

URBAN RESOURCE CENTRE  
Activity Report,  
January - July 2014

### *Highlights*

Awaran Earthquake Rehabilitation Project: In the district Awaran URC has support 425 families with roofing materials for their house construction in fourteen villages. 29 schemes for water supply were also supported in these villages.

URC holds regular discussion forums on major urban issues; during this period four discussion forums were held on road accidents, role of communities in the development, revitalization of Saddar area and Karachi Mass Transit plan.

URC continues documentation of public transport issues: currently urc is conducting a study on transport issues of Karachi city. Study report will soon be available at URC.

URC also compiled report on mobility issues of women in Karachi.

Karachi Circular railway (KCR) resettlement project: The communities continue to struggle to ensure their right for housing.

A group of 14 students from department of social sciences of University of Karachi and Federal Urdu University are continuing their internship at URC.

The news clippings compilation on 16 subjects from 5 daily news papers has been updated up to June 2014.

URC also printed four booklets during this reporting period.

A number of news articles and stories published in various newspapers related to URC work.

## **1.0 Awaran Earthquake rehabilitation**

Two powerful earthquakes (in September 2013, over 7 magnitudes) in the province of Balochistan have devastated Awaran district. More than 300 villages with around 46,000 homes have been flattened. In November 2013 ACHR/ACCA has approved a for earthquake rehabilitation in Awaran District of Balochistan. The project was comprising three components, i. Housing project, ii. Infrastructure upgrading and iii. Technical Support

### **i. Housing Project**

It was proposed to support communities for construction of their houses by providing roofing materials/components. Originally the target was to construct 133 houses. After consultation with communities and market survey and research it was decided to follow the existing construction method and materials for this project. This has reduced the overall material costs and the project has been able to support over 325 families with roofing materials to construct their houses.

The poor communities across Awaran had one room houses for each family. The project team initiated a community led process for the reconstruction of houses. Under this process the communities constructed the walls of the houses and the ACCA project provided support for roofing components. Apart this the communities also carried out labour costs of the entire construction work.

Under this project 425 houses were constructed in fourteen villages of Awaran district.

### **ii. Infrastructure development/upgrading project**

The ACHR/ACCA also provided support for repairing and construction of urgent type of infrastructure for collective community usage. The surveys and consultations with communities identified drinking water as an urgent need to be resolve on priority basis. As a large number of existing community hand pumps and wells destroyed in the earthquake.

The project has supported 30 community drinking water schemes. This includes repairing of 19 existing hand pumps, digging/boring of 4 community wells and provision of 5 water tanks with water connections/pipes. Apart from this two electric water pumps were also given to the communities to fetch water from wells.

### **iii. Technical Support**

A regular monitoring system was developed to assist communities for rebuilding of their houses. The technical team of URC regularly visited the villages to monitor construction work of houses. Most of villages are located in remote mountainous range and difficult to access. Therefore a network of community activists was established to provide guidelines to communities for the construction techniques and methods. An informal mechanism of surveys, meetings, monitoring, field visits and technical support was followed to help local communities. It also includes inter village exchange visits and experience sharing among communities.

**(A detail report on earthquake rehabilitation is available on request at URC)**

## **2.0 Eviction Watch and Housing Rights Program**

### **Evictions in Karachi;**

URC has been monitoring evictions in the Karachi city since 1992. The reported figures show that more than 40,900 houses have been bulldozed by various government agencies since 1992. As a result of these evictions 286,300 people have been displaced, including women, children and elderly. No compensations or alternatives in most of the cases were awarded to the victims of these demolitions.

Since government led evictions have stopped, therefore this has provided a relief among poor communities across the city. But now the other types of displacements are taking place in the city. Now the criminal gangs are getting hold of some of the settlements in the city. These criminal gangs are forcing the peaceful communities to leave their houses in Karachi. Such localities include, Lyari, Qasba colony, Mango Pir and parts of Baldia and Kiamari Towns.

In Lyari fraction of different criminal groups fight to each to strengthen their control in various locations. This situation has forced many communities to leave their houses and take refuge in safe location. These displacements include over 500 Christian and Hindu families who have been living in Lyari had forcefully evicted from their houses.

