

# Assessing ACCA in VIETNAM

These are Tom's notes on the joint assessment trip to visit ACCA projects being carried out in four cities in Vietnam, April 2-6, 2010

These notes were taken during the assessment trip to visit ACCA projects being implemented by poor communities in Vietnam. This was the second ACCA assessment trip (after the Philippines in Jan 2010). The visit took place in April 2010, and was a chance for teams of community leaders and their support organizations from six other countries (Thailand, Nepal, Lao PDR, Philippines, Mongolia and Sri Lanka) - all of whom are involved in implementing their own city-wide ACCA upgrading projects - to meet their peers in Vietnam who are doing projects, learn more about the projects, see how they are progressing, compare notes and discuss together what the strong and weak points of the projects have been. During the four-day assessment in Vietnam, the participants visited four cities: Vinh, Hai Duong, Viet Tri and Lang Son. But these joint assessments are also an opportunity to reflect on how all of us are working back in our own countries. This is a new kind of assessment process - a "two-way" assessment, in which we assess others and assess ourselves at the same time. And we have learned a lot and now have a much deeper understanding of the process in Vietnam.



## SCHEDULE OF PROJECT VISITS :

### APRIL 3 in VINH :

- **Orientation meeting** with mayor + local government officials and community / CDF leaders at City Hall, Vinh City
- **Cua Nam Ward** - This is Vinh's big housing project, an on-site reconstruction
- **Doi Cung Ward** - a small project to lay sewers and an irrigation trench
- **Hung Hoa Commune** - small projects to pave walkways and build a community center

### APRIL 4 in HAI DUONG :

- **Orientation meeting** with local government officials and community / CDF leaders at City Hall, Hai Duong
- **Nguyen Trai Ward** - a small ACCA project to build a community center
- **Pham Ngu Lao Ward Community** - a small ACCA project to lay sewers and drains

### APRIL 5 in VIET TRI :

- **Orientation meeting** with local government officials and community / CDF leaders at City Hall, Viet Tri.
- **Tien Cat Ward** - a small ACCA project to construct a paved road
- **Van Phu Commune** - this nearby relocation is one of the two ACCA-supported big housing projects in Viet Tri.
- **Nong Trang Ward** - this on-site reconstruction of old social housing is the other ACCA big project.

### APRIL 6 in LANG SON :

- **Orientation meeting** with local government officials and community / CDF leaders at City Hall, Lang Son.
- **Co Man Village, Mai Pha Commune** - a small ACCA project to construct a paved walkway
- **Quang Trung Village, Quang Lac Commune** - a small project to construct a village water-supply system
- **Hoang Thuy Village, Hoang Dong Commune** - a small ACCA project to construct a road

## **Who joined the Vietnam assessment trip :**

### **FROM NEPAL :**

1. Ms. Bhanu Gurung (Community leader, Salyani Community, Bharatpur)
2. Mr. Abdul Kaish Miya Teli (Community leader, Shanti Tole Community, Birgunj)
3. Mr. Mahendra Shakya (Lumanti, NGO)

### **FROM SRI LANKA :**

4. Mrs. Anoma Jayasinghe (National leader, Women's Bank)
5. Mrs. Rupa Manel (National leader, Women's Bank)
6. Mrs. Swarnalatha Elpitiyage (Community leader, Women's Bank)

### **FROM MONGOLIA :**

7. Mrs. Urantsetseg Byamba (Community leader, Tuv Province)
8. Ms. Shinetsetseg Munkhbayar ("Shinee") (Urban Development Resource Center NGO)

### **FROM LAO PDR :**

9. Ms. Phayvanh Phomvongsa (Community savings group leader, Nasaithong District, Vientiane Prefecture)
10. Ms. Pangkham (Community savings group leader, Nasaithong District, Vientiane Prefecture)
11. Ms. Onesy Sengmeuang (Lao Women's Union, Lao PDR)

### **FROM CAMBODIA :**

12. Mrs. Kan Bolin (Community leader, Phnom Penh)
13. Mr. Somsak Phonphakdee (Urban Poor Development Fund, Cambodia)
14. Ms Chou Lennylen (UPDF Media person)
15. Mr. Say Leak (Channel 3 / UPDF Media person)

