

HOUSING BY PEOPLE IN ASIA



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FROM THE EDITORS

Manila was totally surprised January 15 when 4 million people, half the city, turned out for Pope John Paul II's last mass. People are saying it may have been the largest crowd ever gathered anywhere in the world for any purpose. The crowd stretched almost a kilometer away from where the pope stood. Such a crowd shows once again the important place spirituality has in Asian hearts.

Unfortunately there is usually little connection between religious convictions and work to solve the problems of the poor, including land security and housing. Most of the people at the pope's mass were poor squatters and slum dwellers, but the largest rally ever held for their own issues gathered no more than 15,000.

To help bridge this gap a group in Manila is meeting to examine how traditional worship, prayer and religious observance can be integrated with the social teaching of the great religions and social action. If the reader has any thoughts on this subject please share them with us and we'll include this in a discussion on social problems and spirituality in our next issue.

* The main article in this issue is a digest of an article by Arif Hasan of Pakistan that examines the failures of housing programs over the past 20 years and makes suggestions for the future. The innovative solutions of HABITAT I (Vancouver 1976), including sites and services projects, slum upgrading, self-help housing and in-city relocation have failed to grow into wide ranging programs capable of putting a dent in the housing problems of our cities, Arif says. There are many reasons for this failure: including interagency competition, politics and a United Nations attachment to Western concepts of housing. Now most Asian governments admit in fact they cannot do much about the vast and growing squatter and slum areas. They deal only with squatters they want to evict from the paths of public works and favorite private developments.

The future lies in devolving political power to the neighborhood level where the main action and decisions take place, Central government can pass laws that make it possible for the neighborhood work to result in land security and other solutions.



Huge puppet of an angry Jesus Christ at a rally of Manila urban poor people: ways must be found to unite the Asian people's profound spirituality with self-help efforts to solve problems of poverty.

Also in this issue: * **The South Bronx bounces back:** dramatic improvement in an area of New York that was once called "Fort Apache". Small neighborhood groups and housing NGOs deserve most of the credit. * **Housing's First Saint:** Fr. Alberto Hurtado of Chile is on his way to canonization in the Catholic Church. He started Hogar de Cristo which has now built 200,000 houses for the poor. * **ACHR Eviction Watch fact finding team in Malaysia:** few laws protect settlers threatened by the booming economy's demand for land. * **Housing in times of disaster:** the most important first step is to involve the people in the planning and the execution of solutions. * **Cleaning up the Pasig River:** squatters on the river bank search for their own relocation sites and see President Clinton and Pope John Paul II. * **New Directions in Community Organization:** more attention must be paid to training local leaders, the environment and gender sensitivity.

HOUSING AFTER DISASTERS

[According to an article by Darryl D'Monte in the The Telegraph of Delhi (October 4) many mistakes were made in rehousing the victims of the 1993 earthquake that killed 7,865 people and left thousands of families homeless in Maharashtra, India. His review of the mistakes may help groups form guidelines on what to do or not do in housing people after disasters.]

Eager to resettle people as soon as possible, the Maharashtra State government launched a housing program worth hundreds of million of dollars. Outside funders and contractors were involved.

The government encouraged people to move to new and supposedly safer areas. The old housing stock in the area was destroyed even if not all the houses were touched by the earthquake. New houses were built, but it's not at all clear that the new areas are any safer than the old ones or that the land can provide an income to farmers.

Experts say that simple changes in design could have made the traditional housing safe; there are available techniques that would cause the stone walls of the houses to fall out if another earthquake struck. Most deaths in the earthquake were caused by stone walls falling in on the residents. The simple remedies were ignored and

new housing models advocated.

The people were not involved in the planning of the rehousing project. It's not surprising that few people are living in the newly constructed buildings, activists say.

No possession is more personal than one's home and to not consult the dwellers themselves was presumptuous, to say the least.

Instead of finished homes, it would have been cheaper and healthier sociologically to provide core houses to which residents could add incrementally. Financing the reconstruction could have been personalized also. Funds could have been credited to an individual's account on which he or she could draw as needed, earning interest otherwise. There could also have been material banks or storehouses supplying building materials at fixed prices.

By letting out most rehabilitation work to contractors, the possibility of converting a disaster into an opportunity for the regeneration of skills was lost. Why didn't the authorities encourage villagers to form their labor cooperatives and undertake masonry and carpentry jobs? Both are traditional occupations in the area, but local artisans were ousted by the contractors.

Other countries have done better. When a much bigger quake struck Iran in 1990, killing 40,000

people, the government decided reconstruction would not be done freely but at the villagers' cost with partial loans in money and materials. It took only 18 months to complete the reconstruction.

In Mexico City after the 1985 earthquake the government encouraged consultation between the victims and other agencies involved. It generated 114,000 jobs, two thirds of which were unskilled labor. The beneficiaries themselves supervised the reconstruction efforts.

The chief lesson one can draw is that the rehabilitation of people in the wake of a disaster is not so much a technocratic as a social process. The people must be involved. If this is not done there will be other examples of disaster housing mishandled.

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TWENTY YEARS OF HOUSING EFFORTS: WHY SO LITTLE TO SHOW?

Arif Hasan

[This paper was prepared for ACHR by Arif Hasan, a Pakistani architect and long time member of ACHR, as a point of departure for discussions on housing in Asia over the last 20 years. It is his own work of course, but it represents the thinking of many ACHR members with whom he has discussed urban issues, and in that sense it is an ACHR paper. Many groups have found it useful. We print selections but any reader who wants the whole text can write to us.]

The situation on the ground in Asia has changed and continues to do so increasingly. Liberalization of the economy, strategic readjustment, the tourist and manufacturing boom, and large scale demographic changes are creating both beneficiaries and victims. All this is having a major effect on housing conditions. However, formal sector policies and approaches to the housing question remain committed, in theory, to the post 1976 Habitat conference recommendations. And these have seldom, if ever, worked. This study tries to understand the causes of this failure and at the same time tries to look into the future.

