

SPARC ANNUAL REPORT 1987

Society for Promotion
of Area Resource
Centres Bombay,
India.

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SPARC - Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres is a society registered under the Societies
Registration Act, 1860

[Regd. No. Born. 798/84](#)

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Preface

This is the third annual report prepared by SPARC. Each calendar year ends with a review and evaluation. Everyone who works in SPARC takes 3 days out of the hectic routine to participate in this vital annual ritual. This report (like our earlier ones) is the outcome of a process of reflection.

Each participant of the review had varied expectations. For the more recent members of SPARC, who joined in 1987, it was seen to be an opportunity, to understand the various aspects of the work SPARC has undertaken and to understand how the many, often disparate strategies used in different parts of our work, tie up to fulfill SPARC's central objectives. For others, who have been with SPARC for a longer period of time, the annual meeting provided the much required time and space to reflect on the growing diversification in day-to-day activities, to clarify objectives and programmes and share with colleagues how the next year would be planned. Finally, we all reviewed the present administrative and staff development process, on the basis of which changes are being planned for the next year. Most important, the meeting provided the much needed time to strengthen interpersonal relationships. Since many new people have joined us, it was a time to get to know each other better.

How to write the 1987 Annual Report was the next urgent question. After much debate and discussion, it was decided that the Annual Report of SPARC should be a readable account of the work which we have done - providing us an opportunity to reflect and analyse our work, and to share it with others.

PART I

THE AREA RESOURCE CENTRE.

Introduction:

An Area Resource Centre (ARC) is a geographic location, a specific place which is physically, as in other ways, accessible to the urban poor.

The basic objectives of an ARC are:

- (a) To organise collectives of women and help them articulate their problems;**
- (b) For women to learn to analyse this problem, identify resources within themselves, the immediate environment and in the larger social system; to create community collectives.**
- (c) To struggle to gain access to identified resources, as a means to resolving the problems articulated.**

During the past three years, tremendous energies have been invested by SPARC, together with the people, to create such collectives of women in each community; to initiate a dialogue with the men so that a space for women to participate in the decision making process be created; and in the process simultaneously locating common issues and problems.

The collectives begin to function at a local level, yet there has been a conscious effort to link them with each other. This establishes a communication net-work which is efficient, and provides an easy transfer of ideas, information and resources. This process is slow, hard to discern and even more difficult to explain. Yet, it is the foundation of SPARC's method of functioning.

Today, We have three ARCs functioning in different parts of the city. The nature of each of these varies, thus the strategies of functioning are diverse. Yet, there is a common thread, a link, which broadens the nature of the local organisational work. The first ARC consists of pavement dwellers in central Bombay (E Ward); the second ARC is a resettlement colony of former slum and pavement dwellers, 40 km north of the city centre (Goregaon East). The third ARC, unlike the first two, was formed on the basis of a common issue, rather than a specific geographical locale. It attempts to bring together both slum and pavement dwellers from various parts of the city in order to press for common demands. Hence it is known as the "Extension ARC".

This year, we have seen a definite shift in the trend of thought and activity in E Ward ARC. Pavement dwellers are fighting demolitions, seeking resettlement and helping train other pavement/ slum dwellers to attain levels of awareness through a path they themselves have been through; it is very significant to see the kind of leadership this womens' collective is providing to other ARCs.

A. E WARD : BYCULLA AREA RESOURCE CENTRE (ARC I)

Being the first ARC, E Ward is also the one which has had the longest history of association with SPARC. Over the past year, the activities undertaken since 1985 have settled into a sense of routine and stability. A strong community feeling of solidarity has developed. The womens' groups have assumed the role of leadership, thus enabling in flow within the community. Hence, a strong and viable network among the different communities, who support one another exists. SPARC's role has become that of a strong back-up service. For many of us, who were directly involved in E Ward, it has been a new experience to gradually recede into the background and watch women assume greater leadership functions. In fact, the role of a SPARC person is merely to be physically around, initiating a sense of confidence within the women to conduct the activities on their own. Thus, our role has shifted from that of direct educators to facilitators.

As such, E Ward has been the base from which ideas are generated and creative functions have emerged. By the end of the year, many of the activities such as the Housing Training and Mahila Milan and its own activities were common to the other ARCs as well. This year, E Ward has been in a transition phase, wherein its destiny is determined both by the people and SPARC. It is hoped that the emphasis will gradually shift to the women themselves.

The two major milestones in the activities in E Ward have been around the issue of shelter. The 1986 report of SPARC mentions at great length our work in housing, how we view the role of women as central to shelter planning and the nature of the programme that we initiated. In this report too, the section on training will deal with shelter and the descriptive details in that area of work. - It has been accepted beyond doubt that the 600 women who participated in the 1986 housing training are the source of inspiration for the activities of SPARC both in housing and in other areas. In 1986, they demanded that we focus on the issues of shelter. The housing training which was created especially to cater to their demands clearly showed all of us that the issue of shelter was not merely one of giving each family a house. It demonstrated the growing hunger of a city which commercialized land to the extent that all "schemes" for low-income housing become mere tokens. The urban poor required to understand these larger dimensions.

The greatest triumph of the training was that it actually made it possible for 600 pavement women, most of whom were illiterate, to understand these dynamics. Their "house model" exhibition in March 1987 had a very powerful impact. The four-day exhibition consisted of life-size models of four houses designed by the women themselves, built with wood, paper and cloth (in lieu of building materials) with actual estimates of costs ranging from Rs.6,000 to Rs.12,000/-. Fellow pavement dwellers, slum dwellers, other organizations, officials, and bureaucrats from the Municipal Corporation, State Government and the Housing Board were invited to view the models. For each category of invitees, the exhibition yielded differing insights. We will summarise these below :

Pavement Dwellers - for families who have lived in 60-80 sq.ft., the life size model of 150 sq.ft. seemed huge in comparison. Yet, more powerful than seeing the size of the models, was watching women who had undergone training answer questions. These were the very same women who had been earlier ridiculed for "wasting their time". They had wondered how women could even learn these things ! Community after community now wanted to "book" training time, or join the "classes

Slum Dwellers - who are generally more organised, better informed and whose sheer numbers have intimidated pavement dwellers, now found that women had "created" alternative sources of information out of their shared experiences, observation; and discussions, They were invited to dialogue with women in slums, and SPARC was invited to work on slum i

Voluntary Organisations - have long since felt the need to work on housing and yet have considered many aspects of shelter planning outside their own repertoire of skills and resources. Many other groups have now approached SPARC to facilitate their own training in tackling housing issues. Interestingly, several organizations from other cities have asked for such assistance.

Officials - The presence of officials at the exhibition fulfilled several vital functions. Firstly, the women met the officials of various Government related institutions in an atmosphere of joy, confidence and triumph. Their natural inhibitions and fears were overcome by collective confidence and they provided the hospitality. This naturally set the tone for how women interacted with officials. For the officials, the exhibition, the women's ideas, their plans, were new and different experiences. Their perceptions of SPARC, too, began to change from an outsider who "gives" to a partner who understood womens' attempt to seek shelter.

Other pavement and slum dwellers observed the interactions, dialogue and exchange which occurred once the exhibition was over. Some of these groups joined the housing training. The women from the first group now assisted SPARC workers in the training of new groups while refining their own knowledge and skills.

As part of this training, women opened bank accounts especially for housing. While discussing the issue of savings, women realised that they were constantly facing crises for *which* they required money

immediately - yet no one wanted to use the money saved in the bank for housing. They decided, therefore to save and pool together separate amounts for small crises loans. This modest capital was kept at the Byculla Resource Centre and a committee of women were elected as its caretakers. They scrutinised the loan applicants, disbursed the money and ensured it was returned. For this activity as well as for the Saving Accounts in the banks, SPARC personnel have stayed in the background, assisting only when help was required.

For women themselves and (for SPARC) these are milestones of building their own organizations. The training which women have undergone may deal largely with shelter, yet most of the training is located around valuable information from peoples' own experiences and converting it into knowledge. Although the women are nowhere close to having acquired land for their resettlement, they *will* wait until they get land which is so situated as to allow them to continue their occupations. While the land for their resettlement continues to be the vital focus for their collective organisational activity, there is a growing realisation that land and houses are merely A PART of the change which they aspire to create. As a result, while pursuing the land base and formation of society, women have sought to devise an organisational structure of their own.

