

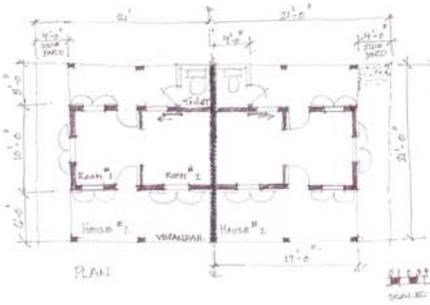
# THE GOPALGANJ HOUSING MODEL

a way forward for  
**community driven**  
**affordable urban housing**



*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*

PLAN



FRONT ELEVATION



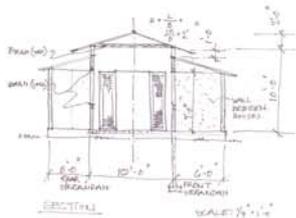
REAR ELEVATION



SIDE ELEVATION



SECTION



END VIEW



Drawing by: Myma Poirier, Housing Consultant

## Forced Slum Eviction Frequently Violates Human Rights

Bangladesh is signatory to a number of international resolutions that protect the rights of slum dwellers. One such resolution, the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, stipulates that all States have a fundamental obligation to protect and improve houses and neighbourhoods, rather than damage or destroy them. The National Housing Policy 1993 affirms the right to habitation and housing for all and compels the Government to take steps to avoid forcible relocations or displacement of slum dwellers.

## Gopalganj Eviction

South Molavi Para Community Development Committee (CDC) was formed in February 2001 and most of the 1,935 people in its 387 households had lived on the site for more than 35 years.

On 21st October 2009, the afternoon before eviction, the residents of South Molavi Para CDC learnt by loudspeaker that their houses were to be destroyed and they were to be made homeless the next day. They were told that, in the name of aesthetic improvement, the district administration had decided to reclaim the land on which the community was living on. Early the next morning teams of demolition workers began tearing down houses and demolishing latrines, tubewells and drains. What took almost ten years to construct was destroyed in just one day. Almost ten years of urban poverty reduction efforts in this CDC were laid to waste through the swift blows of the demolition crew. Physical assets worth more than BDT 17 million that the Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction project (UPPR) had helped construct were destroyed, the financial equivalent of more than a year's salary per household.

Shocked, angry and desperate, the residents of South Molavi Para CDC scraped together whatever meagre possessions they could find and went in search of a new place to call home. Some families went back to the villages they had migrated from to call on relatives to house them, while other families moved to different slums in Gopalganj to start again. Some families stayed amongst the ruins of their former homes, salvaging whatever materials had not been destroyed to set up flimsy shelters.

Slum settlements are the visible face of urban poverty in Bangladesh. In the absence of public and private sector initiatives to provide affordable and secure housing for the urban poor as well as commercial bank loans to stimulate affordable housing enterprises, slum living has become an unavoidable reality and so has the threat of eviction.

Lack of security of land tenure remains a major constraint on poverty reduction. Access to land is an inseparable ingredient in a poor household's ability to survive, earn, thrive and lift itself out of poverty. Aside from being a basis for shelter and access to services, secure land rights can act as a safety net in times of hardship and provide financial security. Secure tenure and housing also encourages people to invest in improved housing and the land itself, while attracting public and private investment in the community as well as other services and infrastructure.

It is estimated that between 1996 and 2004, 115 forced evictions took place across Dhaka, Chittagong and Dinajpur, making some 300,000 people homeless.



Evictions are cruel, humiliating and in breach of international law. They result in people losing their possessions, social networks and access to work and services. The forcible eviction of almost 2000 people in Gopalganj on 22nd October 2009 was one such case.



At least 60,000 people were displaced by evictions in 27 of Dhaka's slum settlements between 2006 and 2008 alone. This happened despite a Supreme Court Order.



In response to  
the urgency of urban poverty,  
a growing number of  
development organizations  
are devoting  
resources to  
improving health,  
education and  
livelihoods in slum  
settlements.  
Slum evictions reverse  
the progress that  
these initiatives make

Gopalganj Housing Model is  
implemented by



Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction  
Local Government Engineering Department

In partnership with

Comprehensive Disaster Management  
Programme [ Phase ii ]

and



UN HABITAT



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# URBAN PARADOXES

## Evictions and Human Development

Slum evictions bring to light many urban paradoxes. Despite an acute housing shortage in Bangladesh it is estimated that demand exceeds supply by over six million housing units. Meanwhile with a declining trend in house ownership in urban areas, slums are being demolished without the provision of alternative shelter for their inhabitants. The reality is that forced eviction without relocation simply shifts poor people from one slum to another or leads to the development of more slums, depleting valuable

housing stock and land. Despite slum evictions, the number of slums continues to increase.