URC has collaborated with other civil society organizations to lobby for creating peace in Lyari area. A number of meetings were held with concerns police officials on this regards. URC along with other civil society organizations held press conference at Karachi press club to highlight issue of Lyari violence in the media. On 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014 a major demonstration was held at Karachi Press

club. A large number of community groups participated in this demonstration. This demonstration got very good coverage in the media.

URC also circulated an international appeal for letter writing. In this letter URC appealed its friend organizations in other countries to send letter to the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) about displacement of families in Lyari particularly minority groups. A number of organizations sent their concerned letters to the CJP with cc copy to prime minister of Pakistan and other relevant authorities in Pakistan.

It seems government is talking security issues of Karachi in more serious way. Now past few months there is relatively calm and peace is prevailing in Lyari area. This is helping many families to return their houses. But still many families are reluctant to back and they are preferring to shift from Lyari area permanently

URC is also working on the following issues link with the forced evictions.

- Supporting the communities to lobby for extension of the cut date for land titles (awarding ownership) of informal settlements.
- Developing a better resettlement policy for poor communities.

**Supporting the communities to lobby for extension of the cut date for land titles (awarding ownership) of informal settlements:**

Currently the cut date for awarding land titles (awarding land ownerships) is 30<sup>th</sup> June 1997 in Sindh province. A number of settlements of poor communities which were established after 30<sup>th</sup> June 1997 cannot qualify for land titles. Therefore URC has decided to support these communities to lobby for the extension of the cut.

With collaboration of the communities a signature campaign was initiated to appeal Sindh government to extend cut date for giving land title to the poor communities. The collected signatures were sent to the chief minister and governor of Sindh. Many follow up meetings were also held with Sindh cabinet secretary in this regard.

URC will continue to follow up this issue.

**Developing a better resettlement policy for poor communities:**

URC continues its follow for a better resettlement policy. Lyari Expressway and Karachi circular railway are two examples policy change dialogues.

**Lyari Expressway** is an old project (initiated in 2001) and half completed. Through a long battle of the communities against demolition of their houses, now the government is agreed to make changes in the expressway plan. These changes will avoid the demolition of the remaining communities. If this new plan is implemented this would be a great victory for the communities, who have been struggling against their forced displacement.

**Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) resettlement plan:** This is a proposed project, which involves resettlement of over 4,600 families. In this case the community network has been trying to make it more participatory and transparent.

The concerned government department (Karachi Urban Transport Corporation - KUTC) was not sharing any information with communities on the resettlement. The community members were invited in many official meetings just for fulfilling official formalities and procedures. The communities sent many requests for sharing of information, but did not get a positive response. After failure of getting information, the communities filed a complaint to the Provincial Ombudsman. The Ombudsman registered complaint under the article 19-A of the constitution of Pakistan and Sindh freedom of information act. After a number of hearings, the Ombudsman accepted public right of information on vital government projects. On 28<sup>th</sup> November 2013 the Ombudsman ordered the KUTC to provide list of affected families and KCR map to the communities.

This order from the Ombudsman is a major victory for the communities usually the government hides such information from communities for various reasons.

On 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013 the KUTC has submitted the list of affected communities and KCR map at Ombudsman office. On 17<sup>th</sup> December 2013 the Ombudsman handed this information to the communities. URC has circulated copies of list among railway communities. It was soon revealed that instead of new surveyed list an old list was given to the communities. Whereas the communities were looking the new list based on a recent survey done by JICA.

The community activists held a meeting at URC and it was decided that to resubmitted a request at the Ombudsman office requesting for a new list of effected families. A request has been resubmitted at Ombudsman and it is being follow up for the hearings. The URC representatives and community activists are regularly appearing before the Ombudsman to follow this request.

URC will continue to play its role to mobilize communities to access information for participatory and transparent process of the resettlement.

### **3.0 URC Forums**

To encourage interaction between different development sectors of the city, regular forums are held at URC, where various groups come in contact with each other. This promotes collective thinking, decision making and actions on major urban issues. URC documents and prints the proceedings of these forums regularly.

