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Negotiating the right to stay in the city

ACHR

The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) is a regional network of grassroots groups, NGOs and professionals involved with urban poor development processes in Asian cities. Over the past 11 years, ACHR has marshalled teams from around Asia and Africa to help poor community groups, professionals and government officials in Phnom Penh to develop and test community-driven solutions to problems of housing and poverty in the city. This article was prepared by Anne Nicholson, with contributions from David Crosbie, Maurice Leonhardt and Arif Hasan.

SUMMARY: *This paper describes a joint programme in Phnom Penh involving the municipality, a local NGO and a federation of the urban poor together with support from UN–Habitat and the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights. The programme sought to influence change in the city and to explore ways of managing processes more effectively and equitably. Research was undertaken to understand local development forces and trends as they directly affected the poorest, and results were shared among communities, academics, professionals and officials. The paper explains how this shared information led to active training through pilot community upgrades and city-wide settlement planning, contributing to policy change and illustrating an alternative and participatory governance system for the city.*

I. INTRODUCTION

"THIS CITY DOESN'T only belong to the rich. It belongs to all of us, so we should all be involved in improving it…. Now we have a lot of work to do. We have to sit down and set concrete plans for this upgrading programme together" (Chev Kim Heng, vice-governor of Phnom Penh).

This paper describes the process adopted for the City Development Strategy in Phnom Penh, from 2001 to 2003. The Strategy was a joint programme of the Municipality of Phnom Penh (MPP), UN–Habitat and the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), the people's organization, Solidarity for Urban Poor Federation (referred to in this paper as "the federation")and the Urban Resource Centre, a local NGO. The Strategy sought to influence changes in the city, bringing the various groups in the city's urban development process together to explore ways of managing processes more effectively and equitably. Through the Strategy, a research process was initiated to understand development forces and trends as they directly affected the poorest. Through participatory research and consultation activities, the results of these studies were shared among communities, academics, professionals and officials. This process facilitated and nurtured a more equitable vision of city development with benefits for all citizens. This paper explains how this information and the extensive consultation were taken a step further, with active training through pilot community upgrades and city-wide settlement planning. This action research contributed to creating policy change, thereby illustrating an alternative and participatory governance system for the city.

II. UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENT FORCES IN THE CITY

PHNOM PENH'S CURRENT urban development is closely linked to its tragic past. During the Pol Pot regime from 1975 to 1979, the city was effectively emptied as residents were forced into the fields to pursue agricultural utopia, and all tenure records and hereditary land-ownership systems were destroyed. With the fall of the Pol Pot regime in 1979, when the Vietnamese took Phnom Penh, land was declared to belong to the state, and people returning from the countryside and from refugee camps were permitted to take residence on a first-come, first-served basis. Within a decade, existing apartments and villas in the city were filled and the government gave permission for people to build shacks on vacant land. By the time land was privatized in the late 1980s, people in both formal and informal housing had settled most of the available land in the inner-urban areas, and were in a position to claim title for their housing. Since the first democratic election in 1993, and increasingly after the economic crisis and greater political stability post-1997, development and investment in Phnom Penh have escalated significantly. As a result, commercial and public development agendas have collided with the needs of the poor within the city. As elsewhere, the poor have been left worse off as a result. As shown in Box 1, the position of the urban poor is extremely vulnerable. They struggle to secure their place in the city in the face of aggressive commercialization of land markets.

In 1998, the Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF) was formed. The UPDF was a collaboration between the federation, the municipality and NGOs. It is a fund for the poor to access in support of their development needs. It was initially intended to meet the housing needs of the poor, beginning with loans for a community relocated in an inner-city development, but has diversified into support for other activities in response to community needs. After five years, more than 18 relocations of low-income communities have taken place, with considerable variance in the viability of the new sites that they have been offered. The development of the Fund has had to respond to such needs.

In the five years after the Fund was launched, relocation was the only option offered to communities facing eviction. When the Strategy was launched in 2001, it was still the only approach imagined for the future.

The organizations initiating the Strategy believed that developing a shared vision of the city's development among various stakeholders was essential. It was agreed that it was necessary to understand current trends, and particularly those most influencing the situation of the urban poor (such as the status of land). This information was also seen as important in helping to create a common base for all stakeholders collectively to assess the past and develop an alternative vision for the future. With these objectives, the Strategy supported three independent studies[1] by local organizations and consultants:
• on the relocation of urban poor communities in Phnom Penh;
• on land availability for city development in Phnom Penh Metropolitan Area; and
• on development plans for Phnom Penh Metropolitan Area.

Once these studies had been presented together, it was realized that an updated understanding of the city's low-income communities was needed. This would enable the poor to have a better perspective that went beyond their community to their *khan* (district) and city, and for the other stake-

1. Sophy, E (2002), "Land availability for city development in Phnom Penh Metropolitan Area", prepared for Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, The Green Group (English and Khmer); also Sophy, E (2002), "Study on development plans of Phnom Penh Metropolitan Area", prepared for Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, The Green Group (English and Khmer); and URC (2002), "Study on the relocation of the urban poor communities of Phnom Penh", prepared for Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, URC, (English and Khmer).

Box 1:	Phnom Penh slum dwellers feel the heat

The fire consumed the Phnom Penh slum that Sim Somay called home while she was at work at a nearby garment factory. The 37-year-old mother of four returned to find the smouldering wreckage of 1,800 makeshift houses, including the shelter that she and her husband had bought five years ago. Her mother and children had escaped unharmed, with a single hastily packed suitcase.

That night, the family and other victims ate food provided by the Phnom Penh authorities. The next morning, city officials proclaimed that no one would be allowed to stay or rebuild on the prime river-front property at the confluence of the Tonle Sap and Mekong River.

