

**JUNE - OCTOBER 2012**

- ACVN and Cities Alliance join forces to expand citywide upgrading in **VIETNAM**
- ACHR stumps for "Citywide, people-driven slum upgrading at the sixth **WORLD URBAN FORUM** in Naples, Italy
- Workshop on "Inclusive Cities" finally happens in Seoul, **KOREA**
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- New film on ACCA called "The Way to End Slums"

## **JOINING FORCES to SCALE UP CITYWIDE UPGRADING VIETNAM**

In May 2012, the Association of Cities of Vietnam (ACVN) and Cities Alliance launched a national joint program that aims to improve governance and reduce poverty in Vietnam's cities by bringing emerging practices of city development and citywide slum upgrading together with greater community participation and civic engagement in planning into the country's urban policy and management. The program will involve stakeholders from government agencies, international organizations, NGOs and community networks, and will include activities to review Vietnam's urbanization process, to strengthen the Vietnam Urban Forum as a platform to link agencies working on urban policies, to operationalize the *National Urban Upgrading Strategy* and to train local authorities on strategic urban planning and management.

But the focus of ACVN's involvement in the joint program will be to strengthen and scale up the CDF-based participatory city development and citywide upgrading movement that has already begun in 30 cities in Vietnam, with support from ACCA. The idea of this focus on citywide upgrading and CDFs is to address urban poverty by strengthening new development options and new, flexible finance systems for the urban poor, which allow them to become key actors in their own development, and to do so in ways that will influence approaches to urban poverty reduction in Vietnam's formal development systems and policies. For this work, Cities Alliance has granted US\$ 1.3 million to ACVN, for a two-year period. This considerable budget will allow ACVN to build on what's already begun in several ways:

- Continue consolidating the 30 cities now in the CDF network and expand the network to 20 new cities.
- Support community and city processes like citywide settlement surveys and mapping, vacant land mapping, learning exchanges and local training.
- Support the setting up savings groups and the institutionalization of the city-based community development funds (CDFs) at city, provincial and national levels - including legal and financial support.
- Provide seed capital to CDFs in ten new cities to finance at least 50 small-scale community infrastructure upgrading projects (loans will revolve through the CDFs)
- Mobilize greater community participation through community, city and national forums, exchanges, network building activities.
- Support policy change and advocacy through various media interventions and through closer linkages and joint-ventures with various development partners across all ACVN activities.



**First "Vietnam Urban Forum" to be held in Hanoi, October 28-31** : This flagship national conference, which is being organized to coincide with Cities Alliance's Annual Member Meeting (which will take place in Vietnam) and "Vietnam Urban Day" (on November 8th), will bring together some 300 delegates, including decision-makers and practitioners from central government ministries and local governments in Vietnam, representatives from community and civil society groups, NGOs, national organizations and international organizations (UN-Habitat, World Bank), to exchange knowledge and share ideas on actions necessary to tackle the challenges for Vietnam's urban future. ACHR, ACVN and Cities Alliance will all be taking active part in this forum.

## ACHR AT THE SIXTH WORLD URBAN FORUM in NAPLES



To many, the World Urban Forums that UN-Habitat organizes every two years are great opportunities for people working in all aspects of urban development to catch up with old friends, make new connections, learn what others are doing, show their own work, and get a big dose of new energy and ideas. But others wonder whether they are worth the millions spent on flying in the tens of thousands of professionals and officials who've come to Nairobi (2002), Barcelona (2004), Vancouver (2006), Nanjing (2008) and Rio de Janeiro (2010), and whether they make any real difference in how cities are developing. But one way or the other, these World Urban Forums are without a doubt the mother-of-all urban development talk shops, with their thousands of delegates and thick schedules of seminars, networking events, round table discussions, campaigns, assemblies, training events, plenaries, exhibitions, film and book launches. They're like gigantic shopping malls, where projects, ideas, organizations and people are laid out in attractive displays, to be bought, sold and haggled over - and business is always very brisk.

The sixth World Urban Forum was held in September, in the Italian city of Naples, and ACHR decided to send a team, not just for the fabulous coffee and ice-cream, but as a chance to wave the banner for "Community-driven and citywide slum upgrading," and to bring the voice of poor urban community people into a dialogue on cities that is overwhelmingly cornered by professionals. Our team of 22 included community leaders and their supporter professionals from Thailand, Nepal, Cambodia, Vietnam, Philippines and Mongolia. When our little Asian force was added to a team of another 40 in the SDI team, mostly from Africa, we made a considerable community presence in Naples. A few highlights from Naples:

**Exhibition of citywide upgrading by people :** ACHR booked a double-size booth in the exhibition hall at the WUF "Mostre D'Oltremare" venue in Naples, right next to the SDI booth, and we lined the booth (spilling over onto the surrounding walls!) with posters which showcased many of the ACCA-supported citywide housing and settlement upgrading projects communities around Asia are implementing. The ACHR / SDI exhibition booth served as our headquarters for meetings, video showings, impromptu dialogues, lunch-breaks and for distributing all the brochures, newsletters, flyers and DVDs we brought with us.

