

"We are all Ninja Turtles of mapping"

Perween was with us in Bangkok, just two short weeks ago, for the big ACHR regional gathering, which took place February 23 - 28, 2013 - one of the rare regional meetings this busy and committed woman agreed to leave her work in Karachi to attend. On the second day of the meeting, during the special session on community surveys and mapping, Perween and her colleagues made a delightful and inspiring presentation about the maps they have been making and using for the last 32 years in Karachi and other parts of Pakistan. "We're all mappers," she told us, in that voice of hers, which went up and down the scale like a flute. "We love maps! We are all the Ninja Turtles of mapping! Maps are to our work what x-rays are to a doctor's: they tell us where the problem is and how to resolve it." Although we couldn't have known it at the time, this was Perween's last presentation to her friends and colleagues in Asia, her farewell message to us. Here is the fully transcribed text of Perween's presentation.

Why are maps important for us? A map for us is like an x-ray for a doctor. For us, who are development workers, if we do not know what exists in any settlement or any city, then there is a fear that we might do something which the government has already done - sometimes even something already done and already financed by the ADB, the UN or the World Bank! When they take up a project in a new place, they don't have any idea if there is a telephone line, a water line and they want to lay a sewerage line. So in the process of laying that sewerage line, they cut everything else. So that is why for us, a map is like an x-ray that tells us what the problem is, so we can resolve it.

What do we get in a map? Starting in Orangi : In 1982, we began mapping of Orangi Town. Orangi is a town in Karachi which has 113 settlements and 1.5 million people in it. We began doing the mapping ourselves. At one time, we thought about hiring consultants or professionals to do it. But no, we thought they would just go into a settlement and just do the work, without interacting much with the community. For us, it was important that we do the mapping - we who were in the community - so that the map could help us get the community youths into the mapping process, and help everyone understand the community and us coming together. We first mapped the sewerage and drainage and water lines in Orangi, as well as the clinics and the schools, and the block makers yards.

Let me tell you, everywhere in Pakistan there is self help. Everywhere. We sometimes think, where is the government? And that is because of the fact that 85% of Pakistan's entire government budget goes into repaying the country's IMF and World Bank loans and to defense, so there is hardly anything left for the people, hardly anything left for development. That's why people do lot of self-help, because they need to survive. They lay their own sewer lines and water lines, they set up their own schools and clinics. And of course they do their own businesses and build their own houses.

So for us, it was very important to understand who was doing what - where is the sewerage line? Is it a government sewerage line or a people-laid sewerage line? The kind of information we gathered and mapped spanned every sector in Orangi, and all the actors in involved. That mapping has now spanned the entire Karachi city.

Mapping the rural "Goth" settlements in Karachi : Today we are involved in mapping those settlements which about six years back were known as "rural villages." But when we mapped them, we found that they are no longer villages, they are urban. First we made "walking maps" of these settlements by walking through them, then we marked them on the Google satellite maps and put the two together. We worked together with the residents, the goth elders and community activists, and we were able to map each and every goth settlement which had become urban. The government's data showed that there are only about 400 of these goth settlements. But our mapping showed that there are more than 2,000 such settlements. In fact, just knowing that there are 2,000 such settlements, we and many of our partner organizations were advocating to everybody. I think the idea of our advocacy was to make the government understand that it's too many communities - you cannot just evict them. These communities are a *fait accompli* - you can't do anything about these old settlements, so you might as well give them land title.



We started mapping all these goth settlements in 2006, and in April 2010, the government announced that more than 50% of all these urban goth villages - 1,063 of them - were to be given the land title. *And it was the maps that did it. Just the maps!* I remember one thing: all of us were talking with the elders in these villages, and we asked, if it is so important, why didn't they lobby for land tenure before? They said, that when they used to go and lobby without a map, nobody thought it was very serious, nobody took them seriously. But when they went with the map, *"With the map we became visible. The map made us visible. And the map made the government take us seriously."* That is the power of the map.



Who does the mapping? All of us do mapping! Even Naheed maps the villages in the flood-affected rural areas where she works. She maps, her daughter maps. He maps. She maps. We are all Ninja Turtles of mapping! We don't know anything unless somebody shows us a map! All of us - we are mixture of people living in communities, people having community-based organizations and technical support organizations - *and we all map together.* And these are highly professional maps. They begin as rudimentary sketches or "walking maps", but then we link them up with Google satellite images. We have tried to use the GIS system, but for us it is too time consuming, and it does not get us close to the communities. So for us, the walking maps and the Google satellite images are map making techniques that help us link up, they make us build up relationships.



