



HABITAT
INTERNATIONAL
COALITION

15

Dalal Building, Behind Capri Hotel, Relief Road, AHMEDABAD-380 001. Tel. : 352841-352842

51/A, 5th Floor, Thakorebaug Flat Annexe, Navrangpura, AHMEDABAD-380 009.

Tel. : 468883

HIC/PO/1/1093

23 October 1993

Shri Sharad Pawar
Chief Minister
Government of Maharashtra
Mantralaya
Bombay 400 020

Dear Sir,

The devastating earthquake in Maharashtra, India's worst natural disaster in half a century, which has left almost 10,000 people dead and almost 1.5 lakh homeless in and around 82 villages of Latur and Osmanabad districts has inflicted severe miseries on the unsuspecting people. The heavy loss of life and property has shattered many families. At a time when the government, army, voluntary agencies, volunteers and affected people themselves are putting up a brave fight in providing immediate relief and planning long term rehabilitation effort I write this, on behalf of over 300 NGO and CBO members of Habitat International Coalition (HIC), spread in 70 countries of the world, a few of them already in the field of housing, to offer our sympathies and solidarity with the suffering families and our support to all who are engaged in restoring life in the devastated area. The task of providing relief and rehabilitation, on such a scale, demands diverse skills and multiple resources. It is really heartening that, in the midst of this tragedy and destruction, a broad based partnership between people from all walks of life, international community, and the government has emerged in meeting this challenge.

Now that the difficult task of long term rehabilitation is at an advance stage of planning - some of it, one hears, already in action - you must be flooded with ideas, suggestions and advice. Normally one would avoid adding to it. However, keeping in view the disaster rehabilitation experience of HIC member NGOs in different parts of the world, and especially, our own experience in Gujarat from where some lessons could be drawn for Maharashtra, I would like to make a few broad suggestions and observations.

The Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG), a non-profit NGO run by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals with which I am associated, has been involved in disaster rehabilitation housing in rural and urban areas for over 20 years. The effort has resulted in rehabilitation of about 30 villages - over 3000 houses - ravaged by floods in the river Narmada and also a township with 2250 houses in Ahmedabad, following heavy floods in the river Sabarmati, in the mid 70s. Though all of these required relocation on a new site, they were mostly successful in

terms of client acceptance, cost efficiency and people participation. Our last experience, however, meant to resettle a village of about 160 families, affected by expansion of IPCL plant near Baroda and industrial pollution to a site just three kms from the original village, has been a total failure. A newly built 160 good quality houses with attendant services and community facilities, at a cost of Rs. 50 lakh, is lying vacant for over seven years. Not a single family has moved to the newly built Dhanora village. And the well built houses and the services remain unutilised.

It is this mixture of good and unsuccessful experiences in disaster rehabilitation that prompts us to make the following broad observations. They are also based on information and feedback gained by some of our colleagues who visited the disaster affected villages recently.

- 1.0 A majority of the buildings that have collapsed due to earthquake were built by the villagers themselves. If the users did not build them using their own hands or skilled/unskilled labour, they almost always controlled the construction process. They were user controlled structures in the sense that they were not built by contractors, real estate developers or public housing agencies; were not designed by architects or engineers; and not supervised by qualified supervisors. Though the structures have collapsed, the skills to build and get built what is needed is still intact. In evolving rehabilitation strategy and organisational arrangement for implementing schemes - especially housing - this particular fact must be borne in mind.
- 2.0 The collapse of the structures is no sufficient reason to suspect - and thereby reject - this ability of common people and local craftsmen : especially when they themselves, under the shock of tragedy and disaster, have started doubting their own traditional skills, wisdom and appropriateness of the structures they had built. The buildings have collapsed because they were not built to withstand the forces that the earthquake generated. And they were not built to withstand those forces because as experts say the region was seismological not active for centuries. Even scientifically evolved building code had certified the region to be a safe zone. Therefore, it is useful to remember - and more useful to let the local people know - that the buildings have collapsed not because they did not know how to build them but because the earth changed its behaviour. Experts believe that if Bombay were to experience similar shocks even professionally designed structures may not be able to stand. Now, however, people could build earthquake resistance houses with little guidance from those who know.

