



# FIJI

## A YOUNG COMMUNITY NETWORK USES ACCA TO EXPAND INTO NEW CITIES

### ACCA in FIJI :

#### PROJECT CITIES (total 12)

- Suva
- Lautoka
- Lami
- Sigatoka
- Nasinu
- Nadi
- Labasa
- Rakiraki
- Savusavu
- Sawani
- Ba
- Levuka

#### SMALL PROJECTS

Small projects approved : 70  
 In number of cities : 12  
 Total budget approved : \$150,000

#### BIG HOUSING PROJECTS

Big projects approved : 8  
 In number of cities : 8  
 Total budget approved : \$320,000

#### SAVINGS (only in 12 ACCA cities)

Savings groups : 395  
 Savings members : 39,565  
 Total savings : \$245,200

#### CITY DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

CDFs active in : 12 cities  
 Total capital in CDFs: \$1,303,200

- from ACCA \$458,000 (35%)
- from coms. \$245,200 (19%)
- from gov. \$480,000 (37%)
- from others \$120,000 (9%)

#### IMPLEMENTING GROUP

The ACCA projects in Fiji are all being implemented by the People's Community Network (PCN).



The People's Community Network (PCN) in the Pacific island nation of Fiji was launched in Suva in 2006, and has quickly grown into a national network which now links more than 400 informal communities in twelve cities, all with active savings groups, with 40,000 members. The network has used ACCA as a tool to help design, test and negotiate alternatives to eviction in which the poor themselves take the lead in securing land and building better housing - on land where they are already staying or close by. The PCN has also implemented a variety of small infrastructure projects with support from ACCA (roads, walkways, drainage, toilets and community centers). Besides addressing immediate needs, these projects have involved developing carefully-nurtured partnerships and cost-sharing agreements between the community members, PCN, the government and other donors. Since the beginning, the PCN has received support in various ways from ACHR and CAN, which, besides the ACCA projects, have supported exchange visits both to and from community savings groups in other Asian countries, as well as community mapping and settlement planning workshops in Fiji.

**MOU HELPS EXPAND THE PROCESS TO 15 MORE CITIES :** The PCN's community initiatives got a big shot in the arm from an MOU that was signed in October 2010, between the PCN, the Ministry of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment and ACHR, to work together to adopt a citywide and people-driven upgrading approach in cities around Fiji. The citywide upgrading approach, in which the poor are key actors in resolving their own problems of land, housing and basic services, starts with the process of surveying and gathering key information about the land status and housing needs in all the informal communities in each city. Under the terms of the MOU, this process was to be piloted in 15 cities in Fiji over a period of several years. These pilot cities act as demonstrations, so other cities can also start to follow the process of people-driven, partnership-based, citywide upgrading, and the goal is to create a new approach to housing in Fiji. The MOU provided a framework for a big expansion of the PCN's work, and the ACCA Program has supported this process with funds for surveys and mapping, coordination, small upgrading projects and big housing projects (in eight cities).

In October 2010, the man who was then Fiji's supportive Minister of Local Government, Urban Development, Housing and Environment came to Bangkok for the MOU signing, and while he was there, ACHR arranged visits to community-driven housing projects being implemented under the Baan Mankong Program. The minister returned to Fiji with new ideas and new energy, and worked closely with the PCN not only to change the mindsets of people in government and city councils, but to help unlock public land resources for seven large housing projects in Suva (2 projects), Lautoka, Lami, Sigatoka, Nasinu and Nadi. These housing projects, which provide 2,794 poor families with secure land tenure and better houses, are being constructed on 290 hectares of public land worth \$5.8 million that was given to the communities (on nominal long-term collective leases), along with another \$345,000 worth of infrastructure from both the local and national governments.

## The network's first land and housing breakthrough at LAGILAGI :

The network's first on-site housing upgrading project was at the Lagilagi community in Suva, which is part of Jittu Estate, Fiji's largest squatter settlement with over 2,000 households. In 2009, with support the PCN, a group of 150 families in Lagilagi negotiated to collectively rent the 2.8 hectares of government land they had been squatting on for many years, on a long-term lease of US\$235 per year. As part of the agreement, the families own their houses, but the land belongs collectively to the whole community, and if anyone wants to move out, they have to sell their house back to the community, which can then re-sell it to a new family.

