

# ACHR

## e-news

News from groups around Asia about what's happening in the region . . .

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July 2011

- ACHR and CITYNET meet with city officials and vinyl communities in Seoul, South Korea
- A flash flood hits Matina community, site of the bamboo bridge project
- Activities in Fiji: workshops in Nadi and Lautoka
- Community architects hold a workshop in Gopalganj, Bangladesh
- People-driven heritage preservation begins in Georgetown, Penang
- First Ministerial Dialogue on Citywide Upgrading and Urban Poor Forum held in Bangkok
- Philippines community savings trip to Mongolia
- Some notes about the situation in Syria
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### Upcoming events:

- Heritage by People workshop in Georgetown, Penang (19-21 September)
- ACCA Committee meeting, in Georgetown, Penang (17-18 September, TBC)

### ACHR and CITYNET meet with city officials and vinyl communities in Seoul

In early June, a team from ACHR, including Somsook, Kirtee and Diane, and Bernadia from CITYNET, went to Seoul, South Korea, for a series of meetings with various government agencies, coordinated by the local NGO, Asian Bridge, and the Korean Coalition for Housing Rights (KCHR). On the first day of the visit, the team visited four vinyl house communities and one rental housing area, to better understand the low-income informal housing situation in South Korea. While South Korea is part of the OECD countries, a survey conducted by Asian Bridge reveals that there are 23 vinyl communities scattered around Seoul, housing 2300 households. Research shows that 15% of households across South Korea live in housing which falls below the government-set minimum housing standards, and in Seoul, the percentage stands at 18%. , though within rental rooms, the percentage is as high as 40% However, the scale of the problem, compared to other Asian countries, is relatively small, and given the countries' economic resources, could be easily solved.

In 2014, CITYNET will move its Secretariat from Yokohama to Seoul. As part of the agreement to move to Seoul, CITYNET has proposed that Seoul take active steps to become a "people-friendly city", an example for other Asian cities. Therefore, the mission of this visit by CITYNET and ACHR was to secure the commitment of the city government to take concrete action to become a people-friendly city, particularly by addressing the housing problems of the urban poor living in insecure vinyl housing and jombang rental rooms. Meetings were held with the Chairman of the City Council, with the office of the Mayor, with the Chairman of Gwancheon City Council (a small city outside Seoul), and with Land and Housing, the agency which develops public housing. While the Korean government provides rental housing, the problem is that it remains financially out of reach of and in locations that do not suit the jobs of the poor. These meetings showed a willingness on behalf of the various agencies to take steps to help those living in vinyl housing, starting with the possibility of a regional conference to be organized in November 2011, on



approaches to housing the urban poor, bringing in experts from around Asia to share with Korean colleagues, and kick-starting the people-friendly process.

### A fire in one of Seoul's vinyl communities – a message from Asian Bridge



Sadly, we also received news that on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, one of the vinyl house communities, Jaegeon Village in Seoul's Gangnam District was burned to the ground, leaving 75 out of 96 households there homeless. Currently, the residents are staying at the community centre and temporary tents in the village. The Jaegeon Village is considered an illegal settlement by government. However, the village was formed in 1981, when the state government gathered war orphans and homeless people, and forcibly accommodated them on government land. The land is where the current Jaegeon Village is located. About half the current households in the village were forced onto this site, and therefore could in a way be considered not illegal.

In 1988, after the Seoul Olympics, the government policy changed. Since then, their registered addresses were changed a couple of times in order to readjust the division of land, and they became illegal settlers. To prove legal residency, people have been collecting receipts which is the most reliable evidence for legal residency. The Jaegeon community has fought for their rights over 20 years.

However, the government still categorized them as illegal settlers and has imposed a penalty fine, which now amounts to around 2.5 million

USD, with the average household fine between 55,000 to 73,000USD.

Jaegeon Village is a very strong community: the residents have a meeting every week to communicate and solve the problems they face. They have expelled speculators from the village. The participation rate of the community meeting shows is 90 percent, with a high rate of women's participation.

