

No. 3

Published by Third World Network & Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

October 1991

STOP EVICTIONS

2000 SETTLERS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA THREATENED

On the fateful day of 15th May, 1991, a government bulldozer swept through the Wabag Compound in Lae, Papua New Guinea (PNG) for three hours, smashing and demolishing all the homes and stores in the community. Armed police and government officials stood by, not to protect the urban poor, but to ensure the uninterrupted destruction of more than 50 homes, which left more than 300 men, women and children homeless, with nowhere to go.

The sweat and tears that the urban poor invested in their only home, built over the years, were smashed in a few hours. The people just stood in despair and watched helplessly. This act by the new Papua New Guinean Government to evict the poor using force should be condemned. For forced eviction is a crime against humanity, one which denies the urban poor of their basic right to their need for shelter.

The National Committee for Urban Shelter, a national non-governmental organisation concerned with human settlements, has condemned the inhuman and barbaric eviction. This eviction was carried out with total disregard for human rights.

The new Government claims that the squatter settlements are harbouring criminals and unemployed people. The bulldozing of the settlements, the government claims, will therefore help solve the law and order problems in PNG. The eviction was also carried out without giving any alternative housing for the urban poor or any form of compensation.

These reasons given for the eviction were unjustified. According to a research by National Committee for Urban Shelter, some settlers of Wabag Compound community have been living there for over 20 years.

The research found that the majority of residents are working in various capacities to sustain a living for them-



A settlement in Papua New Guinea – the poor have a right to housing, forced eviction is inhuman.

selves. Many are self-employed working as drivers, carpenters, mechanics, clerks, salesperson, trade store owners, government employees including police workers, etc. They, like most of the urban poor in other developing countries worldwide, provide vital and fundamental services for their country's development.

In fact, the cheap source of labour and services provided by the urban poor to ensure the well-being of the urban systems need to be recognised and respected. It is essential that all alternatives be explored before evictions are carried out.

According to Somsook Boonyaban-cha, Secretary-General of ACHR, eviction is both an inhuman and an inefficient method of solving problems. "There is now over 30 years of experience to draw upon when seeking ways to improve housing and living conditions in poor city areas without dis-

placing the dwellers," she added.

In a situation where eviction is inevitable, there must be provisions to guarantee the settlers' rights for alternative accommodation and satisfactory resettlement programmes.

We should fight against evictions all over the world for this inhuman act devalues a person and degrades them to be mere disposable people. This is against their basic right as instituted in the United Nations Charter for human rights. Therefore it is only right to condemn this deplorable and barbaric approach to development.

As it is likely that increasing numbers of urban poor settlements are to be evicted in the near future, urgent action is needed. According to the information by the National Committee for Urban Shelter, another eviction had been planned for Saw Dust Compound involving about 2,000 people and 200 houses.

A settler's account of the evictions

"WOMEN AND CHILDREN WERE WEEPING"

FIRST of all I would like to share with you about the eviction that is happening in my Province.

Before I start of with the events of the eviction, today is the deadline for certain compounds to be evicted. More people will be homeless in this rainy season.

Since early this year three settlements have been the victims of eviction. The three settlements are: 5 miles compound, Wabag, and Voco Point.

The first evicted compound was at 5 miles compound, situated at the boundary of Lae City. The Government plans to make their area into a garbage dump and had commenced forcibly evicting residents by bulldozer. It happened on 14 February 1991.

Armed Police arrived to accompany a bulldozer which ploughed through houses and gardens to commence making an access road for the planned dump.

Residents were caught unawares and in a few hours a lot of damage was done. The people who have gone to work in their gardens didn't know their house have been bulldozed.

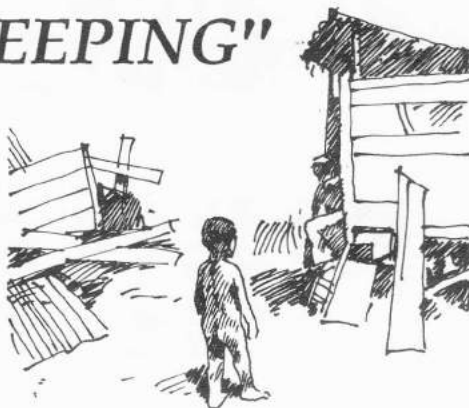
About thousand of Kina(US\$1,000) worth of property was lost. 12 houses were torn down. Fruits trees and many food gardens were damaged. All these were pulled down by the bulldozer which ploughed into the soil.

The second eviction was on 15 May 1991 in Wabag Compound. This compound is in the heart of Lae City. The people have been living there for more than 20 years. Our Provincial Government gave their first eviction notice to the Wabag compound. Then the people went to meet Premier Jerry Nalau. The people gave him three important petitions.

1. Give us sufficient time to move out and resettle somewhere else.
2. Relocate us again or give us another piece of land to live on.
3. Provide us with transport to move our personal belongings and households and allow us to pull down our houses and trade stores and transport them safely to a new place and set them up again.

The Premier refused their petitions. He said he had already held a Holy Bible and sworn that he will destroy the settlement and there will be no chance given again.

The evening of 15 of May was unforgettable. At 6-8 pm a bulldozer with 50 armed police moved into the com-



pound and started demolitions.

While many people stood watching helplessly nobody was able to get their belongings out of the houses. People were forced to move out of their own houses. They asked the police if they can get some of their belongings, the answer was **no**, your time given has passed and this is our turn.

Women and children were crying and weeping loudly. No help came. The policemen put fire on their properties, it continued for two solid hours. At 8 pm everybody had to move to find places to shelter themselves before the curfew started at 9 pm.

The 3rd Eviction. Another sad day for us the squatters at Voco Point.

