

# ACHR e-news

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

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SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2011

- Big floods are drowning almost half of THAILAND + several related stories
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- Piloting some community-based rehabilitation projects in tsunami-affected areas in JAPAN
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## BIG FLOODS are DROWNING ALMOST HALF of THAILAND

It's been another year of terrible disasters of all sorts across Asia, and this time Thailand has been getting its share of calamity in the form of floods which now affect almost half the country. We've been getting many kind messages of concern from friends all over, and we're happy to report that so far, central Bangkok (and the ACHR office in Ladprao Road) is still dry. But we find ourselves surrounded by an ever-growing sea of flooding destruction and misery, and the danger is not over yet.

Even in a country as watery and used to floods as Thailand, this year's floods have come as a real shock, caused by a combination of unusually heavy rain, high tides, mismanagement of runoff from the big dams, wrongful planning and sheer bumbling and politicking within and between the 16 government agencies and 4 ministries in charge of managing the country's water. The floods began in July, in northern Thailand, but quickly spread to the central plains. Some 44 of the country's 77 provinces have been affected, many transformed into vast lakes. More than 500 people have died, 6 million hectares of farmland have been inundated (roughly the size of Sri Lanka), cities and factories have been sunk and hundreds of thousands have been forced from their homes. The economic cost of the floods, to industries and agriculture, is estimated at over 300 billion Baht (US\$ 10 billion), but that could easily double if Bangkok gets badly affected. And that's saying nothing of the costs to the million families of factory workers (many poor migrants from neighboring countries and Thailand's poorest provinces) who now face the prospect of long months of unemployment.



The water is now slowly draining out to the sea, and almost all of it is passing through or around Bangkok, which is built on the natural flood plain at the mouth of the Chao Phraya River delta. It's a terrific location for a city, from the point of view of transport and defense, but a disastrous one in terms of flooding, for it sits right on top of the country's best natural drain! It may take several weeks for all the flood water to flow out to sea, and in the mean time, Bangkok remains in high panic mode, with everybody sand-bagging up to the gills, store shelves emptying from panic buying and more and more districts being inundated by the hour.

**What communities are doing about the floods :** We've got news from CODI that some 600 community projects (both urban and rural) have been flooded so far, and the CODI office in Nawamin Road (which is not yet flooded) has been acting as a make-shift relief and donations headquarters, where the urban and rural community networks are working together to organize their support to affected communities in 22 provinces. The community networks are by now quite experienced in dealing with disasters, and their activities include surveying the affected areas, organizing relief and food centers, providing relief and survival tools and linking with other sources of assistance. But most important of all, they are helping get the affected communities into the active mode, organizing their own relief and looking after their own as much as possible. Funding to support these national activities has been raised and is being managed by the community networks. The national network of Baan Mankong communities has agreed that all their members will contribute 30 Baht (US\$1) to a special national relief fund to help flood-affected families. Some community networks are using their City Development Funds to raise funds locally for flood victims. In Chum Phae, for example, the network has raised enough local contributions to support a truck-load of food and a 10,000 Baht contribution to the national relief fund. All these immediate relief activities have been explicitly planned to lead to a more organized rehabilitation stage, which will be as much a community-driven process as possible, in urban and rural areas, with centers for affected people to organize themselves.

**FLOOD DONATIONS :** Anybody who is interested in helping flood-affected families in Thailand - particularly the poor ones - through a relief and rehabilitation process that is managed by communities, can send donations to the following two funds :

- **Help Flood Victims Fund** (managed by the Coordination Committee of Thailand's National Community Development Network) Krung Thai Bank, National Housing Authority Branch. **Bank account number : 095-0-14784-2**
- **Communities Assisting Communities Fund** (managed by the National Urban Community Organizations Network) Krung Thai Bank, National Housing Authority Branch. **Bank account number : 095-0-14803-2**

## "PEOPLE'S INSURANCE" in THAILAND is ONE YEAR OLD

In October 2010, a new national system of community insurance was launched in Thailand, in which community borrowers themselves are the owners and operators of the insurance system and the funds are all managed by the community networks in various cities. In this system, each family who takes out a housing or land loan from CODI pays just 200 Baht (US\$6) per year into a new national insurance fund, to which CODI contributed a 20 million Baht (US\$ 670,000) seed capital. Then, if there are problems which prevent a community member from making the loan repayment to the cooperative (like illness, loss of jobs, accidents, death or disasters), and if the community determines that nobody else in the family is earning enough to make the payment, then the insurance fund will make the repayments. The scheme provides upgraded communities another tool to ensure that when their members face some crisis which might otherwise force them to sell out and leave the project, they can keep paying their loans, keep staying in the project, keep their house and keep the community support system which is so important for their survival.

