

NOVEMBER 2012 - MARCH 2013

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## ASIA SAYS GOODBYE TO PERWEEN RAHMAN

*On March 14th, the terrible news came that our old friend, the extraordinary Perween Rahman, the director of OPP- RTI, had been killed. The news reports tell us she was intercepted in Orangi Town by masked gunmen on a motorcycle and shot in her car, on her way home from work on Wednesday afternoon. Her driver, Wali Dad, rushed her to the nearest hospital, but she wasn't able to survive. She was 56 years old. Since then, there has been an outpouring of grief around the world as news of Perween's death has spread over the newspapers, radio, television, internet and social media. Tributes to the life and work of this courageous and much-loved woman have aired on radio stations, on TV and in newspapers around the globe.*

*Perween was with us in Bangkok, just two short weeks ago, for the big ACHR regional gathering at the end of February - one of the rare regional meetings this busy and committed woman agreed to interrupt 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, and the role maps have played in making significant change by people. "We're all mappers," she told us, in that musical voice of hers, which went up and down the scale like a flute. "We love maps! We are all 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 in Asia, her farewell message to us. And it was a message that was full of hope and progress and real change - not just for poor communities in Pakistan, but for communities and their supporters around the world who have learned from her. Here is the text of Perween's presentation in Bangkok:*

**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 or 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 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 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 trying to stop a very scandalous US\$ 100 million ADB-financed loan for the sewers in one of Karachi's towns - not Orangi but another part of the city. How did we stop it? We mapped the settlement. The government had signed the agreement, with no map. 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. 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, 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 town and into 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. The maps 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 settlements were here even before the migrants came to Karachi - and Karachi is a city of migrants. All these settlements have been here 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!

**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.



*At this point, Perween turned over the podium to her colleagues Sirajuddin and Naheed Parveen, who continued to describe the way they have used maps in their work. We all found it touching - even miraculous - that the photo of her that has been picked up and beamed repeatedly around the world, in reports about her death on the internet and in newspapers (left), shows Perween in front of one of her "Ninja maps".*

*Visit the ACHR website to read the many tributes to Perween that are flooding in, as well as links to stories about her work and death.*

## TWO BEAUTIFUL BOOKS LOOK AT TRADITIONAL TIBETAN HOUSES

The Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) is an intrepid group of Asian and European activists, scholars, artisans, and Tibet-lovers who have been working in Tibet, Mongolia and India for the past 20 years to restore traditional houses, neighborhoods and monasteries. They use the restoration process to revive the traditional building crafts and cultural practices that go into these beautiful buildings, which continue to be under serious threat. Although their work has focused on restoring historic structures, the group has always searched for ways that the mostly poor families who live in these old buildings and neighborhoods can stay and be part of their revival, rather than pushed out to make way for tourist boutiques or tower blocks. In this way, the THF has used the historic building angle as a conscious anti-eviction strategy, in situations where surviving Tibetan neighborhoods - and the ancient social cultures they contain - are in serious danger of vanishing under government development plans and the more general creeping-in of international sameness.



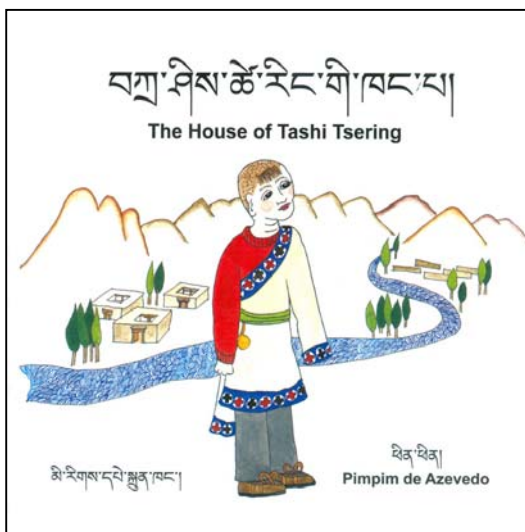
Making or repairing a real Tibetan house, however, was not so easy. Many crafts go into the building - or rebuilding - of these houses: intricate stone masonry, timber joinery of windows and superstructures, carving of wooden columns, roof-making, painting of colorful ornamental friezes and window trim. The "Arga women", for example, use clay, mud and stones to fashion the traditional flat Tibetan roofs, and part of this ancient and highly-skilled process involves dancing and singing special roofing songs in unison, as they make their way, back and forth, across the new roof, gently compacting the stones with long mallets. One of the THF's most difficult tasks has been finding artisans to carry out the restoration work, train younger craftspeople and keep these crafts alive. For this, they ranged all over Tibet, searching for the few surviving master carpenters, stone masons, wood carvers, painters and roof-makers (many in their sixties and seventies!). And when they began working with these people, who knew so much and were themselves cultural treasures, they formulated what has become one of their core working principles: *when in doubt, trust the craftsman*.



