

ACHR

e-news

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

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR)

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APRIL 2025

ACHR 2024: A YEAR OF ACTION & LEARNING

2024 was a big year for ACHR and our partners across Asia. It marked new partnerships, deeper collaborations, and important steps forward in strengthening the regional movement for community-led housing and urban development. Through **action research projects, new alliances, and community exchanges**, we expanded our reach and continued to show how **people-led processes can drive real change**. This year saw lively gatherings—both local and regional—where community groups, city governments, and allies came together to share ideas and strengthen networks. From new research on housing and health to ongoing efforts to secure land and improve living conditions, communities across the region continue to lead the way. As we look ahead, we carry forward the lessons from this busy and productive year, reinforcing our belief that the most sustainable and equitable solutions come from the people who know their cities and neighborhoods best.



ACHR PROJECT UPDATES FROM ACROSS THE REGION



Growing Together: Advancing Collective Housing

Throughout 2024, the ACHR project "*Asian Hub for the Social Production of Housing*"—in partnership with **urbaMonde** and funded by the **Geneva Federation for Cooperation (FGC)**—has continued to promote community-led housing initiatives across the region. Affectionately known as the *Collective Housing Project*, this initiative has made significant progress in advancing collective housing models that prioritize community ownership, social equity, and sustainable urban development. Teams across 11 countries (India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Mongolia) have been actively engaging with local governments and community-based organizations to advance policy dialogue and implement pilot projects. In

several cities, community-led surveys and mapping exercises have informed housing plans, while collaborative design workshops have strengthened community capacity to shape their living environments.

A major strength of the project lies in the in-country and cross-border learning and community exchanges. Throughout the year, communities have visited each other to share practical solutions and strategies—whether it's adapting cooperative housing models in new contexts or negotiating with authorities for land tenure. These exchanges reinforce that communities are not working in isolation but are part of a growing, connected movement that learns and evolves together. By documenting and sharing these experiences, the project aims to inspire and guide similar initiatives across Asia and beyond.

Collective Housing Conference in Bangkok


In July 2024, ACHR and the **Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI)** hosted an international conference in Bangkok, themed '*Collective*



Housing: Let People Be the Solution. The event brought together over 270 participants, including community leaders, policymakers, and urban practitioners from across Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Supported by the Thai **Ministry of Social Development and Human Security**, **FGC**, and various other partners who made significant contributions, it provided a platform to share experiences, discuss policy innovations, and strategize future pathways for community-driven housing solutions.

The energy in the room was electric—community representatives shared firsthand accounts of their struggles and victories, while policymakers and technical experts reflected on how to better support these grassroots efforts. Key sessions highlighted successful case studies from the region, including the use of cooperative models and the importance of legal recognition for informal settlements. Beyond the formal sessions, it was also a time to reconnect, reflect, and recharge for the work ahead. For more details on the conference proceedings and key takeaways, you can visit the [conference website](#) or [this blog](#).





A Collective Voice: The ACHR Declaration on Collective Housing

One of the major milestones that emerged from the Collective Housing Conference was the drafting and release of the **Collective Housing Declaration**. This declaration outlines core principles and policy demands to support community-led housing initiatives, calling for greater recognition of collective housing as a viable solution to urban housing crises. It reflects the inputs of diverse stakeholders who participated in the vibrant discussions during the conference and serves as both a guiding document for ongoing advocacy efforts and a collective voice advocating for more inclusive cities, where urban poor communities have a rightful role in shaping their environments and securing their future. Additionally, it acts as a reference point for communities negotiating with local and national governments, providing a practical tool to advocate for their right to stay, build, and thrive. To read the full declaration, click [here](#).

The CAN Meeting and the Way Forward

Taking advantage of the convening in Bangkok, late June saw the regrouping of the **Community Architects Network (CAN)**, which brought together familiar and new faces of practitioners to reflect on the trajectory of CAN and chart a course for future collaboration and action. Discussions focused on strengthening technical support for community-led housing, enhancing knowledge-sharing mechanisms, and fostering youth engagement in urban transformation processes.

