

**JULY - NOVEMBER 2013**

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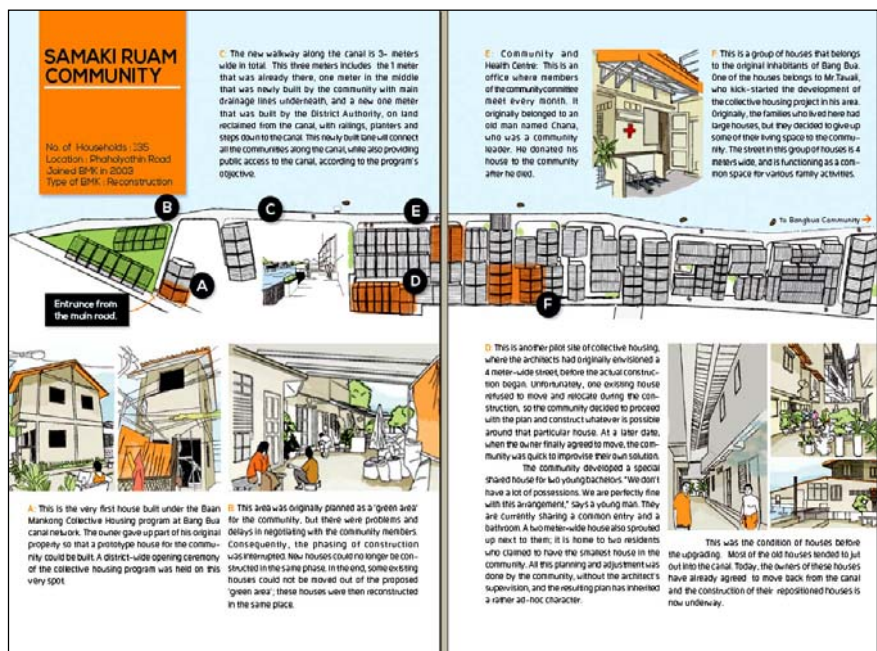
## NEW GUIDEBOOK on the UPGRADING of BANG BUA CANAL

A team of Thai community architects led by Supreeya Wungpatcharapon ("Noot") have just produced an illustrated guidebook to the upgrading of the 12 informal settlements which line the 13-kilometer long Bang Bua Canal in Bangkok - a large project which is still underway. This project, which is the first case of a network of canal-side squatters winning the right to lease the public land they occupy and upgrade their houses and living environments *in-situ*, is one of the most complex, most oft-visited and most inspiring of the 1,500 community-planned and community-built settlement upgrading projects around Thailand that are being supported by CODI's Baan Mankong citywide upgrading program.

The Bang Bua guidebook was originally prepared in the form of a computer-based "interactive" guide to the project, for a 2011 exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Design in New York City called "Design with the other 90%", in which the upgrading of Bang Bua was one of the featured projects. In that version, museum-goers could tap away and scroll around on computer monitors and take a virtual tour through the upgraded communities along the Bang Bua canal. When Tom was home visiting his family last Christmas, he had a chance to see the exhibition, on one of it's around-the-country whistle stops at the Museum of Contemporary Craft in Portland, Oregon. He was delighted to see that this "interactive" feature was very popular with younger visitors, and that the computers were constantly mobbed with children exploring Bang Bua like some kind of new video game!

This new printed version has been much expanded, with more details about the upgrading projects in the 12 communities in the Bang Bua canal network, and with information about the Baan Mankong Program, maps, before and after photos, plans and many drawings. The new format is a handy A-5 size 48-page booklet, in full color.

*The guidebook can be downloaded from the ACHR website. We also have about 500 beautifully printed "hard copies", so if anybody would prefer to look through a real paper-and-ink version, please contact ACHR.*



## HPFP TEAMS SET PLANS TO ASSIST TYPHOON HAIYAN SURVIVORS

*All of us watched in horror as news came in of the season's worst storm, "Super Typhoon" Haiyan, slamming into the Visayas region of the Philippines on November 8th, with 300 kilometer-per-hour winds, rain and waves as high as 15 meters that swept away entire towns like a big broom. The massive typhoon, which they call Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines, was one of the worst storms ever recorded and has affected some five million people in 270 towns and cities, with thousands dead and hundreds of thousands displaced. The hardest-hit region was Leyte Island, whose provincial capital of Tacloban was left devastated by the powerful storm. But the central Visayan islands of Panay and Bohol were also badly affected. To make matters worse, a 7.2 magnitude earthquake had shaken Bohol and Cebu islands just a few weeks before, and people had barely recovered from the devastation, displacement and loss of lives from the earthquake when Typhoon Haiyan hit. We've been in close touch with our friends in the Homeless People's Federation, and on November 19th, we got a letter from May Domingo which outlines how the federation and their support groups are preparing to assist typhoon survivors. Here are a few excerpts from May's note:*



We at the Philippine Alliance (HPFPI, PACSII and TAMPEI), could not yet comprehend the scale of the devastation of these past two disasters - the earthquake and then the typhoon. Stunned by the situation and momentarily thrown off the track, we have been reflecting collectively on how best to respond to this crisis. We would like to share our thoughts with you about how the HPFP plans to go about its disaster response in the short term, but using the crisis to start a longer-term change process. Perhaps from this, our friends in the international network can pinpoint possible areas for support, for further discussion.