**Parallel "World Urban Poor Forum" :** The ACHR team also took part in a series of dialogues on issues of sanitation, upgrading and partnerships, organized by SDI as an alternative forum belonging to community people. Each of these dialogues was preceded by a noisy parade of singing, banner-carrying community people through the exhibition hall, to announce the sessions and inject into this coolly professional milieu a taste of community dash: "*Viva slum dwellers of the world, Viva!*" As Jockin said, in introducing the first of these dialogues, "*People always want to teach us. They think because we have no diploma we can't do anything for ourselves. But it is the poor who make a difference in this world. Without our participation, no development can take place. We are going to use this World Urban Forum to make a clear announcement to the world that people should be the center of the solution.*" It was agreed that these dialogues in Naples would be the first step in a revival of exchanges, mutual support and collaboration between community groups in the SDI and ACHR networks, in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

**The city of Naples :** Wilma at SDI had wisely booked us all rooms in a modest hotel just a ten-minute walk from the WUF venue, in a run-down working class suburb in the western part of Naples. Besides being very convenient for the meetings, this billet gave us a chance to see at least a little of the underside of the city, which despite its beauty and antiquity remains one of Italy's poorest and most troubled by unemployment, housing problems, organized crime and deteriorating infrastructure. But there were also opportunities to sneak in a little touristy rambling around the ancient ruins of Pompeii, along the lemon-tree-lined boulevards of Sorrento and in the maze of ancient piazzas and palazzos in Naples' historic center - not to mention a chance to sample the city's famous pasta, buffalo-milk mozzarella, seafood and pastries at a buffet dinner hosted by our friends at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in a restaurant overlooking the Bay of Naples.



## SEMINAR on CITYWIDE, PEOPLE-DRIVEN UPGRADING at WUF NAPLES

The main event at WUF for the ACHR team was the two-hour seminar (or "networking event" in WUF parlance) we organized on the afternoon of September 4th, on the subject of *"Scaling up slum upgrading: Connecting neighborhood projects, citywide programs, and national policies."* The idea was to draw on the experience of the past three years implementation of ACCA to make a case in this big, international forum that solving Asia's urgent problems of poverty and housing is actually possible, if the great development force which already exists within poor communities can be unlocked and supported as the primary agent of that change. To bring out this message, we organized the seminar a bit differently than others:

instead of putting a panel of "experts" up on a dais to expound and field questions, we asked a series of four key questions about citywide upgrading and the role of poor communities, and opened up the floor for answers. (*Why does it have to be citywide? Why do community people have to do it? Why savings and community finance? How can citywide and people-driven upgrading be nationalized and made into policy?*) Most of the 30 speakers in this lively workshop were community people, professionals and city officials who spoke from their own real experiences on the ground with citywide slum upgrading. Then, at the end, we asked friends from the UN, from Habitat for Humanity, Citynet and from IIED to respond to the stories they'd just heard from communities. *The ACHR seminar has been transcribed and an illustrated version of the transcript can be downloaded from the ACHR website.*



**DECLARATION on CITYWIDE UPGRADING :** Before going to Naples, the groups in many of the countries that are implementing ACCA projects on the ground were asked to discuss the past three years of their work internally and to send us their impressions about citywide and community-driven upgrading: how it has changed their communities, their cities and their urban poor movement and how it can be scaled up. The fruits of this region-wide gathering of ideas were then distilled into a draft *"Declaration of commitment and action on citywide upgrading, by organized urban community groups in Asia"* - a summary of which was read at the end of our ACHR seminar in Naples, by Diana Mitlin. What better venue, after all, for making a global declaration to start doing things differently than in this kind of global conference! Here's a super-brief, bullet-point version (*for the full text, contact ACHR*) :

