

Assessing ACCA in NEPAL

This is Diane's report on the joint assessment trip to visit ACCA projects being carried out around Nepal, November 22-25, 2010

This report describes a four-day assessment visit to two cities in Nepal with very active ACCA projects in process - Bharatpur and Birgunj. This was the fifth ACCA assessment trip (after visits to the Philippines, Vietnam, Mongolia and Cambodia). ACHR's ACCA Program (Asian Coalition for Community Action) entered its third year in November 2010. This assessment trip, and the ACHR / ACCA Committee meeting that was held in Kathmandu immediately afterwards, was organized and hosted by the Kathmandu-based NGO Lumanti, along with the two community federations and the national network of women's savings cooperatives in Nepal.

The assessment visit took place in late November, 2010 and was a chance for teams of community leaders and their support organizations from eight other countries (Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Philippines, Thailand and Japan) - all of whom are involved in implementing their own city-wide ACCA upgrading projects - to meet their peers in Nepal who are doing projects, learn more about the projects, see how they are progressing, compare notes and discuss together what the strong and weak points of the projects have been. The assessment trip was also a chance for all the Nepali groups doing ACCA projects in six cities to visit each other's work and join in the ongoing discussions about all the projects we visited. On the last day, they all returned to Kathmandu for an evening session reviewing the assessment trip. (participant list at the end of the report)

SCHEDULE OF PROJECT VISITS :

BHARATPUR (23 - 24 November)

- Inauguration of the new Urban Community Support Fund in Bharatpur, at the Municipality
- Salayani Community (Big ACCA housing Project) and meeting with savings group
- Lanku Community (small ACCA project - earth drain and biogas)
- Meeting with the Amerdeep Women's Savings Cooperative and the two federations at the Urban Community Resource Center, in the Ganeshsthan Community.

BIRGUNJ (24- 25 November)

- Meeting on the ACCA process in Birgunj at the Municipality, with the Municipality, ACCA PMC and UPES
- Shanti Tole Community (Big ACCA housing project)
- Tara Chand School (small ACCA project to construct children's latrines)
- Bhagwati Tole Community (small ACCA project to repair drains)
- Gahawa Tole Community (small ACCA project)

KATHMANDU (25 - 27 November)

- Evening reflection session at the Everest Hotel about the assessment visits (Nov 25)
- Kirtipur Housing Project (pre-ACCA relocation project for evicted riverside squatters)

ACCA BUDGET APPROVED IN NEPAL (as of January 1, 2010)

(All figures in US\$)

Disaster	City / District	Total budget approved	Big projects	Small projects	City process	Underst anding cities	Other city and national pro-cesses	Disaster	Com-munity savings and fund
NEPAL	Bharatpur	58,000	40,000	15,000 (5)	3,000				
	Biratnagar	58,000	40,000	15,000 (6)	3,000				
	Birgunj	63,000	40,000	15,000 (5)	3,000		5,000		
	Kohalpur	58,000	40,000	15,000 (5)	3,000				
	Ratnanagar	58,000	40,000	15,000 (5)	3,000				
	Koshi	15,000	15,000						
	Country-wide survey	16,100					16,100		
	Federation building	5,000					5,000		
	Nat. process support (x2)	20,000					20,000		

TOTAL (6 cities)	Total 6 cities	\$ 351,100	\$ 215,000	75,000	15,000		46,100		
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(Somsook) In our modern development world, the assessment of development projects tends to be done by high-level professionals from outside, who come in suits and ties. They x-ray you and measure the worthiness of the work you are doing by the prevailing development theories. And most of the time, this external x-ray of an internal process ends up missing most of the depth and the real nature of our processes, which they usually can't understand.

- **We want to change this model of assessment**, into a process in which each group assesses themselves, and then their peers in the region who are doing a similar process, see each other, visit each other's projects, learn from each other, advise each other and help each other make their process stronger. And in the process of assessing others, these groups assess themselves, so the assessment process is a communal one, a two-way assessment of learning on both sides.
- **Now it's time to prepare a good report on these five assessments so far** : This concept may sound good to our international friends, who can't deny the logic of this approach. But they are waiting to see the results of this more horizontal, more collective assessment process. So we have to conclude the assessment, and send them an highly professional report on this new style of assessment - which has now covered five countries (Philippines, Vietnam, Mongolia, Cambodia and Nepal).
- **If it works well, we can then try to institutionalize this new way of assessment, from the ground up.** I think it is important, because in itself, it is a development fight in the development world. We developed this people-driven assessment as part of the ACCA Program, and it coincides with the whole concept of what ACCA is about - which is spreading out from the people, decentralizing.

5th ACCA Assessment Trip - Nepal (November 22-27th, 2010)

Introductory meeting at the Everest Hotel in Kathmandu

- There are 58 municipalities in Nepal + Kathmandu + "emerging" cities
- Kathmandu Valley has a population of about 4 million, of which 1.2 million are in Kathmandu Municipality.

Prafulla presented the constraints facing urban development in Nepal:

- No investment in urban areas, no money for urban issues.
- There are 30,000 NGOs in Nepal, but only 3 or 4 work in urban areas, while of the 246 INGOs in Nepal, only 3 or 4 work in urban areas. There is no money for urban issues.
- Kathmandu's population has increased in size 4 times and there is no coping mechanism to deal with this huge growth.
- Planning began in Nepal only in the 1960s, but now there is virtually no planning.
- Land speculation means land costs have gone up 300 - 400% in the last three years.
- Too many organizations are managing the valley, which includes 5 cities: 256 ministries, all with their own departments, lots of crooks, corruption, and positions being changed and people being transferred all the time, so there is no continuity.
- The housing sector is mostly informal. 80% of the buildings in Kathmandu don't follow any formal building codes or planning regulations. Rules and regulations are not followed with any seriousness, and there is no enforcement of building codes or bylaws.
- Slums are increasing: 10% of the urban population in Kathmandu lives in squatter settlements. Between 1985 and 2010, the number of poor settlements tripled and their population increased by 1,000%. There is no unity in the new squatter settlements, no transport, no infrastructure, no open space. But there is now a much higher confidence among squatters, more pucca houses. . No legal framework to upgrade squatter settlements yet (but there is a new MOU).
- Nepal is the 6th most vulnerable country to global warming.
- World Bank Project to support "emerging" municipalities: US\$ 35 million (a loan to Nepal!) for this project in six small towns!

Somsook: *Your presentation is like a description of a disaster!* Weak state, no chance to get the government to understand. But this situation can be taken advantage of to build a new relationship between the poor and the government and other actors, and ACCA is a tool to help change this situation by changing things on the ground, by people, from the bottom up - not too much on "changing the government's mind."

Lajana: *There are many problems, yes, but :*

- Communities are more organized now, they're linked together, they have the strength of their savings and credit movement, which is spreading around the country now.
- There is good partnership between poor communities and their cities and national government departments. Local government is now more supportive than before and there are now a few successful projects which show a new way (especially in Bharatpur, Birgunj and Kathmandu).
- Lumanti is an action-oriented NGO that is working to involve all the stakeholders

- Lumanti's work was evaluated by the Social Welfare Council recently. They recommended that the ACCA model be replicated in other cities, and in rural areas too, and recommended allocating national budget for this.

Prafulla: *So far, ACCA is being implemented in 5 cities.* It's a small investment, but it's already having a very big impact. These municipalities are already pushing to expand the program and the approach, both within their cities and into other cities. But we need more NGOs to support this expansion. Lumanti doesn't have the capacity!

Somsook: *You are looking at the government and the NGOs, not the people!*

- **What about the people's sector?** The changing people's sector in Nepal is so important! Now the country is going through a transformation into a new political system. Nobody knows how it will come out, but everyone realizes there is a big change happening.
- **People's power is becoming quite active and frustrated at the same time.** The civil war has woken people up and they won't go back to sleep now! How can this people's sector become a new delivery system for the correct solution? Like in Bharatpur, where people plan and do and implement, and the local government and other actors support them to do that. It's a new management system, and it starts with the people's system and makes that the main focus.

Nandasiri: *Instead of relying on more and more NGOs, spread out more cooperatives!* This change has to be done by people. You already have a strong start with your cooperatives in Nepal. Lumanti supports 20 cooperatives around the country now - these are the systems that are truly run by the people. The NGO can move into the background and let the people come forward. They can lobby and speak to the government and spread out this idea of people being the ones to plan and do. They can change the minds of the political parties!

