

# **People's Dialogue on Human Settlements (PD) & The Ghana Homeless People's Federation (GHPF)**

## **BRIEF HISTORY**

In September 2003 two (2) Coordinators of Shack Dwellers International (SDI) from South Africa visited Accra, Ghana. The visit was a response to a request by residents of Old Fadama in Accra. The residents of old Fadama live in one of the most precarious conditions in Ghana. The visit was to explore the possibility of assisting residents of old fadama to find pragmatic solutions to their insecure tenancy, housing and poverty problems.

SDI is a loose network of peoples organization from many countries that seek to organize and unite the poor to influence the way Governments, International non governmental organizations and Multinationals discharge their obligations to the poor particularly, urban poor. During the visit the representatives of SDI had meetings with the residents of Old Fadama – a squatter community of about 30,000 people in Accra under threat of forced evictions, held discussions with the Deputy Minister of Local Government and Rural Development, and with Center for public Interest Law – (CEPIL - the Legal aid and human rights NGO representing the residents of Old fadama). At the end of the exploratory visit the SDI team concluded that:

-There was the need for a local champion and NGO that will be dedicated to working with and providing the needed administrative, technical and professional support to the urban poor to establish savings schemes and ultimately build a federation of urban poor in Ghana that would be linked to SDI. In direct response to the above need, People's Dialogue on Human Settlements was registered in Accra Ghana in December 2003 as a local NGO to build and support a federation of urban poor in Ghana.

People's Dialogue on Human Settlements (PD) is community-based, non governmental organization that works in partnership with the Ghana Homeless People's Federation (the Federation) to find permanent solutions to urban poverty in Ghana through the improvement of human settlements and shelter conditions. PD's assistance to poor communities includes, among other things, technical, facilitation and harnessing external resources to augment the resources mobilized by poor communities.

PD also focuses on the capacity building of federation communities so that they are better placed to deal with their challenges. PD seeks to contribute towards the attainment of adequate shelter for all with secure tenure and access to essential services in every community in Ghana. PD is affiliated to Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI). People's Dialogue is registered under the Companies Code, 1963 (Act 179) as a company limited by guarantee.

PD seeks to work in slums, informal settlements and low-income communities throughout Ghana. Since its establishment in the past ten (10) months, PD has been working in slums and informal settlements in Accra, Tema, Kumasi and Afram plains. The alliance of PD and the Emerging Federation has seen the development of strong peoples process in communities that the alliance operates.

The Ghana Homeless People's Federation is a network of community –based housing and savings schemes in urban and peri-urban settlements from across the country. The majority of the families live in squatter settlements, backyard wooden structures and tenants in compound houses in low income communities. At present, there are 55 savings and housing schemes with a total membership of close to 5,000 and total savings of about fifty million cedis (¢50,000,000.00). The families save daily for land, infrastructure, housing , crisis loan and income generation activities.

## **PD's Mission**

- \* Improvement of human settlements and shelter conditions of the poor in urban areas
- \* Enhancement of socio-economic condition of the poor in urban areas

## **Goals**

- \* Improvement in the quality of life of the urban poor and marginalized people
- \* Secured shelter of the urban poor and marginalized people.
- \* To explore partnership between poor communities and cities

## **OBJECTIVES OF PEOPLE'S DIALOGUE**

To provide information, technical, administrative and general support to the urban poor in matters relating to their development particularly those that relate to adequate housing and sustainable human settlements

To mobilize and store data, human and material resources to capacitate the vulnerable, marginalized and poor people living in towns, cities and urban areas to improve upon their living conditions

To empower poor people particularly women and urban slum/informal dwellers to strengthen their abilities and opportunities to speak for themselves, do things for themselves and make demand to those in power

To engage in research into problems relating to safe and sustainable cities and to pioneer new approaches to poverty alleviation and inclusive cities building

To contribute to the realization of target 11 of the Millennium Development Goals-Improving the living standards of 100 million slum-dwellers in the world and contribute to the enjoyment of general Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR)

## **PD AND GHPF ACTIVITIES IN GHANA**

September 2003 – 1st Savings group started in old Fadama, Accra, Greater Accra

March 2004 -Two groups formed in Avenor and Agbogbloshe both in Accra

April 2004 - Another group formed in Ashaiman-, Greater Accra region

May 2004 - Groups formed in Volta Region and Eastern Regions

June 2004- Savings Groups extends to Kumasi, Ashanti Region

February 2005- Savings groups extends to Takoradi, Western Region.

The alliance (PD and GHPF) is now working in 6 regions out of the 10 regions in Ghana. PD and GHPF now operate in 4 out of 5 of Ghana's largest urban localities namely Accra, Kumasi, Ashaiman and Takoradi with total savings of over hundred million cedis (¢100,000,000.00) approximately (US\$ 11,000).

## **Savings Groups In Accra Metropolis (AVENOR, AGBOGBLOSHIE & OLD FADAMA)**

### **1. OLD FADAMA GROUP**

Following initial exchanges with Slum Dwellers International (SDI) in 2002, savings groups have now begun to develop in Old Fadama. The savings groups started in November 2003.

Old Fadama, is the largest informal settlement in Accra and perhaps the whole of Ghana. Old Fadama is home to about 30,00 residents living in one of the most precarious conditions in Ghana. The residents are under the threat of forced evictions without alternate accommodation. The Government of Ghana is executing a project in the area called-Korle Lagoon Ecological Restoration Project (KLERP) The KLERP has necessitated the removal of the residents from the area. The KLERP is very important for two reasons—control and flow of storm water in the whole of Accra and Improving the Drainage system in Accra. Although the KLERP is considered important, what is lacking

is inadequate provision for a well-integrated or community managed relocation or upgrading strategy.

