

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2008

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HELPING the POOR in KARACHI'S TRADITIONAL "GOTHS" STAY PUT :

The Orangi Pilot Project - Research and Training Institute's Low Cost Sanitation Program, which helps communities to build their own toilets and lay underground sewers in their settlements (using people's own funds and technical support from OPP-RTI, while government is also mobilized and supported to build trunk sewers), began in Karachi in 1981 and has now expanded to 17 cities and towns around Pakistan, as well as many villages in Sindh and Punjab provinces. The OPP-RTI also runs programs in housing, education and earthquake rehabilitation - all based on a similar model in which communities do the work themselves and the OPP-RTI provides research and technical support. Perween Rahman, who directs the OPP-RTI, wrote in recently with news about two new OPP-RTI initiatives in Karachi that are evolving into programs :

1. WATER SUPPLY PLAN FOR KARACHI : A master sewerage and drainage plan for the city of Karachi, which was developed by the OPP's Research and Training Institute (OPP-RTI), has been adopted by the city government and is being implemented now. Building on this success, the OPP-RTI is now developing a new program of research and advocacy with the goal of facilitating better access to piped water for the poor, in a city with a notoriously inefficient and problem-ridden water supply system. Community organizations and government engineers are key partners in this new process, which involves research into the city's existing water supply problems and systems, public forums (organized by the URC) to make public the findings and open up the issue of access to water, media coverage of the issue, and the development of alternative plans to reduce water pilfering and to resolve a variety of problems which are preventing water from making its way through the existing systems to the taps in poor communities. Poor communities are often accused of stealing water and causing leakages in the city's system, but the OPP-RTI's research has shown clearly that the real culprits are not the poor but well-organized, well financed groups working in league with the police, the military and politicians to siphon off from the city's bulk supply mains and re-sell some 272 million gallons of water every day (nearly 41% of the water supplied!), generating some 49.6 billion Rupees annually (which is about nine times the annual budget of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board).



2. SUPPORT TO FORMER RURAL VILLAGES WITHIN THE KARACHI METRO AREA : There are about 1,800 traditional villages within the Karachi metropolitan area, most of them in the peripheral areas of Gadap, Bin Qasim and Kaemari. These old settlements, which used to be rural farming villages, are now being swallowed up in the fast-expanding city. They are known as *goths* and are occupied mostly by poor, indigenous people, with only traditional forms of "*sanad*" land use rights and no title deeds to the land they've occupied for generations. With land values skyrocketing in Karachi and urban development and land speculation expanding rapidly into these peripheral areas, the *goths* are increasingly being targeted for eviction by the city government. The OPP-RTI's efforts to support these communities to safeguard their settlements has, like so much of its work, begun by working with local communities, activists and supportive government officials to research the existing tenure situation, land supply systems and people's mechanisms to resist evictions in Karachi's *goths*, and to survey and map these settlements. Armed with this information, the next step, already underway, is meetings with community activists, area organizations, political activists and officials from the various government departments related to land use, tenure and development in the *goths*, and using the process of working together and forums to build a new Secure Housing Support Group to deal with the tenure issue and resist the growing threat of eviction in a stronger, more unified and better-informed way. As part of the process, the OPP-RTI is also helping these villages to plan and undertake infrastructure improvements. For more information on these two new programs, please contact Perween Rahman at OPP-RTI, e-mail : opperti@cyber.net.pk

"OWNER-DRIVEN" DISASTER REHABILITATION in INDIA :

After the terrible 2001 earthquake in Bhuj (in the western Indian state of Gujarat), a local NGO called Abhiyan was successful in getting the government to agree to an "owner-driven" reconstruction strategy, in which the entire reconstruction was in the hands of the people themselves, and the government money was given directly to people, in installments, with a lot of support mechanisms for them to be able to build on their own. Here is an update from Sandeep Virmani on Abhiyan's ongoing efforts to nationalize this strategy into a government policy :

After the earthquake in Bhuj, Abhiyan was involved with helping develop all the support mechanisms so that people could actually rebuild their houses properly, with earthquake-proof techniques. It was a very successful disaster reconstruction program, in both the urban and rural areas. More than 200,000 houses came up in just one and half years - all of them built by people - and the safety levels in these new houses were very high. And the diversity of construction that finally emerged, in both design and materials, was possible only because people were deciding on their own. Governments and civil society institutions have tried different reconstruction approaches in post disaster situations, ranging from contractor-driven to agency-driven to owner-driven, with varying levels of community and "owner" participation. There is growing acknowledgement of the effectiveness and efficiency of owner-driven strategies, and evidence is piling up that shows that people in disaster-affected communities are almost always happier with the results when they plan and implement the rebuilding of their houses and communities themselves.



