
ACHR E-NEWS

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

January 2016

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ACHR welcomes friends to the New Year of 2016 and (coming soon) the Year of the Monkey in the Chinese New Year. Below is a summary of our activities for Nov -Jan and indications of 2016 activities, but first a brief word from Somsook Boonyabancha Sec Gen of ACHR:

Dear all friends, hope the coming New Year bring us new challenges, new possibilities and new hope in our busy working lives. Most of all, I do hope you will be happy, you will have lots of love and be healthy in whatever life situation is going to be.

Last year, I busied myself involving in the constitution drafting process. It supposed to be one of the very progressive constitution for our changing democratic society and open enormous room for people and community participation and people's driven development possibilities. However that draft constitution was finally voted down and aborted by the National Reform Council due to several reasons

So I am now back to the ACHR office and also supporting some national CODI activities. It is again a very interesting stage in my life to reflect and think what should be next, after our exciting regional ACCA Program ended at the beginning of last year. The program covered support to about 215 cities in 19 countries in the 5 year implementation in the region. So if all my good friends have any good idea to suggest what should be our next or new exciting move or model of development, we are definitely welcome them all.

Happy New Year !!

Somsook

1. ACHR Takes the Grassroots' voices to the Asian Pacific Urban Forum Jakarta

The Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF) is a multi-stakeholder forum organised periodically every 4-5 years by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) with the aim to provide a regional platform for urban actors. This year, ACHR has joined the APUF-6 held in Jakarta, Indonesia from 19-21 October 2015. We participated in 3 activities: a parallel session on community-driven citywide upgrading, a plenary session on people-driven urban development and an exhibition led by communities architect network (CAN) in Asia and CAN Indonesia.

The parallel session ‘Citywide community-led upgrading’ was successfully coordinated and facilitated by our Indonesian friends: Urban People Consortium (UPC), Uplink and Arkomyogya. This session was to showcase participatory processes and community-led design, and hear from those who are doing the hard work on the ground to make positive changes in the city.

Linda and Marco were chair the session. As Marco’s opening remark “- *this session is special because we are sitting on the floor, to be more down to earth. The security was very nervous, I assure you this is not a demonstration, although it its a demonstration of how we work.*”

3 main questions to be answered through the course of the session

- 1) Why people-led processes are important,
- 2) What are alternatives to eviction - context, there have been many evictions recently in Jakarta,
- 3) Why an inclusive city-wide upgrading process is important.

ACHR had brought 70 experts (community leaders, NGOs and professionals) from 9 Asian countries to share their experience in the community-driven citywide approach, and to try to convince the city governments that people are not the problem, but part of the solutions.



We included 30 international participants and 40 community leaders, professionals and NGOs from 10 cities in Indonesia submitted **3 Recommendations for the Chair’s Summary of APUF-6 for policy-makers/decision-makers**

1. Recognise, support and scale-up existing bottom-up urban development initiatives
2. Development of more inclusive and resilient cities should address issues at city-wide scale
3. Eviction of informal settlements shifts problems and does not lead to effective city development solutions

One Key recommendation for policy-makers/decision-makers from each session was to be included in the Call for Action of APUF-6 : Poverty cannot be reduced and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) would not be met if evictions of informal settlements continue without city-wide participatory planning



2. Planning for the Poorest of the Poor and SELAVIP ACHR Housing Activity

The regional ACHR meeting took place just before the APUF-6 in Jakarta, Indonesia, from October 15 – 18th 2015. The meeting gathered the regional members of 9 countries: Nepal, Cambodia, Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Indonesia. However, 3 other countries submitted new proposals but could not attend the meeting: Laos PDR, Myanmar and Mongolia.

In the morning 16th, the participants spent a half-day meeting to share the progress reports of ACHR-SELAVIP Housing project 2015, the on-going activities implemented by 8 countries. In the afternoon the 6 countries presented their new proposals 2016. ACHR Secretariat has presented the new proposals of 3 countries absent. All participants and country teams had 1 full day of discussion, consideration and comparison for their decisions. In the morning 18th the synthetic results of 9 teams including 7 countries, ACHR and CAN were finalised and approved at our general meeting.