A number of policy recommendations were developed at the various conferences, seminars, workshops and exchange programs that flowered after the Habitat conference. It was recommended with great passion that there should be no evictions and demolitions of squatter settlements and slums as they resulted in a loss of unreplacable housing stock. Instead they should be upgraded. Instead of building houses for low income groups, sites and services programs should be developed. These programs should be accompanied with technical advice to the plot owners and loans of both materials and money for house construction. Standards of infrastructure and construction should be lowered to make housing affordable to the poor. NGOs should be a part and parcel of the new programs and community participation in planning, implementation, management and subsequent operation and maintenance of the housing infrastructure should be developed. The creativity and potential of low income groups to build and finance housing was universally recognized and glorified. It was also recognized that a re-structuring of government institutions and procedures was

necessary to deliver the new programs.

Although, the recommendations developed were innovative and appropriate, the story of housing in the Asian region in the seventies and eighties is a dismal one. This study tries to analyze some of the reasons for the failure of this brave attempt to develop policies that could serve the shelter needs of the poor in Third World cities and thus overcome the "shelter crisis".

What Went Wrong After Habitat I?

Between the Habitat conference and the time of writing this paper, international agencies, governments and NGOs have made a large number of interventions to develop "appropriate" housing policies. Their interventions are of three types: One, development of pilot projects by the government in an attempt to overcome the constraints conventional approaches have in delivering housing to low income and lower middle income groups. This was to be followed by "scaling up" of these projects and bringing about necessary changes in laws, institutions and procedures to make the "scaling up" possible. Two, replication of "successful" NGO projects on a large scale and making their concepts and methodology a part of the official planning implementation processes. And three, bringing about major changes in government planning and delivery concepts and processes along with the necessary institutional re-structuring and training programs required to make the "new system" workable.

Almost all the projects that resulted from these interventions and their scaling up attempts have remained very limited. They have remained projects or at best have become programs. Even the "major changes" at institutional re-structuring to make the new concepts and policies workable at the national level have run into serious problems. There are a number of reasons for this. In most cases the success of the new policies being promoted required institutional re-structuring at various levels and the creation of linkages between various government agencies and institutions. This did not happen. At best changes took place only at the level

of the agencies that were directly involved with the project. Many of the policies promoted required the development of government-NGO-community links. However, these were never properly established due to differences of organizational and political culture between these three entities and the climate of hostility and suspicion that existed, and continues to exist, between them. Evictions could not be arrested either for a variety of reasons. One of them being real estate developers in most Third World countries and the support given by government functionaries to them.

Another major factor in the failure of the new approaches and policies was that their promotion is closely linked with the involvement of international agencies in the shelter sector in most Asian countries. This involvement, with its complex evaluation and monitoring systems, its array of consultants, its emphasis on surveys and documentation, its high standards (even when they are being "lowered") of development derived from the First World experience, and its culture of affluence, conflicts with the organizational culture of most middle level government bureaucrats and alienates almost all low income communities from the "processes" that are being promoted. This involvement has produced considerable research material on urban and housing conditions in Asia. However, there has been almost no research on existing processes, with the result that most indicators and definitions related to housing in Asia are derived from First World concepts, and experience has shown that they do not apply to Asian conditions. This constitutes a major problem in developing appropriate indicators and statistics and this in turn, makes appropriate planning on a large scale difficult.

Sites and Services Programs have been developed by almost all Asian countries. Their failure has been well documented and needs no elaboration. Either they have turned into empty graveyards or have been taken over by the middle classes. The reason for this is simply that governments and the formal sector see housing as a cash based activity whereas in most cases for low income communities it is the development of a system for survival. A World Bank study has shown that 55 percent of the households in Mexico City, 35 in Bangkok, 68 in Nairobi, 47 in Bogota, 64 in Ahmedabad and 63 in Madras are unable to afford the cheapest land and or dwellings available in the open markets of these cities.

Similarly, inspite of expressed intentions to the contrary, evictions and demolitions of existing settlements continue unabated, often in violation of rules and regulations. In countries with a populist and democratic political culture or inefficient establishments, it is comparatively more difficult to displace people. In countries with a powerful formal sector and "impressive" economic growth figures, the real estate mafia with full support from the political and administrative establishment displace thousands of persons every year.

The New Urban Scene

In the last two decades major changes have taken place in the urban areas of Asia. However, these changes have not brought about any significant change in urban

Two Successful Programs

There are two successful programmes in Asia that have been effective and are large in scale. These are the Kampung Improvement Programme (KIP) in Indonesia and the Million Houses Programme (MHP) Sri Lanka. In spite of its positive aspects, KIP has not been able to improve Kampung at the rate at which new Kampung are being urbanized. The resulting backlog is increasing every year. Also the government subsidy that goes into Kampung improvement seriously limits the scale of the programme. Planners feel that the programme can only expand and become sustainable if people make a larger investment in it.

The MHP in Sri Lanka has been able to mobilize and provide financial and technical support to the people and the formal and informal private sector on a nation-wide scale. In addition, the process has benefitted the government agencies and made them more responsive to the housing needs of the people and made them realize the importance of processes as opposed to conditions and targets. However, one of the authors of the programme (Susil Sirivardana) states; "What happened was that inspite of the presence of massive opportunities like a convinced head of state giving personal leadership, a clear articulation of the policy, a readiness on the part of civil society to absorb the new participatory values, the availability of space in the state system

development policies which remain by and large as described earlier in the text. What these changes mean in political, social and hence development terms, has not yet been properly addressed.

Today's city dwellers are not like their parents, and/or grand-parents, who were pioneers and as such willing to put up with deprivation. The new generation has claims on the city and are increasingly determining, not only its sociological structure, but also its political culture. As a result, a populist urban culture has developed but has not yet been articulated politically in a sufficiently forceful manner to bring about any meaningful change in the attitudes of the powers that be. It is important to note that over 40 percent of the total urban population of Asia is below the age of 20. What this will mean in terms of employment, housing and infrastructure has yet to be fully grasped.

immediately after the insurgency and a great deal of sound learning cum theoretical work being done in the country, the intended break-through has been unacceptably uneven. On the part of the poor it would be correct to say that there is considerable disillusionment at the manner in which the old order has reasserted itself to limit the space.