- 3.0 The same logic applies to building materials. Some of the engineers and structural engineers, including Shri Laurie Baker, who visited the partially and fully ravaged villages are of the view that the damage is not so much due to use of local materials (stone, in particular) but because of construction methods and techniques; not the material itself, but the method of its use. This is necessary to verify and understand because summary rejection of a local material, which is plentiful and easily accessible to people, both in form of rubble of the collapsed structures and from normal commercial supply sources, not only has cost implications (which could be absorbed through external interventions in this extra ordinary emergency) but also in emergence of a culture of rejection and a psyche of alienation that may cost the local people - especially the disadvantaged groups and over 1,00,000 skilled craftsmen in building trade - dearly in the long run. If people are asked or encouraged to discard locally available and relatively inexpensive building material like stone, which they have used in construction for centuries, it would prove to be a major handicap, a permanent disability. It may take away people's freedom to build. So that this is not misunderstood as advocating use of stone as principal walling material in new constructions despite the new reality of recent earthquake, let it be clarified that one is only cautioning against summary rejection (something that could easily happen) without deeper and dependable analysis of nature of collapse and behaviour of structures. The point is also that it may be possible to evolve safe building designs, capable of withstanding future earthquake shocks, without summarily throwing out the local materials and techniques.
- 4.0 The trouble with most disaster rehabilitation efforts is that relief and rehabilitation get confused and intermixed. Relief is temporary, immediate and oriented primarily to giving and dispensing. It is, by definition, short, term. Not expected to continue or last long. Rehabilitation, on the other hand, by very nature, is a long term thing as it involves creating new, hopefully better and longer lasting construction/housing than the one it is meant to replace. The difficulty, however, is that a culture of "emergency" gets loaded on the decision making and therefore both the 'process' and the product suffer. It is not without reason that end-product of many disaster housing rehabilitation efforts are disastrous themselves. The underlying problem is the 'emergency culture', 'hasty-decisions', and total 'negation of processes'. The real tragedy is that suffering community's temporary disablement and handicap get enlarged

and projected as some sort of extended, permanent disabilities which also lead to denial of their legitimate role, involvement and participation in the rehabilitation and reconstruction processes.

- 5.0 It is this tendency that you, Pawar Saab, as the key decision maker, must fight. The experience of years tells us that there is nothing like immediate, instant rehabilitation. Rehabilitation always takes time irrespective of what one says or does because it involves long term asset creation, relatively heavy investment, creating new organisational infrastructure where little existed before, bringing a number of unrelated actors and agencies to perform together, and often inventing new solutions. Can all this be done overnight? And if one tries to do that, what will one end up creating? It will neither create good assets, nor get the maximum out of investment, nor solve problems.

It is useful to remember, Sir, that a number of new villages and thousands of new houses that you intend building immediately, hastily and in the shortest span of time, took decades, if not centuries, to come up. However efficient you are or whatever the nature of your technology, you cannot capsule time in that manner. Idea here is not to say that one should allow years and decades to rebuild the houses and villages. What is suggested, however, is that they cannot be produced over-night. Both planning and building need time. And that must be given.

If you try building new settlements overnight, you will not have time for any of the legitimate processes. In fact, the 'emergency' will provide the rationale and justification to scuttle, skip, bypass and even reject those processes. This is especially true for the villages to be relocated on new sites. As experience shows, finding 30-40 new village sites, which are topographically proper, acceptable to residents, involve minimum socio-economic dislocation (cannot be far away from the farm land), have atleast a reliable source of drinking water, is easily accessible and is economic in terms of creation of service and social infrastructure, is not easy (that is one thing that the Sardar Sarovar Project has taught). These sites cannot be found overnight. And if they are found and accepted - even with a contrived consent of the end users under pressure of 'emergency' - they might be either disfunctional or unacceptable or non-viable or expensive in the long run. A number of evaluation studies on the earlier homestead plot distribution scheme for the landless, homeless rural poor (under the Minimum Needs Programme) and more recent Indira Awas Yojana have identified many deserted, unoccupied newly built settlements.

For the relocation of villages, site planning is equally important. How will the difference in size of land plots and houses in an old village be accommodated in the new one? Will all be given equal size plots, equal size houses? How is the cast factor, which reflected so heavily in the neighbourhood pattern in the existing village, to be handled? Will all casts be lumped together? Will lots be drawn for allotment of plots and houses? Will Harijan and caste-Hindus share common walls, courtyards? Will Hindu and Muslim live side-by-side? Has the 40 second long earthquake eliminated age old prejudices, customs, traditions and preferences and neutralized long standing hostilities? Will people agree to these things? Will you impose even such sensitive decisions on people? The point is that if you ignore to answer these questions in planning new settlements, they will end up having social problems and new tensions. And if everything is to be done instantly and overnight, where is the time for consulting people, finding answers to some of the above questions and feeding them in the design/planning process?

The quality - in design, construction, workmanship, materials and details - will be the first casualty. No one ever thinks of giving the disaster victims reasonable quality houses in any case. And the emergency/haste syndrome lends credibility to and justifies poor quality. The results are everywhere to see. Aren't some of the houses built under rehabilitation schemes, even normal time Indira Awas Yojana houses, insult to people?

The same thing may happen to planning and laying of infrastructure services, construction of community buildings and other facilities.

If new houses and settlements are going to cost Rs. 300 to 500 crore, a good question to ask is : is it possible to invest purposefully such a large sum of money in a short period of a few months? Can it deliver good results?