Over the years, the THF team has also acquired a considerable understanding of Tibetan buildings, and this understanding has been lovingly preserved in reports, maps, films, archives of measured drawings and books. Before he died in January 2012, Andre Alexander, one of the THF co-founders, had published a beautiful book on Lhasa's



temples, and almost finished a companion volume on Lhasa's houses. Pimpim de Azevedo and Yutaka Hirako, who help coordinate THF's work, are now working with the prestigious Serindia publishing house in Chicago to complete Andre's book - a big, coffee-table book filled with drawings and photos of many of the houses THF restored (sadly, many of which have been demolished now). Pimpim has also written and illustrated another book about Tibetan houses - this one pitched to a younger audience. *"The House of Tashi Tsering"* tells the story of a young boy who dreams of building a house for his family, and gathers ideas as he journeys around Tibet and learns first-hand the whys and hows of Tibetan house design and construction. By some miracle of gentle diplomacy, Pimpim has persuaded the Chinese Government to publish this book (in a bilingual Tibetan and English edition), which is her own love-letter to the Tibetan people, culture and houses she has come to understand so well.



For more information about these books, please contact Pimpim at: [pemamarpo@yahoo.com.hk](mailto:pemamarpo@yahoo.com.hk)



## FIRST EVER BANK LOANS for POOR PEOPLE'S HOUSING in NEPAL

It's no secret that the Aladdin's cave of private-sector finance which makes the world keep spinning is, for all intents and purposes, closed to the poor. That hasn't stopped community groups and their supporters around Asia from continuing to search for the magic words that will open up that glittering treasure to help finance the community development and housing projects which poor community organizations are planning and to add capital to the finance systems they are creating with their own small savings. But sadly, the successes so far have been small, and you can count them on the fingers of one hand. Even at a time when giant banks and millions of middle-class families are defaulting on their housing loans and entire countries are going bankrupt, community savings groups with proven credit-worthiness and 100% loan repayment rates are seen as too great a banking risk: the informality of poor people's lives, jobs and survival systems and the rules and regulations of formal finance systems just can't tango.

But there's some good news on this front from Nepal, where an agreement has just been signed between a private bank, a municipality and an NGO which supports a network of women's savings groups, to unlock some of that formal sector capital and channel it into housing loans to some of the city's poorest families. In the city of Pokhara, women in poor settlements have been saving together for decades, within their traditional Tole Lane Organizations. They use their collective savings to give loans to each other for emergencies and for their small businesses, which have done a lot to increase their incomes and boost their assets. Over the years, these self-help initiatives and the women's financial management skills have won the admiration and support of the municipal government, which has become an important ally of the community process in Pokhara.

A few years back, inspired by some of the community-driven housing and slum upgrading projects being implemented in other cities, the municipal government in Pokhara helped a group of 279 poor room-renters to purchase a piece of land at a price well below the market rate. The people used their savings to buy the land, and the municipality chipped in by leveling the land and putting in basic infrastructure.



This land breakthrough is certainly good news, and the story might have ended there, with these 279 families using whatever meager resources they could muster to build huts on their new secure land. But with support from the municipality and advocacy from the NGO Lumanti, two private sector banks - Kamana Bank and Laxmi Bank - have been persuaded to provide these and other families with housing loans of between 200,000 and 400,000 Rupees (US\$ 2,300 - 4,500) per family (depending on how much they can afford, and whether they are constructing new houses or renovating existing ones), at 8% annual interest, on a seven-year repayment term. In fact, the MOU that has been signed between the banks, the Municipal government and Lumanti is to cover similar community-driven housing projects in three municipalities - Pokhara, Tansen and Lekhnath, where the two banks have also agreed to provide housing loans and banking services for poor families.

In this case, what helped open up the doors to that private-sector loan capital - which nobody ever dreamed would be accessible to poor families! - was partly the municipal government's commitment to people-driven solutions to their serious housing problems and its willingness to help negotiate with the banks, and partly the availability of grant funds from Homeless International's CLIFF Program, which have been deposited in the two banks, as guarantee funds to help those banks feel more comfortable about lending to poor women. In Pokhara, the banks have agreed to lend one-and-a-half times the amount kept in the bank as a guarantee, while the more cautious banks in Lekhnath and Tansen have agreed to top up the guarantee funds by only 10% and 20%, respectively. *But it's a start!* As part of the arrangement, the bank will issue the loans directly to individual borrowers (not to the savings groups or cooperatives), who have been approved by the project management committee and have set up their own accounts with the bank. The repayments will go into a special account in the bank, which will act as a kind of within-bank revolving loan fund, to be used to finance other housing improvement projects in the same or other cities. Half of the 8% interest earned on the loans will go back to the bank, and half will be added to the capital in the revolving loan fund.