The settlement is near the beach and it is also not very far from the settlement where I live. I can say that they are our neighbours.

21 May 1991 was a very sad and frightening day for each one of us, especially those of us who lived in the settlement. We always feel at home, but eviction may come unexpectedly and we'll be displaced.

At Voco Point my friends were taken by surprise. The families didn't have much time to carry their poor belongings out of their house such as suitcases, cupboards and kitchen wares.

The men worried about the loss of the corrugated iron sheets. The water tanks all were destroyed. About 200 people had to find friends and relatives to stay for the night. Some people stayed near the beach under a tent not so far from their previous homes.

While I am writing to you all about our situation here in Lae, there is eviction going on. We are not going to let this Government keep bulldozing us. We'll stand firm and fight for our right to live. I know that you will be with me in our struggle for better living.

In one heart and one mind we are all journeying together from your dear friend, Sr Gertrude Vavine

THE evictions of settlers in Papua New Guinea have elicited worldwide response. We reproduce below excerpts from some responses.

From ACHR, Japan

"There is a very regretful change in the position of the Government which in many international workshops has shown with pride its projects in favour of the squatters.

The eviction is not only an inhuman method of solving a problem but also an inefficient one which moves the squatters from one place to another. It exacerbates deep rooted social conflicts, making it unnecessary for the government to participate in negative processes.

... it is essential that all alternatives should be explored before evictions are carried out."

(The letters carried 25 signatures from architects, professors and ordinary citizens.)

From ACHR Secretary-General, Thailand

"Everyone concedes that housing is a basic need. It is odd then that the poor, who have long established their communities and actively participated in the economic and social development of the country, are still faced with forced evictions which do not only destroy their houses but also their job opportunities and their chances to develop better lives.

In fact, it is the inefficiency of the housing supply system in providing everyone with a place to live in accordance with his/her affordability which causes poor people to struggle illegally in squatter settlements with poor living conditions and without basic public infrastructure. In other words, it is the direct responsibility of the government to correct the situation instead of denying it or concealing it by eviction which only compounds the problems of the poor.

However there is now over 30 years of experience to draw upon when seeking ways to improve housing and living conditions in poor city areas without displacing the dwellers. Some possible methods include: upgrading the living conditions of the poor communities; in some countries such as Pakistan and Indonesia poor communities are provided and preserved, by the state, as permanent living places; in Bangkok, a land-sharing arrangement is often agreed upon by the land owner and the dwellers.

Such experiences show that it is

WORLD CONDEMNS EVICTIONS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

What the Prime Minister says



Mr Nalau... "It is my duty to protect State property." But what about protecting the people?

MR JERRY NALAU, Premier of Morobe Province in PNG said for far too long elected leaders have allowed people to move onto State land in Lae and build homes knowing full well that such actions were illegal.

M Nalau said this after his government evicted more than 300 people from the Wabag Settlement in Lae.

Mr Nalau said he regretted having to evict squatters but it was time for the people of PNG to start showing respect for laws and State properties.

"I took my oath of office by holding the Bible and promising to uphold the laws of Papua New Guinea and the Morobe Province.

"It is my duty to protect State land and properties and I ask the people of Lae and Morobe Province to do likewise."

"I know many of those people personally and I feel really sorry in having to evict them and demolish their houses. But I have a duty as Premier of this province to lead by action and not just sweet words".

possible and indeed more efficient, when carrying out any economic or land development scheme, to consider the problems and needs of all groups concerned, and moreover, to use such development to provide the opportunities for improvement to all those groups involved; not to be selective in giving benefit to some with the poor and less powerful becoming the victims of such development."

From National Committee for Urban shelter, Lae

"Our research, for example, in one of the unplanned settlements of Lae, Wabag Compound, shows that some people in that settlement have been living there since 1971. Many have been born there. For many of the people, there is nowhere to go to. In some cases, they cannot go back even to their villages as they have no land waiting for them. The settlers in Wabag Compound, in particular, have told that they are willing to leave the place if they are forced to. But they need alternative places to go to and other arrangements so that they can survive as decent citizens of Papua New Guinea.

The consequences of forced eviction have never been good in other developing countries and even in Papua

New Guinea. The 1972 White Paper of PNG Government on Self Help Housing clearly supports improvement programmes to eviction. In 1991, it is appalling to see that we have turned our back to some of these decisions."

From Mahila Milan, Bombay

"The Government of Papua New Guinea should first provide them with alternatives by resettling them and only then should demolish their houses — only then the problem of growing slums can be solved. By demolishing houses without any alternative, will only increase more homeless people and increase unemployment and havoc in the country.

We request the Government of Papua New Guinea to do justice with the people who have already suffered. We hope that whatever action taken should be in the favour of people too."

From The United Slum Dwellers Association, Thailand

"People are a most important resource in the development process and the government process, and the gov-

ernment needs to understand and know their problems. Only then can a country develop with balance, in a way that the people, both urban and rural, would wish.

We strongly disagree with your government's eviction of the poor, claiming them to be illegal squatters. We feel that the new government is being irresponsible and not behaving according to just principles.

We would like to propose the following to the Government of Papua New Guinea:

1. To stop evicting the people, as long as the government does not have a policy to solve slum problems.
2. The government needs to plan both a short and long term policy to solve slum problems.
3. The government should have a budget for urban poor housing projects, in which NGOs and the people's community organisations can participate.
4. The government should support a budget for both NGOs and the people's community organisations to work toward solving urban poor housing problems.
5. We propose that the government enact a slum bill to help solve slum problems."