All this is not an argument to cause or justify delay. It is an argument against irrational and impractical haste. The point, Sir, is that the task of creating new settlements demands time for consultation, planning, evolving new solutions, preparing people to participate and construction. And all this is process oriented. By efficiency you could compress, to an extent, the time schedule. You could possibly compress processes somewhat too. But you cannot eliminate them altogether. If you do so, the results will be questionable.

- 6.0 The real question then is : is there time for the processes? Aren't people out in the open? Aren't they shelterless? So long as the affected people are kept in the culture of helplessness, made to feel incapacitated and encouraged to be dependent, they would remain so. Natural disasters, emergencies and our response to them usually create those dependency environments and cultures. Not only the political compulsions of the governments but even charity orientation of common people also contribute to their making. However, if we really observe affected people's behaviour, it would be found that once the shock of death and destruction has blunted a bit, they waste little time in trying to put pieces together again. That is the human law. The principal of survival; putting life above death, construction over destruction; to go on with the game.

It is this positive aspect of disaster victims' behaviour pattern that most rehabilitation planners tend to neglect, even negate. Given an option (environmental, mainly) encouragement, support and strength, most disaster victims will put together a make-shift shelter for themselves; or in extreme cases, with an outsiders' marginal help in labour and material. That neither takes much time nor money. In both urban and rural situations, especially in the rural, self-help practices and mutual help networks get activated, more easily, almost spontaneously, in a disaster situation. Shouldn't this phenomena be explored to buy the minimum time required for the processes listed earlier?

Whether the disaster victims will agree to wait or not, for a "reasonable" period, not endlessly, will depend largely on how the processes are unfolded; on how meaningfully he/she gets involved in planning his/her future habitat and livelihood; how he/she is shown long term benefits of proper planning; and how he/she is helped to adjust and pull on in the interim. It will also depend on whether his benefactors, in form of government, anxious to restore normalcy, and the voluntary agencies, eager to undo the harm, all well-intentioned and in good faith, are able to resist temptation to do everything yesterday and desist from building a culture of over-dependence. Most importantly, it will depend on the level of help, kind of arrangements and amount of investments that get made for the transitional, interim phase.

Though many people may not agree with my assertion, this is mainly a matter of attitude : of disaster victims, on the one hand, and of those engaged in helping them, on the other. Relatively friendly climate (waiting will be

impossible in Europe or similarly harsh climate regions), social relations and accommodating nature are also conducive to pulling on little longer in make-shift, even uncomfortable, living environment.

They will be more than willing to go through some more hardship - God has chosen them to suffer after all, they would say - if in return for little more patience and waiting, they are offered more suitable sites, better designed houses and communities, better functioning services, better quality structures and better means of earning livelihood. People's innate wisdom, even in an emergency like this, will help them to opt for a 'waiting' option.

- 7.0 Besides buying time for designing, planning and consultation it is of crucial importance to think through various aspects of organisational arrangements for planning and executing works. This is where things go wrong, objectives get diluted, distortions set in, processes get circumvented, and outcome suffers. There are many ways of doing things. However, the better way will be to give a shape to the unstructured partnership that has spontaneously evolved between the government, non-governmental agencies, professionals and disaster victims. All are needed in this task : The government with its resources - money, land and, wherever necessary, its organisational machinery. NGOs (defined in a broader sense to include voluntary agencies, business and industry and others motivated to contribute and help) with their motivation, ability to reach people, educate and organise them to become active partners, evolve alternatives and to act as watch-dog against possible deviations and leakages. Socially conscious professionals to think through and offer new and safe, yet inexpensive, structural solutions; house designs commensurate with people's living habits and life style; layouts in harmony with their social relations, traditions and culture. And the disaster victims themselves to articulate their needs, contribute their skills and labour and motivated enough to convert this disruption into an opportunity; this liability into an asset.

The government's role in this operation should be primarily one of 'facilitator', not 'doer'. It should create conditions for other partners to play their roles effectively and expeditiously. Both the organisational structure and operational arrangements should reflect the philosophy and culture of "facilitation" and "enablement". Decentralisation should be the key theme of the operation and the partners mentioned above should be assigned roles commensurate with their principal strengths.

If the organisational design changes, the nature of the task will also change. Looking at the task in a centralised way, with the government as a builder, the target will look staggering : 30000 houses! The material and manpower need, time-required, everything will look immense. But if the responsibility for raising the structure is left with the concerned family, the target will become one house for one family. It may sound simplistic. But that is what it really is. The question is one of attitude. And also of conceiving an appropriate organisational design.

As this letter has become very long - so long that I am afraid you may never get to read it fully - I am avoiding talking about other themes. Yet one that must be mentioned, at least in passing, is seeing rehabilitation not in separate compartments but as part of an overall 'development' package. Integration, coordination, convergence are all aspects of it. The earthquake has necessitated a massive investment in the area. The kind of investment figure that is floating around is not something that becomes normally available for such villages. But that investment has to be made. How to take it far for the disaster victims and how to optimise benefits for the area is the real challenge. Rehabilitation, as we know, 'is static, statusquoist. 'Development' is dynamic. And that must be the goal.

