

# Visit to Phnom Penh

April 2002, Arif Hasan

## 1. PREAMBLE

I was asked by the ACHR to visit Phnom Penh and consult with the UNCHS regarding the process and planning of relocations of informal settlements from the city centre to the peripheries. The ACHR also asked me to discuss with the Urban Resource Centre (URC) the three reports that are under preparation for the City Development Strategy (CDS) and advise on the process of consultation for the CDS once these reports are completed.

During my visit I was accompanied by Maurice Leonhardt and Jayaratana joined us on 21 April 2002. A list of some of our activities is given below:

- Meetings with Peter Swan and UNCHS and municipal technical staff.
- Visits to the following relocation sites:
  - Kraing Ang Kraung: The site visit involved discussions on the drainage and sewage system for the proposed settlement
  - Anlong Kngran: Discussions were held with suppliers of building materials and residents
  - Samaki 271: A meeting was held on the site with the residents and issues related to infrastructure, housing, community participation and social sector programmes (all supported by the community) were held.
- Meetings with the Kraing Ang Kraung community which is currently living on the road after the burning of their settlement.
  - First meeting with them was held at the UNCHS office where the revised plan of their settlement and the process of development was explained to them
  - The second meeting was held on the streets where they are living at present in the centre of Phnom Penh. At this meeting, we received feedback on the previous day's meeting and came to a consensus regarding the plan and the proposed settlement development process.
- Meetings were held with the URC and the following reports prepared/under preparation were discussed.
  - Study of Relocation of Urban Poor Communities in Phnom Penh
  - Development Plans for the Phnom Penh Metropolitan Area
  - Land Management Study
  - Proposals for consultation on the CDS
- Meeting with his Excellency, the Governor of Phnom Penh in which he emphasised the need for lower cost options for relocation and increased community participation. He also accepted the proposals presented by us for the Kraing Ang Kraung settlement.

Based on what I learnt during the site visits; discussions with the communities, building material suppliers, URC, and UNCHS officials; and my meeting with the Governor, I have the following observations to make.

- There is too little community involvement in the purchase of land, settlement planning, development of infrastructure and building of social sector institutions.
- There is too much state and NGO funding which is not sustainable since it is bound to dry out eventually. Also, it has a negative impact on the process of empowerment of poor communities.
- The relocation study done by the URC for the CDS and experience in other community participation projects in Asia show that:
  - Community involvement in land identification and financing leads to a greater involvement of the community in planning and development

- Small groups are more cohesive and work better as communities than larger groups. The ideal size is between 20 to 40 families. As such, plans of the relocation settlements should try and create clusters of 20 to 40 families
- The relocation study shows that health and education are important issues for the relocated families. Relevant programmes around these issues would help in savings for the relocation households
- There are market mechanisms in the provision of building materials for housing and house construction. It is necessary to understand them so as to support their positive aspects
- Empowerment of poor communities emerges out of decentralisation and of that an essential part is the miniaturisation of technology so as to make it compatible with the concept of decentralisation
- In preparing the site the UNCHS/municipality clear the site of old and beautiful trees and also level it even though it is eventually earth filled. This is a waste of finances.

The above observations lead to the following recommendations, which will strengthen community cohesion and lead to a sense of empowerment.

Communities should identify and negotiate the purchase of the land on which they wish to settle. The state should decide on a standard rate per family on the basis of which they should pay the community for the land that they purchase. If the land is cheaper than what the state pays, it will be a bonus for the community. If it is more expensive, the community will finance the difference.

The state should provide minimum infrastructure at the site. This infrastructure should consist of one hand pump and one to two temporary toilets per cluster, depending on the cluster size. The cost of hand pumps can be considerably reduced by providing communities with manual rigs for boring and using local made cheap hand pumps rather than the India Mark 2, which are expensive. Cheaper hand pumps should be used because ultimately the cluster residents are likely to acquire piped water from the state or will certainly place an electric pump over their bore and develop a piped system.

Similarly, the cost of a temporary toilet can be reduced considerably if the pit is held up by bamboo support rather than concrete rings. The super structure of the toilet can also be of bamboo and mat and a roof is not necessary.

Small bore sewage infrastructure should be developed instead of pit latrines. The cluster should finance and develop the cluster infrastructure and should be supported technically by NGOs with the provision of plans and supervision of construction. The UNCHS/municipality should develop only the primary infrastructure along with a sewage treatment plant.

Earth filling should be provided only for the roads. Communities/individual families can fill the community use and family plots.

Only those trees should be cut which are obstructing road alignments and site preparations should also be limited to these alignments.

Based on the above observations and recommendations, certain changes have been made in the plan of the Kraing Ang Kraung settlement and possible directions for future development have been identified. These have been discussed with the community which seems to be in agreement with them.

