Community to Community Exchanges: Breaking the Isolation

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

When the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) was formed in 1988, there was no common or regular forum for members of grassroots or community groups working in Asian cities, urban social activists, non-governmental organization (NGO) workers, and professionals to meet and exchange ideas. During the United Nations International Year for Shelter for the Homeless in 1987, several regional processes were organized which encouraged groups to share their experiences in addressing issues of urban poverty and housing and to discuss regional collaboration. At that time, there was a shared recognition that new ideas and actions were needed to tackle the upsurge of forced evictions in Asia and to develop opportunities for organizations of the poor to gain due recognition and a meaningful role in city management and planning.

In the early years of ACHR (1988-1990), the emphasis was on housing rights and eviction problems in Asian cities. International Fact Finding Missions that put pressure on governments were organized to South Korea (twice), Hong Kong and Philippines with positive outcomes. The second stage of work (1991-1993) developed solutions to eviction problems. The third stage centered on the Training and Advisory Program (TAP) supported by the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom (1994-2000). TAP was a comprehensive package of support activities for ACHR partners with cross-country learning, exchange visits, regional

workshops, training from key regional projects, new country action programs and research. This added significantly to the knowledge and capacity of the regional intervention process.

The fourth stage, from 2000, represents a more mature process and a broader scale of intervention. This included the introduction of community savings and credit activities and the development of many Community Development Funds that have been able to influence new forms of development change in Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam, Nepal, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Philippines and India. Regional responses to the tsunami devastation have developed with the promotion of community-driven relief and rehabilitation. In terms of policy advocacy, the contribution of ACHR key activists has increasingly been recognized with requests to meet and share knowledge with policy makers including government ministers. This reflects increasing interest in possible collaboration and support for urban community development and/or community upgrading programs. City-wide and country-wide slum upgrading in Thailand and India has been used to boost and support learning for structural change in other countries.

Some ACHR interventions and support have been integrated into government policies, while others have been successfully up-scaled without government support. The upgrading of a hundred slums per year in Cambodia and the community savings and credit groups initiatives in Lao PDR and Mongolia have developed into large-scale programs. Other activities include the production and widespread dissemination of international publications including the *Housing By People* series, *Eviction Watch,* and *Understanding Asian Cities*; also the work on protecting the heritage of cities by the participation of poor communities, the Young Professionals Program and regional information activities. ACHR is the Asian branch of the Habitat International Coalition and an executive committee member of CITYNET.[1] It also works closely with Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) and collaborates with United Nations Habitat, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank.

The Regional Eviction Watch Program aims to develop housing rights and the question of rights in general of the urban poor and activities to deal with regional eviction problems. It monitors evictions in Asian cities, undertakes fact finding missions, disseminates information (about evictions to mobilize protests, inform communities on how to tackle evictions, docu-

mentation of evictions for lobbying governments and international development agencies), build the capacities of communities and development organizations to be able to deal with eviction situations professionally and constructively, organize selected studies for advocacy on eviction related issues, hold training workshops for community leaders, NGOs and ACHR professionals to improve eviction monitoring skills and discuss strategies and tools for dealing with evictions, and exchange study visits focusing on the solutions tried by some countries in the region.

The Young Professionals Program (YPP) aims to influence professionals and decisionmakers of the future by increasing their understanding of urban poor communities and cities so that they have a realistic understanding of how their cities function and are more effective at solving city problems—including those of the poor. YPP includes short internships for students, recently graduated professionals, or young slum professionals to work and/or undertake action based research and activities under the mentoring of ACHR coalition partners in their respective countries, which will be strengthened in the future. There is an emphasis on building a network among the concerned young professionals within countries, rather than within the region. ACHR professionals, activists and community leaders work with academic institutions to undertake lectures, develop curriculum and training programs to enhance student understanding of urban poor realities and how the city functions. YPP thus facilitates the establishment of links between universities and urban resource centers for long-term cooperation and intended to change city planning processes.