"This is what we have termed the Elusive Strategy Option. The best way to assess the value of these new initiatives, is to ask the question to what extent have they sought to overcome the manifest limitations of the conventional process. First, is participatory development. They show no experiential understanding of hard social mobilization. The mobilization is limited to satisfying the housing need and thereafter, the coherence is exhausted. Second, there is no awareness of the primacy of savings and credit in poverty alleviation and the need for it to be led by women. Third, they are not thinking in terms of the community building up its own financial base, so that it has the necessary autonomy to negotiate with the system, without being over-dependent. Fourth, the process cannot be sustained. It is essentially short term and poverty cannot be tackled within such short terms. Fifth, the support system is unclear about its new de-professionalized role as a facilitator and sensitive catalyst."

Arif Hasan

In addition, other sociological changes have also taken place. The extended family is giving way to the nuclear family in most cities; clan and tribal links and institutions are being replaced by community and neighbourhood organizations, and as a result there is a growing need for making use of (or developing) appropriate state institutions that can replace the functions of the rural clan or tribal ones. However, this is not happening.

The Gross Domestic Product in almost all Asian cities has grown substantially, but the price of land for housing, construction costs, rents and transportation costs have grown many times more. These factors have been brought out very clearly in studies conducted by the United Nations. In addition, given the falling value of most Asian currencies, the investment in housing and urban facilities in real terms by the state, has fallen considerably and continues to fall.

Living conditions in almost all Third World cities have deteriorated due to industrial pollution, increase in the number of vehicles and the absence of traffic management, increasingly inhuman transportation systems and air and noise pollution. In Bangkok traffic volume on the main roads increases at the rate of 15 to 20 percent every year. This doubles the volume every 5 to 6 years. According to one estimate, 500 new cars are added to the city daily. In Karachi official figures show an increase of 10.6 percent in traffic volume every year. Unofficial figures are 17 percent. In India 1.7 million vehicles are added to the traffic stock annually. In non-Asian Third World cities the situation is similar.

The new urban scene, as described above, is disturbing simply because it points towards the necessity of seeing housing as part of a larger city planning exercise which will have to deal with transportation, land-use patterns, formal and informal processes, employment, sociological and economic distortions both at the micro and macro level, and the necessary re-structuring of government agencies to make this possible. Unfortunately, housing is not being seen in this larger context.

[The author believes present local governments do not have the money, skills or the inclination to do much in the shelter field. Nor have they made serious efforts to empower people.]

In the absence of alternatives, most Asian governments, out of helplessness have accepted the development of informal housing as a fait accompli, even where it involves squatting and illegal subdivision of land, as long as it is not on land that is coveted by real estate developers or is a part of government "development" schemes which aim at increasing the "revenues" of state agencies. This was not so 20 years ago. However, no mechanisms to institutionalize the processes that lead to the creation of these settlements or to induct the informal sector institutions (that provide land, infrastructure, credit, technical support, etc.) into the planning process has as yet evolved except in the case of a few projects. In most cases these projects are the result of the dedication that individual government officials have for them.

The New Neighbourhood Scene

In spite of the chaos at the city level, conditions continue to improve for a large number of city dwellers at the neighbourhood level. This is mainly because of the institutionalization of settlement and house building processes that have emerged as a result of the demand-supply relationship during the last 20 years. In addition, the new generation of city dwellers, as has been observed earlier, has deeply entrenched interests in improving their environment and are developing the social and economic means to do so provided security of tenure is available to them.

To assist in the improvement of neighborhoods the first requisite is a scientific understanding of the non-formal processes. These processes are increasingly entrepreneurial, many community-based and some NGO supported. So far new policy directions have given greater importance to NGO activities although they are miniscule as compared to the other two. This needs to be rectified.

An attempt at a scientific understanding of these non-formal processes is being made in many

countries. However, there are almost no attempts to relate this understanding to the larger institutional issues and planning processes. Without the creation of such a relationship, the development of viable policy approaches will not be possible. Such an understanding has to be followed by the development of a vision which accommodates non-formal processes in planning and implementation and as a result proposes fundamental changes in how planning, implementation and management are done.

In most Asian countries the adoption of the above agenda politically conflicts with the interests of the ruling elite. In addition, it is incompatible with the manner in which professionals are trained at academic institutions and the manner in which research is carried out. It is also incompatible with the institutional biases of international funding agencies and First World training institutions. However, there are an increasing number of Asian practitioners (and First World professionals) who think in the above terms. They need support and they need to be assisted in taking up these issues politically.

A populist urban culture has developed but has not yet been articulated politically in a sufficiently forceful manner to bring about any meaningful change in the attitudes of the powers that be.

Decentralized local government at the neighbourhood level is also an essential ingredient of what is being proposed. Such a government cannot emerge by framing a law. It has to be related to a real situation at the grass-root level and the various groups that would be interested in promoting this concept and removing the bottlenecks that exist in achieving it, have to come together.

One has to accept that the proposed changes are not likely to happen soon. However, efforts can be made to promote them. Some of these are discussed below.

Laws related to land and housing need to be reviewed in the larger legal context so that the rights of people living in informal settlements can be protected and existing laws and court judgements can

be implemented. People living on land should have the first choice of purchasing it. Legal instruments to acquire land for housing at reasonable rates should be developed along with the procedures for implementing these instruments. Similarly, the credit systems need to be revised to make them compatible with the sociology, economics and culture of low and lower middle income groups. All contradictions between existing and/or proposed laws, procedures and regulations should be reconciled for only then can there be a hope of their effective implementation. This requires extensive research and a first hand knowledge of the situation on the ground. It must be recognized that this research cannot be done without the active involvement and guidance of NGOs who have been working with people.