### **FROM THE PHILIPPINES :**

16. Fr. Norberto Carcellar (PACSII NGO, Philippines)

### **FROM the ACHR SECRETARIAT and IIED :**

17. Ms. Somsook Boonyabancha (ACHR, Bangkok)
18. Mr. Maurice Leonhardt (ACHR, Bangkok)
19. Ms. Le Thi Huyen (ACHR, Bangkok)
20. Mr. Thomas Kerr (ACHR, Bangkok)
21. Ms. Somporn Boonyabancha ("Im") (Translator, ACHR, Bangkok)
22. Ms. Diana Mitlin (International Institute for Environment and Development, London, UK)

### **FROM VIETNAM :**

23. Ms. Tang Thi Duong (community leader, Vinh)
24. Ms. Le Thi Hoa (community leader, Vinh)
25. Ms. Le Thanh Huong (community leader, Vinh)
26. Ms. Nguyen Thi Thu (community Leader, Viet Tri)
27. Ms. Phuong Thi Kim (community Leader, Viet Tri)
28. Ms. Tu Thi Thanh Giang (Women's Union / CDF, Viet Tri)
29. Ms. Pham Thi Thuy Hang (community leader, Hai Duong)
30. Ms. Do Thi Hien (community leader, Hai Duong)
31. Ms. Nguyen Huong Ly (Women's Union / CDF, Hai Duong)
32. Mr. Chu Duc Khoi (community leader, Lang Son)
33. Ms. Do Thi Vinh (community leader, Lang Son)
34. Ms. Chu Thuy Sung (community leader, Lang Son)
35. Ms. Hoang Thi Xuan (community leader, Lang Son)
36. Mr. Nguyen Ninh Thuc (ACVN Vice General Secretary, Hanoi)
37. Mr. Le Quang Thong (National CDF Coordinator, Architect, Hanoi)
38. Ms. Le Thi Le Thuy (National CDF consultant)
39. Ms. Tran Thi Thuy Linh (ACVN staff, translator, Hanoi)
40. Ms. Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao (ACVN staff, translator, Hanoi)
41. Ms. Nguyen Thi Dung (Enda Vietnam, Hanoi)
42. Ms. Nguyen Thi Thinh ("Chips") (Young Professional, Hanoi)

## ACCA in VIETNAM :

ACCA-supported projects are now underway in 9 cities around Vietnam

(as of April 1, 2010)

ACCA-supported projects are being implemented in nine cities in Vietnam so far, and all these projects are being planned and carried out by local communities, in close collaboration with the 27-city National Community Development Fund (CDF) network, the Associated Cities of Vietnam (ACVN), the National Women's Union and the NGO ENDA-Vietnam. The way ACCA is being implemented in Vietnam is a little different than other countries. For the past two years, the community upgrading process and the with the Associated Cities of Vietnam (ACVN), which is a kind of secretariat of all the cities in the country. This link with ACVN opens up new space for so many cities to join in the process and to initiate ACCA projects in their cities. We have to see how the communities on the ground will collaborate with the cities in this process, and be very active - this will be one of our important tasks in the next two years. But for the time being, ACVN has had a very big and very special task in supporting this work in a big way, and getting so many cities involved. So far, 20 small upgrading projects are now finished or being implemented with ACCA support in 5 cities, and two big housing projects are being implemented in two cities (Viet Tri and Vinh).

**Linking with Cities Alliance to help scale up ACCA in Viet Nam :** We have also joined forces with the Cities Alliance, and negotiated for their support to expand the program in the next three years to 100 cities. We'll have to see whether we can do this or not. But the important aspect of this idea of 100 cities is thinking big, thinking at the *real scale of the problems*. It might end up being 60 or 70 or 110 cities - the important thing is not only the exact number of cities, but the approach which takes into consideration the real scale of problems and the real scale of change, and works at that scale from the very start.