ACHR produced in 2000 a special publication entitled *Face to Face: Notes from the Network* on community exchange that started a program that used direct people-to-people exchange learning as the most important development tool.

Community-to-Community Exchange

Within poor communities in Asia today, so many activities are going on—learning, building, innovating, negotiating—moving forward in a thousand ways.

Asian grassroots organizations are truly on the cutting edge of people-driven solutions and represent a powerful pool of skills and expertise. This is something we know now, but more than two decades ago, there was also

a lot going on but nobody knew much about it, all those struggles were isolated, as though locked away in separate cupboards.

That's where horizontal exchange comes in.

Community exchange and exposure are terms used to describe a variety of activities which all have in common poor people visiting poor people in other places to meet, talk, see what each other is doing and begin an education which allows them to explore the lives and situations of people in other communities, and to pick up any ideas which they think could be useful back home, in their own struggle for a better community. Exchange builds relationships of trust and partnership across distances, where teaching and learning from each other becomes natural—almost automatic. Exchange remains the root strategy for education and mobilization of poor communities, of the poor and by the poor, in Asia and Africa, and in the ACHR networks.

TO A SIDEWALK

A visit to the Byculla Mahila Milan in the heart of Bombay

WHO CAN FORGET her first trip into India—into Bombay, it's teeming mercantile capitol, and into Byculla, right in the gritty, overcrowded, clamorous heart of the city?

For the connoisseur of the THWACK, India has immense and boundless shock value.

Here are some telegraphic impressions from a Thai visitor to the Mahila Milan's Area Resource Centre at Byculla.

First the street kids pick you up at the airport in their Citibank-donated taxi. They are grown up now, and driving so fast, nothing to do with rules!

Collecting daily savings with Shehnaz, in the early morning.

People on her street live in three-square meter "bed-houses" on the street. The feet of sleeping people stick out of these tiny shelters.

Men bathe in the gutter, babies play under parked taxis and women roll out chapattis and pound spices.

And that food! The way they mash it all together on a steel plate, and scoop it up with their hand.

Shit even on the sidewalks—Shehnaz says, "Watch out for those bombs!"

How can people survive like this! We've seen the pictures, we've heard the

stories, we've read the statistics, but nothing—nothing!—can prepare us for the shock of Byculla, of Bombay, of India!

Even tough people like us, who live and work in poor communities are shocked when they come here.

In Thailand, we get awed by Klong Toey, Thailand's largest slum, with 6,000 families. That's nothing at all in Bombay. Jockin explains about federating the Rural Slum Dwellers Federation (RSDF) or doing the survey, and everything is reckoned in hundreds of workers, thousands of families, millions of poor people!

The scale of everything here is staggering, the scale of filth, the scale of poverty.

But underneath all this, there is this women's savings collective, this federation which has got so much going—building thousands of houses, hundreds of toilets, saving millions of rupees. It's a little mechanism in all this big scale, but it's working! It's healthy, alive, growing.

Book keeping back in the Byculla office, in the garage out behind an old municipal dispensary. So many people here, all in different groups do different things, all sitting on the floor in one small room—making payments, taking loans, counting money, filling ledgers, rubbing feet, combing hair, gossiping, arguing, sleeping.

The phone rings all the time. Sadak Chaap kids wrestle outside, women slap each other on the back. Glasses of sweet tea are handed around. Women pavement dwellers come and go with so much confidence—it's so plain to see.

This is their place—you can feel it, it's not like the offices you visit in other projects—these women are the ones asking you questions, "Do you have savings schemes in your country?"

Learning Tools

When something that poor communities do in one place is found to be useful, it gets repeated. With repetition, it becomes a feature of their work and begins being used with more intention. The more it is used, the more it gets refined and standardized. Soon it becomes a bona fide tool.

Through transfer and adaptation, which are at the heart of community exchange, these tools get reinvented in other places, creating new tools. As with all tools, people master them only by using them—tools that help them

to negotiate with the state, to explore house design possibilities, to organize a savings scheme, to analyze conditions in their settlements. It is a quality of most of the really good tools that they educate and mobilize at the same time—they have a double edge—they have both practical and strategic value to communities in their struggle for land tenure, secure houses, basic services and jobs.