Lajana: There have been no elected local governments for 7 years now. Now only Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), who are bureaucrats appointed by the central government. They have little power by themselves. They need to get the agreement and support from the political parties represented in that city to do anything.

- The political parties are recognizing that the land and housing issue is important, and recognizing that people want to see real change. So far, no real change and the parties are in the hot seat, they're feeling guilty. They see this ACCA project and see it as a good example of real change on the ground, so they support and agree with it. The ACCA program has helped change their attitudes.
- There are three main parties in Nepal now : The Congress Party, the Communist Party (the less extreme) and the Maoists (more extreme)
- Maoists are better fighters than managers : When the Maoists took over running the country, they couldn't manage! No improvements, no change. And the bureaucracy stayed the same and resisted any change initiated by the Maoists, so there was a kind of deadlock. Nothing could happen, the system ground to a halt.
- But this national stagnation had the unexpected result of the city process becoming much more lively and dynamic, with new possibilities.

QUESTION : *Is there a city development plan for Kathmandu?* (Prafulla) Yes, we have plans, but no master plan or land use plan. Everyone has the right to build on the land they own. No land-use restrictions now, no regulations.

Somsook: We come back here to Nepal after almost two years, to see how the work that began here is going. Because Nepal has the answer of the right way to go...

IDEA: To do a study of the informal rental market in Kathmandu.

- **Rental rooms in Kathmandu :** There is a thriving informal market of rental rooms in Kathmandu. In the city center, it costs about Rs 1,000 - 1,500 per month to rent a room. The poor feel this is too expensive! This informal rental market absorbs a lot of the demand for cheap housing in the valley. Migrants from the Terai areas and from India - mostly single men, rent one room and share the rent between 10 or 15 men, who just use the room for sleeping. And middle class families who build new houses for their joint families (like Sajana), often build a couple of rental rooms to offset the high-cost of construction and land and help pay for the houses. And they have no problem finding tenants. Even in squatter areas, there are rooms for rent. And even in Dalit (untouchable caste) squatter areas, there are rental rooms for dalit families, for as little as Rs 300 - 400 per month.
- **The "Buti" land system of common land:** In the past, when there was lots of land and very few people, there was a system of commonly-owned land, called Buti Land. The system was embedded in local culture, no written rules. Land used for common purposes, festivals, temples. Buti land could not be bought or sold, and belonged to everyone. Looked after by a trust, or by the village. But those old systems are breaking down now.
- **Agricultural land being converted to other uses:** As more and more people migrate into the city and land prices go up, farmers sell off their land, or build rental rooms on it, and can make easy money, easier than the hard work of farming! Big change!
- **The case of Mustang District:** Mustang is one of the 75 Districts in Nepal, in the hilly areas. They still have their own raja (king) and administer themselves as a somewhat independent area. Nobody from outside Mustang is allowed to buy or sell land in the district. The Maoists have proposed a federal system for Nepal, in which each district is more independent, with administrative divisions determined by ethnic groups, etc.

BHARATPUR :

ACCA in Bharatpur :

- ACCA support: 3.3 million rupees for housing and small projects
- Bharatpur is a city with a population of 130,000 people, or 17,496 households.
- The city has a growth rate of 7.1%
- There are 26 poor communities in the city, housing 8,380 people.

Meeting at the Municipality

This meeting was attended by representatives of the Nepali Congress Party, the CPMN, Mali and other parties; the leader of the Squatters Federation of Nepal (Basobas) for Bharatpur; and a representative of the Nepal Mahila Women's Cooperative for Bharatpur. While the inauguration of Bharatpur's Urban Community Support Fund was expected, the granting of a cheque from the municipality was a welcome surprise!

New "Urban Community Support Fund" (UCSF) launched today in Bharatpur: The idea came from the Urban Poor Community Support Fund in Kathmandu, and is being replicated here. We've been planning to launch the new fund for some time, and the Municipality promised to contribute to it, but Lajana didn't know the CEO was going to give the cheque today! The Basobas Squatters Federation will be the secretariat of the new fund. City donates 5 million Rupees (about US\$ 75,000), as announced by the CEO Ramji Prasad Baral, today. The lighting of an oil lamp by Somsook and the CEO to ceremonially launch the fund, in the Nepali style.

- **Unlocking local funds:** Bharatpur was one of three municipalities included in a UNDP "Rural-urban partnerships" project in Nepal. The project provided money for a revolving loan fund in the city. But that money never revolved, so the money was just kept "in the safe" in the municipality, which was afraid if they lent it out, it would never come back. So after the success of the ACCA, they decided to open up the safe! So the source of this 5 million Rupee contribution to the new fund is from this UNDP project. (Biratnagar is another city that has this UNDP revolving fund money, but in that city, they haven't yet "opened up the safe" to the people, and are keeping it under tight control - which means NOT using it!).
- **How the new fund will work:** The UCSF will support projects conceived and implemented by the urban poor in Bharatpur, by providing loans (for land, housing and income generation) and grants (for sanitation and infrastructure projects).
- **Management of the fund :** The local chapter of the Basobas Squatter Federation will act as the secretariat of the new fund, the disbursements and loan repayments will be managed by the women's savings cooperative, and the mayor (CEO) will act as chairman. The managing committee will include four community representatives.

Mr. Ramji Prasad Baral, CEO of Bharatpur Municipality: we are inaugurating the Bharatpur Urban Community Support Fund today. This Fund arises as a result of one year of ACCA in Bharatpur, and also with the support of the various political parties. It is hoped that the fund will allow extension of support to other communities. Today we are handing over a cheque of 5 million rupees (70,000 USD) from the Municipality over to the local representative of Basobas. This will be a community-led fund, to be managed by the people. This is an occasion to celebrate, and every year we will celebrate the anniversary of the creation of this fund, which is a joint effort of the municipality and political parties.

- **We have been in partnership with Lumanti since 2005.** Now, with ACCA, we have 5 infrastructure projects and one housing project at Salyani. We've learnt that people can bring positive change by working together. This Fund will be a new development of partnership. People now have access to government funds, and this is an opportunity for income generation activities at the community level. Thinking of the future of the fund, we need to look at other possible sources of funding: NGOs and the UN, the government, as well as income from the repayment of loans with interest, and interest earned on money in the bank account.

Political party representative: Together we are able to establish this fund. We are happy to be a part of this event today. There are many squatters in Bharatpur and I'd like to see them benefit from this fund, also so that they become equal citizens and are not squatters.

Another political party representative: I hope that all countries can provide support so that Bharatpur becomes a slum-free city.

Third political party representative: Political parties and the municipality made this fund possible. However, it should not be limited to municipality support, but should also receive support from the central government.

Fourth political party representative: I have an assurance from the central government of their support of this fund. The Parties and the municipality have really achieved a lot with this fund, but it doesn't end here. Work has to continue, and we need cooperation and support of the people to achieve a slum-free city.

Nandasiri comments: Sri Lanka established a fund a few years ago. We have a belief in the ability of the poor to fight for their own destiny, but they can achieve more with the support of the municipality and government. Therefore, today is a historic day for Bharatpur.

Mr. Mann Chhoeurn (Cambodia UPDF) speaks : We never see this kind of politics in Cambodia! I am very impressed with the unity I see here, between all the different political parties and all the stakeholders in this city, who have all come together to work together to solve the problems of the poor in the city. ACCA is very small money, but it works like a kind of glue to stick all these different parts together, to make a whole.

Rama, from the Women's Coop of Bharatpur: We started our savings group by saving 20 rupees a month. Our savings have really grown, we increased to 50 rupees then 100 rupees, and now we have the support of the fund. I hope the fund will be easily accessible to the poor. Thank you to the parties and the municipality for their consultative effort, and I hope this day will be celebrated every year!

Shabi, Secretary of Basobas in Bharatpur: Today is a big festival for the poor. The government has put its trust in people to manage the fund. Because this fund is exclusively for the poor, it engages all the stakeholders to manage the fund properly.

Political party representative: the fund will play a major role in improving the lives of the urban poor. Let's not limit this to speeches. Next time people come to visit Bharatpur, we need to have some concrete results to show.

