

# ACHR e-news

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

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

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## A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2024 TO ACHR FRIENDS

Season's Greetings from the ACHR Secretariat, spanning from Bangkok to Kathmandu! As another year draws to a close, we extend our gratitude and warmest wishes to all our friends, partners, donors, and allies. May the coming year be filled with health, happiness, and a vibrant spirit of community-led progress! As we bid farewell to 2023, let's pause to celebrate every milestone and every resilient step forward. Join us for a recap of the small victories, transformative projects, and impactful partnerships that have defined this year's journey.



## A LONG OVERDUE REGIONAL MEETING



After gradually emerging from the pandemic-induced hiatus, the Coalition gathered in Kathmandu, Nepal, in January 2023. Hosted by Lumanti Support Group for Shelter, the meeting drew nearly 40 participants from 14 countries. Among them were community leaders and representatives from our partner organizations in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. The meeting also welcomed local government officials, CSOs, NGOs, our new partners from the International Society for Urban Health, and virtually joined sessions by urbaMonde.

The gathering facilitated lots of insightful discussions on collective housing advancements and various related topics, intending to steer our regional movement towards new directions. We also had the opportunity to visit community upgrading

projects in Lubhu and Siddhipur, two wards nestled in Mahalaxmi, on Kathmandu's outskirts, and met with representatives of the Community Women's Forum, who proudly shared their progress, initiatives, and future prospects. You can catch a glimpse of this regional meeting in this short [clip](#).

### Witnessing real citywide transformation

After the workshop in Kathmandu, many participants continued their journey to Kalaiya, a small town in the southern region of the country. There, Lumanti Support Group for Shelter has been supporting a citywide movement of poor communities, their organization into a women-led cooperative network, and their linkages with the incredibly active and resourceful youth group called the Urban Poverty Alleviation Forum (UPAF).

In Kalaiya, we visited some of the most recent settlement upgrading projects, joined discussions with the local youth, and attended a colorful ceremony in the presence of local authorities. The trip to Kalaiya gave us all valuable insights into how marginalized communities have gained better access to flexible finance, upgraded their houses, implemented much-needed infrastructure, and elevated their recognition as valued citizens within this ongoing transformative process. One of the recent upgrading processes in Kalaiya—that of the Bhaura community—has been thoroughly documented by Lumanti in this [case study](#).



## CONTINUING THE GOOD REGIONAL WORK

### A NEW STAGE FOR COLLECTIVE HOUSING IN ASIA

This year has been a period of groundwork for greater endeavors, including the expansion of our collaboration with urbaMonde, Switzerland—a commitment that was renewed in July 2023 thanks to the generous support of the Geneva Federation for Cooperation and Development (FGC). This new phase aims to broaden the reach of the regional collective housing movement, spanning more countries and facilitating more exchanges and learning across Asia. It's designed to support strategic initiatives in each location, enhancing and amplifying local and regional efforts in advancing collective housing. This involves strengthening capacities, fostering partnerships and networks, and advocating for increased recognition and support for collective housing and habitat production.



This regional movement in a common direction holds tremendous value. As Somsook puts it, *"Imagine a garden with a multitude of flowers; you needn't limit yourself to just one. There's immense value in learning from others' knowledge and beauty. Our collaborative work spans across several countries, engaging in various regional activities to generate momentum. At times, we may feel disheartened, but witnessing the initiatives of other countries and friends rejuvenates us, inspires, and sparks change."*



#### New partnerships between urbaMonde and ACHR members

We're also thrilled that urbaMonde and FGC, in this new stage, have expanded their international cooperation with three of our Coalition members: the Urban Poor Consortium (UPC) in Indonesia, the Platform of Community Action and Architecture in Bangladesh (POCAA), and the Philippine Action for Community-led Shelter Initiatives (PACSII) in the Philippines. These country teams have structured ambitious, multi-city actions and strategies, closely tied to the regional movement and aiming to expand and deepen collective housing practices within their specific contexts. This involves advocacy efforts, empowering and building the capacity of communities, professionals, and governments, and establishing robust partnerships across various scales. The

UPC project has already started in full force, with exchanges across cities, meetings with local and national government officials, and training for cooperatives, while POCAA and PACSII are soon to follow suit!