The community networks have developed a set of preliminary projections for what the insurance fund will cover, in a variety of scenarios: in the case of illness, for example, the fund will cover half or all of the family's loan repayments, for three to six months, depending on the illness and the family's earning situation. But the rules are flexible, and it's up to the community cooperatives and the city networks to gauge each case. Most important of all, this new tool for dealing with real problems that come up is being managed by friends and peers - not by some profit-making insurance corporation outside. The insurance fund will also cover disasters, like floods, fires and storm damage to communities - and in the case of disasters, the scheme will cover primarily the borrowers, but the city networks are considering expanding the scheme to cover non-borrowers in affected communities also.

**Decentralizing the insurance system to the city funds.** It was agreed that in the early stage, the 200 Baht per year each borrower pays would go into the national fund, at CODI, but later on, the insurance funds were decentralized, with half going to the center and half staying in the city-based development funds, which are managed by the city networks. So the people's insurance scheme is already being managed by local people, and is already strengthening the city funds, which are now active in about 300 Thai cities (the first eight pioneering city funds in Thailand were supported by seed capital grants from ACHR's ACCA Program).

The new insurance system got its first big test when some terrible floods and landslides hit several southern Thai provinces last April (2011), after unseasonable rains deluged the whole southern region, and many Baan Mankong housing projects were affected. In mid April, a meeting of the urban community networks from all the flood-hit cities was called in Chumphon, where all the networks proposed their "claims" for help from the new insurance system. The claims were all based on actual damages (for example, 12,000 Baht to repair a house), and each network had a team to go verify and check the needs of the members. Besides damage to newly-built houses and loss of livelihood, there were some cases where the family's main wage-earner died. In those cases, the network's team checked to see who in the family could repay the housing loan - if not, the scheme pays full or half the housing loan, until someone else can start earning enough to make the loan repayments.

**Community insurance is now one year old:** In October 2011, a year after the new scheme was launched (but before the current floods had become such a national catastrophe), a national meeting was organized in Bangkok to review both the community insurance activities and the progress of the city-based development funds (CDFs) around the country. There are now 62 cities with full-fledged city development funds in operation (that are receiving some lending capital support from CODI) and another 243 cities have started their CDFs. In all these 305 cities, the CDFs and the new community insurance system are being managed together, by the community networks, with 8,825 households being members so far. The contributions received so far from these community insurance members received so far is 958,450 Baht (US\$32,000), and the total amount of insurance pay-outs up to October (*before the current flood disaster in Central Thailand*) was 792,009 Baht (US\$26,400) to 336 families, which includes :

- **deaths of primary wage-earner** (5 families) : 344,835 Baht (US\$11,495)
- **disabled primary wage-earner** (2 families) : 8,145 Baht (US\$272)
- **disasters** (329 families) : 439,029 Baht (US\$14,634)



**NOTE :** More in next month's e-news about how the Thai Community Insurance funds are dealing with the flood disaster!

## WANTED: STORIES on HOW COMMUNITIES DEAL WITH DISASTERS

One of the biggest lessons of the 2004 Asian tsunami was that in a disaster of such magnitude, we can't rely only on conventional systems, conventional government departments, conventional strategies for delivering relief and hand-outs and conventional ways of thinking and dealing with a crisis situation. Why? Because such disasters bring on problems that are just too huge, too urgent, too diverse and too wide-scale for any of these conventional systems to handle. So the best idea is to find ways to support the affected people to deal with all these diverse problems themselves, as much as possible. That in turn creates a big opportunity for reorganizing, for redeveloping and for solving whatever deeper, structural problems existed in those places even before the disaster happened. And indeed a major disaster like the tsunami ended up creating enormous opportunities for organizing vulnerable coastal communities in Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia and Burma, and helping them to become the main actors in rebuilding their communities, securing their land, developing other aspects of their lives and bringing about change for the better in a very big way.

The tsunami was a watershed for all of us, because it confirmed that the world we live in has changed, and that even the very poorest people affected by disasters need no longer be looked at as *helpless beneficiaries*, but can stand and take the lead in managing their own rehabilitation process. This truth has been born out again and again since then: in the terrible floods in Thailand in 2006 and 2008, in Cyclone Nargis in Burma in 2008, in the volcano eruptions in Mount Mayon in the Philippines in 2006 and Mount Merapi in Indonesia in 2010, in Typhoon Ketsana in the Philippines in 2009 and Typhoon Mirinae in Vietnam in 2009, in the floods in Pakistan in 2010 and 2011 and in all sorts of other storms, floods, earthquakes, fires and landslides. In all these calamities, the role of horizontal relief and rehabilitation, which has been directed and managed by community coalitions and networks of disaster-affected people themselves, has proved to be a vital, efficient, fast, flexible and effective supplement to formal relief and reconstruction efforts. And as with the tsunami, when the affected people have taken a key role in the reconstruction of their damaged houses and villages and the rehabilitation of their livelihoods, these disasters have become opportunities for longer-term development gains for some of Asia's poorest and most vulnerable communities.