A few days later, trucks arrived to transport victims to a remote rice field without electricity or water, where they were given plastic sheeting and other materials and told to make new homes.

Many of the victims, including Sim Somay, were reluctant to go so far from their jobs in the city. But most deemed it wise not to resist, especially after a second fire swept through another river-front slum just two days after the first blaze. "*It seemed to me that if we tried to rebuild the house where we were before, another fire would be coming,*" she said.

Along with displacing an estimated 16,000 people, the fires ignited worries that more trouble lies ahead for residents of the squatter settlements that occupy long stretches of the river front, an area long-targeted for beautification by city officials eager to improve the city's dilapidated image…. Most people in Phnom Penh believe the fires were aimed at getting squatters off the land.

Extracts from Kazmin, Amy (2002), "Phnom Penh slum dwellers feel the heat", *Financial Time*s, 8 January.

holders to see all of development in relation to the opportunities and realities of the urban poor themselves. As a result, the federation undertook a new city-wide survey of low-income settlements in early 2003, updating previous surveys that they had undertaken in 1997 and 1999. The findings of these key studies are presented in the sub-sections below.

a. Relocation of urban poor communities in Phnom Penh

In 1998, the people of Toul Svey Prey were evicted from their roadside location to make way for a municipal drainage project. They worked together with the municipality, NGOs and international agencies back in 1998 to plan their own relocation. At the time, evictions had rarely involved relocation, and when land was offered, it was mostly to distant, unserviced, allocated sites. The participatory resettlement of Toul Svey Prey community thus provided an alternative. However, since then, resettlement has become the only solution adopted by the poor and the city when development plans conflict with the housing needs of the poor. Since 1998, more than 8,100 people have relocated to 18 sites across rural Phnom Penh.[2]

The reasons for the relocations have mostly been to allow public urban infrastructure improvements, such as upgrading and rehabilitation of roads, drainage canals and dykes, and for public gardens. Each relocation has involved different processes, time frames, partnerships and participation, resulting in a diverse range of impacts for the resettled communities. The relocation study analyzed 14 of these situations and came up with the following lessons:
• Unless **carefully planned with people's participation**, relocation can

2. The city is divided into seven *khans* or districts. The four central *khans* are known as the urban *khans*, with relatively high population densities; the three peripheral *khans* are referred to as the rural khans.

deepen poverty. Relocation moves people with generally low and unstable incomes away from the areas where they are making their living. Moving from the city centre to mostly rural areas, many people become even more vulnerable by having to change jobs and income-earning activities, and by earning less overall.

- **Choosing the location is key** to the success of resettled communities, and those sites selected by communities have been the most successful. These have been closest to urban Phnom Penh and, as a result, residents have experienced less unemployment, less income reduction, and less employment change. In the more distant resettlement sites, up to 25 per cent of families have left the site or live most of the week in the city earning their income. In the distant, unplanned relocation sites, income fell by up to 70 per cent compared with an average of 20 per cent across all resettled communities.
- **Relocation can strengthen or break up communities.** Where people have participated in planning their resettlements, they have also been active in construction, incremental improvements and organizing. Where they have not been involved, the relocation has not been successful. Communities have been disrupted due to the lottery system of allocating plots and, in some cases, family members or entire families have to return to Phnom Penh to find a living. Family and community ties have been broken at a time of greatest vulnerability.
- **Disasters are not a time for relocation.** Several of the most recent relocations at the time of the study were in response to settlement fires, with disastrous consequences. People who had lost everything had been moved to unprepared and unserviced sites. However, learning from these experiences, the Bloc Tanpa rooftop community, which was gutted by fire in March 2002, demonstrated how supporting communities near their homes can allow them to keep working at the same time as they are devising plans and implementing alternative long-term solutions.
- **Relocations can be very expensive** if landfill is needed to reduce flooding and conventional infrastructure strategies are followed. The study highlights that these costs have been falling as lessons are learnt. However, in the most remote sites, continuing food aid and subsidies for utilities are still necessary. There remains a need to explore models for lower-cost resettlement that involve greater participation, with a contribution from the community to reduce dependency and build up community power and activity.

   The study concluded that relocation should only be one of several possible solutions. It offered numerous recommendations for improved relocation policies, suggestions for institutional support, and requirements to improve the planning and implementation of resettlement activities.

   The central conclusion and recommendation of the study was that relocation is rarely necessary, and that options such as on-site upgrading, re-blocking and/or the redevelopment of existing settlements could be adopted without impeding the necessary urban developments. Where relocation is unavoidable, the study suggested moving to sites nearby, so that continuous access to employment, markets, utilities and social services can be ensured. The study proposed that comprehensive on-site upgrading be pursued to demonstrate the benefits to the community and to show the city how urban poor communities can be well serviced, beautiful and environmentally healthy parts of the urban landscape.

   While examining approaches to supporting the development of resettled communities, the study noted that many of the settlements are clus-

tered together in areas that are little developed. It proposed that four principal areas be designated "priority development areas" with the extension of infrastructure and service networks and the encouragement of commercial investments.

b. Land availability study

The land study was undertaken to assess the quantity of land available for development and settlement in Phnom Penh, together with its location, condition, ownership and current plans. The land inventory, which was central to the study, included only land parcels larger than 0.5 hectare.

The land inventory illustrated the current trends in land market and land development. The demand for land is increasing due to foreign tourism-related and corporate-sector industrial expansion. There is also a demand for higher middle-income housing and related commercial development. Therefore, all land in prime locations is being purchased by the private sector and being developed. Land that is likely to become prime land is also being purchased and kept for speculation. Almost all the land being acquired is government land, which is being sold because of pressure from a powerful nexus of politicians, bureaucrats and developers (local and foreign). The nature of the development taking place is completely governed by land value and, in the absence of a land use plan, not by any social or environmental considerations. Under these conditions it is not possible for poor settlements to remain either on prime land or on land that is likely to become prime land. Land registration is unusual, with only about 20 per cent of the 170,000 plots in the city being registered.