MAHILA MILAN (MM) is the name which women's collectives, who came together from pavements, called themselves. Its role and function has evolved out of the realization that even if women in a community form a collective, they need support and training to participate in the local community action and decision making on an equal footing with the men.

The women from Mahila Milan not only train newer groups, they also facilitate the training of new staff in SPARC. Having associated very closely with the older staff, they become ideal trainers for newcomers to understand the community. They also demonstrate how to interact effectively with people and increasingly view SPARC more as partners than teachers.

This partnership has extended to different issues and activities. For instance, the fears and concerns of when they can move to a new place to build their home and create this new community is ever present. Ever so often, there is an anxiety that while teaching and mobilising others without shelter, their own dreams might fade in the horizon. Yet, their own maturity and the strength of the collective process is seen through the fact that the women do not visualise the goal of the training as simply the building of 600 new homes. Rather, they see it linked to their own mobilisation and strength derived from organisation - building.

Their ambition is to strengthen their own capability and understanding, demand for what is viable for themselves and continue to encourage others like themselves to start taking control of their own destinies. To emerge from the complacency of living only for today, we see this as a quantum leap from the helplessness which was prevalent as recently as 1985.

Among the routine activities undertaken, it was Mahila Milan who decided to provide support to the villagers from Chitale, a district in Maharashtra. These villagers came to Bombay to demonstrate against land degradation and environmental pollution caused by the sugar factories in their area. The villagers were housed, fed and looked after by the women of Mahila Milan who also joined in the actual morcha. The Mahila Milan women saw this as an extension of their own desire to network. For them, the people from Chitale were future migrants to the city - migrants whose lives in the village were threatened by circumstances beyond their control. The women wanted to continue to participate in such activities in the future.

On reflection, Mahila Milan is gradually and steadily replacing the need for SPARC's presence in B Ward. We have often been *questioned*, both by the people and outsiders, on what we mean when we say

"We will gradually withdraw" -'and we have asked ourselves this question. To date our own understanding is - that SPARC has first initiated the *organisation* of pavement dwellers and womens' collectives. It has also catalysed the articulation of issues and channelised the energies of people in certain directions. While doing this, there were built-in mechanisms to facilitate a process *by which* people paused, and viewed what was occurring and took stock of this. Thus, gradually, as local capabilities evolve, the need for SPARC to play these roles has decreased. This is the withdrawal process. From here onwards, the collectives in E Ward become the spearhead, with SPARC devoting more time in working in other areas. It flows from our belief that people train others extremely well, while undergoing their own training. Much of the activities in 1988 are planned around this understanding.

B. DINDOSHI NAGAR AREA RESOURCE CENTRES (ARC II)

Introduction

The second ARC was set up in March 1986, in Dindoshi Vagar, Goregaon (East). SPARC's involvement is linked to the fact that among the 2500 odd families who were re-located by the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) from various slums, were 300 families who were part of the 1985 Census of pavement dwellers conducted by SPARC (We the Invisible). We, at SPARC, had made a decision that we would "follow" those communities with whom we had any links, in the event of an eviction. Thus, it was only natural that we visited the resettlement colony at Goregaon within a day of its creation, and subsequently it became our second ARC, in March 1986.

The BMC often refers to Dindoshi as a model resettlement. Yet, one year after the resettlement colony was established, the amenities provided have been found inadequate. The toilets are clogged, not maintained; drains in certain sectors do not function; other sectors do not have a drainage system; pathways need to be built in certain areas. Who is to do this ? Women have begun to make representations to colony and ward officers.

Much of the work in 1986, which centred around the traumas of resettlement, is recorded in great detail in the Annual Report, 1986. Almost every activity which we undertook was to help the women resolve their financial crisis. This was against tremendous odds, since each time that we took up an activity, events beyond our control went against us. Our very method of functioning was alien, both to the people and to the authorities. We were not a welfare organisation, and there were many such agencies functioning in Dindoshi. The pressure upon us was tremendous. We resisted any attempt to make us sponsors, or to set up short term programmes. Our close involvement with the community was also seen as a threat by various groups who were directly responsible for many of the irregular allotments and reshifting which had occurred.

We continued to persist with our efforts, since we were confident that those who were the poorest in the resettlement colony were precisely those whom we wished to reach. Therefore, we worked in Dindoshi keeping three major objectives in mind :

1. To ensure that the people increased their own stakes in the new place : through documentation and proofs such as ration-cards, photo-pass etc.
2. Since there was a total loss of control in the new environment, our role was to help people, especially women, regain this through examining sources of alternative employment.
3. This was a tremendous learning process for us and the women in E Ward, who were in the process of planning their own resettlement: Goregaon showed us what not to do !

The major activities undertaken by SPARC are given below :

1. Interaction with Bank:

The women who suffered a loss of income due to loss of employment, are (a) those who lacked the finance in order to continue a trade with which they were already familiar and (b) those who needed capital *investment in* order to try a new occupation. Among the first category were the vegetable vendors whose continuous nagging sent us to a local bank in order to gain information about various loan schemes available. As it happened, the Government had advertised a scheme known as SEPUP

(Self Employed Programme for the Urban Poor) which was a new venture being tried out through the nationalised banks. As institutions, the banks claimed to have had a negative experience with any loan administered to the poor.

They were receptive to us, and agreed with our analysis that most schemes for the urban poor do not reach them due to lack of access and/or information. Our proposal appealed to them for various reasons : it was a collective venture, women were involved and SPARC as an organisation had a deeper sense of involvement with the community. The bank was extremely cooperative, and five loans of Rs.1000/- each were sanctioned at the beginning of the year.

Along with the women, we worked out modes of repayment. They were candid in saying that monthly repayments were a problem, since they were unable to save from their daily earnings. Putting aside Rs.3/- a day was not a problem, but where could they store it ? The SPARC office offered to function as a savings-centre, where the methods of record-keeping would be such that women could learn how to use it themselves: namely colour-coded cards for the different amounts. This worked very well, and the bank was so impressed by the repayment, that they agreed to sanction not only more SEPUP loans, but also loans under other schemes ! In the previous year, 15 SEPUP loans and five DIR Expanded loans have been disbursed.

2. Income-Generation Activities :

By the end of 1986 it was clear that neither the Industrial Estates nor middle-class homes in the surrounding area could offer employment to the women. The conditions of work were such that women were unable to balance the demands at work with those at home. Hence, the focus of the income generation activity was to provide wage earnings at the home so women could fulfill their other responsibilities. Examples of ventures undertaken, how they were handled, and their viability are given below.

(a) Papad-making : Women suggested papad making themselves. They purchased raw material, mixed the dough and made papads. All this occurred smoothly until the stage of marketing. The intense competition was too much. Gradually, after trying various avenues to sell papads, this activity was stopped. Many people have asked us why we started it in the first place: were we not aware of the competition in the papad market, the low wage returns ? Our reply was that we were aware of all this. Yet we felt that women had to understand this process, especially since this was their own initiative. For women who had washed utensils' and done domestic jobs, entering the 'market' had to be seen as a step forward.

The 'papad wallis' as they are fondly called even today, taught themselves and others very valuable lessons in setting up business. These lessons are repeated to new associates and become the basis for evaluating new work options. SPARC too, has developed a capability to try new options along with people - to feel capable of dealing with failure - and today the story of the 'papad wallis' is an important insight.

(b) Taka' work :

While exploring work and employment options, many home based assembly jobs given by industries were rejected. The wage was very low, women did not earn an equivalent to minimum wage even if they worked 10-12 hours, and often had no time to do domestic chores and look after infants. Yet they had no alternative skills either.

Therefore, it became necessary to identify some skill which women could pick up easily, where the market was assured and which fitted into their time schedule. Taka' work fulfilled these functions. "Taka" is a *running* stitch, generally used in quilting, making "rajais" and "godaddis". It is a traditional skill. Most women know it, and if they do not, they can be taught. Using the assistance of

a consultant, various samples are being produced. The number of women who can do this work is growing steadily. However, the production process is still at a *training* level, and the marketing although assured, is restricted.

We are aware that such work depends on an external market and women have no control or understanding of it. However, as their skill increases and new samples are tried, there is a good market open to quality goods. The process has to be streamlined.

Apart from the fact that women earn from this activity, it has several other advantages. Most important is that women sit together, chat and work. They are gradually able to understand market demands, and have developed a sensitivity to quality and time schedules. Yet, as a production centre they have a long way to go.