Tee and Nad, the two young Thai architects who are helping to coordinate ACHR's regional support for community architects, have themselves been involved in supporting communities in several post-disaster reconstruction projects (especially in Thailand) in which communities were the main actors in their own rehabilitation process. Since the flood crisis in Thailand began, they have been linking up with other architects and groups who are supporting flood-affected communities in different ways, and they realized that there are a lot of interesting stories and projects going on out there which nobody knows about - especially the stories about how communities themselves deal with the affects of disasters and how they rehabilitate their lives and communities after disasters. So they've decided to start gathering stories to build a regional archive of new ideas and new possibilities, to publish on the website, in blogs and in printed publications. They'd like to start by asking groups around Asia to please send their stories to ACHR.



**100% Rebuilt by people:** *These photos show an area in Banda Aceh where the December 2004 tsunami completely wiped away 25 coastal fishing villages and 70% of their inhabitants. The government forbade them to go back and tried to force them into relocation colonies miles away. But the survivors decided to go back, and with support from UPC and Misereor, they got together, formed the Udeep Beusaree Network and completely rebuilt their houses and communities, with secure tenure, "eco" barriers and houses designed and built to withstand future earthquakes and tidal surges. The upper photo was taken in May 2005, 5 months after the tsunami, and the lower one is from June 2008, after the project was finished.*



**For more information on the floods, please contact ACHR and check out the following links:**

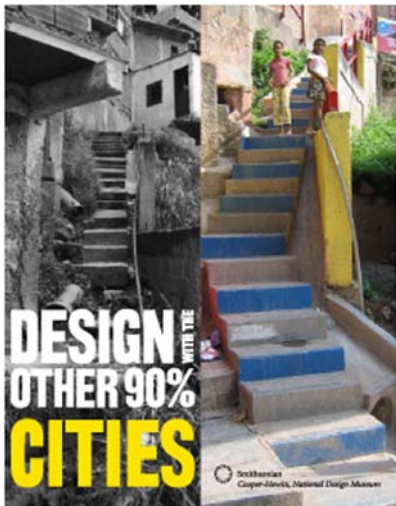
- **Understanding floods - Two short films :**  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAKF1zXEIQY&feature=related>  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LY7a880lbek&feature=related>
- **Design for disaster:** [http://www.designfordisasters.org/00000000\\_ENG\\_003\\_projects.html](http://www.designfordisasters.org/00000000_ENG_003_projects.html)
- **A special blog on the Thai floods which has been set up on the IIED website :**  
<http://www.iied.org/blogs/thailands-floods-complex-political-and-geographical-factors-behind-crisis>

## BANG BUA CANAL UPGRADING GOES to NEW YORK

Many of you may have visited and become familiar with the community upgrading project being carried out by a network of 13 informal settlements along the Bang Bua Canal in central Bangkok. In this marvelous project (which is still underway), some 1,300 poor families are transforming their bedraggled and vulnerable squatter settlements into beautiful neighborhoods with airy 2-story concrete row-houses, flower-boxes, playgrounds, libraries, elderly hostels, canal-side walkways, full municipal services and long-term secure land tenure. Bang Bua is one of the most-visited and most learned-from upgrading projects in a city full of amazing slum upgrading projects - all being designed and implemented by communities themselves, with support from CODI's Baan Mankong Community Upgrading Program (which provides infrastructure development subsidies, soft housing loans and technical support to the projects, all using Thai Government funds).



Through site visits, exchanges, documentary films and publications, the Bang Bua upgrading project has become one of Asia's important "learning centers" for a community-planned and community managed shelter process, in which some of the city's poorest and most marginalized people organize themselves, negotiate secure tenure and then plan and construct their own new housing - and by doing so reclaim their rights as legitimate citizens. The project has inspired squatter communities in cities all over the region to negotiate similar long-term tenure arrangements and to carry out similar housing and settlement upgrading projects.