Somsook comments: The creation of the fund is a very important step to have achieved in one year. Bharatpur was the birthplace of ACCA, and it has a high potential to demonstrate how ACCA can work. We were worried whether the project in Salyani would work, as it was such a challenge: squatters, forest encroachment, and road widening... But now Salyani has paved the way for the city. When we came here almost two years ago, ACCA was just an idea on paper. But the city process clearly had potential to prove how the ACCA program works, and we approved the ACCA project in Bharatpur to show how the city and the poor can work together. ACCA keeps going in more than 100 cities around Asia, and so we can say that from Bharatpur, this good process has expanded to 100 cities.

- And now, when we come back here after two years, we can see how much the city has developed. So good to see this big progress! Very important not only that city-wide upgrading has started, but the the project has shown in the case of Salyani: very poor, illegal, encroaching on forest land, about to be evicted for a road building project. So many problems there! We supported the big project proposal at Salyani, but we all worried about it.
- But now we find that not only has the Salyani situation been turned around, but other communities have also changed, the municipality has changed, other political parties have changed, and the city has given money to support a new people's fund! We feel so happy to see that all that has happened. So in this very unclear government situation in Nepal now, Bharatpur is showing a new possibility, a new kind of collaborative democracy, a new kind of politics. Thanks to all of you for showing us this new possibility.
- Your friends in the larger Asian family would love to see this continue, because this is a genuine Asian solution.
- Today shows a new kind of government, where the city and the politics are in support of the people - it's a new politics of collaboration. With new, people-managed finance, it's a new democracy, a delegation of responsibility. Therefore, Bharatpur is demonstration how we can go from project to citywide processes, to new collaborations, and new politics!

Land tenure security has been achieved in three squatter settlements in Bharatpur so far:

- **Salyani** - 31 households (which is still in the process)
- **Lanku** - 17 households (which has been in the process of getting land titles for many years, since the people were relocated here from the adjacent bus-park and promised land title deeds as compensation for moving).
- **Naurange** - 52 households

Possible new sources of housing and upgrading finance in Nepal - CLIFF: Homeless International is now about to start bringing CLIFF loans to Nepal (two new countries this year: Nepal and Kenya), to start in one or two pilot cities. The money comes from HI to Lumanti, and then revolves inside Nepal.

Visit to Salyani Community (BIG ACCA project)

Salyani Community has 31 houses, which are located on the edge of the forest reserve.

- Rs. 54,000 for toilets
- Rs. 240,000 for housing
- Rs. 165,000 from the municipality
- Rs. 93,750 from the Community Forest Department (in wood)

Woman savings leader speaks: It was very difficult to start, to initiate, to save, to think, to plan. We didn't believe in any outside organizations, which kept coming and going, with no real change. First Lumanti came here and did a toilet project (30 toilets with soak pits shared between 2 toilets, Nad helped design), but only on the condition that we started to save. Lumanti gave us only the materials for the pans and the soak-pits - we had to build our own enclosures and finish the toilets. Now Lumanti and the ACCA project are helping us to get good houses. Before we stayed in houses that were only bamboo and mud, with no windows and thatch roofs that were full of snakes and frogs and insects. Now there are no snakes in our houses, and we're warmer also. Now the savings groups can get loans for income generation and small projects. Women do it all - we pay back the housing loans every month, on the first day of each month.

- **Good support from the Women's Cooperative and the Urban Community Resource Center (UCRC)**, which discussed the project each month and helped us advocate in the community. The UCRC is a forum in the city for the urban poor. Last week we discussed the new Urban community support fund at the UCRC meeting. We use this UCRC forum to disseminate info, share news on housing, education, etc. After each meeting, we print small fliers with info about what was discussed in the meetings, with the main points, to post in settlements around town.

- **The maximum loan per house is 100,000 Rupees.**

Everyone sings the "Sanitation Song" *"No more open defecation for me! We build our own latrines, etc. etc."* (This local hit has been recorded by the Salyani youth, in a recording studio, and broadcast on the local radio!)

Somsook speaks: Congratulations. The new community is very beautiful, and the houses you have built look very strong and dignified! They are dignified because you have built them yourselves, and made them cheaper using your own ingenuity and are paying for them with your own savings. Through this project, you have solved many problems. This community came so far because of support from the Municipality and the political parties. The project went very fast, and it is a real concrete achievement for all of you, and for the city you are a proud part of. We will all bring back this happiness to our own countries.

Community Forest Department representative: We were happy to support the people at Salyani, who are staying on community forest land. And we are happy to support also the other small upgrading projects in other settlements. But there are still problems of low and irregular income here - need to work on income generation, still very poor people here.

Ofelia (HPFP) speaks: You're lucky you have the Municipality to support you. Not in the Philippines!

Ramji Prasad CEO speaks: Promises to build a pre-school here in Salyani soon.

The house that 2 pigs built : Story of the lady who built her simple house without any loan, using only the money she earned by raising a pig for one year! She then sold the pig for 20,000 rupees, which was the cost of her new house. She used traditional technology of bamboo and mud, but with a higher ceiling, tin sheet roofing (instead of thatch) and a good plan with two rooms and a side hall. She has planted a pumpkin vine on the roof to keep the house cool. She's very proud, even though her house is not concrete and brick like the others. But the community doesn't like her raising pigs, because it smells too bad, though she can make much more money raising pigs than goats. Nad proposes to organize a community wide solution to allow place for pig raising, because it is a very good income spinner for the poor households, for example with a biogas digester.

The 20,000 rupee house : The mud house's neighbor is rather grander, with three rooms, made of brick: the lady who lives in this bigger house is the treasurer of the Salyani savings group. She explains that she got a 100,000 rupee loan from ACCA, and the house cost 300,000 rupees in total. The shortfall she borrowed from another savings group of which she is a member. As the land was very low, it needed infilling. She's already repaid a quarter of the ACCA loan. Her husband's wages from the police force go towards repaying the loans, while her income of 250 rupees a day as a labourer is used to cover household expenses. She says that the cooperative has educated her about the value of savings, and allows her to take loans, so she may open a small shop.

Salyani housing loans: The loans are given at 7% interest (which includes 4% which goes back into the cooperative's loan pool, 1% which supports the activities of the ACCA Project Management Committee, and 2% which returns to the community members as a dividend)

Visit to the Lanku Community (small ACCA projects)

(we visit after dark) This community benefits from a biogas plant built before the ACCA project, with Lumanti support. The biogas is piped into only 6 houses in the community, and those households pay 250 rupees per month for the biogas, which is enough to cook for about 3 hours, twice each day. There isn't enough biogas generated to supply all the families, and they have to buy and add animal dung to make it work - their own kitchen and toilet wastes are not enough. But it is environmentally friendly, non-polluting and very clean cooking fuel.

The ACCA project here was the construction of a drain running down the front of the houses. This area is sloping and so flooded easily - the drain solves this problem. As the residents use the area near the drain to grow plants, it was decided to build the drain out of large stones rather than concrete, leaving space for earth to grow plants in. It is also a cheaper solution. Additionally, a meeting room has been built, and it's used for the women's group, as well as for children's activities.

Meeting at the Urban Community Resource Center (UCRC) in Ganesthan

The Urban Community Resource Center (UCRC) is a small office located in the sprawling Ganesthan Slum, on the outskirts of Bharatpur. This office is the headquarters of the UCRC, which is not really an organization, but a forum for discussion, exchange and mutual support for the people's process in Bharatpur. The center was built by community people, the wood for the roof structure was donated by the Community Forest Department, and the structure was paid for by Misereor project funds to Lumanti.

Background on development activities in Bharatpur:

- Misereor support (through Lumanti) to support various activities which helped get the process in Bharatpur going: organizational development, managing this UCRC, education, sports, health, kids, water and sanitation, infrastructure.
- In total so far, these activities are going on in 12 poor communities in Bharatpur.
- Water Aid also gave some funds for water and sanitation projects in these communities.

The people's process in Bharatpur (and in other cities) divides itself into three distinct organizations : All three of these organizations network with each other, and meet regularly at the Urban Community Resource Center - which is a forum, not a membership organization.