**13 years experience with people-led disaster recovery :** As has become a ritual with the Homeless People's Federation, our leaders will be at the forefront of the disaster response being planned for communities affected by Typhoon Haiyan. In many cases in the past, HPFP has organized and assisted communities affected by typhoons, mud-slides, volcano-eruptions, floods and garbage slides to find ways to rebuild their lives, their houses and their communities. In the same way, the federation will find opportunities to bring Yolanda-affected communities together, and HPFP teams in the affected regions will lead the initiative. The federation's Central Visayas headquarters in Mandaue will be the disaster hub, to coordinate interventions in Bohol and Cebu Provinces, while the federation's Western Visayas headquarters in Iloilo will coordinate interventions on Panay Island. Both regions have already mobilized leaders and volunteers to be part of the disaster response teams that are being formed. These teams are now being thoroughly oriented, trained and prepared - psychologically and otherwise - by HPFP for the tough tasks ahead. At the beginning - and particularly during the initial assessment visits - the teams will be reinforced by federation leaders from other regions, who have direct experience dealing with communities affected by earlier disasters in their own regions. Some teams will also be joined by technical professionals from TAMPEI (the network of Philippines community architects) or by their local university partners. Their technical inputs on earthquake-proof housing design techniques will be particularly needed in Bohol, although the architects in TAMPEI will have a much larger role to play during the recovery phase.

**Where the federation will focus its intervention:** Initially, the federation will focus its efforts on the islands of Cebu, Bohol and Panay, as well as the provinces of Antique and Capiz - all areas which have been severely affected but have received neither media attention nor relief support. Since HPFP has regional bases in Panay and Cebu islands, it is more strategic and practical to focus the response in these areas, at least at the beginning. Communities and villages affected by the earthquake in Bohol particularly need immediate organizing and technical support, as they attempt to return to their structurally damaged and unsafe houses. While the federation's immediate response will focus on these areas, it may be possible to work in Tacloban City, Leyte and Samar provinces, but perhaps later, in the reconstruction phase.



**What they are planning to do in the affected areas :** The federation's disaster response teams will now be going into these affected areas, to make contact with the communities, the local government and other local relief and church organizations, assess the situation, understand the needs and explore possible further interventions. Their work will include community-based gathering of data about the affected families and communities, coordinating with the local disaster response structures, using some relief activities as an entry point for longer-term intervention, developing affected people's capacities to address their own immediate and longer-term needs, mobilizing support, and preparing the affected communities for a more people-driven recovery process within a larger area-wide planning framework.

For more information, please contact May Domingo at: [maydomingoprice@gmail.com](mailto:maydomingoprice@gmail.com)

## ACHR's ACCA PROGRAM CONTINUES IN ITS SECOND PHASE



The Asian Coalition for Community Action Program (ACCA), which is promoting a process of community-driven and citywide slum upgrading in cities around Asia, is now well into its fifth year of implementation. The 14th ACCA committee meeting (and the second in the program's second phase) was held in Mumbai, on September 28th, 2013, and was hosted by the SPARC / Mahila Milan / NSDF Alliance. About 40 people from 10 countries traveled to India to join the meeting, where a big new set of project proposals were proposed. After reviewing and discussing them, a total budget of US\$608,300 was approved to support projects in 13 new cities and 10 ongoing cities, in 11 Asian countries (including 7 "big" housing projects, 2 loans from the ACCA Regional Revolving Loan Fund and 11 small community upgrading projects). Here are a few figures from the ACCA program so far :

<b>ACCA PROGRAM UPDATE</b> (as of November 2013)		<i>(all figures in US\$)</i>	
	<b>ACCA Phase 1</b> (2008-2012)	<b>ACCA Phase 2</b> (2013-2015)	<b>TOTAL</b> (as of November 2013)
Number of cities	165 cities	22 cities	187 cities
Total program budget	\$ 11 million	\$ 3.5 million	\$ 14. 5 million
Big housing projects	111 projects (\$3,929,767)	19 projects (\$630,000)	130 projects (\$4,559,767)
Regional fund loans	8 loans (\$242,000)	3 loans (\$145,000)	11 loans (\$387,000)
Small upgrading projects	1,185 projects (\$2,189,300)	183 projects (\$243,000)	1,368 projects(\$2,432,300)
City process support	158 cities (\$447,006)	--	158 cities (\$447,006)
Understanding Asian Cities	26 projects (\$344,577)	--	26 projects (\$344,577)
National coordination + activities	(\$1,369,961)	(\$310,300)	(\$1,680,261)
Disaster	30 projects (\$439,868)	4 projects (\$32,000)	34 projects (\$471,868)
Community savings + funds	projects in 23 cities (\$307,825)	--	projects in 23 cities (\$307,825)
Welfare seed funds	--	funds in 23 cities (\$50,000)	funds in 23 cities (\$50,000)
Special strategic support	--	1 project (\$20,000)	1 project (\$20,000)
<b>TOTAL Budget Approved</b>	<b>\$ 8,322,584</b>	<b>\$ 1,445,300</b>	<b>US\$ 9,767,884</b>

**Field visits in Mumbai :** It's been many years since a big Asian team from ACHR visited Mumbai, so after a long process of discussion and planning with our friends in India, it was decided that this meeting would be held there. As usual, these ACCA committee meetings are used as opportunities for the visiting groups to see projects, talk to community people, see new things, share ideas and immerse themselves for a few days in the politics of change in a context that is far away and totally different from their own. So before this ACCA committee meeting on September 28th, the ACHR team had two and a half days in Mumbai to visit some railway and pavement-dweller relocation projects and community toilet blocks of the NSDF / MM / SPARC alliance and to spend some time in the Byculla office with Sheela, Jockin and a small team of Mahila Milan members (from Mumbai and Pune) to learn more about their process and update them on what community groups in ten other Asian countries are up to.

The work of the Indian alliance to rehabilitate thousands of slum dwellers in Mumbai is an inspiration for organizations working for the poor in other places, where the problems are not nearly so severe or so large-scale. In Mumbai, one of the world's largest cities, about 60% of its 20 million residents live in slums. Poverty can be seen in every nook and cranny of this city - often right in the shadow of tall luxury apartment buildings. In this difficult situation, the NSDF, Mahila Milan and SPARC have developed a lot of solutions to help the poor get secure housing and access to sanitation, and in the process they have shown new ways of doing things and changed policies. They have also been able to link slum communities with various government housing schemes to get thousands of poor households into secure housing, in Mumbai and other cities.