It must be understood that the proposals and recommendations are conceptual in nature and need considerable discussion with communities and with organisations providing financial and technical support to them. They have worked well in the case of settlements in Pakistan.

## **2. PROPOSALS FOR KRAING ANG KRAUNG SETTLEMENT**

### *2.1 The Plan Concept*

I have made alterations to the plan prepared by the municipality for the settlement (for plan see

Appendix – 1). The salient features of the new plan are given below.

The settlement has been divided into 14 clusters of 21 to 25 houses each.

Each cluster is built around a lane and has an independent entrance from a secondary road.

Each cluster has an additional plot for cluster-community use on which one hand pump and a temporary toilet will be built.

All cluster lanes open out onto a large central space which can be developed for amenities and recreation.

24 small shops have been provided at the entrance of the settlement as it has been noticed that such shops always develop at such locations. They will also be a source of income for the community if they are rented out.

Space for the community office in the centre of the settlement has also been provided.

## *2.2 Role of Actors*

UNCHS should:

- Provide land fill and surface for roads only
- Provide low cost temporary toilets and a low cost hand pump for each cluster-community plot
- Later develop primary sewage lines and treatment plant
- Provide electricity and if it cannot be done immediately, provide loans to cluster organizations or community entrepreneurs to set up generators.

Cluster households should form Cluster Organisations (CLO) which should:

- Finance and build sewage tertiaries and individual toilets whenever they are ready to do so
- Convert hand pumps into electric pumps and develop a piped water system and household connections whenever they can afford to do so
- Identify one person to operate an electric generator and pay him to do so or let him make a business out of it
- Organise solid waste collection to a point at the end of their lane
- Plant trees in the lane. Maybe an NGO can offer a prize for the cluster with the best tree plantation
- Elect, select or nominate one person to represent the CLO in the Community Organisation (CO)
- Pay a monthly fee to the CO for the services the CO decides to render to the settlement.

The Community Organisation (CO) should:

- Consist of one representative from every cluster
- Organise solid waste collection and disposal. For this it should hire people from within the community who should also maintain the treatment plant and primary sewage lines
- Collect rent from the shops and fees from the cluster representatives
- Disburse loans for micro credit to cluster organisations
- Identify and support with loans persons from the settlement who wish to become transporters for the commuters to and from the settlement
- Plant trees along the main roads and in the open spaces
- Operate a house building support programme (described in 2.3)
- Operate a preventive health programme (described in 2.4)

- Create schools (described in 2.5)
- To do all this the CO should hire people from within the settlement.

The Urban Resource Centre (URC) or other NGOs should:

- Help organise cluster and community organisations around the issues mentioned in what the CLO and CO should do
- Provide plans and estimates of materials and labour for the sewage system and treatment plant to the UNCHS/municipality
- Provide sewage plans and estimates of labour and material to the cluster organisations for cluster sewage systems and water lines whenever the CLO decides to carry out these items of work
- Develop plans for an incremental house with estimates of quantities of materials for each stage of development. Separate estimates for plinth, walls and roof should be made for the first stage
- Design garbage bins and incinerators which the community can build or acquire
- Carry out a study on the sociology, economics and technology of housing so as to be able to provide proper guidance for house building to the relocated communities (see section 3 below).
- Make a cost benefit analysis of i) a ground floor on earth versus a floating ground floor; ii) a timber versus a concrete house. However, costs for timber should be based on the prices at the building material shops within Anlong Knngnan settlement. Also, the timber house should be the most typical (but of reasonable quality) house in relocation settlement.

### *2.3 House Building Support Programme*

The CLOs, if they agree, should let the CO establish three committees:

- The Finance Committee that receives house building loans from whatever source and lends to the CLOs. The CLOs should be made responsible for the recovery of loans from their members
- A Purchase Committee that makes bulk purchase of building materials.
- A Technical Team of skilled workers from within the community. This team can provide labour for construction at cheaper than market rates. From their wages commuting costs can be deducted.

Other related issues:

- Any CLO which wishes to remain out of this programme should have the right to do so.
- The process of managing house building loans needs to be worked out by the communities after discussions with URC/ACHR and its advisors. The most workable model, which will also lead to community empowerment is that the CO lends to the CLO and the CLO to the household. It will also help in recovery.
- Many options for house building loans are available. There can be a roof loan, if the house has been constructed until the roof level. There can also be an earth filling and plinth loan so that a temporary shack or tent (which can be improved later) can be built on the plinth.

### *2.4 Preventive Health Programme*

From the RUC's relocation study and dialogues with communities, a preventive health programme is necessary for it will result in considerable savings for the relocated communities. A possible format for the Programme is given below.