Community leaders need tools in order to mobilize other poor communities, to form that critical mass which is prerequisite to bringing about real change. These kinds of tools are emerging gradually, from experiments and practical application—many are being actively used within exchange programs. People now have a set of precedents, a protocol. They have been to other places, seen a variety of tools being used. They know how to use them, know what to expect, know what to do. They've become managers of their own learning.

There is a need to explore this new paradigm in light of globalization and new systems of internationalism which are now having an impact on local and national situations, but which are short on solutions that work for the poor.

How can we provide investments to actors in the Asian region to expand the capacities of informal settlements to negotiate for their own development needs?

A very important part of the exchange process is to explore new solutions in which communities themselves determine the priorities, try them out and spread them around if they work. When we look at the community processes that are bubbling along in Asia and in Africa, we have to ask: are there negotiations going on between communities and cities? If so, what skills assist them to leverage these negotiations and what tools help build those skills?

a. Surveys

Enumeration is a great community mobilization starter.

Anybody can start a survey, get ten people together to do it. Just putting the knowledge of ten people together transforms the way they look at their settlement—they can touch it, they can feel the difference. And then that tickles their imagination and they can move ahead. When cities hold a census, the poor are always miscounted, and which means the poor lose. Fifteen years ago, for example, there was no policy for pavement dwellers in

Bombay—nobody acknowledged their existence. Everyday there were demolitions, but the only thing that was clear was that it was the city's job to demolish, and the people's job to build again. The first survey of pavement dwellers defined a universe which nobody knew existed, and it started Mahila Milan, which would eventually transform their statistics and their understanding into a resettlement policy for pavement dwellers all over the city.

In the meantime, they traveled to cities all over India, Asia and Africa, helping others conduct enumerations. Their motto? "When in doubt, count!"

b. Festivals, Jamborees and Big Events

When canal-side settlements in Thailand held a big klong-cleaning, they called canal-dwellers from all over the country to help, planned it to coincide with the Queen's birthday for added luster, and turned a mucky job into a celebration of their right to live there, and proof that they are the best canal-keepers.

And when a community toilet was built in Kanpur, the Mahila Milan organized a big Sandas Mela [Toilet Festival], they invited city and state officials to come cut the ribbon, visitors from all over India, thousands of people from local communities. And there were also speeches, TV coverage, colored flags.

These are ways of marking community milestones by turning them into celebrations that involve many. These are ways of democratizing possibilities, of highlighting and disseminating issues like toilets, houses, ration cards, or policies—any issue at all—and getting people to know and talk about them.

c. Community Mapping

For federations across Asia, an important part of a community's data-gathering process is making settlement maps, which include houses, shops, workshops, pathways, water points, electric poles, along with problem spots and features in the area, so people can get a visual fix on their physical situation.

Mapping is a vital skill-builder when the time comes to plan settlement improvements and to assess development interventions.

In Thailand, for example, canal-side communities draw scaled maps of their own settlements, as part of their redevelopment planning, and also go

upstream, beyond their settlements, to locate and map sources of pollution from factories, hospitals, restaurants and sewage outlets. Where do they learn these skills? From other canal-side settlers.

These community-maps, with their detailed, accurate, first-hand information on sources of pollution, are a powerful planning and mobilizing tool, and also make an effective bargaining chip in negotiations for secure tenure, with cities obliged to accusing communities of spoiling the klongs they live along.

d. Savings and Credit-Savings Walk

Both Mahila Milan in India and the Payatas Scavenger's Federation in Manila have made the "savings walk" a feature of everyone's visit to their settlements—you go house to house with one of the women, you collect the money, you document it, you come back to the office, count the money, put it in the ledger and process the loans—you actually do these primary things.