The housing projects these bank loans will finance (both new housing and *in-situ* upgrading) are all being planned and implemented by the communities themselves, using low-cost and seismic-proof building techniques, with technical support from community architects, Lumanti, and the citywide multi-partner project management committees that have been set up in each of the three cities, to ensure there is broad support for the process from various development actors. If it works in these pilot projects in Pokhara, Tansen and Lekhnath, and the banks realize that organized poor communities make good banking customers, everyone hopes this model of housing finance from commercial banks will catch on elsewhere and scale up - *maybe even without the guarantee funds!*

For more information on this important breakthrough in Nepal, please contact Sama at Lumanti at : [sama@lumanti.org.np](mailto:sama@lumanti.org.np)

## PAVEMENT DWELLERS IN BOMBAY MOVE TO NEW HOUSES



When it comes to community savings and credit in Asia and Africa, the poor women living in many-times-evicted shacks on the grimy footpaths of Bombay, who started Mahila Milan 28 years ago, enjoy a status that lies somewhere between touchstones, gurus and beloved aunts. Many of the national savings movements that are now going strong on both continents can trace their wee beginnings to either visits from or visits to these intrepid women, who have traveled the globe teaching, cajoling and pummeling more communities into the savings habit than can ever be counted. But besides savings, the pavement dwellers also pioneered many other strategies to help them forestall evictions and to gradually craft and negotiate for their own housing solutions. Many of these strategies have also become rituals for many of the region's community networks and federations.

They were one of the first groups, for example, to survey their own footpath settlements, and to use the survey information to begin a dialogue with the city - a dialogue that was based in facts, not in assumptions. The survey, which described a widely-misunderstood world in language everyone could understand, showed that pavement dwellers weren't thieves and parasites, as the myth held, but working families whose cheap labor the city needed, but whose human needs it ignored. Unlike slum dwellers, pavement dwellers were not a recognized "category" and so were bypassed by most entitlements and interventions. That meant no ration cards, no basic services, no loans or rehabilitation schemes. The survey also showed that the city's strategy of demolishing pavement dwellings didn't solve the problem, only further impoverished those without other options. In 1987, they made their first survey of vacant land, where they combed the city looking for possible land for building permanent housing, and then brought that information into their dialogue on resettlement with the authorities (who always said, "There's no land!"). In 1994, they staged their first of many public model house exhibitions, in which they built a full-scale replica of the very modest house they had designed themselves, and used that exhibition to show the city that they were ready and able to work out their own housing strategy, as full partners in the city's development.



The Mahila Milan's many years of preparation, negotiation and hard work finally paid off spectacularly in 1997, when the State of Maharashtra agreed to include pavement dwellers in its new Slum Rehabilitation policy (SRA), and to "rehabilitate" 5,000 pavement households (28,000 people) to small flats (of 225 square feet each) in medium-rise blocks, which the state government would provide to the pavement families for free. As part of the agreement, the entire process of vacating the old pavement settlements, moving to the new flats, organizing the new housing collectively and taking care of the buildings' long-term maintenance was to be managed by the Mahila Milan and National Slum Dwellers Federation. The first batch of 536 pavement dwelling families formed a cooperative society soon thereafter and got the first collective title deed for the new land in the northern suburb of Kanjurmarg, which they aptly named *Milan Nagar*.

**THEY'RE MOVING IN NOW!** Since that triumphant moment 16 years ago, there have been problems and unforeseeable setbacks (including the occupation of some of the brand new buildings by other squatters, and a long process of negotiation to get them to leave!) which have delayed the resettlement. But finally, the pavement dwellers' historic move from into flats the state government is providing for free, is really happening, lane by lane.

Somsok was in Bombay last December, on her way to the community builders workshop in Bhuj, and she had a chance to spend a day with Jockin and Mahila Milan, and to witness some steps in this remarkable - and very difficult! - process. In Byculla, she walked around with Jockin, Shekhar, Shakoor, Sagira and Banoo, examining lanes





where the pavement dwellings have been completely cleared by the occupants themselves and lanes where the houses were now being demolished, speaking along the way with a few hold-outs who are still reluctant to move to their new flats in Mankurd. "Do we want to live like animals forever?" Jockin asked them. "People have to re-start!"



In some lanes, the people had done their part, but the city hadn't cleared the rubble yet, so Jockin felt the ruined houses might be too inviting to re-invasion, so after making a few phone calls, the NSDF team came to demolish the remaining structures themselves.



At the new housing at Kanjurmarg, there were also problems. Many of the 41 eight-story housing blocks (each with 96 units) in this huge development, though newish, were already in bad condition, having been trashed by the illegal occupiers, and some of the drains and paving in the lanes below had broken down and needed to be repaired (*more calls from the mobile phone...*). But even though conditions were not perfect, the women had decided to move in, and wherever they had moved in, the cheerful sight of fresh paint and colorful sarees and dupattas hung out to dry was in evidence, and several of the women were proud to show their new rooms.



Each of the 41 blocks will have its own community organization, and a community center on the ground floor for savings, meetings, cooking and community events. And each floor will have its own communal open space, near the elevators,



which families living on that floor can decide how to use. The Mahila Milan is in charge of managing everything.