**The little island or the big sea?** This is the key issue of the ACCA Program, that we shouldn't just keep doing projects here and there, pouring all our energy and resources and creativity into nurturing these few, isolated projects, as though they were our babies. We could keep taking care of these "babies" forever! In fact these little projects are only small islands in a big sea of change. So the thing we have to do is to look realistically at the actual scale of problems, the actual scale of the changing world, and see how whatever we plan and whatever we do can influence that big scale of change, one way or another.

| Country  | City / District    | Total budget approved | Big projects | Small projects | City process | Underst anding cities | Other city and national pro-cesses | Disaster | Com-munity savings and fund |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------|
| Viet Nam<br>- 9 cities<br>- 3 big proj<br>- 41 sm proj | Viet Tri           | 60,000                | 40,000       | 15,000 (5)     | 3,000        |                       |                                    |          | 2,000                       |
|  | Vinh               | 60,000                | 40,000       | 15,000 (5)     | 3,000        |                       |                                    |          | 2,000                       |
|  | Lang Son           | 20,000                | --           | 15,000 (5)     | 3,000        |                       |                                    |          | 2,000                       |
|  | National processes | 37,464                | --           | --             |              | 15,000                | 22,464                             |          |                             |
|  | Ben Tre            | 18,000                | --           | 15,000 (6)     | 3,000        |                       |                                    |          |                             |
|  | Hung Yen           | 18,000                | --           | 15,000 (5)     | 3,000        |                       |                                    |          |                             |
|  | Thai Nguyen        | 18,000                | --           | 15,000 (5)     | 3,000        |                       |                                    |          |                             |
|  | Hai Duong          | 18,000                | --           | 15,000 (5)     | 3,000        |                       |                                    |          |                             |
|  | Ha Tinh            | 18,000                | --           | 15,000 (5)     | 3,000        |                       |                                    |          |                             |
|  | Ca Mau             | 3,000                 | --           | not yet        | 3,000        |                       |                                    |          |                             |
|  | Quinhon            | 24,800                | 15,000       | not yet        |              |                       |                                    | 9,800    |                             |
| National process support                               | 10,000             |                       |              |                |              | 10,000                |                                    |          |                             |

### Impressions in VINH

#### STRONG POINTS :

- **This is a very important pilot housing project in Vietnam, because it has been built by the community themselves, with good support from the municipal government**, it's cheap (only half the normal price), quick (finished in 6 months), get very poor families together and no eviction, lower government housing standard (which is usually very strict), and the project built a stronger community, with good recognition from the city. (*the BIG ACCA project at Block 6, Cua Nam Ward*)
- **This project sets an important new precedent in Vietnam** : This is the first-ever case in Viet Nam in which urban poor communities living in collective housing have won the right to design and rebuild their own affordable housing on the same site. It is an important breakthrough because in cities all over Viet Nam, municipal governments keen on modernizing their cities are now on the warpath to demolish and redevelop their stock of run-down collective housing, which are seen as an eyesore. When the redevelopment is done by for-profit developers, as it usually is, the redevelopment process invariably means eviction and homelessness for most of the poor families who live there.
- **Changing practice and changing standards** : We've only started, but already the work has shown us that community participation and the small resources from the ACCA program have helped to influence and change some key policies about housing standards and about control of the redevelopment process. Not many development projects can do that! (*Dr. Lan, ACVN*)
- **Using the project to challenge and change unrealistically high building standards**, which make most new housing unaffordable to the poor. The province-set standard minimum house size of 70 sq. meters was challenged by the people in Cua Nam Ward, who have for 30 years lived in 30 sq. meter houses, and have successfully proposed building their own new 45 square meter row houses that are designed to more closely fit their affordability. This people's standard has now been officially recognized and sanctioned by the local government.
- **"The people are my teacher" This community (Block 6A, Cua Nam Ward) has set a new standard for social housing, which is now the standard for the city.** This project is now being used as a model to be replicated in 140 other dilapidated old collective housing areas in the city of Vinh - the city has agreed! Now the savings group network is trying to start savings groups in all these collective housing communities and bring them into the network. (*Mr. Nguyen Van Chinh, Vice Mayor of Vinh*)
- **We almost never meet a high-level municipal official that positive (as the Vice Mayor)**, who is willing to spend the whole day going around with the people visiting all these community projects! (*Diana*)
- **ACCA is giving the city's own agenda a push** : The problems of poor communities are very difficult to solve, and we have a big agenda and plans to do that, but things go very slowly because everything depends on the city government. The ACCA Program is in line with our objectives in the city government, to support people to make the development, so ACCA helps us push that idea forward. (*Mr. Nguyen Van Chinh, Vice Mayor of Vinh*)
- **This is exactly the idea of the small ACCA projects!** *Somsook (on the Hung Hoa Commune paved walkway and community center)* This small road-paving project in a suburban village has brought many new people into the savings group, brought investments from the Commune and the community members that are 6 times the ACCA investment of \$3,000, inspired other projects, and unleashed all these people's energy! *This is exactly the idea of the small ACCA projects!*
- **The role of the municipal government is very important in the land policy and in supporting the role of people in Vinh** - we can see this so clearly in this city. (*Lao woman*)
- **Very impressed with how active the community people are, and how much money they are willing to contribute to their own development projects** - much more than the city or the ACCA budget! This is a significant change compared to Nepal. (*Mahendra, Nepal*)