A key outcome was the commitment to deepen collaboration with local universities and professional bodies to institutionalize community-driven approaches. There was also a renewed emphasis on the importance of community exchanges—both within countries and across borders—to keep learning and strengthening each other. Moving forward, CAN aims to expand its reach by supporting new pilot projects and increasing regional exchanges to reinforce collective housing practices. These efforts will be documented and shared widely to support peer learning and advocacy across the ACHR network.



Building Together: The Model Cities Project

Another familiar initiative, Phase II of the “5 Model Cities” project, funded by the **SELAVIP Foundation**, kicked off in April 2024, marking an exciting new chapter in supporting urban development across the ACHR network. Building on the foundations laid during the first phase (2020-2022), this new stage continues work in the original five cities—Jakarta (Indonesia), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Yangon (Myanmar), Iloilo (Philippines), and Mahalaxmi (Nepal)—while welcoming five new cities: Bandar Lampung (Indonesia), Batticaloa (Sri Lanka), Mirpur Khas (Pakistan), Jeetpursimara (Nepal), and Muntinlupa (Philippines).



At the heart of the 5 Model Cities project is the commitment to scaling up and sharing lessons from community-led processes. Drawing from the experiences and insights gained in the initial five cities, the project aims to deepen and expand these approaches to new contexts. This isn't about simply replicating models—each city brings unique challenges and opportunities. The project adapts solutions to local realities while strengthening community networks, participatory data collection, and engagement with city authorities.

The value of thinking and working “CITYWIDE”

The Model Cities project embraces a citywide approach that sees urban poor communities not as isolated pockets, but as vital parts of the broader urban fabric. Rather than working in single settlements or with a few selected families, the project engages with communities across the city—mapping needs, mobilizing savings groups, and co-creating upgrading plans that reflect the diverse realities of low-income residents. The approach aims to connect organized communities with local governments, professionals, universities, and civil society actors, creating spaces of dialogue, shared learning, and practical collaboration.

By working citywide, the process generates vibrations that reach beyond a single neighborhood—building relationships, shifting perceptions, and planting seeds for more inclusive urban policy. In each city, the project strengthens community networks as the drivers of change, equipping them to negotiate with authorities, articulate their vision, and participate meaningfully in shaping their city's future. The goal is not just to upgrade houses or improve infrastructure, but to build lasting platforms of cooperation, where poor communities are seen as partners in the development of more just, resilient, and inclusive cities.

In Yangon, small-scale infrastructure upgrades are underway, including improved access to drinking water and solar-powered electricity in selected housing projects. Material support was also provided to help renovate the homes of 10 families affected by a storm in Shwepyithar Township. In Mahalaxmi, the partnership between the women's cooperative and local authorities has expanded to two new wards, with ongoing efforts focused on small infrastructure works, training programs and other social services. Jakarta's focus has shifted to housing improvements in Kampung Muka, a large settlement along the railway, which will be accompanied by neighborhood greening efforts. Alongside this, the team is working on a kampung upgrading module and the establishment of a Community Development Bank. Meanwhile, in Iloilo, a housing materials loan program is helping families make incremental home improvements, while larger upgrading plans are being shaped to address shared infrastructure and improve overall livability. Despite initial delays due to political unrest in Dhaka, new opportunities for engagement have since emerged, leading to active cross-learning with the Gaptoli community from Phase I.

In the new project cities, work is taking root in different yet equally meaningful ways. In Bandar Lampung, the project has become a vehicle to reactivate the local citywide community network. Following mapping and the formation of cooperatives, the aim is to use housing and infrastructure upgrades as pilots to inform a people-driven development plan that challenges current top-down planning approaches. In Jeetpursimara, a fast-urbanizing municipality, a citywide survey identified 35 low-income communities, mostly from lower-caste groups living in extremely harsh conditions. Out of these, 10 communities were selected for improvements in housing and infrastructure, serving as pilots for future expansion. Progress in Mirpur Khas, Pakistan, includes the passing of a bill to expand land title regularization, yet housing conditions remain poor. Through collaboration with communities, professionals, academics, and government, nearly 80 families have been identified for essential upgrades like roof repairs and room extensions. In Muntinlupa, two communities are preparing for new housing construction and upgrades, forming part of a broader initiative to strengthen local networks and enhance disaster resilience. Lastly, in Batticaloa, where the legacy of civil war and economic crisis has left many families in temporary or unfinished homes, the project will focus on a large settlement of 350 families, alongside the expansion of the citywide savings program.