(c) Milk Distribution : -

Initially there was no unadulterated and reasonably priced fresh milk available in Dindoshi. After a few attempts, we received a milk distribution quota which was enough to employ four women. This milk is pure and at a cheaper rate, and is in good demand. It was to have increased to employ more women. However, due to the milk shortage, there has been no increase in the quota.

This milk scheme is managed by women, who arrange to pick it from the main road, distribute it, collect money, calculate the profit, and save part of the earnings. Since this job is early in the morning, they have the whole day to work at home and spend time with Mahila Milan in Goregaon.

In many ways, the Goregaon Area Resource Centre represents a mirror image of what is happening in E Ward. In E Ward, pavement dwellers are investing in their own resettlement; they have no land, but a lot of time to think and plan. In Dindoshi, on the other hand, the people have land for their settlement, but have to organise themselves to demand for and work towards financial and material resources to rebuild their homes and to establish an infrastructure, which is beneficial for them.

We were also inspired by the belief that if 600 women in E Ward were able to emerge as a strong collective force, then in Goregaon, such a movement was also possible. Although, it was still very difficult to function, and at the end of the year there were few concrete results, our major breakthrough has been seen in the fact that the Bombay Municipal Corporation has allotted a 300 sq.ft. plot for us to build our office. This has been partially constructed by the women in E Ward as a continuation of the housing training.

In Dindoshi itself, the women are keen on participating in a housing training programme having seen the initiative of the women in E Ward. A discussion has been initiated in order to consider rebuilding houses, sectorwise and improving peoples' housing, if possible. We are also examining ways by which the paths and drainages between houses in each sector can be completed by the people in that sector, using material provided by the BMC, so that by the 1988 monsoon at least, the problem of flooding and mosquitoes in the area due to stagnant water may be reduced. It is possible that the last batch of slum dwellers to be resettled in the Dindoshi colony might finally be re-located in a pattern suggested by us (to examine whether a hypothesis of planned resettlement, in fact, can emerge from the poor.) Yet many of these situations are tentative, and it is important that we develop a capacity to persist.

The MAHILA MILAN concept also exists in Goregaon and is gradually assuming an identity of its own. Here again, the focus is completely different from that of E Ward. It began with a strong focus on "tasks"; in fact, one of the first activities undertaken early during the year was starting a small crisis loan. However, since it was too premature for a strong, cohesive women's collective to emerge, there was no sense of accountability felt by those who had taken loans. There was no repayment, and no collective responsibility to ensure that the process be an on-going one. On analysis, we had responded to an acutely felt need articulated by the community; however, due to other factors inhibiting group formation and functioning, this activity could not be continued.

Despite these drawbacks, Mahila Milan continued to be an umbrella for any concrete activity undertaken during the year. By the last quarter, a strong core of around 25-30 women has emerged, who feel a sense of loyalty to one another and are enthusiastic about being part of a larger group of

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women. So, in a sense, by the end of the year, Mahila Milan is starting to be re-born. The process of collective functioning has been initiated. We are confident that through networking with the Mahila Milan in E Ward, the Dindoshi Unit will assume an identity and character of its own in response to the specific needs of the resettlement colony.

There are several other voluntary agencies which have also chosen to work in Dindoshi. We have often asked ourselves why we choose to continue in Dindoshi. Is it not a duplication? The answer lies in the fact that SPARC has chosen not to give money, welfare to the people or provide resources to some and not to others. Instead, Dindoshi is the training ground to discover what we can do with people - to evolve strategies which people can operate on their own.

The coming year may crystallise some of our plans of upgradation of houses, sector wise, introducing more economic programmes for Mahila Milan to run and to create forums for the Dindoshi people to relate to others like themselves.

C. EXTENSION ARCS

Introduction

When SPARC began to set up Area Resource Centres, the question of growth arose. Ideally, the impact and effectiveness of ARC's lies in their specific geographical location in a community, its comfortable and well established linkages with larger issues and events, and close network with other groups, like the NSDF (National Slum Dwellers Federation). This federation has been in existence for over a decade. It is a loose network of slum based organisations from over 8-10 cities in India - comprising of peoples' organisations from urban slum settlements which have organised themselves around the issues of resource allocations for the urban poor. The association and its membership has chosen not to register as a society or seek any direct external funding. Each city level network selects its own method for supporting its leadership. Its objectives revolve around strengthening leadership in each slum in the city and make their general and specific demands heard.

Since 1986, the NSDF has been working in close association with SPARC. Much of the extension work done by SPARC is with groups which have sought assistance from the NSDF in Bombay and outside. Last year, in 1986-87, we began to provide research and training inputs to several pavement and slum groups in the city. This situation seemed a more viable mechanism for growth whereby, SPARC instead of growing larger in number itself, became involved in building up the capabilities of other groups. This forges the link between the various groups of urban poor and also facilitates other non government organizations (NGOs) who are interested in the issues of the urban poor to seek the support of SPARC to build their own capabilities.

Extension ARCs fall in two broad categories - those within Bombay and those outside Bombay.

Extension centres within Bombay city are in Wadala, Dharavi and the Railway Settlements. The groups of people with whom we work in these areas range from very large to small settlements. Work in each area was initiated on their requests.

1) WADALA

Pavement dwellers from Wadala, who had been censused in WE THE INVISIBLE, in 1985, sought to interact with SPARC. They are forty families who live on the pavements since the past 15 years. They have migrated from Tamil Nadu. Presently, their livelihood is based on petty trade in food grains, vegetables and as unskilled road, drainage and construction workers within the city.

They approached SPARC in order to undergo the housing training, and to examine whether they could seek alternative shelter. They had no documents and as the first step of the housing training, they went through a process of enumeration followed by organising documents of identification. Getting them

ration cards took six months. This time span was related to several things. They first had to link the ration card and its value to more than just food and fuel. They had to feel confident to seek the right to make their own ration cards and they had to convince the ration officer to provide them with these ration cards. Undoubtedly, this process would have been much shorter if SPARC had made their ration cards for them, however, the potential to train and develop their capability, especially women, in whose names these cards were made, would have never begun.

The significance of their training is that as they went through the different stages of the training, other pavement dwellers in Wadala began to take interest. This will initiate gradual involvement of other groups. The shelter project of the DON BOSCO Fathers located nearby has been very supportive of this; and their hall is used for meetings.

2) AKHIL DHARAVI VIKAS SAMITI:

NSDF/SPARC had undertaken an enumeration of Dharavi, and an organisational outcome of the process was the formation of the Akhil Dharavi Vikas Samiti(ADVS). This is a loose federation which has taken upon itself the task of setting norms for the development of Dharavi under Prime Minister's Grant Project.

The debate it has unleashed within Dharavi has been to examine the impact and outcome of the kind of development planning presently promoted through actions of the PMGP. There is a growing consensus that the present development planning

(a) Will evict half the population to resettle the other.

(b) That the type of shelter planned will further indirectly force people, especially women headed households who cannot afford *Rs.40 - 50,000* even in installments,out of Dharavi..

(c) Finally, that the beautification process will escalate land values and market forces will further pressurise people to sell. Knowing this, the debate goes on - do the people of Dharavi want the 37 crores of assistance, so that 10 years down the line none of the original residents will be able to stay in Dharavi.

NSDF chose to work in Dharavi because it has linkages with BSDF (Bombay Slum Dwellers Federation) of which some organizations in Dharavi are a part. If Dharavi, being such a "high profile" slum was to be upgraded, this would set precedents for the large slums in other parts of the country. It was vital for the residents of Dharavi to protect their own interest, and reject plans insuitable to them.

1987 was filled with weekend meetings during which this debate was crystallised and communicated to various sections. It is vital to point out that Dharavi comprises of 400 sq. acres of land on which over 85,000 households reside ! This fact, more than any other, defined roles for SPARC, NSDF and MAHILA MILAN.

SPARC's role was to lobby at levels presently inaccessible to people,to collect and disseminate information;provide organisational training and support;facilitate a dialogue with the relevant authorities and to help build a support structure to enable people to plan alternatives.

Women were ,considered valuable partners in the community. The Mahila Milan exposure provided a role model for women's involvement.The leadership was supportive to womens' participation in ADVS and help train them in shelter planning according to the needs of Dharavi.

3. WORKING WITH SLUMS ALONG RAILWAY TRACKS

When the State Government asked SPARC to undertake enumeration of slums along the railway line, we also saw this as an opportunity to facilitate a federation of railway slums and to involve them in the research, and future planning.