When the tsunami hit southern India in 2004, we tried to revive the same strategy there - for governments as well as for bilateral agencies and NGOs. But despite all the good results from this progressive "owner-driven" strategy in Gujarat, the government adopted a completely "NGO contractor-driven" strategy, in which NGOs actually played the part of building contractors. And this was worse than contractor-driven because these NGOs splurged money, and they made houses that were horrible and that contractors could have built for half the price.



We have been discussing this issue a great deal within India and also with bilateral agencies, and as part of this discussion, we organized a regional workshop on community-driven disaster reconstruction in Gujarat in August 2008, with support from ACHR. We felt that over the last four or five years, there has been a lot of experience in other parts of Asia on different ways of involving affected people in disaster reconstruction, and a lot of very interesting learning has come out of these experiences. So we had the idea to get eight or ten countries together and share these experiences. We organized the workshop in Bhuj so that the visitors could go and see the communities that have been rebuilt and talk to the residents who did all the work and find out what the community people have to say seven years after this major disaster.

We organized this workshop in collaboration with India's National Disaster Management Authority because we felt that as a national government agency, it is their responsibility to guide the state

governments and give them different packages. They were very keen on the idea that the national government should have a policy framework - with funds and a support mechanism - for the states, which promotes a community-driven approach. They invited officials from four of the states where major disasters have happened in the past five years. There were about 50 people in total at the workshop - we didn't want to make it too big so the discussions could happen properly. And the level of discussion was very good. The report from this workshop will be coming out soon.

We have now set up a committee to steer this process in India and are now working to prepare a document that enunciates very clearly what community-driven approaches are and how they should be adopted. The idea will be for the national government to then convert that document into a national policy framework, or at least a tool book, with finances and the help of an experienced "disaster resource group." A national conference on owner-driven reconstruction will follow soon. (For more information, contact Sandeep Virmani at Abhiyan by e-mail : info@kutchabhiyan.net)

SOUTH AFRICA VISITS THAILAND :

A group of eight people from South Africa made a 3 day visit to Thailand (September 17-19) to learn more about CODI's Baan Mankong community upgrading program and to exchange ideas on house construction, community layout and community-driven upgrading with the Thai communities. The team included community leaders from the Federation of the Urban Poor (FEDUP), staff from the federation's support NGO (COURC), and some people from the NGO Peer Africa, which focuses on energy and cost-efficient self-help housing and is now providing technical assistance to the federation to build four or five thousand subsidy houses a year. When the team gets back to South Africa, an important new community (non-subsidy linked) upgrading project will be launched in Witsand, a large settlement of 400 houses in the Western Cape which will become a demonstration project for affordable energy and low-cost, self-help housing construction. Several members of the visiting team came from that community.



Erin Torkelson, an enthusiastic young American who has been working with the SDI secretariat in Cape Town, came along on the exchange and had this reaction: "There have been such a lot of questions flying back and forth, between members of our team and the communities and CODI staff - questions about upgrading, about tenure terms, about building costs, about construction practices. There has also been such a lot of warmth and encouragement. This is the kind of intense sharing I've always thought must happen on an ideal exchange visit." And after the group went home, Mothusi Guy, the head of Peer Africa, wrote a detailed report on the group's reactions to what they saw in Thailand, which included the following bits :

First time in Thailand : All of the team really felt honored and connected to the people and the communities we visited. There was an unspoken feeling and understanding of what the leaders and community members we met had endured. We are indeed brothers and sisters. It is evident that the Thais have a very special and rich social cultural and religious framework from which generosity and determination flows. This generosity was felt and very much appreciated by each and everyone on the team. We can see that there are many factors that have led to, and will continue to underpin the success of the Thai upgrading process. Everyone has taken ownership of the savings culture - *it's personal*.

