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Decentralisation and Habitat Development

Decentralisation: The Fulcrum for Habitat Development

Human habitat is a complex mix of the conditions in which people live. It includes shelter, physical and social security, livelihood means, health, water, sanitation, social status, and various other services. Though these have a lot to do with global contexts, and at varied levels, the interventions take place at the local level. The issues are locale specific in most of the situations and, answers too. The changes in the governance approaches have considered these concerns. The decentralisation has evolved as a major reform in governance. Proponents of decentralisation have been vociferous about the advantages of decentralisation, especially in matters related to various components of habitat.

Many South Asian countries are slowly moving into decentralised governance, though the magnitude of this reform process varies from country to country. All the components and determinants for habitat in one way or the other finds a place in the decentralisation processes in these countries. The potentials and scope of the decentralisation process to be the anchor in habitat development is large. Experiences show that strengthening decentralisation is a logical foundation for habitat development if it is to have focus on the poor, environment and natural resources.

This issue of the basin-South Asia newsletter fathoms the possibilities and linkages of decentralisation and habitat development. The theme paper presented as FOCUS describes these linkages. It concludes with the call for a paradigm shift in approaches for sustainable habitat development, taking into consideration the potentials the decentralisation processes provide. It definitely calls for innovations and risk taking. Case study on Vilappil gram panchayat in Kerala, India, narrates the formulation of sustainable settlement norms by the people of the village under the leadership of the gram panchayat. It also shows how NGOs and civil society organisations could support and facilitate the process through working with the people and the elected local self-government.

Grambanga Unnnayan Committee's initiative in providing housing to the most marginalised

sections of the society in Bangladesh is an eye opener. The process intensive intervention could mobilize the people, motivate the local government and could implement the programme in a participatory manner. It could also take into account the various components of habitat including means of livelihood.

The report by the president of Kozhuvanal gram panchayat of Kerala State in India is on how a local government could mobilize resources and technical support and bring the people together through neighbourhood groups. The decisions were made by the village assemblies thus establishing the ownership and meaning of participation by the people. It also shows how this ownership led to the efficient implementation of the total housing programme for the village.

Kuthambakkom gram panchayat of Tamil Nadu in India has been a model in evolution for rural habitat development and decentralisation. The narrative by the president of the gram panchayat establishes the fact that local governments can become the fulcrum for habitat development. It also shows how various components of habitat are brought together and integrated. The novel concept of network economy at the village level with 20- village cluster and the multi sectoral linkages point to the fact that it is at the level of the local government that the scope for convergence is at the maximum.

The experiences with the present wave of decentralisation, though a short period so far, open up a new and wide landscape for formulating the future approaches and strategies for habitat development. The scope and potentials of the decentralisation process are large. How to tap these so as to develop sustainable habitat with focus on poor, environment and natural resources is the real challenge.

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Training on bio farming as part of the Programme on Towards Sustainable Settlements by SEWA in Vilappil Gram Panchayat, Kerala, India

Habitat and Decentralisation

Decentralisation has been the buzzword in global governance discourses, especially over the last one decade. Though there are different definitions and dimensions to decentralisation, it is simpler to define it as the transfer of power, responsibility and resources from central to regional and local governments.

Different forms of decentralisation are being practiced like the administrative, political (which includes democratic decentralisation) and fiscal decentralisation. To overcome the vagueness about the meaning of decentralisation, Dennis Rondinelli, John R. Nellis and G. Shabbir Cheema developed the conceptual framework of three types of decentralisation: deconcentration, delegation, and devolution. (See Box - 1)

choices and decision-making. Based on this premise, democratic decentralisation definitely leads to improvements in the efficiency of the development activities. Participation of people also helps in tapping dormant local resources – physical, financial and human. The basic principle in decentralisation is that of subsidiarity, which is that, which can be done at the lower level should be done at that level itself.

Habitat development in the context of decentralisation If human habitat means any of the conditions in which people live, then it is much more than just a house. It is a shelter, physical and social security, a work place, social position, a means of livelihood, and a market for products and services. Habitat development should lead to perceptible

Box - 1

- **Deconcentration** occurs when a central government ministry transfers some resources and/or decision-making power to a regional or local office.
- **Delegation** refers to the transfer of government authority over a particular set of tasks to other institutions such as state-owned enterprises.
- **Devolution**, which is the most substantial form of decentralisation refers to authority being transferred to lower levels of government granting them some to all of the powers to plan, make decisions, raise revenues, employ staff, and monitor activities.

