

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF ASIAN CITIES: CASE OF KARACHI

**By
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INTRODUCTION

The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) is an Asia-Pacific Network of professionals, NGOs and community organisations. Its headquarters are in Bangkok. The decision to create the ACHR was taken in 1987 and was formalised in 1989. Its founding members were professionals and NGO and community projects working on housing and urban issues related to poor communities. Since then, through an orientation and exchange programme between innovative projects and interested communities and professionals, the Network has expanded throughout South, South-East and East Asia. Links have also been created with Central Asia and Africa through the savings, credit and housing programmes of the Shack Dwellers International.

The ACHR senior members have been very conscious that conditions at the local and international level today are very different from what they were in 1989 when the ACHR was created. They are also conscious that these conditions are affecting the shape and form of our urban settlements and the living conditions of the poorer sections of society. As a result of this consciousness, the ACHR in 2003 decided to carry out a research on a number of Asian cities so as to identify the process of socio-economic, physical and institutional change that has taken place since the ACHR was founded; the actors involved in this change; and the effect of this change on disadvantaged communities and interest groups. Eight Asian cities along with researchers were identified for the purpose of this research. The names of the researchers and the titles of their reports from which this paper is derived are given in bibliography. An enormous amount of material regarding these cities has been generated and is available with the ACHR Secretariat. The research and logistics related to it have been funded by German funding agency Misereor.

It was decided that the cities chosen for the research should be as different from each other as possible in political, social and physical terms and that all the researchers should be local people. A synthesis of the case studies has been prepared by David Satterthwaite, Senior Fellow of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) UK and published by the ACHR under the title "Understanding Asian Cities". The cities chosen for the research were: Beijing (China); Pune (India); Chiang Mai (Thailand); Phnom Penh (Cambodia); Karachi (Pakistan); Muntinlupa (Manila, Philippines); Hanoi (Vietnam); and Surabaya (Indonesia).

This study was aimed to understand the process of socio-economic, physical and institutional change in Asian cities through identifying the actor involved and their role in the process of change documenting community movements and promoting national and international forums of NGOs and CBOs on housing and development issues. The research outline also involved establishing socio-economic and housing trends through analysis of census data and networking with organization working on these issues. It further included making poverty profiles of each city marking its indicators and their causes and repercussions, identifying accessible poverty alleviation funds and a critical analysis. The research also includes a description of institutional setups of the various countries / cities, the trends in physical growth of cities over time, the master plan, its features and supporting and non-supporting elements; housing policies and programmes; a critical analysis of the various types of civil society organizations and an assessment of the impact of globalization and structural adjustment on society.