9 countries are included in the new proposal for 2016 and all the 9 countries will get support.

There 41 cities participate in the implementation of ACHR –SELAVIP Housing 2016.

The total 1700 poor families will directly benefit and participate in the 3 activities

A. **Big Housing Project:** 6 countries and 7 cities (Indonesia has 2 housing projects in 2 cities)

B. **Small Upgrading project:** 7 countries and 8 cities-

C. **Decent Poor Housing:** 7 countries and 27 cities and provinces

On the second day of the ACHR meeting, all participants visited 2 communities who have been facing the evictions by the River normalisation program conducted by the city government of Jakarta.

The community leaders and international friends from Philippines, Cambodia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan and many other Indonesian cities have shared their experiences in how to link communities and make their voices stronger; how to start savings as a kick-off to bring people and families to work together to find solutions for their land, to negotiate with local government.

(there are a lot beautiful photos taken during the community visits in the Facebook page of Indonesia friends).

3. Visit of Executive Director of SELAVIP International, Brussels, from November 22, 2015 December 4, 2015

In Thailand, Mr. Henri Thijssen had the meeting at the ACHR office in the 1st day to review the regional Decent Poor Fund in the past 3 years and the ACHR- SELAVIP Housing project last year 2015. He also so visited the Baan Man Kong project (Bangbua Canal project) and Homeless Centre funded by SELAVIP 2014

In Sri Lanka he was impressed by the Women Savings Bank activities and Claft Net cooperation. He visited the big housing project funded by ACHR SELAVIP in 2015 in remote and War Affected area in Mullaitivu, where 27 new housing have being constructed.
(Photo by Ranjith) shows incremental progress)



In the

November 30, our friends Arkomjogja introduced the activities in the 6 kampongs in Yogyakarta , where the communities have been supported by the ACCA funding and Decent Poor funding in 2014 and 2015. The ACHR-SELAVIP housing project 2015 has 2 main purposes to support the poorest groups and to advocate for citywide upgrading as alternative housing for the kampung along the riverside. Mr. Henri visited the community and also participated the meeting of KALIJAWI, the citywide network of 23 savings groups.



After the visits of 4 countries (Cambodia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand), a final meeting was held at the ACHR office on the December 4th. Mr. Henri has made quick feedback on the field visits. Also some general conclusions are made for the next year program of ACHR-SELAVIP Housing project 2016:

SELAVIP agrees to support the Housing Project 2016 at the same level of budget (as the year of 2015, about 270,000 US \$)

ACHR could act as a main coordinator for the SELAVIP's activities in Asia.

SELAVIP could support 10% for coordination cost and 5% for the regional exchange and meeting.

4. Poverty Line Study Update

In 2014, IIED and ACHR jointly supported a bottom – up process of the poor in 6 Asian countries 34 cities to define their own poverty line in a challenge to The World Bank dollar-a-day poverty line. This ground- breaking study is perhaps the first study by the poor themselves, and it added to the list of other poverty issues that have been studied by the poor.



In 2015, IIED and ACHR are continuing this Poverty Assessment Policy-phase 2, from May to October 2015. Objectives of the study are to refine the poverty line figures set by communities in each country to be under the same common criteria/standard as well as to compare and share the study figures with government agencies in each country to explore common measure of poverty and what make sense in each country context, In the meantime how our study will influence government ways and process of setting poverty line based on actual poverty context that include all poor people in the society.

At the regional ACHR meeting in Phnom Penh in April five countries: Nepal, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Cambodia and Thailand expressed their interests to join in the 2 phase of the study while Vietnam is interested to be in the process as an observer.

The draft reports of phase 2 study process were presented in the regional ACHR meeting in Jakarta in October. The final report has just been finished and submitted to IIED the early of January 2016.