Civic Media and Youth Advocacy: The YCIV Project

The beginning of 2024 marked the launch of a new action-research initiative in Nepal and India, titled “Co-constructing Neighbourhoods Fit for Diverse Young People: Civic Media Technologies for Equitable Urban Governance” (or YCIV project). This collaborative project, funded by **Fondation Botnar**, explores how young people in secondary cities can use civic media to shape urban governance and advocate for their rights. The project brings together a broad partnership—**Lumanti Support Group for Shelter** and **Kathmandu University** in Nepal, **Hunnarshala Foundation** and **IIT-Bombay** in India, alongside **The University of Sheffield** and the **International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)**—with a shared focus on strengthening youth participation and building inclusive governance through practical, community-led processes.



Launching Workshop in Kathmandu

The YCIV Annual Meeting in Kathmandu (January 15-19, 2024) marked the official launch of the project’s action-research approach. Bringing together all partners, the workshop set the groundwork for aligning strategies and developing a shared understanding of the urban contexts in Bhuj, India, and Dharan, Nepal. Over five days, the workshop created space for partners to exchange ideas, refine strategies for engaging youth through civic media, define research questions, and discuss how to capitalize on and benefit from the broader ACHR network during different project stages. Throughout the workshop, participatory action research (PAR) emerged as a core methodology—ensuring that young people themselves play a central role in framing research questions, designing interventions, and documenting change.



Building Civic Media Labs and Youth Participation

Following the workshop, the project focused on identifying and organizing youth cohorts in Bhuj and Dharan—cities where young people face growing precarity, limited employment opportunities, and restricted access to decision-making spaces. At the same time, teams began mapping local media ecosystems to better understand how information flows and how young people can engage with these channels. With technical support from The University of Sheffield and IIED, they also started developing *Civic Media Labs*—dedicated spaces where youth receive training to document and share their experiences through short films, community bulletins, and other digital media. These labs aim to strengthen local organizing by

equipping young people with the skills to articulate their realities and advocate for change. A critical component of this work is the development of ethical frameworks to protect participants and their stories, ensuring that youth voices are amplified responsibly and effectively. By placing young people at the heart of research and action, the YCIV project seeks to create new platforms where youth can challenge exclusion and play a more active role in shaping urban governance.

Taking advantage of being in Kathmandu, the group also visited housing projects and cooperatives supported by Lumanti, offering a firsthand look at community-led housing solutions and the cooperative models that have emerged in response to urban poverty. These visits grounded the workshop in real-life examples of how organized communities are shaping more equitable urban futures.



Beating the Heat: ACHR’s Regional Cooling Project

As rising temperatures increasingly threaten the health and well-being of urban poor communities, ACHR’s *Cooling Project*—launched in January 2024—focuses on developing community-led solutions to mitigate the effects of extreme heat. Funded by the **ClimateWorks Foundation**, the project, titled “A Regional Approach to Passive Cooling Solutions for Urban Poor Households in Asia,” spans eight countries: Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. It seeks to document the impacts of heat, understand existing coping mechanisms, and co-create affordable, community-driven cooling solutions tailored to diverse social, climatic, and cultural contexts.

Understanding Heat Impacts and Coping Mechanisms

Throughout 2024, the project expanded to 10 cities across Asia, working closely with communities to document how extreme heat affects their daily lives and the strategies they rely on to cope. Community-led research remains central to this process—aside from interviews and discussions, families in several cities have been trained to monitor indoor temperatures, providing critical evidence on the severity of heat exposure inside homes. This data helps to paint a clearer picture of how poor housing conditions and urban density intensify heat stress.

Early findings show that extreme heat is severely impacting health, livelihoods, and daily routines. In densely packed settlements in Dhaka families face heat exhaustion, sleep disruption, and heightened vulnerability, especially for children and the elderly. In Bhuj, indoor surface temperatures reach 50–60°C, worsening heat stroke risks and water shortages. Across cities, heat limits income-generating activities, particularly for those in informal sectors. Communities cope by using temporary measures like opening windows at night, using wet cloths, and seeking shade. However, these solutions offer little relief, underscoring the need for long-term, sustainable interventions.