The inventory found 358 vacant land parcels totalling almost 4,000 hectares (10 per cent of Phnom Penh's land area).[3] Most of this land, (97 per cent) is owned privately, by individuals or companies, leaving only 3 per cent in government hands. The four inner-urban *khans* combined contain less than 20 small parcels of land. The remaining vacant land is found in the three outer *khans*. However, much of this land is unsuitable for relocation of urban slum communities due to its remoteness from markets, utilities and social services, and the potential for flooding. The study suggests that 21 per cent of the available land is suitable for relocation.

In the absence of a city land use plan or regulatory mechanisms for the land market to guide the private sector for city development, land development is guided by investor interests. With government owning little of the land, they are unable to allocate land for social or other development purposes.

The land inventory study was particularly useful in reinforcing the benefits of community-selected relocation sites. It was evident that community-chosen relocation sites were closer to the city, in more economically strategic positions. Smaller plots than the government-allocated remote relocation sites ensured affordability. The study also shows that, although prices may be higher in these areas, there is plenty of available land accessible to the city that communities and the municipality can assess when considering relocation.

c. Development plans

The objective of the study of development plans was to understand and present the development of Phnom Penh; identifying the types of devel-

3. Vacant or unused land refers to land on which there is no development activity currently taking place or land that has been unused for many years. Land owned by farmers is not considered as vacant or unused land.

Table 1:	Phnom Penh urban poor settlement surveys (1997–2003)					
1997		1999		2003	
Settlements	Households	Settlements	Households	Settlements	Households
379	30,100	502	35,165	569	62,249

opment projects, for example road infrastructure or tourism development, that are receiving investment and are thus shaping the physical and social layout of the city and determining its future functions.

The study noted that, in the past 10 years, 203 projects have been carried out or are currently underway in various sectors. Almost one-quarter of these concern water supply; the next most common group relates to community development projects (spanning issues of infra-structure improvement, empowerment and advocacy), which account for 11 per cent of projects; and land use planning projects account for 9 per cent (18 individual projects). There have been equal numbers of projects addressing traffic and urban roads (16), and floods, drainage and sanita-tion (16). The study estimated that these development projects over the last 10 years have cost more than US$ 400 million.

An analysis of the urban development plans shows a focus on the inner-urban *khans* and, in the absence of land use plans, illustrates the direction and corridors for priority city development beyond the centre to the rural *khans*.

Later in the Strategy process, as many of these plans as possible were mapped, to include the locations of communities. This enabled the impli-cations of developments (particularly road and drainage) on low-income communities to be assessed.
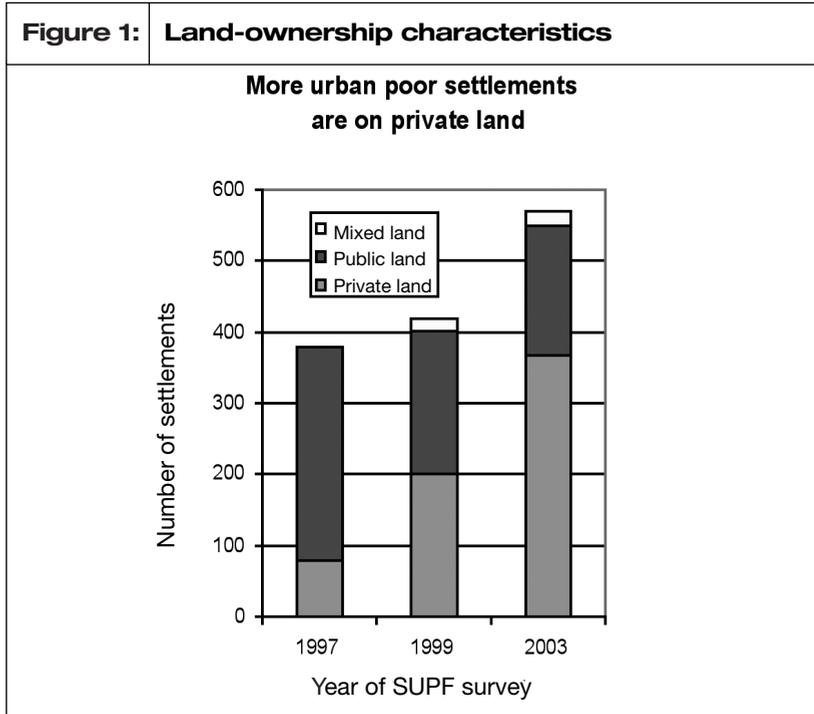
d. Urban poor settlement survey (2003)

The Solidarity for Urban Poor Federation then conducted their own survey of the low-income communities. This survey updated an earlier study in 1999, and found 62,249 poor households living in 569 settlements in the urban and rural *khans* of Phnom Penh.

The biggest demographic change emerging from the new survey (in which more rural communities had been included) was that the scale of poverty in Phnom Penh was much greater in the rural *khans*. This change was also a result of the relocation of more than 13 per cent of the poor over the previous five years, from inner-city to rural relocation sites, which were themselves the only new communities to have formed in the past five years. The great majority (87 per cent) of settlements were established before land privatization.

The 2003 federation survey found an increase in the number of settle-ments on private land relative to public land. Two main factors affecting this change are the relocation of communities from public land to private resettlement sites where they will soon attain private title and the inclu-sion of the many poor rural communities who may own their land, yet are very poor.

The most prominent theme from the survey was the status of security in low-income settlements. Forty per cent of communities were under some eviction threat, with 12 per cent actually under eviction orders.