The collaboration between UNDP and ACHR on poverty study:

Similarly to ACHR's concern, a lot of international organisations have favoured the use of multi-dimensional poverty, in which poverty is determined by many factors, not just income. Since 2010, the UNDP has applied the concept of **Multi-Dimensional Poverty (MDP)** in several countries in national planning (in Mexico, Colombia, Philippines, Bhutan).

Especially, last year the MDP has been used successfully in Ho Chi Minh City as pilot local between the UNDP and the city government. The UNDP's Asian Pacific Hub has suggested to ACHR to combine these two approaches, exemplified by UNDP's work on MPD with Ho Chi Minh City and ACHR's work with communities to define dimensions of urban poverty in the region.

During the regional ACHR meeting in Jakarta, Sarah (UNDP regional Hub) has presented this collaboration plan and 2 activity plans were discussed:

MPI Study in 4 months (December 2015 – April 2016) will be conducted with Arkomjogja in Yogyakarta.

Exchange Workshop on The Multi-Dimensional, Participatory Approach to poverty assessment in Kon Kaen city.: in collaboration with local government, community groups, and academic institutions. The workshop will assemble members from urban poor network, and representative of academia, and government representatives from five cities: Ban Pai, Chonnabot, Sila, Kon Kaen, and Chum Pae. However, the UNDP has postponed this workshop till next year 2016.

5. Community Development Fund (CDF) Study Update

Below is a brief report on the progress of the on-going study about **community finance**, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. The first phase is a literature review - of the 5 countries (Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand) . This started in the middle of 2015. At the ACHR meeting in Jakarta, each country presented their progress on the study. It was agreed that each country will send their interim reports by the end of November, 2015.

Women Savings Cooperative in Sri Lanka



The second phase **is the survey of CDFs in each country** to get their current information about their status, achievements, obstacles, linkages with formal sector and their views toward future direction. At the present, each country team is completing the questionnaire . The interview will be conducted in the February. It is schedule to be completed by the end of May 2016. Afterward, a regional meeting will be held to share information and get feedback from all of us as well as outside experts.

6.Nepal Earthquake Rehabilitation Update

An earthquake of magnitude 7.8 occurred on 25th April in Nepal, killing more than 9000 people and injured around 23000. It was the worst natural disaster to strike Nepal since the 1934 Nepal–Bihar earthquake.



Disastrous events in very poor and politically paralysed nations such as Nepal often become a long drawn out chain of events, in that one disaster feeds into another for years or even decades upon end. The after effects from the earthquake have knock effects on a myriad seemingly unrelated aspects: human trafficking, labor cost and availability, rental and property cost burdens, urbanisation, private and public debt burdens, mental health, politics, tourism, as well as disease and healthcare system damages, disasters that come with the monsoon season. The first monsoon related effects: a landslide on June 11th has claimed 53 lives mean-while a glacial lake had burst in particularly hard hit Solukhumbu district; whether or not the quake had contributed such events is often unknown and un-researched, but certainly possible.

Misereor has shown interest in supporting a program for long term rehabilitation in Nepal. Community Architect Network (ACHR- CAN) along with Hunnarshala Foundation have been assigned to visit and assess the situation in Nepal and identify possible areas of intervention with the support of Lumanti, and to further look for possibilities of developing a community led rehabilitation program.

The assessment trip was organised in the last June and September 2015. The Assessment Team includes:



1. Mr Chawnad - Architect (Coordinator CAN- Thailand)
2. Mr. Mahavir Acharya – Civil Engineer (Executive director Hunnarshala foundation – India)
3. Mr Wajitporn – Community Architect – Chlang Mai –Thailand.
4. Ms.Lumanti Joshi -Architect (Coordinator – Shelter Support group – Lumanti

The team has submitted a new proposal to Misereor for the new support. In which, Lumanti, ACHR, CAN and Hunnarshala will work in partnership to contribute to the whole process. The key objective of the project will be to facilitate and assist earthquake affected families and communities to plan and rebuild hopes, homes and basic infrastructure making the communities better, safer, resilient and sustainable for a dignified life of the people.