Developing and Testing Cooling Solutions

Building on the knowledge gathered, the project has recently begun developing and testing passive cooling techniques that are affordable and community-driven. These solutions range from design-based interventions at the household and neighborhood levels to nature-based approaches that leverage local resources. Local teams are experimenting with reflective roofing, improved ventilation, and shaded community spaces to reduce indoor temperatures, while catering to the financial limitations of low-income households in high-density settings.

The project also emphasizes regional learning exchanges to ensure that innovations are shared and adapted across different contexts. Communities are learning from each other's experiences through workshops and knowledge-sharing platforms, reinforcing the idea that practical solutions must be grounded in the realities of people's lives. As the project advances, the insights gathered will contribute to a growing body of evidence, strengthening advocacy for policy changes that prioritize climate resilience for the most vulnerable urban populations. By centering community knowledge and local innovation, ACHR aims to develop solutions that are not only affordable and replicable but also empower urban poor communities to take the lead in shaping their climate futures.



“ Many employers have started hiring daily wage workers only for half-day shifts on hot days, saying they wouldn't be productive for longer hours. As a result, we end up earning only half our usual income. ” — A resident from Jeetpursimara

Amplifying Community Voices at the CCC Annual Meeting

In March 2024, Marina joined global partners at the **Clean Cooling Collaborative (CCC)** Annual Meeting in Los Angeles, adding a vital grassroots perspective to the international dialogue on sustainable cooling. The meeting convened technical experts, donors, and community organizations to explore strategies for ensuring equitable access to cooling solutions. ACHR's presentation highlighted the lived experiences of urban poor communities across Asia, showcasing the ingenuity and resourcefulness of local groups in developing low-cost, community-led cooling innovations. It also underscored the importance of integrating community voices into global cooling policies and ensuring that technological advancements remain accessible to all. Beyond sharing insights, the meeting provided a valuable opportunity to build new connections and advocate for a people-centered approach to climate resilience.



Healthy Homes, Healthier Futures

The year 2024 ended with the good news of a new action research project, “A Decolonized Approach to Healthy Housing for All,” launched in partnership with the **International Society for Urban Health (ISUH)** and funded by the **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)**. This three-year project will work with communities in Pakistan and Indonesia—through **Urban Resource Center Karachi** and **Rujak Center for Urban Studies**—to explore how people living in low-income areas are already finding ways to improve their housing and neighborhoods.

The project recognizes that housing is more than just shelter—it directly affects people’s health and well-being through factors like access to clean water, proper ventilation, and secure, affordable living conditions. By focusing on these social determinants of health, the project will highlight how community-led solutions can improve both housing and overall quality of life. With ACHR’s long experience in community-led housing, the project will bring together residents, local governments, and other stakeholders to find practical ways to improve housing conditions.

Through workshops, local research, and exchanges between Asia and the U.S., the project will develop simple, community-driven approaches that others can adapt to their own contexts. By putting local knowledge at the center, the project hopes to show that real, lasting change comes from communities themselves leading the way.



ACHR ON THE MOVE IN THE REGION AND BEYOND



Revisiting Vietnam: Building on a Legacy of Community-Led Housing

In March 2024, Somsook revisited the community in Block 3 and 4, Nong Trang Ward, Viet Tri City, Vietnam, reconnecting with local authorities, residents, and key partners such as the **Hanoi University of Civil Engineering** and the **Association of Cities of Vietnam (ACVN)**. This return to the site, where a pioneering community-based housing project began in 2009, sparked new discussions about the future of housing development and the renovation of old apartments in Vietnam. The project itself was a landmark achievement, made possible through the collaborative efforts of local authorities, residential communities, and support from ACHR and SELAVIP. With active community participation, residents carried out the “7 activities doing together”—from planning and borrowing capital to demolishing, constructing, purchasing materials, supervising, and saving to repay debts. This collective approach not only improved housing conditions but also strengthened community cohesion, promoted savings, and opened doors for new livelihood opportunities. In these discussions, Somsook offered valuable guidance on how to build on these past experiences, pointing to new directions for future community-led housing initiatives in Vietnam. The success of this model continues to inspire and shape ongoing and future projects aimed at improving housing for urban communities.