During the current reporting period, the following forums were held:

#### **URC forum on “Road Accidents in Karachi – Causes and Impacts”**

This forum was held on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2014 at URC Karachi office. The panel of experts who made their presentation on this occasion included:

- Dr. Rasheed Jooma, Ex Director General Health Department, Government of Pakistan.
- Mr. Asad Jahangir, Ex DIG Traffic Karachi
- Prof. Dr. Mir Shabbar Ali, chairman Department of Urban and Infrastructure engineering NED University

The panel of experts presented their research analysis on road accidents in Karachi. This research was conducted at Road Traffic Injury Research & Prevention Centre.

The presentations were followed by a discussion on road accidents in the city.

#### **URC forum on “An overview on Karachi Mass Transit proposed plans”**

This forum was held on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2014 at URC Karachi office. Mr. Rasheed, consultant for Transport and Mass Transit Department, government of Sindh made a detail presentation on government's proposed Mass Transit program of Karachi city.

The presentation was followed by a discussion on public transport issues of the city.

#### **URC forum on “Revitalization of Empress Market area and Traffic Management of Saddar”**

URC forum on “Revitalization of Empress Market area and Traffic Management of Saddar” was held on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2014 at URC Karachi office. It was an open forum. The participants discussed traffic management issues of the Saddar area in this forum.

#### **URC forum on “Role of the communities in the development”**

This forum was held on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014 at URC office. This forum was arranged for the students of social sciences of University of Karachi and Federal Urdu

University. Mr. Taseem Ahmad Siddiqui, chairman Saiban – Action Research for Shelter highlighted various aspects of community development and role of communities in the development.

The presentation was followed by questions and answers round.

#### **4.0 Act as a watch group on major urban issues**

URC plays the role of a ‘watchdog’ group in the city’s planning and development scene. In this respect, it has worked on a number of issues, currently it is involved with the following:

- Transport and Traffic Management in Karachi
- Karachi Circular Railway

The details of some current involvements are explained in the following pages:

##### **Transport and Traffic Management in Karachi**

URC has been focusing on the issue of transport and traffic management in Karachi.

URC is more interested in an efficient and cost effective transport system for the city, which would benefit poor commuters directly.

##### **A study on transport issues of Karachi city**

URC is currently conducting a joint study on transport system of Karachi. The objective of the study is to understand issues and problems related to the public transport.

The interviews of public transport users, regulators and transport operators were collected during this reporting period.

##### **The details of interviews conduct:**

###### **Interviews of public transport users:**

- Interviews of public transport users (thru structure questionnaires)
- Interviews of public transport users (thru un-structure questionnaires)
- Interviews of women (thru un-structure questionnaires)

###### **Interviews of operator:**

- Mr. Irshad Bukhari, President Karachi Transport *Ittehad* (KTI)
- Mr. Shabbir H. Sulemanjee, chairman, All Pakistan CNG Association
- Mr. Mehmood Afridi, and Tawab Khan, President /Vice President, Muslim Mini Bus & Coach Owner Association
- Mr. Safdar Qadir, President All Karachi Qingchi & Rickshaw Association



- Mr. Hafiz ul Haq Hassan Zai, President, Karachi Taxi & Motor Rickshaw
- Yellow Cab Owners Association

#### **Interviews of regulators:**

- Director, Transport & Communication Department, KMC
- Mr. Arif Hanif, DIG Traffic, Garden Road
- Mr. Fazal Karim Khatri, DG Mass Transit Department
- Mr. Ghazanfar Ali Qadri, Secretary Regional Transport Authority (RTA)
- Mr. Tauha Ahmed Farooqi, Secretary Transport and Mass Transit department

The analysis of the study is being compiled in a report. The publication of this study report will enable URC to lobby for policy changes.

#### **Mobility issues of women:**

Another major issue in Karachi is mobility of women. The observations showed that there are an increasing number of women commuters, who travel on daily basis for work or education. Public transport is a major hurdle for such women for their secure and safe mobility. The surveys conducted by URC showed that a large number of poor women are working as domestic workers in different parts of the city. They also face transport problems as there are no public transport routes to connect their residential areas with their work places.

During current reporting period more interviews of working women were conducted. In these interviews women have identified number issues, linking with harassment in public transport, travelling time, fares, non availability etc.