Slum evictions have a negative impact on progress on Human Development as well as development work. Tenure security for the urban poor has drastically deteriorated, incidences of slum evictions have significantly increased and the conditions of slums have worsened due to increased population density.

### Tenure Security

Parallel to rapid urbanization, an equally momentous challenge is the growing inequality in urban areas that is reflected in the growth of an already sizeable proportion of the population living in slums. Security of tenure is also recognized as a critical component for successful integration of such settlements into the fabric of urban life, as well as facilitating improvements in service delivery. This in

turn would present various solutions to address the issue of affordable housing and

urban service delivery while guaranteeing the right to adequate shelter.



# UNDP/UPPR Response

On 9 November 2009, UNDP with UPPR support issued an official statement expressing deep concern over the legitimacy of the eviction and requested the district administration's support in assisting the evicted community and requesting the postponement of any other evictions. UNDP reminded the district administration that forced evictions are a "gross violation of human rights" and that when evictions are unavoidable, the Government is obliged to ensure that alternative suitable solutions are provided. The district administration was advised that UPPR's participatory settlement and land mapping process had identified some



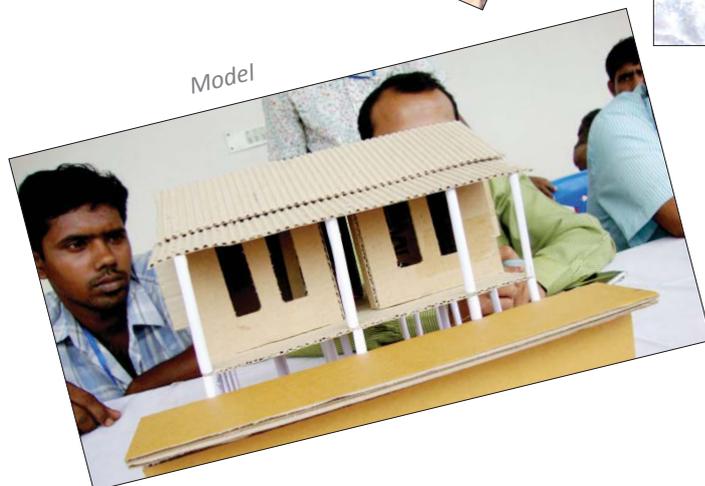
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52 parcels of vacant government and privately owned land that could be used to alleviate the suffering of the evicted slum dwellers.

The Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP-II) has expressed a commitment to contribute to the housing component, access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, as well as disaster risk reduction technical expertise in the effort to resettle the evicted households. A series of multi-partner meetings were held between CDMP, the Mayor, the Deputy Commissioner (DC), and representatives from UPPR.

## Partnership and Community Driven Cooperation

The evicted community along with stakeholders identified government vacant land in the Pourashava for a resettlement project. After holding negotiations, the Government through the Ministry of Land allocated 4.16 acres on a 99-year lease to the Gopalganj Pourashava in June 2010 for resettling the evicted people. The urban poor communities, in collaboration with the Pourashava and with the technical assistance of UPPR and ACCA/ACHR project, developed some models of low-cost housing through rigorous consultative and participatory processes.



CDMP-II agreed to provide the Gopalganj Pourashava BDT 61 million for construction of 260 household units for the Mandartola resettlement project for extreme poor and poor households of UPPR's evicted communities in Gopalganj through the Community Housing Development Fund(CHDF).

# Community Housing Development Fund (CHDF)

The CDCs and Clusters following democratic and consultative processes have established a Community Housing Development Fund (CHDF) with a 9 member Executive Committee (EC) and a 5 member Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee is headed by the Pourashava Mayor, along with representatives of the DC, LGED, UPPR and a Community Leader. The role of the Advisory Committee is to oversee and monitor the activities of CHDF.

