

Some bits and pieces on . . .

ACHR's History and Work

A Brief Profile of ACHR (2008)

When ACHR was formed in 1988, there was no common or regular forum for urban social activists, NGOs, professionals and especially for grassroots or community groups working in Asian cities to meet and exchange ideas. During the UN International Year for Shelter for the Homeless in 1987, several regional processes were organized which encouraged groups to share their experiences in addressing issues of urban poverty and housing and to discuss regional collaboration. At that time there was a shared recognition that new ideas and actions were needed to tackle the upsurge of forced evictions in Asia and to develop opportunities for organizations of the poor to gain due recognition and also a meaningful role in city management and planning.

In the early years of ACHR (1988-1990), emphasis were given to housing rights and problems of evictions in Asian cities; International Fact Finding Missions that put pressure on governments were organized to South Korea (twice), Hong Kong and Philippines with positive outcomes. The second stage of work (1991-1993) developed solutions to eviction problems. The third stage centred on the Training and Advisory Program (TAP) supported by DFID (UK) (1994-2000). TAP was a comprehensive package of support activities with cross country learning, exchange visits, regional workshops, training from key regional projects, new country action programs and research. This added significantly to the knowledge and capacity of the regional intervention process.

The fourth stage, from 2000, represents a more mature process and a broader scale of intervention. This included the introduction of community savings and credit activities and the development of Community Development Funds which have been able to influence new forms of development change in Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Nepal, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines and India. Regional responses to the Tsunami devastation have developed with the promotion of community-driven relief and rehabilitation.

In terms of policy advocacy, the contribution of ACHR key activists has increasingly been recognised with requests to meet and share knowledge with policy makers including Asian Ministers. This reflects increasing interest in possible collaboration and support for urban community development and/or community upgrading programs. City-wide and country-wide slum upgrading in Thailand and India has been used to boost and support learning for structural change in other countries. Some ACHR interventions and support have been integrated into government policies, while others have been successfully up-scaled without government support. The upgrading of 100 slums per year in Cambodia and the community savings and credit groups initiatives in Lao PDR and Mongolia have developed into large-scale programs. Other activities include the production and widespread dissemination of international publications including the Housing By People series, Eviction Watch, and Understanding Asian Cities; also the work on protecting the heritage of cities by the participation of communities, the Young Professionals Program and regional information activities. ACHR is the Asian branch of the Habitat International Coalition and an executive Committee member of CITYNET. It also works closely with Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) and collaborates with UN Habitat, UN-ESCAP, UNDP and the World Bank.

Key members of the Coalition include:

- **Pakistan** : Arif Hasan (OPP, URC), Perween Rahman (OPP), Anwar Rashid (OCT)
- **India** : Sheela Patel (SPARC), Jockin Arputham (NSDF), Kirtee Shah (ASAG in Ahmedabad), Rabial Mallick (PROUD in Calcutta), Sandeep Virmani (Abhiyan in Bhuj)
- **Sri Lanka** : K.A. Jayaratne (Sevanatha), Nandasiri Gamage (Women's Bank), Upali Sumithre (Women's Development Bank Federation)
- **Nepal** : Lajana Manandhar (Lumanti Support Group for Shelter), Prafulla Pradhan (UNESCAP)
- **Bangladesh** : Coalition of the Urban Poor (CUP), Mike Slingsby
- **Indonesia** : Johan Silas (KIP in Surabaya), Wardah Hafidz (UPC and UPLINK in Jakarta)

- **Philippines** : Denis Murphy and Ted Anana (Urban Poor Associates), Bimbo Fernandez (Pagtambayayong Foundation), Jing Karaos (ICSI and Ateneo, Manila), Ana Oliveros (FDUP), Fr. Norberto Carcellar (PACSI and Homeless People's Federation)
- **Cambodia** : Mann Chhoeurn (UPDF/Phnom Penh Municipality), Somsak Phonpakdee & Sok Visal (UPDF)
- **Vietnam** : Tran Minh Chau and Bang Anh Tuan (ENDA-Vietnam), Nguyen Thi Thu Houng (Hanoi)
- **Lao PDR** : Kanthone Phamuang (Women and Community Empowering Project), NLWA
- **Bhutan** : Manjusha Rai (Thimpu)
- **Japan** : Prof. Mituhiko Hosaka (Nihon Fukushi University), Prof. Uchida Yozo (Tokyo University), Fr. Peter Shimokawa (Sophia University, Nojiren), Fr. Jorge Anzorena (Selavip, Sophia University)
- **Mongolia** : Enhe Tsedendorg (Urban Development Resource Center, Ulaanbatar), Chrd
- **Fiji Islands** : Semiti Qalowasa and Fr. Kevin Barr (ECCREA in Suva)
- **Thailand** : Somsook Boonyabancha (CODI), Human Development Center, Human Settlements Foundation

The significance of ACHR in supporting pro-poor change processes in Asia : The Coalition has achieved the following:

1. A network of serious "doers" and change-makers linked together for shared learning, mutual assistance and collaboration. This 20 year collaboration has become a recognized institution in Asia. It is a regional network that includes key agencies and is bound together by friendship, mutual respect and trust.

2. Regional horizontal process for analysis and solidarity: This regional platform allows sharing and mutual learning and support which flows horizontally between groups in different countries. Most conventional development processes by international agencies or government are characterized by vertical (or hierarchical) free-standing interventions; evidence suggests this does not build a substantial and sustained process. The ACHR platform helps support contextual understanding rooted in the region while mutual involvement in activities supports stronger community, city and country capacities to secure change.

3. Nurturing Asia-specific ways of making change: Asia has its own, very significant, history, culture(s) and politics. In particular, its political culture has very deep roots. The groups in the ACHR network are made up of people who have a deep and subtle understanding of Asia's political realities, its feudalistic social and behavioral patterns, and its institutional traditions. They have aligned to maneuver within these traditions to make things work for the urban poor, with new ideas and innovations that support systemic and structural change. If principles of participation, democracy, accountable government and citizen inclusion are to be realized in Asia, links have to be made between these institutional traditions and new realities. ACHR has a demonstrated track record in achieving such change, nurturing and challenging its members to improve their contribution through a strong horizontal and participative process.