- We need to identify new ways to address housing problems at scale. Much of the housing in cities in Africa, Asia and Latin America has been built by the urban poor. But it usually gets ignored or classified as part of a slum and declared illegal. The city would be much worse off without this housing, which also provides accommodation for much of the city's workforce. Imagine what could be done to improve housing at a city scale if governments and international agencies worked with the urban poor and their capacities to build and improve houses and contribute to upgrading in very resource efficient ways.
- There are enough city governments that have looked at slum and squatter upgrading in this new way and working with poor community organizations as equals to show what is possible. Over 500 cities in Asia have done so.
- We have to support this people's process and the force it can bring to city upgrading. Let them be the key actors in identifying what should be done and helping to plan and manage it. The experience to date in cities that have tried this show that very big scale change can be achieved without large-scale funding.
- We have to use finance in different ways so external finance supports the urban poor's own resources. In ways that support and enhance community-driven processes so that external funding is used to its maximum. .
- We, the organized urban poor communities of the global South want to be part of this change but the mechanisms and finance are not there to support us. This has to change. We offer governments and international agencies our knowledge, our skills and our capacities to work together and to use finance and other resources efficiently. And we set a target to reach all cities in the next ten years.
- This Declaration signifies a commitment on behalf of urban poor community groups to continue to work collectively to improve our lives on a city-wide scale, wherever possible doing so with the engagement of other actors, from local and national government, and development agencies, to together achieve a vision of pro-poor, just and livable cities.

(Right) *The 16-page brochure, "Citywide upgrading is possible", which summarizes the ACCA Program to date, was prepared for handing out in the World Urban Forum in Naples. An electronic version of this document can be downloaded from the ACHR website. (www.achr.net)*



## WORKSHOP ON "INCLUSIVE CITIES" in SEOUL, KOREA



The "Inclusive Cities Workshop" in Seoul finally happened on August 10 2012, as a collaboration between ACHR, Citynet, Asian Bridge, the Seoul Metropolitan Government and the network of "vinyl house" communities in Seoul. The one-day workshop was an attempt to help find solutions to the urban poor housing situation in Korea and to provide a platform for the urban poor communities to discuss possible solutions with Seoul Metropolitan Government - especially with its progressive new mayor, Won-Soon Park, who was elected last year. Mayor Park, who is an active human rights lawyer, is already bringing about some big changes in the city, and changing the focus to a more community organizing style of community development, as an alternative concept to the "New Town" style redevelopment and the big evictions that invariably go with it. His tenure as mayor is creating a new political space Seoul's urban poor and represents a golden opportunity to

explore alternatives to Korea's brutal redevelopment policies, which pushing thousands of low-income tenants who cannot afford housing in their redeveloped neighborhoods into informal "vinyl house" squatter settlements and squalid daily-rental rooms.

It came out during the meeting that Korea's newest national hero - a gymnast who had just won a gold medal at the London Olympics - had grown up in one of Seoul's "vinyl house" squatter settlements, which are home to 18,000 people.

The meeting was a chance to connect with key ACHR friends like Professor Ha, Father Mun-Su Park and friends at KOCER and KCHR. ACHR's team of participants included community leaders and their supporters from 11 Asian countries, who came to learn and to add their voices and their on-the-ground experiences with citywide and community-driven upgrading and housing development to the discussion with the Koreans and with a receptive Mayor Park. The day before the meeting, Asian Bridge organized a day full of field visits to some of the vinyl house communities in and around Seoul, as well as a visit to one of the low-income districts where a concentration of the city's "jokbang" (daily rental rooms) are located.

**REGIONAL FOLLOW-UP AFTER THE MEETING :** The day after the meeting, Kirtee Shah paid a "courtesy call" to Mayor Park, on behalf of ACHR and Citynet, to thank him for joining the workshop and to follow up on some of the possibilities that were raised in the workshop - particularly our proposal to the mayor to consider setting aside government funds for 5,000 housing units, to be used to develop a fresh approach to low-income housing project design and development which is community sensitive, participatory, cost effective, socially responsive - and replicable. This meeting was followed up a week later with a letter and more specific proposal to the mayor, which included the following elements:



1. **Survey all the urban poor** who can't afford or don't want to live in public rental housing, including vinyl house communities and "jokbang" room renters.
2. **Develop more new forms of housing supply** (such as community-designed housing, cooperative housing and on-site upgrading of informal settlements) in order to reach out more particular types of groups like these vinyl house or renters.
3. **Make finance available, in the form of an "urban poor housing fund"**, which could function as a new, flexible financial tool to help urban poor organizations develop these new housing new possibilities. The funds would provide soft loans and infrastructure grants. The fund could start with a capital of about US\$ 100 million (which represents the per-unit government public housing subsidy of US\$20,000 x 5,000 units) to start with.
4. **Make land available for the first housing pilots.** The land could come from public, private or church owners by the city government or be identified and negotiated by the urban poor, and it could be leased or sold to the community groups, with loans from the fund. If we target at least 10 hectares of land from all these options, that could house about 2,000 families (in 2-story row houses on 35-40 m2 plots).
5. **Let the urban poor and their support organizations be the key actors** in initiating and implementing these new housing solutions. This includes building strong and collective community organizations, starting savings or housing to build people's collective fund systems, developing social programs in communities to develop community-based systems for dealing with poverty and welfare needs, and build strong community networks and partnerships.
6. **Mobilize civil society groups and universities** to support this process of developing new housing options for the poor.
7. **Build joint mechanisms** which allow the urban poor to become active participants in this housing development and which allow the government's working culture to be more inclusive and participatory.
8. **Make this development of new housing options for the poor a clear policy agenda for Seoul**, getting everybody to help - the central government, church groups, private sector, international agencies, universities, civil society, communities, media.