Rondinelli, Dennis A., John R. Nellis, and G. Shabbir Cheema. Decentralisation in Developing Countries: A Review of Recent Experience. World Bank Staff Working Papers Number 581, Washington D. C. 1984.

Why decentralisation

The champions for decentralisation argue thus:

- It leads to direct accountability
- It ensures transparency
- More efficient management of resources
- Better linkages between information and planning
- Easier inter sectoral coordination
- Effective response to the various needs and capacities of different regions and localities

The strategy for habitat development, even while considering the global contexts and environment, has a lot to do with locale specificity. There are many an argument in favour of local decision making. Welfare maximisation can occur only by providing services consistent with the spatially differentiated tastes and preferences of the people, which can happen only when decisions are made at the local level. More over, efficient management of natural resources occurs through locale-specific

positive change in quality of life. It should lead to continuous improvement and growth over time built upon local strengths.

This is dependant on a natural order and organic relationship between the components: house, settlement, and habitat. The eco dimensions of the concept of habitat bring together the natural environmental features, human/societal features, and public/private assets utilities/services, which are created by the society. Thus, habitat development is rooted to the grassroots and is locale specific. All advantages of decentralisation that were discussed above are natural prerequisites for sustainable habitat development and leads to the need for strengthening decentralisation for habitat development.

Vertical and horizontal linkages are very important in the processes for habitat development. Who will do what and when is a fundamental question. An undoing of the centralised system is that it has become sectoral or departmentalised or compartmentalised. On the other hand, local government is the point of convergence where inter sectoral linkage is the dictum and norm.

Local government works as a single unit and not so much as various departments and sectors. As local government, it focuses on solutions to problems related to habitat, which is multisectoral in itself, and not on approaches, which are sectoral. The principle of subsidiarity mentioned earlier also works in this context. This leads to better efficiency and effectiveness. Thus, decentralisation is very critical to habitat development in terms of participation, accountability, transparency, problem solving, decision-making, implementation, and ownership. It leads to an empowered civil society, which is a 'must' for sustainable habitat. This calls for an integrated and holistic approach towards habitat development.

Decentralisation in South Asia

South Asian region has a long history of local self-governance. Though this course of history was derailed in between by moves to concentrate power at the central governments, the present scenario gives scope for optimism with regard to decentralisation. The context, reasons, structures, concepts, operational aspects and the magnitude of decentralisation varies from country to country in the region. Still it provides enough scope and potential for habitat development. In fact, countries which have adopted this course, have considered decentralisation as an effective strategy for poverty alleviation and for ensuring the livelihood needs of the people. In many countries including India, it is considered to be a better option for local economic development and social justice. It has now been generally accepted that local governments play a major role in matters related to habitat, which includes housing, water, sanitation, local infrastructure like transport, communication and energy. The case of decentralisation in India is an example. The eleventh schedule of the article 243 G of the constitution has earmarked specific functions to the gram panchayats, which are all inseparable components of habitat (See Box 2). Some of the gram panchayats have utilized this opportunity to operationalise these in their own innovative ways with support and facilitation by NGOs and other institutions. The case of Vilappil gram panchayat in Kerala is an experiment towards this. (See case study) All the components and determinants for habitat are in one way or the other find place in the decentralisation processes in many of the South Asian countries. The local governments in these countries have the mandate or responsibility or powers (magnitude and modus operandi varies) related to these components. In certain situations, there is much potential and scope for local governments to be the key actor in habitat development.

Thus, the linkages between decentralisation and habitat development are deep-rooted and deep-seated. Strengthening decentralisation is a logical foundation for habitat development if it is to have focus on the poor, environment and natural resources. Decentralisation approach for sustainable habitat delivery requires a paradigm shift at multiple levels – from participation in implementation to empowered decision making, from projects to processes, people's orientation to people's ownership and management, beneficiaries to customers, and interventions to service delivery.