4. Bringing development processes by people to scale with structural change. The ACHR network includes many successful experiences in developing and up-scaling people's led processes. The network shares, extends and transfers these experiences; examples include CODI (Thailand), the Kampung Improvement Program (Surabaya, Indonesia), Orangi Pilot Project and the Urban Resource Centers (Pakistan). There are similar examples in India, Nepal, Mongolia, Laos, Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia

A Reflection on 20 Years of ACHR

June 1988, that was the starting of the Asian economic boom, and there were so many evictions going on then. Asia was trying to stand up, and many Asian countries which had been under dictatorships before started the process of democratization - big or small. So that was the starting period of the evictions, which were beginning to happen here and there. This was also the period when several international organizations to regionalize their international process. At that time, HIC was trying to regionalize, and change their constitution to be based in the regions. SO different factors come together. And one of the worst eviction situations was in Korea. Many people in the region who had gotten to know each other by name, through meetings or by introduction through Father Anzorena's newsletter decided to come together, share ideas and see how the process in the Asia region should be, with some support from that international process, with problems of eviction. Some of those people are sitting here. We were shocked by the problems in Korea - every country that came to the meeting has problems, but Korea was the worst.

- People felt like we should do something together, so we started the fact-finding missions, and the process in Korea. That was the starting point. ACHR's work could be divided into the following periods:

1988 - 90 : First Period of ACHR : The main issue at that time was eviction. So we went to Korea and discussed this problem as a regional issue, all the groups participated. Later on we organized fact-finding missions to Korea and to Hong Kong, visiting the "cage people" and the homeless. We started looking around, asking what's happening and what should we do - especially with regard to eviction. It was during this first period of ACHR that we all put our passion and our energy and ideas into participating directly in what was happening in different hot spots around the Asia region. During this period, in order to ignite new ways of looking at the eviction issue, we organized two major activities:

- **Women in housing and eviction workshop in Mumbai :** This was the first time we saw the strength coming from women - about 30 women community leaders from 8 - 10 countries in Asia. I learned a lot from this meeting - it was the first time that grassroots women came together and shared among themselves about the role of women, about grassroots organization and about the issue of communities being the key actor. That was the first time we saw that people-to-people exchange could be something so powerful. Sometimes professionals cannot speak the same language as poor people - there's a language gap, a communication gap - but in that workshop, we saw people-to-people communication happening. There was some difficulty in translating from one language to another, but once their stories were translated, they had no difficulty understanding each other. It was something really striking and new and exciting, this sense of direct, people-to-people dialogue.
- **The Asian People's Dialogue (1) in Korea in 1989 :** This meeting was the largest effort yet in the region to bring grassroots groups together - about 100 people, two-thirds of whom were grassroots, from about ten countries involved in the dialogue. Very lively! This event didn't go exactly as we'd planned, in the people's way, however. Our Korean colleagues dragged us out of the meeting venue in Seoul to participate in the actual violence of evictions that were going on then. We were a bit frustrated with this at the time, but even so, none of us could ever forget that kind of interaction that happened for the first time during APD (I).

1991 - 1993 - Second Period of ACHR : after some good achievements and an impression that people could do something together at the regional level, then what to do? Feel like we should do more, should go further. I call this second period ACHR's "project period" when different groups started proposing what kind of projects they'd like to do: rural eviction, publications, exploratory trips to Vietnam, etc. A lot of projects were put together and we raised funds to support them.

Why projects after the big focus on eviction? I think after the first period, people were wondering what to do next, because it's no fun participating in the violence of eviction and seeing people in this late stage of desperation. So what are we doing, how do we find solutions to this? So the emphasis of ACHR's second stage was more on how to find different ways of developing solutions to eviction. Several kinds of activities were initiated by different groups, but it was a little scattered, it didn't have a significant impact. The work of this period didn't have much strength or force in terms of doing things together as a *regional effort* - it was a bit like a lot of different flowers of different colors.

1993 - 1999 : Third Period : ACHR's TAP program starts. TAP was a kind of package of programs. This was the period of regional programs, rather than projects. For instance the regional program on community exchange. So we made a theme of community exchange and opened up the possibility for supporting a lot of community-to-community exchanges, to learn together. Later, this developed and became a source of learning not only between communities, but a "partnership" learning between communities and other actors. The TAP program was able to divide and package the regional work into a set of specific programs based on different kinds of action : community strengthening, community exchange, skill development, information systems, community savings and credit, young professionals, etc. All these activities came out of ACHR meetings, where they were identified as being important interventions which could be implemented at the regional level. Of course there were a lot of other activities happening in the region during this time, but this was the main program through which the ACHR supported the process.

Promotion of savings and credit : During this period, community savings and credit activities was one activity that developed very strongly. Beginning in 1993 and growing in scale. Many countries in Asia have been impacted by this support: Nepal, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Thailand; later Indonesia, Lao, Vietnam. And this wasn't something that someone learned from someone - it might have been initiated by the ACHR process, but later on it spread by itself - one group learning from another. Community saving as another way of linking people on a big scales, has been one of ACHR's key areas of support to promote in different parts of the region.

Country programs : It was also during this third period that we started the country programs :

- **Vietnam** : The program in Hiep Than, in Ho Chi Minh City, was one of the first. It was not very successful: it went very high initially, but when the authority and the system changed, it collapsed. But the experience revealed some truths about the development process. This was the time of *Doi Moi* in Vietnam, big changes happening in the country... We thought we were creating a very good model, which would then be taken up and replicated all over the place. But we found it didn't work, and the solution at Hiep Than didn't fit, that change was much deeper than that. It wasn't a good model, but we had that kind of fantasy about the project! Then it slowed down in Vietnam for a while, then together with the UNDP process, ACHR went again to support the "Five Cities" process, which has had more success and has now expanded into eight cities. Vietnam was one of the astonishing countries through which ACHR is learning.
- **Cambodia** : Then we started the process in Cambodia, around 1992. Cambodia was the kind of country where things go very fast, from small to big in a short time, linking all the communities in Phnom Penh's seven districts into a network and setting up the UPDF as alternative institution to support this new community network. ACHR has intervened in the process of changing policy from eviction first to community-driven resettlement, and later to on-site upgrading. So in some ways, the intervention of the regional process helped the direction of the development in the country.
- **Nepal** : started with the "Ramesh Fund" in 1993 - 94, and people starting Lumanti. Now they are planning to build a community fund as an alternative institution, not only in Kathmandu, but in five cities. Growing very fast.
- **South Africa** : Some people from the Asia region went to SA in the early stage, after the end of the apartheid government, and were able to support the process of communities and exchange in SA. And now it has become one of the strongest African community process, and we now have many things to learn from them. But we were able to make a good contribution to the starting point of that process of change there.

