

CHINA

ACCA in CHINA :

PROJECT CITIES (total 2)

- Lhasa, Tibet
- Yushu Prefecture, Tibet

SMALL PROJECTS

Small projects approved : 5
In number of cities : 1
Total budget approved : \$15,000

BIG PROJECTS

Big projects approved : 2
In number of cities : 2
Total budget approved : \$72,000

SAVINGS (only in 2 ACCA cities)

No savings groups yet
No CDFs yet

IMPLEMENTING GROUPS

The ACCA projects in both cities are being implemented by the Tibet Heritage Fund (THF).



The Tibet Heritage Fund group is using the process of restoring traditional Tibetan houses, and the crafts that go into them, as a strategy to preserve the soul of these towns - and the people who live in them. Here's a photo which shows the REAL Tibet, where the families who live in that building in Lhasa are up on the rooftop celebrating the completion of their renovation of their beautiful old shared courtyard house, in the heart of the city.

Using the restoration of traditional houses to secure tenure and revive local cultures :

The Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) is an intrepid group of activists, scholars, architects and Tibet-lovers who have been working in Tibet (and in culturally Tibetan areas of India and Mongolia) for nearly 20 years to restore traditional Tibetan houses, neighborhoods and monasteries. They use the restoration process to revive the traditional crafts and cultural practices which go into these beautiful buildings, which continue to be under serious threat of demolition. Although their work has focused on the physical restoration of historic structures, the group has always sought to find ways that the mostly poor families who live in these historic buildings and neighborhoods can stay and be part of the architectural and cultural revival, rather than be evicted to make way for tourist boutiques. Two of the Tibet Heritage Fund's projects in China's Tibet Autonomous Region - in Lhasa and Yushu Prefecture - are getting support from ACCA. Both projects are using the historic building angle as an anti-eviction strategy in situations where these surviving Tibetan neighborhoods - and the ancient social cultures they contain - are in danger of vanishing under Chinese development plans.

1 ACCA support to earthquake rehabilitation in YUSHU

In the city of Yushu, a devastating earthquake in April 2010 is being used by the provincial Government as an opportunity to demolish this very old, traditional Tibetan town, and transform it into a "New Metropolis" of gleaming high-rises, shopping malls and vast new subdivisions of up-market villas. It's a boom for Chinese developers, but the low-income Tibetan families who have always lived in the old center of Yushu are facing the prospect of losing their land, houses, trades and ancient way of life and being forced to relocate to cheap, non-seismic cinder block boxes that are far outside town. There is already, however, strong opposition to these government relocation and reconstruction plans.

The Tibet Heritage Fund group is using the ACCA project in Yushu to help several residents repair and earthquake-proof their slightly-damaged historic multi-family buildings in the town center. The project is being used to demonstrate an alternative redevelopment model in which the people stay in their old neighborhoods and in their traditional communal housing - instead of relocating to the government's individualistic standard housing units outside of town. The project is also an indirect strategy to secure people's ancestral properties, prevent their eviction and preserve the soul of the town, since the government is reluctant to demolish historic buildings that survived the earthquake. And the group hopes it may succeed in modifying the official plans for redeveloping Yushu.



The REAL and the FAKE



The Chinese Government's speedy and well-coordinated response to the Yushu earthquake was widely praised as a model of quick, efficient and effective disaster response. But it soon became clear that the motives behind this efficient response to a terrible disaster were anything but humanitarian. The Provincial Government is using the earthquake as an opportunity to turn this very old Tibetan town into a Tibetan theme park, with high-rise condo blocks and sprawling developments of "Tibet-theme" villas with 2-car garages, jacuzzis and fake plaster architecture details tacked on for show.

2 ACCA support to community upgrading LHASA

In similar ways, the ACCA project in Lhasa is helping upgrade traditional houses and community facilities in four poor Tibetan communities still living in their ancient farming settlements on the outskirts of Lhasa, where the land is now being aggressively bought up by Chinese property developers, threatening eviction. The project is being explicitly used to build links between the community people, the local administration and the NGOs, in a very difficult political context which has involved mostly confrontation and exploitation in the past. Because there is greater reluctance these days to bulldoze active historic temples, these small ACCA projects to improve traditional dwellings and historic places of workshop - done step-by-step and with the approval of the local government - is a politically "safe" way of preserving heritage, safeguarding against eviction and displacement, and softening difficult relationships.