These slums along Central, Western, and Harbor line have first interacted with SPARC/NSDF teams in data collection followed by data dissemination on the basis of which the follow up of resettlement strategy is to be evolved. While the enumeration was undertaken, representatives were invited to meet,

share their past experiences, and to develop the trust and understanding necessary to federate slums. Other slum federations also participated in meetings and shared their own problems; and strengths.

WORKING OUTSIDE BOMBAY:

In its collaboration with NSDF, SPARC provides training and research back-up to slum leadership identified by the NSDF in various cities where they work. The ADVS, the MM, and NSDF team now provide the personnel for other cities where they share experiences. In turn, they host people who come from other cities to learn from their functioning in Bombay. This will facilitate a growing network amongst cities' slum dwellers.

While the ambition is to activate the network in 24-30 cities, the target for 1988 is 8 cities. This programme will be assessed mid year and expansion planned for the next three years.

PART II

RESEARCH & DOCUMENTATION

Role of Research:

Several kinds of research projects have been undertaken by SPARC in 1987. This raised some very confused responses from both visitors, funders and new staff. Is SPARC an organization which works with people, or a research organisation? Will it be possible to do "justice" to those diverse goals of intense subjectivity of working with people on one side, and the distancing objectivity of analytical thinking?

In SPARC, we see three clear objectives for research:

- a) there is very little research in the area of quantifying the problems of the poor and such a data base has to be created urgently.
- b) there is a need to evolve a methodology whereby people are active participants in the process.
- c) detailed statistics about the aspirations of the urban poor need to be generated.

Research activity in SPARC is seen to be a process which would train SPARC and the people to learn new methods of representing their reality. This training would also develop their capabilities to understand present policies - discern their impact and implications and learn to challenge them. If new and different alternatives have to be provided, then creating the framework of the policy requires information. Thus, the development of such capabilities in both SPARC and peoples' organizations is very vital. Research is very closely linked with access to knowledge and information. It is also, rightly or wrongly, the process *which* sanctifies knowledge. What people "know", society tends to discount; but if the same emerges as research findings, it is accepted more easily. Despite the fact that several research studies have been "done" on the poor - the subjects of the research rarely get to know the results and never challenge them. The inherent biases or erroneous assumptions of researchers and often incorrect interpretations are never challenged if the methodology is "correct".

Research requires reflection; organizational work requires constant action. *Through* the experiences of the last three years we see ourselves as undertaking three distinct kinds of research.

1. Census or Enumeration

2. Case studies or issue-based primary research

3. Secondary research on areas of public policies, institutions and other issues which directly or indirectly affect the urban poor.

1. CENSUS AND ENUMERATION:

The enumeration undertaken in 1985 gave SPARC an insight into the potential of such a large scale exercise. Official census studies attempting to enumerate settlements of the poor have proved to be unreliable as they do not ensure complete coverage of settlements. Yet at later dates, these

enumerations become the basis for allocation and/or upgradation of slum amenities, or relocation options. In this context, amongst several others, enumerations done by the people are seen as having far reaching effects, not only in terms of sparking off a chain of reactions but initiating a process whereby isolated communities among the urban poor come together to gather information about themselves. The necessity for a network of strong grass root organizations was seen in the context of creating knowledge and a base for better allocation of resources. This enumeration is seen not as a static single-dimensional data gathering exercise, but as a realistic assessment of the status of the urban poor. Since formal data gathering methods are used, this information becomes a medium of communicating with policy makers at various levels in Government. The correct evaluation of such data can lead to proper planning of strategic leadership and the establishment of a federation of peoples' organizations. Options and alternatives available to the urban poor can be analysed on the basis of these statistics. Such a task needs a strong network of local people, supported by a back up organization who would reinforce their capabilities. This definitely takes time as such capabilities have to be identified and the people trained. However, time and space is also essential for strengthening the base to dialogue with the Government.

The enumerations undertaken in 1986-87 were:

Dharavi Census Railway slums Migrant Construction workers survey

All enumerations are followed up with action to strengthen community solidarity.

The first two enumerations have already been discussed in the section on extension ARC's.

MOBILE CRECHE - SPARC SURVEY OF CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

In the Annual Report of 1986, we had reported on a unique joint venture undertaken by SPARC and Mobile Creches, Bombay: a survey of the construction worker families on all the sites in Bombay where Mobile Creches was providing services to the children of these families. As reported then, the unique feature of this collaboration was the use of a participatory training methodology where SPARC staff acted only as trainers, facilitating the Mobile Creche staff to formulate and execute the research, mastering every stage of the research process from formulating the questionnaires to analysing the results and writing the vernacular versions of the final report.

Due to various delays at the electronic data processing stage and other unforeseen problems Mobile Creches was able to release the final report of the study, titled 'The Shadow of the Scaffolding', only in 1987.

A two - day seminar with the Hon. Shrimati Elaben Bhatt as Chief Guest was organised for the release of the report. Government officials and policy makers, representatives from the National Builders Association, other voluntary organizations and social work schools were invited to the seminar, not to mention workers from Mobile Creches, Delhi and Pune.

The seminar was an exciting culmination of a long process of learning by doing, and symbolised the creativity which characterises Mobile Creches workers. For instance, rather than present the results of the survey through a monotonous oral report, the workers interspersed each section of the statistical profile with short role-plays which related the numbers with life and reality. For instance, the data on the migration history of the families surveyed was followed by a skit depicting the traumas, bewilderment, and sense of hope which migrants face as they leave the security of the village and enter the hostile city in search of work - something which no statistics can ever depict.

It is indeed unfortunate - though perhaps significant - that neither the Government authorities nor the builders, who have the potential to alter the shocking plight of the construction workers, chose to attend the seminar. This, despite the fact that it is the largest single study of construction workers in the country. Nevertheless, the survey report has been widely circulated and should serve to strengthen the debates and positive interventions which are afoot.

For SPARC, this experience has affirmed many of our hypotheses:

That research can be demystified and taught to ordinary people, regardless of educational level; That it is possible to transfer research skills from one voluntary organisation to another, without the intervention of academic institutions, more efficiently and appropriately;

That the methodology of information collection and utilization at grassroots level without SPARC exercising continuous control over the process is possible. For example, in the case of the Mubi4 Creche Survey, SPARC did not determine the questionnaire, the analysis plan, the interpretation of the results, the structure of the final report, the shape of the seminar, etc). Thus, what we have done among pavement and slum dwellers, Mobile Creche staff can now undertake among construction workers, without depending on SPARC.

That research is a powerful means of strengthening the capability of workers and sensitising them to the broader realities of their constituency; - That participatory training methods are far superior to conventional hierarchical training methods in achieving the true goals of learning : confidence, analytical ability, and intellectual independence.

2 CASE STUDIES

Situations and events in everyday lives of pavement dwellers - their documentation, collation and analysis have been the basis of SPARC's organizational strategy and the foundation of programmes and training methods. Until 1986, this process was very informal. Women's groups discussed it, and observations and insights were almost automatically absorbed.

The need to formalise this process (in this case, formalisation implies documentation of both the process and content of this study or exploration) arose due to several reasons:

- a) As new members joined SPARC, they required to understand the basis or rationale for a particular decision taken in the field. While relating the entire process it became evident that this had to be appreciated and internalised as much as the outcome. It was getting difficult to ensure that every new person 'understand the processes by oral narration.
- b) Several such narrations also indicated a methodology common in most explorations which we again took for granted, but which was new to women.
- c) We faced similar problems when we discussed these issues with officials, voluntary agencies and others. Therefore, it was decided that all such documentation would be analysed and recorded. Perhaps at the end of 1988, this process would have a clearer methodology and a defined shape when this first 'batch of documentation' is completed.

'Domestic Violence' and 'Occupation and Rent in Pavement Slums' are studies whose findings have a direct relationship to issues affecting the community, especially women. They are planned in a manner which ensures that women see the link between their own experiences and the process of the research, its conclusions and recommendations. Consequently, while undertaking these studies we have had to work at a pace which suits people and generate its movement gradually.

1. Study of Domestic Violence :

This study was designed with a view to understanding four main aspects of violence against women in the home :

- (a) the nature and incidence of violence against women in a given geographic area;
- (b) the attitudes of different sections of the community towards domestic violence;
- (c) what support systems are available in a community for women who face such violence;
- (d) the institutional resources available and women's access to these.

The study is being carried out in E Ward, and housing - type has been used to stratify the population for the purpose of sampling i.e., pavement slums, other slums, chawls, tenements, public sector housing quarters (Railways, Reserve Bank, etc) and private apartment buildings.

