

ACHR

e-news

News from groups around Asia about what's happening in the region . . .

Asian Coalition for Housing Rights

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FEBRUARY - MARCH, 2009

- Women's Bank celebrates 20-year anniversary
- New Urban Poor Fund started in Moratuwa
- ACHR's new ACCA Program launched in Nepal
- Big breakthroughs on land tenure in Viet Nam
- New collaboration between UN-Habitat and ACHR
- Father Anzorena is about to turn 80
- Citynet Congress updates
- Good news for Katrina survivors in New Orleans

WOMEN'S BANK CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF GROUP POWER

Women's Bank will be marking its 20-year anniversary in July with a big three-day celebration-and-training planned in Colombo's Victoria Park. Some 35,000 women will come join the event, where stalls will be set up to showcase WB activities in income generation, housing, tsunami recovery, cultural programs, health care, home-nurse training, education, children and various kinds of training. After the three days in Colombo, there will be visits to other cities where Women's Bank is active.

Women's Bank now has about 70,000 members in 18 districts and 22 cities around Sri Lanka (all of them poor women living in rural and urban poor communities) with a whopping total of about US\$100 million in collective savings! This money isn't sitting in a bank somewhere, though - almost all of it is circulating in countless numbers of small loans the women make to their own savings group members, helping them to improve their families' livelihoods, housing, health care, education and living environments. With this kind of money constantly changing hands, it's no surprise that Women's Bank is SERIOUS about accounting. WB runs a special accounts auditing course to train community women to go around to the various branches and help audit the accounts. This course takes six months (on weekends only) and Rupa Manel, WB Honorary President, says it's very hard, and there an exam at the end. In Moratuwa, only one woman passed! For more information, please contact Nandasiri Gamage at gamage@slnet.lk



MORATUWA URBAN POOR DEVELOPMENT FUND LAUNCHED



There's good news from the other big national federation of women's savings groups in Sri Lanka, the Women's Development Bank Federation (WDBF). The WDBF is a national network of 1,200 savings and credit groups in 450 urban and rural communities, who have developed local, self-help financial systems to improve their livelihoods and resolve emergency needs. Janarukula, which means "people working together," is the WDBF's partner NGO. Since the tsunami, the WDBF has been supporting a people-driven process of house reconstruction in several communities in the badly-hit city of Moratuwa, on the southeastern coast of Sri Lanka, through collective housing loans, from various sources, that are managed by the women's savings groups.

NEW URBAN POOR FUND LAUNCHED IN MORATUWA : The federation's work helping poor communities in Moratuwa to rebuild their houses and upgrade their settlements got a big boost on March 21, when a new urban poor development fund was launched in the city. The Moratuwa Urban Poor Development Fund is a collaboration between the WDBF, Jana Rukula, the Municipality of Moratuwa and SDI's Urban Poor Fund International, with the city's mayor, Mr. Samanlal Fernando, acting as the fund's chairman. The fund's first project will be housing loans to 200 families in the Bambatuwapara settlement.

WDBF ON ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF NEW SLUM UPGRADING AUTHORITY : The Urban Settlements Development Authority (USDA) is a brand new government agency that has just been established in Sri Lanka. The USDA's task is to solve problems of land, housing and living conditions in the country's urban slums, in accordance with the concept of creating "Cities without slums." To do this, the Authority is set to focus on upgrading existing poor settlements, with secure land, good housing and improved living conditions, through the active and conscious participation of the community members. In March, the president of the WDBF, Mrs. Murin Fernando, was appointed to the USDA's Advisory Committee. The federation sees being part of this important new national agency as a great opportunity to bring the voice of urban poor women to the USDA, and to bring their ideas and energy to help solve the country's enormous problems of housing, land and access to basic services. For more information, please contact Upali Sumithre at wdbf@sltnet.lk

FIRST ACCA / ACHR MEETING HELD IN NEPAL

New Acronym to memorize: ASIAN COALITION FOR COMMUNITY ACTION (ACCA) Program. At the big ACHR regional meeting held in Bangkok last January (2009), one of the smaller but still critical items on the agenda was deciding on a name for ACHR's brand new city-wide slum upgrading program, which targets at least 150 cities across Asia over the next three years, through a process which uses the implementation of hundreds of small and large community-driven upgrading projects to build stronger city-wide community networks, stronger relations with the local government and longer-term vision for solving all the housing problems in these cities. The group decided to nix the earlier name, *Communities Act Program*, which was deemed to be too legislative-sounding, and discussed several other possibilities before agreeing collectively on the *Asian Coalition for Community Action Program - ACCA* for short.