## ACCA PROGRAM UPDATE

Since participants from so many countries in the Asia network had come to Seoul for the "Inclusive Cities" Workshop, we decided to take advantage of their all being together to organize a half-day ACCA committee meeting, on the following day. This was the last ACCA Committee meeting of the first three-and-a-half year phase of ACCA.

The good news is that just before the meeting in Korea, we learned that a "transitional" sum of US\$ 3.5 million, from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation had been granted to ACHR, to continue with the next phase of the ACCA Program for another two years. So the main point of discussion during this meeting was how to build on all the good experiences of the past three years, all the social and economic capital that has been generated, all the strong CDFs that are now in operation, all the partnerships, and all the upgrading and housing project in so many cities - to carry this work forward? A detailed proposal for how to use this \$3.5 million grant to continue the next phase of ACCA is now being developed and circulated among the ACCA groups in the region for their inputs. In the mean time, here are the final figures for ACCA's first phase:



### ACCA PROGRAM FIGURES : *(Cumulative figures, as of September, 2012)*

- **ACCA activities have been approved in 167 cities** / towns / districts, in 19 countries (this is the number of cities with some kind of city-wide process. This does not include cities with only an isolated or one-off project like Chiang Mai or Gangaw).
- **111 big housing projects approved** (Total big project budget approved: US\$ 4,009,767 - which includes 5 projects from the ACCA regional revolving loan fund)
- **944 small upgrading projects approved** (Total small project budget approved US\$ 2,189,300)
- **21 Community-driven disaster rehabilitation projects approved in 9 countries** : Cambodia (1 project), Indonesia (2 projects), Nepal (1 project), Burma (3 projects), Philippines (7 projects), Vietnam (3 projects), Sri Lanka (1 project), Thailand (1 project), Pakistan (1 project), Japan (1 project).
- **8 loans from the ACHR Regional Fund, for a total of \$229,700, in 4 countries**, *(see table below for details)*.



**ACCA Regional Revolving Fund Update** : The ACCA regional loan fund has given eight loans so far to different groups in the region. The loans are all given at 4% annual interest, to be repaid in half-yearly repayments, over a four or five year term. One of the innovations of this experimental fund are that the loans are given in US dollars, but the repayments are calculated in local currency, at the exchange rate at the time the loan was made. This makes repayment easier, since the local groups won't lose out by fluctuating exchange rates. So far, all but one of the loans have followed the repayment schedules - most repayments being made in cash, during the workshops or meetings. The table below shows the current status of the fund, as of October, 2012 :

### ACCA Regional Loan Fund *(Figures as of October 2012)*

Country	Who borrowed?	For what project?	LOAN FIGURES			
			Total loan amount (US\$)	Total loan amount (local currency)	Amount repaid (local currency)	Balance (local currency)
Philippines	HPFPI	Roofing loans at the LTHAI project in Mandaue	10,000	435,500 Pesos	80,404 Pesos (US\$ 1,935)	355,096 Pesos
Cambodia	CDF Foundation (National fund)	Scattered housing loans in Koh Kong Province	50,000	202,795,000 Riels	37,571,098 Riels (US\$ 9,215)	182,922,470 Riels
Nepal	Lumanti	1 small housing project in Biratnagar	12,500	895,625 Rupees	321,757 Rupees (US\$ 3,535)	684,839 Rupees
Philippines	HPFPI	Finish last houses in LTHAI project in Mandaue	36,000	1,526,400 Pesos	17,955 Pesos (US\$ 432)	1,508,455 Pesos
Sri Lanka	CLAF-Net	Scattered housing loans in Batticaloa	20,000	2,190,000 Rupees	200,005 Rupees (US\$ 1,558)	1,989,994 Rupees
Sri Lanka	CLAF-Net	Scattered housing loans in 5 cities	50,000	5,475,000 Rupees	500,012 Rupees (US\$ 3,895)	4,974,987 Rupees
Sri Lanka	CLAF-Net	Scattered housing loans in Batticaloa and Kilinochchi	40,000	5,134,400 Rupees	0	5,124,400 Rupees
Cambodia	Banteay Meanchey CDF	Scattered housing loans in Banteay Meancheay Prov.	11,200	44,800,000 Riels	0	44,800,000 Riels
<b>TOTAL 4 countries</b>	<b>8 loans</b>		<b>US\$ 229,700</b>			