**Seeing Mumbai's pavement settlements for the first time :** The ACHR team stayed at the Sahil Hotel in Nagpada, which is just a short walk away from the Byculla office, but it leads through an astonishing progression of streets lined with crowded pavement dwellings. Most of the visitors in the ACHR team were on their first journey to India. For these first-timers in Mumbai, it was quite a shock



seeing so many people living in such precarious conditions, in squalor and poverty, in makeshift shelters built right on the sidewalks and roadsides: people bathing, sleeping, cooking, raising their children and goats and carrying on their lives above open gutters flowing with sewage and within inches of passing cars. The sight made many on the team reflect that the worst of the worst slums back home in Myanmar, Mongolia or Nepal weren't so bad as this! But after talking with Jockin, with Byculla community members and with others from NSDF and Mahila Milan, the team could begin to see the visible changes that the alliance's work has brought about in the lives of these and other poor communities in Mumbai.



*A full report on the ACCA meeting and another report on the field visits in Mumbai can be downloaded from the ACHR website.*

- The next ACCA meeting will be in January or February, 2014.
- Venue for the next ACCA meeting? So far, Bangladesh, Vietnam and the Philippines have been proposed. If you have any other suggestions, please let us know soon.
- New ACCA proposals. It's not too early to start sending in your new ACCA proposals, for consideration in the next meeting.

## NEWS from the ASIAN COMMUNITY ARCHITECTS NETWORK (CAN)

A century ago, it used to be said that "The sun never sets on the British empire." Thank heaven that in this post-colonial era, we have more noble projects to claim that kind of scale and reach! A good example of which is the Asian Community Architects Network (CAN), whose 37 member groups (so far) in 18 countries continue to bring their professional skills to community-driven development movements from Karachi to Osaka, and from Lhasa to Suva. This group of night-owls and over-timers have just produced a big, thick 60-page report which summarizes their work over the last three years (2011-2013). That work includes:

- building an alternative technical support system for community-driven housing and slum upgrading,
- changing the way institutions train a new generation of professionals and interact with local communities in their cities,
- creating new kinds of action-based training events that are collaborative and grounded in real projects and change processes,
- activating and expanding learning and support links between scattered groups of community architects and their partners,
- disseminating this new alternative knowledge through handbooks, publications, websites, videos and other public media.

The report (*which can be downloaded from the CAN website below*) was prepared for the Rockefeller Foundation, which has backed this important new region-wide process with funding support since 2009. The good news is that the CAN network's activities are expanding fast, but the bad news is that the Rockefeller support will end at the end of 2014, so the team is now exploring other possible funding sources. Here are a few updates from Nad and Tee, who are helping to coordinate CAN's work in the region:

**MYANMAR :** In August 2013, Nad and Tee worked with the Women's Savings and Development Network and their support NGO (Women for the World) to organize a community mapping workshop in the beautiful city of Mandalay, Myanmar's second largest city. This is a city that is full of squatters, and is now experiencing a big influx of Chinese investors, so land-prices are skyrocketing and evictions are on the upswing. The women's savings process started there last year, with support from WFW, and they have already set up a CDF and started a housing project there, with support from ACCA. The mapping workshop was part of the preparations for the community layout and housing planning that will come next. *Contact Vanlizar at: [vanlizar@gmail.com](mailto:vanlizar@gmail.com)*



**INDONESIA :** Until recently, the community-driven upgrading process in Yogyakarta was going full steam ahead, with strong community women's savings groups, several good walkway and riverbank upgrading projects completed, an active community architect support group (Arkom), a CDF and a progressive mayor giving good support. But now there's a new mayor and big evictions are happening all over the place. Yuli is working with CAN to organize a workshop in Yogyakarta to look at these problems and explore proactive community-driven and citywide solutions to this crisis, through mapping and settlement planning. Another active young community architect, Andrea Fitrianto ("Cak-Cak"), has recently started a new initiative to support poor communities in his own city, Bandung, and has joined forces with some friends to form Urban Community Architects (UrCA). *For info contact Cak at: [andrea.fitrianto@gmail.com](mailto:andrea.fitrianto@gmail.com)*



**PHILIPPINES :** The big CAN regional workshop on citywide upgrading that took place in Metro Manila in June 2013 brought together some 110 participants from 20 countries (45 international+ 65 local architects plus community people). During the course

of this week-long workshop, these community architects from the Philippines and around Asia worked with nine poor communities in three different cities (Caloocan, Valenzuela and Bocaue) to map and develop alternative upgrading plans. This workshop was part of a larger collaborative process in which a more citywide and people-driven approach to housing the poor is being tested and supported in five pilot cities, with support from the Social Housing Finance Corporation (and its flagship housing finance program CMP), the World Bank, the municipal governments, the Homeless People's Federation, TAMPEI, local NGOs, ACHR and ACCA. Since then, projects are being implemented and the process is already expanding to other cities. TAMPEI, the network of community architects that work closely with the Homeless People's Federation, is now pouring its energies into the post-cyclone relief and rehabilitation work in the Visayas, after "Super Typhoon" Haiyan hit on November 8th (*see story above*).