The savings walk gives visitors a vivid sense of how central these small, daily acts are sustaining their movement.

e. Land Search

When cities claim there is no land left for the poor, don't believe them—they're almost always fibbing.

And when poor people get to know their own cities and educate themselves about development plans, they can challenge this bunkum. Land-searches in cities all over Asia have helped poor communities to negotiate countless resettlement deals.

An early land-search in Bombay went like this: "We thought we could find places for poor to stay—there must be some land allocated for poor people's housing—you can't have a government and a city corporation which doesn't plan for people's housing! So we got these silly development plans, and along with a big group of Mahila Milan women, we went all over the city, locating every single place marked "Housing for the poor" on those plans.

What an eye-opener! Whatever was "green belt" on the plan was actually industrial belt. And whatever was meant for housing the poor was upper-income housing, or warehouses and factories—all kinds of things. In the same naiveté, we went to the Chief Secretary and asked him why this is happening? He told us, this is a national plan, this is how we'd like it to be!

And that's what it is—"it's a dream plan."

f. House modeling and layout

House modeling takes many forms. Mahila Milan used the length and width of their own sarees to understand room dimensions and ceiling heights that are otherwise incomprehensible to someone who has lived most of her life in a box-like hut on the pavements.

Elsewhere, communities use long bolts of cloth to mock-up their house designs, stretched around poles at the corners.

Whether using clay, cardboard, cloth or thermacol—at full scale or small scale—house modeling is another much-used dream prompter.

g. Building elements

Poor people can do many things more efficiently than the state—like building their own solid, affordable houses.

When poor communities take steps to teach themselves how to build better houses collectively, at larger scale, they are helping the state understand this and showing an alternative.

This comes right down to making building materials.

When communities make blocks, or slabs or window frames, they can do it cheaper and better than any contractor or factory, because they are both manufacturer and customer, so quality control is automatic.

And in exchange, going on-site to a housing project, and actually pitching in on the work—helping build a foundation or making some blocks or funicular shells—is one of the best things to bring abstract ideas right back to the big goal—which is decent, secure houses.

This is building an up a stock, and also training others, taking over, taking charge.

TO A DUMP

A visit to the Scavengers Association at Payatas

AND WHO COULD FORGET his first visit to the sprawling settlements which encircle the smoking, towering, stinking mountain of garbage at Payatas, in the Philippines?

Or to the federation of savings collectives which has become the Philippines Homeless People's Federation's senior sister?

Here are some first-hand accounts from a team of community members from Bicol, on their first exposure to Payatas, back in 1996.

Miloy: I was already worried, right from the start—my first time traveling to Manila from the province. I approached some people whom I thought wouldn't fool me. They directed me to the jeepneys (vehicle for public transport) going to Payatas. Reaching Payatas, I wondered what kind of place this is! There was garbage all over the place.

Someone directed me to the Parish. I tried looking around and saw the sign Scavengers' Savings Association on the door.

Dora: I was treated like a member of the family. Where I stayed, water was a big problem. The pump there is good only to fill one pail for taking a bath. Nothing would come out afterwards. So, if you need to go to the "comfort room", it would be very difficult.

Virgie: We visited the dumpsite and even did scavenging ourselves. One woman got angry with us since the system is that dump-trucks are already negotiated for, even before they arrive. Anyway, we got the right timing when one truck arrived loaded with *retaso* (cloth scraps) that you could make into pillows. We started picking them up, then another got angry. Covering our nose is not allowed here because they feel insulted, that's what I observed.

Lina: Mang Boy Awid toured us around. We covered practically all the streets of Payatas! We visited some families, members of the savings program. People are really united in savings—they were even remitting their savings in coins! The person in the savings office was a Bicolana too. I worked with her three times and she showed me filling out records, receiving savings remittances, and issuing receipts.

In Bicol, I'm a market vendor. The other vendors asked me about the real score of the savings program in Payatas. I told them you may not believe it at once, but what comes in and out daily is about 100,000 Pesos! In fact one day savings was about 114,000 Pesos, and what went out in loans was about 83,000 Pesos. There are days when loans are bigger than savings.