## UPDATES from the URBAN POOR COALITION ASIA (UPCA)

Since it was launched in March 2012, in Quezon City, Philippines, the Urban Poor Coalition Asia (UPCA) has been active through several regional activities and loan proposals. Here are some notes from Ruby Papeleras, who is part of the team within the Homeless People's Federation Philippines which is helping coordinate this important new regional platform for sharing, learning and mutual support among Asia's community networks and federations.

**Regional visit to Banteay Meanchey Province, in Cambodia (June 25 - 27, 2012)** A group of community representatives from Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam made UPCA's first field visit to Cambodia in June 2012. The team visited the very active network of community savings groups in the northern province of Banteay Meanchey, where the provincial CDF (to whose loan capital the communities all contribute 10% of their savings each year), had applied for a loan from the regional loan fund, to support housing improvements in five communities - using the compressed soil blocks which the community network is now producing. The team visited all these communities and learned about their upgrading projects. They were accompanied throughout the trip by the mayor of Serey Sophoan, Mr. Oum Reatrey, who has been one of the community network's most enthusiastic and longest-term allies from the local government. The visiting team introduced the new UPCA coalition and decided that 50% of the current housing loan needs in Banteay Meanchey would be met by a loan from the UPCA regional revolving fund and the other 50% would come from the national CDF in Cambodia.



**UPCA's regional revolving fund :** Before and during the UPCA launch in the Philippines, an idea was floated to create a regional fund which would belong to poor community groups in Asia and would support their housing, land acquisition, upgrading, livelihood and other initiatives - to be managed by the UPCA network with as little bureaucracy and as much flexibility as possible. Instead of just talking, though, several community networks began gathering contributions from their savings members and brought fat envelopes of cash to the Philippines to put in the collection box that was passed around during the meeting. The US\$5,622 that was collected during that meeting - almost all from poor community people themselves - became the UPCA Fund's starting capital. Later on, it was agreed that a sum of US\$ 100,000 that was still available in the ACCA Regional Loan Fund would be added to this, for the UPCA coalition to manage collectively.

Since then, community networks around Asia have been meeting to discuss this new people's coalition, and deciding how much they would contribute to this new regional fund. The Philippines communities have already decided that each savings member will contribute US\$1 each year to the regional fund, while savers in Cambodia and Vietnam will contribute US\$ 25 cents and 30 cents, respectively, per savings member per year. The Thai, Sri Lankan, Mongolian, Laotian and Nepali community groups are still discussing how and how much they will contribute. It's been agreed among the UPCA community networks that all these discussions take time and the groups all need space to understand and consider this new regional financial mechanism that will belong entirely to poor community organizations.

**How the UPCA's loan process works :** A few preliminary ideas have already been discussed about how the regional loan fund process will work. Loan proposals from the community group should include details about proposed plans and activities, and should first be considered among their national networks before being submitted to the regional UPCA committee. Once UPCA gets the loan applications, they will be circulated for opinions among all the UPCA member countries (which need to send their comments within a week, to respect the urgent needs behind the loan requests). Loan proposals will only be approved after all the UPCA members agree unanimously. The loan decisions should not be simply yes or no, but the loan decisions should be supported by reasons and assistance if the loans have to be sent back for more clarification. Hopefully, the loan ideas for this new people-managed fund will not only come to the UPCA fund in this conventional way, but will also emerge spontaneously through the active process of grassroots exchanges and support between community groups, and in response to a variety of emergencies, opportunities and situations of need which come up.



For more information about UPCA, please contact ACHR or Ruby Papeleras at e-mail: [rhaddad67@yahoo.com](mailto:rhaddad67@yahoo.com)

## COMMUNITY ARCHITECTS NETWORK (CAN) UPDATE

Community architects around the Asia region continue to be extremely active in many kinds of projects and on many fronts. Here are a few notes on some recent events that have taken place within the Community Architects Network (CAN), as presented by Supawut Boonmahathanakorn ("Tee"), a young Thai architect who has been part of CAN's regional coordinating team.