### ACCELERATING CITY EQUITY (ACE) PROJECT COMING TO AN END

After two years, the 'Accelerating City Equity' project, conducted in collaboration with the International Society for Urban Health (ISUH) with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is coming to a close. In 2023, during the regional meeting held in Nepal, a dedicated day allowed us to delve into how the combined efforts of communities and Coalition partners address various aspects of urban health. Discussions encompassed individual physical and mental well-being, sustainability of ecosystems, promotion of healthy living environments, and fostering strong urban economies.

Most of the cases studied under this initiative, referred to as "bright spots," along with numerous examples from around the world, are showcased on the [project's website](#). Additional resources, including videos, masterclasses, and an 'Equity into Action Starter Kit,' will soon be available online.

ACHR's involvement in the project concluded with participation at the [International Conference on Urban Health](#), organized by ISUH in Atlanta from November 6-9. Representing ACHR, Ruby Haddad from the Homeless People's Federation in the Philippines, Dian Irawaty from Rujak Center for Urban Studies in Indonesia, and Mahmuda Alam from POCAA in Bangladesh actively engaged in discussions, emphasizing the pivotal role of marginalized communities in catalyzing change, addressing urban health concerns, and improving their living conditions and cities.



## NEW PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE COALITION

### ACTION RESEARCH ON YOUTH AND DIGITAL MEDIA



Under the TYPCities umbrella—a three-year research program funded by Fondation Botnar—the University of Sheffield, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and ACHR joined hands to initiate an impactful action-research project. Titled “Co-Constructing Neighbourhoods Fit for Diverse Young People: Civic Media Technologies for Equitable Urban Governance,” this project aims to explore the influence of various digital technologies on urban governance through empirical evidence and analytical insights. It focuses on Dharan in Nepal and Bhuj in India, collaborating respectively with Lumanti Support Group for Shelter and Hunnarshala Foundation, and working closely alongside local universities.



The outcomes of this 2.5-year project, which commenced in September, aim not only to benefit Dharan and Bhuj but also to provide valuable insights for other city programs promoting youth engagement in urban governance. To kick off the project, a workshop was held in Basel, Switzerland, on October 5-6. The workshop convened all five TYPCities research consortia worldwide, fostering a shared understanding and exchanges among project partners. Representing our consortium, the event was attended by Stephanie Butcher from the University of Sheffield, Lumanti Joshi from Lumanti Support Group for Shelter, and Aditya Singh from Hunnarshala Foundation.

### JOINING HANDS TO BEAT THE HEAT IN ASIA'S COMMUNITIES

We're thrilled to announce our new partnership with the ClimateWorks Foundation, a US-based non-profit dedicated to mitigating global warming. Under their Clean Cooling Collaborative program, we've developed an innovative project focused on devising passive cooling solutions tailored for poor settlements. In a year marked by record-breaking temperatures across Asia, this initiative stands as both relevant and urgent. We're eager to work closely with local communities, academic and government partners, and young professionals from the Community Architects Network to delve into how people are grappling with heat, understanding its impact, and devising sound, safe, and affordable solutions to retrofit or adapt their homes and communities for a healthier living environment. This cooling project is scheduled to start in early 2024, encompassing 8 countries with diverse climatic conditions and housing contexts, promising plenty of cross-learning opportunities among India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines.



## ACHR ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

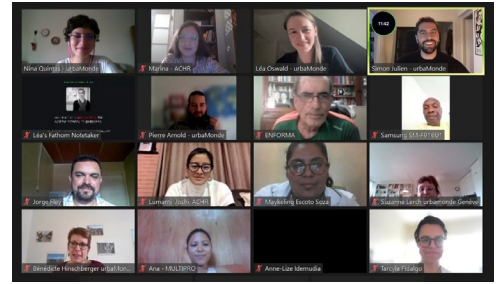
### OUR LINKAGES TO THE COHABITAT NETWORK



The year 2023 has been marked by vibrant collaboration alongside our partners at [CoHabitat](#), a global network of CSOs promoting people-led solutions to the housing crisis, led by urbaMonde. Representing ACHR, Lumanti Joshi joined the CoHabitat annual meeting held in Barcelona, Spain, which served as a pivotal moment for reflecting on and fortifying the Network's development. Beyond engaging discussions and setting strategic directions, the annual meeting was an invigorating and inspiring encounter, uniting allies from across the globe.