Eleventh schedule of Article 243 G of 73rd amendment to the Indian constitution

1. Agriculture, including agricultural extension
2. Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation, and soil conservation
3. Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development
4. Animal husbandry, dairying and poultry
5. Fisheries
6. Social forestry and farm forestry
7. Minor forest production
8. Small-scale industries, including food-processing industries
9. Khadi, village and cottage industries
10. Rural housing
11. Drinking water
12. Fuel and fodder
13. Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways and other means of communication
14. Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity
15. Non-conventional energy sources.
16. Poverty alleviation programme
17. Education including primary and secondary school
18. Technical training and vocational education
19. Adult and non-formal education
20. Libraries
21. Cultural activities
22. Market and fairs
23. Health and sanitation
24. Family welfare
25. Women and child development
26. Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded
27. Welfare of the weaker sections, and in particular, of the Scheduled Casts and Scheduled Tribes
28. Public distribution system
29. Maintenance of community assets

This article has freely adopted concepts and ideas from the papers presented by Vijayanand S.M and Zeenath Niazi at the National Seminar on Decentralisation and Rural Habitat held from 26 to 28 May 2005 at KILA, Thrissur, Kerala.

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Case Study

Towards a pattern for sustainable settlements: Village Panchayat evolves settlement norms

Like any other village in Kerala, Vilappil panchayat also faces problems like unemployment, food crops becoming extinct, loss in agriculture, water scarcity and depleting water sources, soil becoming toxic by the use of chemical pesticides, etc. The existing development perspectives and lifestyles have contributed to an individual existence devoid of mutual dependency and co-operation which had worsened the crisis. The proximity to the city had made this panchayat more dependent on the city and made it at the receiving end of all the waste of the city. SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association) has been trying to help the gram panchayat to overcome these problems and develop a new sustainable settlement by utilizing the possibilities provided by the Panchayati Raj system. The intervention aims at evolving a sustainable settlement pattern existing on mutual relation and co-operation based on the conservation of water, soil (agriculture) and energy.

As a primary step, Vellaikkadavu, Nooliyode, Chovvalloor, Vilappilsaala wards of Vilappil panchayat were selected as the intervention areas. The activities included human and

natural resource map preparation, expert support group in each ward to handle issues of water, soil and energy, soil and water conservation programmes, encourage groups and individuals to engage in traditional, eco-friendly, organic cultivation methods, and training programmes to help people utilize the power handed over to them through the decentralisation process and thereby get gram sabhas (village assemblies), ayalkootams (neighbourhood groups), self-help groups and other community organisations involved in the Panchayati Raj processes. Elected representatives of these four wards, krishi bhavan (local agricultural office) and panchayat committee give guidance to this project. One of the key activities is to evolve sustainable settlement norms, which is to be prepared by the people, finalised by the gram sabha and then formally approved by the panchayat, which thus becomes the rule of the land.

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Water campaign at Vilappil panchayat

Grambangla Unnayan Committee's Initiatives: Housing for the Low Income People

Grambangla Unnayan Committee (GUC) is now implementing a low cost housing program in four sub-districts of Bangladesh for the rural poor, nomadic Bede people, low income groups, homeless people, people affected by natural disasters (flood, river erosion, cyclone etc.). The project is being funded by the housing fund (**Grihayaon Tohobil**) of the Bangladesh Bank, the central bank of Bangladesh. Under this project, the eligible persons under the terms and conditions of the project is given an amount of Tk.20,000/- (US\$300) for a period of ten years with a simple 5 percent yearly interest rate. The houses under this project are 220-250 square feet (20-23 square meter). The construction materials are tin or earthen tiles for the roof and concrete (RCC) pillar for the basic infrastructure of such houses.

Apart from the housing loan, they will also be assisted with skill development training and access to micro credit to involve themselves in income generating activities. As a result, they become able to repay their loan taken for erecting these houses.

Grambangla Unnayan Committee has designed this program especially for the rural poor especially the Bede community, the river gypsies in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, still half a million river gypsies have no house of their own. They are trying to settle in land by building houses so that their children have the opportunity to be educated in government primary schools, to get the chance to receive modern and scientific health services for the family members, etc.