3.0 Yet another aspect which needs mentioning relates to dealing with what has survived. Considering that the earthquake could reappear again, almost any day, how to strengthen the structures which are standing is also to be examined. A small investment now could save a massive one later. However, if it does not get integrated in the current programme of relief and rehabilitation, it may never happen until it is too late. The strategy there, too, must be one of encouraging, supporting and enabling people to strengthen their own buildings and structures. Identifying structural solutions, and making institutional arrangement for financial assistance for the purpose, may help moving in the right, 'non-burdening' direction.

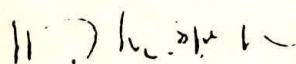
0 The real challenge before you and the State Government is not to allow this rehabilitation effort to degenerate into one more sad story. The investment, to use a familiar phrase shouldn't go down the drain. New villages shouldn't be poorly constructed, almost anemic, rows of straight line structures. They must have quality, strength and character. The built environment of all Maharashtra villages have a strength and a special character. That must not be lost. Only if that is lost, the destructive earthquake would have won a battle.

And there is no reason for that to happen. Resources, skills, experiences and understanding of what to do and what not to do exist. Much will depend on what attitude the government takes and how imaginative and creative it remains in facing this challenge.

If need be I would be only too happy to meet with you, or whoever you suggest, to discuss this and related matters.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,



Kirtee Shah
President-HIC

cc : Chief Secretary
Government of Maharashtra

HIC, Mexico

rra:

Habitat International Coalition (HIC)
Presidential Election
Manila, Philippines

28 September, 1993

Acceptance Speech

by

Kirtee Shah, Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG), India

Mr. President

Members of the Board, and

Members of HIC

- 1.0 It is with utmost humility, sincerity and with a deep sense of responsibility that I stand before you, the Members of Habitat International Coalition present here in Manila and those who are not with us today, to accept HIC Presidency so generously conferred upon me by you all. Considering that I am a relatively new face to some of you at HIC, but for your willingness to repose faith in promise rather than performance and in potential rather than achievement, I am aware, you wouldn't have chosen me to carry this honourous responsibility. I am grateful to you for your act of faith and goodwill and promise to do all within my capacity to serve HIC and be worthy of your trust and confidence.
- 2.0 In the decade and a half of its existence HIC, as a world coalition of human settlements NGOs, has established credibility as an organisation committed to empowering the people - especially the poor people - to improve their housing and living conditions and played a pioneering role as an international pressure group in defence of the rights of the homeless. Through concerted and energetic efforts of its members, associates and partners, over the years, HIC has also emerged as a potent instrument of advocacy action, at the national and global level, on behalf of the disadvantaged homeless of the world and as an effective spokesperson of the NGO community and what they stand for : a bottom up, people centered, equity biased and environment friendly 'development' paradigm. Credit for these noteworthy achievements goes to those pioneers who visioned this initiative and those member organisations and individuals who worked for it. It is indeed our privilege that some of those with the pioneering vision, commitment and ability for selfless hard work are here with us in this room today. We are grateful to the founders, leaders and members of HIC, past and present, for having built this organisation to a level from which we could dream of scaling greater heights and exploring deeper depths.

3.0 In the last few days we have resolved to chart a new course for HIC, evolve a new culture of relationship among members and partners and put in practice a new operational style. In the coming months we shall collectively work on the guidelines for that action and evolve an Agenda for Change. I have no intention to subvert or hijack that legitimate and highly desirable process of consultation, dialogue and search for alternatives. However, based on what I have understood from what our colleagues have said in the last few days here and have been able to interpret from my limited exposure to HIC and its working, it appears to me that HIC's Agenda for Change may constitute new explorations and thrusts in the following priority areas :

3.1 Developing a deeper understanding of the nature and needs of HIC's principal constituencies : the homeless, the inadequately sheltered, the NGOs, and the CBOs.

Creating multiple platforms, linkages and opportunities to develop that understanding; and

Spelling out a fresh mandate emerging from it.

3.2 Developing greater visibility at relevant levels : not only in the international forums but also at the national and sub-national levels;

Developing greater accessibility to the decision making structures at all levels;

Developing greater reach to the constituencies; and

Evolving a decentralised, participatory action agenda.

3.3 Seeking new partners and developing diverse partnerships in HIC's advocacy role

Search for the new partners could be based on a wider definition of NGO world to include a broader cross-section of "change" actors in the civic society.

