.
You have shown us pain, sorrow and a just, a righteous anger.

The most frequent cry of the Urban Poor of Korea is:
"We are human beings."
"We want, we demand to be treated as human."

I can only guess how terrible is the pain
Of being treated as less than human.
But I know how terrible is the sin
Of treating another that way.

Along with the declarations you have made today,
And in gratitude to you — and to the millions and millions of
your brothers and sisters whom you represent —
I would like to make my own small declaration:

You are not lazy; you are not evil; you are not illegal; and
your demands and actions to be treated as human beings are
not illegal.

You are not worthless; you are not unimportant; you are not
disposable people.

You are beautiful sons and daughters of whatever-the-name of
the God you worship
You are the backbone, the life and the strength of your
country;
You are the light and leaven of humanity in this increasingly
dehumanized and dreary world.
In short, you are human.

And that is why you are invisible — because WE DON'T WANT TO
SEE YOU.



We don't want to see you because you challenge and disturb us.
You make us feel uncomfortable.

Because if you are treated as less than human, it is WE who
treat you thus.
So your pain shows the rest of us our in-humanity.

A Place to Live!
Can there be any more basic need? more minimal demand?
How can one even *exist* without a *place* or enjoy any
human right without a place to enjoy it in?

I congratulate you in this unique and important gathering
of the poor of Asia.

I end with a challenge and a prayer:

Governments, big businesses and private individuals have no
right
To build large and expensive homes for *anyone*.
As long as there is one homeless person in the world.

But they do have the duty to insure a minimal place to live for
everyone.

I pray that this Asian People's Dialogue will have three results:

First, the immediate halt, in every country in the world, to all
evictions-by-force;

Second, the immediate recognition that every human being has an
absolute right to a decent place to live;

Third, that all governments, politics, policies, economic
structures and market forces will be rapidly re-organised
to make that right a reality.

An-nyung-hi-dul to-ra-ga-ship-shi-o. Thank you.

Plans of ACHR for the year 1989-1990

1. The meeting agreed to launch the following projects as ACHR 1989-1990 regional activities.

● **KOREA PROJECT II** will be a continuation of the Korea Project but it will emphasize on seeking solutions.

John Daly from UPRI in Seoul will be responsible for this project.

● **REPORT AND ASSESSMENT OF EVICTIONS AND HOUSING RIGHTS IN THE REGION.** This will assess the current evictions and the housing rights situation in different cities in Asia. It is aimed to be a regular report published every 6 months and will be distributed to different groups in the region and around the world.

This report will be prepared by Somsook Boonyabancha, ACHR Secretary in collaboration with active Asian groups in various cities.

● **EXPERTISE EXCHANGE PROGRAM.** This project was proposed by NGOs and Exchangegrassroots groups for more active Programexchange of experiences and expertise between various groups involved in community-based projects.

Mr M Hosaka from ESCAP in his personal capacity will be responsible for planning and arranging the project in the region.

● **ANALYSIS OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS BY BIG AGENCIES SUCH AS THE WORLD BANK AND ADB.** This project aims to develop a better understanding of the real, and often hidden, development objectives and social implications of big projects. It will also develop an effective analytical framework which may be applicable to different countries.

The OPP group led by Arif Hassan and Perween Rahman, Karachi, Pakistan will organise this study.

● **RURAL EVICTION.** This is to understand more clearly the widening problems of evictions in the rural areas. The first year activities were felt to be too biased toward urban issues.

Minar Pimple from YUVA, Bombay, India, will be responsible for this project.

2. Ongoing regional activities will be continued by the following:

- A Research for an Asian Overview on Housing by Arif Hassan
- Grassroots Women Organisation Network by SPARC
- Documentation and Publication by CAP

3. The following functional units will be established according to the plans and intentions of organisations involved.

- Intelligence unit by UNNAYAN, India
- Hot-line by SOCO, Hongkong

A Summary from the First ACHR General Meeting held on 21 June 1989, Seoul, Korea.