#### WEAK POINTS :

- **Need more involvement of more community members in the projects, not just committee members** (*Norberto + Nepal team*) Very impressed with the community management of these small projects, but suggest that all the different aspects of the projects (making design, acquiring materials, managing the construction, keeping accounts, etc.) could be used to make more space for more people in the communities to get involved - not just the committee members! It's too great a job for just 4 or 5 community leaders! Mahendra suggest making the management committees much larger - maybe 15 - 20 people.
- **Suggests that the small project grants should not be loans** (as they are in all the Vietnam CDF cities) but grants, as they are in Nepal. (*Mahendra, Nepal*)
- **Savings culture is not very strong yet here.** Only 600,000 Dong total savings in the Hung Hoa Commune savings! (*Mongolian team*)
- **Need more involvement of women in the upgrading process** : Seems like the management of these small upgrading projects is mostly by the men in the community, not the women. Yet the women are clearly the ones who save, who manage the household money. Why not make the same system in the community upgrading projects, where the women take the stronger role? (*Mongolian team*)

### Impressions in HAI DUONG

#### WEAK POINTS :

- **CDF doesn't belong to the people yet** : The city-wide CDF only contains money from ACCA, the savings groups don't contribute or put in any "shares." The people's own money only stays in their own internal savings groups. Some visitors felt this was a sign the CDF didn't belong to the city savings groups yet.
- **Network of savings groups in Hai Duong is not strong yet.** In Vinh and Viet Tri, the savings groups have a very strong network. But here, the 200 small savings groups are all scattered, no links with each other. They only link individually with the Women's Union. *"This is like an NGO project, not a community savings process which people own themselves."*
- **Rules come from the city and the Women's Union, not the communities** : Ward leader: "We only give the guidelines, we don't control the savings groups!" Somsook: "No need for any guidelines, let the people start, and let the guidelines emerge from the process! A strong savings group has to come from the members, not from any guidelines!"
- **CDF Steering Committee seems to be perceived as a municipal government body**, with some participation of people. Doesn't seem to belong to the people.
- **Need more help to people to visualize other alternatives** (Somsook, during visit to the small 29-family collective housing project at Pham Ngu Lao Community) The city doesn't allow this small, crowded, dilapidated community to redevelop in-situ - *it's sub-standard!* Just like the project in Vinh - this is the place where you need an architect to help people visualize other redevelopment options! The technical issue is easy, if you have this support.