- The National Federation of Squatter Communities (*Nepal Basobas Basti Samrochan Samaj*)
- The National Women's Federation (*Nepal Mahila Ekta Samaj*)
- *The Amardeep Women's Savings Cooperatives*

ACCA in Bharatpur :

- **The Squatters Federation helped select communities for projects.** Selected Salyani for the big project because of the very bad situation there - probably the poorest and most vulnerable community in the town. All the other communities agreed.
- **How ACCA finance flows :** The ACCA funds come from ACHR to Lumanti, which then forwards the funds to the city's Project Management Committee (PMC). The PMC has its headquarters in the UCRC, from where the small project grants go straight to the community savings groups, and the big project loans go through the women's savings cooperative to the community.
- While doing the small ACCA projects, the federation coordinated with other actors, like the Community Forest Department (to get free or cheap wood for the toilets). Linked also with the water supply department and other departments and support institutions in the municipality to get support for the projects. The Municipality, for example, agreed to a request to provide the land filling at Salyani and to put in two wells. Now the CEO is promising also a pre-school there.
- **A totally negative environment has become totally positive:** Before, communities in Bharatpur only dealt with their problems in isolation, by themselves. And the relationship with the municipal government was mostly antagonistic and confrontational. And the public had a negative image of the city's squatters. Now, they get more support from the whole network and even from the political parties! In this way, a totally negative environment has become a totally positive, collaborative environment.
- **The housing project at Salyani was the key ACCA project which helped build this new trust and collaborative relationship** between the poor and the municipality, and really changed attitudes.
- Now this trust we have built has led to the formation of the Urban Community Support Fund (UCSF). And with this new fund, the plans are now on to expand the Salyani housing process to other communities, which will be prioritized and selected through discussions with the communities, the municipality and the political parties. And as the loan money returns to the new fund, it will immediately revolve in loans to other communities.

"Our confidence is getting higher! The next time you come to Bharatpur, we'll have an example that is even better than Salyani. Before we had to struggle to make a fire with so little wood, but now our fire is burning brightly, we have wood, and many other communities and other cities are coming to warm their hands at the blaze!"

* And they plan to use Bharatpur as a community-municipality partnership model for other in other cities in Nepal.

WHO CONTRIBUTED WHAT TO THE ACCA PROJECTS:

1. The National Federation of Squatter Communities (Nepal Basobas Basti Samrochan Samaj) (sometimes referred to as the "Men's Federation" even though there are some women members) This national federation was started in 1991. The federation's main function is to lobby and negotiate, especially in eviction cases. They also do rallies and sit-ins, collect information and do surveys, advocacy with political parties and members of parliament and give inputs to the government discussions and policies. They also link with media and get stories about the squatter issue in the newspaper.

- The central government has a "Squatter Problem Resolution Committee" in Bharatpur, and the federation interacts with that government pane. They don't do projects, their focus is more on advocacy.
- Each district in Nepal has its own branch of the Squatters Federation. So far, active branches in 30 districts (out of total 74 in Nepal). The district committee deals with both these urban and rural squatters. Each district federation branch has a committee, each city has a federation committee and each squatter community has its own "unit committee," which the federation helps them to set up. The federation helps organize communities and includes rural and urban squatters.
- The federation is ONLY for landless squatters, not for poor communities which own their land.
- As a result of the federation's advocacy, the community at Naurange (52 households) has gotten land tenure, and the federation is working on getting land titles ("lal purja") for other communities in Bharatpur.
- Future plans: Aim to institutionalize their district organization, promote discussions on squatter problems, also to pressure government. Do training and capacity development for members. Organize coordination meetings with various stakeholders.
- Institutions in Nepal are changing constantly, so need to keep flexible, according to a very fluid situation in Nepal.

- Squatters Federation in Bharatpur has 1,308 household members (which includes ALL the households in the city's squatter settlements). About 24% or 25% of the households in Bharatpur are poor. The federation links together all these squatter settlements.

2. The National Women's Federation (Nepal Mahila Ekta Samaj) Started in 1999 in Kathmandu. The women's federation also has branches in different districts. The women's federation is also involved in advocating issues, but especially on issues of child development, health and youth groups.

3. The Amardeep Women's Savings Cooperatives: The savings cooperatives are legally registered bodies and they deal with savings and credit and income generation, housing loans, etc. The cooperatives act as an umbrella for the scattered community savings groups in a city. Each city usually has one cooperative, but there are several in the Kathmandu valley. Mostly women members, but some men join. The cooperatives have a different structure and work in different ways than the two federations, but they link together.

- **There are now 20 cooperatives in Nepal.** One cooperative in Bharatpur. The cooperatives now organize women to set up and join community savings groups. Some of the cooperative leaders also participate in the National Women's Federation.
- **The cooperative supports a variety of activities,** including income generation loans, housing improvement programs, small-scale infrastructure, health, livelihood.

Rama from Women's Cooperative: Lumanti taught us about savings, starting with 20 rs per month, in 2004. In the beginning, our savings were not much, so Lumanti gave us a loan of 15,000 rs to get us started with savings and credit. We had 13 savings groups at the beginning, each of which 15,000 rs to start with, which was not enough so it increased to 30,000 rs, and we increased our savings to 50 rs monthly. Then it reached 100 rs a month, and we reached more communities and formed more savings groups. Now, there are 31 savings groups, with 1010 members, from squatter communities. One savings group has between 15 to 50 members.

How is the Women's Cooperative managed? The Cooperative's meetings are attended by one savings group leader per savings group. Any member who wants a loan will first make a request to her group, and the group coordinator will report the group's decision back to the Women's Coop. The Coop will then assess the saving's group recommendation in the loan committee, looking at the person in question's loan records. For example, if they have saved 1000 rs, they can obtain a loan of 5000 rs, to be repaid monthly.

Somsook: This sounds like a very centralized system. The cooperative committee might not know the person in question. Why not make the decision at the savings group level? The current system means the savings groups lack power, they rely on the central cooperative.

- Answer: The savings group does the assessment and makes a recommendation to the cooperative. The savings group can also challenge the final decision and request an explanation. So far, the loan committee has never denied any applications.

QUESTION : Why does the 5 million Rupees from the Bharatpur Municipality for the new fund go to the men's federation? Why not channel all the funds through the cooperative, which has the experience managing money? (Cooperative woman answers) We all work very closely together, and this Urban Community Resource Center is like a platform for discussion, consensus building and city-wide decision-making. The decisions about how the fund will be used will be similar. The financial management of the fund (including loan repayments) will be managed by the women's savings cooperatives. Loans to communities (for land and housing) will be given by the men's federation (which is in charge of upgrading, housing and community upgrading) to the women's cooperatives, which will then pass the loans to the communities and manage the repayments to the fund. Grants for small infrastructure projects, which do not involve any repayments, will be made directly from the men's federation to the communities, without any involvement of the women's cooperative.

- This is the same way the ACCA funds are managed: The loans go through the cooperative and the grants go directly to the communities.

QUESTION: What happens if a community gets secure land tenure ("lal purja")? Do they lose their place in the squatter federation, since they are no longer squatters? (Fed guy answers) No! They will stay members, because there will still be lots of problems they face as poor communities. And if they leave the federation, we'll die! But their status changes. In Salyani, for example, once they got on track to get their land title deeds, they changed their name.

QUESTION: What is the role of the federation and the cooperative in the new Urban Community Support Fund in Bharatpur? Each community has a committee, and that committee will make requests to the UCRC (which is a platform, a forum for all the groups), which will assess the request. The UCRC then takes the application to the board of the fund (which has reps from the two federations and the cooperative). All the prioritizing will be done by the UCRC, not the fund board! Then, loans from the fund will go through the women's cooperative to manage.

QUESTION: How does the UCRC assess the requests for the fund? How to make sure that process is fair? The strategy of openness and lots of discussion, everything out in the open! Nobody knew the Municipality was going to actually give us a cheque for 5 million rupees yesterday, but we've already had a big meeting to discuss how to manage this new fund! Now the fund is there, so there will have to be many more meetings to discuss this and make sure all the communities know about the fund and how it works and how they can access it.

QUESTION: Sometimes community leaders manipulate to get loans for their own communities in the process. How to ensure the fund process is open to everyone equally? (*Woman answers*) Very true! The only solution is to maintain a lot of discussion and openness, no secret decisions, no sneaking! This is a new challenge for us to work harder.

- The ACCA-supported housing project at Salyani has been a very important direction-setting activity for us, and we have to plug all that learning into the management of this new fund.

QUESTION: How will you use the 5 million Rupees in the fund? What percentage will go to grants and what percentage to loans? Will you follow the pattern set by ACCA, with small upgrading grant ceilings of \$3,000 and housing loan ceilings of \$40,000? (answer) No decisions yet, we need to discuss, based on our learning from the ACCA process.