4. As a follow up from the Asian People's Dialogue, Denise Murphy will edit the book which will focus on the grassroots in Asia said about their Place To Live. This book is expected to be completed at the end of this year or early next year.

5. It was proposed that an ACHR Committee for the year 1989-1990 should be organised to consist of those organisations or individuals responsible for ongoing projects for this year plus those responsible for the activities planned in 1989-1990.

This year's committee will have the following members:

Fr. John Daly, Korea, for Korea Project II
M Hosaka, Japan, for Expertise Exchange Program
Arif Hassan, Pakistan, for Research Projects
Minar Pimple, India, for Rural Eviction Project
Somsook Boonyabancha, Thailand, ACHR Secretary and Reports on Eviction and Housing Rights
Sheela Patel, India, for Women Grassroots Network
Lim Jee Yuan, Malaysia, for Documentation and Regional Publication
Denise Murphy, Philippines, for the editing of a book "A Place To Live: Asian People's Dialogue"

6. The term of the ACHR Secretary is for two years. It was agreed that the elected ACHR secretary will also become a HIC board member by position. The next ACHR Secretary election will take place in 1990.

Conclusions from the ACHR meeting in Bombay

December 1989

1. THE STRUCTURE OF ACHR as a regional network was drafted and approved as follows:-

- a) ACHR Committees will consist of the secretariat and all the focal function units. They will meet once a year.
- b) Secretariat — to coordinate, and make decisions according to ACHR objectives.
- c) Focal Function Units — will be organized according to different functions or issues independently in various countries in Asia.

2. ACTIVITIES FOR 1990 — A number of regional activities for 1990 were proposed and finalized.

a) Publication of a book "A Place To Live in Asian People's Dialogue" edited by Denise Murphy. The editing work will be finished in March. 2000 copies will be published in English as well as other translation to other languages.

b) PUBLICATION on "Housing by the Urban Poor in Asia". This is basically an up-to-date compilation of shelter projects based on the newsletters published by Father Jorge Anzorena.

The Focal unit on Publication by CAP in Malaysia will also produce a newsletter called "Housing By People in Asia" twice a year.

c) The continuation of Korea Project emphasizing on "solutions" to the inhuman treatment of refugees and the denial of housing rights in Korea.

d) The exposure of housing rights in Hong Kong as another step in the struggled housing rights in Asia. Detailed plans will be drafted with local organisation (SOCO) in Hong Kong.

e) The setting up of Community-based Human Settlements Training and Advisory Program: This new focal unit was proposed for training and advisory activities to grassroots, NGOs, sympathetic professionals and even good government officials. The unit will be set up in Bangkok.

f) Housing Project in Ho Chi Minh City: A combination of workshop and a local design "competition" for community improvement. The focus of the "competition" is to engender dialogue between the local communities, professionals and resource persons from Asia for the improvement of housing by people in Ho Chi Minh City.

g) Action on Rural Eviction: Activities in the first year will be focussed on gathering information and organising regional workshops on the rural eviction as a step to set up this network for action in Asia.

h) Research on Asian Housing Situation by Arif Hassan. He will work in collaboration with other research groups in the region.

i) Assessment of Evictions in Asia.

j) Women Grassroots network — activities to be proposed by SPARC.

HONGKONG : SOME ARE LEFT OUT

by Denis Murphy

Not everyone has benefited from Hong Kong's tremendous progress. I met old women and men whom the city has used up and left behind on roof tops and in wire cages.

For the phone company Lo Yuet Ho's address is simply "rooftop, Portland Street, Kowloon." Nine stories up, she shares a small hut with a widow friend. Both have been on the rooftop 25 years. Around them are small huts of other old women.

The two women have a room of perhaps six square metres, cluttered with furniture, appliances, old keepsakes, a cat and a Buddhist shrine. At the door are small shrines and offerings to the gods of heaven, sun, earth and money.