### Impressions in VIET TRI

#### STRONG POINTS :

- **Very impressed that community people agreed to give up their own land** - without any compensation - to widen their community road in the road-paving project in Tien Cat Ward)
- **Very impressed with the speed these small projects are done, when people do it!** In Van Phu Commune, the 3-kilometer road paving was done in just one month! The city's drainage project in the same commune took 10 years, but the people built the road in one month!
- **The community at Nong Trang Ward is showing a cheaper, more practical people-driven alternative to the government's privatized redevelopment model**, in which the people plan and build collectively. First 63 households have got their land-use rights! First government decided which family gets which plot, now the community decides, after the project at Nong Trang Ward. *This is a good example of how to change policy from the ground, not from the high-level policy level!*
- **Showing a more collective redevelopment model with shared walls** : Before the Nong Trang Ward project, each family wanted to build their own separate house, without any shared walls or communal construction process - that's the standard way in Vietnam culture! People hate shared walls, think the walls are too thin! But here, people built with common walls and built together, and found it came out much cheaper! This was a difficult social obstacle to overcome, but they did it by the key issue of CHEAPER COST!
- **Savings network strong in Viet Tri, and people themselves set all the rules!** Happy to hear the savings group members tell us, "Savings is the soul of the process!" and "No guidelines for the city CDF or the savings groups - we set our own systems to manage these community finance systems."
- **Breaking out of the "Savings for Spring" model to a longer-term savings model in Viet Tri** : Many savings groups in Vietnam still practice the traditional "savings for spring" in which all the savings go back every year at the new year. But they recognized in Viet Tri that if they follow that system, they can't use their collective money for longer-term needs like housing and land and kids university fees, and they can't link the groups together - it's only individual savings, not collective savings. Women's Union helped promote this longer-term, more communal savings process.
- **Lending between savings groups - very impressed with the ward-level inter-lending between savings groups in Tien Cat Ward**, where each savings groups sets its own procedures, but they have a platform at ward level to loan to each other, with a ward-level committee comprising savings leaders from all the groups. And very good repayment of loans! This kind of collective management of community funds at a level that is *larger* than the individual community is catching on in Viet Tri.
- **Financial management more by people in Viet Tri, than in other cities.** It's very clear that the community people set their financial management systems, both within the communities and between communities at the city CDF level. But it's also clear that they are starting to work with the local authority and Women's Union.
- **Very impressed with the Women's Union support for the process in Viet Tri** : 80% of all women in the city are members of Women's Union.
- **Poor and rich in the communities work together on these small projects to develop their community** - like the road paving at Tien Cat Ward.
- **Very impressed that the relocatees in Van Phu Commune were given 300 square meters of land by the government**, at the relocation site! (*Nepal team*)

#### WEAK POINTS :

- **Vietnam still run by men, like an army!** Power doesn't change by itself. It changes only when the demand-side shows a different momentum.
- **Good local government contribution to the small projects - SOMETIMES.** In most projects (which were part of the government's plans), the government contributed about one-fourth, the people contributed about half, and

ACCA contributed the other one-fourth. If the project wasn't part of the government plans, no budget contribution. No government money for "spontaneous" projects by people.

- **The housing project at Nong Trang Ward - the houses are all built individually, not together!**

## Impressions in **LANG SON**

### STRONG POINTS :

- **ACCA budgets amount to only about 20% of the total small project budgets!** The other 80% is coming from the people and the local government!
- **Savings is new in Lang Son**, but the focus of the savings process is not so much on financial mechanisms, but on giving communities the confidence to start managing their own problems and controlling their development themselves, to link people to work together and deal with their own problems.
- **Big change through the ACCA projects**, so people in the communities no longer just look for outside support, but think about their own ideas and solutions and make their own plans, as a community, using the strength of their own numbers. Plus, communities are much closer after implementing these projects.
- **Cost is at least 50% lower when communities implement the projects themselves, working together**, than if the local government hires a government contractor to do the roads, water supply or drains.