Miloy: I told my colleagues in the Tricycle Drivers' Association to join the savings. I told them that—modesty aside—somebody in Payatas bought a jeepney out of his savings. Persistence is all it takes. There in Payatas they have answers to their necessities due to savings. It might be dirty and smelly in Payatas and houses may just be small and makeshift, but they are complete with appliances.

Tita: For me, it is good to go there—actually. It makes a difference seeing the actual instead of just hearing stories. If a speaker talks about something, you would still be wondering if it is really so, while if you personally see it, you will not have any qualms.

TO A SEWER

A VISIT TO THE LANES of the Orangi katchi abadi, or to the vast *katchi abadi* (informal settlements) of Orangi, in Karachi, Pakistan—a slum that is bigger than most cities, where the most effective, most practical, most unifying link between a million poor families is nothing abstract like solidarity or human tenderness—but sewage!

Exposure visits to the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) follow a little more structured model than the Indian or African visits.

Probably because the whole project, as it progresses, has been used for a long time as a living training ground for extending the model of community-managed sanitation to other settlements, other cities and other parts of Asia.

Hundreds and thousands of people have come here for specific training in building sewers, organizing lanes, digging manholes. And so the training has been systematized.

The OPP staff, which combines technical people and social organizers, from both the communities and from the professions, has got it down to a science.

Visitors are first sat down and given a formal presentation about OPP's work, in the training center, richly illustrated with before and after slides.

The OPP's concept is very simple: off-site infrastructure is done by the government, and on-site infrastructure is developed, built and paid for by the communities—with assistance from OPP.

Engineers who come say "Impossible! Communities have no skills!" NGOs say "They cannot do it!" and community people say "We're too poor! How can we afford to invest in this? This is cruelty!"

After the presentation, they are sent out into the lanes of Orangi with someone to meet the people who have done this work.

"This lane has laid its own sewage system, it has built its own water supply. If you would like to talk to anybody, you can."

So people come out, they bring out their chairs or their beds and spread them out in the lane, and everyone sits down and discusses. It is here that visitors learn how pipes link all these million families—small pipes in hundreds of small lanes connecting to secondary drains, then to main drains, and at the edge of Orangi to the municipal trunk sewers.

And all along the way, the vital issues are level, slope, pipe diameter, sewerage flow. They learn how all these pipes are the basis of organizing their settlements, improving their lives and health, consolidating their right to stay.

Skepticism melts away. And what all these proud sewer-builders tell them is, "You know, we've done this—the OPP has only been a pain in all this."

These tools were developed based also on the experiences of slum dwellers in Africa. The network of communities of Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) in Africa provides the experiences in the use and development of these tools. People from the slum communities in Africa have also visited Asian slum communities under the Community-to-Community Exchange Program.

Achievements

More than twenty years of work led ACHR to the following achievements:

1. A network of serious "doers" and change-makers linked together for shared learning, mutual assistance and collaboration. This twenty-year collaboration has become a recognized institution in Asia. It is a regional network that includes key agencies and is bound together by friendship, mutual respect and trust.

2. Regional horizontal process for analysis and solidarity. This regional platform allows sharing and mutual learning and support which flows horizontally between groups in different countries. Most conventional development processes by international agencies or government are characterized by vertical (or hierarchical) free-standing interventions; evidence suggests this does not build a substantial and sustained process. The ACHR platform helps support contextual understanding rooted in the region and in each city while mutual involvement in activities supports stronger community, city and country capacities to secure change.

3. Nurturing Asia-specific ways of making change. Asia has its own, very significant, history, culture(s) and politics. In particular, its political culture has very deep roots. The groups in the ACHR network are made up of people who have a deep and subtle understanding of Asia's political realities, its feudalistic social and behavioral patterns, and its institutional traditions. They have aligned to maneuver within these traditions to make things work for the urban poor, with new ideas and innovations that support systemic and structural change. If principles of participation, democracy, accountable government and citizen inclusion are to be realized in Asia, links have to be made between these institutional traditions and new realities. ACHR has a demonstrated track record in achieving such change, nurturing and challenging its members to improve their contribution through a strong horizontal and participative process.