The Bang Bua story is now reaching a big new audience that is outside our usual orbit, as one of the featured projects in a large exhibition being put on by the Smithsonian Institute's Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York City. The exhibition is called "Design with the Other 90%: CITIES" and it opened in early November, in the main gallery of the United Nations headquarters in New York, where the exhibition will stay until January, when it will move into the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York, and then eventually tour around the USA. It may seem a little strange that a museum that is housed in a palatial mansion in New York City and is devoted to product design, with fabulous collections of furniture, wallpaper, tableware, lighting fixtures, ceramics and costumes of the wealthy, should be putting a slum upgrading project on display. But the idea behind this unusual exhibition, which is the second in a series, is that "the majority of the world's designers focus all their efforts on developing products and services exclusively for the richest 10% of the world's customers. Nothing less than a revolution in design is needed to reach the other 90%."

The first exhibition in the series in 2007, "Design for the Other 90%", included 34 innovative objects that were designed by professionals to serve that other 90%, such as a drinking filter straw that prevents the spread of cholera, a donut-shaped plastic container for transporting water that can be easily rolled long distances by children and a bamboo treadle pump that helps poor farmers extract groundwater during the dry season. "Design with the Other 90%: CITIES," the second exhibition in the series, looks at cities as a whole rather than objects, and includes projects which provide design solutions to a variety of city-scale problems in poor countries - problems like slum upgrading, housing design, education, entrepreneurship, ecology, basic services, communications and cooking. This time around, the exhibition also includes solutions that were not designed by "designers" at all, but by poor communities themselves. The exhibition's adventuresome curator, Cynthia Smith, spent two years traveling around the world meeting people, visiting the projects and gathering the stories that are now in the exhibition (which also includes the Payatas Scavengers Association's savings scheme and their eco-relocation housing project in Montalban, in the Philippines).

As part of "Design with the Other 90%: CITIES," the museum is making all the information it has gathered in the field accessible through an online open-network database, with websites, blogs and an ongoing education program. An international forum in December 2011 will bring together many of the community people and support organizations behind many of the projects on display, and a team from the Klong Bang Bua communities, CODI and ACHR will be traveling to New York for that event. In the exhibition catalogue (pictured above), there is an essay written by Somsook entitled "Trusting that people can do it" and an interview with Sheela Patel and Jockin Arputham about the work of SDI. *Please follow the links below for more info on the exhibition :*

- [www.cooperhewitt.org/exhibitions/other-90](http://www.cooperhewitt.org/exhibitions/other-90)
- <http://designother90.org/cities/home>
- **Link to an October 21 article in the New York Times, "Rescued by Design,"** about the exhibition, with focus on Bang Bua: [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/arts/design/for-some-of-the-worlds-poor-hope-comes-via-design.html?pagewanted=1&\\_r=1&smid=fb-share](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/23/arts/design/for-some-of-the-worlds-poor-hope-comes-via-design.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&smid=fb-share)
- **For copies of Somsook's essay and Sheela's interview in the exhibition catalogue, or for a copy of the New York Times article** (if the link above doesn't work), please contact ACHR.

## UPDATE on the TOHOKU EARTHQUAKE & TSUNAMI in JAPAN

It has now been almost eight months since a powerful earthquake off the coast of Japan churned up a devastating tsunami that swept over cities, towns and farmland in the country's northeastern Tohoku region with waves up to 10m high, on March 11, 2011. Some 20,000 people lost their lives and more than 200,000 are still living in temporary shelters. Many may never be able to go home, since their towns and farmlands have been contaminated by radiation from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, which was also damaged by the earthquake and tsunami, creating the world's worst nuclear emergency since Chernobyl. Our friends Hosaka and Seiji in Japan have been involved in relief efforts from the very beginning, visiting affected communities, contacting local architects, helping arrange temporary housing in other cities for evacuees and establishing a special women's support network in Tohoku. They are now using some support from ACCA and Misereor (along with funds they have raised locally) to start implementing some pilot housing and village rehabilitation pilots which demonstrate a more inclusive, more people-centered reconstruction process in this extremely difficult "triple disaster" situation. Here are some notes from Hosaka on their recent work : For more information, please contact Hosaka at: [hosaka.m@k6.dion.ne.jp](mailto:hosaka.m@k6.dion.ne.jp)



**Community Architects for Shelter and Environment (CASE-Japan)** is a group of community planners and architects which was founded in 1999 and has been actively involved with ACHR. CASE's chief planner is Seiji Terakawa, who suffered from the great earthquake in Kobe in 1995 and has since been involved in several Buraku community improvement projects in Osaka, where CASE has its office. **Mitsuhiko Hosaka**, who is an old ACHR friend and member of the ACHR-Japan group (he teaches at the Nihon Fukushi University) is helping to coordinate the work and communicate with ACHR and donors.

