CAN COMMUNITY ARCHITECTS NETWORK

NEWSLETTER

May 2016

Bangladesh
We grow together: a Perween Rahman fellowship report *p4*

Nepal
Tibetan nuns rebuild sustainability *p7*

Thailand
Community participation workshop in Songkhla *p9*

Indonesia
Buki Duri street festival *p11*

Where do we go from here?

#6

MAY 2016

Happy Spring 2016! While CAN is proud to support Perween Rahman fellows for the 3rd year in a row, and ready to host a joint workshop with the DPU, UCL in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, under CAN CAM for the third year in a row, our network is about to enter a new, and uncertain phase.

The 3-year funding provided by the German charity Misereor will close in July, and no funding has been secured yet for CAN activities in the future.

The future of CAN, and 'where do we go from here?' will be one of the main discussion topics this July, at CAN's fourth regional workshop this year to be held in Bangkok. What can be done to assure CAN's member groups in each country are self-suffient? How can we continue to network, and support each other financially, inspirationally, and technically across countries?

At this particular moment of CAN's evolution we are trying to paint the situation of community architecture within each country in the network, to compile experiences and skills of community architects all across Asia.

Hopefully the short book will be ready to be distribute at the next regional workshop. If you are one of the countries who hasnt submitted material yet please do, so we can make this hope a reality!

Cover photo: *a group of women from Mohishakundu Shordarpara in Jenaidah city, in Bangladesh, posing with the dream house models they produced together within a pioneering community-driven housing project. Suhailey Farzana, a community architect involved in the process, is telling the story of her own experience in this CAN Newsletter.*

INDEX

APRIL 2016

Short News:
Thailand / Indonesia p11

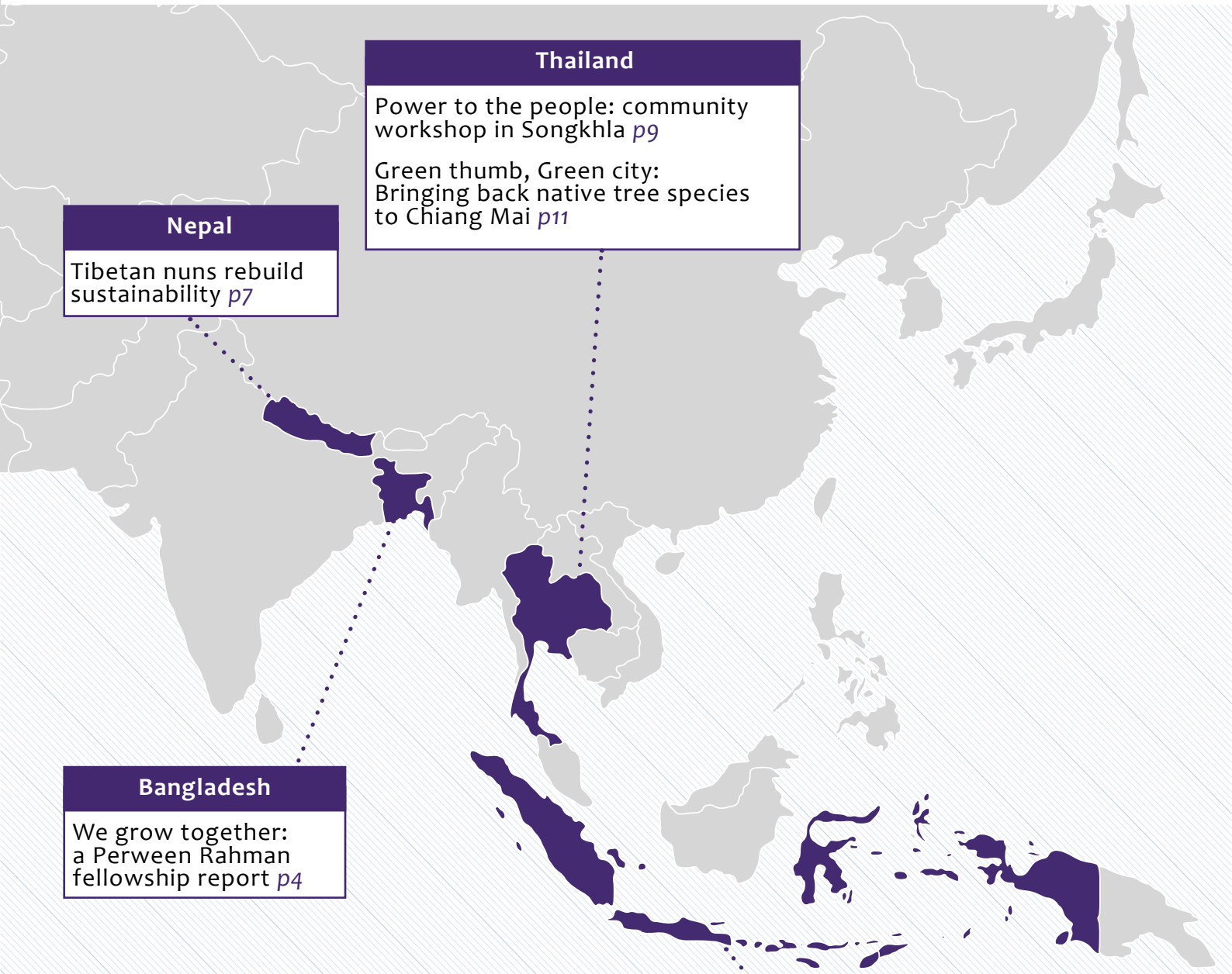
Briefs:
Media / Events / Opportunities p12