For more information on the Mahila Milan, and on the pavement dwellers in Bombay, please visit the SPARC website : [www.sparcindia.org](http://www.sparcindia.org)







ACHR's most recent regional gathering was organized in Bangkok at the end of February, at the Prince Palace Hotel. The marathon 6-day meeting brought together about 150 serious "doers" from around Asia - people who are the key people working on the ground to bring about change for the poor in their countries: community leaders, NGO workers, activists, government officials, community architects and friends from international agencies. And as usual, the meeting was a very good opportunity for all of these active people - many already good friends - to meet, to tell about the good things that are happening, to learn from each others' good experiences, to draw inspiration and fresh energy from those other experiences, and to see how we can support each other to move forward and make that work stronger and more effective. As Somsook said in her welcoming remarks, "We have a lot of friends, so we don't have to work in

*isolation. We can share and help each other as we build things and as we bring our work to another level.*" A full report on the meeting is now being prepared for distribution, but in the mean time, here are a few notes on the meeting's highlights:

- **Country reports** : A day and a half of the meeting was devoted to reports from each of the 19 countries with ACCA projects. The presentations were grouped by sub-region, and the provided updates on the work (with beautiful powerpoint slides), an overview of the challenges they are facing and brief summaries of their national plans for the next phase of ACCA. As usual, these lively and detailed presentations - though always cut short for lack of time! - were the most inspiring part of the meeting.
- **Open session on policy change** : As Somsook said in her introduction: "We are not just doing projects - all this work is leading to structural change, new ways of doing things, new ways of institutionalizing people's central role, new partnerships, new relationships between poor communities and the formal systems. How is that happening?"
- **Session on community mapping and enumeration**, with some very lively presentations by some of the region's most experienced teams of community mappers and surveyors: Celine on SPARC's early pavement dweller surveys in Bombay, Perween on the OPP's use of mapping and Nad's stories about community mapping in Fiji and other Asian countries.
- **Planning the next steps of ACCA** : On the fourth day, the participants broke into 6 sub-groups to discuss and propose points for the various aspects of the next phase of ACHR / ACCA work: the "Decent Poor Fund", "Big sister cities", the Community architects network (CAN), community development funds, ACCA coordination and the housing rights and eviction study.
- **Field visits to community upgrading projects** : In a city that is especially rich in community-planned upgrading projects, there were several opportunities, of course, for the meeting participants to visit community upgrading projects in Bangkok and Samut Prakan, some with and some without support from CODI's Baan Mankong upgrading program. At the historic Pom Mahakan Community, behind the city's ancient ramparts, the group was treated to dinner cooked by street vendors who live in this community that has long resisted attempts to evict them.
- **UPCA meeting and dinner at CODI** : CODI and the National Thai Urban Community Network hosted a market-style dinner for the meeting participants at the CODI office, after a full day's meeting which began with an introduction to CODI and the community upgrading process in Thailand (with a first-ever visit by the Minister of Social Development and Human Security!), and continued in the afternoon with a meeting to discuss the next steps for the Urban Poor Community Asia (UPCA) network.
- **Dialogue at the United Nations** : On the last day, we all dressed up in our Sunday best and headed to the UN headquarters for a half-day dialogue jointly organized by UN-ESCAP and ACHR, with the rather grand title, "Regional multi-stakeholder dialogue on inclusive and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific." Besides supportive speeches by UN-ESCAP officials and the Thai Minister, there was a very good panel discussion with community leaders, government officers and professionals from the ACHR network.





## ACCA PROGRAM UPDATE : FIGURES, PLANS, MEETINGS



**ACCA PHASE 1:** The Asian Coalition for Community Action Program (ACCA) is a 3-year program of ACHR, which set a target of supporting a process of citywide slum upgrading in 150 Asian cities, to demonstrate a new, flexible, comprehensive and people-driven way of solving problems of urban land, housing and poverty. The program has brought together and built on several key elements of the ACHR coalition's work over the past 25 years: implementing citywide community surveys and mapping, building community networks and local partnership mechanisms, supporting small community upgrading projects in several communities in each city, starting at least one housing project with participatory planning in each city, and supporting the setting up and strengthening of community savings activities and city development funds. The ACCA Program has now completed its third year (extended to three-and-a-half years, actually) and is embarking on its second phase. A detailed third yearly report on the ACCA Program's implementation, called "165 Cities in Asia," has been printed and can be downloaded from the ACHR website. Here are a few figures from the report.

### ACCA PROGRAM UPDATE : *(Cumulative figures, as of January, 2013)*

- ACCA-supported citywide upgrading activities in 165 cities / towns / districts, in 19 Asian countries
- 111 big housing projects either finished or well underway (Total big project budget approved: US\$ 3.9 million - which includes eight projects from the ACCA regional revolving loan fund)
- 1,185 small upgrading projects either completed or in process (Total small project budget approved US\$ 2.05 million)
- US\$ 75.7 million worth of land, infrastructure and cash has been leveraged from governments in these big housing projects and small upgrading projects, with the ACCA budget accounting for only 6% of the total project values.
- Community savings groups in 167 ACCA cities, with 274,000 savers and a total of US\$ 22.5 million in collective savings.
- City-based community development funds (CDFs) active in 98 cities, with a total capital of US\$ 5.8 million, of which less than half came from ACCA, and the rest was mobilized from communities, local governments and other sources.
- 30 Community-driven disaster rehabilitation projects in 10 countries
- National surveys in 7 countries, finished or in process

**ACCA PHASE 2:** After a long process of negotiation with our donor and our partners at IIED, there is some good news: a budget of US\$ 3.5 million has been made available for us to continue the ACCA Program for another two years - perhaps not as ambitiously as we might have wished, but well enough to keep the process growing as we decide what to do next. This second phase of the ACCA Program has set a target of supporting citywide upgrading in another 100 cities, bringing the total to at least 250 Asian cities. The key elements that will be emphasized in this second phase will be:

