

# UN-HABITAT

THE CHALLENGE OF SLUMS



## Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI)

Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) is a voluntary association of like-minded people's organizations committed to a shared process of grassroots organization, problem solving and solution sharing. SDI was formed in the North-West Province of South Africa in May 1996.

Today, it has many affiliates on three continents. These include:

- UmfelandaWonye (South Africa Homeless People's Federation) – South Africa.
- Zimbabwe Federation of the Homeless – Zimbabwe.
- Twahangana – Namibia.
- Muungano Wa Wanavijiji (Slum Dwellers Collective) – Kenya.
- Enda-Graf – Senegal.
- National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) – India.
- Mahila Milan (network of slum and pavement women) – India.
- Urban Poor Federations – Thailand.
- Society of Urban Poor Federations – Cambodia.
- Payatas Savings and Credit Federation – Philippines.
- Mutirao Groups in Belem – Brazil.

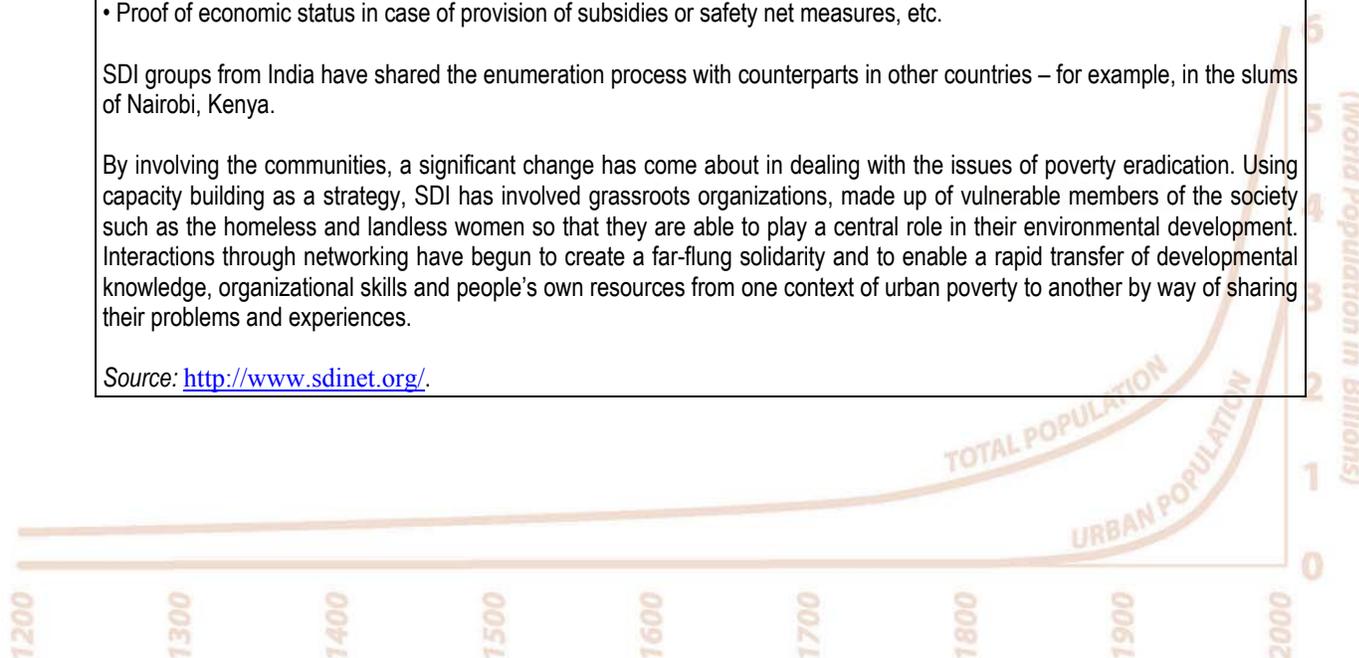
These organizations, often supported by NGOs, avail the network of their facilities, their time and contributions in kind. Most importantly, they share knowledge and solidarity across regional boundaries. For example, NSDF and Mahila Milan from India have developed a slum dwellers' enumeration process by which they generate records on names, faces, locations and living conditions of slum dwellers. This process produces information that can be used for negotiating services or as baseline data in slum upgrading projects. Persons thus enumerated are issued with an identity card, which can be used in a variety of ways:

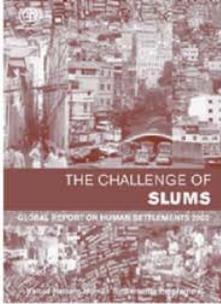
- Proof of residence in case of upgrading.
- Proof of economic status in case of provision of subsidies or safety net measures, etc.

SDI groups from India have shared the enumeration process with counterparts in other countries – for example, in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya.

By involving the communities, a significant change has come about in dealing with the issues of poverty eradication. Using capacity building as a strategy, SDI has involved grassroots organizations, made up of vulnerable members of the society such as the homeless and landless women so that they are able to play a central role in their environmental development. Interactions through networking have begun to create a far-flung solidarity and to enable a rapid transfer of developmental knowledge, organizational skills and people's own resources from one context of urban poverty to another by way of sharing their problems and experiences.

Source: <http://www.sdinet.org/>.





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## Organising for land and housing, social inclusion and human development

### Quezon City, Philippines

Quezon City lies immediately to the north of Manila and is part of the national capital region of the Republic of the Philippines. It has a population of 2.3 million. A large number of the population lives in poor urban communities. In 1991, 50% of households were found to be below the official poverty line. On the north side of the city, straddling a major thoroughfare called Commonwealth Avenue, is an area of some 350 hectares known as the National Government Centre (NGC). This area was set aside during the 1940s and is now the home of the Philippines House of Representatives and a number of government departments. It is also home to a large number of urban dwellers living in poverty in largely unplanned and unauthorized settlements.

SAMASAMA is the largest of a number of people's organizations existing in the NGC, with a membership of about 12,000 families. It was formed in 1980 in response to evictions and demolitions by the Marcos regime that – through mass protest against armed police – it was successful in resisting. Its key objective has been to obtain secure and regularized tenure of the land on which its members have built their homes. Since 1982 it has been assisted in its work by the NGO Community Organization of the Philippines Enterprise (COPE). In 1988, SAMASAMA was officially designated the representative of the NGC residents on a National Government Centre Housing Committee (NGCHC), with 50% voting power on all decisions.

Currently, amidst rapid urbanization and lack of political will by the government in developing the NGC as a social housing site, the SAMASAMA has succeeded in getting 150 hectares proclaimed for on-site resettlement, successfully designing and implementing a social housing innovation called the People's Housing Alternative for Social Empowerment (PHASE), which was adopted and later revised by the government, who institutionalized the right of the people's organization to participate in the decision-making in the NGCHC. The leadership and general membership of SAMASAMA is comprised almost entirely of women, who are supported by their spouses and families.

It has also facilitated the setting up of 18 day-care centres; the installation of legal electricity and water connections to the communities within the 700 hectares of the NGC settlement; the dismantling of syndicates who prey on poor families; and the establishment of a credit and savings cooperative for its members. It formed the core of an anti-eviction federation in Metro Manila of poor families threatened with evictions. The majority of its women members supported the first political party of women that won a seat in congress, the Abanse Pinay, during the 2001 elections. These are highlights of its past and present work. It has worked with planners, architects, economists and the religious in its struggle to make a difference, to be heard, and to break out from poverty, ignorance and marginalization.

Source: UN-Habitat, Best Practices Database.

GRHS/03/Box4