### WEAK POINTS :

- **Don't put the community savings in a bank - use it, keep 100% of it in circulation in loans!** People have needs - toilets, emergencies, etc. If the cash is there in the community, they can use it. The money shouldn't sit in a bank, but should be circulating in loans - all 100% of it! (*Rupa, Women's Bank*)
- **No such thing as "Too poor to save"** (*Rupa, answering a common remark in the Quang Trung Village women*) Suggests saving even a very small amount of money, but insists that even the poorest can save. It's important that your savings procedures be flexible enough - no minimum deposit amounts! - to make room for the poorest to be involved. Others feel the savings process in Lang Son is not very strong yet.
- **Where are the women?** (*in Quang Trung Village*) At our meeting, it was all community men sitting around the table. The women all sat around the edges of the room, shyly, saying nothing! Many visitors were struck by this and turned around to talk with the women! (*Norberto*) If the process is women-led, it will be very strong in the details and issues, and if it is men-led, it will be very strong in the structures.
- **The water supply project in Quang Trung Village - the water is muddy when it comes out of the mountain tank!** How can people use this water?

## Overall impressions in **ACCA VIETNAM**

### STRONG POINTS :

- **It's clear that this is a country with strong women**, and it is also clear that if women have the key role in the process, the ACCA program will move ahead, and will be able to challenge the stiff, vertical systems that keep the communities from being able to do what they need to do. (*Diana Mitlin + Rupa + others agree*)
- **Finance of these projects is mixed, coming from several sources:** ACCA, local government and people. And in many of the projects, the largest contribution is coming from the people themselves. So the ACCA funds are really like a catalyst. Cambodians add that Vietnam is very strong in how to get lots of additional budget with a very small seed grant from ACCA.
- **ACCA is being used very effectively to "start the engine" in Vietnam**, to change things, to mobilize other resources, to make new partnerships, to strengthen links between communities and between communities and their cities.
- **In some cities, it is clear the government system is trying to find new ways to work with the people, and see supporting people's own initiatives as an important - and productive! - direction.** Esp. in Vinh and Viet Tri.
- **Very good support from the Women's Union in Viet Tri**, where they support without dominating the process. In other cities, the role of the Women's Union is much stronger, and the communities seem to have a bilateral relationship with the WU, but no links with each other.
- **As a result of these ACCA projects, we are already seeing direct benefits :** standards are being changed to make urban development more affordable to the urban poor and people can be centrally involved in planning and implementing the redevelopment process (*esp. in Vinh and Viet Tri*)
- **Collaboration between communities, CDF, local government, ACVN and Women's Union** in all these cities is very strong (*Nepal*)
- **The role of architects has been very strong in Vinh and Viet Tri, in helping the communities to develop a clear vision to negotiate for land and for their alternative development model.**

### WEAK POINTS :

- **ACCA process to rigid :** The ACCA process in Vietnam - at all levels - needs to be more flexible and make more room for community people to participate more actively, to show another model that is truly driven by people (*Diana*)
- **Seems like the decisions about choice and nature of ACCA small projects is being dominated by the local government** (*esp. Hai Duong*), who also seem to dominate the CDF process. So people feel the CDF and the ACCA processes are a city-program, not their own programs. Need more decision-making by communities in the ACCA process in Vietnam.