Successful housing and related NGO or government projects should be transformed into research and training institutes with their project areas being used for demonstration purposes. Here government officials of all levels, NGO staff members, community activists and students and teachers from professional and technical institutions should be trained collectively for replicating these projects.

However, the most important aspect of what is being suggested is the creation of a political and cultural environment that can make it happen. Here the existing linkages, however weak they are at present, between communities, NGOs, the media, academic institutions, formal and informal production and marketing systems and government agencies, need to be strengthened. The dominant actors in the urban development and housing drama (such as politicians, government agencies, international and funding agencies, etc.) can play an important role in making this happen. However, they will have to make their "other roles" subservient to this objective, which may perhaps not be possible.

It will take time for the agenda outlined in this paper to materialize and there will be periods of doubt and difficulty. For the immediate future to be better than the last two decades there will have to be an increasing tolerance between the world of official planning and the informal sector. If this tolerance develops it should not be allowed to become a new status-quo. As it is the planners are defending a status-quo whose quo has lost its status.

A HOUSING SAINT

[On October 16 Pope John Paul II proclaimed as Blessed a Jesuit priest from Chile, Father Alberto Hurtado. He was famous for his work in low cost housing. Most of our readers are non-Christians, so it may be useful to explain that to proclaim a person Blessed or a Saint means the Catholic Church believes they were truly holy and are with God in heaven. Fr. Hurtado was the predecessor of Fr. Josse Van Der Rest at Hogar de Cristo in Chile. Fr. Van Der Rest founded SELAVIP; Fr. Jorge Anzorena is the SELAVIP secretary for Asia.]

Alberto Hurtado was born on January 22, 1901 at Vina del Mar in Chile. His father died when he was a small child; as his mother could not afford to live on her own, she moved to Santiago with her two children to live with relatives. She passed on to them a deep Christian sense along with respect for and service of the poor.

His vocation to the Jesuits took root while he was in school, but his mother had need of him and he decided to wait. He studied Law at the Catholic University of Santiago while working in the evenings. He tried his hand in the field of politics, which cost him a bullet wound in the head. In 1923 he was admitted to the bar, and joined the Jesuits on August 14 of that same year.

He was concerned with a structural solution to the problem of poverty, in order to root out its causes. This concern is what gave rise to the works he founded, such as the Hogar de Cristo, the review *Mensaje*, the Chilean Trade Union, as well as his books Social Humanism, Trade Unionism and several others.

Father Hurtado died of cancer of the pancreas on August 18, 1952. Two months earlier he had received the news of his impending death as a gift from God: "I've won the lottery! I'm happy, very happy!"

SOUTH BRONX BOUNCES BACK

[New York City's South Bronx area was once infamous for its miles of burned out buildings. President Ronald Reagan said he hadn't seen anything like it since London after the bombings of World War II. Now new houses are going up thanks to local citizens groups.]

In a city full of surprises, few are as striking as the contrast between the 20-year-old image of the burned out South Bronx and the reality after what officials call the nation's largest urban rebuilding effort. With more than \$1 billion in public dollars spent in the South Bronx since 1986, 19,000 apartments have been refurbished, more than 2,500 new houses have been built for working class home buyers and 2,000 more are under construction.

More than 50 abandoned buildings that once stood like rotten teeth along major arteries like the Cross Bronx and Major Deegan expressways have been reclaimed as midrise apartment houses.

Even in the impoverished interior of the South Bronx, where rampant crime inspired the movie "Fort Apache, the Bronx," rows of one-and two-family homes with suburban backyards have reappeared on blocks once burned, abandoned and left for dead.

The outside world has seen only glimpses of the changes: a new development here, a ground-breaking there or a ribbon-cutting there. And while many patches of the South Bronx are still decayed and dangerous, the efforts taken together represent a fundamental shift for a section of the city that less than 20 years ago many considered a lost cause.

"There has been no more dramatic revival of a community in the country," said Paul S. Grogan, the president of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, which aids housing groups nationwide. "It's particularly dramatic because the South Bronx went so far down, down to rubble. If it were more widely

known what happened in the South Bronx, it could be a symbol of the possibility of revival."

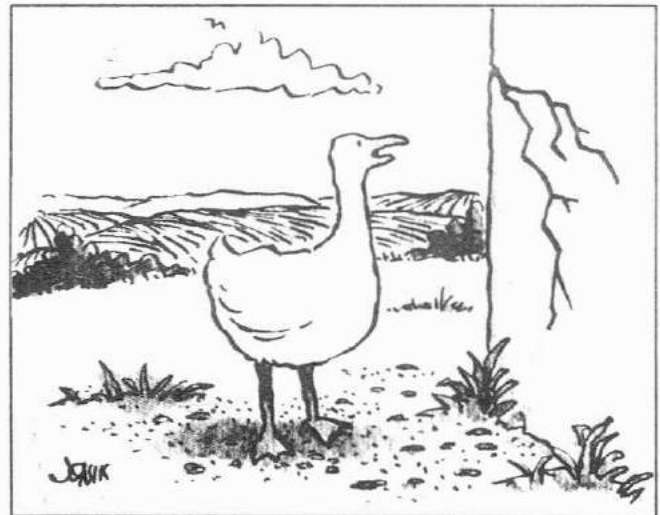
He attributed the success of the effort to local housing groups that in many cases were involved in financing and marketing the developments and in assisting residents after they move in with everything from maintenance to social services.

In the 1970's, many of those building became fuel for the arson fires that made the South Bronx infamous. But after Mayor Edward I. Koch initiated a \$5 billion housing renovation plan in 1986, the city and nonprofit groups began renovating thousands of apartments each year.

Howard Cosell, announcing the 1977 World Series from Yankee Stadium declared "the Bronx is burning" as the camera panned a sky alive with fires. And in the 1981 film "Fort Apache, the Bronx," crime and depravity wear down Officer Murphy, played by Paul Newman, who says: "I'm burned out as the damn building on Charlotte Street."