Two days after the fire, the municipality announced that it will provide public rental houses for victims, with a 10 year contract, and house sizes depending on family size. According to community members, the provision of public rental houses is not acceptable because:

- it will break up the community and scatter resident. The residents wish to be accepted as legal residents to continue living together.
- the rental houses will be scattered around Seoul; if they are scattered, residents will no longer be able to care for each other, especially the elderly and disable.
- rental and house maintaining fees are simply unaffordable for them;
- it means the community will be evicted from the site;
- the penalty fee imposed on the residents in terms of 'illegal settlements' will follow the residents. Because the community's stance is that they are legal residents, if they move out, they may not be able to fight for their rights and to clear the penalty fee.
- most residents would lose their job. Many residents work in the recycling business, which has its work field and storages next to the village.

A community member says: 'The most urgent need at this moment is the fund for restoration of our village. We are going to rebuild our community here even though the municipality will not allow it. If we could receive donations for building materials, it would be best for us. However, if there is a way to get the material in production cost, and if we could get a long-term loan with low interest, it would be good enough for us.'



For further information, please contact Asian Bridge at [asianbridge21@gmail.com](mailto:asianbridge21@gmail.com)

## An update on the Matina bamboo bridge and June's flash flood

Readers will recall the ongoing bamboo bridge construction project in Matina, Davao City, Philippines. Community architects have been working with the local community in bamboo construction techniques. As preparations for the bridge opening ceremony were underway, the community was hit by a devastating flash flood. Andrea gives an update on the last few months:

It was the end of March 2011 when carpenters Suyadi and Sunarko, from Sahabat Bambu (SaBa) in Indonesia, returned to Davao City with me to resume the bamboo footbridge construction process in Matina. Five men were elected for the "core team" representing three communities; some honorarium and meal was provided by the federation to support them. Later on dozens of volunteer of teenagers and elderly also came to help, in shifts. Led by the two Indonesian carpenters, the construction of the main bamboo structures was scheduled for the month. But, an interlude of flash flood came up on 5 April. Our bamboo pavilion that was made during the January bamboo workshop was ill placed and collapsed. Another heavy current came up after two weeks and brought down the scaffolding that we use to install the frames onto the foundations, that was just one day after we done the job.

At the end of April we had a farewell to the two carpenters and our volunteer-architect Natalia Dulcey of Colombia and determined to complete the bridge soon. Nipa leaves were put as roof cover, floor stringers were being placed, cement-mortar injected inside the bamboo on the primary joints. An eight cm thick reinforced concrete was cast onto the floor; i.e. a practical 'load test' of around 300 kg per sqm, a "diaphragm muscle" that stabilizes the bridge against lateral force, and an anchoring system to the bridge. Lastly, the concrete approach ramp was completed in mid June. With lots of excitement, we were ready for the launching date, invitations being prepared including for the city mayor.

However, fate told us differently: a bigger flash flood hit the community on 28 June at 11 p.m. after 3 hours of heavy rain. I grabbed my camera and rushed to Matina. Traffic was halted as the access road practically became a river. Two hours later the water subsided and I walked towards the bridge. Some local kids in the entrance told me that "everything is collapsed, and there's no bridge!" In anxiety, I braved the water up to my neck until I saw a glimpse of bridge's arches: and that's exactly where it is! Thank goodness, the bridge is spared, with debris all over the floor (see photo). And as I enter the community and saw fellow residents in confusion: houses were collapsed, trees fallen. In the morning I learned that the damage was grave...



The Davao Flood affected 5 *barangays* and despite of material loss it took almost three dozen lives. There's an on-going discussion on relocation of the affected families, despite a general acceptance that environmental degradation was the main cause of the disaster. The *Philippine Alliance* is currently preparing a comprehensive rehabilitation scheme. Nevertheless, with our extensive learning from past disasters and with supports from our network, we will stand with the people of Matina to secure the land and to maintain our achievement: the first community-made modern bamboo bridge.

Please check the blog for regular updates: <http://tulaykawayan.blogspot.com/>

## Activities in Fiji: Nadi Workshop and Lautoka City Projects, May 2011

Hugo and Anna, architects based in Australia, along with local community architecture students Norani Tubuna, Apenisa Tora and Hanisi Manueli, have been busy working with communities in Fiji to get community processes off the ground. Here is a summary from Hugo and Anna's report:

A workshop was held in Lautoka with participants from 9 communities, starting with all participants gathering around an overall map of Lautoka which identified the 32(+) informal settlements and the land type they are on. This brought together the information drawn by the people on their maps and the problems they have

identified in their communities with the overall Lautoka map and context. The participants then drew maps of their own community, identifying geographical features, problems, and project ideas and solutions.