But there have been some countries where we haven't been able to succeed much - like Bangladesh - we tried several times and it didn't work very well. In Sri Lanka, we haven't tried very much, at least not in a regular basis. But in most, we have been able to help each other.

It is something like this: each of us have a farm in our own country and are busy raising our own crops, but once in a while, when it's useful, we go and help out each other with this farming. A particular aspect of our coalition is this: we are not hunters for projects. We are changing our situation, but in changing our situation, we share with our friends and work together. That is the mentality.

(shows transparency, diagram of ACHR in 1996) Some may remember this - don't look for accuracy, it is just a model of thinking! The structure here ... (*can't hear*) .. each program links different countries, examples of strong cases in the region, different people work together. The idea was to decentralize it so the secretariat doesn't do too much. Let each program take care of its own coordination, do its own businesss, get the people who are keen with that particular issue to come together and plan, do their work - region-wide. At the time, this seemed great, as the way to decentralize it.

But this was not working very properly. People didn't have a high participatory mentality. The way to get people to plan something together, it didn't happen very well. So after some time, we still have different programs, but the management wasn't linking ... (*can't hear*). It was not highly dynamic or so energetic, but there were activities here and there, going slowly.

2000 - 2004 : Fourth Period of ACHR : In this latest period, it has changed from this pattern into more of a facility. I couldn't find the diagram of this new model. This is slightly different: it's more like ACHR is a facility, which offers several kinds of programs, similar to the third period, but more loose, not much structure, more open to people who want to do things, who initiate activities themselves. If you want to do things, you do it and ACHR can support. So in different programs, people link together by themselves, this could be considered as a draw-back or as progress! We can discuss this later on. But in this period, the secretariat has a little more role in linking with others, and supporting what they need.

The mystery of the three year cycle : It looks from this like the work of ACHR seems to divide itself naturally into periods of 3 years. I don't know whether this is because three years is the cycle of funding, or whether three years is a natural cycle of regional change? Or maybe three years is the time it takes to start something, work on it, grow tired of it and start needing a change. It's quite interesting this three year thing. Maybe it shows that when we undertake any process, we eventually come to a certain level where we need to change, to move on or to try something new. *I don't know!*

Why can ACHR still function? Since the beginning in 1988, there is some reason why we still function, and are still able to link things a little, sometimes can help influence some change here and there :

1. The serious people involved the network : We together from different countries, we are knowledgeable people. We are able to get access to the key people who have passion, serious people who want to do things and who are actually doing things in their home countries. And it's no problem at all to link with these people once you show them what we would like to do together. Like-minded people are ready to link with this group. We are the ones who are *shaking the system*, provoking some change in our countries. It is these key people who are the ones most interested in sharing their knowledge and learning from others, through this coalition. People who have the passion to change things, and people who have the nature to give. - not so much the type of people who like to only take. When we come together to share ideas, we don't find people asking "What am I entitled to? What is my share of these resources?" I think in the past 15 years, this has not been the main thing in ACHR.

2. These are the people who like to link together : it's not like someone else or any big institution is telling us all we have to link together. We link because we want to share, we want to learn. We like to sit in this kind of meeting to share, to talk and to do things.

3. Being loose and flexible : We are flexible, we are loose. There are so many international institutions that are tight, with clear membership, boards, etc. It's understandable because they have to set clear boundaries of who is in and who is not in. So the people who are in are able to participate and make decisions. But I hardly see any lively process in that kind of structure, at the international level. I think this kind of international process is very different from the reality in our countries and our communities. Different countries have all sorts of different ways of doing things, so anything that tends to be very inflexible at the international level, tends to have more problems.

4. A certain level of trust between people : We are not making a whole set of rules, conditions and making people agree and follow them. We have trust, we use our words as the only law. That is the regional way of managing. You speak about what you'd like to do, and we pass the money so you can do it, and then report. In a simple way. Emphasizing on doing, and not on talking too much! Main thing is to do.

5. We don't have the "fishing" nature : We don't link together as a regional coalition because we want to sell projects for funds. We're not in the business of making money from poverty, which is becoming an overwhelming pattern in our field, and in our world today. Poverty has become an industry, with all the local, national and even regional projects to deal with poverty. At least that's not our intention. I think it's not in our way of doing, or of thinking: if there is a fashion for funding this or that, we should put our pipe in to catch some of those funds, and color our work in such a way as allows us to grab those funds - no, that's not our way. Getting resources is not our main function. Instead, we are always trying to see what we want to do, what can bring about change, and only then finding resources to support that.

It's not a business what we do. The more I am involved in the international process, the more I feel like a stranger, because there, poverty is an industry. It's a business, and people are very happy to do that business. If you're not in that culture, you feel like a stranger! They talk all about making change, but behind their language, it's all about how to make money.

6. We are people looking to make change : When we go to Cambodia, we want to see how eviction can be stopped. We want to see how people would be able to understand the situation. We are not going there looking for *projects* - in water, in resettlement, in anything. Water may be needed, but what does water mean in that place, and how can it be linked to a broader process of learning and change. I think many of the people here are looking for change, and we use projects as a means of making change, an instrument to facilitate learning and change.

7. We feel part of another country's process of change : When Arif comes here, and when different people go to different countries, we don't feel like it's a big difference. When we put our energy into sharing in the process of our friends in other countries, we actually feel like it's our country too. Which is not always very good! When we participate in someone else's difficult, changing process, we don't feel like ours back home is better, but we feel like participating in this other process, and feel like we're a part of that. This gets people in the local process to feel like they have real friends in the region.

8. We have the facilitating nature, at least we try to : ACHR has a very small secretariat with just a few staff members, and try not to decide too much. Later we have had to decide more, which I don't think is too good: what to do in this case or that case. But we try not to decide the details of things, where regional interventions happen, so as much as possible it's their matter, their business, and we can help. If we feel that an intervention is not leading in the right direction, we will try to ask questions and so on, rather than

making any kind of system of rules and approvals, or something which is owned by the secretariat. We may have some problems and mistakes, for which I apologize. But the important thing is we are trying to find a way that everybody feel they are the decision-makers in this regional process, and what they are doing in their own countries is changing the process of the region itself. The main thing is how we link this together.

A DRAFT ACHR Chronology

1985 - 88

1977 : Father Jorge Anzorena begins producing his twice-yearly newsletter, "Selavip Newsletter - Journal of Low-Income Housing in Asia and the World" many trace the genesis of the community exposure idea to this early champion of direct, people-to-people learning, who said "*Why should professionals like me have a monopoly on all this vast experience, while the poor are stuck in their settlements? Why shouldn't they, with such hunger to improve their lives, also be able to travel, to see the best of Asia's development?*" And so began the exchange experiment. With some very modest funds from *Selavip*, he began helping set up and support some exploratory grassroots exchanges.