But Charlotte Street is now a development of 90 single-family homes on grassy lots that look like they were transported by tornado from Southern California. Metal grating on ground floor windows is the only reminder of their true address.

New York Times



"Quack."

United Airlines Magazine

HOUSING AND EVICTION IN MALAYSIA

Atty. Jose Mendoza

[Atty. Mendoza of the SALIGAN Law Center, Manila, with Judge Rajindar Sachar, special United Nations rapporteur on evictions, and Ted Anana of Urban Poor Associates also in Manila composed a fact finding mission for ACHR's Eviction Watch program. They were in Malaysia December 20-22 of last year. They met the Housing Minister Ting Chewpeh, other government officials and the communities affected. Here is a report on what they found.]

In Malaysia, a country of rapid economic growth, people are often asked to give way to national development by giving up their lands and houses, and often, their jobs and their children's schooling for highways, airports, government offices, and even golf courses. Yet frequently no adequate provision for compensation, resettlement and alternative employment is contained in the budget of the development plan.

While there are perhaps close to 100 golf courses in the country — many of them with provisions for all-night golf — and 200 targeted by the year 2000, which cater to the wealthy and Japanese businessmen on weekend visits, there are many poor Malaysians who have lived on the land where they are housed for a hundred years without security of tenure and are in fear of imminent eviction. Likewise notably lacking is a clear policy to deal with and look after those that will inevitably be displaced by such rapid development and construction as is taking place in and around Kuala Lumpur.

Some of the problems of those to be dislocated as a result of this kind of development are as follows:

* Because of rapid industrialization and development in such states as Johore, Selangor and Malacca many plantations devoted to oil palm or rubber are sold for conversion to factories, townships or golf courses. While their owners transfer to East

Malaysian states like Sabah and Sarawak to start other plantations, the plantation worker who, of course, is not transferred is frequently evicted from his house with compensation only for his separation from employment and not for the loss of housing.

Since the plantation owner provides housing, and sometimes schools for the children of the workers, solely in consideration of the employment, the worker is only compensated for his separation from work when in fact what he has lost is his job, his house, and even his children's school. Malaysian laws require that plantation workers be housed, but do not require compensation of the loss of housing that accompanies the separation from work. Neither is their plight considered in fixing the price for the sale of the land. Many plantation workers facing eviction are already third generation workers in these plantations having been born there and having raised their families there.

* Urban expansion resulting from development often requires the use of land lying on the fringes of the known city which has often been abandoned or has remained idle for decades. In Malaysia, many of these lands are occupied by groups of families without the benefit of title but with an unusual claim to their possession. In the 1970's, it is claimed, a sizeable rural population was enticed by the government to migrate to the cities to bolster a labor force which was far too inadequate to meet the demands of an already increasingly industrialized country. Aside from the promise of jobs and better income, these families were also guaranteed eventual ownership of the lands that they were to occupy at the start of their employment.

The government denies this and calls them squatters. They call themselves urban pioneers. Interestingly, some of their communities do not evince the usual trademarks of squatter areas such as congestion. Houses of the urban pioneers are well-spaced and development had taken place in preparation for the occupation of the land.

Malaysian newspapers frequently carry stories of evictions and demolitions. There have already been dozens of cases of forced evictions in and around the country, and many more are expected. These are,

however, carried out under the authority of laws that make such situations of dislocation possible while not providing alternatives for those to be displaced. An example of such a law is the Land Acquisition Act of 1960 which allows government wide discretion in expropriating lands. Acquisitions under this law are frequently questioned on the basis of the sufficiency of compensation and, on the side of the poor occupants of the land, concerning the recognition of their right to decent shelter.

Affected groups have been organizing themselves to gain support from others in similar situations, but also to advocate the recognition of their rights. One group of urban pioneers has issued a statement urging a settlement of five demands. They intend to impose these as a condition for any candidate in the upcoming elections who wishes to win their sizeable support. The five demands are:

- * Relocation should be mutually agreeable
- * Legalize squatters as urban pioneers and provide basic amenities.
- * Safeguard the human, property and land rights of the urban pioneers.
- * Abolish all laws that legalize forced evictions and arbitrary demolition.

Other efforts are being made as well, and an NGO called Jawatankuasa Sokongan Peneroka Bandar is in the forefront of this effort.

It must be clear that this is not an argument against development (although there must be a saturation point for golf course). And neither is this an argument made by anti-development activists. But true development does not throw out its greatest productive assets, its labor force, nor does a true caring society throw out its families. Left with no options, these people will inevitably squat on any available land, and this will certainly be unproductive for all concerned. In the final analysis this is anti-development.

The point must finally be made that security of land tenure and the adequacy of shelter is an essential component of a nation's development and must be seen as essential to lasting and sustainable progress. Above growth-centeredness, development must be people-centered.

People say there is no land when it comes to developing low-cost houses, but they can't seem to tell me where they got land to develop golf courses.

Anwar Ibrahim, Deputy Prime Minister, Malaysia

HOUSING BRIEFS

"Housing the poor is a productive use of money, while housing the rich is mere consumption," according to Mohammed Yunus, head of Bangladesh's Grameen Bank.

Government money that houses the poor results in economic growth in the community, not so with the rich. A reasonable conclusion for a poor country interested in housing and economic growth, therefore, would be to use its limited housing funds exclusively on the poor. Unfortunately in many countries this money still goes overwhelming to the rich and well off.

A decent house makes a family more productive. It allows poor people to work in their home environment at some form of money making activity. It allows children to study and the whole family to become healthier, free of the ills caused by poor drainage, lack of water, etc. All this helps the economy. Rich housing has none of these advantages. Rich people already have adequate housing.

The Kampong Improvement Program of Surabaya discovered that when people had a clean, covered space in which to work, they began weaving, sewing, packaging, etc. No loans or other incentives were needed.