From the solutions and ideas on the maps participants then started to decide on firmer project proposals for their communities – looking at the tasks involved in the project, materials needed, \$/unit, how many units, total cost and who will organise and help. The problems, ideas and project proposals were presented to the group as a whole and the project proposal sheets were taken back to other community members for feedback and ideas. Each community put together a list of the people and skills/talents/resources that members of their community bring to projects; from building and carpentry skills to fundraising and cooking for a large group – all skills that will be helpful when a project is started. The workshop also included a tour of other communities in Lautoka, in order to see and share each other's problems and experiences.



Members of the communities had discussed and prepared their project proposals since the workshop on Saturday. At the beginning of the workshop each community presented their project proposals to the rest of the group. Costings of the projects had been put together by each community and they ranged between \$600 for drainage improvement and \$4150 for the building of several new houses.

From this a discussion was had about how to manage the \$15,000USD ACCA small projects grant, and the idea was suggested by Sele of Vunato community that a one-off grant of up to \$1000 Fiji dollars could be applied for by each community for upgrading projects, and after this loans could

be given to that community on a case by case basis. This means the majority of the fund will remain in a revolving fund.

Those present agreed with Sele's suggestion for the use of the small projects fund. How the grant would be managed was then discussed, and the idea of a group made up of representatives from each squatter community managing it talked about. Work on projects should begin on 16<sup>th</sup> July, when members of the network will go to one community and work on their project - this will begin in Natabua seaside with digging drainage.

The local community architects and regional support architects met with the Minister for Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment, Colonel Saumatua, together with Semiti Qalowa, Father Barr and Ben of the PCN, and government officials. Lautoka's citywide network, the starting of the small projects and the Nakaracia housing project were discussed and commitments made to confirm the members of the City Committee, from both the government side and the community side. The National Committee is ready and Lautoka is the first city where a City Committee and a Community Committee are starting.

Workshops were also held for Nadi communities. It was a chance for discussion and introduction about the Peoples Community Network and ACHR. The citywide network, city committee and small project proposals now happening in Lautoka were discussed and plans made for the PCN and ACHR to spend more time in Nadi working with these communities in the near future.

During the workshop participants from the three communities identified their location on a large map of Nadi area and then drew their own maps of their communities. They identified their land situations and the communities were drawn showing the number of houses, family names, roads, paths, mangroves and more. Community members had come prepared to the workshop with data they had collected about their community including the number of houses and number of people in each household.



A workshop was held in July at Bila settlement. Participants from Bila, Cawa and several employees of the Tokatoka resort in Nadi joined the workshop. Bila and Cawa communities worked with overlays on googlemaps to identify small projects that they could begin working on. The women of Bila decided to improve the track which leads from their community to the main road – this is the track that the children take to get to school. The land situation at Bila was discussed; for the last 12 years they have lived in their settlement which is where they were told to stay by the Housing Authority

while housing was developed on adjacent Housing Authority owned land. This new housing has never been built, and the community developing a proposal for this adjacent land to then talk with the Housing Authority about was discussed. The area around Bila settlement experiences very bad flooding every year.

During the week of July 10<sup>th</sup>, 9 Fijian community representatives and PCN staff travelled to the Philippines for an exchange visit with HPFPI. As well as visiting communities in Cebu City and Manila, they will also participate in workshops on mapping and savings.

Norani, Apenisa and Hanisi, local students of architecture have been working with the PCN in mapping of squatter communities in the Lami – Suva - Nausori corridor. They will continue this work, also starting to run workshops with clusters of communities to identify problems and projects and build networks. They will also be spending a week of each month in Lautoka supporting the small scale upgrading projects that are beginning and the Nakaracia housing project, and continuing to support Nadi in beginning small projects.

## **Community architects hold a workshop in Gopalganj – part of the first ACCA project in Bangladesh**

From the 9-18<sup>th</sup> of June, a workshop on comprehensive site planning and low cost housing was held in Gopalganj Municipality, Bangladesh. The savings group network in Gopalganj had identified around 350 families living in 32 locations, facing eviction or landlessness, or extremely poverty. These families had been evicted in 2009 for the expansion of a sports complex. The local government has provided paddy field land of 4.16 acres to accommodate the municipality's urban poor, a project which is being carried out as part of the Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction (UPPR) of UNDP Bangladesh. This project in Gopalganj is the first ACCA project in Bangladesh, with a budget of 40,000USD to set up a CDF as a revolving fund for housing, and is being carried out jointly with UNDP, which is providing 30,000USD for infrastructure costs.