QUESTION from Ruby: Will the small infrastructure projects be supported by a grant of a loan from the new fund? At the start of the ACCA project, we decided that communal improvements in the community would be given as grants, while funds for people's housing would go as loans. But in the cases where we have built toilets for the poorest community members who have no toilets, the toilets are partly a grant and partly a loan.

QUESTION From Nandasiri: What are the chances the government will try to control this new fund? (Answer) No, they cannot! The federation is very strong! Now we have friendship, and there are community leaders on the board of the fund, and we all need to be more aware. We need to make sure these community representatives on the board are updated constantly on people's needs and concerns, to take them to the board.

COMMENT by Ruby: Use that fund to demonstrate people-led development on the ground.

QUESTION from Somsook: All these political parties might be hunting for community leaders. How can you balance these external political forces and remain neutral in such a complex time of political change? (Fed guy answers) The federation is not political, as an organization. But individual members are in the various parties, but they can't do their politics inside the federation. The truth on the ground, in these squatter settlements, is our common point. And that truth has to be the thing we use to influence all the political parties and all the other stakeholders in the city.

COMMENT from Father Jorge: Impressed that the work of men and women is very well integrated here in Bharatpur, and that these community organizations have the maturity to deal with a very volatile and complex political situation, with all the different parties and no elected government, using both men and women as vital parts of the strategy. Nobody is neglected or excluded. I see equality happening here in reality, not just high-blown talk from Lumanti!

Leader of the Basobas Federation speaks :

For 22 years we have been fighting for the housing rights of poor squatters, but nothing has happened, our struggle hasn't achieved a single success, not a single real change on the ground to show for all our work! Nobody ever got any land, and nobody ever got one single house! But now, in Bharatpur, the poorest community in the city, which everyone wanted to evict, has been given their land by the government, they've built new houses for themselves with loans from the new Urban Community Support Fund, and the Municipality has given 5 million Rupees to add to that fund! Now that is real progress! This ACCA housing project at Salyani has helped to show a real alternative path to secure tenure and decent housing, and has really made it happen!

What changes have happened in Bharatpur thanks to ACCA?

- Linkages have been made with the local Forestry Commission, which has provided wood for toilets, 119 in total, in different communities.
- Linkages have also been made with the water supply division and other agencies.
- The municipality have created the Fund, because they have seen the active work of the communities.
- The municipality has also contributed in kind, for example tube wells, and infilling land.
- Community networking used to be weak, and problems were only dealt with at one community. Now the whole network is involved in dealing with problems.
- Political parties are also interested in our work and achievements.
- Therefore, ACCA has changed attitudes and improved the perception of the municipality towards communities. The housing project especially was the key.

BIRGUNJ :

ACCA Projects in Birgunj Municipality: 58,000 USD
5 small projects and 1 big project
Contribution from the Municipality: 13,000 USD

Birgunj is a city with a population of 112,484 (2001 census) and 4.89% growth rates. The literacy rate is 69%. The city is very near to the Indian border and therefore serves as a trading post.

- There are many factories on the outskirts of Birgunj, with lots of slums across the street. Lajana says most of them are run by Nepali entrepreneurs, but they buy the raw materials from India and manufacture here, where the labor costs are a bit lower than in India. Many job seekers from both India and Nepal come here.
- A city of traders: Birgunj is a conduit for Indian goods going into Nepal, and for cheap Chinese goods going into India and into Nepal.

Meeting at the Birgunj Municipality

We started our visit with a meeting at the Municipality, where we were given a presentation by the city's ACCA Project Management Committee (PMC). The PMC is composed of representatives from Birgunj Municipality, Lumanti, PPUE, UPES, and members from the cooperatives and the ethnic groups. During our field visits we were also joined by the Regional Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives, who is a native of Birgunj and was interested in seeing how ACCA has been helping the local communities.

- 5% of the municipal budget is set aside for urban poor development. This only happened after Lumanti came and started work - Lumanti is a friend.
- The city of Birgunj, which is one of the country's chief commercial and industrial hub, alone contributes 40% to Nepal's national revenue!
- Very proud of the new swimming pool and health club the city recently built, for US\$ 0.7 million!
- Big contribution by the Municipality to the ACCA projects (shows chart)

ACCA Projects in Birgunj		From municipal powerpoint (all figures in US\$)			Total budget
Community name	Project	Project contributions			
		Contribution from ACCA	Contribution from Municipality	Contribution from Community	
Shanti Tole (28 households)	Big housing project	40,000 (87%)	5,930 (13%)	??	45,930
Nagwa Tole (33 households)	Women's bathing area, waste water treatment system, new road and sandbag lake	2,500 (81%)	572 (19%)	??	3,072
Gahawa Tole (120 households)	Communal toilets and communal cow-rearing area	3,000 (70%)	1,286 (30%)	??	4,286
Bhediya Tole (?? households)	Toilets?	4,500 (63%)	2,643 (37%)	??	7,143
Ram Tole (80 households)	Drainage, toilets, lane paving and a waste management system	2,500 (47%)	2,500 (47%)	325 (6%)	5,325
Bhagwati Tole (35 households)	Covered drains, waste-water treatment system, communal bathing area for women	2,500 (85%)	425 (15%)	??	2,925
Tarachand Slum Secondary School	"Child friendly" toilets	2,000 (74%)	715 (26%)	??	2,715
TOTAL		US\$ 57,000 (80%)	US\$ 14,071 (20%)	325 (0%)	71,396 (100%)

Somsook : *They have money in this city for a swimming pool and health club, but no money for the poor!*

Urban Community Support Fund (UCSF) already established in Birgunj in 2009, and is already active: Total fund capital is 1.6 million Rupees (US\$ 23,000), of which Lumanti contributed 800,000 Rupees (\$11,500) and the Birgunj Municipality matched that amount. The fund has already given loans to community savings groups for their members to start small businesses, buy bicycle rickshaws, buy land, build hand pumps and toilets, etc. A total of 99 "honorable toilets" (in 15 communities) have been built by poor families with loans from the UCSF. (Good details about the UCSF in the xerox they gave us in Birgunj)

- Mr. Mann Chhoeurn suggests that the Municipality contributes 5 million Rupees to the UCSF, as the municipality in Bharatpur did!
- The housing loans in Shanti Tole (BIG ACCA project) will go through this city fund.
- this Fund is funded by the government and Lumanti, and currently has 1.6 million rupees available for income generation loans, as well as land loans. It also supplies some grants. The board of the UCSF includes some community members, though the Fund is owned by the government and the city's CEO is the chair.

Urban Poor Empowerment Society (UPES): The city-wide community process is being supported internally by UPES, which is a very active network of young men and women from the squatter settlements in Birgunj. Here, the UPES functions a bit like the UCRC in Bharatpur, and it is active in the ACCA Project Management Committee (PMC) in Birgunj. The youths here are very active!

Savings in Birgunj : Savings in Birgunj started in 2005, with Lumanti's support. Now there are 1,200 savings members, in about 45 savings groups, with total saving of about US\$ 1,000. No cooperative set up yet to link together these savings groups.

- **All the savings groups are linked together in one city-wide Cooperative, like in Bharatpur.**

Visit to Shanti Tole Community (BIG ACCA Project)

- ACCA big project: 53,072 USD total
- 40,000 USD from ACCA
- + 5950 USD from the Municipality
- + 7142 USD from UNDP for biogas

Current conditions : The people of Shanti Tole have been squatters on this privately-owned land for 90 years. They are of the untouchable caste, and have long been suppressed. Lumanti launched a community program and introduced a savings group in Shanti Tole, which has gradually helped to open up the community and built up people's confidence. With this new-found confidence, the people were able to demand their right to the land, as the law says that if you till somebody's land, you are entitled to 50% of that land from the landowner. The landlady eventually agreed, and it has taken the community one year to obtain the land title, going to different departments and government offices.