Early 1989

Women's Regional Savings and Credit Meeting in Bombay : Grassroots women leaders from 10 Asian countries and 8 Indian cities gathered for a week in March, 1989, and formed a grassroots women's network. Organised by SPARC and hosted by pavement dwellers in *Mahila Milan*, the meeting was a first on many fronts: the first exchange of poor women involved in savings and credit, the first regional acknowledgment of savings and credit as one of the most important community mobilising tools, the first to produce a meeting report composed entirely of carefully transcribed and translated words from the women themselves. This meeting formed the genesis of what future exchanges would look like: a parallel meeting of local federations was held, *Mahila Milan* got the international visitors to inaugurate housing sites at Mankhurd and Railway slums, took them all to meet their government officials, got them to talk to the Housing Secretary about the role of women, and did everything very frugally - everybody slept in big hall together and ate meals prepared by the communities. *All these were elements of exchanges which later got very defined.*

First all-Thailand slum census was carried out by the *Human Settlements Foundation* (NGO). Though not very accurate or very participatory, this was the first attempt to take a comprehensive look at slums in 27 cities outside Bangkok, at a time when the focus was all on rural development and few initiatives in these cities dealt with problems of urban poverty and housing. The survey led to community organising work in southern Thailand, and to the first series of exchanges between community leaders in Sonkhla and Bangkok.

Later 1989

June 1989 : Asian People's Dialogue on Housing and Shelter in Seoul, Korea brought together grassroots community leaders and NGO representatives from 11 countries. A first in Asia - *100 poor people from 11 countries together!* This was one of the most important milestones of the regional exchange process and for many professionals marked a shift to supporting a learning process that really belonged to poor people themselves. Held in conjunction with a fact-finding mission focusing on evictions in Seoul for the Asian Games, the meeting clearly showed that Asia's poor had many concerns in common and much to learn from each other. People still talk about the magic and solidarity at that meeting, and about the *telepathic* understanding among community leaders despite translation problems.

International workshop-style meetings aren't usually designed for the poor, who can be intimidated by their atmosphere and style of debate. In Seoul, the poor were the main actors and their settlements were the main venue, where sessions took place in slums around Seoul, some facing eviction crises. People stayed in slums and talked about *all aspects of their lives* - houses, incomes, jobs, kids, basic services - even religion! This was a new concept for a workshop and ended by establishing a network of Asian grassroots community collectives.

A second “Asian People’s Dialogue” held in Bangkok, right after the meeting in Seoul, to include the South Africans, who weren’t given Korean visas.

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights is officially formed at the Seoul meeting, holds it’s first general meeting and resolves to support exchange of grassroots groups.

First Regional Exchange Funding Proposal flops Right after Seoul, ACHR worked out and sent to donors a 3-year proposal of US\$200,000 to support regional exchanges, but nobody would fund it. It’s hard to say whether this happened because we were ineffective in communicating or because donors were afraid to invest in a new process which could promise no concrete “outputs” and which their colleagues could easily label as *“Developmental tourism for Asian slum dwellers.”* But the plan to undertake a regional exchange process systematically *was not abandoned!*

1990

Vietnam Exchanges Begin : with a workshop on participatory settlement development in **Ho Chi Minh City**, bringing together grassroots community leaders from Vietnam, Thailand, India and Sri Lanka, along with professionals from the region. A community-managed pilot housing project in canal side settlements is set up. This was one of the first times that local officials and professionals were invited by local community leaders (*not the other way around!*), and one of the first times that the Asian network of professionals was on hand to assist both community leaders and authorities. Exchanges to India, Thailand and Sri Lanka followed.

Sri Lanka Women’s Bank is formed : An set of experimental women’s savings groups in areas around Sri Lanka came together to form *Women’s Bank (Kantha Sahayaka Sewaya)* to gain solidarity, pool savings and create a capital fund for micro-enterprise loans. From the beginning, an intense programme of exchanges between poor community women all over the country helped extend the bank, enabling women to meet, share experiences and jointly solve problems.

1991

December 1991 : Joel’s trip to Asia : Immediately after Broederstroom, PD’s director Joel Bolnick was invited on an exposure whirlwind of Asian groups in the ACHR network. Visits Hong Kong (*SOCO*), Philippines (*Pagatmbayayong, Freedom to Build, COPE*), Thailand (*ACHR, HSF and some federations*), Pakistan (*OPP*) and India (*SPARC*). The long partnership between India and SA dates to this visit, where Joel found a logical partner organisation in SPARC because of its alignment with people’s movements, emphasis on partnership, prioritizing the poorest, women, savings, participation.

1992

1992 : Urban Community Development Office (UCDO) is set up in Thailand with a revolving loan fund for the urban poor. Seeks to improve living conditions and increase organisational capacity of poor communities through savings and credit, housing and livelihood loans and the formation of community networks at city, provincial and national levels. In coming years, these networks play increasingly central role in UCDO programmes and exchange becomes network’s principle tool of information transfer and expansion. (*Groups around Asia joke that in Thailand, the fund came first, and the federation was built to use it!*)

1992 - First Thailand - India exchanges, between Thai community networks and MM/NSDF in 1992.

1992 : Vietnam Exchanges : to and from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Thailand - some of the first exchange visits to experiment with “mixed teams” of community leaders, NGO and government officials who travel together.

1993

1993 : TAP Programme established : A number of country-to-country exchanges after the Seoul meeting helps grassroots groups to develop the capacity to *host* and *train* their Asian neighbors. In 1993, this process is formalized into the DFID-supported ACHR **Training and Advisory Programme (TAP)**, based on a few key assumptions :

- Asian grassroots organisations in the ACHR network are on the cutting edge of people-defined solutions and represent a powerful but unacknowledged resource
- While international agencies keep sending in short-term consultants to tell them what to do, these groups continue to be firmly rooted in local process.
- Poor communities *can* dialogue and collaborate with all the development actors, and their strongest tool is not protest, but *alternative solutions*.