**BANGLADESH :** Bangladesh has a brand new community architects group called POCAA (Platform for Community Artisans and Architects), which is being facilitated by Khondaker Kabir from BRAC university's Faculty of Architecture. Nobody knows whether it was deep humility about their role or just a coincidence that their chosen acronym POCCA also happens to be the Bengali word for *insect*. But what is clear is that this group has been very active in the past few months, helping to map and survey four dalit communities in Dhaka and working with a community of 400 low-caste cobbler families in the Wari Robidas community in Old Dhaka to prepare for an ACCA-supported *in-situ* housing project. The group has also been working closely with NHA and the World Bank on a project which is supporting a citywide and people-driven slum upgrading process in 5 pilot cities in Bangladesh. In November, Nad will join Kabir and a small POCCA team on a journey to the city of Comilla - one of these pilot cities - to help start the community planning process there. *For more info, contact Kabir at: khkabir@bracu.ac.bd*



**MALAYSIA :** After a long process of study and consultation and exploration of possible models, our friends in the historic city of Georgetown, in Penang, are finally coming close to setting up their Community Development Fund, which will hopefully become a tool for supporting Georgetown's more vulnerable residents - especially renters - who are in danger of being thrown out of their city, as it's historic shop-houses are gentrified and turned into boutiques and galleries. A two-day workshop on "Affordable housing through CDF" is being jointly organized by ThinkCity, Georgetown World Heritage, ACHR and CAN, November 23-24. Teams from Nepal, Indonesia and Thailand (all of whom have experiences with both CDFs and people-driven historic preservation) will join some 40 local participants who are tenants, local activists, preservationists and friends from Think City, who will be providing seed capital to set up the fund. *For more info, contact Hooi Seam at: nghnji@gmial.com*

**THAILAND :** Ploy, Hung, Wan, Ek and Francesco, from the Openspace group of community architects, have been doing some fascinating work with poor families in remote villages and hill-tribe communities to help them retrofit their houses to make them accessible to handicapped family members, and to design and build low-cost furniture and equipment which helps them move around more easily and manage day-to-day tasks more independently - all using local artisans and simple, cheap, locally-available materials like bamboo, wood and recycled cloth. In November, they will be encouraging nursing students in Khon Kaen, who will be working with handicapped patients, to add their ideas to the process of making the more handicapped-friendly houses, equipment and environments. The Openspace team also continues their ongoing collaboration with the historic Nanglerng market community in Bangkok, to develop a community center in an old wooden house and to help the community develop reblocking plans for an area of the community where a new subway station is to be built. *For more info, contact Ploy Yamtree at: archazama@gmail.com*



**INTERNSHIPS :** An experimental "Junior Professional Program" jointly organized by CAN, ACHR and the DPU has recently ended, where five new DPU graduates were placed with community organizations in four Asian countries, to work for six months (two in Vietnam, one in Cambodia, one in Philippines and one in Indonesia). The idea was to give newly-hatched young professionals an opportunity to top-off their book-learning with a bit of messy, complex and intense learning with poor communities on the ground. The students have jointly produced a beautiful 65-page report called "*Grounded Education*", which describes their experiences, with a lot of humor, humility and insight. (*Please contact ACHR for a copy*). Now Johanna (a DPU intern from Colombia) has joined an NGO in Cambodia and is working on a community mapping project with them, and Francesco (another DPU intern from Italy) has joined Openspace in Thailand and is working on their projects for six months.

- **CAN e-mail:** For more information on CAN, please contact Tee at: [architect\\_once@hotmail.com](mailto:architect_once@hotmail.com)
- **CAN website:** [www.communityarchitectsnetwork.info](http://www.communityarchitectsnetwork.info) or the CAN facebook page at
- **CAN on facebook:** [www.facebook.com/CommunityArchitectsNetwork](http://www.facebook.com/CommunityArchitectsNetwork)

## DECENT POOR PROGRAM UPDATE

ACHR's Decent Poor Program has continued in 2013, with new projects in 12 countries. Inspired by a similar program pioneered in Thailand, the Decent Poor program is a tool to help communities and citywide community networks to develop their own systems for ensuring that even the very poorest community members will not be excluded from taking part in the citywide upgrading and housing initiatives being developed in their settlements, even if they cannot afford to take loans or make payments for houses. The program begins with the premise that any urban poor housing process which excludes the poorest and most vulnerable is not solving problems but creating new ones. In our kind of slum upgrading, *everyone is in the boat*, no matter how much they can or can't afford to pay. The program allows community groups to explore a variety of alternative low-cost construction techniques to build houses for the poorest families, with a grant subsidy of only \$500 per family, and a ceiling of \$10,000 per country (20 grants). The program's total budget for 2013 is \$100,000, which includes \$80,000 from the Selavip Foundation and \$20,000 from ACHR.

The program has demonstrated that reaching national scale is possible, even with very modest budgets of \$10,000 per country. Launched together with the ACCA phase 2, this year's Decent Poor program started with scale, and with the intention of opening up a new national platform, so that the program could reach out to the poorest in as many cities and as many countries in Asia, as possible. The modest grant of \$500 per family has achieved housing security for more than 200 vulnerable families in a variety of ways: constructing new basic or "core" houses (as in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India), or partly subsidizing housing loans and finishing incomplete houses (as in Nepal). The beneficiaries in most countries are active members of their community savings groups, but in Sri Lanka and Mongolia, they have used the Decent Poor grants to draw very poor, marginalized families into the community process and to open up the savings process at the same time. *A few snaps of some Decent Poor-supported houses:*

**PHILIPPINES :** Mr. Riol Morota's house is in the Saversville Homeowners Association, Inc. (SHAI), one of the Philippines Homeless People's Federation's relocation projects for people who lost their land and houses in the Mount Mayon volcano eruption in Guinobatan City. He built his new 4m x 5m house with help from community members and the young architects at TAMPEI, on a concrete block base, but with bamboo walls and an *anahaw* leaf thatched roof, which makes the house very cool inside. The house cost only \$625 to build, of which \$500 came from a Decent Poor grant and \$125 came from his own savings. Riol will stay in this house with his wife and five children.



**MONGOLIA :** Mrs. Nandichimeg is a widow with six children, living in the Khentii Province, in Mongolia. She is an active member of her ger area savings group. She used a \$500 Decent Poor grant to buy a new ger of her own, after renting a dilapidated old one for many years. After putting up her new ger, she was interviewed on national TV.



