

# UPCA Declaration

DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT AND ACTION OF THE  
URBAN POOR COALITION ASIA (UPCA), MARCH 16, 2012



**1** We, the urban poor communities of Asia, want to declare today that we are ready and able to make change to our lives. We want to be active actors and participants, not just recipients, in all development relating to our lives. We want to be active partners in all development activities of government and development agencies.

**2** For several decades of urban development, poor people still have had unsteady and low-paid jobs, lived in very insecure and unhealthy communities without or very little infrastructure or services; and faced eviction with little opportunity for new housing. While many kinds of development activities exist, only a little of these can sometimes reach us; but most of the time they do not fit with what we really need. We mainly have to find our own solutions and struggle to survive, sometimes out of nothing. We are tired, we are bored, and we want change. We don't want to be only the victims of a city development that is decided by others, but we want to be a visible part and more equal partners in city development. Having secure jobs, access to basic services and secure tenure are not grants or privileges, but basic rights which belong to all human beings.

**3** Furthermore, in the past decades, we have also learned to make much change, with some support from development agencies. We have learned to organize and to coordinate among ourselves. We have learned to get our information and do mapping of our settlements. We have organized our saving groups and community funds. We have started to get loans from our community funds to improve our income and jobs, to develop our infrastructure, to upgrade our communities and to make our housing projects.

We have linked our many organizations into community networks, within the city and between cities, at a national scale and between countries. We have much greater opportunities to share, to learn and to help each other between communities, between cities and even between countries. And we are now able to link together as community organizations around Asia.

We have learned that we have great potential and great abilities to solve all these problems by ourselves, and our solutions are always better and cheaper - and they answer our real needs and bring us together as communities.

**4** So the urban poor communities in Asia (represented today by Cambodia, Indonesia, Korea, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam), want to announce this new important change today:

That we, the urban poor of Asia, linking together under the Urban Poor Coalition Asia (UPCA), will work actively together for all possible action and self-development, in order to make visible and concrete change to the problems of poverty, insecure housing, jobs and welfare which we have long faced unjustly. Together, we will:

- develop our savings and financial systems and build our community funds to support development initiatives and housing by community people;
- develop information about all the poor communities and households in all the cities through our mapping work;
- negotiate and survey all existing land in order to secure and develop proper housing and legitimize our poor people to live as proper citizens with dignity in the city;
- build our capacity to work, boost our community members to all be active and organized as strong community units to work together;
- build citywide networks for citywide action and collaborate with local authorities and development agencies, in order to make joint plans and achieve our development.

**5** In order to achieve all these, UPCA wants the government, international development agencies, and local development organizations to join and assist our mission by:

- Opening the room to recognize that the poor people want to be an active force to make change, and support such a process for the people to do this. They must give room for the people to do this in a big way and allow these people process to be an active force to work in the cities with the government and development agencies. They should let the implementation process on the ground to be undertaken as much as possible by the people themselves.
- Involving the community people, in whatever government and development agencies propose, in whatever poverty program or development activity they initiate, whether it be in a positive or a negative way like eviction, through a process of dialogue and joint discussion, of planning, implementing, deciding, and managing in all the key stages as much as possible so that all the development activity should allow people to benefit in the process. This way the community would actually help the activity or the program become more effective.
- Allocating more funds directly to communities to solve poverty or housing development. The funds would support community systems of finance, like community development funds. There is now so much investment in infrastructure and other urban development, but almost unnoticeable budgets for housing development or for activities being done by people that address poverty.