- Community-driven, community-proposed and community-implemented projects
- Citywide information and mapping, citywide upgrading activities, citywide networks, citywide partnerships, citywide processes
- Strengthening community finance systems: savings and funds, city-based community development funds (CDFs)
- Building partnership, changing relationships, changing structures and making the larger system work for the poor
- National mechanisms/ platforms for implementing ACCA, with at least 50% community participation

<i>Tools for ACCA Phase 2</i>	<i>Budget per project</i>	<i>Amount (US\$)</i>
1. Big housing projects	About \$40,000 per project x 30 cities	1,100,000
2. Small upgrading projects	\$5,000 for existing ACCA cities and \$10,000 for new cities	700,000
3. Welfare activities	\$2,000 per city x 100 cities (max 10 cities per country)	200,000
4. Special support for strategic activities	Open to proposals	200,000
5. National coordination and activities	\$10,000 per country per year x 2 years	300,000
6. Decent poor housing grants	\$500 per family, only for housing. Max 20 grants per country	100,000
7. Community driven disaster rehabilitation	Ceiling of \$10,000 per disaster (from Rockefeller)	100,000

### Upcoming ACCA and ACHR events in 2013

- March 14 MOU signing between ACHR and Municipality of Phnom Penh to support citywide upgrading
- April 2 - 6 First community survey and mapping workshop, in Yangon, Myanmar
- April 28-May 10 DPU Students (London) come to Asia to do field study in Thailand
- May 3 - 6 ACHR / ACCA Meeting + field visits and workshop in Yangon, Myanmar
- May 14 - 18 Study visits to Thailand from Social Housing Finance Corporation and World Bank in the Philippines
- May 19 -29 Regional Community Architects Network (CAN) Workshop in the Philippines
- May Field study tour in Thailand by the new Jakarta governor, with a team of officials and community architects

## NEWS FROM THE COMMUNITY ARCHITECTS NETWORK (CAN)

*Chawanad Luansang ("Nad"), who is part of the team which coordinates the regional community architects process, gave a presentation during the ACHR meeting in Bangkok about the exciting recent work community architect groups around the region are doing to support the people-driven housing and upgrading processes in their cities and countries. "The ACCA Program was like a bomb blast for us," Nad said. "We have all just jumped into the middle of a big new river, which is this community process. The real projects that we are now working on - with real communities - are being implemented with the strong belief that there are no borders between us [community architects] and you [poor communities], and that all people are creative, all people are capable and full of ideas, not just professionals." A few highlights from Nad's presentation :*



**27 groups in 17 Asian countries now in the CAN network :** The CAN network was formed in 2010 and had its first regional gathering in Chiang Mai in June 2010. The network now brings together 27 groups in 17 Asian countries, who use the network as a platform to link with each other, share ideas, learn from each other's work and help make it stronger. These groups include architects, engineers, designers, community-based builders and professors and students from universities. All of them are deeply involved in working on the ground to support communities in several ways: community mapping, settlement upgrading, comprehensive site-planning, housing design, community-builders training, exploration of alternative and cost-saving local building materials, engaging with universities and academics and sharing knowledge through meetings, workshops, print and electronic media.

### **Community planning workshop with vinyl house communities in Seoul:**

There are 38 informal "vinyl house" communities in Seoul, which are home to some 10,000 households. During the last four years, a network of these communities has started savings groups, implemented small ACCA-supported upgrading projects and successfully lobbied to get ID cards. But how to get secure land and housing has been the big issue nobody knows how to start tackling - even now that Seoul has a progressive new mayor who is actively supporting cooperative housing, as an alternative to the city's long tradition of contractor-driven neighborhood redevelopment or faceless and expensive public rental housing in tower blocks. In November 2012, CAN, ACHR and Asian Bridge jointly organized a workshop in Seoul to try to get some of the city's poorest and most vulnerable communities to start brainstorming about alternative housing possibilities. During the four-day workshop, a group of Korean, Thai and Japanese architects worked with the people in three vinyl house communities to look at possible strategies for securing their land (such as renting or buying from the government, or from private landowners) and finding financing to develop their own cooperative housing, and then to explore some different housing design and settlement planning options for this new kind of social housing (including ground floor row-house developments, as well as low-rise apartment blocks).



**Community Builders gather for a workshop in Bhuj:** In December 2012, a workshop was organized in Bhuj, India, which brought together 30 community architects and community-based builders from Indonesia, Thailand, Philippines, Mongolia and India. The 8-day workshop, which was jointly organized by CAN and Hunnarshala, included a day of presentations by community architects from around India, a day of field visits to ACCA-supported community savings, upgrading and housing projects and an evening of Sufi music and Gujarati vegetarian cuisine at a beautiful museum of local crafts beside a salt lake a little outside of Bhuj. But the focus of the workshop was a few days of hands-on learning at Hunnarshala's active training center, where village women, youngsters and community builders learn to make different kinds of soil blocks, rammed earth walls and other alternative building materials and techniques. The group stopped off in Ahmedabad on the way, where they took a "heritage walk" around the old city, visited the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), and took part in a press conference with the local architects association, which was arranged by Kirtee Shah.



