



Giving a voice to slum dwellers – Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI)

<http://findingwhatworks.org/2011/11/15/giving-a-voice-to-slum-dwellers-shackslum-dwellers-international-sdi/>

Whilst examining the concept of 'horizontal learning' or sideways learning, we came across a really interesting organisation called Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI).

SDI is a far reaching network of community-based organisations in 33 countries mostly in developing regions (Africa, Asia and Latin America). The network enables slum dwellers in developing areas to share knowledge/practice, solve problems through learning from each other, and advocate as a large group of people who might otherwise be marginalised or left out of the urban development policy debate by policy makers and/or large NGOs.

The way that knowledge is shared is through community-to-community (aka horizontal learning) exchanges. A pertinent example lies in Byculla, a slum in Mumbai, where women organised themselves to form a simple street-based savings and loans collective called Mahila Milan that eventually built up enough capital to build thousands of houses, toilets, and saving money for the slum dwellers of Byculla Mumbai. This savings model became the basis of a horizontal learning exchange – the first meeting (held in 1989) saw grassroots women leaders from 10 Asian Countries and other parts of India gathered to learn from each other/from Mahila Milan's women about savings and credit. This horizontal exchange is still flourishing until this day with over 3.5 million people in India, who are a part of the Mahila Milan/National Slum Dwellers Federation.

For more information on SDI, please visit: www.sdinet.org