

South East Asian Grassroots Leadership Meeting for Resilience Building



Grassroots women leaders put intensive amounts of time and energy into their community work, and their work is closely interwoven with their personal lives, such that support among and for leaders of these groups is a key aspect of women's empowerment. Thirty women from South East Asian countries held an intimate gathering in the Philippines this week to build their relationships as women leaders working toward increased ongoing networking in their region, with a focus on community resilience

work. The meeting began by focusing on the accomplishments and challenges for grassroots women leaders of grassroots organizations or people's organizations.

Several SE Asian countries are located in the Asian "ring of fire," a geographic region particularly susceptible to disasters. The participants in the meeting shared their work within this context of ongoing threats and vulnerabilities. They shared practices and discussed future activities within the theme of resilience as a broad concept representing community capacity to be resilient to a wide range of crises and disasters. The group presented strategies to oppose evictions, carry out savings and credit and build resilience to disasters such as typhoons, heavy snows and flash floods. Together, they decided to continue networking as they carry out local activities and exchanges between countries to develop their resilience work. Participants represented grassroots organizations and supporting NGOs from Cambodia, Indonesia, the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand.

Grassroots Women's Leadership



Women reflected on the pride and passion they feel about their community work and the challenge for women to balance domestic work with community work and the changes in their relationships with husbands as a result of their empowerment as women. They expressed pride in the accomplishments of raising families and in the accomplishments of building grassroots organizations that strengthen community development. They noted achievements such as becoming autonomous from support NGOs, stopping evictions and acquiring secure tenure and engaging with government on a range of

issues, such as achieving legislation on violence against women. The group also identified ongoing challenges, most notably the needs to gain support from local and national governments and to develop young leaders to sustain their grassroots organizations.

They used the Leadership Support Process to reflect on their own lives as women leaders and to discuss what it means for women to support each other in their leadership.

Planning for Community Resilience

Under the topic of community resilience, groups came up with plans for deepening their work, next steps on resilience and connecting within the region. They analyzed how disasters are affecting them, and how they might begin or strengthen their mitigation and resilience measures.

Groups decided to give more priority to waste segregation and tree planting in Mindanao, Philippines in order to mitigate the effects of flash floods in their communities. From Indonesia, the grassroots leaders emphasized the importance that community mapping has held in their work. They will continue to do mappings of their communities with their community members, collecting data on demographics, vulnerabilities and resources. In Indonesia, they have used mapping as a way to organize communities against evictions and to be aware and prepared for dealing with other disasters. Finally, the mapping tool serves to demonstrate the knowledge and vulnerabilities of the community to local authorities, supporting community advocacy for appropriate mitigation measures to be taken in their communities.

The Thai leaders agreed that the eviction threats faced in their communities are like a kind disaster or crisis, and that the work they do in their organization is building resilience to these threats. They affirmed that the foundation for community resilience work is to have communities that are organized with strong women's leadership, then they can be ready to collectively respond. They are currently working to expand the women's group within their mixed organization. They shared their ongoing work of stopping evictions, struggling for secure land tenure and participating in the development of a welfare system for the urban poor. The meeting energized them to plan to have more disaster response preparedness in the communities where they are organized.

All of the groups expressed the need for increased networking with grassroots women's organizations in other countries in order to discuss the issues, share practices and work on resilience building together. Preliminary plans were made for possible peer exchanges between Korea and Thailand, and between the Philippines and India. All groups made commitments to next steps that they would carry out in their country as a follow up to this meeting. The next steps are part of a process toward consolidating the network of groups.

Participating Organizations:

LOCOA, South East and East Asia

Four Regions Slum Network and Human Settlement Foundation, Thailand

Urban Poor Women in Development, Cambodia

Vinyl Housing Community Residents Coalition and CONET, Korea

Bantay Banay, DAMPA, Kasiglahan Action Group, Grassroots Women's Empowerment Center, Proccess, Bohol, Talomo Urban Poor, GROUP Foundation, BUHAI, PHILKSA, CO Multiversity, Lihok Filipina, COPE, Philippines.

Urban Poor Consortium and UPLINK, Indonesia