Lo Yuet Ho who is now 68 came to Hong Kong from a village near Canton during the Japanese occupation. She was the oldest child and since there was little food she was told to earn and send back what she could.

She came to Hong Kong as a girl of 16 and got work as a coolie unloading ships in the harbour for HK\$9 a month. What she didn't spend on food for herself, she sent back to China.

"Then the communists came," she told us. "My father wrote me that they were worse than the Japanese. They wouldn't let us send food or money to our village. My father died without food. I was eating here and they were dying of hunger." She began to cry.

She said she worked 18 hours a day for years without a day off. In time she got easier jobs. Now she is a waitress from 6 pm to 3 am in a dimsum food shop. She is one of the anonymous, usually illiterate mass of mainland China refugees that built Hong Kong into one of Asia's richest cities.

When asked if she ever married, she said: "Who would marry me? I'm illiterate, a worker." Then remembering she added: "Yes, there were some men as poor as myself who wanted to marry me, but I always believed two poor people marrying is bad and there may not be food for them."

She doesn't worry about what will happen in 1997 when Hong Kong's sovereignty is returned to China. "I may be dead then. I live day by day." She also has never thought about whether there is life after death or not, she said.

She makes HK\$2,000 a month as a waitress but worries about what will happen when she is no longer able to work. "I will just lie down one day and

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not get up I hope."

We were told there may be as many as 25,000 old men and women living like Lo Yuet Ho on the rooftops of Hong Kong. They fear the city may order their buildings torn down to make way for new high rise office and apartment buildings. If that happens, there is really no place for old people.

A short walk from Portland Street we visited another building where men literally live in cages. They are mostly old, single men in a dormitory type room, where the beds are stacked three high with a wire cage enclosing each bed.

Each "cage" is about 6 feet by two

feet by two feet — the size of a coffin. There were 130 men in the large classroom size dormitory we visited.

Mr Shin who acts as voluntary caretaker of the room told us the cages are for protection against thieves, but are also an attempt by the men to gain some privacy. Each man keeps all he owns in his cage, locks it when he goes out and locks himself in at night.

Women in similar dormitories feel no need for the cages, which tells something about men and women.

The stories of many of the older men parallel Lo Yuet Ho's. Because they concentrated on sending money back to China they never married.

Most of the men go out each day to work or to walk around, but some of the older men stay in the dormitory. One man hasn't left in 20 years.

Routinely when a man dies the police come for the body and it is buried quickly. The men have severed any connection with relatives in Hong Kong because living in the cage is a great stigma, but sometimes they buy what they can and go back to China where they are kings for a day in their villages.

Modern development creates short memories. We can be more careful to remember who really builds the country and not let them be thrown aside when they are no longer useful. — *The Chronicle*, Philippines.

*A Prayer**

Dear lord,

You know I'm growing older

Keep me from becoming talkative and possessed with the idea that I must express myself on every subject.

Release me from the craving to straighten out everyone's affairs.

Keep me from the recital of endless detail.

Give a seal to my lips when I am inclined to tell of my aches and pains.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong.

Make me thoughtful, but not nosy, helpful, but not bossy

With my vast store of wisdom and experience, it does seem a pity not to use it all.

But lord, I want a few friends at the end.

Janet P Gullick

* This prayer was hidden amongst the many pieces of things on John Daly's table

Letters from the grassroots

Dear friends. This column is an attempt to continue the wonderful sharing of the grassroots people we started in The Asian People's Dialogue in Korea. Here we share with you letters from Aporn Wongsang, Lee Byong Ro and Taweesak Saengathit. We hope this will contribute to the active communication between the grassroots in Asia.

Dear friends,

Thank you very much for your letter. I would like to share with you our situation.

We have about 500 families in our community in Yenarkard. Half of our community live on private land while another half live on public land. There are 3 private land owners on the private land who now want to sell their land, therefore they are evicting us out of the land.