One major departure in this study is that rather than focus purely on the experiences of *the battered women themselves, stress has been laid on examining the attitudes of the men who commit violence, and the services, reactions, responses, and attitudes of several potential 'help' agencies and institutions in the area - viz, the police, religious bodies, welfare agencies and voluntary organisations, legal aid cells and the courts.

The initial design of the study was enhanced and many insights were provided by a number of women activists who interacted regularly with SPARC in the preliminary planning phase of the study. Unfortunately, this project has taken much longer to get underway and complete than we had visualised. This was due to the sensitivity of the subject matter, the difficulty of locating individuals and groups for interview, the lack of trained, skilled personnel who would devote their time exclusively to this study, and the pressures of SPARC's ongoing field activities.

Nevertheless, some important milestones have already been crossed: Hospitals, religious/welfare agencies, voluntary organizations, the police and legal aid centres in E Ward have been identified, and their members interviewed on the issue of domestic violence. The nature of assistance provided to battered women by these institutions/resources has also been determined.

As for individual interviews, progress has been slow. The vast majority of women and their families are reluctant to admit that such violence occurs in their homes - even fewer are willing to discuss it in depth unless the interviewer (or the organization conducting the study) is very well known to them - and sometimes, not even then. Consequently, only about 15 of the expected 60 individual interviews have been completed to date. Notwithstanding this, the domestic violence study has been a tremendous learning experience for all those who have participated in it. We are confident that with this experience, we will be able to complete the study by the end of 1988.

2.DOCUMENTATION OF LIFE ON THE PAVEMENT.

The three studies undertaken have been :

- A. The phenomenon on rental accommodation on pavement. B. Space utilization within household.**
- C. Commercial encroachment on household and womens' space.**

A. Phenomenon of rental accommodation in pavement dwellings.

The various complex legislations and regulations governing the issues of rental accommodation, especially in the city of Bombay, have made it difficult for a common person to understand these issues and to deal with such situations in the future. For instance, if and when the groups have access to alternate housing, we have to accept the fact that some houses will be sold or others rented. How should SPARC and the women react to the occurrence of this phenomenon. Instead of taking any categorical stand, we decided to examine this phenomenon in the present context of pavement dwellings.

Pavement dwellings, though outside the legal and formal land market of the city are a result of its value escalation and scarce availability. As a result, it mirrors the trends and the mechanisms which exist in the formal mechanisms of housing ownership and use.

This documentation has attempted to first observe the existence of the renting phenomenon in pavement slums.

Secondly, to document the entire process by which a family decides to rent, the negotiations, the costs, the perceived benefits and the social control which governs the arrangements, in view of the fact that no formal mechanisms exist.

Thirdly, to prepare junior members of SPARC to undertake the study, and to involve the Housing Committee of Mahila Milan in the process so that this information is the basis for later discussions on whether rental process is to be accepted, controlled, monitored or rejected.

By the end of 1987, the only concrete aspect of this study which was possible was the definition of *the* scope of coverage, the informal structuring of the interview, the role of SPARC and Mahila Milan personnel in data collection and some interviews.

The preparation period we believe has taken more time and effort than the actual data collection. This is because people are not sure whether it is "right" or "wrong" to rent. A large amount of time in the preparatory phase has been devoted to creating amongst the investigators an attitude of exploration without making a judgment. This is easier said than done, because biases projected by the investigators may distort information exchange and reduce the factual nature of the documented output, which would then not be suitable for future planning of the resettlement.

The process itself which will be completed in 1988 will be an anecdote document with as many instances of rental situations as possible, in the five settlements where the study is . being carried out.

The process by which the study is conducted will also be documented. The general and specific findings will be presented as part of the report, along with the reactions of the people to the generalizations and their plans of how to integrate its regulations in their resettlement planning. We would try end examine the rent phenomenon in general and with the help of resource persons comment on the extent to which the pavement situation simplistically or otherwise relates to the general situation.

B. SPACE UTILIZATION WITHIN HOUSEHOLDS ON PAVEMENTS :

Presently, the city housing authority allocates 150 - 300 sq. ft. per household for relocation or sites and services for the economically weaker section. This norm has become the basis for structural design and planning of houses. In this context, the professional planner/architect is forced to produce a room with four walls - a multipurpose room which may or may not have individual bathing/washing facilities and/or a toilet.

Based again on a strong belief in SPARC, that the consumer of a facility (in this case the Pavement Dweller) is the most creative planner for space utilization, this study attempts to document the use of space by the families in their present pavement huts.

Such a documentation would provide the following insights :- . a) Present space usage would be indicative of patterns presently existing and probably provide insights into why they occur.

b) It would highlight possible methods to incorporate some of these patterns in future designs. c) It would carefully examine familial and community usage of space to facilitate settlement planning which ensures that people's needs may be met.

Each pavemea group would have a focused discussion to first define the areas/categories of usage, then locate five homes in each cluster which they perceive as representative of their usage.

a) Then, each home will be photographed - four walls, ground, roof (inside/outside) and surrounding.

b) The photographs will include time of day variations, where a place may be used for varying purposes at different times.

The patterns which emerge will be discussed by the housing committee as well as with the architects working with SPARC so that these findings can be viewed from the point of incorporating them in the resettlement design.

C. COMMERCIAL ENCROACHMENT ON HOUSEHOLD AND WOMEN'S SPACE :

One of the outcomes of the Housing Training has been an investigation into existing situations to provide a basis for planning alternatives. One of these situations is employment and occupation. Internationally, there is a trend of reducing manufacturing costs by subcontracting. This has gradually reduced factory based production and further reduced wage earnings of the factory worker. More people are being given home-based employment. As a result, the burden is passed down to the worker. The onus of investment in a factory is minimized, along with more attractive possibilities to earn from space ownership. This has

lead to a phenomenon of the so called self employed individual. We say 'so called' because this individual has no control over price, commodity, process of manufacturing, marketing and pricing. Instead he/she has to provide the space to "produce".

There is no question in our minds about the fact that most of these 'self employed' have no choice but to enter into such a commercial transaction. There are many laudable movements to empower these collectives to bargain for improved wage and other assistances. At the same time, it is vital that the implications of such trends where homes are used for commercial purposes be examined for their immediate and long term implications. Similarly, the oft mentioned advantage of women working in their own homes has to be scrutinised. Finally, to inquire into the possibility of doing a "soci,)l audit" on this space utilization is a possibility we wish to initiate.

In order to do this there was need to :

- (a) Define occupations presently undertaken by pavement dwellers which are home based. This data has been made available to us from the census of Pavement Dwellers.
- (b) To identify groups of these occupations ready to participate in this study.
- (c) To define within each occupation the various aspects and graphically describe how/what physical and social aspects of family space does it replace/displace -
- (d) The nature and extent of this displacement and its implications, whether temporary or permanent.
- (e) Having collected this information, to study the implications for women/children, family, settlements thus locating the basis for the position communities could take in the future towards home based occupations.

These studies are being done simultaneously in E Ward only. It has taken the later part of 1987 to define the focus, develop the method and prepare the Housing Committee of E Ward to participate in the studies. We are confident that they can be completed by 1988 as the initial stages of evolving a methodology have been evolved.

3. SECONDARY RESEARCH

More recently, we have also undertaken secondary research. These studies do not ,rdirectly involve people, but cover subjects which we believe affect people directly or indirectly. These research studies are mainly assessments of existing institutions, their policies and impact on the poor. They are also part of the process to develop a capability within SPARC to critically assess policies and view their impact on the poor.

The studies initiated in 1987 are:

THE BOMBAY PORT TRUST STUDY: Its future plans and implications on the City of Bombay.

In each City, there is a historical link between the city's growth and development, and the formation, growth and development of some institution. Often, when the phenomenon to be studied is so large, specific aspects have to be scrutinised as ways of generalising.

The Bombay port is an integral part of the growth and development of the City of Bombay. It is also the largest land owner in the city. Understanding the development and growth of the port provides clues as to how the City has grown to date; we believe that in the future, the plans of the Port will

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also have Implications on how the city of Bombay will develop.

We also hope to understand how the Port Trust manages these vast estates. Today, Government, and its allied institutions, possess the bulk of land in the cities. In view of the pressing land requirements of housing for the urban poor, these institutions and government need to take a look at how they plan to use this land, presently and in the future.