- This is the FIRST slum housing project in Birgunj - got a big push from ACCA!
- "So many meetings!" She says there were 80 meetings to discuss and come to an agreement on various points of the project. Exposure trips to Bharatpur and Kathmandu, and two community members traveled to join ACCA Assessment trips in Vietnam and Cambodia (Zaeed and Abdul)
- Not just physical change, but change in the attitude of the neighboring communities toward us. (lady) "Before, they all saw us as an eyesore, a blight on their neighborhood. Now they come to learn from what we are doing!"
- Housing loans from ACCA : Maximum 150,000 Rupees (US\$ 2,143) Repayment will be 100 Rupees a day, or 2,800 Rupees a month, per household, for 5 - 7 years. The Rs 150,000 includes Rs 100,000 for building materials and Rs 50,000 for labor, so if people build themselves, they can reduce the house cost - and their loan - to just 100,000.
- Plot sizes were unequal before, but now the community has decided that everyone will have the same size plots.
- Everyone will get individual land titles ("lal purja"), but the process to get these titles was very difficult - lots of bureaucracy and trips to Kathmandu - even though the rich feudal lady land-owner gave them the land.
- Some organization is helping to set up a biogas digester
- The Red Cross provides temporary tent-shelters during the reblocking and house construction period.
- Construction is scheduled to start in December 2010 or January 2011.
- Eighteen community meetings have been held, as well as exposure visits to other cities.
- There has been an attitude change by the government, and other people - outsiders now have a different view of us.

22 houses to be built, along with roads, drains, and biogas digesters. Looking at the design for the new homes, they are very much row houses, which do not seem to allow much space for people's traditional way of life, with animal sheds and houses arranged in clusters. The cost of each house will be 2000 USD, and the nominal interest on the loans will be 3%, so the monthly repayment will be 2800rs.

Foundation stone laying celebration at Shanti Tole on November 2, 2010 : (*Lajana's e-mail*) I was in Birgunj. The Minister for Local Development was invited for the foundation stone-laying ceremony in Shanti Tole - the big ACCA housing project. A very, very big event for the poor and marginalized communities in Birgunj! Not a single high-ranking government official had ever stepped foot in the poor communities in the history of Birgunj. About 700 community people took part in the event. Some very powerful and emotional remarks by the people, and a show put on by the community. .

QUESTION about the high cost of these houses? Almost \$2,000 for such poor people! The house model may be too expensive for these very poor people! The house design is not coming from people's real affordability.

- Lumanti says the idea is to do incremental housing - not the full house all at once.
- How much people earn here: One community woman says she has already started her housing savings - started 3 months ago. And she says that in each family in the community, there are at least 2 earning members, who make at least 250 Rupees a day, so total household income of minimum 500 Rupees a day, or 14,000 Rupees a month. So no problem to repay 100 Rupees per day for the housing loan.
- Ruby : Can all 28 families afford to repay the Rs 2,500 per month? (woman answers) Many families will not take the full loan, but smaller loan and build incrementally.
- Lumanti clarifies that the maximum loan from ACCA will be only 100,000 Rupees (US\$ 1,429).
- Woman from the Kathmandu Cooperative: How to convince people to agree to take such big loans, and later to repay them? (community women answers) It took us one year to convince everyone to make this push to build our community in a new form!]
- Somsok : I'm sure that some people here won't repay! They have their individual land title deeds - why should they repay? If some members don't repay, what will the savings group do? (woman answers) Others in the savings group will help, if some members have difficulty making payments. We won't kick anyone out! This is our group power, and it is based on trust.

Karima Begum, Regional Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives: I will advise Parliament to make 1000 houses for the people of Birgunj. ACCA is a savior for the people of Shanti Tole. The Minister declared 200,000rs for the people of Shanti Tole!

Visit to Tarachand Krishna Lal School for slum children (Small ACCA project)

ACCA Small Project (\$2,000? Lajana says "about \$1,000") to support the construction of a block of "child friendly" toilets.

Background: This is a special school for slum children, open to provide free schooling to children from the nearby slums who were otherwise not going to school. It is a community managed school, very close to Shanti Tole. The school was started in 1951, at first only for primary classes. Now the school offers classes up to 8th standard. Before, no support from the government - the school was run entirely by volunteers from the slums. Even six years ago, Lumanti said many slum children nearby didn't go to school - government schools aren't really free, need money for uniforms, books, activities, etc. There was no awareness of the importance of education. So Lumanti helped add two more school rooms to the school if they agreed to make room for more kids, and linked with the Municipality to get more support. The savings cooperative women leaders support the school and are active in sending kids here. Now the school gets some government support, and 10 paid teachers from the government payroll, but lots of volunteer teachers still, with a total of 16 teachers here.

- Five years ago, there were only about 300 students, but now a total of 995 students.
- This is a "free school" - almost! Parents have to pay 25 Rupees per year, per student, and provide their uniform.
- Now there is a national policy to transfer management of such schools to the community, and parents and community leaders are involved in the management committees. Very transparent.
- Now they have Rs 25 million to demolish the gloomy dark classrooms at the front and construct a new 3-story building with more classrooms, on one side of the courtyard.
- The school earns some income by renting out shops at the front, along the main road.
- ACCA small project strategy: A good example of "adding to the existing good thing, and helping it grow and get better!"

Visit to Bhagwati Tole Community (small ACCA project)

- This small squatter settlement has 35 households
- Small ACCA Project to improve drains and sewers and toilets, and keep sewage out of the community. Also to start a central pig rearing area (??).
- Mostly laborers, rag-pickers, municipal sweepers and children beggars live here. Dalit caste community. Called the "Dome Caste"

Woman community leader speaks: (crying with emotion!) We are very low-caste people. Before, when we needed a loan, we had to go to the money lenders, who charged us a very high interest, but then we started savings and could make loans to our own community members. Now we have livelihood loans to start small businesses, and 10 families have taken loans from the UCSF to buy rickshaws for the husbands, to earn.

- Now we are improving the sanitation in the community, constructing toilets for 6 families (loan). We're also negotiating to get the land. In the past, there were attempts to evict us.
- Life is still hard, but it was much harder before (more tears!)
- Before, this settlement used to be known as Dome Tole, which is the name for our untouchable caste. But with the confidence of our savings and our improvements, we have renamed our settlement Bhagwati Tole.
- Rickshaw loans from UCSF: Loan is 16,000 Rupees (US\$ 239) to buy one new bicycle rickshaw. The rickshaw pullers repay the loan to the UCSF in daily payments of 50 Rupees. They can earn between 400 and 500 Rupees a day, so the repayment is no great hardship. All ten families have already repaid their rickshaw loans in full!

Ruby: We are so happy to visit your community and to see that even though you are very poor, you are still saving! And that you are addressing your problems of drainage and sanitation and hygiene and still have a dream of better living, with secure land. Your efforts and work have gained the trust of the municipality. Now the ACCA program is demonstrating that community people can solve their own problems easily, quickly, efficiently and with very little money. Congratulations to the poor communities in Birgunj for working together like this, support each other to improve their lives and living conditions - for themselves and for their children!

Indonesia woman from Surabaya speaks: You have sisters and brothers in Indonesia who are struggling with you!

Visit to Nagawa Community (small ACCA project)

ACCA small project here:

- two bathrooms for women to bathe in,
- sandbags around pond to prevent flooding (temporary measure),
- platform for the communal handpump.

Other projects include:

* fixing the muddy entrance road to the community, with technical support from the Municipality and Lumanti.

* Building new homes for three houses which burnt down, using a grant from the Urban Community Support Fund, and a 5 year loan from the savings group, at 5%.

Nagawa Community is located next to a large pond, off one of Birgunj's main roads. The residents here are also from the untouchable caste. They were relocated here 20 years, when they were evicted from their previous location and moved here by the government, in order to make way for a new road. They were not given any compensation. Recently the government and their neighbors have again been wanting to evict the community, with one of the reasons being the poor living conditions. The community therefore agreed to improve their living conditions in order to be able to remain on site.

- The community are now in discussion with the municipality about housing. This community will be the city's second housing project by ACCA - however, this means that they have to wait 5 years for the loans of Shanti Tole community to be repaid. So we may try and set up a housing fund of 5 million rupees. But we also need to guarantee secure tenure.

Nandasiri: perhaps Madam Minister might be able to look into the issue of security of tenure?

Minister: the visits I have done today have made me realize that communities have been deprived of services. The problems of the poor are being ignored by the government. I am aware of the insecurity of tenure and I am offering my commitment to raise the issue in government. I also request Lumanti to submit a proposal to the government, and I will lobby to support your proposal.

UCSF income-generating loans: Some community members have benefited from loans from the UCSF. One man took a 16,000rs loan for one year at 3%, in order to buy a rickshaw. Previously he worked as a basket weaver, earning 75rs a day, and with his rickshaw he can now earn 125rs a day.

Outcome of our Birgunj visit: thanks to the presence of the Regional Minister for Agriculture and Cooperatives, the visits offered an opportunity to raise the profile of the issues being faced by the city's urban poor. She made a commitment of 200,000rs for Shanti Tole community, as well as to support Nagawa's claims for secure tenure.