**The construction of a Disaster Resilient Resettlement Housing Complex for the households evicted from urban areas in South Molavi Para of Gopalganj Pourashava is a collaborative project of:**

- The Gopalganj Pourashava (GPJ-Pourashava)
- Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR)
- Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme Phase II (CDMP II)
- Asian Coalition for Community Action Program (ACCA); and
- Community Housing Development Fund (CHDF) Committee



## Thailand Study Tour: Best Practice and Knowledge Sharing

An exposure visit and comparative study of Thailand was organized by UPPR in December 2010 involving a Member of Parliament, senior central and local government officials, a lawyer, a journalist, and community leaders. The group visited slum upgrading and low-cost housing projects, spoke to local government authorities and community leaders and learned about eviction avoidance policies and participatory approaches to urban community development. The study tour resulted in the participants acquiring knowledge on community-based infrastructure projects, good governance principles and increased awareness regarding the importance of community participation in development projects. Upon returning to Gopalganj the group developed an eleven-point action plan including resettlement of the evicted households.



“CODI is a public organization with a goal to build a strong societal base using the collective power of civil groups and community organizations.”

Over the years, 42,199 organizations have cooperated with CODI along with 2,798 networks. Today CODI has over 4.6 million participating members.

Most conventional low-income housing strategies focus on the physical aspects of housing, treating it as an individual need to be provided to poor families. The individual approach may work for better-off people, but not for the poor, whose position at the bottom of the economic ladder leaves them especially vulnerable. While the poor may be weak in financial terms, they are particularly rich in social terms. With this new approach poor people themselves can work together, bringing their huge energy and social force to the task of delivering secure, affordable housing to everyone. This concept of a people-driven housing development process in which poor people are the main actors, the main solution-finders and the main delivery mechanism is the hallmark of progressive approaches to low-income housing.

The Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI) was established on 27th July 2000 as a public organization. The aim was to support and empower urban and rural community organizations through financial assistance, career development, housing development and environmental improvement while generating public acceptance and certification of community organizations. In order to succeed CODI initiated flexible community savings and credit schemes promoting welfare and livelihoods. The backbone of their work is encouraging public bodies, NGOs and government agencies in supporting community organizations.

## **CODI: Lessons from Thailand**

After 13 years of diligent work, CODI now has a remarkable track record of inspiring, empowering and working with poor communities. In Bangladesh, we can find a number of fine examples of community mobilization models too. One such scheme is UNDP's UPPR Project that plays a crucial role on a remarkable scale in transforming poor urban communities. Building on the experience of such community development models and with a keen interest in learning from international success stories such as CODI, a new framework for affordable housing for the poor can be realized. The Gopalganj Housing Model shows the way how to deliver such a model in Bangladesh nation-wide.

## **Key Features of CODI Model**

- To support the development of community organizations and their networks;
- To emphasize the central role of community organizations in social development;
- To promote financial co-ops, savings and credit schemes and public welfare;
- To provide flexible finance for affordable housing custom-made to meet the needs of the poor.

# The Gopalganj Housing Project may determine the future direction of affordable housing for the poor in Bangladesh



## the purpose of this project

- To use collaborative efforts to ensure the sustainable resettlement and rehabilitation of the evicted slum dwellers in a disaster resilient housing complex through a participatory approach.
- To establish a model of joint collaboration among communities, municipal governments and development partners to respond to the needs of the urban poor.



The first batch of 100 units on raised ground will be completed by end of 2013. The second batch of 160 will be undertaken upon the completion of the first batch, approximately by the third quarter of 2014.



## Policy

# Affordable Housing

## Replication of Gopalganj Mandartola Housing Resettlement Project

UPPR turned an adverse situation into an opportunity and led the way towards a sustainable solution to housing needs. At the local level, UPPR's mobilization efforts resulted in slum communities assisting their evicted neighbours and slum leaders successfully lobbying the local authorities to provide rapid, short and long-term relief. UPPR's response at a higher level resulted in local and central Government decision makers taking steps towards providing land

and low-cost housing to the evicted community and to improve infrastructure and social services in Gopalganj slums.

This event, despite its tragic beginning, has shown that UPPR has the flexibility and expertise to tackle complex crises quickly and efficiently. It has shown that, when given the right tools and knowledge, local governments, in partnership with the affected communities, can successfully address urban poverty issues when they arise. And more importantly, the

Gopalganj eviction has shown that when mobilized, represented and empowered, slum communities in Bangladesh can influence the decisions that affect them, and in doing so, sustainably improve their own lives and livelihoods. The Gopalganj Housing Project is also an exemplar intervention showing great potential and may determine the future direction of affordable housing for the poor in Bangladesh. ■