TAP begins looking around the region at programmes *that work for the poor* and facilitates visits of community leaders, NGOs and officials involved in these programmes to other cities and countries to advocate these strategies. Exposing *national* groups to *regional* processes creates a method for diffusing innovations *by and for people directly*, and builds a huge pool of strategies to link local groups into a regional - and later international - fraternity. ***In it's first six years, TAP supports 120 international exposures.***

1993 : Regional Links to Cambodia : Urban Sector Group (USG) is established during a city-wide workshop on urban poverty in Phnom Penh. NSDF/MMM help conduct an enumeration in the city's largest squatter area, and start savings groups. Cambodian community leaders later visit Thailand, India, Pakistan, South Africa.

1993 : Links to Nepal : First ACHR links with poor communities and professionals in Kathmandu Nepal. Later *Lumanti* is established as local NGO and begins work in squatter areas.

1993 : Links with Orangi Pilot Project, Pakistan : Ongoing involvement in regional exchanges to and from Karachi. *"OPP began with the assumption that poor people are not foolish but great masters of the art of survival, and are trying hard to improve their lives. But they are not getting much help or support. On the contrary, they are at times harassed. There is a need for social guidance, technical guidance, and economic support."* (OPP's founder, Dr. Akhtar Khan)

1994

1994 : Links to Lao : Thai and Indian community members visit canal settlements in Vientiane, Lao PDR, help starting savings and credit groups and discuss solutions to drainage problems, working with UNCHS/CDF project.

1994 : Community Workshop in Colombo, Sri Lanka : hosted by Women's Bank and Sevanatha (NGO), with mixed community/NGO teams from 8 Asian countries and South Africa, focuses on community action planning, savings and credit, community contracts for infrastructure and sanitation.

1995

1995 - Thai Network Expansion : Expansion of community networks in Songkhla, Chiang Mai and Northeast lead to increasing numbers of national and local exchanges, for learning, transfer and assistance. UCDO begins moving from a credit-service delivery approach to a network style of management. The **DANCED Environmental Improvement Programme** begins within UCDO in 1996, in which networks throughout the country take greater role in developing, implementing, monitoring and disseminating the environmental projects going on. DANCED helps the exchange process link with existing NGOs, new communities, provincial and municipal officials.

October 1995 : Workshop in Japan : Sri Lanka, Philippines, Thailand and India - focus on how to negotiate with local authorities and sparked a series of exchanges between members of the Buraku Liberation League (a minority in Japan) and the South Korean squatter settlements.

1997

1997 : First city-wide survey of poor communities in Phnom Penh, conducted by the federation of urban poor communities in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Counted 379 settlements with 31,000 households, most without access to basic services and most in danger of eviction.

1997 : Philippines joins exchange process. Father Norberto (Parish Priest in Payatas, one of Manila's largest slum areas around garbage dump) visits NSDF/MM in India. Since we were already promoting the formation of saving groups, which had been running since 1993, along micro-credit lines. We had 2,000 members by that time, so it was not hard for the Payatas group to understand the MM way of savings group

formation. The learning was the institutions element of federation building and linking savings with land and housing issues - not just micro-credit for income generation and emergencies. Later that year, Jockin and Joel visited Payatas, and a new direction for the savings groups.

1997 : Nepal joins Asian exchange process, exchanges with India, Thailand (others?)

1997 : Model House Exhibition in Cambodia : The *Squatter and Urban Poor Federation (SUPF)* showcases their recent city-wide slum survey (379 settlements), and affordable house types (one wood, one brick) - municipal and national governments attend, along with CBO/NGO teams from India, Thailand and South Africa. The city took notice! This first, big public event galvanized the federation and led to several "integrated" exposure trips with community leaders and local officials to India and Thailand, and paved the way for the federation's first housing project.

1998

March 1998 : Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF) set up in Cambodia, under and MOU between ACHR, the Municipality of Phnom Penh and the Urban Poor Community Federation of Phnom Penh. UPDF's first housing loans go to the city's first voluntary, community-driven relocation of the roadside squatter community to new land at Akphivat Mean Cheay, as an alternative to eviction.

September 1998 : First Assembly of the Philippines Homeless People's Federation held in Payatas, Quezon City, bringing together over 1,000 local members and 200 visiting members from across the Philippines. Hosted by the Payatas Scavenger's Federation, meeting focuses on land acquisition and savings. The new federation's first big jamboree marks a shift in VMSDFI's role from microcredit service provider to federation support partner. Leads to first city-to-city exchanges in Philippines between savings groups in Payatas, Cebu, Ilo-ilo and General Santos.

1999

January 1999 : First Philippines - Indonesia exchange : Waste-pickers from Payatas Scavengers Federation visit scavenger community in Bantar Gebang, Jakarta.

June 1999 : Nepal Mahila Ekta Samaj (Network of women's savings collectives) is established in Kathmandu, after a group of poor women returned from an exposure visit to Thailand and Cambodia and regional meeting of women's savings groups in Thailand.

June 6, 1999 - Inauguration of Women's Development Bank Federation in Colombo - new women's federation of savings groups. Join exchange process with trips to India, Cambodia and Nepal.

October 1999 Model house exhibition in Nepal held to launch the new *Women's Savings Federation (Nepal Mahila Ekta Samaj)* and coincide with CITYNET meeting of Asian mayors in Kathmandu. over 1,000 local women and SDI delegates from India, Thailand, Cambodia and Sri Lanka join. Exchanges with MM/NSDF in India helped develop savings groups in Nepalese squatter settlements and now direct links are established with Mahila Milan/NSDF teams in Kanpur and Lucknow.

December 1999 : Tibet to Nepal : Tibet Heritage Fund and Tibetan Officials exposure trip to Nepal : Pimpim writes : Nepal trip was nice and I think everyone enjoy it. All went well better then we thought. No big problems, and everyone enjoy to see Patan, Baktapur and Ktm, and we hope that this will help to have a diferent view in diferent matters.... We couldn't go to see Lumanti. I really apologise to Sajana. I think John already did. We will see when thefruits and flowers will blossom.

2000

July 10, 2000: Garbage slide at Payatas community in Manila, kills 250 poor people living in shacks nearby the garbage dump.

November 2000 : First Urban Community Development Funds set up in 5 provincial cities in Vietnam (later expanded to 8), where ACHR helped to continue a process begun by the UNCHS/UNDP project there, which ended this year.

2001

Karachi's Old City Rehabilitation Program launched, with support from ACHR

2002

2003

May 2003: UPDF 5th Anniversary and start of "100 Slums Upgrading Policy" - UPDF's 5th anniversary event in Phnom Penh with big celebration, model house exhibition and national meeting. Proposed a new program of on-site upgrading in 100 poor settlements in Phnom Penh city, as an alternative to impoverishing and costly relocation to remote resettlement colonies. Prime Minister Hun Sen agrees to proposal and extends it to be "100 slums upgrading every year." First four land sharing projects approved by Prime Minister few weeks later (two of which were actually implemented: at Borei Keila and Dei Krahom.