Coinciding with this meeting was the 4th International Social Housing Festival (ISHF). Its focus was on extracting lessons from established and evolving housing systems in response to emerging global social and economic challenges, with a particular emphasis on Southern Europe. The event drew substantial participation from Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa, facilitating a diverse exchange of ideas and experiences among over 200 organizations. Attendees also had the opportunity to explore various cooperative housing initiatives in Barcelona.

ACHR also engaged in a collaborative effort to document and systematize experiences in community mobilization and capacity building alongside CoHabitat members Multipro (Nicaragua), FUCVAM (Uruguay), Catalytic Communities (Brazil), and urbaSEN (Senegal). Our focus was on documenting the "5 Model Cities" experience, a process derived from the infamous ACCA methodology. Its aim was to stimulate citywide transformations and foster stronger communities through strategic housing and infrastructure interventions. The collective insights from these discussions will culminate in a report, scheduled for release early next year. We're excited to share the outcomes with you!



## ACHR AT THE ASIA-PACIFIC URBAN AND HOUSING FORUMS



This year, the 8th Asia-Pacific Urban Forum (APUF) and 9th Asia-Pacific Housing Forum (APHF) were held in Suwon, South Korea. With financial support from UN-ESCAP and Habitat for Humanity (HfH), an ACHR delegation consisting of community leaders, organizers, and professionals, took part in these events: Lumanti, Bina, and Laxmitara from Nepal; Mahmuda and Kulsum from Bangladesh; and Ruby, Ericka, and Nerissa from the Philippines.



A highlight of these gatherings was the Grassroots Assembly, jointly organized by ACHR in collaboration with the Huairou Commission (HC), FANSA, and Slum Dwellers International (SDI). This assembly served as a platform uniting community representatives from the region, enabling them to voice concerns, build solidarity, and establish partnerships. The discussions covered diverse topics such as community finance, government collaborations, and recent ACHR initiatives. Additionally, a panel discussion specifically focused on community engagement involved contributions from representatives of HfH, HC, Habitat International Coalition, ACHR, and SDI. Insights and recommendations gathered from these discussions were synthesized into a declaration, emphasizing the importance of grassroots integration and active involvement in developmental processes.

*"On behalf of the urban poor communities across the Asia Pacific region, we stand together today to voice our aspirations, hopes, and concerns as we gather here at the Asia Pacific Urban Forum. We believe that in order to achieve true sustainable development and inclusive urbanization, it is essential to give a voice to those who are often marginalized and forgotten - the urban poor. We recognize that urbanization brings about both opportunities and challenges. While cities hold the potential for economic growth, improved infrastructure, and enhanced living conditions, they also perpetuate inequalities and exclusion, pushing the most vulnerable members of society into the shadows of urban life. As we discuss strategies and policies to shape the future of our cities, we urge you to keep the needs and rights of the urban poor at the forefront of these discussions."*

Click [here](#) to view the full declaration of the Grassroots Assembly.

## FROM THE ACHR SECRETARIAT

In our own Secretariat news, the operations of ACHR will continue jointly with teams in Bangkok and Kathmandu. Following several rounds of discussions, this appears to be the most reasonable path forward, with the organization's administrative and financial base remaining in Thailand while increasingly sharing coordination responsibilities with the Nepal team. In Bangkok, discussions about retirement persist, although Somsook has committed to dedicating herself to the coordination of the regional collective housing movement for at least another year. Natvipa ("Nat") also continues her part-time commitment to various administrative and office management tasks, demonstrating unparalleled proficiency in locating documents and files throughout the office. Pakorn ("Chai") retired in June, leaving a noticeable absence in the office. Another longstanding friend of ACHR, Angkana ("Jim"), has joined the team part-time to oversee finances and general administration. Marina, as the sole full-time ACHR member, has been settling into the role of regional coordinator and documenter of Coalition activities. Over in Kathmandu, Lumanti has been providing support for regional coordination and serving as an ACHR ambassador, participating in meetings and conferences worldwide. Meanwhile, Lajana has embraced the crucial role of key coordinator for ACHR with dedication, grace, and fresh ideas.

For all of us, 2023 has been a year of learning, planning, and strategizing, as well as expanding and revitalizing partnerships. A heartfelt thank you goes out to all our supporters and partners! We are eagerly anticipating a new year filled with collective and community-led action!

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