URC representative held a number of meetings with secretary transport, cabinet secretary, commissioner Karachi, director transport department and secretary regional transport authority. The purpose of these meetings was to draw attention towards issues of women mobility. Increasing seating capacity and separate bus routes were the main focus of the discussions in these meetings.

URC has compiled a report on women mobility issues in Karachi. The report is now available at URC.

URC will continue its investigations on the transport issues to understand the situation and develop better facilities for the commuters.

#### **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)**

URC regularly attend the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) public hearing meetings. The documents collected from these hearings are now available at URC library.

## **5.0 URC's Partner organizations**

### **Punjab Urban Resource Center (PURC)**

There is a regular interaction between PURC and URC Karachi. Information and technical assistance is being shared with PURC on day to day basis. Both organizations will further collaborate on common urban issues in future.

### **Partners in other cities:**

There are a number of other small organizations in other cities which are doing similar activities. These organizations are in contact with URC and information shared with them on regular basis.

Recently URC has developed contacts with communities working for earthquake rehabilitation in Awaran district.

## **6.0 Networking and exchange**

### **Strengthening Community Based Organizations:**

NGOs and CBOs from different parts of Karachi city are in regular contact with URC. Information is shared with them on a number of issues that are relevant to the problems they have identified themselves. URC also inter-links community based organizations with other NGOs, Government, Media and Academics working in the same field.

During current reporting period contact details and current activities of 29 CBOs were updated. This update shows the current involvement of CBOs.

### **Community Development Network (CDN)**

The Community Development Network (CDN) holds regular meetings. During this period one meeting of CDN network was held. The meeting was held in Jafferabad Balochistan on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2014 and it was hosted by the Islamia Educational and Welfare Society Jafferabad.

This is a national network of partner organizations. The CDN meetings provide an opportunity to members to understand each other's work and to observe partners work on site, as the venue of the meeting is rotated among partners. Members discuss various development issues and trends.

Partners from various organizations presented new developments in their work, expansion of work, link up with government programs.

### **Joint Action Committee (JAC)**

URC is also a part of an NGO Network called Joint Action Committee (JAC). This is a coalition of NGOs in Karachi. The JAC is working on gender and human rights issues. This network holds regular meetings, seminars, workshops, public demos and interactions on gender and human rights issues.

Some recent focus issues of the Joint Action Committee (JAC):

- Supporting the recent army operation against terrorists in Northern areas (Civil society organizations back military operation, condemn terrorism)
- A delegation visited Mr. Hamid Mir in the hospital on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2014. Mr Mir is a senior Journalist, who was shot injured by the terrorists in Karachi. A press conference was also held on 24 April, 2014 at Karachi Press Club (KPC) demanding arrest of terrorists involved in this incident.
- Press conference on violence in Lyari area and demanding restoration of peace in the area.
- Discussion on security and law & order issues of the Karachi city.
- Condemning increasing rap cases and demanding protection of women.
- Meeting on issues of the poor labour workers in the city.
- Discussion meeting on displacement of minority groups in Lyari.

### **Network of communities against forced evictions**

Currently there are two networks of communities working against evictions:

- i. Network of communities affected by Lyari expressway project
- ii. Network of communities living along railway tracks of Karachi.

These communities are facing eviction threats due to mega projects. They formed their respective community networks to lobby for the protection of their housing rights.

The communities along Lyari expressway almost achieved their goal by stopping the construction work of the expressway in half way and now successfully lobbied to make changes in the expressway plan.

Whereas the communities along railway lines in Karachi are still struggling with the government's proposed plan of their forced displacement program.

## **7.0 Youth Training Program**

The program provides an opportunity to under and fresh graduates from universities and low-income settlements to involve themselves in the activities of URC and develop their orientation towards the changing realities of the urban context. To provide an incentive to the youth, more informal techniques are adopted during the training, which are based on field visits and self-learning. The URC staff supervises and guides their activities.

A group of 14 students from department of social sciences of University of Karachi and Federal Urdu University are continuing their internship at URC.

These students were assigned to prepare case studies of different settlements as well as urban issues.