**NEW CAN PUBLICATIONS and FILMS :** The CAN network continues to produce printed reports and how-to guides which describe some of the techniques being tested and refined in their work to support a new kind of design process in which communities are the designers and the architects are the facilitators. Their latest is a beautiful 94-page report which describes and illustrates many of the house design, mapping, settlement planning and alternative materials projects groups of community architects around Asia have been involved with over the past two years (2010-2012). For a copy of that report, please contact ACHR. The Thai film-maker Pisut Srimhok (from "Openspace") has also produced a delightful 8-minute film which provides a vivid introduction to the work of the Community Architects Network in Asia. Sut's film, which will be included in the coming-soon DVD compilation of new films from the ACHR/ACCA network, can be viewed on YouTube : <http://youtu.be/7npRzF6wRI4>



## FILMS BY GROUPS AROUND ASIA PREMIERED AT ACHR MEETING

During the ACHR regional meeting in Bangkok, the half-hour or so before each session began was used as an opportunity to screen new films that have been produced by community groups, architects and professionals who are part of the Video / Media Network Asia - some with support from ACHR and the Rockefeller Foundation and some without. Most (but not all) of these films document citywide slum upgrading projects that are being implemented by poor communities, with support from the ACCA Program. Many of these films are now being compiled into a set and should be available from ACHR in late April 2013, in the form of a single DVD. For more information, please contact Maurice. Here's a list of the new films (from 2012) that will be on the DVD compilation:

**PAKISTAN** : Two films by URC-Karachi: Karachi transport problems (5 minutes); The Problems of Pedestrians in Karachi (5 minutes) + two films by OPP-RTI: The Orangi Pilot Program - RTI Community mapping process; ACCA supported flood relief project in Pakistan, "One room and a roof." + a training video by Watan Welfare on how village communities can lay their own drainage and sewerage pipes

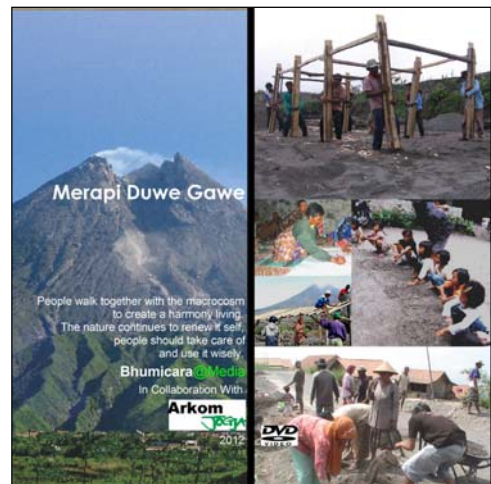
**CAMBODIA** : 50 five-minute videos on the urban poor in Cambodia. These films were produced for a weekly TV series called "Community Minutes" which airs nationally on TV3.

**MONGOLIA** : A film by CHR D: Introduction to CHR D and community-based development through local efforts (30 minutes) + a film by UDRC: Savings groups and enterprising impacts (30 minutes, in Mongolian, with English subtitles)

**INDONESIA** : "The Merapi Volcano" - a film by Arkom Jogja, which has also helped villagers in volcano-affected areas to make their own films about the environment, local wisdom, culture, arts, cuisine, economics, health and history of their villages. "Construction of a road by the community" - a video by the community people in riverside kampungs in Yogyakarta. A film by UPC on the ACCA-supported housing project in the city of Kendari, in Southeast Sulawesi.

**TIBET / LADAKH** : A Brief Introduction to Tibet Heritage Fund (5 minutes) + Andre Alexandrer- Heritage Hero. A film from the BBC series (10 minutes) + Tribute to a Heritage Warrior - Music and slides of Andre from ACHR friends.

**SRI LANKA** : The Story of the Sri Lanka Women's Co-op, "Encouraged to Smile", a film by Women's Co-op's media unit + 4 short training videos produced by Sevanatha: Community livelihood action planning; Community contracts; Land tenure security; Making soil cement bricks for housing in Batticaloa (a war-torn zone in northern Sri Lanka).



**NEPAL** : A short film was prepared by Lumanti to document the Bagmati River Communities' battle against eviction. Three other short films on ACCA-supported housing projects and the impact of community savings are now being edited.

**THAILAND** : 3 films by Open Space (a group of Thai community architects): Architects working with communities in several different contexts: a project designing a center with the homeless people's network in Bangkok; designing housing and living/working spaces for rehabilitating disabled people in rural Thailand; a rural community planning project by KJB which is part of the CODI-supported Rural Baan Mankong Program.

**PHILIPPINES** : A 20-minute video which documents the launch of the Urban Poor Coalition Asia (UPCA) in Quezon City, in March 2012, and the field visits to community upgrading projects in different parts of the country that took place beforehand. The Homeless People's Federation has uploaded several videos onto YouTube, including videos about the community-led housing projects in Mandaue, the construction of bamboo footbridge in Davao and various other ACCA supported housing and road upgrading projects around the country.

