Building Sustainable Community: Dharavi, Mumbai

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In this presentation.....

- Community Organising in an international context
- Mega slums
- Dharavi, Mumbai
- Local Community Development issues
- USA community organising ideas and methods on local sustainable development practice
- Alternative community organising model – Slum Dwellers International
Anna Tibaijuka, then Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations said

“make no mistake, we live at a time of unprecedented, rapid, and irreversible urbanisation. The cities growing fastest are those of the developing world, and the fastest growing neighbourhoods are the slums. ….. Urban poverty is now becoming a severe, pervasive – and largely unacknowledged – feature of modern life. Huge numbers of people in towns and cities are suffering levels of deprivation that are often worse than those experienced by the rural poor.”
UN-HABITAT defines a slum household as a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following:

1. Durable housing of a permanent nature that protects against extreme climate conditions.

2. Sufficient living space which means not more than three people sharing the same room.

3. Easy access to safe water in sufficient amounts at an affordable price.

4. Access to adequate sanitation in the form of a private or public toilet shared by a reasonable number of people.

5. Security of tenure that prevents forced evictions.

(Not everyone living in a slum area is in poverty, although most will be. And not every person in poverty lives in a slum)
Main Urban Development Issues

Urban Sprawl

Collapse of public service (too many people, not enough money)

- Employment
- Affordable housing
- Transportation (public and roads)
- Water and sewerage
- Crime and violence
- Education, Health and Welfare
- Environmental collapse
- Corruption

Continued inward migration / ethnic and cultural tension

How far is this relevant for the USA?
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Dharavi, Mumbai – 18 million people(?) and growing
Dharavi
Local Community Development Issues

• The contribution of traditional industries in sustaining the local economy

• Contribution of other local industries especially recycling

• Attempts at utilising local community assets to promote sustainability

• Strengths and weaknesses of local leadership / social entrepreneurship to develop sustainable organisations

• The role of western NGO’s in developing sustainable community initiatives in Dharavi

• The effect of introducing USA community organising ideas and methods on local sustainable development practice

• Exploring the embedded values of local community organisations (eg: response to gender, age, sexuality and religious difference)
ACORN International and Dharavi

- Organiser from Middle class/ Higher Education backgrounds
- Trade Union experience and Marxist politics
- Politically motivated
- Poor organisational funding / dependant upon personal networks
- Small organisations need to use networks and media to have impact
- Little local leadership training (learn through experience)
- Use of external volunteers
- Quasi social entrepreneurship approach

Issues from ACORN International and developed in local context:

- Walmart / small traders / street traders
- Youth work / arts / media
- Seeds of Peace (conflict resolution)
Network currently extends to Asia: Cambodia, India, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Africa: Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Latin America: Brazil. There are also emerging initiatives in Indonesia, East Timor, Mongolia, Africa: Lesotho, Swaziland, Madagascar, Angola and Latin America:

**Guiding principles**

1. A ‘voice of the urban’ and not a voice for the urban poor.
2. Community learning and solidarity through horizontal exchange programmes.
3. Incremental human settlement development.
4. Solution-finding through negotiations and dialogue.
5. Small core groups of professionals to provide technical and financial support to federations.
6. Consistent engagement with local authorities through urban poor funds, enumeration data and citywide development strategies.
7. International advocacy in order to strengthen local city level initiatives.