ACHR’s visit to Sri Lankan partners

In January 2024, Lajana visited Colombo, Sri Lanka, to reconnect with longtime ACHR partners: the **Sri Lanka Women’s Development Services Cooperative Society (Women’s Coop)** and **SEVANATHA Urban Resource Center**. The trip offered an opportunity to witness the remarkable progress of Women’s Coop in advancing savings and credit schemes and promoting community-led development for poor women across urban and rural areas. The visit included a tour of their new office, a meeting with Women’s Coop leaders and SEVANATHA representatives, and in-depth discussions on ongoing initiatives. A highlight was the visit to a hospital established by Women’s Coop, which now provides affordable healthcare to its members and the broader community. The experience was both inspiring and deeply moving, reinforcing the legacy of the late Nandasiri Gamage, whose vision continues to guide the organization’s work. For Lajana’s firsthand reflections, see the text box on the following page.



A Legacy of Empowerment: Visiting Sri Lanka

In January 2024, during my trip to Colombo for the annual FANSA (Freshwater Action Network South Asia) meeting, I took the opportunity to reconnect with dear friends at the Women's Coop and SEVANATHA. It had been many years since my last visit, and I was eager to meet with individuals I had not seen in person for quite some time.

My first visit to Sri Lanka was in 1997, when I attended a training organized by ACHR under the Training and Advisory Program (TAP). This program brought together both experienced professionals and newcomers like myself, all passionate about community development and empowering the poor through housing. During that visit, I came to know more about Women's Coop and their remarkable work in savings and credit initiatives for poor women in both urban and rural areas. I also met the late Nandasiri Gamage, a visionary who played a pivotal role in establishing and nurturing Women's Coop. His teachings and dedication to empowering women in Sri Lanka have left a lasting legacy.

Upon my arrival in Colombo, I reached out to Ranjith, who graciously coordinated my visit to Women's Coop. On January 21, 2024, I was warmly greeted at my hotel and taken to the head office of Women's Coop. I was welcomed with sisterly love and affection by Ashoka, the President of Women's Coop, and her team. Their new multi-story office building stood as a testament to the ever-growing impact of their work. The facility was spacious and vibrant, reflecting the expansion of their initiatives. As we toured the office, I had the chance to meet many staff members, all women, each contributing to the organization's development. It was inspiring to see a storeroom dedicated to products made by women's groups for marketing—items such as tea and handcrafted goods.

What truly moved me was witnessing the profound respect that the members of Women's Coop have for the late Nandasiri Gamage. It was clear that his spirit and teachings continue to guide their work. The deep admiration for him was visible in the tearful eyes of the women as they spoke of his wisdom and support. In the office building, a room has been dedicated to his memory, serving as both a shrine and a museum. Inside, his bust, personal belongings, photos, and awards are carefully displayed as a tribute to his life and contributions. We entered the memorial room barefoot, a sign of reverence. The space itself is a beautiful reminder of his lasting influence, and I felt deeply moved to witness this homage to a man who gave so much to the cause of women's empowerment.

After the tour, we gathered for a meeting to discuss the ongoing work of Women's Coop. Representatives from SEVANATHA, including Jaya, Ranjith, and Chula, were also present, and it was wonderful to catch up with them. A PowerPoint presentation was shared, detailing the remarkable progress that Women's Coop has made in both quantitative and qualitative terms, particularly in rural and urban communities across Sri Lanka. It was truly inspiring to see how the organization has touched the lives of millions of poor women. I also shared updates on Lumanti's and ACHR's work and how much we have benefited from the knowledge and exposure we have gained from Women's Coop.

One of the highlights of the visit was a tour of a hospital established and managed by Women's Coop. I had heard about their plans for a health project at various meetings, and seeing it come to fruition was incredibly heartwarming. While the hospital is not very large, it is fully equipped with key facilities, including referral services for more complex cases. It provides affordable, high-quality healthcare for Women's Coop members and the broader community, a testament to their commitment to holistic development.



We then visited one of the branch offices of Women's Coop, a well-maintained facility with modern amenities that support their vital work. The branch was bustling with women and young girls who had gathered to welcome me. Although there was a language barrier, we communicated through translators, and it was a joyful experience to spend time with them. The office staff served an array of delicious Sri Lankan delicacies, and I was delighted to taste each one.