4. Bringing development processes by people to scale with structural change.

The ACHR network includes many successful experiences in developing and up-scaling people-led processes. The network shares, extends and transfers these experiences; examples include CODI (Thailand), the Kampung Improvement Program (Surabaya, Indonesia), Orangi Pilot Project and the Urban Resource Centers (Pakistan). There are similar examples in India, Nepal, Mongolia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Cambodia.

Some Learning

The Community-to-Community Exchange Program facilitated the gathering of many ground-level experiences of communities. It brought out a number of significant learning that defined the value of such an exchange program.

Exchange learning is a development tool which helps people build capacities to deal with the root issues of poverty and homelessness, and to work out their own means to participate in decision-making which affects their lives—locally, nationally and globally. In exchange, people are not being trained to "do things". They decide themselves what to pick up and what to discard, by visiting others in the same boat. It is learning without an agenda or anybody else's atmosphere—it's on-site and vital learning, direct from the source, unfiltered. Nobody's telling who, what or when to learn.

Exchange has proven to be a useful and many-sided development tool. As an isolation-buster, confidence-booster, option-expander and network-builder, horizontal exchange is one of the most powerful antidotes to that old non-involvement problem. The exchange process represents a collective commitment of organizations of the poor to communicate with each other, to examine their problems, set priorities and explore solutions, to use each other as allies. Then to evaluate these solutions, refine them and spread them around.

These kinds of solutions and these explorations invariably mean working with other development actors—with municipal and state governments, with NGOs and bilateral development agencies. Here, too, exchange is a powerful builder of networks and working alliances with sufficient scale and clout to strengthen representation of the poor in development debates and to expand the role the poor can play in bringing about equity and social

justice. The large networks, which exchanges create, become a channel for the direct, rapid transfer of ideas, strategies, and options. When some solution seems to work in one place, horizontal exchange creates opportunities for more communities to learn about it and piggy-back on the experience, so good ideas spread around. Usually this means community leaders (and sometimes NGO partners and even government officials) come along to get hands-on training and then take the message back home and to other cities. In these ways, solutions that are worked out locally become the building blocks for scaling up with global applicability.

The more these national groups get exposed to regional processes, the more we build a regional mechanism for diffusing innovation, by and for people, directly. A growing number of grassroots groups in the Asian region—and their supporters—have embraced this form of direct, experiential learning, and over the past fifteen years, the exposure process has mushroomed in scale, matured in focus and expanded in variety. Exchange is now an inherent feature of how the regional network operates, and how the poor learn.

As more and more exchanges are organized within the region, an increasing—and increasingly varied—core of expertise comes out of those exchanges. If one settlement in India, for example, has grappled with a serious infrastructure problem, there is your resource for other communities to learn from. Another settlement which has navigated a bumpy negotiation for alternative land becomes another resource. The Asian network now has a set of core organizations that operates as resource team, in which everyone knows each other, understands each other's strengths and weaknesses and knows how best to combine and work together. The investment stays within communities and within the region—it's available, affordable, there's a better language and cultural fit.

One of the most powerful aspects of exchange is that it expands your repertoire of options—you don't have to have it happen in your own back yard any more. People don't have to work out all their systems by themselves —they can import that process to help them if they need to. And that's what the larger pool offers. This resource pool provides a healthy counterbalance to a development paradigm which keeps sending international experts over to tell communities what to do, and which still holds considerable sway over Asian development and development resources. In that model, experts come in, innovate and then go away, taking the learning with them. In the

exchange model, learning stays within communities because the vehicle is people, who are rooted in their local process—and who do not go away.