### WORKSHOP IN AHMEDABAD, JUNE 23-24 :

A national meeting of Indian community architects was organized in Ahmedabad, as a collaboration between CAN and Kirtee Shah. The idea was to create a national platform for collaboration among the country's community architect groups working on low-income housing and to introduce these groups to the Asian regional network of community architect (CAN). About 15 architects, professionals and representatives from development organizations involved in housing joined the two-day workshop and made presentations about their work with poor communities in housing and settlement planning projects and discussed how to support each other's work more concretely through the regional network.

- **First day :** The first day of the workshop was taken up with presentations by the participating groups. The groups which presented their work included : Mahila Housing and SEWA trust, Shelter Associates from Pune, Centre for Heritage Management in Ahmedabad, AVAS from Bangalore, Maharashtra Social Housing and Action League (Mashal) from Pune, HUDCO from Delhi, Mr. Balachandran (a planner working in Bhuj after the earthquake), India Habitat Forum (INHAF), People in Centre Consulting, SAATH from Gujarat, Wonder Grass and Rhizome (two groups focusing on bamboo), Habitat Technology Group from Kerala, and Home in the City Program from Bhuj, CURE from Delhi, Sprout from Mumbai, VINYAS from Delhi, and SEED from Delhi. Nad and Tee also presented the work of CAN in Asia, especially the work supporting ACCA projects.
- **Second day :** The second day began with field visits into the old walled city of Ahmedabad and to a housing project being implemented by SEWA's Mahila Housing Trust, and continued with more discussions on a few key points: how the contribution of community architects can be scaled-up - especially in the Indian context? How our work can create changes in the system and how it can be relocated by communities and their support organizations themselves? How the community architecture groups in India can link more among themselves and with the regional groups through CAN and ACHR?



### COMMUNITY BUILDERS TRAINING IN BHUJ, INDIA in DECEMBER :

During the CAN visit to India, the group also had a chance to visit the work of the Hunnarshala Foundation in the city of Bhuj, in western Gujarat, where ACCA is helping support their ongoing citywide community housing and upgrading process. Hunnarshala has been one of the pioneers in promoting the use of traditional building knowledge and local artisanship in both earthquake rebuilding and ordinary housing construction. After some discussions, it was agreed that CAN and Hunnarshala will jointly organize a training workshop for community-based builders and craftspeople in Bhuj, some time in December 2012. On the way to and from Bhuj, the visiting community builders will also be able to visit community-managed and built housing projects being implemented by ASAG in Ahmedabad and by the NSDF/Mahila Milan/SPARC alliance in Mumbai. It

has been proposed that two participants from each country (one community builder and one architect) be invited to join this workshop. For more information, please contact Tee.

**CAN at WUF in ITALY in SEPTEMBER:** On September 5th, a training event for community architects entitled "Participatory Design for Slum upgrading and Inclusive City Building" was held at the sixth World Urban Forum in Naples, Italy. The event, which was jointly organized by Architects Without Borders UK and UN-Habitat, was a chance to bring together experiences of participatory design and planning of houses, communities and whole cities. The workshop drew a good crowd of about 100 people, and Tee, May Domingo and Sonia Cardonigara shared their experiences with community housing design and settlement planning in the Philippines and in other countries within the CAN network. UN-Habitat has plans to compile the cases and stories that were presented in this dialogue in Naples into a publication, and has asked CAN and asked CAN to contribute our experiences and keep in touch with this global network.





**NEW CAN BOOKLET FOR WUF NAPLES :** For the World Urban Forum event in Naples, the CAN network prepared a new 24-page booklet entitled, "Let people be the solution", which is full of stories, plans, drawings and colorful photos which describe the work of many of the community architect groups that are part of the CAN network around Asia - work that involves community and citywide mapping, settlement upgrading, comprehensive site planning, community builders training, engaging with academic institutions and sharing knowledge and communicating.

*This booklet can be downloaded from the ACHR website, or else contact Tee at [architect\\_once@hotmail.com](mailto:architect_once@hotmail.com)*

**WORKSHOP WITH RIVERSIDE COMMUNITIES IN KATHMANDU, AUGUST 6-15:** The

eviction crisis which is affecting some 2,500 poor families living in 17 informal settlements along the banks of the Bagmati River in Kathmandu, is continuing, as the government pushes ahead with a big project to revitalize the badly polluted river. The project, which involves developing drains, water treatment plants, roads and public green spaces along the river, calls for the eviction of all those informal settlements - Thapathali - was brutally demolished in May and 258 families lost their houses and everything they possessed. Some of these families have been relocated to temporary shelters, but when neighboring communities protested the presence of these poor, low-caste relocatees and threatened to burn down their tents, they were moved again. But about 50 households are still camping out on the rubble of their old houses in Thapathali.