The government began very early on to construct temporary housing wherever possible, but it will take at least a year to accommodate most of the families in need. The experience from the Kobe earthquake in 1995 showed that the top-down allocation of temporary houses and then shifting of the occupants later to permanent public housing led to the destruction of communities, and many people (particularly the elderly) suffered and died in isolation. In this new disaster, a considerable number of people will have to leave their native areas and resettle in other parts of the country - either temporarily or permanently. Even so, in some affected areas, it may still be possible to sustain a social space for community interaction for people-led reconstruction processes.

- **Advocating for a participatory and incremental housing rehabilitation process** : Besides raising funds and collecting and distributing relief materials, the team started to get involved in policy advocacy early on, to create a community space throughout all the stages, from evacuation camps to temporary housing and eventually to permanent housing. The concept of a community space in every temporary housing area has been partly accepted by the two key provincial governments, but institutionalizing the concepts of incremental and participatory temporary housing has been more difficult.
- **Showing a model of participatory housing reconstruction in Ohtsuchi Town** : During their site visits, Seiji and Hosaka felt it was important to develop a model building which would provide space for community interaction in the temporary housing areas. The model could be combined with incremental housing. They identified Ohtsuchi town, a badly devastated remote fishing town in Iwate Prefecture as the site, and have been collaborating with an NGO there. They helped one acupuncturist there to rebuild her clinic and house, as an example of incremental housing reconstruction, which starts with a temporary structure which can be moved to a permanent site later. The NGO is going to finance a major part of the construction cost, and ACCA will help. The construction started in October 2011, with local people and volunteers pitching in to help.
- **Setting up a community loan fund in Ohtsuchi Town** : A few local organizations in Ohtsuchi would like to promote income-generation and settlement development on a self-help basis, and the CASE team has discussed the possibility of establishing a community fund to be managed by local groups, with funding from various sources, including local citizens. The fund will be used to construct more skeleton structures on request from individuals, for incremental housing or community care facilities on a hire-purchase basis, or retail shops on a rental basis. The fund will also help create work-share job opportunities, and organize training sessions and field visits for community managers. More participatory reconstruction processes will thus evolve.
- **Organizing exchange visits**. Early on, Hosaka began trying to communicate to the affected people some lessons from the 2004 tsunami and to organize some regional exchange visits, but he found that the people were overloaded by so many outside groups bringing new ideas. Now, though, most of the affected people have settled into their temporary accommodations and have more capacity to absorb disaster management experiences from countries that they have never seen. Both local and regional sharing could now be organized, with proper identification of participants.



## WORKSHOP in PENANG on THE POOR IN HISTORIC CITIES

Imagine you fell asleep reading a Joseph Conrad novel, and then dreamed you were traveling in the tropics, on a tramp steamer, and had disembarked at an old colonial port city. As you made your way through narrow streets lined with Chinese-style shop houses, you passed vendors selling bowls of steaming noodles, pedicab drivers cat-napping in the seats of their spangled pedicabs and old men cursing each other across the mah-jongg board out in the arcaded galleries. Don't pinch yourself - that marvelous old city actually exists, and it's called George Town, on Malaysia's island state of Penang. While most old Asian cities have long since gone under the wrecking ball and been replaced by freeways, shopping malls and generic tower blocks, a combination of shifting economic fortunes, dusty old laws and sheer historic accident have somehow miraculously preserved almost the entire center of this wonderful old city. And George Town is not only a physical relic, but a living, breathing melting pot of the many peoples and cultures that have made the city and continue to give it its vivid life: Chinese, Indian, Malay, Acehnese, Burmese, Siamese, Tamil, Sri Lankan and even German populations - all with their own neighborhoods, languages, foods, religious places and coffee houses.

But ironically, just when everybody realized what a treasure they had and began taking steps to protect it, George Town faced the greatest threat of its two-centuries of history. Within a few years, the rent control act was abolished, the city was declared a "World Heritage Site" and the laws allowing foreigners to buy land in Malaysia were relaxed. The combination of these three factors proved to be lethal. In a city where 85% of the population are tenants, rents skyrocketed, people started being evicted left and right, and old shop-houses and even temples started being snapped up by investors and converted into art galleries and boutique hotels. The real George Town was in serious peril of being very quickly replaced by a fake Disneyland version of George Town.