Use of models : We were fascinated by the creative use of scale models and props which helped the communities to visualize the challenges of site planning when you move a community from an informal set up to a more formal site layout. Patrick and Thami took lots of photos of these models and will use them to improve our design workshops back home.

Houses, infrastructure, building standards : We found the quality and feeling of the houses excellent. The infrastructure and foundation details were quite interesting and very sophisticated. The houses were far bigger and more expensive than the South Africa government standard, and they actually felt like a home. We could feel the sense of pride in the home owners when they gave us tours. We fully agree with the communities that generic government building standards may create more space for walkways but they leave families in crowded communities with an unacceptable amount of living space. We understand these dynamics and applaud the communities for sticking to their guns and not compromising.



Use of Energy. The Thai communities seem to use a lot of domestic energy for cooling, refrigeration, water heating and lighting. Perhaps there is an opportunity there for solar water heating systems. But we noticed that most of the windows are designed for easy opening and ventilation, while keeping the blowing rain from coming into the room.



Self-help spirit versus the sense of entitlement : The South African subsidy model is like a double-edged sword: poor people get basic services and some support for minimal housing, but they become dependent on government handouts and measure the success or failure on what the government does or doesn't do for them, not on what they do for themselves. Government should be an enabler and not the sole source of community development. The Thai model, on the other hand, seems to start with small community groups that develop a vision, complete their projects themselves, with government support, reversing the entitlement mentality and building their networks one group at a time.

(For more information, contact Joel at SDI : sdi@courc.co.za)

EVICTIIONS and BREAKTHROUGHS IN INDONESIA :

On 24 August 2008, a large eviction took place in North Jakarta's Tanjung Priok district. Some 6,000 poor squatters (most of them evictees from recent demolitions in other parts of the city) had been living for several years on a 26.5 hectare piece of public land, on which the Jakarta government has plans to build a sports center and public park. It took an army of 5,000 policemen, soldiers and "Public Order Officers" a single day to demolish all the houses and close all the community's wells, leaving a very large and very dazed group of people still there, but now camping out amidst the rubble of their former homes. For a city which has seen some of Asia's largest-scale and most brutal evictions in the past few years, under Jakarta's former Governor Sutiyoso, this demolition is nothing new. But what IS different about this one is that there has been a good dialogue between the community, their supporters and the city government, which now has a new mayor and a new atmosphere of openness to new ideas. Here is more from Dian and Wardah at the Urban Poor Consortium, the NGO which is part of the coalition of groups supporting this community :



A demolition with dialogue in Jakarta : At the beginning, it was the government's idea to relocate the evictees to social housing 15 kms away or send the people back to their original villages. But what is exciting is that now, different than before, the local government is willing to have a dialogue, and we have come up with an alternative solution of nearby relocation. Nobody is against the idea of developing more public parks in a city that is increasingly starved for green space, and the community people are willing to cooperate with the government's plans for the land they were living on. The people are now looking for vacant land in the

area, gathering information about those alternatives and proposing them to the government. It's now in the process and we also have also gotten the related departments in the national government involved in the process, as well as professionals like architects and city planners. So we've found that the crisis of eviction creates opportunities for building a more broad-based coalition to search for a more sustainable solution to the problems urban poor settlements and also for city planning. Hopefully, that will set a good precedent, not only for Jakarta, but nationally.

Another eviction-to-development breakthrough in Surabaya's river-side communities :

Besides Jakarta, the UPC, and the national Uplink Network it is part of, are also working with urban poor groups in 13 other Indonesian cities on organizing, advocacy and horizontal and vertical networking. There have also recently been some exciting developments in Surabaya, the country's second largest city. After a five-year struggle by the network of communities living along the city's riverbanks, they have won the city's acceptance of their proposal to upgrade their communities in situ. In 2002, these communities were about to be forcefully evicted and relocated to land far away - presumably to enable the city to improve the river's drainage capacity. But in 2007, they were able to persuade the local city council to issue a bylaw that allows them to stay and upgrade their communities in the same place. They have been given five years to do this. There has been some really good progress now, because before, these communities were not too aware of environmental issues like garbage or waste management. They are now really into it, the communities are green and they plan to manage their liquid waste using alternative, eco-friendly systems. Their work is also contributing to the city's ability to deal with flooding and making these poor riverbank communities vital allies in the process of managing the river. (for more details, contact Wardah or Dian at UPC : upc@urbanpoor.or.id)