The workshop aimed to address the following questions:

- How can the land which the government provided, which cannot accommodate all 350 families, be used in a way which benefits the most vulnerable group? And how can the Community Development Committee (CDC) and all savings group members accept this most vulnerable group?
- How can this pilot project be used to set up a CDF and its mechanism, and to scale up the idea with other partners?
- How can this workshop help to create a YP platform in Bangladesh?

The workshop team consisted of local YPs (5 urban planners and 5 architects), representatives from the UPPR at town level and an urban specialist from the headquarters, a UNDP consultant (Jaya from Sevanatha in Sri Lanka), two volunteer architects, Maria from Indonesia and Pasu from Thailand, May Domingo from the Philippines, Dhammika, an engineer from Sri Lanka, and Nad and Tee, two community architects from ACHR.

The workshop lasted 6 days and focused on two key aspects: social processes (in terms of identifying priority families for relocation onto the new site) and design processes (in terms of drawing a site master plan, affordable incremental housing, and infrastructure facilities). Participants from the low income households identified key criteria for selecting which households should be eligible to relocate to the new site. Community members, working with architects, drew up their “dream community” designs, which fed into a master plan. The site plan can accommodate 198 families, arranged in clusters, with each cluster having their own basic services and open courtyard. An infrastructure plan with rough costing was also made, including land filling, shared sanitation and septic tank, rain water harvesting and water supply tanks. A low cost house model was developed, starting at 35,000 taka (470USD) when bamboo posts are used, up to 60,000 taka (800USD) when RC columns are used. During the design process, the team learnt that the site was flood prone, so to reduce the amount of land fill necessary, the idea of clusters was developed: houses would be on stilts in clusters, a form



which also relates to the traditional mode of living. The next step is for local architects to build a model house on site, as a demonstration to the local communities. A financial plan at the household level for receiving loans and repaying them was developed, while the concept of setting up a CDF with a revolving fund within the existing community development committee (CDC) structure was discussed.

The next stage will be to adjust site plans and related plans, with the support of UPPR, who may try and link with the Faculty of Architecture at Kulna City, as one of the university's lecturers participated in the workshop and could use the project as a platform for his students. The community network will discuss the selection processes and form a city development fund for housing, while also discussing with local government how they can support housing projects, for example by finding other plots of land for the landless, providing infrastructure or providing funds for housing loans.



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## People-driven heritage conservation activities begin in Georgetown, Penang

Between 1997 and 2000, George Town experienced massive hollowing out due to the repeal of the Rent Control Act, which marked a quick transformation of a once buzzing port city into a declining old town. Today, the fragmented communities are facing yet another challenge with the onset of gentrification. Following the listing of George Town as a UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) in 2008, the hike in property prices lead to rising concerns of housing security for existing tenants and a lack of affordable housing in the historic inner city. Many of the existing tenants have been residing in the inner city for generations; the city is their home. Today, these communities are concerned by the changes and plagued with insecurity – their fate lies at the discretion of the property owners.



While the World Heritage Site status has attracted renewed local and foreign investments - including various conservation and restoration projects - the onset of gentrification has had both positive and negative implications. One of the negative effects of this renewed economic interest is the marginalization of existing tenants who could not afford the escalating rental, resulting in unfettered evictions by property owners. The loss of these old communities also brings with it a loss of the "identity of place", and introduces a sanitized version of a WHS.

*Left: first workshop between landlord and tenants*

Various parties actively participating in heritage conservation in George Town (including NGOs, federal funding agencies and other civil societies) recognize the importance of achieving balance between tangible and intangible heritage conservation; and thus, the need to address this issue. The participation of a team from Penang in the Regional Community Architects meeting in Chiang Mai in June 2010 introduced the concept of "community architects" as a different approach to heritage conservation in George Town. This pilot project started with the application by Hock Teik Cheng Sin Temple (HTCS) to Think City's George Town Grants Programme in September 2010. Think City is a federally funded agency set up to fund and initiate urban regeneration work in the George Town WHS. Hock Teik Cheng Sin Temple (HTCS) – a community temple clustered around the worship of a Chinese folk deity known as *Toa Peh Kong* (大伯公) - has been in existence since 1844. The temple building and the shophouses along Armenian Street were believed to be built between 1850 and 1867.