BACK IN KATHMANDU :

Concluding Assessment Meeting (at the hotel in Kathmandu)

Back in Kathmandu, the participants on the trip convened in country groups to discuss the positive points and the weaknesses of what they had seen of the Nepal ACCA process during the visit.

Strengths of the Nepal ACCA Process

The Nepali participants:

- The loan repayment rate is very good in the communities.
- The level of confidence has increased in all communities and the people can talk very well about their projects and the future plans.
- The establishment of the UCSF is a great opportunity, and the Municipality is working with us from their heart. The ACCA process and Lumanti has created the opportunity for strong relationships with the municipality and other relevant organizations.
- Two years ago, the women in the communities were backwards, they wore burkhas - now they are at the forefront and they openly talk to us.
- There has been a communal effort to get land ownership documents and this effort is continuing, which can lead to more.
- The ACCA process has provided a strong learning curve for UPES and their capacity has increased a lot over this period.

The Indonesian team:

- Physical upgrading gives concrete proof to the authorities and communities about the possibilities created by a process like ACCA. This leads to creation of Funds and increases community cohesion and confidence.
- The management of loans and savings are based on trust - people are not punished if they struggle to repay, but rather, there is negotiation towards a solution.
- There is active involvement of youth in activities, particularly through the UPES in Birgunj.
- Upgrading for a few people has a wider impact on the city.
- Lumanti has created win-win situations. For example, in Shanti Tole, the landowner benefits from the higher price of her remaining land because the neighbouring areas are cleaner and upgraded, while the community benefits from improved living conditions.

The Sri Lankan view:

- The intervention of Lumanti has created the opportunity to raise awareness amongst communities and the municipality. For example, an engineer from the municipality in Bharatpur said they didn't know how to bridge the gap between the poor, the municipality, and politicians, and Lumanti helped to bridge this gap.
- The community people's bargaining power has increased - for example, they were able to debate with the visiting Minister. They have changed from being untouchables to talking directly to political leaders.
- The communities have been able to obtain land certificates, after many decades on the land.
- The projects help to address environmental issues, for example the biogas digesters. As environmental problems are usually low priority for the poor, the projects offer solutions.
- Community mapping and participatory design has taken place.
- Youth are included in the process. They are the next generation of community leaders, so this is important.

The view of ACHR and others:

- There is close collaboration at the city level between different groups.
- The Municipality is strong, and has the flexibility to help people
- All the people are very active, it's not just the women joining in the process.
- People are seizing the opportunity to get all political parties together.
- The small projects are interesting, they can achieve a lot with a small budget.
- Thirty years ago, it was unthinkable that poor people could own land. This represents a huge shift.
- People have confidence and the ability to take charge of projects. They can make use of the knowledge of elders in the community and involve them in the process.
- Lumanti is using ACCA as a tool to engage and link with government. It is also working with the lower castes and empowering them.
- The youth are very active, particularly through UPES in Birgunj. They are the children of the slums, so they know the problems.

Points for consideration in the Nepal process

Nepal team:

- Technical aspects need to be examined, through a monitoring process.
- Further empowerment is still necessary.
- We need more exposure visits.
- There are some very poor communities - they need longer loan repayment terms, and we need to focus on income generation opportunities.

Ruby:

- Political change means it can be difficult for communities. However, people can still be pushed to the forefront of negotiations. Lumanti can give them space and just guide them, as people can be at the front of negotiations.
- Tee: In Laos, the Women's Union plays a key role and negotiates with the government. In Bharatpur, the structure of the Fund has many subgroups but it is unclear that the community organizations can play a key role. If there are too many organizations, all playing different roles, it becomes very sectoral.

Sri Lankans:

- Having big groups like the Women's Savings Groups means that leadership potential is limited. Having smaller groups allows training of more leaders.
- The UCRC in Bharatpur seems to be dominated by men.
- Access to credit from many different sources can lead to people being over-extended.
- When we interacted with leaders, their vision seemed limited to projects, it did not go beyond. They need a mechanism of their own for their total development. We don't want too much of a project approach.

Indonesia:

- The biogas project in Lanku is too expensive for 7 households. In Indonesia, we use a plastic facility which is cheaper, and we combine it with animal husbandry.
- In Salyani community, it does not really appear to be community work. In Surabaya, the people work together weekly, they contribute money and labour, to strengthen community cohesion.
- There is a sharp distinction in the role of women - they manage money, whereas men are in the public space, negotiating and planning. Women can be given a more strategic role. Men don't seem to be interested in the women's cooperative.
- How will we institutionalize what has been achieved so far, using the new constitution as a vehicle? Lajana answers: actually, Lumanti and the Federation have been lobbying the constitution drafters, so housing rights have been included in the draft constitution, as well as the right to water and sanitation.

Mr Mann Choeurn:

- We saw in the presentation by Birgunj municipality that they have spent millions on their new swimming pool. The poor need to make demands of their municipality, otherwise the government doesn't know and continues to spend on things like swimming pools. In Cambodia, communities raise requests through the integrated plan.

ACHR and others:

- Communities should contribute to their city funds, like they do in Cambodia or the Philippines. Just 1USD a month per member helps the fund to grow and also gives members a sense of ownership over the fund.
- In Salyani, there are many models of different houses built at different costs, from 20,000rs to 300,000rs. There is an opportunity here to do research of all the models and presenting them to people, so that they realize they do not necessarily have to take out a large loan and the resulting debt burden. Model houses can also be built to show how low cost houses can still be good, and concrete is not necessarily always the best material.
- It is also important to look at the wider context of the way of living - how the houses relate to the surrounding resources like the forest or a fish pond, and how people look after their animals and vegetable gardens. This wider context needs to be included in new community designs. Housing projects are not just about the houses, also about the life needs.
- In Birgunj, there is a lack of a housing fund to allow more housing projects, without having to wait at least five years for the Shanti Tole loans to be repaid.
- The UPES in Birgunj may be too strong, and not leaving enough space for community people to talk. They could also be doing more with their capacity, such as surveying.

General observations about Nepal's ACCA process:

- There are possibilities for private sector participation, such as the school project.
- There has been a huge shift in the possibilities open to the poor - from the Monarchical system to the current system, where politicians and the government can make public commitment to do things.
- Communities should also contribute to their city funds.
- Individual land tenure raises the question of sustainability.

Rama cooperative lady: government and donors should hand over money to the people, because we can manage the money and do good projects with it, like ACCA has shown. The 5% interest rate is divided into 2% for the common fund, and 3% going to the management of the cooperative. It might feel like too much for the poor, but it is necessary for the running of the fund. We have now moved from living in shacks to palaces, and government officials have been sensitized to our needs and abilities thanks to ACCA.

Dharan Municipality agrees to give Rs 4 million to the urban poor! During the assessment trip, we were joined by a social development officer from the Dharan Municipality (NAME?). During the trip, he was in communication with his CEO by phone, telling him about what he was seeing. At the end of the assessment trip, back at the Hotel Everest, he announced that the Dharan Municipality had pledged to contribute Rs 4 million (US\$ 57,000) to the urban poor community fund in Dharan! The decision has been approved!

Morning meeting at hotel with government officials on 27 November

Lajana presents a brief summary of the ACCA process in Nepal: This ACCA program is very different from the other types of government-developed or NGO-developed projects. And it is different than the way Lumanti worked in the past. In this ACCA Program, people decide what they want to do and do it all themselves! Nobody tells them to "Do water!" or "Do sanitation!", they choose. Then there is a very modest ceiling of \$3,000 available to them to do their projects.

Lajana: ACCA is unlocking funds from the municipalities: There are now urban poor community support funds - with Municipal support - in 4 cities:

1. Kathmandu Urban Poor Community Support Fund (the first one, set up with US\$100,000 budget from the municipality, and matching funds of US\$ 100,000 from ACHR and SDI.)
2. Bharatpur Urban Community Support Fund (starting now with a lending capital grant from the Municipality of about US\$ 75,000)
3. Birgunj Urban Community Support Fund already active in Birgunj, started in 2009, with a total capital of 1.6 million Rupees (US\$ 23,000), of which Lumanti contributed 800,000 Rupees (\$11,500) and the Birgunj Municipality matched that amount.
4. Dharan Urban Community Support Fund : The newest one, which will be started with the Rs 4 million from the Municipality.