7. Dawei's project in Myanmar

Rapid development in Myanmar over these few years has seen many changes and the growth is likely to expanding under the new political process. ACHR has been working with local groups since Cyclone Nargis some years ago so is familiar with the local context and organisations. With regional experiences in alternatives eviction and relocations ACHR has been invited to be involved in one of the largest development processes in Myanmar.

The Dawei Special Economic Zone (DSEZ) Development project emerges strategically to create a new shortened international trade route, linking the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean and leading to the connection of China and India which are the two most populated countries in the world. This makes DSEZ relatively different from the other in Myanmar both in terms of sizing and complexity of the project. The world class mega deep seaport and modern industrial estates are expected in the master plan to attract foreign investors, resulting in boosting Myanmar economy as well as improving living standards for the people along the economic corridor from Myanmar to Thailand, and further to the region.

Of course thousands of families will be affected by this massive development. ACHR has submitted a proposal to be involved in the first stage of the development . The objectives will be:

To understand the actual need of the local communities from the DSEZ development as well as to build the platform for constructive communication between development agencies and community people through surveys and participatory planning processes.

To provide recommendations to the concerned authorities about feasible relocation and compensation for the affected people to design a new social support system and capacity building program necessary for affected people to live together in community and that can continue address real needs.

If the proposal is accepted it should take around 9 months. ACHR team will consist of regional experts, CAN - Community Architects Network , Local NGOs (Women of the World, and Thai researchers. More information is available from ACHR Sec.

8. Recent research and articles from Arif Hasan

ACHR senior advisor and friend, Arif Hassan have done a lot of research work and published it along with a number of articles. We are attaching the links of those that have been published. You can see more in our website for other interesting reading articles, like 'The Re-planning of Saiban City' or "Needed an Urban Land Reform".

1. "Planning for high density in low-income settlements. Four case studies from Karachi"
Arif Hasan, Asiya Sadiq, Suneela Ahmed, March 2010
<http://pubs.iied.org/10582IIED.html?a=Arif%20Hasan>

2. "Land ownership, control and contestation in Karachi and implications for low-income housing" Arif Hasan, Noman Ahmed, Mansoor Raza, Asiya Sadiq, Saeed-ud-Din, Moizza B. Sarwar, March 2013 <http://pubs.iied.org/10625IIED.html?a=Arif%20Hasan>
3. "Impacts of economic crises and reform on the informal textile industry in Karachi" Arif Hasan, Mansoor Raza, April 2015 <http://pubs.iied.org/10727IIED.html?a=Arif%20Hasan>
4. "Responding to the transport crisis in Karachi" Urban Resource Centre, Karachi, Arif Hasan, Mansoor Raza, July 2015 <http://pubs.iied.org/10746IIED.html?a=Arif%20Hasan>
5. The Redesigning of Saiban City, Lahore <http://pubs.iied.org/G03488.html?a=Arif%20Hasan>
6. "The Causes of Land Contestation in Karachi" Arif Hasan, February 2014 <http://arifhasan.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/KarachiLandCondensedPaperforEU.pdf>

9. The Passing of Yamamoto Yoshihiko, BLL Japan: from Hosaka Mitsuiko

One ACHR longest serving friends passed away in December. Below Hosaka Mitsuiko gives an overview of Yamamoto's last and recent activities supporting the buraku people in Japan.

YAMAMOTO Yoshihiko from a buraku community of Asaka, Osaka, died of cancer on 3 December 2015. The disease was detected a year ago, and he had an operation. At one time we felt he was recovered. He was still active in travelling even abroad, joining in buraku federations' meetings, assisting disadvantaged communities, protesting against money-led municipal policies as well as organising a new community establishment of Asaka.