**INDIA :** Mrs. Rajbai Maljijogi and her husband lived with seven other family members in a thatched hut in the Ashapura Nagar slum in Bhuj, India. She works as a construction laborer and her husband gets irregular work as a wood carver, but they make barely enough to feed the family. Hunnarshala helped the family to design this roomy, cool house, using innovative woven bamboo and wattle-and-daub lime plaster techniques. The house cost just \$500 to build.



### Decent Poor Fund Projects in 2013

Country	# of cities	# families	# people	Budget
Sri Lanka	6 cities	20	82	10,000
Mongolia	5 villages, 1 city	20	100	10,000
India	1 city	10	54	5,000
Nepal	2 cities	20	94	10,000
Bangladesh	2 cities	20	120	9,000
Cambodia	17 cities	21	92	10,000
Lao PDR	2 cities	16	80	8,000
Myanmar	2 cities	10	50	5,000
Viet Nam	1 city	20	65	10,000
Thailand	no info	20	80	10,000
Philippines	3 cities	17	102	8,500
Indonesia	1 city	9	45	4,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39 cities, 5 villages</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>967</b>	<b>\$ 100,000</b>

## NEW GADGETS ON OFFER FOR SURVEYING AND MAPPING SLUMS



Poor communities and their networks and federations in Asia and Africa have been surveying and mapping their settlements for more than a quarter of a century now. This gathering of information about their own lives, living conditions and land tenure has grown in scale and sophistication over the years. Community networks in many countries now use computers to tally and update the information from their citywide and settlement-level surveys. And while a lot of community mapping is still done in the most essential and human way - with marking pens, measuring tapes and big pieces of paper - community groups in many countries are also using professional survey equipment, Google Earth maps and even mobile phone-linked GIS applications to plot extremely accurate maps of their settlements. And the way urban poor groups use that information to analyze their problems, to

understand the larger structural issues which exacerbate their poverty, to provide baseline data for developing solutions to those problems and to negotiate with their governments for land and resources has also grown sharper. Mapping has led to all sorts of breakthroughs in land, housing, access to resources and constructive working partnerships with the cities that used to look down on these informal communities as parasites, or ignore them. For the urban poor, surveying and mapping have become essential tools in their process of self-development - tools which have proved time and time again that old adage that *information is power*.

The UN-Habitat has recently started promoting surveying and mapping also, and launched its own Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) in 2006 - a program that is trying to build an alliance of research institutions, government agencies and civil society organizations around the world to promote more equitable land management and security of tenure for the poor, through the use of a variety of "demand-driven and pro-poor tools." What tools? Well one of them is a thing called the Social Tenure Domain Model (STDM) - a computer software package that has been developed to help local governments and local communities to survey and map poor settlements more efficiently, and then to manage that information once it's gathered in ways which lead to greater tenure security for the poor. Last year, the STDM tool was piloted in one city in Uganda, with the involvement of SDI, the Ugandan Homeless People's Federation and the country's Ministry of Land, Housing and Urban Development.

In October 2013, this STDM software got a test-run in Asia, in a 3-day training workshop in Metro Manila. The workshop was organized by Habitat's GLTN team, with local support from many of the organizations that are already collaborating on an important citywide slum upgrading pilot initiative in the city of Valenzuela, including the Homeless People's Federation (HPFP), the VALPONENT network of poor communities in Valenzuela, FDUP, TAMPEI Community Architects Network, the Social Housing Finance Corporation, World Bank, ACHR and ACCA. The training focused on how to use the STDM "tool" to gather and process information in one squatter settlement in Valenzuela, the Bagong Kaunlaran Homeowners Association (BKHOA), with 185 households. The 50 participants (which included a team of seven from ACHR: community leaders from Cambodia, Indonesia and Fiji + Minh Chau) spent two hours in the community: one group filled out the settlement profile form, one filled out the house-to-house survey form in two houses, and one group did a little mapping, using the GPS-based gadgets that are part of the STDM package. After that, the group went back to the hotel to learn how to process and analyze the data, and by doing so, to get an idea how the STDM tool works.

**So what's the verdict on STDM?** The Cambodians felt the package might be useful in their ongoing program of citywide slum surveying and mapping in a 24 districts in Cambodia, but worried that they couldn't manage it by themselves, and would need technical assistance. The Fijians found the package "*user unfriendly*" and worried that it reduced a lot of the human interaction that was such an important part of the survey and mapping process. But they liked the idea that the package covered all aspects of community information gathering and management, and that it could potentially help in their negotiations for land - which involve difficult politics no matter how the information is presented. The Indonesians found the tool very "*classy*" and looked forward to a similar training that has been planned in Surabaya and Yogyakarta in January 2014.



**Trying out another "tool" :** On the last day of the workshop, some of the participants decided to follow Celine d'Cruz (from SDI), who had brought along with her the standard "settlement profile" form that many of the SDI-affiliated groups use in Africa and India, and went back to the community and gathered the settlement data again, using that other form.

For more information about the Global Land Tool Network, please contact Danilo Antonio at [danilo.antonio@unhabitat.org](mailto:danilo.antonio@unhabitat.org)

## POVERTY LINES: WHO REALLY IS POOR AND WHO ISN'T?

In 1973, the World Bank's president, Robert McNamara, set a goal to "eradicate absolute poverty by the end of this century" (2000). Back then, McNamara drew his line for measuring "absolute poverty" at 30 cents of a US dollar per day, which was thought to be enough to eliminate malnutrition and illiteracy, reduce infant mortality and raise life expectancies to match those in developed nations. Adjusted for inflation, those 30 cents would amount to \$1.60 in today's dollars. But when the new World Bank president, Jim Yong Kim, announced in April 2013 that his institution was going to get serious about poverty and "end extreme poverty by the year 2030", he put the World Bank's new poverty line at \$1.25 a day (up just a wee bit from the decades-old "dollar a day" poverty line we all know so well). That \$1.25 will definitely not be enough to provide education and health or decent housing or secure tenure or access to basic services, but it should be enough to just barely keep a person in most places from starving to death - which is the World Bank's new and disappointingly unambitious definition of "absolute poverty." By simply lowering the bar like this, the chances of actually achieving this noble-sounding goal to end poverty have been made magically more likely.