The first ACCA / ACHR committee meeting was held in Nepal, February 25-29, 2009, and was hosted by the Kathmandu-based NGO Lumanti, and by the National Squatter Federation and the National Women's Savings Federation. One of the things that was decided early on in setting up the ACCA program was the idea of roving committee meetings. The idea was to hold each ACCA Committee meeting in a different city, to give a chance for the meeting participants to see and take part in the local process and local politics of people-driven change. Accordingly, the first ACCA meeting was held in Kathmandu, but the first two days were spent making a spectacular bus journey to the provincial city of Bharatpur, which will be one of the ACCA Pilot cities in Nepal. In Bharatpur, there were field visits to squatter settlements and community improvement projects and dialogues with Bharatpur communities and municipality. After returning to Kathmandu on the 27th, there were more detailed discussion of ACCA Program, presentation of ACCA proposals and discussion of the proposals.



In this first meeting, the ACHR/ACCA committee approved in principle a total budget of US\$ 772,100, which covers projects proposed from 10 countries, covering 17 cities, with 11 housing development projects and 54 small community development projects. Our initial calculations indicate that 370 communities (with 108,250 households) will be directly and indirectly affected by the development projects and the process in these first 17 cities, and have been or will be linked into savings groups, city-wide networks, a city community development fund and a national system of exchange learning and mutual assistance. It is our hope that this support will lead to city-wide upgrading covering many more communities, especially communities who face eviction.

Two meeting reports : There are two reports from the meeting in Nepal and both of them can be downloaded from the ACHR website :

- **The first report, "ACCA Committee Meeting Nepal Feb 2009"**, summarizes the key points from this first ACCA Program (Asian Coalition for Community Action) committee meeting. The report includes important points that were raised, agreements that were reached and information about approvals of the first batch of city projects proposed to the ACCA Program so far.
- **The second report, "Nepal Meeting Notes Feb 2009"**, provides more details on the discussions which took place during the three-day meeting, and details about the Nepal situation and from the trip to visit the city of Bharatpur, which was selected to be one of the two pilot cities proposed to ACCA Program from Nepal. It has been one of our key ideas to organize each ACHR/ACCA committee meeting in a different city, and with this report, you will understand how we make use of committee meeting as an opportunity to focus on, learn about and participate in the city and country process in greater detail. The report includes stories about visits to several poor settlements in Bharatpur and discussions with communities and officials there.

The ACHR secretariat is now in the process of coordinating with each country or city process to gather more details about how the process can be successfully planned and organized, so that disbursement of the project funds can gradually be transferred to the groups, as soon as possible.



One very important thing we all agreed during the Nepal meeting was to make use of this ACCA Program in much more strategic ways, since each country will be able to use support from this program to make city-wide movements by communities in between five and ten cities (or more!) in each country. This scale should be big enough to make significant contributions to a new people-driven development movement in all these countries and in the Asia region as a whole. We also agreed to develop good information about the situation and the process in each participating city, in order to better measure and compare the performance and the process of real change occurring in all these cities.