Figure 1: Land-ownership characteristics

More urban poor settlements are on private land

- □ Mixed land
- ■ Public land
- ■ Private land

Number of settlements

Year of SUPF survey

ACHR (2003), "Phnom Penh: an information booklet on the city's development and the settlements of the urban poor", May.

Figure 2: Families threatened with eviction in Phnom Penh

40% of families in Phnom Penh are threatened with eviction

Threatened by development plans 28%

No threat 60%

Under eviction 12%

ACHR (2003), "Phnom Penh: an information booklet on the city's development and the settlements of the urban poor", May.
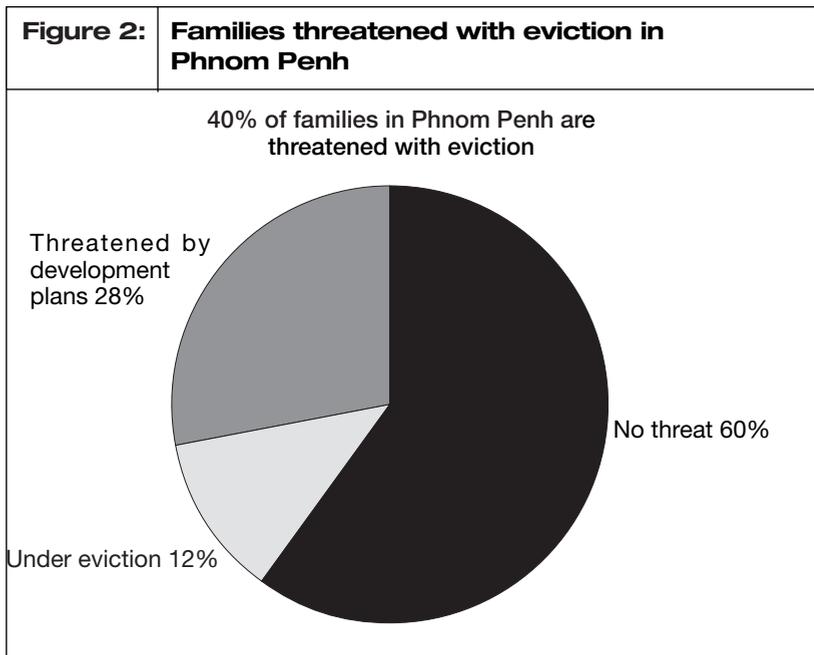
Table 2:	Eviction threats by type of development	
Cause of eviction	Settlements	%
Infrastructure	74	38
Beautification	22	11
Commercial	23	12
Ministerial	11	6
Private	11	6
Uncertain	56	27
	197	

The survey found the greatest problem was on public land where 60 per cent of settlements were at risk. A significant 20 per cent of settlements on private land were also threatened with eviction.

Almost half of these evictions are due to public infrastructure and beautification projects, with road development being the cause of 18 per cent of all eviction threats.

Poor communities face a lot of uncertainty about their settlements, and rarely know or are informed about the development plans and their consequences. This makes it difficult for them to plan for their own development. The survey showed that people in almost 30 per cent of settlements did not know about the plans for their land.

III. SHARING KNOWLEDGE WITH THE CITY

THE STUDIES INDICATED conclusively that the combination of unrestrained commercial urban development within the core of the city and the policy of relocation, advocated in the past, had failed to alleviate either the problems of urban poverty or of slums. In practice, relocation sites were becoming centres of disadvantage. These conclusions pointed strongly to the need for a change in focus with regard to development in the city.

Initially, ACHR, the municipality and UN–Habitat had envisaged that the Strategy would produce a database of information on urban poor settlements and city development trends that would be useful for the urban poor organizations, NGOs and government. This information would allow the government to make informed decisions on future development and planning assistance from major donors. While much of this information was acquired, the Strategy took the further step of undertaking analysis, in order to facilitate planning.

The Strategy recognized that the way forward had to be agreed upon collectively. Using these studies, the groups involved began to draw together the process to facilitate the development of a collective response. The studies were used to present the reality of the situation in the city and to reflect on directions for future change. In this way, a broad selection of local actors was involved in the analysis and consequent planning phase of the Strategy. The key stakeholders involved were:
• federation community representatives in each community;

- the municipality of Phnom Penh;
- seven *khan* chiefs and officers;
- *sangkhat* (sub-district) officials;
- the Urban Resource Centre;
- other local NGOs; and
- ACHR.

a. Embedding local ownership

A fundamental aspect of the City Development Strategy in Phnom Penh was to engage local urban organizations in these studies, creating opportunities for them to explore more deeply the processes in the city. This ensured that the knowledge remained with the city rather than belonging to external consultants. The relocation study was undertaken by the Urban Resource Centre in Phnom Penh, a local NGO that coordinated the necessary surveys through their participatory monitoring and evaluation team. Community leaders and committees in each settlement participated actively and the process involved more than 30 people overall. The land and development studies were undertaken by young local professionals from the Green Group, a new and expanding consultancy. The Green Group worked with more than 20 leaders from the federation to find and make an inventory of vacant land. This collaboration was important in bringing together disparate stakeholders to work and learn together, thus strengthening relationships between local institutions working in the urban development and poverty sectors.

b. Democratization of knowledge

Bringing together and disseminating all this information on the city was integral to the ownership and action that resulted from the studies. When the studies were completed in May 2002, the Strategy used the information to bring together communities, NGOs, municipal and government officers. In a series of large workshops, the essence of the studies was presented to more than 800 city residents, officials and development agency workers, with briefing papers circulated to all.

It is important not to underestimate this approach of making information available to the public. In Cambodia, as in many Asian countries, information is power for those who collect, retain and thus control it. Making the Strategy's own information so broadly available was intended to demonstrate the right to, and utility of, multi-stakeholder and citizen participation and cooperation in the understanding and management of the city.