UNICEF/URC or any other NGO should agree to promote the Programme. The Programme should consist of:

- Identifying two or more educated (middle schooling) women in the settlement.
- They should be given training as Community Health Workers (CHW) and as immunisers

under the Expanded Programme for Immunisation (EPI).

- They should hold regular "teaching" meetings with cluster organisations on the identification of the most common diseases in the settlement and their prevention, hygiene, nutrition, family planning, kitchen gardening and immunisation (drugs for immunisation should be provided by the EPI and the CHWs should keep all records related to this programme. Family planning supplies should also be provided and distributed through the CHWs who should keep proper accounts and statistics).
- Seeds for kitchen gardening and advice regarding planting and variety should be provided by a relevant NGO to the CO. Once the Programme takes root, seeds should be purchased by the households and not provided free of charge so as to make the Programme sustainable.

### *2.5 Education Programme*

A relevant NGO, with the help of the CO and CLOs, should identify persons who have middle or high school education and train them as teachers. After this (2 to 3 months?) training the NGO should:

- Motivate the community to build a shed in which a primary school can start functioning.
- The NGO should provide furniture and all necessary education aids and material.
- The students should pay a small fee to the teachers to cover their salaries.
- The teachers should be encouraged to become education entrepreneurs or alternatively the CO should take over the school and run it as a trust.
- The school should be linked to the health programmes.

## **3. THE NEED FOR A HOUSING STUDY**

The URC needs to carry out a study on housing in the relocation settlements. It is obvious from the homes visited and the building material suppliers that we talked to, that people build very differently from how professionals plan houses for the poor. The poor build like birds build a nest – bit by bit over a period of time. Many actors are involved in this building process and the nature of their relationships determine the end product as much as economics and technology does. A study on the sociology, economics and technology of housing would help in a better understanding of people's requirements and hence better advice.

For this purpose, I suggest that 100 houses be surveyed. The majority of these houses (50 per cent) should be the most typical houses existing in a settlement. The rest should be chosen as different "types". An analysis should be made as given below.

### *Sociology*

- Who does what and how? Their relationships with each other (material suppliers, skilled workers, earth suppliers, households, neighbours)
- Problems in these relationships and their repercussions on the quality and cost of the house
- Plans of the house builders for the future and how they intend to achieve them
- The role of building material suppliers and skilled workmen in the house building process. The problems they face and the problems they create for the house owners
- Infrastructure provision: who are the actors? A case study of the relationship of households and electricity (generator operators) and water suppliers (vendors). This would help in identifying problems and potentials in these relationships
- The causes of the problems identified and how they can be removed

### *Economics*

- How is house building being financed? Who are the funders and how do they recover their money?

- The role of the building material supplier and its effect on the economics of construction (a case study of a suppliers organisation is required)
- Cost of earth filling to the households. How is it organised?
- The cost to the household for employing skilled labour such as masons and carpenters
- Infrastructure costs: a case study of a generator operator and water vendors is required

#### *Technology*

- An analysis of the most common technologies used in construction
- Identification of shortcomings in construction due to design, bad details, poor workmanship or other defects. An analysis for the reasons for these defects and how they can be removed
- An identification of the major components of building and their cost at the city markets and at the building material supplier on site. Materials on site are probably cheaper and in keeping with the paying capacity of poor communities
- Based on the survey of existing houses and their costs, advantages and disadvantages and a cost benefit analysis of various types of design and construction
- Acquiring and storing at the URC office various types of building material used by house builders in relocation settlements along with their prices, advantages and disadvantages

Recommendations on how the problems identified in the sections above can be solved and how good practices can be supported and bad practices curtailed, especially regarding relationships between various actors, the removal of technical faults in housing and support to communities to develop their own infrastructure or support to private providers to improve their services. This support can be financial (through loans); technical (through research and advise); and sociological (by improving relationships through information sharing and promoting ideas of collective action.)

## **4. COMMENTS ON CDS REPORT AND PROPOSED CONSULTATIONS**

### *4.1 Study of Relocation of Urban Poor Community in Phnom Penh*

This is an excellent study and has makings of an even better one. My specific comments have been discussed in detail with the URC members. Some general comments are given below.

It needs to be emphasised that the urban poor should not be looked at as destitutes but as people capable of solving their own problems and controlling their destiny. What is required is that NGOs should understand what they are doing and how to support it.

Experience tells us that communities do not require developed sites to begin a new life. What they require is to be prepared to build social and physical infrastructure. This process of building empowers them to do many other activities.

Information (especially from the tables in the Study) provides a number of insights that have not been identified. They need to be expanded upon and recommendations built around them.

A number of problem areas have also been identified. Recommendations for them need to be developed. These areas include electricity, water (I do not know why for it seems that subsoil water is potable), health, transport, employment and education.

Laws have been quoted. What they mean to the urban poor needs to be analysed. For me they are bad laws since they are ambiguous.