ACCA Projects approved in principal on February 28, 2009								
<i>All figure in US Dollars</i>								
Country	City	Total budget approved	Big projects (max \$40,000)	Small projects (max \$3,000 each)	City process (max \$3,000)	Underst anding cities	Other city process es	Disaster
1. Cambodia	Serey Sophoan	49,000	40,000	6,000 (2)	3,000		10,000 (country survey)	
	Samrong	49,000	40,000	6,000 (2)	3,000			
	Country survey	10,000						
	National process support	10,000						
2. Indonesia	Surabaya	58,000	40,000	15,000 (5)	3,000			
	Makassar	43,000	40,000	--	3,000			
	National process support	10,000						
3. Nepal	Bharatpur	56,800	40,000	13,800 (5)	3,000			
	Biratnagar	43,000	40,000	--	3,000			
	National process support	10,000						
4. Burma	Yangon	83,800	40,000	15,000 (5)	3,000			25,800
	National process support	10,000						
5. Korea	Seoul	58,000	40,000	15,000 (5)	3,000			
	National process support	10,000						
6. Philippines	Quezon City	54,000	40,000	3,000 (1)	3,000	5,000	3,000	
	Manila	25,500	10,000	6,000 (2)	3,000		6,500	
	National process support	10,000						
7. Viet Nam	Viet Tri	12,000	--	9,000 (3)	3,000			
	Vinh	12,000	--	9,000 (3)	3,000			
	National process support	10,000						
8. Sri Lanka	Nuwara Eliya	58,000	40,000	15,000 (5)	3,000			
	National process support	10,000						
9. Mongolia	Erdenet City	18,000	--	15,000 (5)	3,000			
	Tunkhel village	18,000	--	15,000 (5)	3,000			
	Bayanchandmani District	18,000	--	15,000 (5)	3,000			
	National process support	10,000						
10. Fiji	Suva	6,000		3,000 (1)	3,000			
	National process support	10,000						
TOTAL	17 Cities	772,100	410,000 <i>(11 projects)</i>	160,800 <i>(54 projects)</i>	51,000 <i>(17 cities)</i>	5,000	19,500	25,800

BIG BREAKTHROUGHS ON LAND IN VIET TRI, VIETNAM

The national network of community savings groups and their city-based Community Development Funds (CDFs) in Viet Nam is growing fast. What began originally under a short-term UNDP project in five provincial cities, and expanded later to eight cities with support from ACHR and Enda-Vietnam, is now going national. Since 2007, a new partnership has been forged with the Association of Vietnamese Cities (ACVN), a national organization which represents 92 of the country's 96 towns and cities. ACVN is helping to replicate the community savings and development fund model in other cities. This partnership offers a means to scale up a community-driven development process in Viet Nam and an opportunity for the CDF network to be officially recognized at a national level.

ACCA Program in Viet Nam : With support from ACHR's new ACCA Program, city-wide upgrading is now being piloted in two cities - Viet Tri and Vinh. As part of the process, ACHR continues to support ACVN as the key implementer of the city-wide upgrading and community development fund / savings process in Vietnam, and a new MOU between ACHR, ACVN and Enda Vietnam was signed on March 24, 2009.



People-to-people design assistance from Thailand : Community-driven upgrading and housing design are very new concepts in Viet Nam, where a very strong state sector tends to plan and implement everything. So when it was time to start planning the ACCA Program's pilot housing project at Nong Trang Ward, in Viet Tri, there was a need for some help. Last December (2008), a group of Thai community leaders and community architects conducted a hypothetical community design workshop in the city, and now they are going again, but this time the project will be a *real one*. In late April, a group of Thai community leaders, community architects and CODI workers - all veterans of their own community upgrading projects - spent five days with the community people in Viet Tri guiding them through the steps of participatory layout planning, house designing and all the complications of turning dreams of a secure house into an affordable, practical reality - *by communities*.

Spreading out the learning : The 4-day community design workshop will focus on the target families at Nong Trang Ward, but will be opened up to community members (and some volunteer architects also) from other parts of the city and from Vinh City, to observe, take part and learn, so that when it's their turn to design their own houses and communities, they'll know what to do. There are also plans to bring groups of community leaders from Viet Tri and Vinh to Thailand to visit Baan Mankong upgrading projects.

Update on the ACCA Pilot project in Viet Tri : Viet Tri, which is one of the two first ACCA pilot cities, is a small provincial city with a population of 170,000 people, about a 2 hour drive northwest from Hanoi, in north of Vietnam. Although it is a very old urban settlement, Viet Tri was a very small town until after the war, when the government encouraged migrants in the 1970s and 80s to come here to work in the state-run factories it was setting up and help transform Viet Tri into an important industrial city in the north of Vietnam. The CDF / community savings process in Viet Tri has been active for several years and is now quite strong, with good support from the local Women's Union, especially around income generation. The ACCA program is now helping to use the savings and CDF process, and the new links with ACVN to mobilize people to move beyond income generation and begin to tackle their more serious problems of land tenure, housing and infrastructure.