Khan-level community workshops. As a first step, the Strategy took the information to the people, with five workshops of between 50 and 100 people, one for each rural *khan*, and two combined workshops for the urban *khans*, between May and August 2002. More than 500 community leaders were briefed on the study results, and they discussed together the primary issues raised and ideas for addressing them.

District authorities. Further workshops in September 2002 presented the findings to local authorities from each of the city's seven *khans* and to the appointed municipal steering committee for the Strategy.[4] The workshops presented the study findings and the recommendations formulated by the communities in the preceding workshops.

NGO workshop. More than 20 NGOs working in the urban develop-

4. The CDS Steering Committee was established in early 2002. The committee initially included heads of departments in MPP, officials from central government line ministries (including Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction), CBO and NGO sector representatives, UNCHS and Cambodia Development Research Institution (CDRI). Composition of the committee changed over time, from an unwieldy membership of more than 30 to a small group of about ten.

ment sector in Phnom Penh held a similar workshop in October to look at the findings and recommendations from the studies and the previous workshops.

CDS (Strategy) steering committee. Throughout this process, the municipality and representatives from various line agencies were kept abreast of the study activities, results, consultations, findings and plans, with sometimes more than 40 representatives of the municipality in attendance.

IV. THE STRATEGY AS AN INTERVENTION TO TURN INFORMATION INTO ACTION

THROUGH THE STUDIES and workshops, alternatives to relocation following eviction, and the need for the poor to have development options within the city, were discussed and debated between diverse stakeholders. It was agreed that alternatives to relocation needed to be considered. Particular priority was given to in-situ upgrading, nearby relocation and land-sharing. But how to make these suggestions a reality? What did these concepts of comprehensive upgrading, land sharing and nearby relocation really mean? And how could all of these stakeholders, engaged during the studies, be mobilized to take these ideas and their participation to another level, where they become the instigators and drivers of a new development approach for the city?

Thus, the strategic turn in the Strategy process came in transforming consultation and awareness into participation and change. A city-wide federation workshop identified and prioritized three communities to pilot three new approaches and, simultaneously, began a process of *khan*-level community mapping, analysis and planning.

The two main actions initiated were:

• **Pilot upgrading as training for the city:** it was agreed that a number of pilot communities would illustrate each of the alternative concepts. Planning, design and implementation were started in three communities, observed by the entire city.

• **Planning solutions for poor communities across the city:** member groups within the federation took the information from the studies a step further. They began to compile maps of their *khans*, in order to consider the development plans and vacant land, and sought to work with local stakeholders to assess the likely alternatives for each settlement in their *khan*.

a. Upgrading as "training by doing"

At this stage, upgrading, nearby relocations and land share were merely concepts. Some people had seen them work in other countries but, overall, there was not a good understanding among the communities, officials and professionals. By prioritizing a few settlements for a trial of these concepts, their possibilities came alive, through the interactions of the communities, their *sangkhat*[5] and *khan* officials, the UPDF young professionals, the municipality and the numerous other agencies involved in the development process.

The three prioritized communities, and the approaches selected for them, were Ros Reay (on-site comprehensive upgrading), Borei Keila (land sharing) and Stoeng Kambot (nearby relocation).

5. Sub-district officials have been elected only since February 2002, and so in many cases they are eager to interact with and support communities in their jurisdiction, although they have no funds. *Khan* officials are appointed by the municipality

| Box 2: | Ros Reay upgrades existing community with drains, paved roads, house improvements and landscaping |

The 72 tightly packed houses in Ros Reay are part of a larger neighbourhood of over 1,000 house-holds behind the French Embassy, most of which settled here in 1979, immediately after the Pol Pot period. Even though it is right next to the city's largest natural drain, Boeung Kak Lake, Ros Reay experiences serious flooding during the rainy season, so building a drainage system was the community's first upgrading priority. Because they own the land they occupy and are already well organized through their savings group, Ros Reay was the least complicated and the most ready of the three pilots. And because it was the first to start work, Ros Reay has become the first comprehensive upgrading "train-ing by doing" for the whole federation and the whole city. Lots of people have visited and taken part in every stage of the work, as the process is carefully kept in the learning spotlight.

The first step was to survey and map the settlement, which community people did themselves with some help from UPDF's technical team and groups of "upgrading apprentices" from communities in other *khans*. On the map, they plotted all the houses, trees, water points and problem areas, and used this to discuss what needed improving, in what order. Once they had decided what improvements to make, they estimated the costs and drew up a budget for their upgrading plan, which was submitted and approved in January 2003. Municipal officials and community members from around the city were invited to the ground-breaking ceremony, where the first US$ 500 handed over to the community was immediately matched by US$ 500 in cash contributions from community members.

With this US$ 1,000 in hand, work began with moving back the fences and compound walls, straighten-ing the lanes, and making room for laying the underground sewage and storm drain system, which involved an enormous amount of labour. The lanes were paved, trees and flowers planted along the lane edges, and most of the houses boasted a fresh coat of paint by the time the upgrading was opened by the vice-governor at the UPDF anniversary. Since then, activities haven't stopped. More and more houses are upgrading, with more brick, tile and painted facades appearing in the community every month.

6. Young Professionals (YPs) are students or recent graduates from local universities who are employed by UPDF and URC to support the community planning process. Most commonly to date, these YPs have been architects. The YP programme strives to link young, enthusiastic professionals with active communities, so that the YPs can learn the reality of, and planning obstacles to, housing for the urban poor, and can support the community planning process with technical advice and professional services.