- **Need stronger links between savings groups in the city :** We see savings taking many forms in these cities: daily, weekly, monthly, savings for Tet, etc. One suggestion that came up was that it's OK to have all these different systems, but that they need to be brought together more, as a city-wide networks and CDFs. Now the links are not strong, seems very individualized. Suggestions also for more small-group style savings groups (from Rupa).
- **Role of Women's Union in the savings process in Vietnam is wrong :** When people in the communities want a loan, they go to the Women's Union, not to the savings group! This is a sign that it's not a savings process which belongs to the community people themselves. (*Cambodia*)
- **The savings process in Vietnam is expanding too slowly!** In such a country, with such strong and smart women, and with such a vivid entrepreneurial spirit, the savings process should be growing so fast! (*Lao women*) And seems slow for savings groups to move beyond savings only as a financial mechanism to savings as a vision for development in their communities (*Diana Mitlin*)
- **Seems like many of these small projects are being implemented in communities which are not very poor, with people in very big and nice houses!** (*Nepal team*). In Nepal, we focus the ACCA projects on the very poorest communities with the very bad conditions!
- **Sometimes not enough space for community people.** Wherever we went, the community leaders did all the talking, and spoke for people.
- **Need to do more work in all the cities on surveying, mapping and information gathering in the communities** (*Diana*)
- **Suggestion to organize a national assembly in Vietnam :** To bring together all the community leaders from all the cities to discuss how to take this ACCA process forward. Suggest inviting some key leaders from Vietnam to the Philippines to observe and participate in the Homeless Peoples Federation's annual national assembly! (*Diana*)
- **How to make sure the savings groups that DON'T do ACCA projects don't get left behind?** The ACCA process has been a huge success in creating a positive energy and initiating a lot of activity in the communities. SO how to make sure those savings groups in settlements which did not do ACCA projects are not left behind? (*Diana*)
- **Need to change the minds and attitudes of the larger public, about community-driven development, not just the communities.** Suggest more use of the media, television, children's education, videos, newspaper stories - to publicize this exciting ACCA process. (*Mongolia*)
- **ACVN needs to take a stronger role in supporting the community process and making sure to open space for people in these cities :** To make the communities, a stronger actor in this process. This is a facilitating role. Otherwise, if we leave the ACCA process to be managed by the existing system in each city, the local government or the usual stiff governance systems will take over. Need more space for people, and ACVN can be the one to help the cities be more flexible.

## Assessment of the **ASSESSMENT PROCESS**

**Somsook :** **How to make these assessments better?** How did it go? What do you think? No PhDs in this kind of assessment! No men in suits and ties! But we have come to check out what people are doing, and we check it out properly, all the same. We do these assessments in such a way that by bringing groups that are actually doing projects themselves, to check, to share, to even to climb up muddy mountains together. It's a little clumsy this assessment process, but is it worth it? What do you think? Should we do more of these assessments or should we stop? Or could we do it better? How? How to improve the quality of these assessments?

**Banu Gurung from Nepal :** The assessment process is very good! If a PhD does the assessment, we never know about it. When we come ourselves, we feel so close to the people who do these projects. It's not a one-way assessment, it's 2-way. We are assessing ourselves also. We community people need to experience learning that is practical and based in real projects, real work like this.

**Tuy from Vietnam :** I agree with Banu! This is totally different than the traditional assessment style. We can improve the process by allowing more communities to do this kind of assessment.

- **More sub-regional assessments between close-by countries :** We can also do regional assessment trips between countries that are nearby each other and can visit each other more easily and cheaply. So with the same amount of budget, we can get more exchanges, more assessment visits, get more people involved.
- **Also national level assessment inside the country** - this kind of assessment would help consolidate friendship and partnership between communities and connect the cities. Suggests starting to do assessments inside each country, and get the young architects and young community people involved.

**Lao PDR lady :** Another kind of assessment could be to organize a seminar to conclude the "lessons learned" from the ACCA projects in that country. Could invite other cities to assess your projects.

- **But the best assessment of a project is the assessment that comes from the community itself - especially from those at the bottom, the poorest.** How did the project touch them? What changed for them?

**Viet Tri Community woman :** This assessment was very useful for us! The cities and the communities can look at ourselves and see what it is like where they are.

- Suggestion: For future assessment, maybe focus more on particular points, like only the big housing projects.

**Mongolia team :** Maybe it might be easier to have a deeper discussion if the groups are smaller. Difficult to discuss with the communities when we're in a great big group like this. Maybe divide into two groups, so the discussion can be smaller and closer.

**Nepal suggestion :** This learning needs to be documented! Suggest that each visiting team writes up their impressions, and then ACHR can put them together.

**Fr. Norberto :** Suggests more preparation by the cities before the assessment teams come. What do they have to show, what do they have to teach others? What is the particular thing in their ACCA process that they have to offer the others? If we can plan these assessment trips early enough, it will give the city groups enough time to prepare more.

**Diana M. :** Asia is in a state of going through extreme and extremely rapid changes! But many of those changes are clearly anti-poor. We can see many attempts to protect values of social inclusiveness. ACCA is an opportunity to bring together those groups who are trying to do things better and trying to build a network of them. If that (??) is realized, everyone will help and contribute.