It was the impetus to restore these shophouses that brought the plight of the tenants to the attention of the funding agency and NGOs. Eight of the shophouses are currently occupied, whereby six of the families have lived there for at least three generations. All the tenants were paying RM400 (approx. USD132) rental per month without a tenancy agreement (except a new young tenant who has been given a one-year tenancy agreement). The tenants have been hearing rumors about a possible eviction for months, and their yearly lease was changed to a monthly tenancy in mid 2010. After some time spent on ground survey, two major needs were identified: tenancy security, and improvement of physical condition of some houses.

With the intention to address the needs of tenants and to encourage affordable housing in the historic city, Think City approached ACHR to jointly fund in this project. Community architects from ACHR made several trips to Penang to help facilitate the people's participatory process. The engagement with the owners and tenants was then adopted as a pilot project, which was set in motion officially in April 2011 when a workshop was organized to facilitate dialogue between the property owner, Hock Teik Cheng Sin Temple, and its 8 tenants. A tenants group was established to carry out mapping, estimate repair and renovation costs, and draw up an application for ACCA support, with the assistance of community architects and Think City.



*Above: identifying physical problems*

When the application for ACCA funding was approved, a framework to set up a community fund at city level was introduced by ACHR. The notion of a community fund is very new to Penang; thus, in order to facilitate better understanding of a people-lead process and fund management framework, a 5-day field trip was organized by both ACHR and Think City in June 2011. The participants of Penang team included Think City, community architects, Armenian Street tenants representatives, and Hock Teik Cheng Sin Temple representatives. The field trip included:

- Experience sharing with communities which have achieved community upgrading/ building and housing security successfully through people participatory process
- Experience sharing with communities which have started people engagement and organization process towards community upgrading and housing security
- Experience sharing at CODI on the setting up of a fund management committee
- Experience sharing with OPENSOURCE on how to engage community in small upgrading projects through children
- Introduction to ChangeFusion and the concept of social enterprise.

At the end of the trip, the team gathered to reflect on their experience with the communities they visited. Overall, it was an inspiring experience for the team to witness the achievement of the Thai communities. The following are collective conclusions drawn by the team:

- In initiating a participatory project, groundwork and communication with the people should be given emphasis. One should avoid being caught up with too much "planning on paper";
- Demands and/or needs must be thought through and articulated clearly for an idea/proposal to be sustainable;
- Successful people-lead process share a common thread: all of them recognised the importance of their community identity, moving together towards common goals based on shared common needs;
- Starting savings groups helps to bring people together when they are saving for common needs;
- Positive thinking and determination are important qualities of community leaders.

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### **Bringing the grassroots and senior government officials together, on the occasion of the Asia-Pacific Urban Forum in Bangkok**

As part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Asia Pacific Urban Forum (APUF) held in Bangkok in June, ACHR co-organised two side events to this regional meeting. The first was a Ministerial Dialogue on Citywide Upgrading, officially hosted by the Thai Minister of Social Development and Human Security, and co-organised by CODI, ESCAP and

ACHR. The second was the Urban Poor Forum, co-organised by CODI and ACHR. The aim of the Ministerial Dialogue was to gather Ministers and other high-level actors who have the responsibility for housing and urban development in their countries, to discuss appropriate responses to housing for the urban and rural poor in their countries, with opportunities to interact directly with Asian community representatives. One such approach is community-driven, citywide upgrading, as has been implemented in Thailand on a national scale through Baan Mankong, and so the Dialogue included field visits to local Thai communities and meet with community leaders, both from Thailand and other Asian countries, participating in the Urban Poor Forum.

The Urban Poor Forum was an opportunity to bring together community representatives active in housing activities around Asia, to exchange their experiences and also interact with a wider range of actors, both the participants of the Ministerial Dialogue and the attendees of the APUF meeting, at which community leaders played an active role in discussions. Participants from both workshops were also able to participate in a discussion with the caretaker Prime Minister, HE Abhisit Vejjajiva, on the topic of citywide upgrading, as well as a longer roundtable discussion with the Minister of Social Development and Human Welfare, HE Issara Somchai, in charge of housing in Thailand.