2004

December 26, 2004: Asian tsunami hits coasts of Indonesia (Aceh and West Sumatra), Thailand, India and Sri Lanka.

2005

2006

June 2006: Asian delegation from tsunami-hit villages in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand and India conduct a seminar on "Community Driven Tsunami Rehabilitation) with ACHR at the World Urban Forum in Vancouver, Canada.

2007

2008

ACHR Themes and Milestones

When ACHR was formed in 1988, there was no common or regular forum for urban social activists, NGOs, professionals and especially for grassroots or community groups working in Asian cities to meet and exchange ideas. During the UN International Year for Shelter for the Homeless in 1987, several regional processes were organized which encouraged groups to share their experiences in addressing issues of urban poverty and housing and to discuss regional collaboration. At that time there was a shared recognition that new ideas and actions were needed to tackle the upsurge of forced evictions in Asia and to develop opportunities for organizations of the poor to gain due recognition and also a meaningful role in city management and planning.

STAGE 1. 1988 - 1990

Focus on eviction and housing rights

ACHR officially set up, in a seminar organized by HIC in Bangkok (June 11-14, 1988) In the early years of ACHR (1988-1990), emphasis were given to housing rights and problems of evictions in Asian cities; International Fact Finding Missions that put pressure on governments were organized to South Korea (twice), Hong Kong and Philippines with positive outcomes.

In the first stage of ACHR's work, we put a lot of emphasis on problems of housing rights and eviction in Asia, which was one of the main reasons we all came together originally. The evictions in Korea and other Asian countries. Also, because back then, we never had a regular platform for sharing and mutual help

between Asian people themselves. There were some meetings and forums organized here and there, of course, in which there were Asian people who were invited to "participate", but that was it, no platform that belonged to us.

But after several years of having started to know each other from these meetings, from learning about each other's work through Father Jorge's Selavip Newsletter, and through the efforts of the Habitat International Coalition (HIC) to set up a regional body in Asia, we started linking together, all these key people. So we decided to set up a new Asia regional platform, and we called it ACHR. It was to act as a branch of HIC. In those early stages, the main problem in Thailand, Korea, India, Indonesia and so many Asian countries was eviction, and many of the key people who formed ACHR were involved in the issue of eviction.

So in the first stage of ACHR, the emphasis of the coalition's work focused on how to deal with eviction: mobilizing the regional expertise and regional intervention to deal with eviction problems in the various countries.

Fact-finding missions : Before setting up ACHR, all the senior Asian groups, professionals and activists came together for a workshop that was organized by Selavip (**Date?**). Many senior people who came with strong feelings that we should set up this coalition together, and it was at that meeting that we decided to start by organizing the first fact-finding mission. The idea of such fact-finding missions had been around for a while, and came from the prevailing culture of international human rights groups, but this first fact-finding mission that was organized by this very senior group of Asian professionals and activists - and the ones that followed - were different in several ways.

These early ACHR fact-finding missions represented our first stab at thinking and acting in a new way, and bringing groups in the region together to intervene and deal with housing rights problems of different kinds, in specific countries, and to find ways for the groups around the region to learn from each other and help each other. And the role of ACHR was to plan, schedule, arrange and coordinate these missions, so that these interventions became an event in the countries and had some good political impact.

1. First fact-finding mission to Seoul, Korea (September 5-10, 1988) : At that time, there were huge evictions of informal settlements in Seoul going on, in preparation for the Olympic Games. But instead of just coming in, documenting housing rights violations and pointing fingers, we designed this one to be something very special. This fact-finding process was designed to create space for dialogue within the country, to get people to talk, to bring up the issues and to discuss possible solutions. We met with all the key government agencies and lawyers groups involved in the planning and resettlement, and we also visited many communities around the city who had been evicted or were facing eviction. We were very warmly received by these communities, and even the government was fairly receptive, and there was a great deal of discussion, a lot of it carried out in a very public way. The mission included a Buddhist monk from Thailand, a high-court judge from India, a member of parliament from UK, the President of HIC, and a journalist from the Philippines. Everywhere we went, this combination of people attracted a lot of attention, especially with the Buddhist monk in his bright orange robes. After the mission, we sent the report around the region and a lot of groups wrote letters to the Korean government and Korean embassies objecting to this large-scale displacement of poor communities for the Olympics.

- ***It was a good achievement.*** I think that ACHR played an important part to intervene at the right moment in this way. The first fact-finding mission was followed very soon by a shift in the policy of the Korean government to construct 900,000 units of subsidized public housing for the poorest communities displaced by eviction and redevelopment - a first in Korea's history. This was the first time in the history of Korea to have a clear policy to resettle evicted communities in state-subsidized social housing, on the same site as far as possible. ***Although there were many factors involved, ACHR played a significant part in the launching of that policy and came at least partly from a very strategic, well-timed and proactive intervention from this new regional process.*** before the Olympic games, with lots of public interest in the situation.
- ***Follow-up fact-finding mission to Seoul (September 7-12, 1990)*** Two years later to follow up on the first one.

2. Fact-finding mission to Hong Kong (September 13-18, 1990) : When the first fact-finding mission in Korea was so successful and led to such concrete results, several other countries wanted ACHR to organize fact-finding missions to their countries - followed by Hong Kong and Philippines. The next one was a fact-finding mission to Hong Kong, to visit the "*Cage People*" - poor and elderly poor people living in tiny rented cubicles partitioned like animal cages stacked up on top of each other within apartment rooms. Although this did not involve any outright evictions, this was another situation of extreme housing rights problems, when human beings were forced to live in such conditions. This mission visited several cage-dwelling areas and spent some time with the local organization that was working with these cage dwellers, SOCO. I don't

think this mission was highly successful, because back then, Hong Kong was a much more open society and our's was just one small voice in that big system. There was not any big policy shift, as there had been in Korea, but the fact-finding mission did help to publicize the issue of cage-dwellers locally, and the cage people's stories were brought into the perception of groups around the Asia region.

3. Fact-finding mission to the Philippines (Date?) : This is a country where evictions are always happening, from the beginning until now, and also a country that had had many fact-finding missions in the past. So there wasn't too much excitement about ACHR's fact-finding mission. But the visit was successful in bringing various groups of people into a discussion and a report was written and distributed.