From SPARC, India

"As long as the ONUS of 'COPING' with these 'PEOPLE' and their settlements remains a knee-jerk reaction of the local and municipal administrations, there can be no meaningful outcome to this war of attrition — and that's what it will be. The poor who squat illegally DO NOT HAVE OTHER CHOICES. What will happen after many such battles is a waste of national resources. The State will have invested enormous amounts to break homes, police the areas and maintain law and order. The poor, on the other hand, however frightened they are, have NO OTHER CHOICE. Their meagre shelter and assets will be destroyed every time and they will have to start from scratch. These are also the nation's resources. They too have the right to such considerations."

Land and Homelessness in South Africa

An international team of 10 people from Asia, Africa and Latin America participated in the South African People's Dialogue on Land and Homelessness, 17-21 March 1991, Johannesburg, Republic of South Africa. Below are excerpts from a report prepared by the team.

THE International Team was fortunate to be in South Africa during a period of great change. The dismantling of apartheid, which had started in early 1990, was well underway when the team was there in March 1991.

The team's first impressions of South Africa were of prosperous modern cities where both black and white people walked the streets and everything seemed fine. Soon they realized it was a cauldron of violence, where as one man said, "people are up to their eyeballs in hate." Finally they found a society steeped in courage and religious commitment.

In the months since the meeting, reports from South Africa indicate that while apartheid as a legal structure has to a great extent disappeared, little has changed at the grassroots level in the lives of the poor. Meanwhile industrial countries lift the international economic sanctions; political parties prepare for interim governments and elections; new compromises and alliances are made. It has happened in nearly all Third World countries that the poor are forgotten in the rush and excitement of independence. The election of a black government in South Africa is surely comparable to independence.

It will be a tragic mistake to overlook the economically poor blacks of South Africa. No people anywhere has had a longer, harder struggle for freedom, or has been more hopeful as the day of deliverance drew near. This monumental hope has kept the people strong through decades of abuse. If it is frustrated, the social consequences can be terrible.

Therefore, the International Team urges South African government officials and the international agencies and states who deal with South Africa not to forget the poor; not to relegate the concrete issues of the poor to the back burner to be taken care of later when other "more important" problems are solved. Concrete improvement in



A squatter family in South Africa. There is one brick and cement house for every 3.5 white people, but only one such house for every 43 blacks in South Africa.

poor people's lives is the main issue.

HOMELESSNESS

Although no official count of homeless people has been made, it can be roughly estimated that a third of African people do not have access to a brick and cement house, even an overcrowded one. Some million black people live in shacks. To quote "Homes for All", a publication of Christian Research, Education and Information for Democracy (CREID): "At the beginning of the 1980s there was one formal (brick and cement) house for every 3.5 white people, but only one such house for every 43 blacks. There are 1,286,000 decent houses available for the white people and 486,000 for black Africans, despite the fact that there are at least five times more African people living in the country than whites."

The table below describes the disparities in home construction.

Housing in South Africa 1983 - 1985		
	Surplus/shortage	Houses built
1. White	+ 37,000	172,000
2. Asian	- 44,000	37,000
3. Coloured	- 52,000	62,000
4. African	- 583,000	41,000

Statistics for education and health

are similar. While the government in 1985-1986 spent Rand 2,746 for every white child, it spent only Rand 387 for every black child. Infant mortality rates for black children were 13 times as high as for white children

RECENT CHANGES

Since early 1990 President F.W. de Klerk has set about dismantling the apartheid legal structure and unleashing political forces that should make substantial changes in South Africa. He has his vocal critics of course. Most observers believe the immediate occasion and reason for the revamp was the shattered state of the South African economy. The ANC claims credit for the international sanctions that helped damage the economy and force the changes.

By July 1991 the apartheid legal structure was on its way to being a thing of the past, though blacks found little had changed. No longer did law govern where people might live, but few blacks had the money to buy into choice all-white areas. Legally they didn't have to live in Soweto, but practically speaking they couldn't live anywhere else.

The legislation that grew out of the White Paper on Land Reform has explicitly ruled out any hope of land being returned to the people evicted, such as, the Mfengu.

Restoration of land is a complex issue, but as a team of lawyers, including a number from the Centre for Applied Legal Studies said in a comment on the White Paper, it is also a matter of injustice and cannot be ignored.

The lawyers suggest a special land claims court be set up so that all decisions made on and will be made according to public criteria in an open process with the right of legal appeal. They say the White Paper left too much to the decision making of administrators in the government with very few public guidelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While political struggles continue, it is important to work out short-term and long-term policies to deal with the issue of homelessness.

The International Team recommends that housing become a people's development movement rather than a welfare effort. The experiences of other countries indicate that if the problem is approached in terms of a welfare program it will cater to a privileged few and the programme will not be sustainable.

Housing policy should create conditions that support a people's movement for housing. Land redistribution, infrastructure provision, sites and services, a credit system accessible to the poor, recognition of community organizations and the establishment of a community level management system can all form part of the solution. However, it is important the process be generated internally with the opportunity given the people to decide at every level what they think best. A sense of freedom has to be generated through the housing process.

People must be free to decide what kind of design they want, what form of technology, how to finance and how much, how to build. Through this process the people will produce housing that reflects their aspirations and which will be much more satisfying than housing produced by the state or by companies.

The freedom people enjoy in the housing process will add to their ability to create a truly participatory democracy.

PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

In summary the International Team believes there is hope if the courage and strength of ordinary black people, will be allowed to flow into peoples movements and organizations which give them a voice in national

SOWETO

"Every black man has a heart full of anger and suspicion"



Soweto with 2 million blacks was set up by law as dormitories for black workers who work in Johannesburg or other cities.