*Ministers and community representatives with the Thai Prime Minister at Government House in Bangkok*

This was the first time that ACHR had sought to bring together the key actors from both the community level and the policy level on such a large scale, in order to be able to discuss intensively the needs for citywide upgrading around Asia, and it can be said that the two workshops and their combined sessions were largely fruitful.

Participants of the Urban Poor Forum also led a break-out panel on community-driven forms of finance as a viable alternative to formal finance systems, which was well-attended.

#### **Key outcomes of the Ministerial Dialogue and Urban Poor Forum at APUF:**

- Agreement to try and establish an Asian Urban Poor Trust Fund to support poor people's housing in the region.
- Agreement that the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (APMCHUD) can be used as a platform for continued dialogue at the Ministerial level.
- Agreement to establish an Urban Poor Forum for the region, for continued dialogue across countries, with ACHR as coordinator.
- An MOU between CITYNET and ACHR was signed, to make the ACHR approach more accessible to CITYNET member cities.

### **Philippines team and Celine go to Mongolia for a savings exchange**

In June, three representatives from the Philippines, Ruby, Ofelia and Father Norberto, travelled to Mongolia with Celine from India. The main objectives of the visit were to understand the savings processes initiated by UDRC and CHRD in Ulaanbaatar and other cities, and to support the local NGO staff and community leaders in understanding the value of consolidating the savings process, by making the shift from individual loans to collective networks, and from small savings groups to community-level savings and action. The following comments come from the team's notes on the visit.

There has been a significant evolution among the NGO leadership and staff and some of the community people since the last 5 years. They have also participated in many exchanges in the region and more recently participated in those directly related with the ACCA network. Given Mongolia's history the support NGOs also work on other agendas of human rights and advocacy. Through the ACCA program they are being exposed to urban issues and learning new ways of working with urban poor communities. Given their context, they are able to adapt and link their work with the ACCA processes and this is commendable. If given the right support and mentoring they have the scope to grow and change their organizational structures to meet the needs of the Mongolian urban poor communities. After meeting some of the leaders in their community context and in their cities and after meeting them at the network meeting organized on



the last day at UDRC, it is heartening to notice that there are many community leaders, especially women, who are capable of giving leadership to this process if mentored and given timely support.

As well as a visit to Darkhan city, a workshop was held with staff from UDRC and CHR D and community representatives, led by Ruby and Celine. Ruby anchored the savings and city funds discussions and was very good as she was able to put across the concepts very simply and clearly to the rest of the group. There is the notion of a community fund that was called different things from community development funds to city funds. While they seem to have heard about this concept through ACCA the leaders were very keen to understand more about this fund, its vision, structure and characteristics. Through this sharing they were introduced to new ways of doing savings and enumerations, and also to understand the logic of the city fund as separate from their community development fund which is also an evolution of their savings.



Celine anchored the session on slum enumerations which also got very interesting reactions. The group from Khan Uul District where CHR D works spoke about the threat of an eviction in the year 2014, as a huge flyover will be constructed over their settlement. They were able to make a connection between collecting savings, collecting information and collecting people as a means to be able to address their more difficult problems. Both the NGO support and the community leaders acknowledged why they needed to build systems around slum enumerations and mapping. Our impression

is that the Mongolian people are systems oriented and work well in a structured environment. Hence, have the potential and the discipline to do a good job of collecting accurate data about themselves.

There were at least 6-7 leaders from Ovorkhangai present on the last day for the joint meeting. These women or their communities had no ACCA funding but it was interesting to see how they were able to gear up support from their local government, who contributed 1200 USD to their work. They said that this was possible after an ACCA exchange where the community and government traveled together. On their return the government found ways to support them. This example was a very positive example for the other leaders from the other cities.

There are a growing number of illegal settlements in the periphery of UB, creating a division between the legal and the illegal settlements. The ACCA loans at present are going to those in the legal ger settlements. It will be interesting for the NGOs to extend their work to the illegal settlements and check if there is a greater chance of consolidating the networks in the illegal settlements due to their more vulnerable situation. The ACCA program is one of the early programs teaching Mongolian communities the difficult lesson that there are no easy and quick fixes, and that they will need to participate and co-create a new way for themselves.