Over the next five months, one community was upgraded and two clear plans were established, all driven by the community and gathering support from other groups as the momentum increased. At Ros Reay (Box 2), the showcase upgrade, senior officials from the municipality, the Bureau of Urban Affairs, the UN and many other settlements visited the community to see how the process was progressing. At the same time, monthly federation meetings at the UPDF began to play an increasingly important role as an open forum for all stakeholders to discuss the Strat-egy's pilot projects. The regular visits (from the municipality, *sangkhat* and *khan* chiefs, as well as UN–Habitat) all helped the stakeholders to under-stand the direction in which the project was moving. Undoubtedly, that direction was led by the communities and their federation. They drew in other groups as facilitators and administrators, in support. Certainly there were obstacles and periods of resistance and opposition, but with the objective of "training" rather than precedent setting, the pilots really did become an avenue for all to learn how to support a common goal.

Although Ros Reay is the only project to be realized to date, the plan-ning, revision and conceptualization involved in both Stoeng Kambot (Box 3) and Borei Keila (Box 4) generated a great deal of interest and learn-ing throughout the federation and among other stakeholders. Regular updates were presented during federation meetings. In the case of the land sharing, there was particularly intense stakeholder interest. This is the most controversial of options and many were curious about the processes that could be followed.

Exchange programmes to Thailand helped to inform the Young Profes-sionals,[6] community leaders, especially from Borei Keila (the pilot community that chose to land share), and Urban Resource Centre staff of

Box 3:	Stoeng Kambot rebuilds its community on adjacent land, to make room for the city's dike-building project

Stoeng Kambot is a poor settlement of 210 families living in wood and bamboo houses built in a long line on a narrow strip of land between a dirt road and a drainage canal in a remote part of Roessei Keo District. Many of the community's grown-ups and children work as labourers in the brick kilns across the road or in nearby factories. There are trees and plenty of fresh air and open space out here, but conditions in the settlement are pretty bad – families have no electricity or water supply, and have to pay upwards of US$ 50 a year to the brick kiln owner to use the stagnant water from his pond across the road. The people first settled here in 1984. In 1998, they linked up with SUPF and began organizing themselves through a collective savings scheme. For several years, the community has been under threat of eviction, to make way for a municipal project to construct a new road and dike on land the community now occupies. After surveying and mapping their settlement, the community explored several redevelopment options, including squeezing their houses on to a narrower strip to make room for the new dike. But now, the Stoeung Kambot community, along with the federation's *khan* unit, is negotiating for compensation in the form of some nearby farmland they have identified, where they would be willing to redevelop their community, according to layout plans they've developed with young architects at the UPDF.

the benefits and constraints of the scheme. As the Borei Keila community leaders became clearer about the principles behind this approach, they were able to inform other federation members.

Within a short time, this exposure and the activities in the three pilot communities were intensely discussed within the federation in UPDF meetings and/or at federation workshops, resulting in a growing understanding and enthusiasm among federation members.

b. Information as a tool for planning change

The federation's 2003 urban poor settlement survey provided an organizational springboard for the subsequent process of *khan*-mapping. The information collected in the studies enabled the accurate documentation of districts and settlements. Within two weeks of putting together the draft survey results, each *khan* had consulted with its various committees and members, conferred with village and *sangkhat* chiefs and visited some communities, to be able to plot their findings accurately on to large-scale district maps, showing:
• settlements under eviction;
• settlements organized with the federation or NGOs; and
• settlements defined by type of land they occupied, such as public or private.

Overlaying these settlement maps with the location of proposed development projects and vacant land in their district enabled federation members to take a broad view of their district and current directions of development. With this information, members could together consider options for each of their settlements, creating the analytical overlay to their district map, marking:
• settlements which could be upgraded in their existing location;
• settlements which could be redeveloped through land sharing or other land-adjustment initiatives; and
• settlements that might have to relocate, preferably to nearby land, which the community has identified.

In a large federation city-level meeting, each of the *khans* presented their findings and development proposals to the more than 200 assembled federation community leaders, as well as representatives from local

Box 4:	Borei Keila uses a land-sharing strategy to rebuild its community on a small portion of the land it now occupies, and returns the rest to the government for its development plans

Borei Keila is a crowded inner-city settlement of 1,482 families in 7 Makara District, living in and around two rows of four-storey apartment blocks built in the 1960s to house athletes. Some families live in the apartments while the rest live in wood and brick houses. The land is owned by the Ministry of Sport and Youth which, for years, has been trying in vain to evict the settlement to demolish the buildings and construct a new stadium and facilities First settled in 1979, the community is now very strong, with both SUPF and USG savings groups and strong community leadership. The idea of upgrading Borei Keila has united this large community, which is 100 per cent determined to stay. After surveying, measuring and mapping the entire settlement, the people have worked with UPDF architects to explore a range of land-sharing redevelopment options, which involve rebuilding the community on a small portion of the land and returning the rest to the ministry. Their first plan involved developing five-storey blocks of flats on 25 per cent of the land. But this would be extremely expensive and the community is now looking at a much cheaper and more efficient layout plan of 1,500 tiny row-houses on 30 per cent of the land. Borei Keila is an important test case for land sharing, which makes room for poor people's housing while releasing enough land for the government to go ahead with their redevelopment, and even commercial developments.

NGOs and some enthusiastic *khan* and *sangkhat* officials. The meeting then set about prioritizing who would be included in the next round of upgrading. This selection would effectively broaden the scale of this "training by doing" work. Each of the seven *khans* selected five communities: three to upgrade in-situ, one to relocate and one to redevelop through land-sharing or land adjustment. The upgrading in these 35 communities, like the pilots, provided a training ground for the federation, for more local village and *sangkhat* authorities, and for the municipality.

The entire process represented the implementation of a participatory, city-wide upgrading mechanism through which the communities could work together, moving from recommendations to pilots, and from pilots to the whole city.