ON a rainy Sunday morning a man who had spent 10 years in jail on Robben Island with Nelson Mandela drove the team through Soweto. They passed empty lots full of junk and garbage, muddy pot-holed streets, knots of idle young men, tiny shacks crowded together in the back yards of larger houses. They saw a beerhall destroyed in a 1976 riot; a school where students rebelled against the use of Africaner language in everyday instruction; intersections where the young people battled police and hundreds died; hostels where there had been recent bloody black-against-black fighting. There wasn't a white face in the township of 2 million people.

The rebellion of the Soweto students was joined by students in dozens of other townships and became the most serious revolt against the white state since 1960.

Opposition to the apartheid program of the National Party had grown from 1948 to a climax in 1960 when protests against the pass laws led to incidents, such as, Sharpeville where 67 blacks protesting peacefully were killed by police. After this the black resistance went underground, while Nelson Mandela and other leaders were jailed. There were some guerilla attacks by blacks, but then virtual silence till the Soweto rebellion.

The team asked the driver if he was bitter. "I'm bitter, of course," he said. "Every black man has a heart full of anger and suspicion." He said apartheid was a violent system "where black people were treated as less than human." But he went on to say that

"bitterness and anger are poor guides to action." He said he would work along with the African National Congress (ANC) of Oliver Tambo and Mandela and hoped things would improve. He had a daughter working as a veterinarian in another African country of whom he was very proud.

Soweto's black population ranges across the social classes from Nelson Mandela to very poor squatter families living in corrugated iron shacks as poor as any in Asia or Latin America, the team thought. More than 50% of adult men have no regular salary.

Soweto and the other townships were set up by law as dormitories for the black workers needed in Johannesburg and other cities. Workers travelled 20 or more kilometers to work each day, but had to return at night to the townships. Blacks generally could live nowhere except in the townships. They were like prisoners on parole or good behaviour passes: they could go out to work, but had to return to the jail at night or face the consequences.

In some townships the government built 25 square meter box-like houses. When families moved in, other poorer families put up shacks in the backyards. The government built hostels or barracks for single male workers who had come to the townships leaving their families in the rural areas. In time families followed the men so that in a hostel a family might have only a bunk in a small crowded room. Sometimes the bunks were stacked two or three high.

Resolutions from the South African People's Dialogue

1) EVICTIONS

There should be mass action to oppose evictions. While these are going on, legal actions should also be taken. We should all support communities threatened with eviction.

We should first of all support the people's initiatives, and try to involve the civic associations and other interested organisations. Every effort ought to be made to spread information about evictions as quickly as possible. In all of this work it is clear that women have a crucial part to play.

2) SECURING LAND

Land is a basic right and the constitution should be changed to guarantee this right for all. Where necessary land must be occupied. This land should be near jobs and amenities.

The government and private institutions must be pressurised to provide the poor with subsidies to buy land. The land we live on must be cared for and conserved. All classes must be educated about the fact that land is a basic right; a right which is being denied to millions of people.

3) THE WHITE PAPER

Since the white paper was drafted without consultation of the landless and the

homeless and does nothing to address their needs it is flatly rejected. Recognising that the state intends to proceed with the recommendations of this paper it is advised that it be investigated and that summaries be made available to communities. We should take up mass action to show our disapproval.

4) BUILDING COMMUNITY

Every effort must be made to end internal violence. Some ways to do this and at the same time build community are: train local people to be effective leaders; use local structures; build community organisations; establish networks with professionals and other groups. A forum of homeless people should be established.

5) AMENITIES/SERVICES

First of all we must determine the needs of our communities. Where it can be effective we can boycott service charges. Also we should pressure government to upgrade its services in our areas. When space is missing in "black areas" we should get blacks to use amenities in "white areas". We should work for a single tax base in one municipality per city or town.

6) HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT, EDUCATION

a) Community members should be trained in childcare. Education trust funds should be set up in order to assist community members, while the state should be pressurised to provide adult education. Literacy programmes should target adult members of the community.

b) Community members should be involved in primary health care. This could lead to the establishment and staffing of clinics.

c) Environmental awareness campaigns ought to be launched.

7) WELFARE NEEDS

It is important that people participate in planning and meeting community welfare needs. In this local people should be trained. Also we should look for all the expertise inside and outside our communities that can help us.

8) COMMUNITY RESOURCES

There are many things communities can do in this regard, such as set up credit unions and co-operatives, fund-raising within and without the community, and establishing local advisory offices, community stores and home industries projects.

Land & Homelessness in South Africa

● From page 5

affairs and bring concrete improvements to their lives. If these movements and organizations don't take shape, the mass of poor blacks will probably be bypassed by change. They have struggled too hard for too long, however, to go along quietly with such a future.

The main recommendation of the team is therefore that the government and all influential agencies and the churches work for the broadest democratic involvement of the people in the fields of housing, politics, health and economic life.

First, everything the team has learned demonstrates black South Africans are self-reliant and organize as well or better than any people in the world. They have accomplished marvels of political and social organizing. They have kept alive a national political struggle in the face of overwhelming

odds, a struggle that thrilled and amazed the world.

Second, nowhere is people's participation needed more than in South Africa. The black government that comes to power will most likely be squeezed between the extraordinary hope ordinary poor people have for change and the fears and self-interest of the white establishment. It will be tempted to make easy compromises unless the people are critical and keep the government faithful to its promises.

Also, if the people are organized they can make maximum use of the limited resources available. If they are involved in change, they may be more tolerant of unavoidable delays.

The team was deeply moved by the people's ability to move from intense anger over the situation to prayer and song. It reveals depths of culture and a capacity for a long, difficult and human struggle for a better life.

Tremendous damage has been done by apartheid, especially to young people. The March meeting spoke of a lost generation of young people. Families have been torn apart, now AIDS rages. Only the people's own organizations and the churches can hold such a people together.