### **Some notes about the situation in Syria from May Domingo**

*May and her children are temporarily back in the Philippines, due to the instability in Syria...*

The Syria situation continues to deteriorate, but Aleppo, the city where we live, is not yet directly affected. What has been happening for the past 4 months is really something unparalleled in Syria's recent history - that is, the sustained effort for a reform of government, in spite of many innocent people being killed and arrested. I think the ordinary Syrian wants change after so long under 'emergency law' and wants more representation, something which the government has been promising for years. They have found the inspiration and courage to demand change, during this Arab Spring/Awakening.

Nobody knows how this is all going to end. The Syrian economy is suffering as a result of the instability, and merchants and businessmen who have done well under the current government are wondering what is going to happen next and how better stability can be provided. The protests of the masses continue, often fuelled by anger at killings by security forces or armed groups. Meanwhile the government has started a national dialogue on reform, and opposition groups inside and outside the country are trying to find a way to reconcile with the government.

In all, we are of course among those praying that all the deaths, arrests, displacements and general economic hardships of the Syrian majority will end soon somehow, hoping that any change will be substantial enough to have made it all worth it. We have known the Syrians to be good, friendly, hospitable and warm people, even though they have suffered and we hope very much that the situation is resolved peacefully soon.

## Sri Lanka ACCA committee meeting – new approvals in April

The April ACCA Committee meeting was held in Colombo, following the Sri Lanka assessment trip. The Colombo meeting, which was jointly hosted by the Women's Co-op and Sevanatha, was the third to be held during the third year's implementation of the ACCA (Asian Coalition for Community Action) Program. The meeting was attended by about 70 people from 11 countries. A considerable number of new ACCA projects were proposed during the meeting, and after reviewing and discussing them, a total budget of US\$752,260 was approved to support new projects in 10 new cities and 10 ongoing cities in 14 Asian countries (including 11 BIG projects and 3 more big projects for the new ACCA Regional Revolving Loan Fund in three already-approved cities and 48 small upgrading projects). This brings the total cumulative figures as of May 2011 to:

- ACCA activities approved in 132 cities/towns/districts, in 18 countries;
- 76 big housing projects and 639 small upgrading projects approved;
- 19 community-driven disaster rehabilitation projects approved in 6 countries.

### SUMMARY of new ACCA proposals **APPROVED** on April 30, 2011

(All figure in US Dollars)

Country	City / District	Total budget proposed	Big projects	Small projects	City process	Underst anding cities	Other city and national process	Disaster	Com- munity savings and fund
INDONESIA	Mount Merapi (Yuli)	58,000	40,000	15,000 (5)	3,000				
	Mount Merapi (UPC)	75,000	30,000	15,000 (5)	5,000			25,000	
	Kendari	58,000	40,000	15,000 (5)	3,000				
	Community architects in 3 cities (UPC)	10,000					10,000		
NEPAL	Biratnagar	12,500	12,500 (ACCA regional loan)						
BURMA	Landless Farmers Network (WWM)	58,000	40,000	15,000 (3)	3,000				
	Khawmu Township (SEM - Aungzabu)	48,000	40,000				8,000		
KOREA	Gwacheon	18,000	--	15,000 (5)	3,000				
	Daejeon	18,000	--	15,000 (5)	3,000				
	Busan	18,000	--	15,000 (5)	3,000				
PHILIPPINES	Mandaue (HPFP)	36,000	36,000 (ACCA regional loan)						
SRI LANKA	Batticaloa	60,000	20,000 + 20,000 (ACCA regional loan)					20,000	
MONGOLIA	Sainshand District	10,500	--	7,500 (3)	3,000				
	Undurshireet District	10,500	--	7,500 (3)	3,000				
	Zuunmod District	10,500	--	7,500 (3)	3,000				
THAILAND	Chinatown Bangkok	3,500	--	2,000 (1)	1,500				
INDIA	Meera research	4,000				4,000			
LAO PDR	Luang Prabang Dist.	40,000	40,000						
	Pakse District	40,000	40,000						
PAKISTAN	Karachi Goths	46,000	40,000	--	3,000	3,000			
JAPAN	Tohoku tsunami	16,000						16,000	
BANGL'DESH	Gopalganj	43,000	40,000	--	3,000				
MALAYSIA	Georgetown	58,000	40,000	15,000 (5)	3,000				
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10 new cities + 10 ongoing cities</b>	<b>752,260</b>	479,303 (13 new projects)	144,500 (48 projects)	45,457	4,000	18,000	61,000	0