Spending the entire morning visiting the main office, the hospital, and the branch office left me with a deep sense of happiness and fulfillment. I was moved by the warmth of the Women's Coop leaders, staff, and the members of SEVANATHA. It was evident that Women's Coop has come a long way, leaving an indelible mark on Sri Lanka, and continues to grow with unwavering support from friends and partners. Their journey is a living testament to the fact that with determination and solidarity, the sky truly is the limit!

— Lajana Manandhar



Shaping Urban Futures: ACHR at the World Urban Forum

The Twelfth Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF12), convened by **UN-Habitat**, took place in Cairo, Egypt, from November 4–8, 2024. ACHR participated in key events, sharing insights and strengthening alliances for community-driven housing and urban resilience.

ACHR co-organized an event with **FANSA** and the **Sohag Governorate**, titled “*Voices of the Cities—Collective Housing and Safe Sanitation in the Face of the Climate Crisis.*” The session highlighted the role of communities, practitioners, and policymakers in driving inclusive urban solutions. Somsook, Lajana, and Ruby emphasized the urgency of securing land tenure, sanitation, and finance for the urban poor. ACHR members Aditya and Lumanti also joined “*Living Heritage: Pathways Towards Community-Driven Post-Disaster Reconstruction,*” co-hosted with **Architecture Sans Frontières (ASF-UK)** and **IIED**. Drawing from India and Nepal, they shared how earthquake-affected communities led their own recovery and rebuilding efforts, restoring both homes and cultural identity.

With housing and secure tenure slipping off donor agendas, and climate change taking center stage, access to affordable housing has become even more challenging. WUF12 provided a platform for ACHR to strengthen alliances with global partners such as the Habitat International Coalition, Habitat for Humanity, and Slum Dwellers International, ensuring that community-led housing remains a priority in global policy and funding discussions.



ACHR at the CoHabitat Network Annual Meeting in Geneva

As part of its international collaboration and networking efforts, a team of ACHR members from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka participated in the **CoHabitat Network’s Annual Meeting**, which also marked 10 years of the network’s formation. Since CoHabitat’s inception in 2014, ACHR has been an active member, working alongside organizations worldwide to advance community-led housing as a key solution to urban housing challenges.

The five-day gathering brought together members from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe to reflect on a decade of collaboration and chart future pathways for strengthening collective housing efforts. Through dynamic sharing sessions, participants explored diverse community-led housing approaches, exchanged insights, and built cross-regional connections. The event also provided a platform for urbaMonde’s Global South partners (including ACHR, UPC, PACSII, and POCAA) to present and learn from experiences in community-led financial mechanisms—a critical pillar for enabling secure housing. This discussion also laid the groundwork for an upcoming collaborative study that will further examine innovative finance models for collective housing.

Beyond knowledge-sharing, the meeting reinforced the urgency of scaling up community-driven approaches in the face of growing housing inequalities and climate vulnerabilities. As the network looks ahead, ACHR remains committed to deepening its engagement and ensuring that people-led housing solutions continue to shape urban development policies at regional and global levels.



A New Partnership: ACHR Signs MOU with Habitat for Humanity

A new partnership has been forged between ACHR and **Habitat for Humanity International, Inc. (Asia Pacific)**, bringing together two organizations committed to securing land and housing rights for marginalized communities across Asian cities. Through a newly signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), this strategic alliance aims to strengthen connections between ACHR members and Habitat for Humanity country offices, fostering collaboration on joint initiatives. These efforts will focus on advocacy, awareness-raising, and policy contributions in key areas such as resilient construction methodologies, housing finance, land tenure, slum upgrading, national housing strategies, and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene). The partnership will also address critical cross-cutting issues, including gender, climate change, migration, and people-centered approaches to housing and development.



ACHR’s Visit to Indonesia’s Housing Movements

In February 2024, Marina visited partner organizations in Indonesia to learn from the vibrant collective housing and cooperative movement. Communities across Jakarta, Bandar Lampung, and Yogyakarta shared their journeys, showcased upgraded neighborhoods and future plans, and warmly welcomed the visit. Through conversations with community leaders and allies, the trip offered space to reflect on the movement’s progress, document emerging processes, and explore ongoing initiatives. It was a moment for sharing insights, celebrating achievements, and confronting challenges in the pursuit of sustainable, community-driven housing solutions. The exchange brought together diverse perspectives on how communities have organized and mobilized to tackle housing issues through collaboration and mutual support—highlighting the growing impact of collective action in transforming housing conditions across Indonesia.