After a visit by ACHR, SDI, CAN and Lumanti, plans were set to organize a workshop to explore alternative housing solutions for these embattled riverside settlements (including on-site upgrading, reblocking, land-sharing and land readjustment) and to use these alternative plans and ideas to negotiate for a better and more viable solution than relocating all those people to hostile relocation sites and deepening their poverty. The week-long workshop, which was jointly organized by Lumanti, the community federations and the local and regional groups of community architects, was held in August (August 6-15). The workshop proposed a holistic approach to redeveloping the housing along the whole length of the river, in which the communities would move back 20 meters from the river bank to make room for the project, and then redevelop more densely-planned forms of housing along those smaller strips of land. That would mean the Bagmati communities would be returning 61% of land they now occupy to the government and retain only 39% of the land for their community housing.



These proposals and negotiations got a big boost when Mr. Keshav Sthapit, Kathmandu's former mayor and a strong ally of the community movement in Kathmandu, was appointed as Commissioner for the Kathmandu Valley Development Authority, and put in charge of managing the resettlement of the Bagmati families. It was also agreed in the workshop that this kind of participatory exploration of alternative "win-win" housing options - which work for both the city and the poor communities - should be explored not only in the settlements along the river, but in all the other informal settlements around the city.



*(Nad has prepared a detailed report about this workshop, filled with photos, plans and drawings. Please contact ACHR for a copy)*





**TIBET HERITAGE FUND NEWS :** Pimpim de Azevedo, who is one of the founders of the Tibet Heritage Fund, has been dividing her time between her studies and her work in China and India - and is about to get her Masters degree!

### **WORLD HABITAT DAY in THAILAND and CAMBODIA :**

October 1st was the official "World Habitat Day", which UN-Habitat has graced this year with yet another anodyne theme, "*Changing cities, building opportunities.*" But as usual, the Thai community networks have planned such a lot of events, project inaugurations, seminars and workshops that they have made the whole month of October "World Habitat Month". In Cambodia, the Community Savings Network of Cambodia (CSNC) and their NGO partner, Community Development Foundation (CDF - formerly UPDF) are likewise planning a series of ribbon-cuttings, seminars, meetings and project inaugurations to go with the global attention on housing for the homeless. The community CDF network in Vietnam will also be organizing a national event with ACVN at the end of their own "World Habitat Month" (October 28-31).

### **SCALING UP HOUSING FINANCE IN THE PHILIPPINES:**

Somsook spent a week (October 1-5) in Manila, working as a consultant to discuss with friends at the Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC) ideas about how to scale up the reach of the Community Mortgage Program (CMP - which is under the SHFC) and how to make it a less project-based and a more flexible and more citywide land and housing finance system. In the past twenty years, the CMP has provided land and housing loans to about 200,000 households across the country - a drop in the ocean compared to the staggering scale of urban poor housing needs. Their plan now is to give the CMP a big push, and target a total of 850,000 households by 2016, which would represent about one-third of the country's urban slum dwellers. It's no surprise that the National Housing Authority's idea for achieving this target is to house all those families in contractor-built medium-rise buildings ("MRBs") and relocation sites. So one of the week's crucial points of discussion was how to move beyond this existing model and to embrace a more citywide approach to solving these housing problems, with strong participation of communities and local authorities, in which the physical form those 850,000 CMP-financed housing units could take many forms, including on-site upgrading, land-sharing, reblocking, relocation, presidential "proclamation" sites - and those MRBs might be one option among all these possible solutions. But the important point is to open up the space for communities to work out for themselves what kind of housing they want and what kind of land tenure arrangements they can negotiate.



**MINH CHAU JOINS ACHR STAFF :** We have a new face at the ACHR secretariat in Bangkok. Minh Chau, who is an ACHR friend of very long standing, has moved back to Asia from France with her family and has been working with the ACHR secretariat in Bangkok since early of September, as Somsook's assistant. Minh Chau started working with ACHR in 1990, on the coalition's very first project to experiment with community-driven slum upgrading in Ho Chi Minh city, in an area called Hiep Thanh. At that time, she was a government official in the city's Land and Housing Department, but she was very passionate about working with urban poor community groups, and that inspired her to continue to work with ACHR ever since. In 1994, Minh Chau got a Fulbright Scholarship to do her masters in City and Regional Planning (MRP) at Cornell University, in USA. When she returned to Vietnam, she became an advisor to Enda Vietnam and was one of

the key people to help start of the Five provincial cities project in 2000, which promoted community-based approaches in those cities, with funding support from UNDP and some technical support from ACHR. Those five cities became the nucleus for what was to become the national CDF network, which has now grown to some 30 cities. In 2002, Minh Chau moved with her husband Henri and her two children to live France, but continued to be very actively involved in the process in Vietnam, through e-mail and frequent working trips home. *(That's Minh Chau, on the right right side of the photo, during a housing workshop in Kim Duc Commune in Viet Tri, in December 2008)*

**IIED's NEWEST BOARD MEMBER :** Somsook has been invited to join the board of the Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and will be going to London for her first board meeting in November 2012.