CRITIQUE OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN BOMBAY

One seemingly permanent crisis for the urban poor is the war of attrition with city authorities about their place of residence. All interactions with government officials lead to the fact that the poor happen to reside in places and areas earmarked for "other" uses through "an instrument for planning". This instrument for planning is the Development Plan. In almost all informal discussions, architects, planners and people associated with development planning acknowledge that there are many major problems in this present format for planning. To us too, it seems obvious that any planning instrument which never gets into operation, and which does not cater to the needs of a very substantial section of the city's population is a flawed instrument, which requires to be reviewed and made more relevant for present day indications.

It is also very unfortunate, that these issues do not lend themselves to public debate, as the planning process itself is not easy to understand. Yet the poor and those activists concerned with the problems of the urban poor need to participate in such debates and plan for changes required. We see this study as a learning process for members of SPARC and those associated with it to better understand what is actually happening; and the publication of this report would be a means by which we can share this with others like ourselves.

DRUG ABUSE - RESEARCH & TRAINING IN PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT:

SPARC had undertaken a study for the Government which was to have been completed in March 1987. However this eight city study which comprises of 1500 interviews of addicts and documentation of counselling practices and other aspects of addiction could not be completed as data from two cities were unavailable. The data collected have led to the preparation of reports, which have been submitted to Government of India, and a draft policy paper has been circulated all over the country.

On completion of the 8 city study, it was decided that the information gathered would be disseminated in view of the serious gaps in information about Drug Abuse in the country.

In 1987, the drug study group had a wide infrastructure in several cities and could have undertaken research again this year - as undoubtedly there is a serious information gap on what is occurring all over the country. However, it was decided that while the work on hand would be completed, the focus of our effort in 1987 would be the dissemination of this information in various sections of society in different parts of the country.

The objective behind such dissemination was that at localised levels, the parents of addicts, with the support of other citizens, would create city wide anti-drug campaigns and lobby for national policies which prevent drugs from entering the country.

It was also felt, that in different regions and across the country, gradually a network of such resources which educate, train, protest against drug abuse, will emerge.

The state Government administration has also been very interested in developing a role for themselves, and the SPARC team interacted with the interested departments to facilitate the participation of the state and local administration.

Thus the 'plan for 1987 was to complete research and documentation on hand, and to initiate *interaction* with all kinds of Government / non Government institutions, groups and individuals to

devise a plan for large scale dissemination of information about drug abuse. Along with this, the Addiction Research Group worked towards strengthening the management of drug abuse, training more councillors, disseminating information about detoxification, rehabilitation and education.

REFLECTIONS:

Our reflections on what we have learnt from undertaking research are:

- 1. Due to very close and dynamic involvement with people - there is a trend to expand the focus of research from the original plan. This requires more finance and time - both of which small organizations can ill afford. Therefore, internal mechanisms to control this have to be devised.**
- 2. By the same measure, targets and time frames are sometimes not achieved due to problems beyond one's control. Again, because the organization is small, it cannot absorb increased expenses and delays. Hence, such contingencies must be kept in mind.**
- 3. Because the major thrust of our work is field-based, all research steps upto the analysis of information are well orchestrated and planned. Report writing and dissemination often get delayed as field-based work gets priority; as a result, there needs to be a greater investment in, and more careful planning of these functions.**
- 4. Finally, as SPARC begins to undertake more research, it is vital that new and old members are oriented to research. This would include an exposure to various forms of research, and refresher courses in methodology. ,**

PART III

ROLE OF TRAINING IN SPARC:

SPARC, like many NGO's today, seeks to play the role of a supporter / facilitator of a movement of the urban poor. This is one in which the poor are demanding their rights and women play an equal and vital role. Such an objective envisages, that as people's organisations begin to expand and develop, they gradually take on the roles voluntary organisations assigned to themselves. SPARC sees its role as facilitator - trainer whereby the people's organisations strengthen themselves, expand their leadership, their influence, and their capability to define, resolve and execute solutions to their problems.

SPARC sees NSDF and MM as partners; NSDF helps groups to federate and network intra-city and inter-city with other groups of the urban poor; MM encourages and strengthens the formation and development of womens' collectives at each community level to participate in development..

In this context, the training necessary has to occur for collectives and federations at different levels and for different purposes. It might be to help collectives articulate their problems and seek options, or to examine civic resources or to register a society. It could also be for training new leadership, b undertake research and so on.

SPARC's functions are increasingly moving from organiser to facilitators as NSDF/MM collectives define their role and capability. It is in this context that the training has to be viewed. In the context of the urban poor, there is a growing demand amongst the poor for a more just and equitable distribution of resources. This re-distribution demands that they play an active role in seeking these resources. The difficulty arises in developing the capabilities to play this active role. Traditionally the poor, and specially the women have been denied this opportunity. Our experiences during the last three years have indicated that when an organization of people seek to change their present situation: a) . The present position/situation needs to be improved.

- b) Change towards an aspired direction requires a shift in the present equilibrium**
- c) Having located a direction, the purpose of the movement and building of capabilities have to be defined, and a process which facilitates this must be made operational.**

In SPARC we view training at three levels:

- a) To facilitate common foundations on which people with similar problems can come together. i) Through devising common symbols, values etc.**
- b) ' ii) To initiate new ways of communication, and interaction to replace stereotypes.**
- iii) To develop an environment where new skills may be learnt.**
- b) Organisation building/sustaining.**

c) Special skill/process orientation.

Inherent in every training sphere is a mechanism to train others, and to utilise one activity of training for several different purposes for different groups. We would like to present in this section how we have evolved our training programmes.

Initially SPARC's workers had to develop a sensitivity, define roles, scope of work and methods of interaction with women and communities. Later, MM and NSDF also had to undergo such processes, and relate to a larger group of slum communities and womens' collectives. Over the last three years there have been a range of training programmes, wherein methods have been developed.

Characteristics of these training programmes are -

- a) Training occurs in an environment which has a physically acceptable framework; at a pace, time frame and level comfortable and non threatening to those participating.**
- b) The trainers are not givers all the time. They are facilitators of a process who assist, support and direct group reflection, planning, learning and action. Trainers further crystallize, affirm and develop their own training, skills and learning by sharing the experiences with the group, thus growth of trainers as well as trainees is facilitated.**
- c) Past experiences and exposures are seen as the resources that individuals bring to the group. These when analysed, become the foundation and basis for new action to be undertaken collectively.**
- d) Training occurs in a manner which provides the trainees concrete tasks and activities, and to train others while undergoing the process.**

1. MASONRY TRAINING FOR WOMEN :

(M extension to the Housing Training for women in E Ward).

Scope and Context of the Training :

SPARC had trained over 600 women from several pavement clusters to participate in-shelter planning. The training included elements of :

- a) How to organise your own community to focus on issues of shelter.**
- b) To view present housing problems in the context of the land available in an urban situation - thus emphasising the fact that the struggle for resettlement would be long and* hard.**
- c) While demanding for land, to begin a process of familiarization of how others (voluntary agencies, Government and people) have planned or undertaken resettlements.**
- d) Devise on the basis of their own netunderstanding and aspirations, a set of criteria and strategies for resettlement.**
- e) Equip themselves with knowledge, skills and awareness so that as and when they do get land, they are fully prepared to undvrtake resettlement in a manner most suitable to themselves, with minimal wastage of resources and hardships.**

Among the things to learn, exposure to what others had dpne both in Bombay and in other Indian cities was necessary. Similarly settlement and house design, hpusing finance and cooperative society laws were very important. Out of this study emerged the ques~ion of building technology.

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When people examined their experiences in house construction, they characterised it as : a)

- A highly individualised activity.**
- b) 7'he materials used were bamboo. cloth etc. all material which could be dismantled during demolitions with minimum damage, or loss.**
- c) While capital investment was low, periodic renewal was necessary.**

Based on these observations, people especially women, began to discuss possible solutions. Through meetings with other slum dwellers, architects, masons, and their own experiences, they began to put together an alternative strategy.

Collective building ~of houses in each settlement was considered advantageous, economically as well as for ensuring that the settlement was planned to serve the needs of the entire community. A proper assessment of material requirements and bulk purchase would reduce costs considerably, Each family would provide the manpower to build their own houses and the cooperative would hire skilled masons to supervise them. With scope for women to understand construction and supervise, a substantial control over cost, time and material usage could be achieved. Hence, the women needed a closer and deeper insight, into new building materials to gain confidence about relative utility values.

The many questions which arose were analysed and answered by the group itself. Such a dialogue helped formulate the training programme in masonry.