For contributions, comments, or queries, write to **communityarchitects.news@gmail.com**

For more information about the network, visit the website: **communityarchitectsnetwork.info**

Thanks to all those who contributed their stories, pictures and experiences for this issue!

WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND ASIA:



Thailand

Power to the people: community workshop in Songkhla *p9*

Green thumb, Green city: Bringing back native tree species to Chiang Mai *p11*

Nepal

Tibetan nuns rebuild sustainability *p7*

Bangladesh

We grow together: a Perween Rahman fellowship report *p4*

Indonesia

Bukit Duri street festival *p11*

Bangladesh

We grow together

A Perween Rahman Fellowship report from Jhenaidah

My fellowship is full of learning, back and forth, self-realization, disappointment, frustration, and yet substantial amount of happiness with small successes. It has taught me to be flexible, trust in little steps, gradual changes and most importantly to be patient.

Many times our plan doesn't work the way we want, and we take a different path without planning, we let it flow and that works better. What I proposed for Perween Rahman Fellowship was my planning, which perhaps didn't exactly reflect the community or the city's needs. Therefore, I was struggling to make my plan work.

At some point, I slowed down, and paused, and made myself available for the community in whatever way they might need my assistance.

I went beyond my identity; I had to keep changing my hats. I acted in several roles, sometimes as an architect, a social mobilizer, a product designer, a business planner and what not! I let the communities and me flow together for the good, for better things.

In my report I would like to share this journey. Perhaps the end result is not something that is very visible yet; still I strongly believe it has taught us so many things beyond our capabilities. And I dedicate my wonderful happy journey to Perween Rahman's soul.

If my work is to be assessed, there is nothing concrete I am able to share right now, however, gradual changes are being made in the life of the community, a life they are trying to make together. My presence combined with the communities efforts facilitated many things to happen in Jhenaidah city, Bangladesh, so I call my fellowship "It's a Happening".

"My fellowship is full of learning, back and forth, self-realization, disappointment, frustration, and yet substantial amount of happiness with small successes. It has taught me to be flexible, trust in little steps, gradual changes and most importantly to be patient".

It was winter, when I first met this group of women who have given me the opportunity to grow better, from whom I am learning life. Now, another winter is almost at nature's door, and I am cherishing how we have grown in the past year.

Within a few days we mapped the community together, produced measured drawings and documented the houses, mapped housing aspirations, designed houses and so much more. With a formal education in planning and decision, I was learning how people have their own processes and different ways of planning than I was used to.

While travelling with the women to study savings in "Women's Bank" of Sri Lanka, we started to weave a better and stronger relationship together. The trust, and people-led process resulted into forming of several savings groups within a citywide network, 20 new houses and a great horizontal sharing and skill transfer. Currently, new houses are already being built. We developed only two models, but in reality there are now many different houses because every household changed their plans while building. Communal and individual spaces have started to change with time. Last month I went to the community and saw someone wrote on her house "Shopno Paraa" in Bengali, which means, "Dream community"...

Jhenaidah had received an Asian Coalition for Community Action (ACCA) fund for both for big and small projects, revolving funds to be revolved in all the networked communities across Jhenaidah. The fellowship I originally proposed was to strengthen the existing riverside network and marginalized communities in Jhenaidah city. But I couldn't work there, sometimes leaders tried to politicize our presence in the community, it wasn't very easy. We failed to start savings groups there. I realized this is not the way to work, pushing my plans, and thought instead better to look for other needs in that moment. At the same time Mohishakundu Shordarpara community took initiative to visit other communities, and share stories on how savings groups made it possible to make better things. I decided to start following their needs and aspirations.