We have faced eviction problems for 1 year and 8 months up till now. We are trying to contact the landlords offering them the land-sharing solution. The community should be able to buy 4 out of 13 rai (1 rai = 1600m²) which is less than one-third of the land of 91 families who are still staying here. Some well-off families have moved out getting compensation only 200 baht per wah² (about 50 baht or US\$2 per m²).

The landlord is offering a group compensation but we have refused it because we want to have our own house so that we will not face eviction again in future.

We are organising activities to raise funds for the community and are trying to coordinate with outside agencies to increase our incomes by job creation programs.

We are also in the federation called "Ruamnamjai Pattana" started by the NGOs of different communities. A seminar was organised in order to find common problems and ways to work together. The seminar agreed to set up the federation to help each other in solving common problems.

Thai Slum Association Opposes Government Slum Bill and Proposes People's Slum Bill

Dear friends,

I am so glad to hear from you after the meeting in Korea. By the time my letter reaches you, it is already after the World Habitat Day on 2nd October. I would like to tell you that my government here does not give any recognition of this day. I think it may be the same in your country as most governments will not give any importance for this day. Whatever the reason, I think most of us realise this.

I must apologize for late reply to Mr Nakamura's letter. Thank you very much for your letter. In your letter you said that you can still remember our being together in Korea, I think I can

The group was started on 5th March 1989 and have core coordinators. The activities of the group are as follows:

1. Visit to member communities
2. To lobby for the people's slum bill.

Our federation now has 38 communities but only 24 communities are actively involved. 3 communities of our group are facing eviction problems and there is a threat of eviction in 7 more communities. Most of these communities have savings as one of our major activities is to prepare ourselves mainly for housing as well as for improving our income generation and education.

Having participated in the Korea meeting, I feel that we have so much similar problems. We are trying to find different ways to solve our problems, at policy level, at landowner level or even with government officials. Those are some of our methods. I think other countries will have different tactics and methods also. I would like to ask for your ideas and suggestions so that we can learn and borrow it to solve our problems here since we are the same urban poor people.

Finally, I wish your country will have success in solving the housing problems of the poor.

From the Ruamnamjai Pattana Group.

**Aporn Wongsang
Yenarkard Community
Bangkok.**

still remember it very well too and would like to say that I am very impressed with every event I experienced in the Korea Meeting.

I would like to inform you about the current situation in my country and what we are doing in Bangkok. After coming back from Korea, I have learned that my government and the National Housing Authority which is the organization directly responsible for solving low-income housing problems, is making a special law for the slums.

This new slum Bill by them, in fact, does not solve any of our problems but, on the contrary, will create more problems to us. Their law states that it will improve all slums by moving us out. Their solution is to construct flats for slum dwellers and ask us to pay regular monthly rents. This is very difficult for us for we cannot afford to pay rents. We are low income earners who have very irregular earnings.

We need to squat on unutilized land. If we have to pay regular rent then our income will not be enough to feed our families. To remove us from the existing slums and make it in such a way that we cannot go back again means that this law will legitimise evictions. This we cannot accept. We have to protest against this Bill. We will inform you on the progress of this movement so that we may get support from you to stop this unjust law against the poor like us.

Parallel to this, we have drafted our own Slum Bill in accordance to our needs and aspirations with support from lawyers who stand with the poor people, as well as NGOs who work with us.

The major contents of the NHA's slum law is:

1. To improve the slums by redevelopment, stating that the former slum dwellers must move out for redevelopment and come back after the redevelopment is completed.

2. To provide rent contract, 5 years contract for private land owners and 10 years contract for public land.

This 5 or 10 years contract is only a guise to allow eviction in the future so we, definitely, cannot accept this law.

On the other hand, the law proposed by us also focuses on 2 major areas:

1. The government should appropriate the land in every slum and give land titles for us. We propose that the government buy these land for us and we will repay the government by instalment.

2. We propose to have our representatives in the Slum Improvement Committee.

We have sent our draft to 2 political parties. These political parties have

proposed to the government to set up a committee to consider our proposed Bill. At the same time we also sent letters to every political party in this country calling for their support on our Bill.