As the community had earlier acknowledged that issues of housing affected women, it was decided that they should be the focus of training as this process of training was meant to give greater control over the building process. The representatives of the building committee selected from the various clusters, would be trained first; they would then train others. Only those who were willing to train others would be chosen.

The community felt that one such training programme was not sufficient to transform women overnight into masons or to attain a degree of skill. Instead the trained group would collectively undertake the bulk purchase of material after assessing the requirement. They would supervise the hired masons, and facilitate the rest of the community into participating meaningfully. After the construction of their own houses, it was felt that women may be able to gain a skill at a level whereby they could undertake masonry work as an occupation.

The objectives of such a training would lead to an exposure to the kinds of building materials available and understand the relative advantages and disadvantages of each. This was done through visits to production centres, where the material is made and discussing with the people there the different qualities and variations available as well as related costs of transportation. This information would give the women the ability to select building material, supervise its purchase, storage and proper use. Simultaneously, the women could also gather information on regulations for buildings and drainage and pathways in slum settlements.

"Hands-down" training - working with masons in building a structure they had designed and assisting the kind of masons who would work on the resettlement was seen as the crucial point in the plan for resettlement.

For this process of training to be comprehensive, basic structural knowledge was dealt with systematically.

- a) Site measurement within the permissible limits stipulated by the Corporation was the basis for the estimate of material required.
 - b) The women had to balance costs, durability and the availability of good and cheap building materials.
- c) Interaction with the Bombay Municipal Corporation and the skilled masons would demystify technical knowledge, thus leading to the actual construction of the "pre-fab" houses, drainage and pathways.

Throughout the training, the channel of continuous involvement and participation of the larger group was sought as a vital reference point for training. In smaller groups, these women were assisted in conceptualising from their experiences.

Outcome of the training :

- a) The women have built model houses in two communities - Bombay and Madras which are to operate as community centres.
- b) The women from one sector of Dindoshi have started to negotiate with the BMC to provide drainage and pathways.

- c) Knowledge of hitherto unknown technical terminology leading to experimentation, as with the "pre-fabs".

This group of women from Mahila Milan have become familiar with the building process. They provide "technical" information to the housing training for other pavement and slum dwellers, and continue to expand their own information base about construction material.

2. TRAINING OF TRAINERS IN PLANNING SHELTER (WITH A VIEW TO INCLUDE WOMEN). In 1987, it became very clear that there was a clear role for SPARC to play in facilitating 'peoples' organisation in slums to participate in shelter planning and action. In accepting this, SPARC's role moved from direct organisational work to facilitating peoples' organizations to enhance their own functioning, to network, to challenge unacceptable policies and most important, to involve women in community decision making.

This entailed training programmes at various levels for slum leadership, setting up a shelter network in Bombay as well as in other cities and this was a definite leap forward. The question was how to define this process of growth. People have to form linkages with the poor in other cities as exchange of experiential learning is vital for a forum of the urban poor. At present, it was clear that SPARC, while capable of setting up the inter city networks, needed partners to work with in each city.

The ideal solution would be to have a voluntary agency like SPARC in each city aligning with the peoples' organizations. However, such a compatible relationship requires several elements. In view of the fact that the NSDF had an active inter city federation, it would be possible to strengthen their capabilities and to gradually include other voluntary agencies who show a keen interest in the work. SPARC would help these agencies by sharing its own experiences, training etc. A vital feature of this process would be that the local slum dwellers federation determines which voluntary agencies will be their partner - not SPARC. In areas where there is no slum dwellers federation, SPARC would relate to an NCO to help form the federation and work together.

Thus it was envisaged that eight major cities would be identified: the leadership of, the city's-slum dwellers federation would be trained, so that they in turn could train the other local groups; as and when voluntary agencies were located, they would be included in the process.

The immediate goals of the training would be :

- I. Training an eight city cadre of trainers who can undertake training *which is* shelter-related and ensured participation of women.
2. To formulate a network within cities so that experiential learning may be shared: a confidence in peoples' own capacity to think and act increased.
- 3: To gather information in order to formulate a comprehensive and accurate data base about the urban poor.
4. To concretely carry out an activity in one or more of the regions, so that there is a live demonstration of the training. This will be undertaken only where the process of training is as important as the result.

The cities chosen are not expected to proceed at the same rate. It is anticipated that the process will be initiated in cities of varying sizes, and depending on the local leadership, the situation and issues faced by the poor in the city, various responses will be elicited.

The network will share these experiences and learn from them. Thus at any given point, **DESPITE** common inputs, the activities in the cities will vary in their intensity, context and focus.'

Initially Bangalore, Hyderabad, Madras, Pune and Kanpur have been the focus. Madurai, Coimbatore, Salem began to interact with us mainly due to associations between slum dwellers. Except for Kanpur, where SPARC has collaborated with another voluntary organization, Shramik Bharati, all other interactions are with community-based leaders, part of the NSDF.

It is also vital to mention at this point that the network is envisaged to expand beyond these cities to other cities. However, in view of the gigantic nature of the tasks behind such a vision, an 8 city network

was felt to be a more realistic and attainable target. The training of the community based leadership of the NSDF city federation members was the focus of the first 8-10 months of work.

THE PROCESS:

a) CHOICE.

Before any formal training events occurred, each member had to be familiarised with the 'conceptualisation inherent in the training. This provided the groups an opportunity to decide whether or not to participate as their agreement was essential.

b) SHARED EXPERIENCES/LEARNING:

Within each city there was an attempt to strengthen the collective identity. This was done through a range of activities - amongst which were sharing of the history of slums in the city, understanding local slum dwellers issues, the present functioning of the local Municipal Corporation and the various schemes and resources available to the poor. This was achieved through a dialogue between local slum dwellers and SPARC/NSDF functionaries.

Several meetings in the cities mentioned showed that there were many variations among different city groups as well as common concerns. Since the North and the South had dramatically different canvases, it was felt that, at least, in the initial stages the training would be conducted separately. Later on, the groups could merge together.

At this point, SPARC and NSDF are clearly the facilitators of the local network. The role of Mahila Milan will become more defined as the city level networks begin to relate with each other during the training sessions undertaken by the Mahila Milan women's collectives. The approach is to demonstrate how women can, and should participate in the struggle of the urban poor, and then seek local women's participation.

The plan for 1988 is to set up training workshops of those city groups ready for this, and to then, undertake a range of localised activities in as many cities as possible to follow up the events and developments. ,

One such activity arose this year: The Tamil Nadu Slum Dwellers Federation (TNSDF) suggested that SPARC seek permission to build two housing models at the Maduravoyi IYSH Exhibition. NSDF/MM/SPARC personnel spent 15 days in Madras actually building the houses, holding meetings in various areas and explaining to the people, along with the TNSDF what this represented.

The visit also provided a mutual exposure and experience-sharing. The NSDF, BSDF, MM got an opportunity to understand implications of multi storeyed buildings for slum dwellers. They shared experiences of evictions, negotiations for land, housing models, role of women in planning, and future exchanges.

3. STAFF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN SPARC

SPARC has increased its personnel substantially each year, as the Scope of work expanded - What began in 1984 as an organisation of three persons, has had to expand rapidly. Initially, we found ourselves hesitating. This may have been due to a concern that expansion may lead to a loss of inter-personal relationships, support and team-work which was very much a part of our organisation. However, this resistance to growth disappeared when SPARC redefined its scope of work to include the urban poor in general, and not merely restrict ourselves to pavement dwellers. Various groups in the city requested assistance and support, hence we had to grow in response. Once this network was extended to other cities, there was no looking back.

This redefining of the scope of work meant an increase in staff strength. Soon the elements of in service training of new staff was clearly understood: new team members had to enjoy working with women; to learn to communicate effectively with people, and to function comfortably in a team. Everyone worked and learned together.

Monday meetings:

Every week, come Monday and the staff of SPARC are assembled together for a daylong session. This meeting is an investment into ourselves. The agenda is drawn out together and until it is completed, no one leaves. Each member can demand repeated explanations and clarifications - and this occurs in discussions which range from the understanding of strategies, behavior of other staff, and people, plans, relationships, values, philosophical assumptions and so on. It is also the forum in which all new ideas, plans, and projects are debated.