So far we have received very good backup from the local government. Following the ACCA fund, the Mayor gave us time and resources to understand the process, urban planning maps from the planning office, and searching for land if relocation was needed. After the construction of 20 houses, the local authority became even more enthusiastic to support our initiatives. Many positive things are happening. Now the mayor has assured us we would be involved in the the forming of a CDF for Jhenaidah. and has

offered us a place in the city corporation of Engineers for additional technical support. Now the Polytechnic institute of Jhenaidah is getting involved.

The whole process was established by the trust, friendship, active presence, patience, participation and decision-making involved in flexible funding, and flexible planning and continuous trust in the people-led process. PRF and ACCA's positive aspect is they value these, and encourage these aspects to grow.With the help of a humble NGO, flexible finance, and support from local authorities it made it possible to do better things, informally and flexibly.

There were many challenges too in the process, many imperfections, back and forth, dialogue, discussions and even disagreements. Challenges were both for community, the architects, the government and the NGO. This is a new learning process for everyone, but we learnt together and we learnt to trust each other for better result. We (architects, engineers, community network, ngo's, local authorities, and our relatives) are growing together in a very complex and beautiful way.

I feel, "Togetherness" has always been a power for everyone. This community has become a leader in getting other communities united by doing savings and mapping. Saving is becoming their strength. The most wonderful thing is this savings are solely managed by them, the power is at their hands. They decide which day to meet for collecting savings, how to keep the accounts, who receives, and how to distribute loans among themselves, unrelated to the NGOs. Neighboring communities are now approaching them to learn how to start their own group for saving. The process is gradually flowing wonderfully from community to community. Better things and good practices are happening now in the city.

Every time I go back I see gradual changes, they probably also know how I am changing too. Just one silent question in their eyes makes me visit Mohishakundu Shordarpara again and again, "When are you coming back?" My relation with the women of Mohishakundu Shordarpara didn't end after building houses, I feel instead it only started; building a few houses was just a tool to gather people, to learn to trust each other and build a stronger community. It's an unexplainable joy meeting these women regularly, welcomed by the worlds best smiles and warm hugs.

| Suhailey Farzana (suhailey.farzana@gmail.com)

△ *From top: 1:1 housing simulation; the architect and her "clients"; surveying the settlement; a visit by Jhenaidah mayor to the community.*

Nepal

Nuns rebuild sustainability

For more than eight months I have been working on a restoration project in a remote mountaintop Tibetan nunnery in Nepal. The earthquake last year destroyed the nuns hand-built nunnery, leaving 200 homeless. Our restoration activities draw directly on the religious traditions of the nuns and on indigenous building practices of the region.

Immediately following the earthquake I arrived to a ghostly landscape of flattened and damaged buildings. Later my colleagues from the **Mountain Resiliency Project**, a social enterprise dedicated to strengthening remote mountain communities in Nepal, **Hunnarshala Foundation** and the **Tibet Fund** joined me. We stayed for three weeks, assisting the nuns with the first steps of the recovery. The members of our Tibetan and Sherpa communities in Kathmandu were the first to mobilize support. To date, more than half of the funds we have gathered are individual donations from within our community. American Jewish World Services, a non-sectarian humanitarian and emergency relief non-profit organization, has granted also $287,000 to our rehabilitation effort.

As refugees, Tibetans face difficulties in seeking help from the Nepali government. The majority of the nuns come from my mother's home district in southern Tibet, Dingri, the northern base of Mt. Everest. Many of them are my relatives. The nunnery is located high on a mountain where cars cannot travel, mountain people must journey on foot.

The nuns were sent by their parents to Nepal at early ages— typically in their teens— because of the lack of prospects for them in Tibet. Their average age is now around 38. Isolated from their relatives for decades, they lack familial support systems. Nonetheless, their childhood memories of home and strong cultural ties are central to their lives. In recognition of this identity and affiliation, our team emphasized the importance of reconstruction with a strong inclusion of traditional Tibetan building techniques while also incorporating techniques to make the buildings resilient in the face of earthquakes.