But there are many people in George Town who care passionately about what is happening to their city, and have been struggling to find another way, where the people who actually live and work in the city are taken as an important part of heritage also, along with the material heritage of the 5,000 old buildings. In the past six months, three of these groups (Think City, Penang Heritage Trust and Arts Ed) have linked together, and with support from the regional network of community architects they have launched a small pilot project in which a group of low-income tenants are working together to upgrade the dilapidated (but historic) shop houses they have rented for generations, on Armenian Street. This project is a very rare collaboration between the tenants and the Chinese temple which owns the houses. With joint funding from Think City and ACCA, they've set up a revolving loan fund to finance the house repairs, and a group of the tenants and landowners have even traveled together to visit and learn about other community-driven upgrading projects in Bangkok. The project is just getting started, but the process has already expanded to five other communities of vulnerable tenants and market vendors in George Town, who are now exploring their own alternative strategies for staying put.



In September 2011, the case of George Town was the focal point of a 3-day regional workshop on the issue of historic cities and how to preserve them in ways which also preserve the people who live in them and the particular cultures which shaped them. The workshop was jointly organized by ACHR, the regional community architects network and these key groups in Penang - Think City, Penang Heritage Trust and Arts Ed. The workshop was held in the beautiful 19th Century Confucianist temple of the Cheah Kongsu, in Armenian Street, and brought together about 40 architects, activists, community leaders and government officers from 16 countries, as well as another 40 from Penang. There were presentations about old city-preservation initiatives in Ahmedabad (India), Kawagoe (Japan), Karachi (Pakistan), Lampang (Thailand), Kathmandu (Nepal), Istanbul (Turkey) and Hoi An (Vietnam), as well as very lively stories from community members who live in the six pilot communities in George Town. But the common thread that linked all these stories was the search for ways by which the people who actually live in these cities - their "living" heritage - can be included in the preservation process, instead of being evicted. As one workshop participant put it:

**"Heritage should be a very happy, positive issue. But if the relationship between the poor and rich in a historic city isn't balanced, preservation can bring about the same kind of evictions we see happening in cities all over Asia, but for other reasons: for development, for infrastructure, for speculation. So the question for us in this workshop is how the poor can be part of a city development and cultural and architectural preservation process that is INCLUSIVE, not exclusive."**

*The stories and projects presented in the Penang workshop (plus several others!) are now being collected and edited and will be published in a special issue of the ACHR Newsletter, "Housing by People in Asia" in December 2011. For more information about the workshop, please contact Tee or Nad (who coordinate ACHR's community architects support in the region) at ACHR.*

## UPDATE on the WORK of ASIA'S BUSY COMMUNITY ARCHITECTS

The past few months have been busy ones for Asia's fast-growing network of community architects. So far, some 99 big housing projects around Asia have been approved for support from ACCA, and many of these projects are now well underway and being supported by groups of community architects. This large number of ACCA housing projects is creating a great big new space where Asia's people-driven housing movement and a new kind of design support system are growing together, pioneering all sorts of innovations and showing new light. In some 16 countries now, groups of architects are working with poor communities and exploring new techniques for getting people to survey and map their settlements and design their own community layouts, upgrading projects and housing models. When professionals stop being the ones who design everything for passive "beneficiaries" and begin playing a more delicate role of helping translate people's own ideas for transforming their houses and communities into drawings and models which the larger society can understand, then the design process becomes a kind of empowerment, an unlocking of energy and enthusiasm in the communities. Here are some notes on some recent work of the community architects:

**PHILIPPINES : Building bamboo bridge in Davao (May-June, 2011)** The design and construction of the beautiful 23-meter bamboo bridge, which now links the three Matina Crossing communities with the main land, in Davao, has been one of the most exciting collaborations between the communities who built it (in just 2 months!), and the community architects from the Philippines and Indonesia who helped them design it. The project was supported by a small project ACCA loan from the HFPF's city fund. But just when the bridge was finished and the mayor was scheduled to come inaugurate it, Davao was hit with torrential rains and flash floods on 28 June. The bridge survived the flooding and helped hundreds of Matina Crossing community members to escape to safety, but the communities were very badly damaged and many houses were destroyed. Now the focus is moving to rehabilitation of the flood-affected communities, who are now planning to rebuild their damaged houses using more flood-resistant stilt and bamboo technologies, with ACCA support. The success of the bamboo bridge has given the people new courage and energy to stay where they are, despite the government's efforts to evict them.



**BANGLADESH : Housing workshop in Gopalganj, Bangladesh (June 2011)** This 10-day workshop was organized by a few of the region's key community architects to help a 350-household community plan the layout and houses of their new community - an important pilot community-driven housing project which will be partly supported by an ACCA big project grant of \$40,000. The architects (including May, Cakcak, Nad, Tee and some other community architects from Sri Lanka and Thailand) went there with Jaya, who has been supporting the Bangladesh PUPR process as a consultant, and linked with a group of young local architects in Bangladesh, who joined the workshop.