Exchanges take many forms. Some are like wake-up calls, some are highly ritualized, others are big events. Some work like museum visits, others like comfy drop-in visits between old chums. Some exposures have events that are carefully planned, all worked out, and others fly by in a chaotic whirl. Some encourage reflection, some galvanize to immediate action. But one thing that is common to all—no matter what the protocol—and that is that afterwards, when people go back home, or when they see off their visitors, they are a little bit different. Something has happened to shake things up—something always happens.

Conclusion

There were approximately eighteen international exchange visits in 2007 with more than two hundred twenty people participating from around ten countries. Many included integrated teams of community organizations, government agencies and NGOs. More than half were funded by external agencies but managed by ACHR and friends. When the exchange program started more than ten years ago, ACHR funded ninety percent of the activities. In 1992, when ACHR-TAP began, exchanges were a rare methodology for learning. But since then it almost became mainstream methodology for development agencies.

In 2008 ACHR began a program of city-wide community centered upgrading called Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA). Through the network developed over the past twenty years through rituals of savings and credit, and exchange and networking, ACHR was able to approve thirty-two large housing projects and two hundred eighty-six smaller projects in sixty-four cities in fourteen countries in Asia. Community-to-community exchange is fundamental to the learning process and scale of these activities.

Endnote

[1]Key members of the Coalition include:

- Pakistan: Arif Hasan (Orangi Pilot Project [OPP], Urban Resource Centre [URC]), Perween Rahman (OPP), Anwar Rashid (Orangi Charitable Trust [OCT]), Muhammad Younus (URC)
- India: Sheela Patel (Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres [SPARC]), Jockin Arputham (National Slum Dwellers Federation [NSDF]), Kirtee Shah (Ahmedabad Study Action Group [ASAG]), Rabial Mallick (People's Responsible Organization of United Dharavi [PROUD]), Sandeep Virmani (Abhiyan).
- Sri Lanka: K.A. Jayaratne (Sevanatha), Nandasiri Gamage (Women's Bank), Upali Sumithre (Women's Development Bank Federation)
- Nepal: Lajana Manandhar (Lumanti Support Group for Shelter), Prafulla Pradhan (UNESCAP)
- Indonesia: Johan Silas (Kampung Improvement Programme [KIP]), Wardah Hafidz (Urban Poor Consortium [UPC] and UPLINK in Jakarta)
- Philippines: Denis Murphy and Ted Anana (Urban Poor Associates [UPA]), Bimbo Fernandez (Pagtambayayong Foundation), Jing Karaos (Institute on Church and Social Issues [ICSI] and Ateneo, Manila), Ana Oliveros (Foundation for the Development of the Urban Poor [FDUP]), Fr. Norberto Carcellar (Philippines Action for Community- led Shelter Initiatives [PACSI] and Homeless People's Federation), May Domingo (PACSI/ACHR)
- Cambodia: Mann Chhoeurn (Urban Poverty Development Fund [UPDF]/ Phnom Penh Municipality), Somsak Phonpakdee & Sok Visal (UPDF)
- Vietnam: Tran Minh Chau and Bang Anh Tuan (ENDA-Vietnam)
- Lao PDR: Monthaa Ajchariyakul (ACHR), Kanthone Phamuang (Women and Community Empowering Project), National Women's Union.
- Bhutan: Manjusha Rai (Thimpu)
- Japan: Prof. Mitsuhiko Hosaka (Nihon Fukushi University), Prof. Uchida Yozo (Tokyo University), Fr. Peter Shimokawa (Sophia University, Nojiren), Fr. Jorge Anzorena (Selavip, Sophia University), Mr. Etsuzo Inamoto (SHARE)
- Mongolia: Enhe Tsedendorg (Urban Development Resource Center, Ulaanbatar), Center for Human Rights and Development [CHRD]
- Fiji Islands: Semiti Qalowasa and Fr. Kevin Barr (Ecumenical Center for Research Education and Advocacy [ECREA])
- Thailand: Somsook Boonyabancha (Community Organizations Development Institute [CODI]), Human Development Center, Human Settlements Foundation