"Many people in Nepal are lulled into this false sense of security with reinforced cement buildings and put off by

A remote mountaintop Tibetan nunnery in Nepal reconstruction project draws directly on the religious traditions of the nuns and on indigenous building practices of the region

△ *Nuns digging mud clay to use for their home construction.*

The Great Protector Wish-fulfilling Gem is the protector for all beings
□□□

Thailand

Power to the people: community participation workshop in Songkhla

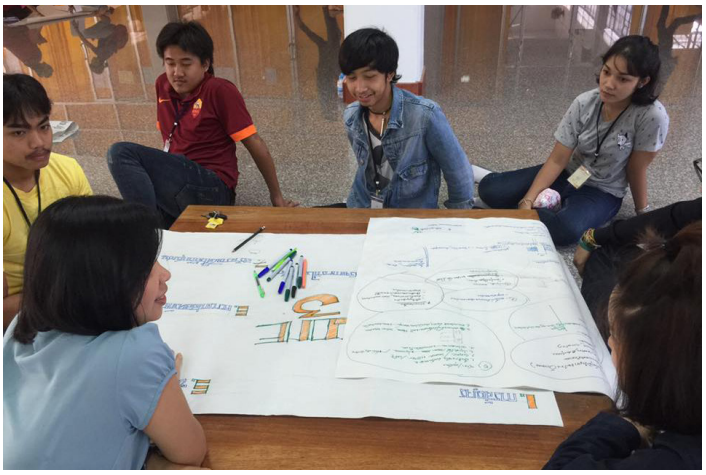
Songhkla is a port city of around 163,072 people located in Southern Thailand. Historically the city was part of the old Malay Kingdom and due to its long and rich history present day Songhkla has an eclectic cultural mix of Thai, Chinese, Arabic, Malay and Dutch. With no official protection many historic structures in the old city are vulnerable to unsympathetic tourism driven development. Although Songhkla benefits from a vigorous economy based on trade, industries, fishing and tourism, many residents live in informal settlements, with more than half of those settlements located on government owned land. The **Association of Siamese Architects** under Royal Patronage (Community Architect Network Committee) together with the Faculty of Architecture at Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya (RMUTSV) jointly organized a students' planning workshop with Songkhla Municipality and Heritage Trust to address redevelopment threats faced by informal communities settling on the Songhkla – Hat Yi railway line.

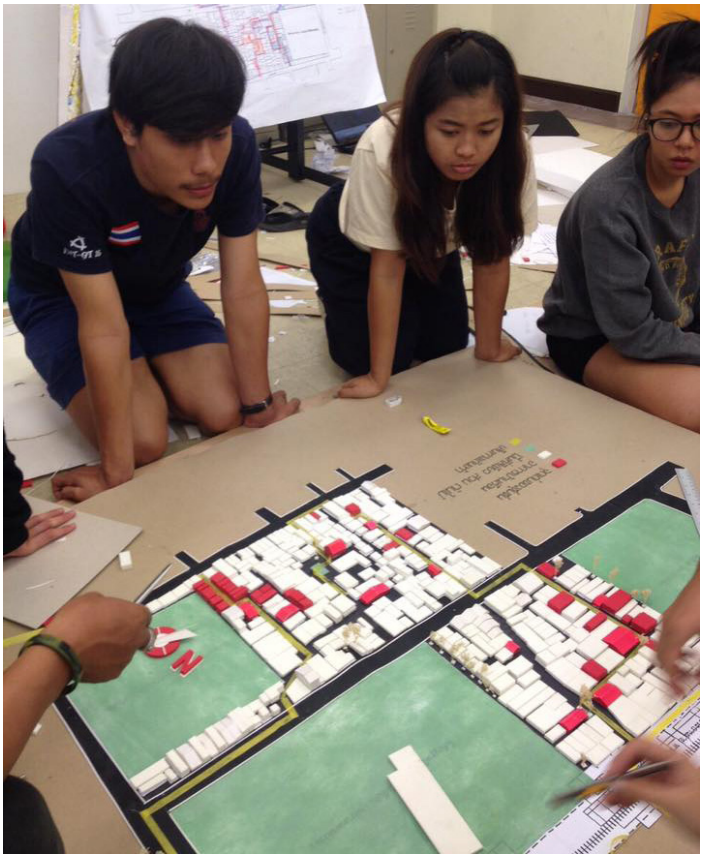
As the rail link between Songkhla and Hat Yai was abandoned in the 70s, people started building up houses along the tracks. Now, with a railway revamping project, many old-time residents have been ordered to leave

Due to the shortness of developable land in Songhkla, when the rail link closed between Songkhla and Hat Yai, many low-income informal settlements began encroaching on the public railroad right-of-way (ROW). Recently however, the authorities announced a plan to bring back the abandoned railway lines, threating to evict the long-time residents there. The residents are facing a dilemma as the majority are unable to afford formal housing in the city area, but cannot move too far away due to their employment/ business which is rooted in the local area.