Options to the present relocation process have been proposed. How can they be achieved needs to be discussed along with a clear identification of constraints.

The housing process needs to be explained. Who does what and how? Who includes building material suppliers, money lenders, skilled workers, government officials (formally and informally),

NGO representatives and households (see section 3).

Table in 2.5 needs a column on capacity/capability and in the comments' column funding sources and their amounts should be entered against the NGOs. An analysis of this should follow. It will clarify the problems facing the housing process.

Relocation recommendations need to be reviewed for they will lead to limit community involvement in its own development when it should be the opposite.

A detailed case study of Lor Kambor would point to options for the relocation recommendations. This study should be made even if it is not a part of relocation study.

The issue of speculation surfaces in table 4.2. How serious is this issue and if it is serious what do we recommend?

The excessive costs of boring and hand pumps and temporary toilets have been dealt with in the recommendation's section of the Preamble of this Report. I feel they should form part of the relocation study.

Corruption has been alluded to in the Study. Either it should be removed or expanded upon. If corruption is well documented and published it is very useful in changing perceptions about the poor and about officialdom. This often wins friends among journalists and human rights activists.

The issue of non-payment of loans has also been raised in the Study. The non-payment of loans is a cultural issue. Where account keeping and austerity is promoted and where loan recovery processes are clear and simple, loans are returned. Where there is a culture of gifts and patronage along with a culture that the "easy money concept" promotes, loans are not repaid. Some recommendations might be useful.

#### *4.2 Development Plans for Phnom Penh Metropolitan Area*

The Study has lots of information. However, it needs to be put into a structure and analysed as to how it effects the poor and relates to the context. A possible structure for the Study is given below:

##### *The Phnom Penh context*

- Demography/growth and its long term repercussions on the city and the poor.
- Socio-economic trends from the census and what they mean for the city
- Physical problems: land, water, sewage, drainage, housing. Present conditions and how they effect the poor.
- Health, education and employment. Present conditions and how they effect the poor.
- Land ownership/control and how this effects the poor.
- Institutional arrangements: government agencies/local government, their structure and relationship to urban poor communities.

##### *Government, international agencies and NGO plans*

- Actors: their roles, priorities and working
- Their relationship with each other (do they work within an overall plan?)
- Sources of funding (loans are not sustainable nor is aid)
- An analysis of the above to ascertain i) effectiveness, ii) constraints, iii) coordination, iv) relevance to the context.

*Sector plans and their usefulness (or otherwise) to the urban poor*

- Housing and relocation
- Transport
- Drainage
- Water
- Institutional reform

Recommendations regarding the planning and implementation process that would improve conditions for the city in general and the poor in particular.

*4.3 Land Management Study*

The Study has already undertaken an investigation into vacant land in Phnom Penh. This would be interesting and would compliment the management study I am proposing below.

Who manages land and how? An analysis of the system identifying weaknesses, constraints and potential, with particular reference to urban poor communities.

What will happen to Phnom Penh if this system of management continues? A look into the future. Land in public and private domain to whatever extent it can be ascertained. Its extent, categorisation, registration and records.

The nature of record and its relationship to issues of transparency, accuracy and how all this effects the poor's accessibility to land.

Rural and urban land and its relationship to a larger city plan.

The process of urbanisation of rural land. Laws, actors involved and their relationship with each other. Land conversion trends and speculation. The results and their repercussions on the city. Their negative or positive aspects for the poor.

*4.4 CDS Related Consultations*

I feel that the process of consultation around the CDS studies should be as under:  
Consultation with urban poor communities and interest groups (such as hawkers/ cyclos/vendors' associations)

- Presentation of reports
- Division of community members into groups for discussions
- Feedback from the groups leading to modifications and consensus
- Identification of activists to take into the subsequent phases of the consultation process
- Consultation with the seven Khan chiefs.
- Representatives of the urban poor will be involved in this consultation
- Presentation of studies
- Consensus and or disagreement leading to modifications in the studies and possible consensus.
- Presentation before 78 Sangkat chiefs
- Urban poor community representatives will be present at the presentation
- Division into groups for discussion
- Feedback, modifications and possible consensus
- Consultative workshop
- Participants will include government officials, formal sector interest groups, NGO

representatives, international agencies, human rights groups, journalists, community representatives

- Group discussions leading to endorsement of studies and or disagreement, setting of priorities and perhaps a consensus
- Finalisation of studies
- Seek the endorsement of the Governor of Phnom Penh for the recommendations of the studies

### *Conference*

All the actors from the previous workshops and consultations will be present along with representatives of relevant ministries.

Papers on the findings of the studies and their various recommendations will be presented. The conference will hopefully endorse the gist of the presentations.

A steering committee of various interest groups should be formed at the end of the conference for taking the CDS process further.