The result of this first stage of ACHR's work helped people in the Asia region to have a much clearer picture of eviction. In Korea, the mission direct resulted in a significant change in resettlement and housing policy, and fairly reasonable secure housing solutions were eventually worked on in almost all the communities in Seoul we visited - mostly through the development of public housing. It was not so easy to find a solution in Korea, but the mission helped open up the debate.

STAGE 2. 1989 - 1994

The focus is more on solutions than on problems, more proactive interventions from the regional coalition, and a more grassroots-driven approach (*especially involving community savings*).

The second stage of work (1991-1993) developed solutions to eviction problems. Towards the end of this first stage, many of us started to get the feeling that by focusing mostly on eviction, we were involving ourselves only in the problems: so far we had been mostly going to meet people who faced evictions, learning about problems of eviction and preparing and disseminating documents which described those evictions. But what about the solutions to eviction? The next stage of ACHR's activities, therefore, shifted to a greater focus on finding ways to deal with eviction and to intervene in the development situation in places where eviction occurred.

Asian Women's Dialogue on Shelter in Bombay (March 20-27, 1989) : This more proactive direction of ACHR's work had its origins in a workshop we organized in India, the Asian Women's Dialogue in 1989. This was the first time in my experience that we invited mainly grassroots women from cities in 7 or 8 countries around Asia to see the Mahila Milan Women's collectives and to learn about their active savings process, etc. It was a good number of people in the workshop, which was supported by the Selavip Foundation. That gathering showed us several significant things :

- it was the very first direct grassroots-to-grassroots conversation to take place between poor women from different situations of poverty around Asia. (Of course we had to organize a lot of translation to facilitate this conversation!)
- It showed the strength of this sharing and showed that this is possible.
- it showed us the strength of community savings, of which at that time the Mahila Milan were the pioneers, and it was running very well, and it showed the strength of this savings process to deal with problems of poverty and eviction in a very new way.

This was the first powerful workshop where the ACHR organized this process and it showed the light of solution - by people, on the ground, the very poorest grassroots women. This was clearly something very powerful, and it came as a revelation to many of us.

Asian People's Dialogue in Seoul, Korea (June 14-20, 1989) : The women's grassroots gathering in Bombay was followed three months later by the much larger "*Asian People's Dialogue*" in Seoul. This very lively meeting brought together over 100 people, including about 80 urban poor people from 11 Asian countries, as well as about 25 professionals, activists and support NGOs. Back then, 100 people seemed like *a huge meeting* to us! This was the first big meeting of grassroots people yet in Asia, and the first time that such a meeting was organized in a place where some of the most serious eviction problems were going on, so that besides the international sharing of experiences, the international participants could get involved more directly with the Koreans in their struggles against evictions.

- **Continuation of the Asian People's Dialogue in Thailand (June 23- July 2, 1989) :** This meeting was organized to take advantage of many of the groups who'd come to Seoul passing through Bangkok on their way home, and to include the South African group.

The meeting in Seoul confirmed the new stage of ACHR's work, which focused more on solutions than on problems, more proactive interventions from the regional coalition, and a more grassroots-driven approach. And by the end of 1990, the power of community savings to help communities deal with many problems they

faced (*including eviction*) had become very clear, and had set a new path for many of the grassroots processes in the Asia region involved.

First ACHR General Meeting (21 June 1989) : Immediately after the meeting in Seoul ended, and while all the key participants were still together, we organized ACHR's first general meeting, and began setting plans for further activities. The idea was to broaden the scope of ACHR into more important activities - activities that were proposed in that meeting included: support to rural eviction (Minar Pimple, this initiative never went very far...), community organizing (Denis Murphy), and starting new initiatives in those countries where no solutions had yet been launched - like Vietnam.

- **Setting ACHR's working strategy** : In this meeting, the agreement on how ACHR should work became clearer: that ACHR should be a loose coalition, that people in various places were free to develop their own activities or projects, and that the coalition's management would come from the projects that are active in that year. Everyone agreed, no tight structure.

The idea of this second stage of ACHR's development was to open up the regional process to more new initiatives, new projects and new possibilities.

ACHR's first country-intervention : Support to community-managed upgrading in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (1990 - 1991) : One of the major new interventions during this period was the support to the pilot community upgrading process in the **Hiep Tanh community** (a settlement of 310 households in Ward 6, District 4, Ho Chi Minh City). UN-ESCAP had been trying to support the government and the Municipality at that time, and Hosaka (who was working with UN-ESCAP then) had the idea to invite ACHR to be involved. ACHR followed up and supported the upgrading process in one of the communities under the UN-ESCAP project. This upgrading got a lot of very good publicity in Vietnam, and showed a new option of community-driven upgrading.

- **This was the first time that a group of senior people from the Asia region went into a country to intervene like this, as the ACHR**, with different expertise, different roles, going at different times, and trying to intervene proactively, how to change the situation, study visits, experience sharing, and finding some budget to support these modest upgrading activities.
- **There were some very good results from this project**, which were very inspiring for both the Vietnamese groups and for the new ACHR coalition. The project became an important new model for a community-driven slum redevelopment and a milestone for the community-movement in Vietnam. A new government policy on upgrading, using the Hiep Tanh project a model, was eventually drafted and proposed. But in the end, the existing government policy to evict informal settlements turned out to be much stronger and the settlement was eventually demolished.

STAGE 3. 1993 - 2004

The Training and Advisory Program (TAP) is launched.

The third stage centred on the Training and Advisory Program (TAP) supported by DFID (UK) (1994-2000). TAP was a comprehensive package of support activities with cross country learning, exchange visits, regional workshops, training from key regional projects, new country action programs and research. This added significantly to the knowledge and capacity of the regional intervention process.

TAP Program established (1993): A number of country-to-country exchanges and workshops after the Seoul meeting helped grassroots groups to develop the capacity to host and train their Asian neighbors. With new funding support from the British DFID, this process was formalized into the ACHR's *Training and Advisory Program (TAP)*, based on a few key assumptions :

- Asian grassroots organizations in the ACHR network were on the cutting edge of people-defined solutions and represented a powerful but unacknowledged resource.
- While international agencies keep sending in short-term consultants to tell them what to do, these groups continue to be firmly rooted in local process.
- Poor communities can collaborate with all the various development actors, and their strongest tool isn't protest, *but alternatives*.