The four day workshop was attended by 34 students from four different universities - Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songhkla (Faculty of Architecture), Prince of Songkla University, Trang Campus (Faculty of Architecture), King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (Department of Architectural Education and Design) and Songkhla Rajabhat University (Faculty of Management Sciences). The workshop was a first of its kind to be organized in Songhkla, where the students worked together with various stakeholders such as the railway settlement community, Songhkla Heritage Trust, PTTEP to find an innovative resolution to a 'real' issue faced by the railway settlement community.

For the first half of the workshop students spent their time understanding the diverse needs and aspirations of various stakeholders. Chawanad Luansang, Dr. Nikhil Joshi from Taylor's University, Kuala Lumpur and professors from





the local universities worked together with the students to produce an imaginative 'solution' that is sensitive to the community needs and aspirations, while provide sufficient space for growth and development of the railway in the city. On the last day of the workshop, the students presented their innovative design ideas to the community leaders and other stakeholders at the Red Mill, also the home of Songhkla Heritage Trust. On the one hand the community leaders were quite excited by the development concepts, however, on the other hand they voiced concerns regarding an infringement of privacy and community fragmentation if more tourists were to visit their settlement. During the lengthy discussion that developed, it was agreed the residents of the railway settlement needed a better waste management system and more green communal spaces in order to have a healthy urban well-being, green spaces which could generate economic value in addition to recreational value.

Overall the workshop was considered a success as it opened a dialogue between Songhkla municipality and the railway settlement community, as well as raising the local stakeholders' appreciation towards the ROW railway residents, and diverse historical landscapes of Songhkla. It is hoped that the students' proposed redevelopment schemes would serve as the starting point rather than the end for this first-ever students-community engagement exercise.

| Nikhil Joshi (abhivyakti13@hotmail.com)

◁ *The workshop not only raised the students' awareness of socio-economic-cultural issues associated with development, but also made them aware of the role of community and the significance of working with stakeholders to achieve a balance between development and community needs.*

Thailand

Green thumb, Green city: Bringing back native tree species to Chiang Mai

Last March, 20 people met on bicycles at Fuen Baan Library to ride around Huay Kaew Aboretum and Chiang Mai University in search of seeds to plant as saplings. During the trip the forestry official and plant expert Ms.Jiraporn Meewasana shared some knowledge about growing trees from the seeds.

Mue Yen Muang Yen team (which translates to 'Green Thumb, Green City') was formed almost a year ago and every Saturday we give away free saplings at university. Now most saplings are donated by the forestry department or individuals, but we want to start growing our own,from seeds collected ourselves. We were inspired to collect our own seeds and saplings to learn the whole progress of each tree, and the time and effort it takes for it to grow. This summer we plan to grow more saplings from seeds, especially rare and native plants.

One of our first planting activities was planting native trees around the moat in Chiang Mai, illegally. However, because we didn't inform the municipality, the staff cut these saplings while mowing the grass around the moat, and most of our saplings died. For the saplings to become big trees we realized we had to involve the local government and local people. So for the next tree planting activity, we invited the municipality officials to join us in planting around 800 native trees around the moat in August 2015. Now Chiang Mai Municipality is Mue Yen Muang Yen's big supporter, and they help us when we are in need of supplies, tools or manpower.

△ *We collected about 15 varieties of seeds, including Dipterocarpus alatus, a tall tropical tree, that can reach about 50m, now endangered in many areas.*

Chiang Mai is expanding quickly and our forests are being cut down for cash crop farming. The first idea to plant urban native trees came from our group's founder Pharadon (Opor) Phonamnuai, a local musician. He said instead of expecting farmers living in the highlands to start replanting native trees, we can start in Chiang Mai, by planting some trees right where we are. Over time our group expanded, mostly through social media platforms, currently we have more than nine thousand fans. We appreciated that others are also caring for the environment and we hope that our actions will raise awareness on natural preservation, and we hope people will help us plant more trees. **|Thanawin Wijitporn (thanawin.net@gmail.com)**

Indonesia

Bukit Duri street festival

Hundreds of residents in Bukit Duri, South Jakarta celebrated **Pasar Rakyat** together, or the "people's market" over three days April 3-5. The event, facilitated by Ciliwung Merdeka, typically happens around Indonesian Independence day, as an opportunity for the community to express themselves creatively though selling products and performances. However as residents of Bukit Duri will likely be facing eviction in the upcoming months, this was possibly the last Pasar Rakyat and had a different motive.