Leader of the Basobas Federation Speaks : We have been fighting for the housing rights of poor squatters for years and years, but nothing has happened! Nobody ever got any land, and nobody ever got one single house! But now, in Bharatpur, the poorest community in the city, which everyone wanted to evict, has been given their land by the government, they've built new houses for themselves with loans from the new Urban Community Support Fund, and the Municipality has given 5 million Rupees to add to that fund! Now that is real progress!

Rama, the Bharatpur Savings Cooperative Leader speaks: When Lumanti first came to Bharatpur, we rejected them, because so many do-gooders and groups come and go. And we struggled for years against the Municipality, which only wanted to evict our neglected squatter settlements, and didn't want to talk to us - we were like enemies! Now we have very good collaboration between the network of squatter settlements and the municipality. And we have 1,000 women savings members with collective savings of over 15 million rupees (US\$ 214,000)! We visited Bangkok to see what this ACCA is all about.

- My suggestion to the government people here : Hand over the money to the people and let them manage it! They can fix all the problems themselves, and they can do it faster and more efficiently and more cheaply than any government department!
- In Salyani, our jhopdis (shacks) have been converted into mahals (palaces).
- And in Bharatpur, those who wanted to evict us are now coming to help us - they've even given 5 million rupees to our own city development fund!
- Birgunj Woman Savings Leader speaks : In Birgunj, women used to never even show their faces, but hid behind their doors or their veils! They never looked anyone in the eye. Now they come out to speak and to greet visitors and talk to officials with confidence!
- We are poor, but not useless! Especially for untouchable sweepers like me, from Shanti Tole.
- Such a change has taken place, and ACCA has sensitized municipal officials. And now Dharan has also decided to give Rs 4 million to start an urban poor fund in that city!
- Lajana is our Nepali mother, and Somsook is our international mother!

Fr. Jorge speaks : There are about 1 billion poor people around the world, but the energy of the poor is our greatest hope for solving the problems they face. These people, who are neglected, marginalized, and often without hope. But they want to participate, they want to do something, they want to take part, and that energy and drive of theirs is a very important asset. But the development process very often takes away this wealth of energy or ignores it. These ACCA projects we have seen in Nepal show that it is possible to solve these big problems of urban poverty, if we can only let the people themselves do it. Like in Birgunj, for example, where we now see that all the children from the poor communities are going to school now. It's not just drains and roads, but a way to let hope come in.

Visit to the Kirtipur Housing Project, 28 November (not an ACCA project)

- This project was built about 5 years ago, and was the first community housing relocation project in Nepal. The new fund was used to buy this land, which used to be farmland. Land was free for people, but they had to pay for their new row-houses, by loan.
- Before, they were all squatters living in communities along the Vishnumati River, and they were evicted to make way for a road project. 200 families were evicted, but finally, only 43 families decided to join the housing project at Kirtipur.
- 44 houses (43 families + 1 house for community center)
- Still problem of drinking water, which they have to carry from a source up the hill, in the town. The water from the well inside the community is OK for washing, but not drinkable.
- We meet the community committee. A young woman named Bagmati, who speaks very good English, translates for us. She is only 18 years old, but already has a job teaching at a boarding school in Kathmandu.
- Now starting composting of natural waste.
- PROBLEM : This place is very far from the city center, from jobs, expensive to go by bus or van!
- Now they do daily saving and daily housing loan repayment - it helps to improve the repayment.

Housing Loans: Each family got a loan of 350,000 Rupees per house. Loan was given from the new Kathmandu Urban Poor Support Fund, at 5% annual interest, to be paid back in 15 years. Repayments are minimum 2,000 Rupees per month. But many problems with repayment! Now there is a new community committee and the repayment is better.

Who joined the trip?

FROM INDONESIA :

1. Mrs. Nunuk Mihartini (Stren Kali Riverside Community Network, Surabaya)
2. Mrs. Warsiani (Stren Kali Riverside Community Network, Surabaya)
3. Mr. Widayanto (Stren Kali Riverside Community Network, Surabaya)
4. Ms. Wardah Hafidz (Coordinator, Urban Poor Consortium NGO in Jakarta)
5. Ms. Dwi Hartini (UPC staff, national coordinator of ACCA program in Indonesia)
6. Ms. Annye Meilani (UPC staff, interpreter)

FROM CAMBODIA :

7. Mr. Somsak Phonphakdee (Urban Poor Development Fund - UPDF)
8. Mr. Mann Chhoeurn (Urban Poor Development Fund - UPDF)

FROM SRI LANKA :

9. Ms. Sunethra Kumari Samaraweera (Women's Co-op leader from Kalutara)
10. Ms. Dona Jayanthimala (Women's Co-op leader from Nuwara Eliya)
11. Ms. Arumugam Pathmajothy (Women's Co-op leader from Baticaloa in Eastern region)
12. Mr. Nandasiri Gamage (Director of Women's CO-OP - Women's Bank)
13. Mr. Ekanayaka Banda (Sevanatha NGO)

FROM VIETNAM :

14. Dr. Vu Thi Vinh (Director of Association of Cities of Vietnam - ACVN)

FROM MONGOLIA :

15. Ms. Baigalimaa Purevjamts (Savings group leader from Sukhbaatar District, Ulaanbaatar)
16. Ms. Uhnai Luvsansodov (Savings group leader from Sukhbaatar District, Ulaanbaatar)
17. Ms. Uyanga Sainbayar (Urban Development Resource Center - NGO, interpreter)

FROM THE PHILIPPINES :

18. Ms. Ruby Papeleras (Homeless People's Federation Philippines - HPFP)
19. Ms. Ophelia Bagotlo (Homeless People's Federation Philippines - HPFP)
20. Fr. Norberto Carcellar (PACSII - NGO)

FROM THE ACHR SECRETARIAT IN BANGKOK :

21. Ms. Somsook Boonyabancha
22. Mr. Maurice Leonhardt
23. Mr. Thomas Kerr
24. Ms. Diane Archer
25. Mr. Chawanad Luansang ("Nad") (Community architect coordinator)
26. Mr. Supawut Boonmahathanakorn ("Tee") (Community architect coordinator)
27. Fr. Jorge Anzorena (Selavip Foundation and Sophia University in Tokyo)

FROM NEPAL :**FROM LUMANTI SUPPORT GROUP FOR SHELTER NGO :**

28. Ms. Lajana Manandar
29. Mr. Mahendra Shakya
30. Ms. Sama Vajra
31. Ms. Sobina Lama
32. Ms. Karuna Joshi
33. Ms. Roshani Joshi
34. Ms. Eliza Baidya
35. Mr. Padam Lal Shrestha
36. Mr. Anil Sthapit
37. Mr. Visal Shrestha (Lumanti Board Member)
38. Ms. Lumanti Joshi (Community architect with Lumanti)

FROM KATHMANDU :

39. Mr. Basant Jaisi (Nepal Basobas Basti Samrachayan Samaj)
40. Ms. Bina Budhacharya (Nepal Mahila Ekta Samaj)
41. Ms. Dibas Bhujel (Child Development and Youth Network)
42. Ms. Jayanti Giri (Savings Cooperative Network)

FROM KOHALPUR:

43. Ms. Moti Tamata (Savings Cooperative)
44. Mr. Resham Giri (Nepal Basobas Basti Samrachayan Samaj)
45. Mr. Karna Bahadur Thapa (Kohalpur- ACCA PMC member)

FROM BIRATNAGAR :

46. Mr. Bharat Lama (Integrated Community Development Forum)
47. Ms. Goma Chaudhary (Samjhana Women's Saving and Credit Cooperative)

FROM BIRGUNJ :

48. Ms. Sunita Devi Gupta (Women's Saving and Credit Cooperative)
49. Mr. Abdul Kaish (Urban Poor Empowerment Society - UPES)
50. Mr. Wasim Husen (Urban Poor Empowerment Society - UPES)

FROM BHARATPUR :

51. Mr. Chhabilal Devkota (Nepal Basobas Basti Samrachayan Samaj)
52. Ms. Rama Adhikary (Amardeep Women's Saving and Credit Cooperative)

FROM DHARAN :

53. Ms. Laxmi Rai (Lumanti staff in Dharan)
54. Mr. Sunil Nepal (Social Development Officer, from Dharan Municipality) Dharan Municipality

FROM THE MEDIA :

55. Mr. Govinda Nepal (Kantipur Publication)
56. Mr. Murari Ghimire (Kantipur Publication)