ADB study of urban poverty found that 24 per cent of the population of Dhaka city are living

in slums and squatter settlements. The average per capita living space enjoyed by the poor of Dhaka is only 30 square feet. Since *Bedes* have to live either in small boats or tents so the average per capita living space enjoyed by the *Bedes* is much less than the slum people i.e. 10-12 square feet.

GUC has implemented 10 Reflect circles since 2003 for educating and empowering the nomadic *Bede* community with assistance from ActionAid Bangladesh at Louhajanj sub-district of Munshiganj district. Reflect is a program on adult education and empowerment of the poor and powerless adults implemented by around 100 NGOs in Bangladesh especially by the support of ActionAid Bangladesh. Findings of the Reflect baseline and evaluation studies show that the Reflect participants identified 'lack of habitat' on the land as one of the major crisis in their life. They also identified that Government of Bangladesh has programs on housing i.e. Gucca Gram (village) and Adarsha Gram (village) for the homeless people and they never get access to this type of safety net programs of the government. In that



Flood ravaged village in Bangladesh

circumstance, 250 participants of 10 Bede Reflect circles collectively set an action point to struggle for getting some allocation of houses in those Gucca Gram and Adarsha Gram. In 2004 Reflect participants organized several community meetings and at last they organized a grand rally toward the office of Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), Chief Executive Officer of Louhajanj sub-district for demanding allocation of houses in one Gucca Gram which was under construction in their area. After that rally the UNO sat with the concerned Union Parishad Chairman and Members (Union Parishad is the lowest tier Local Government Institution in Bangladesh) and decided to allocate 30 houses to the Bede families in that Gucca Gram. As a victory of that struggle; 'Bedes' who used to live by the side of the roads and rivers on public land are enjoying the facilities of living in a planned housing area. The total worth of that Guccagram, low cost housing complex is around Tk.15 million (US\$ 230,679). The criteria for selecting those 30 families were: Bede families who do not have more than two children, Bede families who want to settle in the local area and are in a process of livelihood diversification, Bede families who have sent their children to primary schools after 6 years of age, Bede families who were identified as most poor and vulnerable by the Reflect circles through wealth ranking and PRA exercises and recommended by the Union Parishad Chairman and members.

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Slowly, we will make it !

Houses for the Poor: Experiences from a Village Panchayat

The newly elected panchayat committee of Kozhuvanal came to power on 5th October 2000. In the beginning itself we decided to give priority to the housing problem. Lack of financial resources was the main hurdle. We had to allocate our annual plan fund to productive, services, and infrastructure sectors. Naturally, housing which comes under services sector could not avail enough funds. We accidentally came to know about the SDC-KESNIK Rural Housing Programme. This is a programme being implemented by Kerala State Nirmithi Kendra (KESNIK) and is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). After discussions, our panchayat was chosen to implement the programme. Subsequently, the programme

was to change the development orientation and priorities of our panchayat.

Three hundred families were residing in kutcha houses. Through an intensive campaign, which took a period of nine months, the panchayat was able to rehabilitate all the 300 families who were residing in uninhabitable houses. In a way, the panchayat could resolve the housing problem for ever. The entire staff of Vallichira unit of KESNIK wholeheartedly co-operated with the Panchayat throughout the project. Beneficiaries were identified through house-to-house visit. A special Gram Sabha (village assembly) was convened to select the beneficiaries of this project. The real, deserving beneficiaries were thus selected.

The component which causes maximum financial burden is the construction materials. The beneficiaries could chip in only with physical labour. KESNIK agreed to provide five production units producing construction materials at lower costs. Three units were making hollow concrete blocks and two for making door/window frames. KESNIK also agreed to provide building materials free of cost to five poor persons. We organised Ayalkkootams (Neighbourhood Groups) in all the 10 wards of the panchayat incorporating the beneficiaries of the housing scheme. The members comprised both men and women.

Each house needed Rs 70000-75000 (US \$1500 to 1600). In the initial stages, we only had what the KESNIK had offered – building materials and the machinery needed for producing building materials. We discussed this in the ayalkkootams. We tried to find out people who were willing to take up the



Inauguration of the Total Housing Programme

management of building materials manufacturing units. Two women units and three male units were finalized. We did not have clear idea as to how to realize the balance amount required for completing the housing scheme.

