



▲ During the housing design workshop in the Salyani community, in Bharatpur, Nepal, in May 2009.



▲ During the big regional gathering of community architects, at Chiang Mai, Thailand, in June 2010.



▲ Planning the new community at Mandartola with the people in Gopalganj, Bangladesh, in June 2011.



▲ The bamboo construction workshop in the Matina Crossing Community in Davao, Philippines, in January 2011.

After years of hibernation, ACHR's regional program of support to young professionals has come back to life, thanks partly to an infusion of support from the Rockefeller Foundation, partly to the many new projects being implemented with ACCA support, and partly to the energy and enthusiasm of two young Thai architects, Chawanad Luansang ("Nad") and Supawut Boonmahathanakorn ("Tee"), who are now helping to coordinate the involvement of community architects in the housing and upgrading projects being implemented around Asia - both under the ACCA Program and otherwise. The Rockefeller grant is now finished, but ACHR is negotiating another year's support, and in the mean time, many of the regional community architects activities are being supported by ACCA. Here are some notes from Nad and Tee about the process :

### TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DESIGN PROCESS

When we talk about doing city-wide slum upgrading in the whole Asia region, we need lots of architects, para-architects and experienced community-based builders to work with people in hundreds of communities and to help them develop and implement their upgrading plans, in a big way. We have been trying in different ways to link with groups of young architects and professionals in various countries and to help them work with communities - on both the ACCA-supported upgrading and housing projects and on other community initiatives. The movement is becoming quite active now, and a lot of things have been happening over the past two years or so, as more and more countries open up this process. Of the 15 Asian countries involved in the ACCA Program so far, twelve have active groups of community architects now: Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Indonesia, Philippines, Fiji, Nepal, Mongolia, India and China. So far, we have focused our work on four activities to support, strengthen and expand this community architecture movement in Asia :

**1 Building groups of local architects to work with people, in each country.** Many countries don't have groups of local community architects to work with the communities yet. So in some countries, we have assisted by organizing pilot community-upgrading and housing design workshops that are tied to actual projects, with support from the local NGOs (in Nepal, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Fiji and Penang). An important part of these projects is linking with faculties of architecture and young professional people in that place, and inviting them to participate in these projects and to learn how to work with communities. After that, we try to support the young people to keep working with the communities.

**2 Organizing training seminars and lectures :** In several countries, we have given lectures at architecture faculties (in Vietnam, Mongolia, Lao PDR) and organized hands-on training seminars with students, young professionals and community people about how to work with communities, to support a community-driven housing design process (in Lao PDR, Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Fiji and the Philippines). This is not just to develop technical support skills, but to show these young people how to make communities become the designers and technicians of a design process which belongs to people (community design workshops in Vientiane, Phnom Penh and Yangon; earth-block making workshops in Vinh, Phnom Penh and Ulaanbaatar; a community mapping workshop in Fiji, a bamboo construction workshop in Davao and a slum-upgrading architectural competition in Surabaya. We're now planning a big regional mapping workshop in Karachi.)

**3 Building a regional network of community architects in Asia,** to share their experiences, share their knowledge and assist each other in different ways. In June 2010, we organized a 5-day regional gathering of 100 community architects and community builders in Chiang Mai, which gave a chance for all these groups to meet, present their work, compare notes and begin to set joint plans as a regional network of community architects. (Full transcripts of the interesting presentations at this meeting can be downloaded from the ACHR website.) Many of these groups also travel to join in the design workshops and training seminars in other countries. One of the first activities of this new regional network (which was officially inaugurated in Chiang Mai) has been to support fledgling community architect groups in each country with small seed funds of \$5,000 per country. So far, community architecture groups in nine countries have received this support and are using it in a variety of ways to initiate pilot projects with communities or to build their own national community architects networks. In some countries, these groups already existed (as in the Philippines, Cambodia, Pakistan, Indonesia and Vietnam) and in some countries they are just getting started (as in Lao PDR, Myanmar, Fiji and Mongolia). These groups can include young architects, architecture students and professors, engineers, planners and community builders.

**4 Sharing experiences :** We are also working to document the work of community architects around Asia and to help disseminate their stories, experiences and ideas through various media, including publications (a book on community architecture work by key groups around the region and a series of handbooks on mapping and community planning have already been published, and another handbook on the poor in historical cities is now in process), documentary films about the work of community architects, and the setting up of a regional community architects blog / website.

“ I think it is very important for community people to have a space to share their ideas and to exchange the knowledge about houses and settlement planning which they already possess, and to visualize what can happen in the future when they think and plan together - as a community rather than only as separate households. The question for architects is what kind of design process can bring people in a community into this kind of dialogue and can create consensus about what form they would like their community to take? And how can professionals like us facilitate this kind of discussion? ” (Chawanad Luansang)