VISITORS TO THE ACHR OFFICE in BANGKOK :

September 8 - 18. Joan MacDonald, who is now managing the grants program for the Selavip Foundation in Santiago Chile, visited Asia in September, with stops along the way to visit Selavip-supported projects in Cambodia, Indonesia (Jakarta and Yogyakarta) and the Philippines. In between stops, Joan had some time in Bangkok visiting CODI and seeing some of the community upgrading projects and discussing the possibility of Selavip's collaborating with ACHR on helping to coordinate and select funding proposals for projects within Asia. For information about the Selavip Foundation's grants, please contact Joan at : selavip@vtr.net

September 16 : Mercy Corps (Indonesia) visits CODI's Baan Mankong Community Upgrading Program : The international NGO Mercy Corps has been running a program in Jakarta's slum communities to help improve their access to water, sanitation and solid waste services. Now, with the new governor in Jakarta, the political space for alternative housing solutions is more open, and Mercy Corps has been exploring the possibility of expanding this project into a more holistic community upgrading and tenure security program. They contacted ACHR recently to ask for help learning more about strategies within Asia for land tenure and in-situ slum upgrading such as land pooling, land sharing and communal land tenure, as alternatives to eviction. On September 16, a team from Mercy Corps visited CODI and several upgrading projects in Bangkok, to gather ideas from the Baan Mankong community upgrading program. (for more information, contact Michelle Kooy at Mercy Corps Indonesia at e-mail : mkooy@id.mercycorps.org)

CAMBODIA : BOOSTING COMMUNITY SAVING in PROVINCIAL CITIES

As part of the new program to expand its work to poor communities in cities all over Cambodia, the Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF) and its new government partner, the National Committee for Population and Development (NCPD), organized the fourth in a series of regional meetings to review and boost the community savings and community fund process in Cambodia's provincial cities and districts, to expand the UPDF's support for poor community processes in these regions and build greater support from and partnership with the local government agencies. This meeting, held on September 15-16 in the town of Siem Reap, brought together national and local community savings network leaders, UPDF and NCPD staff and the provincial governors, district chiefs and representatives from the provincial levels of the Land Management Department from four northern provinces : Siem Reap, Oddor Meanchey, Kampong Thom and Preah Vihear. This is the fourth regional meeting that has been organized since March 2008. The fifth is now being planned to be held in Battambang in October, and will bring together savings group leaders and local government officials from the five provinces of Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Pailin, Pusrath and Kampong Chnang.

Another first-time seed loan from UPDF was given to the community development fund in Oddar Meanchey Province during the meeting. The loan for 20 million Riels (US\$ 5,000) will be used as lending capital for on-lending to savings groups to support community-based income generation, house improvement and small upgrading projects. These seed loans are small, but this very modest injection of external capital from UPDF goes a long way in boosting the savings and credit process in these extremely poor communities and in building their collective financial management systems.

(Contact Somsak at UPDF for more information : updf@clickmail.com)

Seed Loans from UPDF to Community Development Funds in provincial cities so far :

1. Koh Kong 20 million Riels (\$5,000)
2. Sihanoukville 20 million Riels (\$5,000)
3. Kampot 20 million Riels (\$5,000)
4. Prey Veng 20 million Riels (\$5,000)
5. Koh Kong 20 million Riels (\$5,000)
6. Oddor Meanchey 20 million Riels (\$5,000)



How communities in CAMBODIA and THAILAND negotiate practical alternatives to eviction :

The upcoming September special issue of *TRIALOG* (a scholarly journal which is published quarterly in Germany and focuses on urban development issues in the cities of the South) will be devoted to the issue of evictions and gentrification. Most of the articles in this issue will reflect on the big global economic forces which are behind the problems of gentrification and eviction of poor communities in many countries. But two articles will be included which look at the eviction problem from another angle and describe the work of poor communities in Cambodia (with support from the UPDF) and Thailand (with support from CODI) to develop and scale up a variety of practical, negotiated alternatives to eviction, in which poor communities themselves are at the center of the process. For more information, visit the *Trialog* website (www.tu-darmstadt.de/fb/arch/trialog/) or contact ACHR.