Time and time again we were moved by the people's ability to pray and celebrate. We can think of no better way to end than by quoting a poem read at the March meeting:

*Africa my beginning, Africa my ending
Men sailed from the West
Bloody with war and disease.
Our people were taken off in slavery
Our huts were left empty
But our own leaders have arisen
We remember Sharpeville & Soweto.
I am born here, I die here
Africa my beginning, Africa my ending.*

Thailand's Forest Recovery Program threatens to evict 1.2 million people

IN 1961 53% of Thailand was covered with forests. In 1988, it was only 28%. Logging concessions, illegal logging, industrial, agricultural and infrastructural development were seen to be the main causes of this loss.

To solve this problem, the government drew up a policy of having 40% of the country to be covered by forests. To attain this, up to 1986 the government declared 12% of the country's total land as "preserved forests".

This area includes 52,800 sq km of deteriorated forest in which there are 12,073 villages. 1.2 million villagers settled here are being threatened by this move.

Loss of land rights

Many villagers have lost the rights to their land, on which some have settled for over 100 years, as they are now alleged to be illegal encroachers.

The government can evict the people from their villages whenever it wants to: either because it wants to recover the forest or because it wishes to benefit from using the land for other purposes.

Widespread evictions

The reforestation programmes have caused widespread evictions by both government officials and private investors



Eucalyptus plantations for commercial use have severely affected the lives of villagers living nearby.

tors involved in the programmes.

And where evictions have not taken place, large scale plantation schemes, mainly eucalyptus plantations, have severely affected the lives of the people living nearby. The fast growing eucalyptus trees, with their extensive root system, consume large amounts of water and thus lower the water table and severely decrease the productivity of people growing other crops.

The plantation schemes have also eliminated many community woodlands which are an important source of food and firewood for the villagers. Such disastrous effects have led to serious confrontations between villagers and government officials and between the villagers and private investors.

The conflicts have spread throughout the country and many villagers have been threatened, arrested and in

some cases their leaders have been killed. The government's policy to support private investment in the country's reforestation program is in the process of being reviewed, but attempts to maintain the government's former policy persist.

During the last three to four years, Thailand's Union for Civil Liberties (an NGO whose works mainly concern human rights) has received reports and petitions from villagers throughout the country involved in hundreds of conflicts concerned

with displacement in rural areas.

A small number of cases, after long and persistent efforts, have been concluded with satisfactory agreements being reached. In most reported cases the villagers are still struggling and the number of cases where the struggle is yet to begin is unknown.

Nobody knows the number of cases where the villagers have already accepted their fate and have been parted from their homes and farmlands. There are few choices left for the villagers who are alleged to be encroachers by government officials.

Many NGOs have attempted to promote the concept of community forests but they have received little response from the government whose own role as protector of the forests has proved to be unsuccessful.

NEW BEGINNINGS

ACHR-YUVA held a workshop on the above topic in Bombay between 17 and 19 June 1991.

The workshop was seen as a step towards developing the project itself to understand its role vis-a-vis issue of rural displacement taking place at Asian level.

The workshop provided a forum for understanding the situation of housing, eviction and displacement of Rural Poor in Asia specifically to different countries in the region. Case studies of displacements and

HOUSING EVICTION AND DISPLACEMENT OF RURAL POOR IN ASIA

struggles, both project related as well as hidden displacement due to industrialisation, government policies were presented. In this context, the role of International Aid Agencies, State, Multinationals and Industries were discussed.

A format for documentation of case studies was presented, analysed and sharpened in the process of the workshop. The workshop also opened up the question of the relevance of the project in the context of the Asian situation and the participants own experience within different countries so that the project

could play a meaningful role in strengthening the local struggles and movement of rural Asian poor.

A total of 70 participants who were representatives of peoples organisations of tribals and rural poor, non-government organisations working with issues of rural poor environmentalists, documentation/research groups, planners, lawyers and individuals concerned with issues of Housing and Displacement from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Mexico (Special Invitee) and India.

Squatters to be removed for World Bank-IMF meeting

THE Thai government is removing slums near the Sirikit National Convention Centre in Bangkok where the World Bank/IMF meeting is to be held in October, saying it would damage the country's image.

Surit Wathoo of the Foundation for Housing Development said that the government hoped the meeting would attract more foreign investment to Thailand, but a few slums near the convention centre are unlikely to country's chances.

Instead the eviction would tarnish the country's image because it would attract the attention of foreign newsmen, he said.

Chulalongkorn University lecturer, Khothom Areeya said, "meeting participants will be upset if they think their visit had caused trouble for slum people."

Slum community leaders have asked the government not to move them until the schools close so that it would not disrupt their children's schooling.

Evictions would also jeopardise livelihoods of the slum dwellers be-



"People say slums are ugly. Now we are offering a nice-looking slum," said a resident.

cause most are fruit vendors nearby.

Meanwhile the slum dwellers have adopted a new strategy in fight eviction by giving a new and pleasant look to their environment which was regarded as an "eyesore" to the authorities.

Armed with brushes, paint and vivid imagination, the slum children have transformed a corrugated iron wall, which hide the slums from passers-by, into a huge, colourful mural facing the Sirikit Convention Centre.

United Nations Urges Relocation Strategy

"OUR Policies and programmes urge that, wherever possible, forced eviction should be avoided. However, it is recognized that in particular circumstances, such as the acquisition of land required for public purposes, and for health and safety reasons, existing settlers or squatters may have to be removed. In all such cases suitable alternative arrangements should be made for resettlement, appropriate compensation should be paid, and those affected should be given an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process to the maximum extent possible.

The Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 (GSS) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, in resolution 43/181 of 20 December, 1988 is the framework for national and international action for the production and management of shelter services.