For a deeper look into the movement’s achievements and the ongoing land and housing advocacy in Jakarta, read the full blog [here](#). It captures the spirit of these community-led efforts along with the strategies, partnerships, and policy shifts shaping a more inclusive, people-centered vision for urban development.

ACHR at the International Conference on Urban Health in Marrakech

In November 2024, Marina represented ACHR at the 20th International Conference on Urban Health, organized by the **International Society for Urban Health (ISUH)** in Marrakech, Morocco. The conference was a valuable learning experience, bringing together a diverse group of practitioners, healthcare professionals, community leaders, and government representatives to explore the many dimensions of urban health. Discussions ranged from the mental health impacts of the climate crisis to the role of housing conditions and transportation networks, lessons learned from the pandemic, and the value of community-driven approaches in promoting healthy neighborhoods.

ACHR’s contribution focused on reflecting on the recently completed “*Accelerating City Equity*” project, carried out in partnership with ISUH, including discussions around a series of short documentary films produced as part of the project (which can be watched [here](#)). Marina also shared insights on how the Coalition’s ongoing projects continue to promote collective, community-driven practices that address health and well-being. Beyond the sessions, the conference offered a rich cultural exchange—highlighted by an inspiring culinary experience with *Amal*, a non-profit catering initiative that empowers marginalized women. A guided tour through the medina’s market sparked meaningful discussions on food, community, and accessibility, adding a unique local perspective to the broader conversation on urban health.



Photos by Maria Visuals

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR COALITION PARTNERS



Peer-to-peer learning between Sri Lanka and Indonesia

In line with ACHR’s long-standing tradition of fostering cross-country exchanges, a seven-member delegation from Indonesia visited Sri Lanka from December 12 to 19, 2024. The purpose of the visit was to learn from the Sri Lanka **Women’s Development Services Cooperative Society** (Women’s Coop), which has supported urban and rural poor communities through savings and credit systems for over 30 years.

Organized by the **Urban Poor Consortium** and **SEVANATHA Urban Resource Center**, in collaboration with the Women’s Coop, the exchange was part of Indonesia’s broader effort to develop a national cooperative network for urban poor



communities. The Indonesian delegation came to study the Coop's experience in self-managed savings, leadership development, welfare initiatives, and internal auditing practices. Inspired by what they saw, the group expressed strong interest in adapting these models within their own programs back home. This peer-to-peer exchange is one of many in the region that demonstrate the power of regional solidarity and the value of sharing knowledge to strengthen communities and promote collective action.

World Habitat Awards Celebration for the Gold Medal awarded to the Jakarta housing movement

In 2024, the Gold Award of the **World Habitat** went to the remarkable housing movement in Jakarta, a collective effort involving the **Urban Poor Consortium, Rujak Center for Urban Studies, and the Jaringan Rakyat Miskin Kota**. This recognition was largely for their exceptional work in promoting collective housing solutions, particularly through the Kampung Susun Akuarium and the KAKC upgrading projects. On August 25th, Louise Winterburn from World Habitat visited Jakarta to present the award, marking a significant milestone for the movement. The celebration took place at the Akuarium housing project, bringing together residents from across Jakarta's urban poor network to commemorate the achievement. The event featured lively performances, including traditional dance and martial arts, and a feast prepared by the cooperative, showcasing the community's spirit and unity.

A panel discussion featuring Rani Puspitasari (Arkom), Dharma Diani (Akuarium Housing Cooperative), Andi Amir (KAKC Housing Cooperative), Prof. Nor Zalina Harun (National University of Malaysia), Ian Wilson (Murdoch University), and Marina (ACHR) delved into the challenges the movement faced, the importance of the award, and the path forward in building upon this recognition. A particularly touching moment was when former Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan, a key supporter of these projects, was warmly greeted by the community members and offered his remarks in front of an excited audience. The success of these projects, celebrated in such a vibrant and communal atmosphere, serves as a powerful inspiration to the broader regional movement, and we are incredibly proud of our friends in Jakarta for their achievements.