We discussed with the Pala Social Welfare Society, an NGO, about the scheme and they agreed to assist us. We approached the Kottayam District Co-operative Bank together with the NGO and KESNIK people. The bank did not have any system to give loans to a gram panchayat. We finally clinched the deal by submitting the title deed of the beneficiaries to the bank as surety. The panchayat became the guarantor of the loan and agreed to repay the loan within 10 years. The loans were



*Handing over of houses
by the Minister of Housing Mr. K.M. Mani*

granted on the basis of the list prepared by the gram panchayat and the KESNIK. This is the first instance where a co-operative sector institution has come forward to directly finance a grama panchayat housing scheme. Training was conducted at KESNIK for 15 days for *ayalkkoottam* members who constituted both masons and non-masons. Things were executed on a war footing after the training. In the case of bricks itself, around Rs 4000 was saved per house. Door/window frame cost was Rs 200 lesser. All the beneficiaries utilized the building materials which were produced in the panchayat. We started the construction work on 30 December 2002 and completed by 30 July 2003. The panchayat has given Rs 30000 to each beneficiary. This housing project gave impetus to tackle various other issues affecting the

panchayat such as drinking water, sanitation, electricity etc. Kozhuvanal gram panchayat was adjudged the second best gram panchayat by the Government of Kerala and was awarded Rs. 11 lakhs. Now with the success of the Kozhuvanal gram panchayat, 36 more panchayats in the Kottayam district have approached the District Co-operative Bank to implement the housing scheme in the same way.



An exhibition model on CEEF building technologies constructed by KESNIK at Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA) – the training centre for local government functionaries.

*Jose Mon Mundakkal, President,
Kozhuvanal Gram Panchayat, Kerala, India*

Kuthambakkam Village Panchayat: Towards Social and Economic Development

Kuthambakkam: State of affairs – 1996

1. Communal disharmony
2. Poor basic infrastructure (Water, sanitation, roads, street lights, schools, etc.)
3. Unemployment
4. Livelihood insecurity
5. Illicit arrack brewing and liquor menace
6. Violence against women and children

For the people of the Kuthambakkam panchayat, gram sabha (village assembly) was least attractive. They, however, attended long sit-ins during temple festivals and sorted out common issues of the village.

When we were elected to the gram panchayat, one of the first things we tried to do was to change the attitude of the people. As part of the confidence building measures, we tried to solve some issues at the gram sabha to demonstrate that attending the grama sabha was quite fruitful.

This then led to a handful of measures initiated by the gram panchayat like grassroots-level planning, vibrant gram sabha, community mobilization, housing for all, self help groups formation, livelihoods based on local resources, and employment generation through panchayat activities.

Kuthambakkam is now trying to emerge as a model panchayat by implementing a number of unique innovations. It has been producing cement stabilized compressed mud blocks. All the huts are improved with mud blocks. Granite waste is being made utilized in random rubble masonry construction. Ferro cement panels and joints are used, mainly for toilets. Use of

mud blocks is popular now in house construction. Latrine-cum-bathing units have been installed in houses. Reinforced brick panels and pan tiles and RCC filler slab roofing are used in house construction. The panchayat uses CFL-based energy-efficient lamps extensively.

The CFL-based energy-efficient lamps save more than two-thirds of electric power. SS dome is used as self reflector. Bulbs for the lamps were outsourced. The innovative system ensures generation of local employment. Kuthambakkam has 320 such street lights which result in savings of Rs 15000 per month on electricity charges.

The panchayat is using solar power for street lights and panchayat office. Conventional system of water pumping consumes 300% power in case of low water table. Energy-efficient water pumping system saves 60% on electricity cost.

Network growth economy model

Another important intervention being undertaken is to develop a network growth economy model linking up with other villages.

Different types of village industries are being developed for a 20-village cluster taking into consideration the various linkages. These include rice mills, paddy processing units, tur dal (yellow

pulses) mill, other type of dal mills, oil mill, bakery items manufacturing units, confectionery products, flour mill, miscellaneous items (e.g. Pickles, papad, masalas, etc), milk processing, tea packaging / coffee processing, iodized salt manufacturing unit, and vegetables production units.