The diverse partnership could mean :

- o Working simultaneously and synergetically at the grass roots, local, national, regional and global levels;

- o Working jointly and in active partnership with other social movements : environment, human rights, consumer protection, women's rights, etc; and

- o Working to evolve alternative strategies, structures, processes and solution models
 - * to weaken grip of the traditional control regimes
 - * to prevent misdirected development
 - * to protect rights of the citizens, especially the vulnerable sections, and
 - * to educate and influence

3.4 Developing a wider perspective

- o Shelter provision for the poor to be seen as an integral part of poverty alleviation strategy;
- o Shelter issues to be addressed in the wider context of functionally efficient and more equitable cities

Developing a new orientation towards rural settlements

Finding more resources : organisational, monetary and human

Developing power : Constitutional as well as that derived from the constituency solidarity; and

Developing an appropriate organisational structure : commensurate with NGO culture and ethos and suited to HIC's multiple roles

3.5 Generating a new dynamism for the NGO movement

- o By establishing role of NGOs as a "desirable" partner in development : with people, with governments, with other development actors
- o By creating "space" in the formal systems and machinery for effective role playing
- o By strengthening NGO work at the grass roots and other relevant levels
- o By multiplying their number
- o By capacity building : not only to provide services efficiently but also to influence institutional change

- o By setting up inter and intra-sectoral linkages and networks, and
- o By directing resource flow from the national development budgets and international development sources for NGO action.

This list is neither comprehensive nor mandatory. These are some random thoughts on this day of organisational transition. They are not meant to preempt a process, only a tentative directional indicator.

- 4.0 All of us want a newly constituted, freshly mandated and imaginatively structured HIC - a HIC that, in Fr Joe's words, is a place to dream dreams and an organisation providing freedom to fly, flexibility to operate, space to innovate, motivation to act, encouragement to collaborate and share, and even freedom to take risks for the causes we champion. Members here have expressed that they want a more transparent, more open and less bureaucratic HIC. In the coming years working together, working purposefully and systematically we shall endeavour to make HIC such a place. Because dreaming dreams is a necessary precondition to moving societies ahead, to conceive changes and to change orders, structures and directions. And the NGOs, as we all know, are in that business.

We, however, must recognise that our dreams are loaded. They carry a burden in the sense that they couldn't be left as dreams alone and must be translated into reality. Because in realisation of those dreams lies welfare, hope and future of those for whom we are working : the oppressed, the disadvantaged, the poor, the slum dweller, the landless farmer, the evicted villager, and the marginalised woman. Come to think of it, they are not even our dreams. It is their dreams that we are dreaming.

- 5.0 It needs no stressing that the tasks we have taken upon ourselves to address are indeed difficult and complex. While we, the NGOs, want to empower the poor, the formidable societal structures and forces, working in various combinations, are conspiring to make and keep them powerless. While we are fighting for their rights to a reasonable shelter the market forces, on the one hand, and a nexus between politicians, corrupt officials and the builder mafia, on the other, are systematically and openly snatching them away. We want 'illegal' squatters to be given secure and legal land titles. To a many that appears to threaten not only the age old institution of private property but distorting the delicately balanced market mechanism. We are demanding adequately paying jobs for the poor, protection against harassment and eviction of the self-

employed entrepreneur and supports for their enterprises. The elitist concepts of "city beautiful," the forces let loose by structural adjustment programmes, modernisation ideologies and development models and institutional insensivities and rigidities are doing exactly the opposite. We want the environment to be saved for our children. The power of both capital and technology is at work, over time, to damage it. We must realise that our work, our ambition and our convictions demand swimming against the current. The tasks we have taken upon ourselves are demanding. And we have to contend with formidable adversaries : often governments, almost always market forces and occasionally the thrust and the direction of the development process itself. Can we fight this formidable battle just with dreams alone? Especially when we are few in number, small in size, highly restricted in our access to financial, manpower and technological resources and operate under severe constraints : including an identity where we are known not as what we are but what we are not : the Non-Governmental Organisations; the NGOs.

- 6.0 Though it may sound paradoxical, we will have to be realistic in dealing with our dreams. As the tasks we have taken upon ourselves to address are formidable, we will have to organise ourselves systematically and marshal our limited resources optimally and skillfully. Even if we do not like those words we will have to 'perform', we will have to 'deliver' and, in doing so, we will have to be 'efficient'. Our commitment to 'processes' cannot make us oblivious to results.. We can't afford to look upon them as mutually exclusive.
- 7.0 The history of development tells us that we are woefully short in imagination in building proper institutions. It is predominantly the institutional crisis that accounts for distortions in development. We at HIC have realised that the instrument that we have created to work together and to achieve goals is less than perfect. It is indeed fortunate that we have recognised its limitations in time and are poised to work on its restructuring.
- 8.0 In reshaping and reorganising HIC, among other things, we will have to build on our assets and strengths. The first realisation, however, will have to be that the poor, our clients, are not as poor as the world thinks them to be. If the poor were really as poor as they are perceived to be, they would probably be dead long time ago. The very fact that they are surviving in a hostile environment and meeting most of their needs, however inadequately, means that they have more than what we think they have. It is necessary to discover their hidden resources, untapped talents, unrecognised strengths and unchanneled energies. Even we,

the NGOs, do not seem to know enough about the coping mechanism of the poor : which are biological, cultural, physical, psychological, social and spiritual in nature. If our strategy of empowerment is built on understanding of those mechanisms and recognition of those resources and strengths, we may not appear so hopelessly resourceless.