TAP began looking around the region at programs that work for the poor and facilitated visits of community leaders, NGOs and officials involved in these programs to other cities and countries to advocate these strategies. For ACHR, TAP represented a huge opening up of the region for cross-border learning and sharing, and a big scaling up of ACHR's work. The TAP program brought a huge scale of new learning and new horizontal sharing among the people and groups, and was a very important factor in helping strengthen the regional process in Asia.

1. Turning key projects in the region into "Learning centers" : Through TAP-sponsored exchange visits and regional workshops, many of the very strong projects and innovative housing initiatives around Asia became "schools" and "learning centers" for others in the region to learn from. By visiting these important projects, in which poor community people were key actors, the workshops became a new form of training on the ground. These cases were like universities, but people were trained not in classrooms, but on the ground, within these *real projects*, which included :

- **Land-sharing in Bangkok**
- **Kampung Improvement Program (KIP) in Surabaya**
- **Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) in Karachi**
- **Mahila Milan Savings Collectives in Bombay**
- **Women's Bank in Sri Lanka**

2. Issue-based workshops : There were also many issue-based workshops organized by ACHR's TAP, which were still organized in places with a strong local process, but with a stronger subject-base:

- **Community organization**
- **Community Savings**
- **Urban Resource Centers**

3. Exchanges : In its first six years, TAP supported 120 international exposure visits. There were also a number of new initiatives launched in **(places?)**

4. New initiatives in new countries : Because the resources to support these TAP activities came with a little more flexibility than usual, ACHR could initiate new activities in several countries where there were no strong community processes yet :

- **Cambodia :** ACHR had conducted its first exploratory visit to Phnom Penh in 1992 (having been invited by DFID to explore the situation and see what we could do), but with TAP, we were able to follow-up these initial contacts with some activities. The Urban Sector Group (USG) was established during a city-wide workshop organized by ACHR-TAP on urban poverty in Phnom Penh. NSDF/MM help conduct enumeration in the city's largest squatter area and start savings groups. Cambodian community leaders later visit Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, South Africa through ACHR-organized exchanges.
- **Nepal :** ACHR's intervention in Nepal had also begun in August 1992, when it linked with communities and professionals in Kathmandu. Later, Lumanti was established as local NGO, with initial support and funding assistance from ACHR-TAP, and Lumanti began work in the city's squatter areas.
- **Lao PDR :** With support from ACHR-TAP, Thai and Indian community members visited canal squatter settlements in Vientiane in 1994, helped them start savings and credit groups and discussed solutions to drainage problems, with the UNCHS "Sipsacres" project.
- **Vietnam :** The TAP program also allowed ACHR's initial work in Vietnam to continue after the Hiep Tanh upgrading project had ended. **What activities?**

1994 : ACHR's Eviction Watch Program launched, to monitor evictions in Asian cities, organize fact-finding missions, and produce reports, disseminate information on the evictions and on the means people use to resist the evictions.

STAGE 4. 2004 - 2007

ACHR's work in the region is consolidated and scaled-up

The fourth stage, from 2000, represents a more mature process and a broader scale of intervention. This included the introduction of community savings and credit activities and the development of Community Development Funds which have been able to influence new forms of development change in Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Nepal, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines and India. Regional responses to the Tsunami devastation have developed with the promotion of community-driven relief and rehabilitation.

- In terms of policy advocacy, the contribution of ACHR key activists has increasingly been recognized with requests to meet and share knowledge with policy makers including Asian Ministers. This reflects increasing interest in possible collaboration and support for urban community development and/or community upgrading programs.
- City-wide and country-wide slum upgrading in Thailand, India **and Philippines** has been used to boost and support learning for structural change in other countries. Some ACHR interventions and

support have been integrated into government policies, while others have been successfully up-scaled without government support.

- The upgrading of 100 slums per year in Cambodia and the community savings and credit groups initiatives in Lao PDR and Mongolia have developed into large-scale national programs.
- Other activities include the production and widespread dissemination of international publications including the Housing By People series, Eviction Watch, and Understanding Asian Cities;
- also the work on protecting the heritage of cities by the participation of communities,
- the Young Professionals Program and
- regional information activities.
- ACHR is the Asian branch of the Habitat International Coalition and an executive Committee member of CITYNET.
- It also works closely with Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) and collaborates with UN Habitat, UN-ESCAP, UNDP and the World Bank.

After the DFID funding for TAP finished, MISEREOR support allowed the TAP program, as well as ACHR's other work to continue to expand and to scale up. This was a period of ACHR's work in which the work was consolidated, deepened, broadened, with support to scaling-up important processes and making policy change in several contexts. Several countries developed stronger processes during this period, in which their work was broadened and institutionalized.

The ACHR Regional Fund facility : (with MISEREOR support) was able to help broaden the community-driven activities in many Asian countries. Support for the setting up, strengthening, expanding and linking of city-based and country-based urban poor development funds - and the collective community savings processes which are an inseparable part of the fund process - became one of ACHR's most important activities in the Asia region. With support from ACHR, such funds were operating in at least ten Asian countries by 2007 - all operating in very different political contexts and having very different institutional arrangements, different scales and different degrees of maturity and institutionalization. But all these funds have in common the idea of creating a resource which supports quickly and flexibly and with a minimum of bureaucracy the housing, land, livelihood and welfare projects which organizations of the poor design and implement themselves. By the end of 2006, fund and savings activities had been supported, strengthened and expanded with ACHR support in :

- **Indonesia**
- **Lao PDR**
- **Mongolia**
- **Nepal**
- **Philippines**
- **Vietnam**

The Asian Tsunami : The occurrence of the catastrophic Asian tsunami, on December 26 2004, unleashed a whole new area of work for ACHR, and a whole new dimension of ACHR activities promoting a more community-driven disaster rehabilitation process. With this very big problem, though, came some very big new development opportunities, learning and collaboration between groups in the five tsunami-affected countries of Thailand, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India and Myanmar.

Understanding Asian Cities Program : That was also from the Misereor stage. This program of study and documentation and pilot initiatives was very much part of ACHR's consolidating of its work, and involved a more complex understanding of the forces shaping Asian cities, and the forces and policy changers that affect the issues that touch the poor.

- **8 city studies** : Beijing, Pune, Chiang Mai, Phnom Penh, Karachi, Muntinlupa, Hanoi and Surabaya.
- **Several seminars**
- **Synthesis booklet published**, with editorial support from David Satterthwaite
- **Offshoot**: the poor in historic cities and city centers

In all these different stages, we can put the different activities - so many things! Chronologically! (for example the 2004 ACHR yearly report - so many activities!)