## COMMUNITY HOUSING FUND LAUNCHED in GOPALGANJ

A team from ACHR (including May, Ruby, Tee, Nad and Tom) traveled to Bangladesh in October to visit the ACCA projects that are being implemented in Gopalganj and Dhaka. The small city of Gopalganj is a five-hour's drive from Dhaka through sumptuous green countryside. In June 2011, ACHR and the community architects network (CAN) organized a site planning and house design workshop in Gopalganj, for the ACCA-supported relocation project at Mandartola. In this important breakthrough project, 348 extremely poor families who'd been evicted to make way for a sports complex had successfully negotiated for 4.16 acres of government land for their new housing. The land, which is right in the city, was provided free by the District Authority (with support from the mayor), the municipality laid an access road to the site (which was low-lying rice paddy), the UPPR Project agreed to provide land-filling and basic infrastructure (on a "community contract" basis), and the community would manage the whole project and build the first batch of "starter" houses collectively - using the big project funds from ACCA.

The process slowed down a bit after that, and this visit was partly to help revive the Mandartola project and partly to hand over the \$43,000 from ACCA to the citywide network of women's savings groups in Gopalganj, to launch their city's first Community Housing Development Fund (CHDF). The ACHR team worked with the community people, UPPR staff, the mayor and municipal staff to review the layout plan and house designs (the people have decided to squeeze more families onto the site than previously), to decide how the CHDF will work and how much people will borrow for the first batch of houses, to fit their affordability and maximize the number of families who can build houses on the new land.

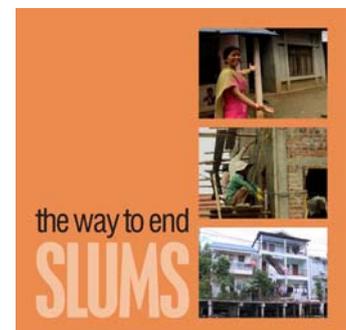


The ACCA project in the sprawling city of Dhaka (with a population of about 15 million people, of whom about 30% live in the city's 5,000 slums) is being coordinated by the NGO DSK. But the eight small community infrastructure projects the ACCA project supports are all being implemented by different community networks and their support NGOs, which have in the past year come together to form the Housing Land Rights Forum Bangladesh (HLRFB). In a city with so many slums, so many community networks and so many NGOs with so many stand-alone projects in every conceivable sector, it's no surprise that the city's urban poor movement is fragmented and piecemeal. This modest ACCA project is being used as a tool to bring all these different groups together, to learn from each other, share their experiences, support each other and build a more citywide coalition in this

immense, difficult city. During the visit, Dibalok Singha, who directs DSK, brought the ACHR team to visit four of these ACCA-supported community infrastructure projects to build communal toilets, drains and community centers.

## NEW FILM ON ACCA - "THE WAY TO END SLUMS"

For the past few years, Brenda Kelly, a London-based film producer, has supported ACHR's network of local video film-makers with occasional injections of technical and artistic advice, which come from her long experience producing documentaries on social issues with the BBC. In June, she and her partner Trish Connolly persuaded ACHR to hire their company, Uncommon Media, to produce a short film about the ACCA program. Over the next three months, they traveled to Nepal, Vietnam, and Thailand to meet with communities and film their upgrading stories. Besides the community leaders, who are the film's real stars, there are interviews with NGO partners and government officials who have worked in partnership with the people - and who make a plug for the idea that this community-driven and citywide approach is the best way to address the huge housing problems Asian cities are facing.



The 21-minute film endured a rather subdued world premier on September 3rd at the "Urban Film Festival" during the World Urban Forum in Naples, but enjoyed a livelier showing the following day, as the opener for ACHR's networking event on "Citywide upgrading". On September 13th, the film was screened in Bangkok, at the Foreign Correspondents Club, with a much bigger crowd (including the press, academics and friends from UN agencies), a question-and-answer session at the end of the screening - and a nice buffet dinner too! As Somsook said in the Naples screening, "You may hear ACHR and the ACCA Program mentioned in the film, but don't bother too much about that. We are not glorifying the program. The ACCA Program (Asian Coalition for Community Action) is just an example of the change that is being made by poor people. It is a program which proves that this can be done, and which shows that a new path of development - by people - is possible." **Please contact ACHR for a DVD copy of the film.**