- 9.0 Though the challenges we face are daunting it is helpful to recognise that this is an opportunate time to push for change. The world is going through major changes. The power block equation has altered decisively. Though it is premature to pass judgement on the unfolding scenario, the current trends are indicating that the democratic form of governance is gaining fresh ground in many part of the world. The governments seem inclined, if not to rethink entirely their development models, atleast open to admitting flaws in them. A wider partnership in development is yet a distant dream but the state machinery seems inclined to try out small experiments. The information revolution, in a non-visible way, is contributing to consolidation of 'empowering' processes. Relatively new actors on the development scene, in form of government and non-government international agencies, while still learning complexities of development dynamics are exerting pressure to create space for the NGO's and the civic society's participation in development. New social movements - environment, consumer, gender, human rights - are slowly but surely gaining in strength. And the suffering people at the bottom spurred by political processes and supported by social movements are beginning to demand their share in society's wealth and resources. Admittedly much of this is at an embryonic stage. But, in making plans and evolving strategies it is helpful to take note of these hopeful signs and 'positive' trends.

- 10.0 Let me end this presentation by doing what I should have done in the first place : express my thanks to those without whose wish, help, goodwill and support I won't be standing here today. First of all I am thankful to all HIC members, including the Board, for giving me this opportunity to serve HIC and contribute to its work and progress. It is a privilege to be part of HIC and indeed a greater privilege to be its President. I must also express my grateful thanks to ACHR, its members and especially its remarkable Secretary for nominating - and thereby trusting - me for this demanding job. I must also thank my colleagues in ASAG at Ahmedabad and many other NGO friends in India for their constant support and encouragement. And I must thank my family - mother, wife and children - who have silently suffered my prolonged absence and neglect for years. Lastly, I must thank Davinder Lamba, a long time active member and well-wisher of HIC for making this contest

respectable, friendly and principled. Time and again I have felt - and I still feel - that Davinder would have made a better President. He knows HIC a lot more and a lot better than I do. He cares for this organisation. And he seems to have both heart and stomach for it. Though he has chosen to withdraw from the contest, I hope he will play an active role in strengthening HIC.

11.0 Finally, let me conclude this by assuring you:

- (a) that I look upon the office of HIC's president not as a position of power, privilege and authority but as a mandate to give and serve;
- (b) that in discharge of my duty as HIC President, the operative pronoun will be 'we' and not 'I' because therein - in that form of 'collectivism' and 'togetherness' - lies HIC's strength and future; and
- (c) that I shall remain in this position only till I am creatively useful to HIC, till I am able to contribute to its progress and growth, and till all of you, who have placed me in this position with so much trust want me to be there. Official length of tenure has little meaning. Your approval of me and my conduct will determine how long I stay in the position. In that sense this acceptance speech is also a resignation letter. It is a symbolic indication that in the newly structured HIC you will not be saddled with what you do not want : including the President.

Thank you for your trust and the opportunity to serve HIC.

HIC counts on your energy, your support and your commitment.

Thank you all.

Habitat International Coalition (HIC)
Presidential Election
Manila, Philippines

28 September, 1993

Acceptance Speech

by

Kirtee Shah, Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG), India

Mr. President

Members of the Board, and

Members of HIC

- 1.0 It is with utmost humility, sincerity and with a deep sense of responsibility that I stand before you, the Members of Habitat International Coalition present here in Manila and those who are not with us today, to accept HIC Presidency so generously conferred upon me by you all. Considering that I am a relatively new face to some of you at HIC, but for your willingness to repose faith in promise rather than performance and in potential rather than achievement, I am aware, you wouldn't have chosen me to carry this honourous responsibility. I am grateful to you for your act of faith and goodwill and promise to do all within my capacity to serve HIC and be worthy of your trust and confidence.
- 2.0 In the decade and a half of its existence HIC, as a world coalition of human settlements NGOs, has established credibility as an organisation committed to empowering the people - especially the poor people - to improve their housing and living conditions and played a pioneering role as an international pressure group in defence of the rights of the homeless. Through concerted and energetic efforts of its members, associates and partners, over the years, HIC has also emerged as a potent instrument of advocacy action, at the national and global level, on behalf of the disadvantaged homeless of the world and as an effective spokesperson of the NGO community and what they stand for : a bottom up, people centered, equity biased and environment friendly 'development' paradigm. Credit for these noteworthy achievements goes to those pioneers who visioned this initiative and those member organisations and individuals who worked for it. It is indeed our privilege that some of those with the pioneering vision, commitment and ability for selfless hard work are here with us in this room today. We are grateful to the founders, leaders and members of HIC, past and present, for having built this organisation to a level from which we could dream of scaling greater heights and exploring deeper depths.