The Grameen Bank has extended 300,000 housing loans, all in the rural areas. They are for amounts of \$300-\$600 payable in ten years at 8% interest. The money buys four solid concrete posts a corrugated iron roof and a concrete floor. People add sawali or other types of walls. The house is small, about 10 sq. meters, but it is clean and attractive and keeps the rain and heat out. In the rural areas a small house is acceptable since it is set in a wide farm plot. People repay the loan weekly.

The bank is innovative in its care to see the women and children benefit from the new houses. It requires a woman who wants a housing loan to get the title to the land from her husband. After a struggle the woman usually get the title. It is done to protect the woman and children: if the marriage breaks up, the man must move out, while the woman and children are safe.

CLEANING THE PASIG RIVER

Fides Bagasao

[In 1993 the Philippine Government announced plans to clean the polluted Pasig River that flows through Manila. The first press releases said 60,000 poor squatters living along the river would be evicted, claiming they were responsible for the pollution. The project is headed by the Philippine's First Lady Amelita Ramos.]

There are about 12,000 poor families along the Pasig River and its tributaries, or 60,000 persons. They live in several cities and towns, including Manila, Pasig, San Juan Mandaluyong and Makati.

There are two types of housing situations: one type is composed of the houses standing on stilts in the water or actually overhanging the river. The second type are the houses a few meters from the water. About 2,000 families of the first type are scheduled for relocation in the near future on the grounds they are in danger of being swept away in time of typhoons and monsoon rains. The people make their living in the area around their homes and don't want distant relocation that will cost them this livelihood.

The squatters cause two percent of the river's pollution. The industries along the river cause 46% of all pollution. Also, the river is the sewer for most of Manila; only a few areas of the city have a sewer system that doesn't end up in the river.

Three Filipino NGOs work with the squatters — Community Organization of the Philippines Enterprise (COPE), CO-TRAIN and Urban Poor Associates. They organized 23 pockets of those destined for demolition so that the people could have a say in what happened to them.

These communities have a population of from 300-4,000 persons. Once the communities were organized, they formed an alliance called in English Alliance to Save the Pasig River. The name suggests to the public that the squatters want a clean river, but

they also want to protect their homes and families. The Alliance made a special effort to link up with environmental groups and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Poisoner of the River Award.

To draw attention to the pollution in the river and to highlight the guilt of the industries along the banks, the people awarded prizes to the worst polluters. They got data from the DENR about the industries on the river, and then organized a parade of boats that sailed up the river on Earth Day April 23 and gave Poisoner Awards to a large sugar refinery and a food company. The boats stopped near the factories; people read out the award citation over loudspeakers. The factories deserved the awards; the water near the food company was black and thick as oil and had a foul smell. The awarding caught the media's attention. The people were recognized as participants in solving the problem of pollution in Pasig River. Since that time the two industries have installed pollution controls.

The people met with the First Lady to tell her they were willing to help in the clean up campaign, and they offered to dismantle their shacks on stilts provided they had somewhere decent to go. They offered to help clean the river by picking up garbage in boats and other ways. They also presented their



Squatter housing along the Pasig River. Originally government claimed the squatters polluted the river. Now it is clear they create only 2% of the problem. Those who face eviction are looking for decent relocation sites.

proposal for in-city relocation so they could continue in their present jobs.

They got the support of Mrs. Ramos for all of this, but they couldn't find empty land available near their neighborhoods that they could afford. Mrs. Ramos supported efforts that involved the people in the clean up work.

The people were given a place on the government technical committee that took care of relocation. When they couldn't find land near their homes that they could afford, they widened their search to include empty land 20-30 km outside Manila. They visited the areas and discussed the pros and cons of what they saw. The process is on-going, but the government is after them to hurry up and decide.

The Clinton Visit.

Despite the agreement the Alliance had with the government, the week before President Clinton's visit in early November, the local government demolished some squatter houses that he might see on his way to visit President Ramos. There was no thirty day notice of demolition and no prepared relocation site for the people. The people filed a protest with the Commission on Human Rights, and brought the children of the families whose houses were demolished to the hotel where Clinton was staying. They were able to get good press coverage, including a CNN interview. Police took away the children's placards when Clinton's party actually came into view.

Some Reflections

There are problems in organizing people when they are on the brink of eviction and feeling desperate. Different possibilities, some involving money, are held out to them, so that the leaders may be divided and become critical of one another. People want a solution at any cost, and who can blame them.

Whatever happens now, the people will get a slightly better relocation solution than they would have

received if they hadn't organized. Sometimes NGOs fighting eviction are discouraged when they see people relocated despite all their efforts. They have, however, made a difference and they have prepared the people for future struggles.

Very useful in the Pasig River work was the link up with the environment groups. They have a better image than the urban poor and better access to media and influential persons.

Schoolchildren who together with their families were spared temporarily from demolition because of the Pope's visit to the country Jan. 12-16 sent him a letter asking him to intercede with President Ramos to allow them to finish their schooling this year and to demolish their houses only at the end of the school year.

What are the Rights of the Urban Poor?

This newsletter recently received the draft of the Charter of Asian Human Rights, a project of the Asian Human Rights Commission and the Christian Conference of Asia. There are sections on peasants, workers, people with HIV/AIDS, youth, women, old people and cultural minorities, but none on the urban poor who make up 50% of the urban population in most cities.

We don't want to criticize the authors of the draft; rather we suggest we take this chance to draw up a list of such rights and submit it to the authors of the Charter. The other sectors have an average of 5-10 rights assigned. For example peasants are said to have the right to own the land they till. Fishermen have the right to be protected from foreign or large commercial fishing. Is anyone interested? Please send your lists and we'll send them on to the authors of the charter.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FOR THE 1990s

[In November 1993 some 34 community organizers and local leaders from six Asian countries met in Baguio, Philippines to review 20 years of community organizing in Asia and to plan for the future. They spoke from long and concrete experience. The organizers had over 150 years of organizing activity among them. The local leaders had spent most of their lives in community work. Here are some of their reflections on the past and the future.]