The Strategy urges governments



Forced evictions should be avoided...Suitable alternative arrangements should be arranged if settlers are to be removed.

to adopt national shelter strategies which enable other actors such as the private sector, non-government or community-based organizations and individual households to produce shelter. The Strategy also urges the improvement and regularization of existing squatter settlements."

— From United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS).

MORE EVICTIONS IN ASIA

- 2 urban communities in Dumagnete City, Philippines face eviction as the government plan to relocate them to a site 75 km from the city centre.
- 2 pavement communities in Bombay, one with 1,500 people and the other with 300 will be evicted. The people are protesting and have submitted memorandums to the government.
- 51 families were rendered homeless when their houses were demolished on April 16, 1991 in Davao City, Philippines. The demolition was implemented not through a court order but by a mere administrative order from the City Mayor's office, with the assistance of the military and police in full battle gear.

UN condemns forced evictions

AN important United Nations body has officially condemned the global practice of forced evictions. The UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities adopted an unprecedented resolution today labelling forced evictions as a gross violation of international law, in particular, the internationally recognised right to adequate housing.

In this decision taken at its 43rd annual session in Geneva, the Sub-Commission stressed the need for governments to undertake "immediate measures at all levels aimed at eliminating the practice of forced evictions."

Habitat International Coalition (HIC), a non-governmental organisation working on housing rights and evictions, was instrumental in pressing the United Nations to take positive action to prevent violations of the right to housing.

According to HIC delegate Scott Leckie "the UN has almost totally ignored this issue since its founding in 1945". He added that "the willingness

of a major UN human rights body to take concrete action against forced evictions is extremely significant, and could signal a process aimed at ending this often violent and inhumane practice, which is still carried out in most of the world's countries".

It is noteworthy that the resolution explicitly recognised that forced evictions continue in many states, affecting millions of people annually. It also concluded that misguided development policies often result in mass and forced evictions. This path-breaking document noted the many "disguised terms which governments employ to hide the violence often associated with forced eviction such as 'cleaning the urban environment', 'urban renewal' and 'progress and development'".

This decision by one of the most centrally placed UN human rights bodies, comprised of 26 independent experts – and not of governments – recognised further that while involuntary evictions are not exclusively carried out by public authorities, the ultimate legal responsibility to prevent

eviction rests with governments.

Hope was expressed by HIC representative, Miloon Kothari that "governments of countries which employ policies of mass and forced eviction – such as Nigeria, Thailand, the Dominican Republic, South Korea, India, France, the United States, Brazil and many others – would take seriously this decision and take immediate steps to protect, instead of neglecting, the rights of their citizens to a place to live in peace, security and dignity".

Habitat International Coalition's statement to the Sub-Commission emphasized that eviction encompasses a range of practices often carried out under the terms "displacement", "forced removal" and "slum clearance", occurring in both rural and urban areas the world over.

The historic resolution also emphasized the importance of providing "immediate, appropriate and sufficient compensation and/or alternative accommodation" to those who have been evicted.

CHARTER FOR THE RIGHT TO HOUSING

THIS is a charter drafted by the Habitat International Coalition-Europe, for adoption by the EC Parliament.

1 Everybody has a right to housing. It is a fundamental right, not merely a right to shelter. It is a right to dignity and citizenship.

2 Europe must promote solidarity not only a unified economic market. We do not accept that within a prosperous Europe some people are denied of this right. Efforts to correct this imbalance now will prove more economical in the long term.

3 Exclusion from housing highlights other forms of exclusion such as economical, social and cultural. Measures to combat exclusion specifically must consider this global perspective. It is not sufficient to work for specific target groups without situating them in a broader context. Rehabilitation is a global process that takes place in a defined territorial area of which housing is one important element.

4 Measures to combat exclusion must also find ways of encouraging the participation of the excluded themselves. In order to enable them to become aware of their situation, their identity and capacities to find solutions to their problems. We

cannot accept that others invent solutions for them. More support needs to be given to self initiatives on the part of the through national and local policies.

5 Rehabilitation would be more effective if public authorities understood, recognised and stimulated self-help groups. "General assistance" type policies that are directed towards target groups maintain excluded in their situation.

6 The free housing market does not give access to decent homes for a large part of the population. Public intervention is necessary but this does not call for large apartment blocks aimed at housing the poor.

The public sector needs to consider quantity and quality and mobilise a variety of partners to increase the supply of housing. Public aid, management, the ability to recognise the needs of the population and participation of inhabitants are as important as the amount of financial input into housing the poor.

7 We do not believe in universal solutions from the top down which ignore the variety of geographical and cultural differences of the excluded population.

8 The excluded are often voiceless. We are aware of this shortcoming and will con-

sider ways of ensuring dialogue between the excluded themselves.

9 The free movement and residence in Europe should involve harmonisation of housing policies measures in the struggle against exclusion.

10 There is still a lot to learn in the struggle to combat exclusion. Experiences can be drawn from non-EC countries and notably the Third World social exclusion mechanisms are similar but on a larger scale. Examples from these countries can be of use to us. We will therefore develop relationships with networks from other continents.

11 Legislative and financial measures are important to combat exclusion but are not sufficient if they are not accompanied by change in attitudes and encouragement of those who suffer to suffer exclusion to find new methods to combat their situation.

12 Lack of housing is the most extreme form of social exclusion. To tackle this problem, it is necessary that governments of the Community agree to link national housing policies to the Community's social economic policies on a permanent basis.

THE HIEP THANH APPROACH

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam, has a population of about 3 million in its city proper area. There are 28,000 slum housing and 16,000 canal squatter units, together constituting some 15% of the total private housing stock. There is strong commitment at the political level as well as in the city administration toward housing for the poor, and greater authority has been developed to city, district and even ward levels for public housing. But the approach is largely conventional and a process has yet to evolve to directly consult and involve people in low-income communities in the planning and development.