WHO'S DOING WHAT FOR WORLD HABITAT DAY ?

A long time back, the United Nations declared the first Monday in October every year as World Habitat Day, to "reflect on the state of human settlements and the basic right to adequate shelter for all and to remind the world of its collective responsibility for the future of the human habitat." Some groups in Asia have found it strategic to use this annual occasion to showcase certain projects or concepts or processes and have used the UN spotlight to play a little politics around the work they are doing on issues of housing and land tenure. Others pay no attention at all. We decided to ask around the ACHR network and see what some of the region's most committed groups working on issues of habitat for the urban poor are doing for this year's World Habitat Day :

NEPAL : (*Lajana, from the Kathmandu-based NGO Lumanti writes*) Because the Hindu festival of Dashain falls on October 6th, we've pre-poned our celebrations of World Habitat Day. On September 29th, the Department for Urban Development and Building Construction will hold a formal event, to be inaugurated by the new minister for Physical Planning and Works, and Lumanti will have a stall to display our work in their exhibition. On October 1 morning, Lumanti will organize a media tour to bring journalists and officials to visit community upgrading projects in two slum communities, and have arranged for a popular local radio station to conduct an interview program with representatives from the slum federation and government to discuss housing and slum upgrading issues. In the afternoon, Lumanti will organize a discussion session on "What does harmonious city mean to us?" with the Slum

Upgrading Forum, a loose network of community and federation leaders, local government officials, NGOs, donors and representative from UN agencies and other civil society organizations.

THAILAND : In Thailand, CODI will continue its tradition of making maximum use of World Habitat Day to bring the spotlight onto what the country's resourceful poor communities are doing, especially under CODI's national "Baan Mankong" Community Upgrading Program. This year, they're planning a month-long event, with extensive and overlapping caravans of exchange visits between cities in the various regions, to showcase Baan Mankong community upgrading projects, with lots of ministerial and mayoral visits, ground breaking and column-raising ceremonies, project inaugurations, ribbon-cuttings and seminars along the way.



MONGOLIA : (*Enhe from the Urban Development Resource Center in Ulaanbataar writes*) We haven't planned a big event, but some of the communities have plans to organize small social events which focus on World Habitat Day. Since winter is coming and air pollution from fuel-burning stoves becomes a major problem in our cities, improving the energy efficiency of the houses and fuel consumption for heating and recycling ash from fuel will be introduced to the Ger area communities.

INDONESIA : (*Wardah from the Urban Poor Consortium in Jakarta writes*) We do not plan for a big thing on World Habitat Day this year. We have been made busy by the eviction cases that have happened in past weeks and are looming in the coming months. Also, the first Monday in October coincides with the end of Ramadan - those celebrations can take a week or more and everybody usually goes to their home towns on vacation.

PAKISTAN - OPP : (*Perween Rahman from the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi writes*) We celebrate habitat day every single day of the year, as we try to support varied community initiatives spanning from secure housing and infrastructure to education, health, micro enterprise and earthquake rehabilitation.

PAKISTAN - URC : (*Younus from the Karachi URC writes*) We have no special events planned, but we are launching a signature campaign in the first week of October to extend the cut-off date for regularizing (obtaining land titles) in *katchi abadis* (informal settlements). The Sindh Province's 1987 *Katchi Abadi Act* now stipulates that no settlement established after 23 March 1985 will get land title. We are campaigning to get this extended to December 2007. When this law was enacted, there were 2.5 million people living in Karachi's *katchi abadis*, but now there are 6 million. According to this law, 3.5 million of these people do not qualify for land titles, even though all of these settlements have been upgraded with underground sewers, electricity, concrete pavements and public facilities (mostly through community-based efforts and investments), and most live in solid concrete block houses. The absence of land titles is now a major issue, as most of these settlements remain under threat of evictions. Later on, the signatures we collect will be used for advocacy under our Secure Housing Program, an ongoing joint activity of URC and OPP-RTI to document the settlements and map people's and public investments in these settlements on housing and infrastructure.