The meetings are informal, flexible, but very purposeful. An evaluation of the Monday meetings was done for 1987. While there were many suggestions for improvements /changes, no one in SPARC wanted to reduce the hours, frequency or style. Through out the week, teams and individuals are scattered in various settlements and working on different issues. *Each* member has to feel confident about making decisions, taking up action and formulating plans with different people. Rarely are consultations possible, yet decisions have to be taken constantly on behalf of SPARC. In such circumstances, an exposure to strategies, and discussing implications of any action adds clarity. Most important, the confidence to fail and feel sure that the team will be supportive exists. We aspire to imbibe in each person a sense of trust and security especially in the event of a set-back. This is an emotional support. which cannot be taken for granted and expected to occur on its own.

The structure of these weekly meetings have now become clearly defined. The agenda comprises of items which each individual or team needs to report. Once the listing is done, it is classified into related groups. A detailed recording of minutes is prepared and most staff members share this task of writing. Meetings are in English and Hindi with translations whispered simultaneously into the* ears of those who do not understand.

After factual reporting is completed, each item undergoes a review and assessment of how the activity was undertaken, its implications, the problems, crisis and community impact in which everyone participates. This facilitates an analysis of strategy, the pressures on staff and people and potential use of this area for generalised insight and learning. Finally, a follow up is planned for the coming week, and support of others is usually sought. This plan, in turn, becomes an area of review the following week. Thus, the group assists each member to plan, seek action or support and then analyse the work.

Our own communication with each other (we believe) must be based on the same principles which apply when we relate to others.

Some of these features are :

- a) Regardless of a specific contribution of any person, everyone, must understand, feel part of and support all activities.
- b) Effectiveness is based on a combination of analytical skills as well as the ability to execute a task. It is essential to maintain a balance, as well as to ensure that this principle is transferred to people.
- c) Since SPARC is working in areas where no orchestrated and managerial solutions are possible, it is important to examine acts, reactions, processes, rather than products of "projects". This requires, the strength to sustain the SPARC team through periods of uncertainty, when, despite all efforts, nothing moves. Here, an investment of on-going support and an understanding of larger issues which affect our work indirectly, have to be discussed.
- d) In the last two years, there has been an increasing disparity in the background of people who work for SPARC. Instead of seeing this as a disadvantage, we have attempted to use reporting of events for training, feedback, analysis and future planning.

This routine itself has become a vital training and familiarization of new people into organizational norms and values.

These weekly meetings are further supported by four other types of staff meetings.

- a) Group strengthening processes:

Each year we invite trainers who are familiar with SPARC to facilitate a processes of group strengthening and building. In 1987, we spent two days of reflection. Unlike Monday meetings, this was completely focused on individuals, their roles, dilemmas and inter-personal relationships within SPARC as an organization.

The structure, function and future growth of SPARC was analysed alongside our needs, our feelings of insecurities, our ambitions and how we manifested these to each other. This experience helped build up our reserves of strength in a year we knew would stretch our capabilities to unknown levels.

b) Focused discussions on specific areas :

As our staff members increased, often there were areas of work which had evolved before a group of people had joined. These activities were based on patterns already developed and so external, alien and not meaningful to new members. As and when this feeling became very obvious, two or three of the experienced senior staff have taken extra time to clarify, examine, and share the early experiences. Such discussions were necessary in areas of working with women, shelter planning, handling government norms and machinery. They help team members to understand the common set of beliefs and experiences.

c) Depending on opportunities, interest of staff and time constraints, staff members have been sent for workshops, seminars, meetings and training programmes organised by other groups. These have been local, regional, national and international. As many staff members as possible have been sent to various meetings. 1987 being the year of shelter for the homeless led to most such , meetings occurring on the subject of shelter. '

d) Annual Review and Evaluation :

The Annual review and evaluation is an expanded version of our Monday meetings, using the entire year's activity instead of just one week for a discussion. Usually the entire staff takes four days out of the work routine to be together. As mentioned in the preface, the Annual Report is written on the basis of the events, their discussions of these four days. The report of these four days discussion is . usually circulated amongst the trainers, resource persons and Governing Body members to ensure adequate communication. This also helps outsiders who come to assist the staff as trainers or facilitators.

POST scRlrr_:

1987 : The year of Shelter for the Homeless

A year of dilemma for SPARC ! TO BUILD OR NOT TO BUILD

Throughout 1986, it was apparent to all of us to SPARC, that shelter, for the poor would be an important focus of our work. In a way, it seemed a natural movement for an organization which worked with pavement dwellers; it attempted to move its efforts in the direction pointed as a priority by the people.

Despite the varied resources which SPARC has been fortunate in having : staff and well wishers whose skills in various fields has allowed the organization to enter unknown areas, shelter was a new subject for everyone. Women on pavements desired secure homes: secure against the weather and physical elements; one which facilitates the enrichment of family and community life; emotionally secure - without fear and threat of demolitions, of fighting the city for a foothold on the pavements.

We, at SPARC, gave this aspiration a high priority. In fact, it has lead to new learning for everyone. Shelter, more than any other area in development is fraught with complexities and requires Insights, understanding and technical information, all of which may not be freely available.

Perhaps, due to lack of awareness we began to gradually seek answers to questions in shelter planning and programmes. As we understood situations, events and acts, we shared these with groups and collectives of pavement dwellers and slum dwellers. Some in the form of training programmes, others in informal discussion. But, while these processes occurred and our own understanding grew, it opened new areas and intricacies which we did not know.

Because 1987 was the year of shelter for the Homeless, many of our training programmes, our strategies (which are still evolving) came into the limelight. In this year, we saw a paradox. There were no tangible attempts to improve the shelter situation for the Homeless, yet there was a growing pressure on groups like ours, to initiate symbolic programmes of high profile and limited budgets.

This was accompanied by a growing concern amongst people. "Would understanding ever get them a home ? Perhaps if a few got houses, it would boost the morale of everyone". We were fledglings too. Our own knowledge and understanding had to be tested. We, too, wanted to try out our ideas. The temptation to undertake to build a few houses was strong.

Yet, we have not built any houses except models of wood and paper. We chose not to buckle to this pressure. Only time will evaluate the wisdom of this decision, yet the decision not to build model townships or settlements has become stronger. Several reasons can account for this decision. Homelessness of people is not a historical accident, with solutions which are simplistic. Wherever schemes to build houses and shift people to them have been undertaken, their long-term assessment has indicated that the original occupants often found it unacceptable, and the houses have changed hands.

There are many lessons to learn. Solutions are not easily available. For instance occupations of the poor are closely linked to the site where they live. In most cases, the choice of the occupation on arrival into the city is generally unskilled and based on availability . The wages are way below minimum wage, and demands a home near the place of work. It is in this context that relocation for better shelter has to be seen.

- a) Can people find work there ?
- b) How can the process of planning help people ensure that their relocation helps improve the quality of their lives.?
- c) How can they ensure that hastily planned relocations do not result in desperate sales of newly acquired structures because people cannot live there.

Housing itself - the construction, material designs are linked to various factors. People must be able to afford their construction costs, the maintenance and so on. Prototype designs, standardised settlement

patterns, poor supervision of low cost construction, all lead to growing "slum" settlements which, despite government financing and land are akin to squatter settlements, which come up spontaneously.

In an environment where land is prime investment - where investments double in two/three years, social commitments and responsibilities to provide space for shelter construction by the poor is overtaken by greed and. an investor's dream to multiply money.

1987 was a good time to retrospect on social consciousness. How are the homeless going to get access to land T Reports of various Government instituted commissions have emerged with suggestions, with glaring statistics. Yet there is no clear way seen as to how Government will make the land available for people.

Reflecting on many of these situations to the microscopic realities of our work it is growing clearer, that the poor have to demand for land, for housing, its material and finance in a manner which is suitable for them. What the contents of these demands are, how they will be executed, and how this demand will translated into a movement is the challenge.

Rather than attempting a symbolic gesture we have chosen to utilise this year :

- (a) To increase the membership of communities both in Bombay and elsewhere,
- (b) To enhance their understanding of their own situation, to try ways of seeking resolution of problems.
- (c) To lobby with Government to make shelter related information available to people.
- (d) To change even at micro levels, policies in housing, the present practice of upgradation, sites and services to include peoples' planning.
- (e) To create information from people's own understanding of situations to counter information about them which may be wrong; to ensure that planning becomes more realistic.
- (f) To develop technical and financial capabilities for people to undertake, supervise and plan their own resettlement.

To that effect, much of the activities of SPARC in 1987 have these underlying objectives. It has been a hard and difficult year, a year of painstaking study and planning and endless meetings and discussions. Yet, all made worthwhile by the acceptance of the people themselves and of our support by other groups and well wishers.