Slums in Viet Tri : While there aren't any totally informal squatter settlements in Viet Tri, of the sort we see in most other Asian cities, there are poor settlements there with housing, land tenure and environmental problems, but these are mostly extremely dilapidated collective social housing (n 2-4 story blocks, or in less dense row-house developments), where low-income and poor people stay, without any land-use rights papers. The government wants eventually to redevelop these old collective housing developments, but this redevelopment process is so far conceived only a conventional top-down, state-planned, contractor-built process with almost zero participation of the communities and in which the people will be expected to pay for everything: land-use rights, infrastructure and new housing.

First land-use rights papers granted to 56 families in the ACCA Pilot housing project at Nong Trang Ward : The community at Nong Trang Ward is a big settlement of about 500 poor families, but they have very active savings groups. The community was built over 30 years ago as a "collective housing" development (24m2 one-room row houses with kitchens and latrines out back) for

workers in a state-run garment factory. After the factory went bankrupt, the houses were sold to the families, but nobody got any land-use rights papers. The city now has plans to demolish the whole neighborhood and redevelop it with bigger roads and larger house plots, following a top-down plan developed by the Provincial Authority and will be built by contractors. As part of the project, 95 families will be relocated to other land, and the families who are allowed to stay will have to pay nearly \$4,000 each for their land use rights and their share of the new infrastructure costs - not including the houses they will then have to rebuild.

Showing a simpler, cheaper, people-built alternative to this top-down planning : These costs are much too high for most families in the community, who earn between \$1 and \$2 a day. With support from the ACVN and the ACCA Program, the community has been able to negotiate with the Ward Authority to allow the people to reconstruct their community themselves, on a step-by-step basis, and to use the project to demonstrate a cheaper, simpler and people-built alternative to this expensive, top-down redevelopment model. The big news from Nong Trang Ward is that in late March, the Ward has given the first 56 families land use rights certificates (within the same community), and it is with this group of 56 families that the Thai team will be working to assist the people's reblocking and housing plans. The 98 families who will have to relocate will likely be the next batch for design workshops, as soon as their new land has been identified.

NEW ACHR / UN-HABITAT COLLABORATION in the ASIA REGION

Thinking big - 300 Asian cities: A new collaboration between ACHR and UN-Habitat is on the simmer. In early March, a group of six senior people from the ACHR coalition traveled to the UN-Habitat's regional office in Fukuoka, to meet with the whole senior team there and to discuss how to combine the strengths of both organizations to strengthen and scale up the region's already existing community-driven development movement. After two days of discussion, an idea was jointly agreed upon: instead of lots of little NGO style projects scattered here and there in the region, why not do city-wide slum upgrading in 300 cities across the region, to begin to scale up the processes of community-driven housing, upgrading, land tenure, networking, savings already happening, with the UN to help boost the process, on a big scale? The idea has taken root and is now being worked on. Here's a brief excerpt of the first draft concept note :

The Three Hundred Cities Program aims to capture people-initiated changes in Asia-Pacific cities and bring to scale the emerging development opportunities for the urban poor. This program will combine ACHR and UN-Habitat experiences and technical support, and to make best use of their relative strengths, simultaneously address urban poor communities, city authorities and other urban actors in at least 300 cities across the Asia-Pacific Region. The activities will catalyze citywide processes and offer new opportunities of people-government partnership for decision making, funding arrangement and community management. The thrust to achieve this will be the facilitation of city-level *Development Funds* based on community savings. The new processes and platform will bring about housing and livelihood betterment and city-wide urban upgrading that will again be supported by ACHR and UN-Habitat network.