3.0 In the last few days we have resolved to chart a new course for HIC, evolve a new culture of relationship among members and partners and put in practice a new operational style. In the coming months we shall collectively work on the guidelines for that action and evolve an Agenda for Change. I have no intention to subvert or hijack that legitimate and highly desirable process of consultation, dialogue and search for alternatives. However, based on what I have understood from what our colleagues have said in the last few days here and have been able to interpret from my limited exposure to HIC and its working, it appears to me that HIC's Agenda for Change may constitute new explorations and thrusts in the following priority areas :

3.1 Developing a deeper understanding of the nature and needs of HIC's principal constituencies : the homeless, the inadequately sheltered, the NGOs, and the CBOs.

Creating multiple platforms, linkages and opportunities to develop that understanding; and

Spelling out a fresh mandate emerging from it.

3.2 Developing greater visibility at relevant levels : not only in the international forums but also at the national and sub-national levels;

Developing greater accessibility to the decision making structures at all levels;

Developing greater reach to the constituencies; and

Evolving a decentralised, participatory action agenda.

3.3 Seeking new partners and developing diverse partnerships in HIC's advocacy role

Search for the new partners could be based on a wider definition of NGO world to include a broader cross-section of "change" actors in the civic society.

The diverse partnership could mean :

- o Working simultaneously and synergetically at the grass roots, local, national, regional and global levels;

- o Working jointly and in active partnership with other social movements : environment, human rights, consumer protection, women's rights, etc; and

- o Working to evolve alternative strategies, structures, processes and solution models
 - * to weaken grip of the traditional control regimes
 - * to prevent misdirected development
 - * to protect rights of the citizens, especially the vulnerable sections, and
 - * to educate and influence

3.4 Developing a wider perspective

- o Shelter provision for the poor to be seen as an integral part of poverty alleviation strategy;
- o Shelter issues to be addressed in the wider context of functionally efficient and more equitable cities

Developing a new orientation towards rural settlements

Finding more resources : organisational, monetary and human

Developing power : Constitutional as well as that derived from the constituency solidarity; and

Developing an appropriate organisational structure : commensurate with NGO culture and ethos and suited to HIC's multiple roles

3.5 Generating a new dynamism for the NGO movement

- o By establishing role of NGOs as a "desirable" partner in development : with people, with governments, with other development actors
- o By creating "space" in the formal systems and machinery for effective role playing
- o By strengthening NGO work at the grass roots and other relevant levels
- o By multiplying their number
- o By capacity building : not only to provide services efficiently but also to influence institutional change

- o By setting up inter and intra-sectoral linkages and networks, and
- o By directing resource flow from the national development budgets and international development sources for NGO action.

This list is neither comprehensive nor mandatory. These are some random thoughts on this day of organisational transition. They are not meant to preempt a process, only a tentative directional indicator.

- 4.0 All of us want a newly constituted, freshly mandated and imaginatively structured HIC - a HIC that, in Fr Joe's words, is a place to dream dreams and an organisation providing freedom to fly, flexibility to operate, space to innovate, motivation to act, encouragement to collaborate and share, and even freedom to take risks for the causes we champion. Members here have expressed that they want a more transparent, more open and less bureaucratic HIC. In the coming years working together, working purposefully and systematically we shall endeavour to make HIC such a place. Because dreaming dreams is a necessary precondition to moving societies ahead, to conceive changes and to change orders, structures and directions. And the NGOs, as we all know, are in that business.

We, however, must recognise that our dreams are loaded. They carry a burden in the sense that they couldn't be left as dreams alone and must be translated into reality. Because in realisation of those dreams lies welfare, hope and future of those for whom we are working : the oppressed, the disadvantaged, the poor, the slum dweller, the landless farmer, the evicted villager, and the marginalised woman. Come to think of it, they are not even our dreams. It is their dreams that we are dreaming.

- 5.0 It needs no stressing that the tasks we have taken upon ourselves to address are indeed difficult and complex. While we, the NGOs, want to empower the poor, the formidable societal structures and forces, working in various combinations, are conspiring to make and keep them powerless. While we are fighting for their rights to a reasonable shelter the market forces, on the one hand, and a nexus between politicians, corrupt officials and the builder mafia, on the other, are systematically and openly snatching them away. We want 'illegal' squatters to be given secure and legal land titles. To a many that appears to threaten not only the age old institution of private property but distorting the delicately balanced market mechanism. We are demanding adequately paying jobs for the poor, protection against harassment and eviction of the self-

employed entrepreneur and supports for their enterprises. The elitist concepts of "city beautiful," the forces let loose by structural adjustment programmes, modernisation ideologies and development models and institutional insensivities and rigidities are doing exactly the opposite. We want the environment to be saved for our children. The power of both capital and technology is at work, over time, to damage it. We must realise that our work, our ambition and our convictions demand swimming against the current. The tasks we have taken upon ourselves are demanding. And we have to contend with formidable adversaries : often governments, almost always market forces and occasionally the thrust and the direction of the development process itself. Can we fight this formidable battle just with dreams alone? Especially when we are few in number, small in size, highly restricted in our access to financial, manpower and technological resources and operate under severe constraints : including an identity where we are known not as what we are but what we are not : the Non-Governmental Organisations; the NGOs.

