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Roof Over Our Heads (ROOH): Informing Community-Led Resilient Housing Practices

Submitted By: Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC)



Organization Profile

Organization Name: Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC)

Organization Type: Civil society

Website: https://campaignforrooh.org/

Practice Details

Country(ies): India, Indonesia, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Egypt

City(ies): Surat, Bengaluru, Gangtok, Pimpri, Mumbai, Pune, Ahmednagar, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Paradeep, Delhi, Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Corrientes, Salta, Buenos Aires, Neuquén, Valparaíso, Rocuant, Valdivía, Talagante, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Purana, Pernambuco, Salvador de Bahía, Cali, Barranquilla, Acapulco, Xochimilco, Ixtapaluca, Guadalajara, Monterrey, San Juan de Miraflores, Nairobi, Freetown, Helwah, Minbal, Jabal at Tayr, Izbat Ibayd Sarufim

Start Year: 2022 **Ongoing:** Yes **End Year:** N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

Housing Affordability & Financing

Communal & Self-Build Housing

Housing & Climate Adaptation

Relevant SDGs:



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Problem & Context

ACHR shows 90% in informal settlements design, build, and fund their homes, gaining tenure only generations later, with few subsidies or infrastructure. Extreme weather puts these households in double jeopardy yet just 1% of adaptation finance exists and none reaches them. ROOH will set up 100 learning labs with communities, especially women, to co-create resilient solutions with available materials. Supported by the Champions Team, ROOH explores local and global responses. Settlements face 42–45°C heat, floods and constant repairs, women bear the heaviest burden yet are excluded. Govt. schemes in India give subsidies but miss realities, focusing on milestones over resilience. ROOH elevates women's choices and incremental upgrading, urging policy, finance and supply chains to back resilience.

Solution Developed

The ROOH campaign supports the most vulnerable in temporary or semi-permanent informal settlements that are unsafe, heat-trapped and flood-prone by placing women at the center of solutions. Low-income urban families, especially women facing daily risks of heat, floods and debt, are the focus and co-producers of solutions. ROOH aims to transform survival houses into resilient, low-cost homes offering comfort, dignity and safety. Each Lab is a classroom where women co-design and test upgrades with local workers and professionals. Using materials acceptable, accessible, adaptable, affordable, and available (5 A's of ROOH), families upgrade incrementally through the 3 R's repair, retrofit, rebuild. Solutions include reflective roofs, breathable plasters, raised plinths and recycled thermal barriers. ROOH fuses technical and social innovation, women-led design, climate science with traditional wisdom, participatory finance and material dashboards, while roundtables and peer learning spread solutions globally, shifting housing from charity to agency.

Implementation

The most important element is co-produced knowledge developing methods to assess vulnerability against extreme weather which women adopt themselves. It reformulates architecture and engineering for humble homes, rarely attempted locally or globally. The process works with providers to make affordable, accessible options while testing resilient materials and building a global network to share solutions that transform vulnerable houses. The Secretariat team partners with women's collectives, local systems and universities to adapt frameworks. Demonstration houses are assessed by communities, contractors, engineers, academics, and where possible authorities. Each year the campaign produces a COP/WUF book, the third now underway. Demos tested reflective sheets, cooling paints, tiles, plasters, raised plinths, fly ash bricks, recycled thermocol, waterproofing, higher ceilings, ventilation, retrofitting, workshops, training. Latin America partners added timber, insulated panels, prefabs, DIY units. Thermo hygrometers showed drops from 45°C to 29–34°C. Financial models proved poor households invest with flexible credit, while dashboards and collective procurement shift

supply chains. ROOH is shaped by women's groups, workers, innovators, academics, allies and global platforms. Phase I (2023–24) labs, Phase II (2024–25) demos/finance, Phase III (2025 onward) 100 labs and 1000 houses, blending savings, labor, philanthropy, grants, CSR, MFIs, small banks.