The youths in the community have been very important in this mapping. Right from 1981 until today, the young people in communities have been involved in mapping, all across the country. We are part of a community development network which links more than 80 partner organizations and 3,000 community-based organizations across the two most populace provinces - Sindh and Punjab. And the community youths are involved in all of these organizations. Why the youths? They like to talk, and they are not short of time. They build up relationships, and these relationships work both ways: to understand what people are doing in a community and to gently extend any information into any town or settlement. *The map helps us build up these kinds of relationships.*



What have the maps done? The maps have helped professionals to understand the reality and to have the courage to accept reality - that's very important. The maps have also helped the government to understand the reality and for the government to understand that somebody else also has this information, so somebody else can pressure them. So it's not just we or just the ADB or UN developing and owning this information - the people and the NGOs and the media all have this information now. The media is very important for this work, because in our case, the media have used all our maps. Today, all our maps are being used by the government, the media and even the politicians. So it's good for us. In this we have a strategy. Sometimes on a map, we do not put our names. We also say, OK, you put your name: you put the chief minister's name, you put the government department's name - as long as you accept that map. That is also a strategy for us, that we take a back seat, we become invisible. And sometimes the people use the map and put their organization's seal on it - *and we love that!* It's great for us!



And of course the maps help the community to understand also. Because the people within settlements may understand their own work, their own few lanes - but an understanding of an entire area, that is needed. And once that understanding of the larger area is there, the advocacy goes to another level. Because within the community, there are people who understand their lane work, people who understand their molhollah work, and people who understand the town and city work. So this helps take the advocacy and pressurizing of government to a higher level. And of course, government officials within the various departments are also making use of it and supporting it. There is a lot of relationship-building that happens within a community, during the mapping. Because whenever the information is gathered, it is gathered while talking, while discussing, while actually being in the settlement. For us, the relationship-building has been the key that has helped advocacy and citywide upgrading.

What has the mapping done, at the wider level? Some examples.

1. Using maps to stop an unnecessary ADB loan for sewerage: In

1999 we were involved in the city of Karachi in trying to stop a very scandalous US\$ 100 million ADB-financed loan for one town's sewerage - not Orangi but another town in another part of the city. How we stopped it? We mapped the settlement. The government had signed the agreement, with no map in it. There wasn't any map. The entire loan was sanctioned without any map. So we started questioning it. We said, no map? OK, let's do a map ourselves. And we mapped it, and we found that the loan that the government was taking was for the sewerage and the drainage of the entire town, whose population was one million. 80% of all infrastructure already existed in that town. So why the loan? And then we estimated that if 80% exists, only 20% of the town needed some work, and about \$15 million was needed. And I remember that in one of the meetings with the governor, when the loan was cancelled, the government department that was taking the loan was lobbying, No we need that loan, we want it, we can't do without it! So the governor, who had seen the map (and of course after a lot of advocacy), said, "If we can build the atom bum," he said, "why can't we make our own sewerage line?" The point is, the governor hadn't wanted to take the loan, but the info to make his point powerful was not there. The map did it. There was a huge advocacy - the URC was involved, lots of other organizations all over Karachi were in on it. And the map strengthened that and made our advocacy visible.



In the work of the OPP-RTI, the URC and the TTRC, we began as working in settlements, and then expanded into to town and the city. And that expansion into the city and into other cities was due to maps. Because maps are our eyes - like the x-ray. They tell us what to do, where to go, who to lobby.

2. Using maps to secure the land in goth villages : For us, the story of how the goth villages have become urban and have gotten their land titles, because of the maps, has been such an exciting development. I remember when Diana Mitlin was visiting us in 2010, she went and met some of the community members, who at that time were distraught, *"The government gives land title to the rich, why not to us? We have been here since ages. We are the oldest settlers in Karachi. These were settlements that were here even before the migrants came to Karachi - and Karachi is a city of migrants. All these settlements have been there since long before the birth of Pakistan in 1947. More recent migrants are getting their land titles, why not us?"* This was also a case of political friction between the old settlers and the new migrants. But the maps did it! That settlement that Diana visited got the land title - individual land title!

We were just saying amongst ourselves that if we die today, we will die so happily, because we have done it. Karachi is in flames. One of the aspects of the violence is the land: who gets the land title is very important. Because the latest migrants, who are represented by a very violent political party, have all got land titles. They came after the 1980s. And these goth settlers, who have lived there since before partition in 1947, they never got the land title. When we were doing the mapping in the goth settlements, there were lots of angry young people, and they said, *"Oh that settlement over there? They are new migrants and they got the land title. We are the original settlers and we haven't got it."* The maps were what helped us to turn it around. And now we are doing a lot of infrastructure in those goth communities and setting up savings groups. This land title thing has been a step forward for the peace of Karachi. It's contributed to the peace and the political balance - so it's very powerful.