By such tricks of statistical smoke and mirrors, the titans adjust the game to serve different purposes, at global and local levels, and the true scale and extent of poverty remains as murky and misrepresented as ever. So who really *is* poor and who *isn't*? And who should be making that call and defining those lines? Sadly, it's almost never the poor themselves, who are the ones most intimately acquainted with all the multi-dimensional fine points of deprivation, and the first to laugh at the silly notion that \$1.25 a day could ever clearly separate the poor from the non-poor. Yet billions of poor people around the globe are being left out by development policies that are based on those wonky top-down poverty lines. As Sheela Patel, from the Indian NGO SPARC puts it, *"Today's development world is very lazy. They want only two bullet points to make a policy. They are too impatient and too busy to worry about the exponential growth of poverty. In development, there is an imagery of professionals being objective in their collection of data about poverty, and poor communities being subjective. We need to reformulate this relationship and buck those imageries."*

In that spirit, ACHR and IIED are working together to challenge this nonsense with a little *bottom-up* research of our own into poverty in Asian cities. Instead of getting a few professors to gather the information and write up a paper in isolation, in the style of most conventional development research, this regional poverty study is being organized to create space for urban poor people around Asia - the ones who understand poverty best - to think, examine, discuss and sharpen their own understanding about what constitutes poverty in their own particular contexts. Some of the questions they will be asking themselves include :

- What is poverty? How to decide who is poor or not so poor, and what aspects of poverty determine those levels?
- What does a person need to live a sufficient life in these cities and countries, and how much income do those things require?
- What is the level of poverty in these cities and countries? How do people in these various categories of poverty survive?
- What problems will the World Bank's new \$1.25-a-day poverty line cause in these cities and countries?

### A few responses to the study, from friends around the region:

- **From Lajana in NEPAL** : In every national and city-level meeting and workshop in Nepal over the last 20 years, we have always faced this question: How do you define who are the urban poor? If people living in slums own TVs, mobile phones and motorbikes, and make very articulate speeches, how can they be poor? Recently, UN-Habitat conducted a study and prepared policy guidelines for upgrading slums which divides people living in the settlements into at least seven categories of "poor" - we don't think these definitions can work in real life.
- **From Anh in VIETNAM** : It would be very striking to see how the poor define poverty themselves. I believe the outcome of such a study would be much more interesting if we could make it more comparative, including more than just one city per country, and several countries in the region.
- **From Arif in PAKISTAN** : The changes in Pakistan over the last decade have been enormous. Inflation and recession in the formal economy have taken place, and new forms of capital-intensive farming (the result of globalization) have created a new push out of the rural areas. People have reacted to overcome the negative aspects of all this. I feel their unmet aspirations are also a part of poverty. An understanding of these socio-economic changes and their micro-level repercussions are essential to an understanding of poverty.
- **From Kirtee in INDIA** : There is a very lively debate on how to define poverty in India right now, with the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen on one side and Prof. Jagdish Bhagwati on the other sides. The new Food Security Bill, which covers almost 700 million people, has made this debate a live topic. But everything is formal - it's all government and big time economists. Nothing is ever done in a bottom-up way or from the angle of the poor themselves. Getting the poor to define poverty is a remarkably interesting idea, and if it's done well, it will be a game-changer.
- **From Hosaka in JAPAN** : The poverty line is an initial ballpark measurement institutions use to identify target beneficiaries and allocate entitlements. But for the people, the poverty line is a result of the process of actual deprivation. Many assume that globalization has deprived the poor, but few have documented that process empirically, through poor people's eyes. I believe that asking people to describe their survival strategies (including non-monetary exchanges and social relations) would be very empowering for them.



## NEVER UNDERESTIMATE WHAT POOR COMMUNITIES CAN DO!

*This little story comes from way outside ACHR's usual sphere of attention - from a tiny village in the poorest region of southern Italy, where a remarkable community-initiated and community-managed program for dealing with the huge influx of refugees from Africa and the middle east is showing new light. The story provides a big boost to those of us who spend a lot of time arguing that the poor are not a problem but a resource for the cities they live in, and that when they are treated like human beings and given a little room, they can bring about great and unexpected things - for everyone. The story also shows us how much local communities - even very poor ones - can do to solve big, complicated problems that their governments can't. The story was sent to us by a friend in rural France, Janet Kerr, an artist who has been a passionate follower of ACHR's work over the past 15 years.*



Lampedusa is a tiny island in the Mediterranean Sea, about half way between the island of Sicily and the African coast of Tunisia. Because it is part of Italy, Lampedusa has become one of the primary destinations for tens of thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers from Africa, the Middle East and Asia trying to enter Europe. Most of them are fleeing unspeakable things: civil war, torture, ethnic cleansing, dispossession, and worse. And most must sell everything they have to pay smugglers to transport them to Lampedusa, in rickety boats so overcrowded that more than 7,000 people have drowned or died of exposure and dehydration during the journey. Just last month, a boat carrying 500 migrants, mostly from Eritrea and Somalia, sank off the coast of Lampedusa and at least 300 people died.