Enablers & Obstacles

ROOH advanced through layered enablers: women's collectives gave legitimacy and continuity, city duty bearers allowed experimentation, and universities with industry offered technical validation. Tools like thermal hygrometers, the ROOH dashboard, and lab records turned scattered practices into evidence. Families, often stuck with poor-quality overpriced materials, gained from a demand dashboard that aggregated needs so suppliers viewed settlements as markets. Global support from Climate Champions, Race to Resilience, Marrakech Partnership, GRP and 56 partners linked local action to global agendas. Despite tenure insecurity, poor services, transport gaps and denial of rights, secure tenure enabled finance, though families faced high informal interest, rigid subsidies and strict loan cycles. ROOH tested flexible credit and CSR funds as risk capital, turning each barrier into ground for systemic reform.

Results & Impact

A. Creating a methodology that democratizes resilience assessment by communities and their supporters in building homes.
B. Building rigorous, practical capacity with impact measurement, sharing risks with vulnerable households who can withdraw from solutions if ineffective.
C. Courage and capacity to face delays/rejections as communities shift from charity to sustainable, scalable alternatives with market and digital access.
D. A global campaign counters pity rhetoric for 1B people in poor conditions, advancing methods to replicate solutions with specialists and youth.

ROOH's impact shows in numbers and power shifts: 200+ houses documented, 70+ upgraded, cutting heat from 42–45°C to 29–34°C. Families use fans 2h vs 12h, saving energy and $22–25 yearly. 1200+ women engaged, 210 trained leaders across 70 labs with 200 artisans. Financial models in Pimpri/Surat proved households invest with fair credit, spurring MFIs' housing loans. Women now negotiate with suppliers, contractors, officials. ROOH influenced PMAY, entered 40+ university curricula, seeded a global peer network. Women's groups negotiate with cities, industry, finance. Resilient houses cut costs, repairs, boost income, cut emissions, and reposition settlements as resilience labs, not neglect zones.

Replication & Scale Up

We began in India (Surat, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Bhubaneswar, Ahilyanagar) and have expanded to 10+ countries across Africa, MENA, SE Asia, and Latin America. Now engaging fisherfolk and

rural communities, the process is co produced with women's collectives who negotiate and build, adapting to local climates reflective coatings, flood-resilient plinths, breathable plaster, insulated roofs. Women and youth monitor comfort data, aggregate demand and partner with vendors, proving low income households are active resilience builders, not passive beneficiaries.

The ROOH campaign bridges local realities with global influence. By 2025 it spans 3 continents, 10 countries, 36 cities, with 56 labs, 200+ houses documented and 70+ under demonstration. Scaling anchors ROOH Labs in networks, targeting 100+ across Asia, Africa, Latin America and MENA. Tied to subsidy schemes like PMAY BLC and others it grows without new burdens. Cross learning, universities, and industry embed methods. Our goal is women led, climate resilient housing as the norm so poor families don't bear climate risks alone.

Policy Uptake

This housing practice has informed or been partially integrated into policy discussions, strategies, or pilot-level policy instruments.

What began with women improving their homes is now shaping how cities reimagine PMAY BLC, echoing Yogyakarta's Kampung Lampion where UII, government and community co-produced in-situ redevelopment. In Ahilyanagar, subsidy talks now include women's inputs and incremental layouts. The Task Force on Informality uses ROOH evidence to guide adaptation for informal housing, while construction roundtables and university partnerships carry this knowledge forward, bringing community-led housing into mainstream policy and planning.

Lessons & Takeaways

From all ROOH labs we saw housing change is less about fixes than process. Starting with community choices let us weave ROOH into how they build. Finance showed strong demand, but repayment delays mean lenders must adapt to informal realities. Linking supply chains earlier gives families better quality at lower cost. Most of all, ROOH adds value by strengthening govt schemes like BLC, proving climate resilience and women's agency can be built into existing housing systems.