**COMMUNITY ARCHITECTS NETWORK ASIA (CAN)** : A film from Kabir in Bangladesh: "My House, My Way". A film on "The Role of Community Architects in the Philippines". A film by the Young Professionals Team in Vietnam on the Tampei YP workshop in Tan An City. Planning and constructing the bamboo bridge in Davao, Philippines. The Role of CAN-CAM - the Community Architects Network Cambodia. CAN is now producing a series of films which will document five of the milestone projects in the past few years: the housing design project in Bharatpur, the site planning in Yangon, the resettlement planning in Gopalganj and community survey and mapping in Fiji, Thailand, Lao PDR and Nepal.

**ACCA / ACHR** : 4 five-minute videos on ACCA from the ACHR secretariat: ACCA overall concepts; a slide show of ACCA projects; small upgrading projects in Vietnam; ACCA projects in Cambodia. "The Way to End Slums" is a 20-minute film that documents the experiences of ACCA-supported citywide upgrading in three cities (Bharatpur, Vinh and Bangkok), produced by Brenda Kelly and Trish Connolly of Uncommon Media (UK). Now the film is also available in versions with Thai and Vietnamese sound tracks.

1. **UPCA meeting in Chum Phae, Thailand, December 14-17, 2012.** The community-planned and community-implemented housing and upgrading process in the Thai town of Chum Phae is probably one of the closest to achieving truly citywide housing and land security for all the poor people in the city. With support from CODI's Baan Mankong Program, they have upgraded several poor communities *in-situ*, and built new communities for scattered squatters on land they have negotiated to lease from the central government. The community network's 3-year old CDF (which was launched with seed capital from ACCA), has continued to finance houses for poor households who couldn't qualify for CODI loans, and even financed a collectively-owned rice farm which provides both organic rice and future land security to the network. Somsook: *"It makes me feel so humble when you see how much creativity comes from a strong people's process like this, and when you don't impose too many rules. They invent things you would never would have dreamed of."* Almost all the poor households in the city are part of savings groups (which contribute to the CDF), and the savings habit runs so deep there that even 1,000 school children save and contribute to the CDF. In December, 2012, the community network in Chum Phae hosted a 3-day regional gathering of the Urban Poor Coalition Asia (UPCA), where the visitors got a chance to visit many of these community initiatives, talk to the community people and local officials and see first-hand what a truly citywide community upgrading process looks like.



2. **NEW PAPER : How has market-based slum redevelopment worked for the poor?** One of the chestnuts that keeps falling down with a thud into discussions about what do with slums is, *"Let the private sector solve the problem!"* The Indian state of Maharashtra is one of the few cases in Asia where a state government has tried to do just that, and made market-driven strategies for redeveloping urban slums into a policy. The Slum Rehabilitation Scheme (SRA) was initiated in Mumbai in the mid-1990s, and in the city of Pune shortly afterwards. With huge portions of the urban population living in slums and equally huge shortfalls in public funds for housing, the SRA scheme was seen as a pragmatic way of providing decent, secure shelter for the poor without relocating them, and at the same time unlocking the valuable inner-city land they occupied for real estate development. The scheme combined the cross-subsidy economics with land-sharing planning and encouraged developers to propose projects which redeveloped existing slums with commercial real-estate projects on one portion of the land and blocks of small apartments to re-house the slum dwellers on the other. The SRA scheme has gone through several waves of adjustment, and enough projects have actually been built to generate both enthusiasm and scepticism. Meera Bapat is an independent academic and housing activist who has been studying Pune's slum communities - and the changing urban development forces that affect them - for more than thirty years. In this paper, Meera takes a deep and detailed look at the SRA scheme in Pune and finds out how it works and how its projects have been perceived by the city's poor communities, NGOs, architects and government officials. For a copy of the paper or more information about the SRA projects in Pune, please contact Meera at: [meerabapat17@gmail.com](mailto:meerabapat17@gmail.com)



3. **DPU students come to Bangkok again this spring :** The partnership between the University College of London's Development Planning Unit (DPU), ACHR and the CAN network goes back to 2010, when the first field trip for DPU students was organized in Bangkok, in collaboration with CODI. In May 2011 and again in May 2012, groups of 50 DPU students came to Bangkok for intense two week workshops where they visited community upgrading projects and studied issues of urban development, community engagement and housing planning, working closely with community architects and local groups. Since then, Somsook has given several lectures at DPU, and DPU students and faculty have come to Thailand and the Philippines to explore possible mutual learning and support links between DPU students and community networks and their upgrading projects here in Asia. This year, DPU, ACHR and CAN have set up a "junior professional internship" program, which is now supporting six DPU graduates to spend six months getting on-the-ground experience working with community organizations on their citywide slum upgrading projects in Vietnam, Indonesia, Cambodia and Philippines. And in the end of April, another batch of 50 DPU students will come to Bangkok for another 2-week workshop, with lectures and field visits to citywide upgrading initiatives in 5 Thai cities - all in collaboration with ACHR, CODI and CAN. Although the DPU is based in London, the course draws students from all





over the world, and one of the reasons ACHR has decided to invest in this ongoing cross-pollination is because many of these students will go back home afterwards and eventually become key professionals and officials steering the development in their own countries. *For more information on the DPU - CODI - ACHR collaboration, please contact ACHR.*