There are about twenty (20) savings groups in old fadama with total membership of close to 3000. Total savings is about thirty million cedis (¢30,000,000.00) approximately (US 3,200 Dollars). Peoples Dialogue and the Emerging federation leaders have started exploring the possibilities of opening discussions and negotiations with the Ashiedu Keteke Sub Metropolitan District of the Accra Metropolitan Assembly.

The emerging federation leaders are clear on their minds that, they need to cooperate with the AMA and Government. PG has focused on building strong peoples processes and negotiation skills of the urban poor to begin talking towards a negotiated solution. The residents through the federation activities have developed the necessary skills and mindset to Dialogue and negotiate with the AMA and Government. SDI, People's Dialogue and the Residents are committed to supporting the City and Government around relocation, resettlement, in-situ upgrading, voluntary movement and other alternatives to evictions.

## **2. AGBOGBLOSHIE**

Like most old settlements of Accra, Agbogbloshie is a formal settlement but has degenerated into a slum. One of the largest foodstuff markets in Accra is located in the area. Narrow and twisted roads, poor sanitation, wooden structures, and lack of environmental and health requirements characterize the area. The Agbogbloshie savings group was started in April 2004 and has about 150 members with total savings of about nine million cedis (US 1000 Dollars) who are saving to address the problems identified above. At the edge of Agbogbloshie resides the Railway Slum Dwellers. They are also saving to find solution to their insecure tenancy and the looming Forced Evictions.

## **3. AVENOR**

Avenor is yet another formal settlement that has degenerated into a slum. Poor sanitation, insufficient basic facilities and flooding are the major challenges that PD is supporting the residents to address. The Avenor savings group was started in April 2004. It has total membership of about 210 people and total Savings of about ten million cedis (US 1,100 dollars).

### **PD AND THE FEDERATION PROCESS (Alliance)**

For purposes of both effectiveness and relevance the SDI Model will be employed by the alliance. It will involve a set of strategies and activities such as:

- \* Building and organizing poor communities
- \* Facilitating the savings / federation process
- \* Strengthening the poor communities negotiation power
- \* Establishing and providing a support base
- \* Bringing together organized communities of the poor and local and/or
- \* Government authorities into a dialogue

### **FUTURE ACTIVITIES**

- \* Slum upgrading in Ghana's Slums and informal settlements
- \* Develop a Slum Upgrading and Resettlement Programme in Ghana to ensure decent housing
- \* Develop a strategy, including a joint proposal to Cities alliance to enable Ghana 's major cities to become cities without slums over the next decade.
- \* Set up an inventory of all slums in Ghana
- \* Establish a Community-driven Urban poor fund, with Government and Federation leaders to finance community-led development processes
- \* Development of an Organizational base among Ghana's Urban poor leading to the formation of a
- \* National Federation of the Urban poor in Ghana

## **SDI VISIT TO ACCRA, GHANA – DECEMBER 11-18 2004.**

As has been the Practice, an SDI team of five persons visited Accra Ghana from December 11 to 18, 2004. The team had a clear mission – to undertake a Settlement Profile of Old Fadama as a first step to carrying out an Enumeration in old Fadama. Many were those who anticipated clashes and failure. But the residents proved all skeptics wrong. The residents –mostly women, painstakingly administered their questionnaires and successfully counted all structures in old Fadama by the eleventh day.

Residents of old Fadama were set for action and preparation was far advanced before the SDI team arrived. The settlement profile team was drawn from members from the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area. The inclusion of federation members from other parts of Accra was to ensure that the training and experience becomes a shared knowledge. Without any delay, the exercise started on the 13 December. Amidst fun and anxiety, hundreds of residents poured into the federation office and offered themselves for the exercise.

One significant thing about the exercise was the high level of interest and seriousness of purpose that the women showed throughout the period. Rose and the SDI team facilitated and took their Ghanaian counterparts through the process. Like a dream come true, at 10:45 am, on the morning of 13th December, the first structure was marked and counted in old Fadama. By the close of the first day of the exercise, about 2000 structures were counted. The counting and administering of questionnaires lasted 11 days and the Compilation took additional three days. Altogether, it took 14 days to complete the exercise.

It is significant to note that the few days before, during and after the exercise a strong peoples process was seen building up in Old Fadama. The residents are confident that given the appropriate support and encouragements, they can themselves do many things. When asked to comment on the exercise, one woman who participated in the exercise had this to say “initially, I did not believe that I could play an active role in compiling and gathering information in my community since I had no formal education but this exercise has been an eye-opener for me and a confidence booster for myself to come out of my shell to try and do other things that I thought I could never do.” Her feelings typify the feelings of almost all that took part in the exercise.

From the perspective of People’s Dialogue and SDI, the residents of an informal settlement (old Fadama) have taken the first practical step to demonstrate that they are capable, willing and ready to genuinely partner the city authorities and Government to find a socially sound and sustainable solution to their tenure insecurity and settlement problems by collecting accurate and reliable information of themselves and about their community which is available for the residents, the City and Government.

The next step towards building a genuine partnership among residents, the city and Government is the planned Enumeration exercise to be carried out in Old Fadama in the coming months.

### **Summary of settlement profile:**

Name of Settlement: Old Fadama- Accra, Ghana

Has existed as an informal settlement since 1981

The land is currently Public Land

Total Population is 24,165

Women- 11,485

Children – 5,285

Total No. of Shacks- 11,066