In the last two years ACHR has assisted local community-leaders and authorities in establishing a community-managed planning process in Ho Chi Minh City. A low-income settlement of 310 families located in Ward 6 of District 4 of the City was identified as a pilot action area. People in that settlement was encouraged to come up with a name to refer to their community; and it is now called "Hiep Thanh" community meaning "combined strength". A basic feature of the ACHR's assistance has been to promote EXPERIENCE-SHARING AMONG COMMUNITY LEADERS through transnational and local networking. ACHR has also arranged occasional advisory visits to the community, capitalising on its professional network in Asia.

Through study visits and community workshops, a new leadership emerged in Hiep Thanh. People had never been exposed to the concept of self-reliant, community-based approach distinct from government-provided top-down housing and settlement schemes. Their exchanges with

ACHR promotes community-managed planning in Ho Chi Minh City



The Hiep Thanh Community in Ho Chi Minh city.

community leaders in Bangkok and Colombo seem to have motivated them to improve their housing and settlement through community efforts. They established community working groups to analyse specific issues and plan for solutions. Some city officials have been placed in a position to assist the groups.

In March 1991, the Hiep Thanh community completed seven standpipes in the area, as the first developmental action according to their priority. Community leaders had negotiated with the city authorities for a loan for the construction. A water management committee was established to collect

fees from users and manage this community revenue. The community set the fee at half the price of informal water vendors but which still enables them to make monthly payment to the municipal water corporation, amortize the construction loan, pay to fee-collecting families, save for maintenance and contribute to a newly-established Community Development Fund. All of this scheme was initiated and decided by the community. People intend to utilize the Community Development Fund for an income-generating loan programme, and ACHR is assisting them in formulating a viable programme. People have also done road improvement, and are discussing a roof loan programme, drainage improvement and building material production.

The above developments attracted attention of some non-governmental community workers and they independently came to the area to open non-formal evening schools for working children. Interest has been raised in other communities and district authorities in the City. They started to visit Hiep Thanh and try to introduce what they now call "Hiep Thanh approach" to their area. The City's Land and Housing Bureau is going to organise a national congress for housing agencies in October 1991 and a city-level workshop for leaders for low-income communities in December 1991, both to highlight and disseminate the Hiep Thanh approach.



● indicates the location of the standpipes as decided by the people.

Hiep Thanh Community's existing built up area.

Learning from the Thai Land-sharing experience

LAND-SHARING is a plan to partition a plot of land, currently occupied by slum-dwellers into two parts. One part will be sold, leased or donated to the slum-dwellers and the other for the landowner to develop commercially to the best possible advantage.

This innovative concept has been widely practised in Bangkok and is quite successful in housing Bangkok's poor. It does not displace the poor and this is most important for them since most of them cannot afford to live far away from their means of livelihood.

The overall slum population of Bangkok has increased from 850,000 to 1 million during the last decade.

In generally, evictions have been relatively free of violence. Communities were organized to prevent eviction and stay, where they have usually succeeded in delaying eviction for long periods of time. However there was no positive strategy which could lead to a permanent solution.

It is here that the land-sharing for the slum-dwellers concept provided a constructive alternative.

The evolution of land-sharing

1. Slum improvement project

In 1977, the Thai government launched the Slum Improvement Project as an alternative to eviction to the construction of flats for slum-dwellers. In this project the government accepted the slums as residential areas for the city's poor. But it failed to deal seriously with structural problems like land tenure.

Although about 100 slum communities in Bangkok has been upgraded through this scheme, but the landlords can still evict the dwellers or raise the rent.

2. Concept of land-sharing presented

The concept of land-sharing was first presented by Dr Shlomo Angel and Thipparat Chirathamkijkul during the seminar on "Land for housing the poor: Towards the positive action in Asian cities", which was held in Bangkok on January 18-31, 1992.

This land-sharing concept was later widely accepted as an alternative of slum improvement by the National Housing Authority.

3. Land Tenure Security Programme

In 1982, the National Housing Authority (NHA) initiated the Land Tenure

Security Programme wherein the NHA tried to assist communities facing eviction acting as an intermediary trying to secure for the people security on land tenure with affordable self-help housing and people's participation. This programme, although dealing with basic problems, lacks legal and financial support

4. First land-sharing project

Wat-ladbuakhao is the first land-sharing project being implemented. An agreement was signed by which 20% of the land was given to the people in plots of about 40 square meters each, rather than being evicted, for reconstruction.

Land-sharing has been generally accepted by the authorities as a possible alternative to improve slums where land tenure is insecure and especially in cases where threat of eviction is predominant.

The method used in Bangkok has depended largely on informal negotiations and bargaining power among parties involved, including the military.

Key Factors

Some key factors to achieve land-sharing solution in Thailand

1. Strong people's organisation

It is the only real challenge that moves the government to find compromising alternatives instead of total evictions.

The result depends largely on the bargaining power of each group.

It also needs strong support from outside organisation in the negotiating process. Strong peoples' organisations will ensure the cost of eviction remains high for the landlord. It will force them to negotiate for a land-sharing.

2. Concern with political stability

The ruling elite in general and the military in particular, have been aware of the dangers of protests and demonstrations in the slums and have chosen to act to diffuse conflicts between residents and landlords which may affect political stability. To overcome criticism of the government's inability to handle these crisis, the military in particular has been quick at agreeing to land-sharing in some projects.

3. Benevolent and public-conscious landlords

The land-sharing programme is

possible only with benevolent landlords.

Many landlords also do not wish to advertise that they own slums and that they are mistreating the poor. Public owners, such as the Crown Property Bureau cannot afford to be associated with forcible action which might reflect negatively of the Royal Family to marches and to media evictions are fought against protests lead to marches and to media involvement.