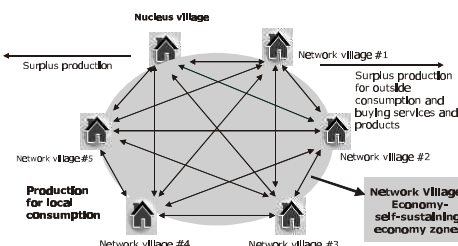
Manufacturing units of cosmetic and toilet items like bathing soaps, washing soaps/detergent, tooth paste/ tooth powder, shampoo/ shaving cream and hair oils are also part of the package. In the case of construction materials, the cluster focuses on brick manufacturing units (VSBK), painting materials, plastic recycling units for production of road repairing materials, tiles, mud blocks and pre cast materials/ cement water tanks.

The network economy model also envisages units for tailoring, cloth processing e.g. pillow covers, bed sheets etc., candles and incense, paper recycling units, cattle feed, weaving, electrical gadgets, school note books, school bags/ shopping bags, food processing, furniture, plastic recycling and utensils. It also foresees the scope for rural service industries and other livelihood initiatives.

Panchayat Academy

Another major initiative is the Panchayat Academy of Kuthambakkam. This endeavours to continue strengthening panchayats by sharing and learning best practices among panchayats because people always need role models. The Academy intends to enable panchayats to function as local self-governments to establish self-reliant villages.

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Building upon the Micro-Finance Experience: Enabling the Rural Poor to Access Sustainable Habitat

A national level Workshop was organized by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and Development Alternatives facilitated by the basin-South Asia Regional Knowledge Platform on 9th and 10th November to look at innovative ways of enabling the rural poor to access sustainable habitat through access to housing micro-finance. The Workshop supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), was hosted by the Banker's Institute of Rural Development (BIRD), Lucknow.

The Workshop brought together participants from Civil Society, Finance Institutions and Government to address critical concerns of how access to finance and other supporting services can be enhanced so that the poor are able to improve the quality of their habitat. The Workshop provided an opportunity for participants to develop a greater understanding of the links between livelihoods of the rural poor, their savings and habitat up

gradation. The workshop provided a space for sharing of experiences and points of view from different perspectives. Participants discussed various models of finance available to the rural poor and their delivery mechanisms. The relevance of available products and the efficiencies of delivery were debated and criteria for appropriate habitat and livelihood finance mechanisms were discussed and a direction for further was defined.

The Workshop provided a clear direction for Collaboration amongst civil Society, Finance Agencies and Government; it defined the roles of the various stakeholders in order to accelerate the journey of the rural poor from scarcity to surplus and access to sustainable habitat.

The Workshop recommended that

- A composite habitat and livelihood finance product that encompasses social, technical and financial services is required.

- The component of livelihood finance and support services must be an integral part of housing / habitat finance for the poorest. This could be targeted at individuals or groups.
- Village Panchayats must be included as an active partner in the design of the habitat products for the rural areas as well in the delivery of these products. The creation of village infrastructure, critical for habitat and livelihood development must be addressed through community habitat infrastructure approach in association with Panchayats.
- Active partnership between NGOs and Banks required, where NGOs act as facilitators and delivery channels at the grassroots for the composite products and services promoted by banks.
- Product development, promotional and service delivery costs in the pioneering stages must not be loaded on to the rural poor.
- Mechanisms to increase comfort levels of front line bankers must be put in place. These include simpler documentation collaboration with grassroots stakeholders for customer assessment.
- Further documentation to design new products and streamline existing ones is required. Works of organizations such as TVSG, ODTF, Development Alternatives, Gram Vikas, DHAN Foundation and others should be studied to pick up features and mechanisms that may be replicated to reach habitat finance and technical services to rural communities. This documentation and learning should feed into promoting facilitative policies to accelerate habitat and livelihood development and rural areas.
- The role of NABARD is clearly to lead this development process and to influence policy to facilitate the reach and effective utilization of rural habitat and livelihoods services.

Aga Khan Planning and Building Service, Pakistan Awarded Alcan Prize for Sustainability

Aga Khan Planning and Building Service, Pakistan (AKPBS,P) has been named the 2005 winner of the US \$1 million Alcan Prize for Sustainability by the Prince of Wales International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) for its efforts to improve Pakistan's built environment and water and sanitation facilities.