The relocation to subsidized temporary units in social housing transforms the people's existing current land ownership into a rental scheme. The community's alternative proposal for nearby collective relocation rejects the standard form of compensation provided by the government, and instead advocates to pick up on an alternative type of compensation in the form of land, recognizing the value of residents' existing land and building. The proposal for nearby collective relocation rejects subsidized temporary rental units, the routine form of compensation by the government, and instead picks up on compensation in the form of land, an option rarely acted upon. The proposal by the community for collective relocation follows up on an earlier proposal facilitated by Ciliwung Merdeka for on-site upgrading, known as 'Kampung Susun' or vertical village, proposing land consolidation of the river edge and construction of new collectively owned mid-rise housing. Although well received by the former governor Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, the proposal was eventually rejected by the central government.

Pasar Rakyat was picked up well by the media. The event included a parade with banners carrying political messages, one of which asking Jokowi to keep his promise to build "kampung susun" instead or relocating riverside residents to rental units. **| Ariel Shepherd (shepherdariel@gmail.com)**

Media

In a brief article published on ODI's website, **Is community mobilisation a myth? Experiences from Niger**, researcher Clare Cummings brings together her reflections based on her fieldwork in Niger.

In **The (Im)permanence of paper: an interview with Shigeru Ban**, the japanese architect who has been working extensively on post-disaster shelter, reflects on how does desiwgn cope with a reality in which "temporary" often becomes permanent, and "permanence" tends to be temporary.

Could mapping tech revolutionise disaster response? After stuying in the US and workind on the ground in the wake of Haiti's earthquake, Nama Budhathoki brought back pioneering crowdsourced mapping methods to

native Nepal after last year's earthquake. In this article, he reflects on how people-led mapping can give a crucial contribution to diaster response.

Events

The **4th CAN Regional Workshop** will be held in Thailand at the end of July. The theme will be **"Co-creation with nature and people for our ecosystem"**, to move beyond urban issues and explore rural planning and how can design improve the balance between human collectivity and nature. The sitework locations are currently still being defined.
Thailand, 22-28 July 2016.

Opportunities

We are happy to announce a call for the 4th round of **ACHR-SELAVIP** Housing Projects 2017, in which block grants are made available for communities to use as revolving funds to incrementally finance housing and neighbourhood improvements. In addition to the regular activities, there is a new additional community-based Waste Management project.
- Activity A: Big Housing project - up to 30,000 US$
- Activity B: Small upgrading projects - up to 5,000 US$
- Activity C: Decent Poor Housing project - up to 5,000 US$
- Activity D: Community-based Waste Management - up to 5,000 US$

The deadline for proposals is the 31st of May, please email achr@achr.net for more details.

The **Indian Institute for Human Settlements** (IIHS) is launching its **Urban Fellows Programme** (UFP): a fully funded, nine-month, full-time, inter-disciplinary fellowship for recent graduates and young professionals from varied educational backgrounds or practice domains.
The programme will investigate India's urban transition, unprecedented in scale and complexity, within which lie both the opportunities of increased economic growth and employment as well as the challenges of persistent inequality, extreme deprivation and environmental degradation.
The UFP 2016-17 will be based out of the IIHS Bangalore City Campus. The first batch of 35 Fellows will start in August, 2016 and graduate in May, 2017.
Deadline: 10th May 2016.

USAID Small Grants Program is looking for applications from **Pakistani Civil Society Organizations** (CSOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and private sector organizations seeking to secure funding in the areas of civic participation, which also includes use of technology and best practices for improved governance and transparency, community participation. Apply **here**.

If you happen to be teaching or researching at **Leiden University** in Belgium, or you have some professional contacts there with whome to prepare a research proposal, this might be of interest: the university is giving out big grants (up to 150.000EUR) to finance teaching and research project on Asia themes.
Deadline: 1 September 2016.

"At all costs, I have always wanted to avoid the attitude too often adopted by professional architects and planners: that the community has nothing worth the professionals' consideration, that all its problems can be solved by the importation of the sophisticated urban approach to building. If possible, I want to bridge the gulf that separates folk architecture from architect's architecture."

Hassan Fathy