SRI LANKA - WOMEN'S BANK : (*Hosaka, an old friend of Women's Bank, writes*) Women's Bank is commemorating World Habitat Day by constructing an earthen, thatched "eco-friendly" house for a young, blind member family through the voluntary work of 150 children. With this initiative, they will proceed to help build houses for 35 other families, on land they have purchased near Colombo.

SRI LANKA - WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT BANK FEDERATION : (*Upali Sumithre from WDBF writes*) We have got some information that the Ministry of Housing is organizing a ceremony to commemorate World Habitat Day in Moratuwa, but we believe it is not a ceremony that has been organized by the people. A team from WDBF will be visiting South Africa in early October, and so we hope to celebrate World Habitat Day there.

JAPAN : (*Hosaka writes from Japan*) Most people and the Government in Japan seem to have forgotten about World Habitat Day! Of course the UN-Habitat's Fukuoka Office is planning something, but the Japan Housing Association is presenting their Habitat Awards this year (to HELP-O in Sri Lanka and the UDRC in Mongolia) on 20 October. But apart formal events, an interesting movement currently going on in Japan is the Anti-poverty Caravan. Big groups of activists, lawyers, civic organization leaders and union representatives are roving all over Japan. On their way, they stop at each major city, where they are joined by local groups, representatives of low-paid workers, daily laborers, workers under irregular employment and homeless people, and organize citizen forums, lobbying sessions with local authorities, processions, on-site consultations for livelihood allowance recipients and those in heavy debt. They started the journey in July and it will culminate in Tokyo in mid October.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE WUF IN NANJING IN NOVEMBER :

IT'S OFFICIAL! ACHR's Networking Event at the 4th World Urban Forum, in the ancient city of Nanjing China, is on :

- **Seminar : "Communities as key actors in disaster rehabilitation"**
- **Date : Monday November 3, 2008**
- **Time : 14:00 - 16:00**
- **Place : Room MR206 at the WUF Venue, the Nanjing International Convention Center**

Here is our official 100-word (precisely!) summary of the planned event : As changing climates cause more storms, floods and landslides, the discourse on how to deal with these calamities grows ever more urgent. But while governments, development institutions, relief agencies, policy makers and activists debate, the group which plays the most vital, primary role in dealing with disasters - affected communities themselves - continues to be largely absent from this discussion and from disaster rehabilitation. In fact, Asian communities (especially the poorest) are playing an increasingly central role in planning for and responding to disasters, and their work in people-driven disaster relief and rehabilitation is creating an important new development paradigm.

Small Nanjing planning meeting held in Bangkok, September 6 - 7, 2008 : ACHR called a small, informal meeting in Bangkok to plan for this important event, most of the ten participants coming from the key Asian countries which have been dealing with disasters and will take part in the networking event in Nanjing (Arif Hasan from Pakistan, Bang Anh Tuan from Vietnam, Father Norberto and Sonia Fadriago and May Domingo from Philippines, Somsak Phonpakdee and Wuttiapan Ratanatari from Cambodia, Sandeep Virmani from India, Wardah Hafidz from Indonesia and Enhe from Mongolia, plus Somsook, Maurice and Tom from ACHR). After planning how to organize our two-hour seminar in Nanjing and discussing details about travel, hotels and the exhibition space we have booked at WUF4, we used this small gathering to informally discuss several other regional ACHR issues and activities, including :

- planning for ACHR's regional activities and an upcoming big regional meeting in December 2008 or January 2009.
- planning new possible financial support models for our activities in the Asia region.
- ACHR funding issues, including the new 3-year grant from Misereor to support ACHR's regional work.
- new ACHR project proposals to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and to the Rockefeller Foundation.
- other possible ideas about our regional process and other matters.

BRING YOUR POSTERS AND PUBLICATIONS ! ACHR has managed to book a double-wide exhibition booth (3m x 6m) at the World Urban Forum in Nanjing, which will be our headquarters during the four-day event. Groups taking part in our networking event, and all the groups that are part of the Asian coalition, are invited to prepare posters to put up in this exhibition space - especially posters which describe a variety of community-driven work on themes of housing, community upgrading, sanitation, savings and credit, community funds, community welfare, disaster rehabilitation, etc.