There are four core inter-related objectives for the program of work described in this concept note:

- To support the growing movement of urban poor communities that would influence development approaches to urban poverty reduction across Asia-Pacific.
- To strengthen governance systems of Asian-Pacific cities by consolidating emerging practices of people's participation in city management
- To develop a platform for city-wide changes in housing and upgrading that is people-centered and community-driven
- To assist countries to establish systems for the poor to access formal sector finance

The Three Hundred Cities Program aims to transform development options for the urban poor in Asia-Pacific through its simultaneous support for community led change processes in 300 cities in 15 countries over the next three years. The activities will build initially on an established and successful model of people-led neighborhood and city development, and take this model to a new level of significance by replication across Asia-Pacific, though the Program will always be aware of new responses, new initiatives and new "models" being developed and new realities emerging in the process.

Low-income communities are recognized to act as the key change agents to demonstrate that it is possible to address issues of land tenure, infrastructure access, social and economic development and housing improvement at the required scale. Some of their action principles, already well demonstrated, as an initial framework, may include: community saving groups, people's survey, community action planning workshops, locally-managed revolving fund for credit, Community/City Development Funds, exchange visits, communal land management, community contracts, housing cooperatives, and eventually city-wide upgrading. Municipal-level community development councils with the support of key stakeholders through city-wide coalitions may facilitate the process, as demonstrated by many UN-Habitat programs recently. The program will link the scattered initiatives and potentials of the urban poor in cities to give them a voice and responsibility to drive the development of the cities forward.

For more information on this exciting new joint-venture, or for a copy of the full concept note, please contact ACHR.

OPEN SECRET : FATHER JORGE TURNS EIGHTY NEXT YEAR

When a man as well-known or as well-loved as Father Jorge Anzorena approaches the milestone of his 80th birthday, there's no keeping a lid on plans for some kind of celebration. Here are a few excerpts from the e-mail exchanges that have been circulating on the topic. If you have more ideas, please send them to us here at ACHR.



- **(From Ken Fernandez in Australia)** We always celebrate when Father Jorge, who continues to inspire and teach us all, visits. Can we do this collectively? We could put together a collection of writings to honor his unique and wonderful contribution to our lives and work. This would also be a great way to develop some institutional memory of a unique teacher. I have a biography that was put together in 1994 by the Magsaysay Foundation when Father Jorge won the award. We could update this and publish it, along with a number of contributions from his fellow travelers, colleagues and friends. Maybe a small group of 3 or 4 people can manage this - and couldn't we somehow include his friends in Africa and Latin America as well? (stopevictions@yahoo.com.au)
- **(From Somsook in Bangkok)** I agree it will be good to have some special event for Father Jorge's 80th birthday, but we should do it in the style which will go well with Father's style - he may not feel too comfortable with a big celebration, but he would definitely like to meet people. We could plan it to coincide with ACHR's 20th anniversary and with one of the upcoming regional events where a good number of us could come and meet, and could ask Father to give special talk. I think it would be good if Hosaka could share this idea with Father Jorge and see what he would like. (achr@loxinfo.co.th)
- **(From Younus at URC in Pakistan)** I agree with Ken and Somsook. This time we can have two things for Father Jorge: a collection of writings published in his honor and some kind of regional event where Father will give a special talk. But I would like to suggest that this lead to some continuing activity - maybe an international award to support grassroots community initiatives, or something like that. If we discuss this in detail, we could launch this award soon. If an award is not possible, we can discuss some other activities which we can do regionally or internationally, in honor of Father Jorge. (urc@cyber.net.pk)
- **(From Hosaka in Japan)** It is interesting and it would also be opportune as our work to mark 20th anniversary of ACHR, though it must be a quite busy task to publish next year! Are we going to hide this attempt from Jorge? Otherwise, I could visit and coordinate with him if needed. (hosaka.m@k6.dion.ne.jp)
- **(From Lajana at Lumanti in Kathmandu)** What a wonderful idea that you are presenting! I would like to be a part of any activities decided upon to honor our dear Father Jorge. (lajana@lumanti.wlink.com.np)
- **(From Kirtee Shah in Ahmedabad)** We should write to him saying that as a mark of our love, respect and admiration for what he is and what he has done, on the occasion of his completing 80 years, all his friends and admirers want to celebrate the event. As we are all committed to participatory ways of working, we can ask him what he would consider the most fitting and enjoyable way of doing it. I think the best way to do it is to get Father Jorge among us for three days and doing different things each day, while also doing our other program work. He has been on this for over 30 years now, and if we could find a way to bring back those earlier days and all the things we have shared with him, it would be wonderful. Doing it with love and fun will be the most appropriate. (kirtee@ksadps.com)
- **(From Celine D'Cruz in the Ukraine)** We need to think about how to do this differently. Father would be most happy to hear the voices of the poor. I would say we must have all our community leaders come together and just tell him their stories. Their stories today reflect the changes in the last thirty years since Father started his work. I know it would make him very happy to see so many more new gems shining. We could do this in the Philippines, for example. (celinedcruz@mac.com)