A Coalition within the Coalition: Growing Collaboration in Indonesia

Koalisi Perumahan Gotong Royong (KPGR), meaning "Coalition for Mutual Cooperation Housing," continues to champion community-driven cooperative housing as a sustainable solution to Indonesia's housing crisis. Established in 2020 by Arkom Indonesia, Rujak Center for Urban Studies, and Urban Poor Consortium, with support from ACHR, the coalition has since expanded to include partners such as Habitat for Humanity Indonesia, Arsitek Kampung Urban (AKUR), Rimpang, and grassroots organizations like Paguyuban Kalijawi and Jaringan Rakyat Miskin Kota. KPGR's advocacy includes engaging with senior government officials, including the Vice Ministers of Cooperatives and Housing, to align national policies with cooperative approaches.



Recent discussions with the state-owned secondary mortgage institution and the Ministry of Cooperative's revolving fund agency focus on securing financing mechanisms to ensure the long-term sustainability of cooperative housing projects. Through research, policy advocacy, and community engagement, KPGR is strengthening the movement for inclusive and just urban development across Indonesia. Pilot projects in Blok Eceng and Notoyudan showcase the potential of cooperative housing to address urgent housing needs while contributing to the government's goal of building three million homes.

Celebrating Lumanti: Three Decades of Impact and a New Chapter

The end of July marked another anniversary of Lumanti's founding—a moment always warmly celebrated by its team members, well-wishers, and community partners. This year's celebration was especially meaningful, as Lumanti officially moved into its own office space for the first time in its 31-year history. The building, constructed over the past few years, was purposefully designed to house the Lumanti office. It will also serve as ACHR's base and address in Kathmandu, further cementing the Secretariat's presence in Nepal.

The milestone was commemorated during Lumanti's annual day, where the team shared highlights and reflections on achievements from 2023–2024. The event was graced by Somsook, who joined as chief guest and congratulated Lumanti on more than three decades of impactful, community-centered work. She reflected on the organization's ability to evolve with changing times and challenges, while consistently uplifting the voices of the poor and marginalized—particularly those living in slums and informal settlements.

While in Nepal, Somsook also met with the new Minister of Urban Development and delivered presentations to key government officials and civil society representatives. She stressed the importance of decentralizing housing development through broad, participatory collaboration among cities, communities, civil society, and the private sector. She also called for a shift toward a more hybrid development approach—one that combines institutional support with the scaling up of community-driven solutions.



FROM THE ACHR SECRETARIAT



Throughout 2024, the ACHR Secretariat continued its mission from its two vibrant bases in Bangkok and Kathmandu. Somsook has been sharing her time between the dynamic collective housing movement in the region and the crucial work with CODI, where significant milestones are being reached in Thailand. Natvipa (Nat) has been managing the administrative tasks with her usual efficiency, while Angkana (Jim) ensures the meticulous management of ACHR's finances.

In Kathmandu, the Secretariat team has been at the forefront of shaping the direction of ACHR's programs, with Lajana, as Secretary, providing guidance and leadership to every partnership and initiative. Lumanti has been coordinating the Model Cities project and expanding ACHR's reach through a series of engagements with international networks.



After nearly three years in Thailand, Marina returned to Greece in late September, from where she continues to coordinate projects and support the Coalition partners from afar. And Tom, back in Portland, continues to be one of the satellites of the Secretariat, helping with write-ups and collecting stories from across Asia.

The teamwork and dedication across both bases continue to drive forward ACHR's mission, ensuring that the momentum for collective action and community-driven housing solutions remains strong and impactful across the region.

- Somsook, Lajana, Lumanti, Marina, Nat, Jim and Tom



ACHR E-News is a publication of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights. This issue was edited by Marina Kolovou Kouri, with heartfelt thanks to Lajana, Lumanti, Ranjith, Elisa, and Hieu for their contributions; to all Coalition partners for their ongoing dedication, shared learning, photographs, and stories; to Somsook for her guidance; to all partners and donors who made these initiatives possible; and to the community networks across Asia for continuing to lead the way in transforming their cities.