At the end of October, the 3 slum federations in Bangkok having 94 slum communities as members will hold a big meeting to find ways to push and submit this Bill continuously. In this meeting there will be representatives from all 94 slum communities. 3 from each community will participate in this meeting. We also sent invitations to representatives of political parties as observers as well as to ask them for financial assistance. We also informed the mass-media to cover this event in order to voice out our needs and aspirations to the public. We hope that this will achieve some impact. Any outcome from this meeting will be sent to you again.

In this regard, I also hope to receive news from you so that we can share and may be able to help each other. May I wish you, your community, your city and country happiness and success. I hope to have a chance to meet with you again sometime in future.

Always thinking of you.

Mr Taweesak Saengathit
USDA United Slums
Development Association
Bangkok

Dear Friends

The Asian Poor People's Dialogue in Seoul gave all of us a new vision for the struggles for survival and human rights.

The meeting gave many of us in N.F.S.V. new dreams of a new world and the feeling of solidarity between Asian Poor People.

We have recently received the letters of Mr Nakamura and Miss Somsook.

It gives us great joy that we are circulating letters among us, and that we can give international help and solidarity to each other.

Our address is
 National Federation of Street Vendors
 459-44, Changshin-dong,
 Jongro-ku
 Seoul 110-541

We held an assembly on October 5th 1989, in Seoul University where Korean Street vendors participated in the fight against the terrible suppressors.

Lee Byong Ro
October 10, 1989

Seven lessons from seventeen years of work



The Center of Concern is a Washington, D.C.-based inter-disciplinary team engaged in social analysis and reflection, policy advocacy and education on issues of justice and peace.

After 17 years as its executive director, **Fr. Peter Henriot, S.J.**, has resigned in order to live and work with the poor in Zambia.

Looking back on his work, Fr. Henriot offers these lessons:

1. Love is essential to the work for justice. I have come to realise that the primary reason to work for justice is people. People I know and care about, people I love. People whose dignity is ignored, whose rights are violated, whose development is stifled, whose participation is denied. It cannot be only ideology or politics that drives me to challenge the unjust structures of society, for that would all too quickly become stale and sterile. People... make the difference.

2. Avoid reductionism in any strategy of change. Because I want to get things done, I tend to reduce a problem to one clear solution. But there is a great danger in any univocal approach to working for justice. I can come to feel that there is only one way — usually my way... I have learned that social reality is too complex and human creativity too unlimited to put the strait-jacket of a narrow reductionism on efforts to bring about justice.

3. Feminism is a perspective as well as an issue... The women I have worked with on our team have helped me appreciate the deeper question of a feminist perspective... as a lens on reality, feminism uncovers areas of life hidden or distorted by merely male perspectives.

4. Hope is more politically powerful than despair. ... Seeing the good things first means I can put the bad things in perspective. But if I see the bad things first, I may never get to the good things! And there is simply too much to change in our world today to allow discouragement or pessimism to dull my efforts.

5. Practice what you preach — or at least try to! ... Believing in the cause of justice is not difficult, but authentically living out its message is a real challenge... I do need — personally and corporately — to try to be authentic in lifestyle and policy, congruent with the message I share... practising what you preach is not always easy... But it's a cost that must be paid.

6. Don't provide minor distractions from the major issues. It's tragic to lose the right struggle for the wrong reason. ... If I don't have my facts straight or do incompetent analysis, don't speak clearly or with respect, then no matter how just my cause may be, I won't get a good hearing for it. I've learned that it's difficult enough to get people to listen to a social justice message without distracting them by something which needn't be a part of the picture.

7. Faith is alive only in works. From the earliest beginnings of the Center we have tried to bring a faith perspective to the cause of justice... It is not simply a matter of "linking" faith and justice but of seeing that the one is incomplete without the other. This has meant struggling for a spirituality that motivates, guides and sustains in the work of transforming the world. I have been so much helped in reaching for the spirituality by the struggling of others.

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