- 6.0 Though it may sound paradoxical, we will have to be realistic in dealing with our dreams. As the tasks we have taken upon ourselves to address are formidable, we will have to organise ourselves systematically and marshall our limited resources optimally and skillfully. Even if we do not like those words we will have to 'perform', we will have to 'deliver' and, in doing so, we will have to be 'efficient'. Our commitment to 'processes' cannot make us oblivious to results.. We can't afford to look upon them as mutually exclusive.
- 7.0 The history of development tells us that we are woefully short in imagination in building proper institutions. It is predominantly the institutional crisis that accounts for distortions in development. We at HIC have realised that the instrument that we have created to work together and to achieve goals is less than perfect. It is indeed fortunate that we have recognised its limitations in time and are poised to work on its restructuring.
- 8.0 In reshaping and reorganising HIC, among other things, we will have to build on our assets and strengths. The first realisation, however, will have to be that the poor, our clients, are not as poor as the world thinks them to be. If the poor were really as poor as they are perceived to be, they would probably be dead long time ago. The very fact that they are surviving in a hostile environment and meeting most of their needs, however inadequately, means that they have more than what we think they have. It is necessary to discover their hidden resources, untapped talents, unrecognised strengths and unchanneled energies. Even we,

the NGOs, do not seem to know enough about the coping mechanism of the poor : which are biological, cultural, physical, psychological, social and spiritual in nature. If our strategy of empowerment is built on understanding of those mechanisms and recognition of those resources and strengths, we may not appear so hopelessly resourceless.

- 9.0 Though the challenges we face are daunting it is helpful to recognise that this is an opportunate time to push for change. The world is going through major changes. The power block equation has altered decisively. Though it is premature to pass judgement on the unfolding scenario, the current trends are indicating that the democratic form of governance is gaining fresh ground in many part of the world. The governments seem inclined, if not to rethink entirely their development models, atleast open to admitting flaws in them. A wider partnership in development is yet a distant dream but the state machinery seems inclined to try out small experiments. The information revolution, in a non-visible way, is contributing to consolidation of 'empowering' processes. Relatively new actors on the development scene, in form of government and non-government international agencies, while still learning complexities of development dynamics are exerting pressure to create space for the NGO's and the civic society's participation in development. New social movements - environment, consumer, gender, human rights - are slowly but surely gaining in strength. And the suffering people at the bottom spurred by political processes and supported by social movements are beginning to demand their share in society's wealth and resources. Admittedly much of this is at an embryonic stage. But, in making plans and evolving strategies it is helpful to take note of these hopeful signs and 'positive' trends.
- 10.0 Let me end this presentation by doing what I should have done in the first place : express my thanks to those without whose wish, help, goodwill and support I won't be standing here today. First of all I am thankful to all HIC members, including the Board, for giving me this opportunity to serve HIC and contribute to its work and progress. It is a privilege to be part of HIC and indeed a greater privilege to be its President. I must also express my grateful thanks to ACHR, its members and especially its remarkable Secretary for nominating - and thereby trusting - me for this demanding job. I must also thank my colleagues in ASAG at Ahmedabad and many other NGO friends in India for their constant support and encouragement. And I must thank my family - mother, wife and children - who have silently suffered my prolonged absence and neglect for years. Lastly, I must thank Davinder Lamba, a long time active member and well-wisher of HIC for making this contest

respectable, friendly and principled. Time and again I have felt - and I still feel - that Davinder would have made a better President. He knows HIC a lot more and a lot better than I do. He cares for this organisation. And he seems to have both heart and stomach for it. Though he has chosen to withdraw from the contest, I hope he will play an active role in strengthening HIC.

11.0 Finally, let me conclude this by assuring you:

- (a) that I look upon the office of HIC's president not as a position of power, privilege and authority but as a mandate to give and serve;
- (b) that in discharge of my duty as HIC President, the operative pronoun will be 'we' and not 'I' because therein - in that form of 'collectivism' and 'togetherness' - lies HIC's strength and future; and
- (c) that I shall remain in this position only till I am creatively useful to HIC, till I am able to contribute to its progress and growth, and till all of you, who have placed me in this position with so much trust want me to be there. Official length of tenure has little meaning. Your approval of me and my conduct will determine how long I stay in the position. In that sense this acceptance speech is also a resignation letter. It is a symbolic indication that in the newly structured HIC you will not be saddled with what you do not want : including the President.

Thank you for your trust and the opportunity to serve HIC.

HIC counts on your energy, your support and your commitment.

Thank you all.