Now the Italian coast guard has a mission by the EU to rescue these people. The ones who survive are first handed over to the police and then to the health authorities (in that order) and locked up in a huge "temporary holding camp" in Lampedusa, behind barbed wire, where they languish in terrible conditions for months and months. Little by little, as their papers move through the EU bureaucracy, they are let out. Many are lured into bonded labor syndicates controlled by the mafia. Some make it to the more prosperous cities in northern Italy or to other parts of Europe. But almost everywhere they go, they face suspicion, fear, discrimination and outright hatred, in a Europe where immigration

has become an explosive economic and social issue. In Rome and Perugia, we saw so many of them selling flowers and trinkets to tourists - they all had such an air of desperation, I kept wondering where they sleep and how they eat?

But I just saw a documentary about a village in the impoverished Calabria Region of southern Italy, which is one of a growing number of communities in Italy that have been doing remarkable things for these people who nobody wants, nobody welcomes. Acquaformosa is itself an extremely poor village, in a region of Italy that has always been poor, and even now is a place where more people run away than stay. Many of Calabria's villages are dying - so depopulated that the schools are being shut down for lack of students, the shops are closing for lack of customers and the fields are going untilled for lack of laborers. In Acquaformosa, for generations, the men have had to go to other countries to find work to support their families, so they have great empathy for these new refugees, and decided to take them in.

All the new children are enrolled in school, and so schools are able to stay open and the local teachers keep their jobs. It is great to see all these different colors and nationalities all in school, learning Italian. The EU provides the refugees with a small living subsidy of 20 Euros a day, which comes in the form of coupons which they can spend at the local bakeries, butchers and green grocers, and then the tradespeople take the coupons to the Mayor and are reimbursed. As a result, businesses that were failing are being given new life. And houses that were abandoned or for sale are being occupied and renewed, while local trades that were dying out are being revived with this new influx of workers. The Mayor was saying that they had had a huge feast, with cooking from all these different cultures, with the best desserts ever, and that the local people in Acquaformosa were having their own culture broadened as a result of this influx. It moved me to tears to see what people with empathy, compassion and a little plain good sense can do.



This resettlement program is being run entirely by the village itself, and it turns out to be a win-win prospect for everybody. Acquaformosa has pulled off an extraordinary trick: managing simultaneously to create employment, to stop a mass exodus from their village and to find a solution to the controversial issue of asylum seekers. And here is the cherry on the cake: it costs the EU just 20 Euros a day to support a refugee in Acquaformosa, as opposed to 70 Euros a day to keep her in the camp in Lampedusa. Now the mayors in several other dying villages in the region are doing the same thing. *For a copy of some articles about this initiative contact ACHR. Here is a link to the documentary about Acquaformosa. The film is in French, but the pictures tell a thousand words:* [http://pluzz.francetv.fr/videos/13h15\\_le\\_samedi\\_,91835493](http://pluzz.francetv.fr/videos/13h15_le_samedi_,91835493).

# ACHR NEWS BRIEFS

**1. Good news for film buffs:** A second compilation of short films by groups in the Video Media Network (VMN) and the Community Architects Network (CAN) has been put together and is now available from ACHR, in a handsome two-DVD boxed set. A whopping 40 films (ranging in length from 2 to 30 minutes) have been chosen from a much larger pool of films to be included in this set, and they come from community groups, architects, amateur and professional film makers and NGOs in 12 Asian countries. Some of the more polished films have been made in collaboration with professionals and TV film crews, while others have the gritty vitality of first-time video-making experiences. Hundreds of community people and their supporters have been involved in the production of these films, and the process of making them has opened new space for urban poor communities and their supporters to explore the medium of video for advocacy, learning, confidence-building and expanding the profile of their initiatives in the public media. Some of the films have been shown on national television and have received good responses from government and the general public, while others have been used in training programs and meetings, and for opening up local community processes to friends in other countries.



The films cover a wide variety of topics, but most of them focus on issues of urban poverty and people-driven development: community savings, settlement mapping, citywide slum upgrading, new construction technologies for the poor, people-driven disaster rehabilitation, ACCA projects, urban issues and introductions to CAN and other community organizations. A full list of the videos in the compilation - as well as links to some of the films which can be viewed on the internet - can be found on the ACHR website. *Please contact ACHR if you'd like a copy of the DVD compilation.*

**2. New ACHR Blog + facebook page:** Let nobody accuse ACHR of being behind the game in matters cyber-spatial! Maurice has set up a new ACHR news blog at [www.achrnews.tumblr.com](http://www.achrnews.tumblr.com) where you will find posted news updates and video downloads from the ACHR secretariat and from friends in the coalition around Asia. The latest ACHR e-news bulletins are also posted on the blog. ACHR also has a facebook page: [www.facebook.com/pages/ACHR-Home/229255877130863](http://www.facebook.com/pages/ACHR-Home/229255877130863)

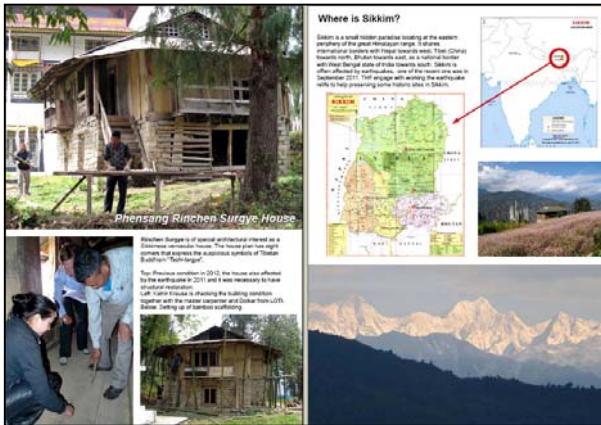
**3. ACHR joins 2013 Citynet Congress in Seoul :** Citynet is an association of municipal governments, civil society organizations and activists from 83 cities in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe. This past year, Citynet's secretariat moved from Yokohama, Japan to Seoul, Korea and has just hosted its 2013 Citynet Congress, which took place in Seoul, November 3 - 6, 2013. As the website says, "The Congress is a unique opportunity to meet face-to-face with high-level city officials, civil society leaders, and urban activists from across the Asia Pacific and beyond."