**INDONESIA : Arkom Jogja's work :** Yuli and Cakcak and their team of architects in Yogyakarta continue to work with a network of 11 villages that were badly affected by the November 2010 eruption of the Mount Merapi volcano, outside Yogyakarta. The villagers are philosophical about the eruption, and see it as something natural, which they have always lived with. For them, the real disaster is the government's relocation policy, in which farmers who had 3-4 hectares of land before the eruption are being forced to relocate to sites where they get only 100 square meters of land and US\$3,500 to build a little house. Some of the villagers have gone back and are trying to rehabilitate their villages, in defiance of the government's relocation plans. Yuli's group is supporting them by helping build temporary houses, set up women's savings groups, map the settlements, replant bamboo and hardwood forests, and use some small project funds from ACCA to rehabilitate a water supply systems, repair drains, roads and evacuation bridges. Arkom has also been providing technical assistance to some of the UPC's ACCA housing and upgrading projects in Surabaya, Makassar, Kendari and Jakarta, and continuing to explore with communities the technical possibilities of bamboo as a cheap, strong and local building material.



**FIJI : Community mapping and upgrading planning in 3 cities.** Hugo spent some time supporting three young architects in Fiji, to work with the People's Community Network (PCN) to do settlement and city-wide slum mapping (using Google maps, making "jumbo" maps, with houses, looking at history and



physical problems and land ownership in each settlement) and upgrading planning in Lautoka (the big city in the west of Fiji) and other cities - where 30% of the country's population lives in informal settlements. The important thing was to actually get started doing something, so besides the mapping, some communities started projects to address their problems - particularly drainage problems. And they decided together on which ACCA small projects should go first. So they borrowed the mechanical digger from the municipal council and started digging drainage canals.

**CAMBODIA : Community architects group supports projects around the country.** The network of community architects in Cambodia is very active these days in supporting at least 9 big housing projects and 140 small upgrading projects being undertaken by communities around the country, with support from ACCA and UPDF. Their work includes working with UPDF staff and local communities to do city-wide surveys and city-wide mapping, helping communities design and implement small projects and big housing projects with design workshops and ongoing technical support, helping to prepare presentation drawings and models as negotiating tools to present to local governments, helping communities to design low-cost housing models and estimate costs, helping develop and manufacture low-cost building materials (both soil and cement blocks) and linking with local universities to get students and professors involved in local community projects.



## COMMUNITY ARCHITECTS NETWORK (CAN) SETS REGIONAL PLANS

For two days before the ACCA meeting and Heritage Workshop in Penang, in September 2011, a group of 30 community architects from around the region gathered in Penang to tell each other about their recent projects, to discuss the direction of their work and their movement in Asia, and to set some plans for their network (which they call Community Architects Network - CAN) in the coming two years. Several ideas were discussed at this meeting :

- **Decentralizing the coordination process.** So far, it has mostly been Nad and Tee who run around and organize everything, but now the work is growing too big for these two to manage alone. So in order to spread out this coordination work and get more people involved, they've decided to divide themselves into sub-regions, and each country will select two coordinators to work within their sub-region. And each sub-region will select one coordinator to work in the region. The 4 coordinators from the 4 sub-regions will work closely with Nad and Tee to support community architects activities around the region. Their plan is to try this system for six months and see how it works.
- **Set up 6 task forces :** They also set up six task forces to do the following things: 1) Prepare regular e-news bulletins with news about community architects activities in the region, 2) Develop a special community architects website and "open space" with news and stories, 3) Develop handbooks and publications, 4) Develop films and media materials on the community architects work, 5) Organize training workshops to build architects capacities on various issues and 6) Develop a platform for academics and universities to bring community upgrading into the curriculum.
- **New funding support for Community Architects activities in the region :** In late September, we got the good news that ACHR's proposal to the Rockefeller Foundation has been approved. The US\$ 574,000 budget will be for 2 years and will provide support for : activities of community architects in the region (\$260,000), knowledge and information dissemination (\$60,000), community media and film activities (\$90,000) and regional coordination, policy dialogue and sustainability fund-raising (\$164,000).



### Upcoming regional Community Architects Network (CAN) workshops and activities:

- City-wide upgrading workshop in Kep City, Cambodia, for 40 community architects, November 9-12
- Workshop on community-driven disaster rehabilitation, in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, December 19 -23, 2011
- Workshop jointly organized with Global Studio, in Bhopal, India, January 7-24, 2012
- Young Professional workshop in Vietnam, March 2012
- Preparing a handbook on comprehensive site-planning (Nov-Dec. 2011)
- Compiling a special issue of the ACHR Newsletter "Housing by People in Asia" on the heritage issue (Nov-Dec 2011).
- Start working on new CAN website.