CITYNET NEWS

CITYNET is a network of local authorities and civil society organizations that promotes sustainable urban improvement initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region. Besides working to making cities better places for people to live in, the network's activities seek to upgrade urban slums and promote community participation and more equitable distribution of resources. For several years, ACHR has been on the CITYNET executive committee. Here are two CITYNET-related news items :

- **Search for a new secretary general, president, vice president and executive committee members:** CITYNET is in the process of gathering applications for these key positions in the organization. Applications have to be sent to the election committee by April 30th, so if you have anybody in mind, make it snappy because there isn't much time left!
- **The Regional CITYNET Congress will take place in Yokohama, September 7-11, 2009.** During the congress, ACHR will help organize a session on linking community groups and civic groups with their cities in the new process of city-wide upgrading, and in a more participatory city development direction. Please send any questions or comments about the elections or congress to Ms. Bernadia Irawati, Program Director at bernadia@city-net-ap.org or visit the CITYNET website at www.citynet-ap.org



NEWS FROM SAM JACKSON of BREAKTHROUGHS in NEW ORLEANS

May Day New Orleans is a group of public housing residents advocating for the right to return for all Hurricane Katrina survivors, particularly those who are former public housing residents. May Day was founded by Sam Jackson, a carpenter and public housing resident who took part in ACHR's second Katrina/Tsunami exchange in Southern Thailand and Indonesia, and represented New Orleans Katrina survivors in ACHR's seminar on community-driven disaster rehabilitation in Nanjing China, in November 2008. There's both good news and bad news from our friends in New Orleans. Here are a few bits, drawn from e-mails from Sam and stories posted on the website of May Day's partner organization, the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI), which along with ACHR to organize the Katrina/Tsunami exchanges.

The REALLY bad news : Despite heroic efforts on the part of local organizers and their national and international supporters, the four big public housing projects in New Orleans (4,800 units at C.J. Peete, B.W. Cooper, St. Bernard and Lafitte) were demolished in the spring of 2008. The demolitions occurred despite a city-wide 43% increase in rents and a doubling of the homeless population in New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina. Additionally, there is growing concern that the city lacks the funding required to rebuild the demolished communities according to the "mixed income" development plans they originally touted.



Some VERY good news : After many bleak months of working to bring the issue of public housing residents to the national stage, Sam Jackson and the other public housing residents went to Washington D.C. in February 2009, where they made passionate presentations about the housing situation in New Orleans to Congress and to the White House. As a result of their discussions, two cabinet secretaries were scheduled to personally visit the New Orleans region on March 5 and 6. They also extended rental vouchers (which subsidize poor family's renting of commercial apartments) for the moment.

Some more bad news : The Cabinet Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, (HUD) did visit New Orleans, as promised, in early March. During that visit, Secretary Donovan met with developers and city officials, but when residents tried to schedule a meeting with him, their calls and e-mails and faxes were unanswered. "We hope to get through to the Obama administration, Secretary Donovan, and other leaders in Washington," said a hopeful Sam Jackson. "We're a little concerned that Secretary Donovan's visit has been so secretive. We understand that he doesn't have time to meet with everyone, but he's got to reach beyond the usual suspects and talk to those of us who've been fighting for fair housing down here in the trenches."