**4. New support for community-driven kampung upgrading in Jakarta :** "Jakarta is always the most anti-poor city in Indonesia," says Wardah Hafidz, from the Urban Poor Consortium (UPC). "In Indonesia, Jakarta has the biggest city budget - which is now US\$ 2.3 billion per year. But the economic and social gap in the city is very wide. Some forty to fifty percent of the city's residents live in slums and informal settlements. There are slums everywhere, in between the skyscrapers, hidden behind the tall buildings. At the same time, Jakarta has 114 big shopping malls, for a population of 9 million people. But there was a study that found that only 500,000 of those inhabitants can actually afford to shop in those places. And many communities have been evicted to clear land for these shopping malls." Last July, the citizens of Jakarta voted in a progressive and unassuming new governor, Joko Widodo (known affectionately as "Jokowi"). His election, won by a landslide, has turned the country's political order on its head. He had earlier been the mayor of Solo, and under his mayorship, he was known for using dialogue with slum dwellers to resolve land problems without eviction. There is now a lot of hope that this "pro-poor" mayor may be able to help find long-term and large-scale solutions to the city's serious urban poor housing problems.



In the past few months, the young architects Yuli and Cakcak from the Arkom Jogja group have been talking with the new mayor and with Mr. Novizal, who now heads the city's housing division, about the possibility of implementing a series of pilot in-situ community upgrading projects in the city, to demonstrate a more community-driven alternative to eviction and resettlement. Both officials are quite open to these ideas, and have even proposed selecting 30 kampongs for upgrading, using purely public funds. The Arkom team has proposed starting with pilot upgrading projects in two communities - the Pluit Community in North Jakarta, and the sprawling Ciliwung Riverside communities in South Jakarta.



The mayor has agreed to the plan and the Arkom team is now preparing some schematic concept drawings for the mayor to present the idea to the city council. The Arkom team is now working with ACHR to organize a study tour to Bangkok for a team which will include the mayor, his key housing officials, the architects, UPC and some representatives from the pilot upgrading communities. The focus of the visit, which will likely be in May, will be on community-driven slum upgrading projects, supported by CODI's Baan Mankong Program, as well as ACCA. *For more information on this important breakthrough in Jakarta, please contact Cak at: [andrea.fitrianto@gmail.com](mailto:andrea.fitrianto@gmail.com)*

**5. Arif Hasan finally gets his own website: [www.arifhasan.org](http://www.arifhasan.org)** One of the ACHR network's most prolific thinkers, writers and practitioners is Arif Hasan, whose articles, books, research studies, lectures and travel notes have been bringing the cool light of his deep understanding and the warmth of his affection for and curiosity about all things Asian to our collective work for decades. Arif's colleagues in Pakistan and at IIED in London have now helped him to develop and launch a website of Arif's work, with the purpose of supporting academic research, community activism and culture. The website contains Arif's articles, reports, research monographs, seminar papers and powerpoint presentations, as well as descriptions of his many books and photos and drawings of his various architectural and planning projects. The website also has an image gallery with downloadable photos of Karachi over time and photos of places where Arif has worked in Pakistan. There is also a section of the website on maps, which includes historic maps of Karachi, maps related to the evolution of the city and its infrastructure and urban development and maps of Pakistan relating to ecology and environment. The subjects covered by material on the website include: Human Settlements, Karachi, Culture and Heritage, Architecture and Planning, Environment and Ecology, Development and Poverty, OPP and URC, Disaster Management and Political Writings. The website project has been supported by IIED in London. The address of the website is wonderfully forget-proof: [www.arifhasan.org](http://www.arifhasan.org)



**6. Invitation from Asiya to join her lecture series in Belgium :** After 12 years of teaching at the Department of Architecture at NED University in Karachi, Asiya Sidiq and her Belgian husband Christophe Polack have relocated to Brussels for a few years,



where they are teaching in the International Masters program at the School of Architecture, at KU University in Leuven (*which occupies a castle, see photo*). Asiya and Christophe have initiated a lecture series there - both for their architecture students as well as the public - about the community-driven development programs in Pakistan and other Asian countries. The first five lectures of the series were given by Arif Hasan in September 2012, and they were a big hit with the students. There have already been a few spin-offs: a Belgian journalist wants to do an article about sustainable development in Karachi for his magazine "Revolve", a few senior Pakistanis want to form a study group here in Brussels, and Asiya and Christophe are initiating a study on the housing conditions of Pakistani migrants in Belgium. Since then, Asiya has asked us to request anyone in the ACHR network who is in Europe, who may be interested in taking part in the lecture series, to please contact

Asiya. They can arrange within-Europe travel and accommodation, through the university lecture series. They would also like to request that any groups that would like to link with the lecture series of this study on migrant housing to please contact them to discuss possible collaboration. Contact Asiya at: [info.architectuur@luca-arts.be](mailto:info.architectuur@luca-arts.be) or visit the website at: <http://architectuur.sintlucas.luca-arts.be/>