- **Through the pilot training**, the communities, the federation, the UPDF, the municipality, other NGOs and local authorities all learned how, by supporting community initiatives, urban poor communities could significantly improve their neighbourhoods to make them into clean, healthy, beautiful elements of the urban landscape, at a relatively low cost.
- **District and city planning** helped the federation to have a city-wide perspective on the situation of the urban poor. Following their internalization of the Strategy study information, the federation demonstrated a community-driven mechanism for analysis, planning, prioritization and critique.

V. HOW A BROAD AWARENESS AND COOPERATIVE ACTION CAN CATALYZE CHANGE

AS A PROCESS implemented through an active people's network, and in partnership with diverse local actors, the City Development Strategy contributed to the realization of several key changes in Phnom Penh.

Creating a city-wide vision and action for change. The most integral cumulative result of the process was that, by promoting a people-paced, people-driven analysis with the planning of alternative urban development initiatives that were broadly inclusive of other associated groups, a

new policy evolved from the people up.

Through the studies, the consultations, the survey, mapping and planning options for low-income communities in Phnom Penh, a shared vision for this alternative policy was created despite the diversity of stakeholders. For groups faced with eviction, the City Development Strategy broadened the menu of options from relocation on distant sites to include on-site upgrading, re-blocking, land sharing and nearby relocation. At the heart was a recognition that the poor have a right to live in the city, and that their development can benefit the city, making their settlements beautiful, healthy, safe and secure elements of the urban environment. These concepts are not new but had never been tried in Phnom Penh. Building the understanding of their meaning, documenting and disseminating the findings of the studies and the need for other options was important in helping the communities, the NGOs and the authorities to see that other solutions and other mechanisms were possible. Figure 3 shows the different stages of participation between the federation and the municipality of Phnom Penh, as two approaches were pursued: the first focusing on how upgrading could practically be implemented; and the second on how a city-wide view could be nurtured.

Facilitating a government policy change – people's policy with strategic advocacy. Both citizens and authorities have been actively supporting the pilot projects, creating a momentum of energy for change, added to which strategic advocacy with the municipality helped elevate the concept of an upgrading policy.

The UPDF is itself a collaborative organization between the municipality, the people and NGOs, with the prime minister's personal support. The fund used its fifth anniversary event (24–26 May 2003) to promote the strategy of on-site community improvement with further support in a widely distributed newsletter and the Phnom Penh booklet.[7] The booklet offers a summary of the key findings of the studies, and includes information about the situation of the urban poor, including the availability of land, in each *khan*. The event itself was organized jointly by the municipality and the federation. Delegates from leading grassroots communities in Asia and Africa attended the celebration alongside officials from UN–Habitat, the World Bank and government ministries. Over 5,000 community members from Phnom Penh itself were present.

The approaching national election provided added incentive for the government to launch the pro-poor upgrading initiative. Prime Minister Hun Sen gave the opening speech, in which he announced his policy for the upgrading of 100 settlements in a year in Phnom Penh, and 500 settlements over five years. He also announced municipality support for the nearby relocation of a community living on a garbage site, and the approval to land share at three large slums on government land.

Making the people's process the mechanism for upgrading poor communities. By creating the space for the poor to be involved in the research, to be central to the consultations and analysis, and to create the process of settlement selection, planning, designing and implementation, the Strategy process has opened space for the evolution of a community-driven upgrading mechanism. Since the declaration of the policy, this process has further evolved to become the implementing mechanism of city-wide upgrading, in cooperation with the 100-slum upgrading committee (on which the people sit as decision makers).[8]

Strengthening the UPDF. The UPDF is an important element of the institutional environment in Cambodia, being neither an NGO, nor

7. ACHR (2003), "Phnom Penh: an information booklet on the city's development and settlements of the urban poor", City Development Strategy, (English and Khmer); also ACHR (2003), *Urban Poor Development Fund Newsletter*, Fifth Year Anniversary edition, prepared by ACHR/UPDF (English and Khmer).

8. Currently, the committee has 16 members (seven *khan* chiefs, one representative each from UNCHS, MPP, Land Management Department, SUPF, UPDF and ACHR, the MPP vice-governor, the chief of cabinet and two deputy chiefs of cabinet). The working group, consisting of SUPF representatives and UPDF architects are, however, the main actors in developing the concepts which go to the committee for approval.