For more information about the struggle for fair and affordable housing in post-Katrina New Orleans, contact Sam Jackson at jackson-action@hotmail.com, or visit the NESRI website, where you can download all kinds of stories and short video films about the struggle for affordable housing in New Orleans (www.nesri.org) Reports about the lively Tsunami - Katrina exchanges and about ACHR's disaster event in Nanjing can also be downloaded from the ACHR website (www.achr.net)

BUILDING WITH MUD : TWO STORIES

1. BUILDING WITH MUD in ILOILO, PHILIPPINES : The Iloilo branch of the Homeless People's Federation Philippines (HPFP) is just beginning their biggest-yet housing project: 172 houses for families who had been squatting in danger zones along rivers and canals and who agreed to relocate to a nearby municipal relocation site at Barangay San Isidro, to help the city implement a large flood control project. As relocations go, this is a pretty good one: the people are moving together, as strong, well-organized and well-prepared communities. They have savings groups, they have a variety of housing scheme choices, they have good support from the local government and the Iloilo City Urban Poor Network (ICUPN), and they will no longer be illegal squatters but legal owners of their own small 60m² land plots. But like all resettlement projects in the Philippines, *nothing is free*: the people will have to pay the city for their new land eventually, and will have to shell out for new houses at the San Isidro relocation site at San Isidro. For that reason, the families who have opted to join the HPFP's housing scheme need to build their houses as cheaply as possible.

Interlocking Compressed Earth Blocks (ICEBs) : After some exploration and experimentation, the HPFP decided to build their 172 houses using interlocking compressed earth blocks, which they are manufacturing themselves, and will reduce their house construction costs by 30 - 40%. The ICEBs are much cheaper than burned brick or conventional concrete blocks, and the walls don't need to be plastered, inside or out, and that also reduces construction costs. Houses made from these ICEBs are also much cooler inside, because the soil blocks have better thermal qualities for a hot, humid climate like Iloilo's.

The technology and the block-making machines come from Thailand, but the block-making system was introduced by a local guy, and the combination of clay, lime, sand and cement had to be adapted to suit the properties of the local soil and sand. May Domingo, an architect working with the HPFP in Iloilo, says that the soil in Iloilo turned out to be very good for this kind of block. Their first test blocks were very strong, and they make a beautiful goldish-tan colored brick. The blocks are then laid (on a proper concrete foundation) in tightly-interlocking courses, with some steel rebar laced through the cavities at the center of the blocks, to tie the walls, windows, doors and corners together structurally.



They make the blocks themselves : In July 2008, the HPFP set up a block-making workshop right on the relocation site at San Isidro, where they're making the 700,000 blocks they will need to build the federation's 170 houses. 2 people are employed in the operation so far (5 women, 7 men), who are paid according to how many blocks they produce at 2.75 Pesos per block. They have three block-making machines and can now produce 900 blocks per day, working only one shift during the day. As soon as they get 24-hour electricity access, they will add another evening shift, and should be able to double the production to 1,800 blocks per day.

For more information on the housing project in Iloilo, please contact Sonia Cardornigara (*Visayas Regional Coordinator for the HPFP*) at scadornigara@yahoo.com or visit the HPFP's brand new website : www.hpfp-pacsii.org

2. BUILDING WITH MUD in INDONESIA and INDIA :

The close friendship between the Uplink Network in Indonesia and the Bhuj-based NGOs Abhiyan and Hunnarshala in western India goes back to the tsunami, when Hunnarshala's technicians came over to Aceh and offered their post-earthquake-rebuilding expertise to help the people develop earthquake-proof housing types during the big rebuilding process there. In the years since, the two organizations have continued to collaborate and they are now planning a joint workshop in India on the use of mud in house-building and in reviving traditional building crafts. The workshop will be supported by ACHR. Here is a brief note from the Indonesian architect Cakcak, who has been involved in planning the workshop (upc@urbanpoor.or.id):



From our experience in Aceh, post disaster is a good moment to change the conventional building practices: using earth blocks and load bearing walls, but we have to adjust the new techniques so they will fit to the local vernacular systems, which are different in every country. Earth is a building material that is used almost all over the world, and in Indonesia we have a tradition of using earth blocks. In other countries, the tradition is to use wattle and daub, rammed earth, etc. For the workshop, it would be useful if each participating country could present their own vernacular building materials and techniques, so we can learn the local wisdom from each other's countries and explore the possibilities for combining them, with special attention to climatic zones.