He was born in a buraku (discriminated settlement). Since aged seven years old, he woke up at four o'clock every morning and worked as a vegetable vender. Until noon he attended school, and then was engaged in a leather production workshop through deep in the night. One day, little Yamamoto asked his mother why he had to be so hard-working, then she burst into tears saying "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Forgive me." He realised he was a bonded labourer. The experience in such sheer poverty made him deeply empathetic with and considerate of people in destitution and discrimination all through his life. Visiting an outcast community in India, he was crying from anger over the lasting discrimination against people and their resultant inhuman living environment.

His appearance was, however, quite tough, somehow even yakuza-looking. When he participated in the ACHR People's Dialogue in Seoul, June 1989, he was stopped at the Immigration and taken to a separate room for further scrutiny. In town, we stayed in a slum, and at night a strange local fellow came to talk to him and suggested a drug deal. But he became very popular among Asian participants at the meeting and his participation seemed to be eye-opening to him. He initiated grassroots exchanges

between Korean evicted people and Japan's buraku communities, and contributed greatly. Indeed, ten days before his death, there was a Japan-Korea seminar in Osaka commemorating the anniversary of people-to-people exchange programmes, which Yamamoto himself, already hospitalised, could not attend personally. All the Korean and Japanese participants thanked him and wished his recovery.

While he has been leading buraku liberation movement since the 1960s, his last dream seemed to revitalise his own community of Asaka. In the 1980s, the Asaka branch of Buraku Liberation League (BLL) under his leadership successfully negotiated for removal of a large train yard and for on-site construction of public housing. However, Yamamoto later realised that the BLL strategy of pressuring the government to deliver services and subsidies on a preferential basis could lead to the dependency on the government, and searched a new strategy for self-reliance. He and his colleagues in Asaka established small companies, several community enterprises and community-managed welfare establishments. The idea behind such community management was to find sources of income for the buraku movement. Over last several years, however, the city government took outright privatisation strategy, and municipal land being used for buraku community centres, community shops, housing and public amenities have been taken back and sold on the open market, which is eroding the base of community management and Asaka, with losing younger population, has become a very lonely place. Yamamoto has been trying to revive and maintain the practice of community management, by starting to re-organise the community to buy or rent some strategic sites and rooms for community use, build community space for interaction and personal care, and establish community enterprises, partly through ACCA support.



Yamamoto with Somsook in Asaka, May 2013 (photo: Hosaka)

This proposal to ACCA II was to be presented by Yamamoto at the Mumbai meeting, but Indian government refused to issue a visa to him. In May 2013, however, Somsook visited him in Asaka to ascertain the proposal and asked him about a prospect of wider social change for integration of buraku. Yamamoto said: "I am proud of being from buraku, and based on our identity, we have built mutually-supporting communities where people live together and help each other. But this should not mean we should be in an island. Because we have been discriminated, we have become aware of other forms of discrimination against women, against elderly people and against those with lower

incomes. That is why the Asaka BLL has built welfare establishments and organised so many community activities over the years to give space to these various groups outside the buraku communities. Through this process, “integration” will be possible”.

10. Community Architects Network CAN - Asia

On the other side of the world in New York, out of over 400 candidates, CAN was a finalist at the Buckminster Fuller Award ceremony. The Buckminster Fuller Challenge award gives a sizeable amount of money to supporting activities which bring a social and ecologically sustainable innovative solution to the worlds problems. The winner was a kelp farming initiative in the US for fisherman with increasing insecure livelihoods, and a runner up with CAN was the Manila Housing Authority in India, working with Slum Dwellers International, SDI on people driven solutions to slum upgrading in India.

And in January CAN published its New Newsletter edited by Francesco Pasta and Ariel Shepherd; Lots to read: The Central Museum Inauguration in Leh with friends fro Tibet Heritage Foundation ; CAN at the Asia Pacific Forum - Towards a people-catered urban future ; CAN at the World Bamboo Conference in South Korea ; People -driven bamboo upgrading in Tongkol. Jakarta ; Where do we go rom here ? Culture and Community Design Studio in Penang ; Citywide planning and community profiling in Fiji: learning by doing ; and Briefs on Media, Events, Opportunities.