Figure 3: How the city development strategy process helped facilitate change in Phnom Penh
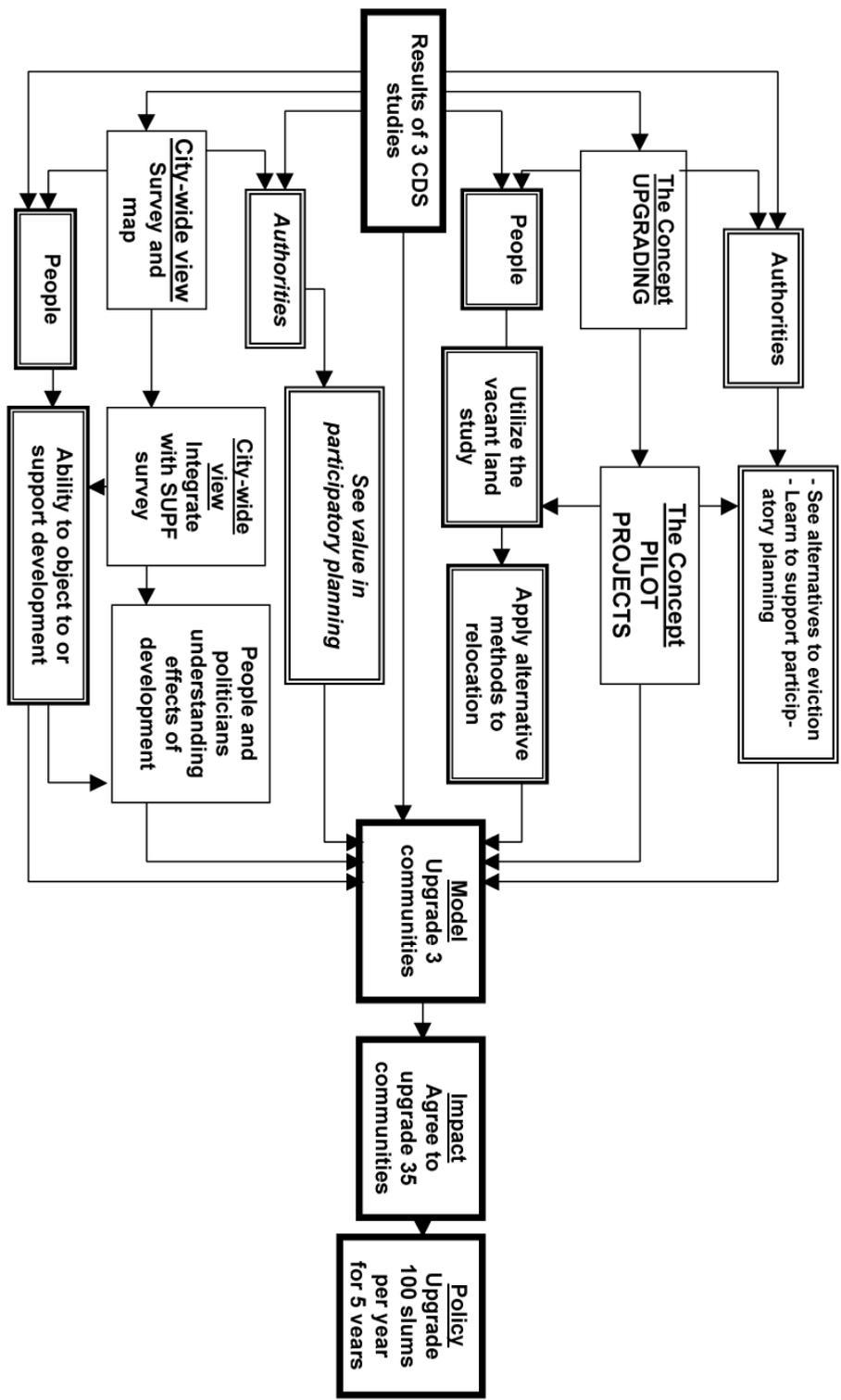
> "*This change has also been felt at the local and district levels, where the recognition for people to be involved is increasing. There have been several meetings held in the municipality since the UPDF anniversary in May, to discuss the upgrading policy, and community leaders from SUPF have been invited to participate in these meetings. This reflects a changing attitude. The district officials have also been discussing with community people about how to go about this 100-community upgrading process. The position of poor people as important actors in solving the city's housing problems is being increasingly accepted by various levels of the government, and the UPDF anniversary event and the Ros Reay pilot project has played a big part.*"
>
> Mr Mann Chhoeurnn, Municipal Cabinet Chief, speaks about the transformation in attitude towards the urban poor which has taken place within the national, municipal and district governments (12 July 2003, UPDF Board Meeting).

community, nor government. It is a unique institutional space where these groups come together to work in new and challenging ways to bring change to their city. Inevitably, they develop roles that are quite different to those that they traditionally follow. In this process, they create new forms of governance. Instigated by the Strategy, this experimentation in roles, partnerships and processes for development was facilitated through the UPDF. Its role becomes even more significant as the 100-slums upgrading policy moves into implementation.

Facilitating greater cooperation between communities and their local authorities. The Strategy coincided with a time of local democratic change. *Sangkhat* officials had been elected for the first time, but they lacked the financial resources and management experience to facilitate development in their wards. The pilot projects became important development precedents that community groups could use to engage with and influence these local officials. From the *sangkhat* to the district and city level, the community-driven pilots allowed the communities to draw officials and politicians into their process, learning together with the common objective of seeing the projects achieve change. Relationships have varied in this period; the communities and their authorities found their own ways to cooperate. It is anticipated that the shared learning and experimentation will continue, as better modes of working together develop.

Democratizing information. People need tools to facilitate true participation in decision-making, planning and policy development and implementation. Information is one of the most important tools. By the very nature of the information collected, the agenda is set. Through the process of collection and analysis, the use and ownership of this information is determined.

With a pro-poor focus, the active participation of community leaders, support from local NGOs and professionals, and extensive consultation and dissemination of the information throughout the city, the City Development Strategy facilitated the ownership and use of this information. They engaged municipal officials and politicians, local levels of government, the poor and other development groups. All documents were translated into Khmer. A UPDF newsletter (produced in Khmer and in English) disseminated the information and offered analysis. The importance of this democratizing of information is evidenced by the scale of mobilization and the subsequent political response.

It is important to remember that these changes are not simply the result of the City Development Strategy and associated processes. Rather, they are a consequence of using the Strategy as a tool that enables the various existing groups and processes in the city to take a new look at the realities of the city's development, and to explore and experiment with new

alternatives. By giving space for the inclusion of multiple stakeholders and opportunities for collaboration, the Strategy has effectively demonstrated an alternative form of governance for the city. As a result of that new form of governance, all stakeholders have begun to modify their roles. The communities have demonstrated their desire and capacity to be the leading decision makers and implementers, and to be able to understand, absorb and translate their knowledge and needs into development for the city. At the same time, the process has provided, through the planning and implementation processes, opportunities for local and municipal authorities to engage with their constituents at multiple levels, as supporters and facilitators of their development efforts. The current 100-slums upgrading process is carrying forward this evolving process, as both the communities and the government move in a direction whereby development comes through the action and support of all, and with results that are of benefit to all.