Manuals that offer rules and concrete steps for organizing are useful but we wish to state that organizing a community is an art in the way that raising a child is an art. Each community or child is different, so that a good organizer, just as a good mother, treats each differently and understands the peculiar strengths and weaknesses of each. Art deals with individuality; there are rules and traditions of art that must be studied and mastered, but much room is left to creativity and individual judgment.

There is no single model of what a people's organization should be, nor any strict prescription for how an organizer should act. However, certain basic rules or principles are non-negotiable, for example, that the people make the basic decisions and have control of their organization; this reflects CO's belief that only people that decide for themselves will become independent.

As in raising a child, love and concern are very important in

organizing. Organizing is more than a bag of tricks of an omniscient superwoman or superman. It is rather relating to poor people with hope and energy and with a willingness to share sacrifices. The organizer must be a model of many virtues — hardwork, discipline, optimism, courage, decency, concern — all of which presume he or she has genuine love and commitment. Our workshop wished to reaffirm this old truth.

We also believe community organizing makes better human beings, not just more powerful or prosperous ones. How to do this, of course, is the age long concern of all the great religions, and obviously it's not easy. COs would like to believe that organizing and forming better people go together, that by organizing we win concrete gains for people and also help them at the same time to become better human beings by encouraging them to make sacrifices, to share, to be concerned for others.

Community organization provides a milieu of struggle and cooperation around issues so that ordinary persons find opportunities for courage, initiative and sacrifice. Whether a person takes advantages of the opportunities is up to each individual.

We also have to have a realistic view of success. A resource person said the big question for community workers is to know when they have succeeded. Success doesn't always mean victories necessarily, because sometimes

victories may be beyond a people's strength. Organizers know that after years of effort there may not be a great deal of success in concrete terms. An organizer should then find satisfaction in having helped form a more critical and more united people. Whether there are many or few victories the struggle to form such a people goes on. After all is said and done, forming people is the CO's work: organizers prepare people who change their world when and as they can.

In general organizers have found that it is fairly easy to involve large communities of poor people in the organizing process and to have some initial successes around issues, such as, water, light and footpaths. A people's organization can be formed around these issues.

However, we are more aware now of community organization's limitations than we were twenty years ago, and we know that there are no instant panaceas for social ills, not even people's organizations.

What happens often is that the more basic problems of the people, land or jobs, are harder to solve. The land issue, for example, can drag on for years, with seemingly endless meetings and compromises; the leaders can begin to quarrel among themselves, become selfish and seek some immediate advantage. It takes a skilled organizer to deal with all the problems.

What does an organizer do, for example, when the people's

organization becomes bogged down in long, snail paced negotiations with government that sap its energy? Should the people abandon the talks, or threaten to abandon them if progress isn't made by such a date? Should they continue the talks but give them a low priority and pursue their demands in other ways? Does the organization have the strength to do this successfully? Can the people bring sufficient pressure to bear? What tactics should be used? These are some of the problems an organizer faces a year or two into the work.

There are other problems. As the organizing process goes on, government and other groups become more skilled at dividing people, and adroit at deflecting the people's actions. Governments learn to balance the carrot with the stick. Also leaders and organizers become entrenched and bureaucratic, so that often decision making is limited to the leaders, with the ordinary people left out. When the leaders fail to keep abreast of the people's opinions, the people look to other leaders or causes.

After a few years of life such troubles have begun in nearly all the people's organizations known to the Baguio participants. Some organizations worked through the problems; others stagnated. The life of a people's organization is as much a rollercoaster as the life of an individual.

Still despite all the difficulties there are many peoples organizations in Asia that are 10-20 years old — ZOTO and SAMA-SAMA in Manila, PROUD in Bombay, SOCO's organizations in

Hong Kong, others in Seoul, Bombay, Calcutta, Bangkok and elsewhere. All of them have had ups and downs, good times and bad times, and are still around.

At the Baguio meeting the participants gave much time to discussing the factors that ensure peoples organizations will develop in a normal healthy fashion. These factors include; effective preparation of local leaders, popular education programs, workable structures for their peoples organizations, constant action, a clear vision and concrete, achievable goals.

Local Leaders

Much of the earlier writing on community organization centers on the training and activity of the community organizer, which makes a great deal of sense if the discussion is about the early phases of a peoples organization. In the beginning the organizer is the key dominant figure: he or she is guide, motivator, life model (of a simple life style, dedication and courage, for example), protector, strategist and father or mother confessor all rolled into one. This is natural enough and appropriate since by definition the people are, as Paolo Freire, Franz Fanon and others have noted, lacking in confidence, passive, and sunk in a culture of poverty. Though generally people may not be quite as badly off as these writers say, still the major role in the beginning must be that of the organizer.

As the organizing work continues, however, the focus of

attention should turn to the local people and the local leaders. The skills, attitudes, courage, imagination and resourcefulness of the organizer must be transferred to the local people. Easier said than done. It may be difficult but this transfer of skills must take place. In the matter of settling internal leadership quarrels, for example, the organizer may settle quarrels in the early stages of the program, when the people are still afraid of confronting one another, but in time peacemaking must become the people's job.

Organizers are basically teachers and their reward should be to see the people learn how to do things for themselves, though there probably will never be a time when a poor people's group doesn't need some outside organizing help, if only on a part time basis. It's important that organizers and other professionals (lawyers, architects, etc.) only propose and clarify issues, but allow the ordinary people to decide. This is a revolutionary concept in Asia where the rich and the powerful have traditionally made all the decisions.

The organizer must focus on furthering the formation of leaders who have been engaged in community action efforts for a year or more. A community organizer can train men and women who have demonstrated leadership potential in special training seminars. Besides seminars a good way to train leaders is to help them visit other organizing areas within the city, country, or overseas. The organizer then helps them reflect on the work they've seen. Most changes in development work have come from such a

process that gives people a chance to hear new ideas and see new ways of doing things. Leaders should be well prepared for these visits or they will learn little. They should be helped to know what to look for, and how to appreciate other people's ways. The visits will strengthen them in their work; they will see the poor people's struggle carries on everywhere.