For more information about the CAN Network and their work, please contact Nad and Tee at ACHR or follow these links :

**Facebook page:** <http://www.facebook.com/pages/ACHR-Community-Architects-Network/102598863125935>

**Email Google group:** [communityarchnetwork@gmail.com](mailto:communityarchnetwork@gmail.com)

You can subscribe to join this email group by this website:

<http://groups.google.com/group/communityarchnetwork/sub?s=B234QxQAAABpHdMO2dN9aNbHWBzH06MZEpc1c1MG5Q0ZrkVFA2IN9A&hl=en>



## ACCA PROGRAM UPDATE : FIGURES, MEETINGS, PLANS

It's hard to believe, but the Asian Coalition for Community Action Program (ACCA) is now coming to the end of its third year of implementation. The most recent ACCA committee meeting was held in Penang, September 17-18, 2011, just before the 3-day regional workshop on the poor in historic cities, with a focus on the tenants in the World Heritage Site city of George Town (*described in the e-news story above*). During the two-day meeting, a total budget of US\$1,249,460 was approved, to support new projects in 13 new cities and 16 ongoing cities in 13 Asian countries (including 23 Big projects, 1 loan from the ACCA Regional Revolving Loan Fund and 70 small upgrading projects). Besides discussion about these new proposed projects, there were reports on the ACCA Program's performance so far, and reports on ACCA-related activities with community architects, links with other organizations, activities and plans for upcoming events.



### ACCA PROGRAM UPDATE : *(Cumulative figures, as of October 1, 2011, after the Penang meeting)*

- **ACCA activities approved in 145 cities / towns / districts**, in 19 countries.
- **99 big housing projects approved** (Total big project budget approved: US\$ 3,726,570 - which includes 6 projects from the new ACCA regional revolving loan fund)
- **709 small upgrading projects approved** (Total small project budget approved US\$ 1,869,500)
- **21 Community-driven disaster rehabilitation projects approved in 6 countries** : Cambodia (1 project), Burma (3 projects), Philippines (8 projects), Vietnam (3 projects), Pakistan (1 project), Indonesia (2 projects), Japan (1 project), Sri Lanka (1 project). (Total disaster budget approved: US\$ 388,490)

### UPCOMING ACCA and ACHR EVENTS in 2011 - 2012

- **December 2011**: Next ACCA committee meeting (possible venue Bangkok, with regional ACCA documentation gathering)
- **January 2012**: Regional workshop on community-driven disaster rehabilitation, in Yogyakarta
- **January 2012**: Coalition of the Urban Poor Asia (CUPA) regional forum in January 2012 (Possible venue: Philippines?)
- **February 2012**: ACCA committee meeting in Lao PDR (together with the Lao Women's Savings Network national meeting)
- **March 2012**: Community video workshop, in Bangkok.
- **April 2012**: Regional meeting of Community Architects, in Indonesia.

A detailed report on this meeting has been prepared and can be downloaded from the ACHR website. [www.achr.net](http://www.achr.net)

### FIRST REPAYMENT to the ACCA REGIONAL FUND from HPFP in the PHILIPPINES

During the Penang meeting, Ruby Papeleras, who is one of the national leaders of the Philippines Homeless People's Federation, made the first 6-monthly repayment (in cash!) on the federation's loan from the ACCA Regional Loan Fund, which is supporting the roofing component in their large, ongoing on-site housing project at the LTHAI community in Mandaue. The amount due, according to the repayment schedule in Pesos, was 48,546 Pesos, which Ruby translated into US dollars (at the current exchange rate), which comes to \$1,116. This cash was handed to the ACHR secretariat with great applause! This \$400,000 in this ACCA regional loan fund is like an experiment, to see how finance can cross borders, in local currency, to support community initiatives in different ways, to see where the problems are, and then to scale the fund up in the next phase of ACCA.



#### ACCA Regional Fund loans so far (total 6 loans) :

- Mandaue, Philippines: \$10,000 loan to support the roofing in the first stage of the HPFP's ongoing housing project at LTHAI.
- Mandaue, Philippines: \$36,000 loan to support the roofing in the second stage of the HPFP's housing project at LTHAI.
- Khemara Phouminh, Cambodia: \$50,000 to support housing loans in 10 settlements, as part of land tenure negotiations.
- Biratnagar, Nepal: \$12,500 to support housing loans to 11 families in the Jute Mills community.
- Batticaloa, Sri Lanka: \$20,000 to support housing improvement loans in flood-affected communities around the city.
- CLAF-Net Fund, Sri Lanka; \$50,000 to support housing loans to scattered Women's Bank members in 3 cities.