4. Existing densities

Technically the density of existing slums should not be too high. The lower the existing density, the easier to negotiate with the landlord since they need only a small portion of the property. High density will require more effort, efficiency, better management capacity, etc., due to more difficulties and complications in the project.

5. Effective mediators

The roles of different mediators such as community organisers, housing authority officers, political parties, influential political figures, financial supporters, and others, are significant to achieve the agreement. It is important that these mediators do not conflict with each other.

6. A growing involvement of institutions with the slums

The media in Bangkok has given wide coverage to slum issues and eviction struggles.

Moreover, the National Housing Authority (NHA) embarked on a city-wide slum upgrading program in 1977 implementing infrastructure improvements in more than 70 areas. The officials of NHA have become accessible to slum dwellers, and some of them have often acted on people's behalf.

At the same time, a number of voluntary organisations have channels of information between communities and authorities and helped to finance a number of activities of the slums. They together with volunteers from the NHA, often provide the necessary technical assistance for exploring and preparing land-sharing alternatives with the people.

7. Democratization in the decision-making

Elected politicians cannot ignore one-fifth of the urban population living in the slums. Many have gone into the slums and have taken on a variety of advocacy roles on behalf of the people.

LOOKING BACK

Some achievements by ACHR in the last two years

EVICTIONS & HOUSING RIGHTS

THE most serious of problems concerning people's housing rights and large scale evictions in Korea, and in human housing situation in Hong Kong had been dealt with by ACHR regional action projects in 1988-1990.

The first fact finding visit to Korea before the Olympic Games in 1988, resulted in regional and global reactions on these problems.

During the following assessment mission in September 1990, it was found that considerable changes had been made, not only to the government's housing policy, but also to attitudes toward the urban poor in general.

Although changes have been attributed to the internal democratization processes occurring in Korea, ACHR's intervention at this time, with its Regional Korean Project, has also engendered changes, particularly on the issues of housing and evictions of Korea's urban poor.

ACHR is continuing to utilize all possible ways to further such positive changes.

The Fact Finding Mission to Hong Kong brought much publicity and awareness of the case of the "cage people" and the plight of some particular cases were better addressed and brought greater concern from public agencies.

These regional actions by ACHR has helped to concretise the issue of evictions and housing rights in other countries as well as in the international countries.

GRASSROOTS SOLIDARITY

After ACHR's Asian People's Dialogue in Korea and the Women's Grassroots Workshop in Bombay, there emerged a new form of solidarity amongst grassroots groups in the region.

At these gatherings people were able to meet and share personal experiences from different countries and in the process become aware of feelings and actions common to all those struggling for housing rights.

It provided powerful feedback and support for the work each had undertaken in their own countries.

Cardinal Kim's speech on the last

day of the Asian Peoples Dialogue best illustrated the importance of such occurrence. People have continued the dialogue and are still writing letters to each other.

NETWORKING

ACHR began with 19 people from 17 organizations in 10 countries: efforts have been made to contact and increase the awareness of many more concerned individuals and groups.

Today, ACHR has information on some 807 organizations and 209 individuals recorded as possible contacts throughout the world.

Although a more qualitative process needs to be developed to more effectively utilize each contact, the process of out-reach and establishing contacts has been initiated. An exchange of information and collaboration with other networks within and between the regions has also been sought and established.

REGIONAL ROLE

ACHR has been well recognized as a regional coalition by many important agencies. ESCAP and UNCHS are well aware of ACHR's existence: each has frequently requested information and cooperation for regional activities.

In November 1989, ACHR was elected to be a member of the executive committee of CITYNET, a network of local authorities and NGO groups in Asia organized under ESCAP-UNDP.

ACHR is also recognised by HIC as well as other international organizations such as Amnesty International, Hot-Lines, The Third World Network, IRED, etc...

PROFESSIONAL INPUT

The diversification of ACHR's role in 1990, to act as a regional professional group demonstrating a community-based improvement project in Ho Chi Minh City can be regarded as another concrete achievement by ACHR.

Since the first activity was initiated, only about one year ago, one can see a considerable change in the government's attitude and direction with regard to urban poor housing development in Ho Chi Minh City: from a costly and somewhat wasteful high-rise apartment development construc-

tion by the state to replace slum areas, to a community based improvement approach by people in the community themselves.

One community was selected to demonstrate the process. The authorities, convinced of its success, have now begun to extend the process to other communities. It is positively expected that such process may help contribute to the new direction of housing policy with more participation by people in Vietnam.

PUBLICATIONS

ACHR publications have been widely distributed and very well received. These include: A Battle for Housing Rights in Korea; A Report from the Fact Finding and Assessment Mission to Korea and Hong Kong; A Decent Place to Live: Urban Poor in Asia; as well as the ACHR newsletter "Housing By People".

These publications act as a spoke-piece for the beliefs and processes that ACHR wishes to present and promote. It is in itself a concrete and on-going campaign on the issues for regional and international communities.

ACHR Meeting in Manila

MEMBERS of ACHR met in Manila from 27 Sept - 2 October 1991 to chart the future direction and projects of ACHR.

General trends of housing by the poor, country situations and other factors which affect housing by the poor in Asia were analysed.

Amongst the new projects which will be taken up by the ACHR in 1992 include Special Project on the Philippines; Action-research on housing and urban poverty; and Grassroots training programme.

Ongoing activities on various issues like housing rights and evictions; research and publications; community and women; Ho Chi Minh City project; and lobbying, networking will be continued.

New issues like housing in China and evictions in Myanmar were brought up.

For more information, please contact: Somsook Boonyabancha, Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, P O Box 24-74 Klongchan, Bangkok, THAILAND