This project involved a first-ever housing partnership between a community of poor squatters, the government and the community network. The project combines funds from several sources: besides providing the land, the government contributed US\$ 659,000 as a house construction subsidy, the people contribute the labor and half the cost of the houses through their savings, the NGO ECREA added US\$ 612,000 of donor funds from Misereor, and a \$40,000 big project grant from ACCA supplemented the housing loans, through the Suva CDF.

The two-story house model that the community members developed, costs about US\$ 11,000, of which half is to be paid for by the people (US\$ 5,650, on installments at \$8.50 per week for 12 years, through the savings groups and the city fund, and the other half is to be paid for by the government subsidy. The money the people repay will go into the city fund, where it will revolve and enable more houses to be built. The Lagilagi project has had problems, and is still in process, with just 35 units completed so far. But everyone is hoping that if this pilot project works well, it can be expanded to upgrade the rest of Jittu Estate and duplicated in other squatter settlements around Suva, wherever secure land tenure can be negotiated.





I think it is very important for community people to have a space to share their ideas and to exchange the knowledge about houses and settlement planning which they already possess, and to visualize what can happen in the future when they think and plan together - as a community rather than only as separate households.

(Chawanad Luansang, from CAN)



## Citywide mapping and planning in LAUTOKA

**Informal communities in the city of Lautoka get their first taste of understanding their settlements and their place in the city in a new and more comprehensive way through the process of community mapping . . .**

This 15-city MOU between the PCN, the Ministry and ACHR, involves the implementation of a considerable number of actual housing and community upgrading projects, as the process expands into more communities and more cities. Between 2009 and 2010, a team of young community architects from Australia, New Zealand and Thailand (part of the Asian regional Community Architects Network - CAN) made frequent trips to Fiji to support the citywide upgrading process, in collaboration with the PCN and with some local architects and students. During that time, they helped to survey and map informal settlements in three cities, set up savings groups in new settlements, plan several small upgrading projects and develop schematic plans for some housing projects in Suva and Lautoka. In April 2011, during an ACCA meeting in Colombo, Chawanad Luansang, a Thai community architect and one of the coordinators of the Asian CAN network, gave a presentation about a month-long community mapping and settlement planning workshop he and Hugo helped organize in Lautoka, in collaboration the PCN and local architects. Here are some highlights from his presentation:

**M**apping works like a catalyzing process in new communities. When we talk about mapping, it includes not only marking the existing houses and settlement boundaries, but getting all the people to come together, to participate and to start talking about what they need to fix in their communities (including problems with the services, the houses and the land tenure security) as they begin to develop their upgrading plans. In Fiji, the savings is very new, but we find that this mapping process can bring all the community people to participate and can actually give a big boost to get people to start saving also.

About 13 communities in Lautoka participated in this mapping and small project planning workshop. First all the community participants made big, hand-drawn maps of their own settlements on poster paper, and then brought them back to the meeting hall, where they were all put up on the wall. For most of them, this was their first chance to look at a map of their community, seeing where their houses were and where the various community problems were.

This time in Fiji, we also experimented with a new technique of training the community leaders to be the facilitators of planning upgrading projects with ACCA support. We used aerial photographs as a base, and let the community leaders use them to identify and explain about what the problems in the settlement are - and also what are the good things that they want to keep or enhance. For example, in the Zomuga community, the biggest squatter community in Lautoka, they used the tracing paper over the aerial photos of the settlement to explain about the problems in the settlement to others. They can also go back to use the big settlement map and organize meetings in the community to get more ideas from the community people and decide what they want to do.



The municipal government in Lautoka has offered two pieces of government land for relocating the coastal fishing communities the government wants to evict. So when we were in Lautoka, we organized

a two-day comprehensive site-planning workshop for the people who might be moving to these areas, to explore how can we design a site plan. One of the sites (10 hectares) is right in the middle of the town and has room for about 400 houses. The other site (27 hectares) is a 20-minute drive north of town and has enough room for about 260 households, with room for people to do some farming.