The Aga Khan Planning and Building Services is an agency of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). Established in Pakistan in 1980, the agency's mandate is to plan and implement infrastructure and technology-related development initiatives in Pakistan. AKPBS,P believes that in order to alleviate poverty in a sustainable manner, it is important to enhance the built environment of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations of society. It does this by providing material,

technical assistance, applied research, planning and construction management services for both rural and urban areas.

The agency's Water and Sanitation Extension Programme was launched in 1997 to reduce the risk of water-borne diseases through the provision of potable water as well as improved hygiene and sanitation practices in Pakistan's Northern Areas. The success of this programme has led to a partnership between AKPBS,P and the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF). As a result, the programme is being replicated in several other areas with the support of donors and partners.

The AKPBS,P Building and Construction Improvement Programme is an initiative designed to improve living conditions by developing solutions to issues relating to

housing and the living environment. The programme was established in 1997 through a collaborative agreement between AKDN and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Today the programme has developed low cost, seismic resistant, energy and resource-efficient housing construction methods, which includes the testing and application of over 60 different interventions designed to improve building standards. Over 12,500 fuel-efficient products have been installed in 5,000 households to date, benefiting more than 40,000 people.

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Auroville Earth Institute aims to research, develop, promote and transfer earth-based technologies which are cost and energy effective. These technologies are disseminated through training courses, seminars, workshops, publications and consultancy within and outside India.



Centre for Ecocentric Development and People's Action is a non-profit, non-governmental organization working over the last 14 years for "People Centered, Eco-Centric Development."



Coastal Area Disaster Mitigation Efforts is a network of twenty voluntary organizations working for the uplift and disaster preparedness of Fishing Communities in India.



Exnora works as a catalyst in bringing about local initiative and community participation in overall improvement in quality of life. It aims at developing civic and environmental consciousness among citizens through self-help, enactment of suitable legislation and environmental protection initiatives.



Grambangla Unnayan Committee, Bangladesh is a non-profit, non-governmental voluntary development organization working over the last 12 years for people whose lives are dominated by extreme poverty, exclusion, deprivation, illiteracy, disease and handicaps.



Orissa Development Technocrats' Forum is a registered society working to facilitate an effective rural housing delivery system in Orissa through formalizing the rural construction sector and the "Promotion of Appropriate Construction Technologies and Opportunities for Sustainable Livelihoods."



Society of Environmental Journalists, Nepal is a national level media organization working in the sector of environment. Their mission is to build up public awareness on environmental issues by enhancing capacities of local journalists for improved quality, accuracy and visibility in environmental reporting.



Trust for Village Self Governance is a charitable trust focusing on local self governance in villages using panchayat as a tool. Their focus is on creating sustainable employment and providing opportunities in habitat development.



UNNATI is a non-governmental organization working over the last 15 years for "civic leadership promotion and strengthening local self governance."



Aga Khan Planning and Building Services, Pakistan works to improve the built environment, particularly housing design and construction, village planning, natural hazard mitigation, environmental sanitation, water supply, and other living conditions. These goals are achieved through the provision of material and technical assistance and construction management services.



Development Alternatives is a not-for-profit sustainable development enterprise that designs and promotes programmes and products which, through the use of alternative technology, contribute to the enrichment of human life.



Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is Switzerland's international cooperation agency within the Swiss Foreign Ministry. The Rural Housing Project (RHP) supported by the SDC focuses on providing choices and access to poor rural families for improved housing, especially for affordable, energy and resource-efficient and environment-friendly building material and technologies.

basin-South Asia Regional Knowledge Platform (basin-SA) is committed to "developing knowledge systems and promoting collaborative action within South Asia to enable access by the poor to sustainable habitat and livelihoods."

The South Asian node of global 'basin' network was set up in 2004 to enable knowledge development and sharing. It seeks to promote collaborative action in the area of habitat and livelihoods for poverty reduction. The parent Network has successfully provided relevant and timely knowledge and resource links to government agencies, financiers, builders and developers, architects, planners and producers of building materials. It houses an intensive knowledge base and supports the regional node in quality management of its products and services.