ACHR, which has been active in Citynet for many years, has been asked to be an executive committee member, and Kirtee Shah traveled to Seoul to represent ACHR in this meeting and make a presentation about ACHR's work. ACHR's ACCA Program (and the citywide and community-driven slum upgrading it supports) was one of the "Best Practice Briefings" during the Congress (under their "MDG Cluster"), and was featured in the Autumn 2013 issue of Citynet's newsletter, "City Voices." For more information, please contact :

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- Web: [www.seoul2013.citynetcongress.org](http://www.seoul2013.citynetcongress.org)

**4. ACHR "Seniors" to meet in Bangkok, December 9-11, 2013:** Ancient Chinese wisdom had it that the world is always in a state of change, and that every single moment is a transition from one thing into something else. But transitions come in all sizes, and as ACHR enters into the last year of its ACCA Program, many of us in the coalition have felt that one of the bigger transitions is about to take place. What ACHR has been and what it might become in the next stage will be the subject of a small meeting in Bangkok in December. Father Jorge Anzorena is planning to be in Thailand during most of the month of December, so we decided to take advantage of his being here to organize a small symposium with some of the ACHR "seniors", to both reflect on the past 25 years of ACHR's work, and to discuss some ideas of what might be the coalition's next steps. *For more info, please contact ACHR.*

**5. New support for community youth leaders in Birgunj, Nepal:** When Lumanti first initiated community-based programs in the city of Birgunj, on the Indian border, young people from several of the city's poor communities wanted to take part. So they came together and formed their own organization, which they call the Urban Poor Empowerment Society (UPES). Since then, UPES has become an important actor in the city's active community development process, taking over many of the organizing, documentation, communication and support roles that are usually provided by NGOs and professionals. More than 40 young people in UPES, from 17 poor communities, now take part in the savings, CDF, settlement upgrading, housing, loans, health and education activities in the city's slum communities. In the past few years, UPES's activities in Birgunj have been supported by a small grant from ACCA. Earlier this month, Lajana sent the good news that UPES had been chosen (out of 8,449 proposals from 129 countries!) as one of the 31 beneficiaries of a grant from the UN-Habitat's Urban Youth Fund. The grant will allow UPES to expand its program of support to the urban poor community-driven development process in Birgunj. *For more information, please contact Lajana Manandar, at Lumanti: [lajana@lumanti.org.np](mailto:lajana@lumanti.org.np)*



**6. Tibet Heritage Fund starts working Sikkim :** Our intrepid friends at the Tibet Heritage Fund continue to work with the Leh Old Town Initiative (LOTI) to survey and restore traditional Tibetan houses in the old town of Leh, in the northern Indian region of Ladakh. They also continue their work creating a Central Asian museum complex in Leh, with the most recent addition being a Ladakhi Kitchen Museum, where visitors can not only see how a traditional Ladakhi kitchen works, but enjoy a cup of butter tea that has been cooked there. THF has also begun working in the Indian state of Sikkim, along the eastern periphery of the Himalayas, and helping to restore and preserve several historic buildings in an area that is often affected by earthquakes. *For a PDF copy of THF's beautiful 54-page 2013 newsletter, please contact Pimpim de Azevedo at : [pemamarpo@yahoo.com.hk](mailto:pemamarpo@yahoo.com.hk)*

**7. Remembering Perween :** It's been eight months since Perween Rahman was murdered in Karachi, in March 2013, on her way home from work. Many of Perween's colleagues fear that her death will be considered as just another of the some 2,500 murders that have taken place in Karachi this year, and will not be investigated or treated as anything special. To counteract this forgetting, and to find ways of celebrating, learning from and remembering the important work Perween did, her friends in Karachi are undertaking several projects:

- **Justice for Perween Campaign:** Perween's sister, Aquila Ismail, and her colleagues have launched a campaign called "*Justice for Perween Rahman*" to ensure that her murder is investigated and that justice is done. As an architect, social scientist and planner, Perween worked for the inalienable rights of the poor to housing, land, water and education. She was killed, they believe, by the extremist elements that have taken over Qasba and the areas adjoining Orangi Town. It is believed that she stepped on powerful toes while documenting informal settlements and the illegal water-supply business in the city - both of which the extremists benefit from immensely. The documentation that Perween was doing - the only of its kind - had the potential to lead to major changes in the manner in which development of water supply, sanitation and housing is perceived and carried out by the state. Many ACHR friends who knew and admired Perween were among the 7,800 people who signed the "Justice for Perween Rahman" petition, which was formally submitted to the Supreme Court in late October.
- **A documentary film about Perween and her work :** A documentary film maker - a young woman - who knew and loved Perween, is in the process of producing a film about her life and work. ACHR will be gathering footage of friends in the Asia region reminiscing about Perween and discussing the importance of her work, to add to this film. If you would like to contribute, please contact ACHR or Aquila at the e-mail address below.
- **A biography of Perween :** Aquila, who is herself a journalist, is in the process of writing Perween's biography, which will include a glimpse into her childhood, her life in East Pakistan (Bangladesh), her growing up years in Karachi and of course her "complete merger" with OPP. For this last, Aquila will be using, in addition to her own knowledge of her work, the 133 quarterly OPP Progress reports that Perween wrote.
- **A book of essays :** Aquila is also planning to collect and edit a book of essays written by Perween's mentors and peers in Pakistan, in Asia and around the world. If anyone would like to contribute to this book, or has some ideas, please contact Aquila.



*For more information, please contact Perween's sister Ms. Aquila Ismail at: [aquila.ismail@gmail.com](mailto:aquila.ismail@gmail.com) or visit the "Justice for Perween Rahman" page by following this link: [www.facebook.com/JusticeForPerweenRahman](http://www.facebook.com/JusticeForPerweenRahman)*