Often there's no need to travel far. In the next squatter area or the next town there are people organizing in different ways, and much can be learned from visiting them. Groups must first admit humbly that they have much to learn.

But outside of seminars and visits, how are veteran local leaders formed? In general the organizer must see the leaders of a peoples organization as a team and build up a spirit of cooperation among them through which they complement and balance each other. No leader has all the skills: leaders who are able to think on their feet and who are articulate should be the spokespersons; those with peacekeeping skills should preserve unity, and those with ideas and imagination should have freedom to initiate actions. The organizer has to help the leaders recognize their own strengths and weaknesses and those of the other leaders and how to put all the skills together for the common good. Leaders must be encouraged to listen to one another, everyone should get a chance to talk freely about what they think should be done, even if it's only to say "yes" or "no".

The organizer must also think

in terms of individuals: each leader has his or her own motivational needs and requires a different mix of encouragement, criticism and guidance. Some leaders have to be challenged; others criticized; others quietly pushed or encouraged. Leaders have different intellectual levels and needs; they need distinct amounts and levels of inputs, reading, theory, etc. An organizer is like an athletic coach building teamwork through building up individuals. It's a job every father or mother of a large family understands. The good of the



community is primarily the leaders' responsibility, but the organizer through his own hard work and commitment shows them what this responsibility entails in the day to day routine. Every great religious leader has formed his close followers in such a way.

Organizers must also be very sensitive to leaders' personal problems. Leaders have all the problems of other poor people: they may see their children turn into drug addicts; they lose their jobs; their husbands beat them if they are women, etc. The organizer must be aware of the extra load a leader is

carrying when something like that happens, and must help the leader cope. Often money isn't the biggest need; it's rather a matter of understanding and good advice. An organizer who's able to guide his or her leaders through their personal crises is very valuable indeed.

It will help the development of local leaders if financial arrangements are made by which they can recover the money they spend in the service of the community (transportation money, for example) and funding to cover the loss of some of the income a leader suffers when he's busy with community affairs. The Baguio participants suggested all money given to leaders should be approved by the people's organization and some money, if possible, should be raised in the community through raffles, dances, dues, etc. Leaders can also be helped in ways that are not strictly cash: They can be given a housing allowance or scholarships for their children. These recommendations are for veteran, proven leaders, not for those in the first year or two of community service.

But money is only one problem. Very active leaders tend to neglect their families. To avoid this they should be helped to work out a good understanding with their spouses and children of the nature and demands of their work and arrive at a good time management plan. If they don't, there will be problems. Perhaps day care service for leaders' children can be set up.

[To be continued next issue. The complete reflection will soon be printed as a booklet.]

EVICITION UPDATE

[ACHR sponsors EVICTION WATCH a network of groups in Asia who monitor evictions and help the people affected safeguard their housing rights. Eviction Watch is only a year old, so its reporting is still far from adequate. We offer here the latest information available. Some figures were already given in the last issue of this newsletter.

- ♦ The Society for Community Organization of Hong Kong reports that the government wants to remove some 30,000 squatters living on the roofs of old private buildings. Also facing eviction are 600,000 households occupying public flats the government will redevelop and improve now that land values have risen considerably.
- ♦ In Seoul 700,000 people were evicted in the years leading up to the 1988 Olympics. About 100,000 of those people transferred to the outskirts of Seoul and are again facing eviction.
- ♦ ACHR member Fr. Joe Maier estimates an average of five evictions involving some 300 families take place each month in the slums of Bangkok. Most of the evictees are renters.
- ♦ Antonio Pradjasto of the Institut Sosial Jakarta told Eviction Watch that each month about five evictions occur among the 3 million squatters in that city.
- ♦ Varathan Selvan of the Urban Pioneer Support Committee of Malaysia says between 10,000 to 15,000 families were evicted in 1994 in the Klang Valley around Kuala Lumpur. The government and private developers are literally changing the face of the valley, bulldozing old communities and plantations to build high rise condominium, golf courses, townships, factories, a new government administrative center, and an international airport. Kuala Lumpur will host the Commonwealth Games in 1998.
- ♦ In Burma the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) demolished slums and squatter settlements in Rangoon as part of its crackdown on the pro-democracy movement two years ago. About 50,000 urban poor families were evicted and relocated 30 kms outside of Rangoon.
- ♦ In the Philippines at least 11,000 people were illegally evicted in 1994. The Philippine government says it has no

Country/City	Period	Affected Persons
Metro Manila	July 1992-Nov. 1994	96,420
Kuala Lumpur	Sep. 1992-early 1993	10,750
Jakarta	1989-1992	27,318
Rabaul, Papua New Guinea	June 1994	6,000
Rangoon	1991-1992	300,000
Bangkok & other Thai cities	Oct. 1987-Mar. 1994	9,056
Phom Penh	1994	4,914
Hong Kong	Jan. 1994-Apr. 1994	450
China	April 1994	30,000
South Korea	Sep. 1993-Mar. 1994	30,250
Karachi	Feb. 1993	10,000
Dacca	1990 to 1992	162,000
Bombay	Jan. 1994-Mar. 1994	45,000
Jalpaiguri, West Bengal	Feb. 1994	1,140
Kathmandu	December 1991	840
TOTAL		734,139

records of how many people are evicted.

Housing Rights

Many countries — including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Burma, China and Indonesia — have not signed the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which is the main guarantor of housing rights. Even among those who signed, there are some big violators of housing rights.

In a meeting with Housing Minister Ting Chew Peh of Malaysia, Justice Rajindar Sachar, the United Nations' special rapporteur on evictions, pointed out that human rights cannot be treated merely as a humanitarian matter, that is, something to be observed or not depending on the good will of the government. Recognizing a human right demands carrying out of an obligation to respect, to promote, and to fulfill the right.

Reports received by Eviction Watch indicate that where people assert their rights, they are able to stop evictions, secure greater compensation and receive adequate relocation. Asserting rights often leads to the formation and strengthening of existing peoples organizations. Federation of these groups leads to greater strength.