Three students from other academic institutions are also doing their summer internship at URC, they include

- Ms. Rudaina Siddiqui, *MA Development Studies* - York University – Toronto, Canada.
- Ms. Palwasha Shahab, BA – LLB Program Lahore university of Management Sciences.
- Ms. Mahvasha, Architecture Program – Indus Valley School of Arts and Architecture

URC displayed presentation on various urban issues at seminars held at NED University of Engineering and Technology. These exhibitions were organized by Department of Architecture and Planning held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2013 and 29<sup>th</sup> March 2014. The theme of the seminar was to understand the dynamics land in the urban and regional contexts and housing for all.

On 16<sup>th</sup> May 2014 the students from 4<sup>th</sup> year architecture class of visual studies department of Karachi university has also made their presentation on urban development at URC. This is part of URC and OPP-RTI efforts to encourage involve themselves in community development.

## **8.0 Research**

URC is currently conducting a study on issues of the public transport in Karachi. A report of the study will soon be available at URC.

## **9.0 Publications**

### **Proceedings of the Forums**

During the current period the proceedings of the following forums were printed: Proceedings of four forums were printed. These include:

- The drainage system of Karachi – Major issues and a way ahead
- Karachi: Demographic trends - social and political Implications
- Sindh Local Government Act 2013 - An Overview
- A Research Study on Road Accidents in Karachi – Causes and Impacts

### **News articles published in various news papers related to URC work:**

- Help yourself, by Dr Noman Ahmed on June 29, 2014, Daily The News. Click on link: <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/help-in-post-disaster-scenario/#.U7-M2UDNzzB>
- Mass transit plan: 'Finish line close for the Karachi yellow line' By Mahim Maher on April 19, 2014 Daily Express Tribune. Click on link: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/697514/mass-transit-plan-finish-line-close-for-the-karachi-yellow-line/>
- Cellphones, Billboards, No Helmets: A Recipe For Death In Karachi Streets. By Zofeen Ebrahim on April 4, 2014 Mint Press News. Click link: <http://www.mintpressnews.com/cellphones-billboards-helmets-recipe-death-karachi-streets/188061/>
- 'Mass transit system vital to improve traffic, lower casualties' by Zeeshan Azmat on March 22, 2014, The News. Click on link: <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-4-239585-Mass-transit-system-vital-to-improve-traffic-lower-casualties>
- Circular Railway imperatives by Arif Hasan, on February 25, 2014 Daily Dawn. Click on link: <http://www.dawn.com/news/1089294/circular-railway-imperatives>
- All we want is peace': Lyari residents hold govt responsible for bloodshed By Sameer Mandhro, on March 14, 2014, Express Tribune. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/682561/all-we-want-is-peace-lyari-residents-hold-govt-responsible-for-bloodshed/>

### **Facts & Figures (monthly facts sheet)**

Since July 2013, URC has circulated 12 issues of the monthly Facts & Figures. URC has been circulating this newssheet in Urdu and English since January 1993. It is a monthly newsletter, containing information on major urban issues, i.e. housing, health, environment, education, urban services, economy and transport. This information is collected through news clippings, reports issued by government agencies and NGOs, and studies conducted by URC. The current issues of the Facts & Figures are now available at the URC web site.

## **10.0 Documentation**

### **News Clippings**

Major articles under each heading have been compiled into dossiers (sorted and separated heading-wise files) and updated up to June 2014. URC has been collecting news clippings and articles and providing facilities for different cross sections of the society since 1991. Mainly researchers, students, journalists, academicians, institutions and libraries purchase these clipping files.

The news clippings from Daily Jang, Daily Express, Daily Dawn, The News and Express Tribune are being collected. The news clippings are being collected on the following subjects;

- Transport and Traffic Management
- Housing & Land Management
- Health
- Education
- Environment
- Economics
- Law & Order
- Lyari Expressway
- Eviction and Encroachment
- Beaches, Parks and plantations
- Water Supply
- Sewerage
- Solid Waste Management, Electricity,
- CDGK & Local Body System and
- Urban Services
- Floods

A list of all documentation is available at URC.

### **URC Library**

The URC library has more than 5,000 government reports, books, research papers, magazines and newsletters on urban issues in general and on Karachi in particular. An average of 150 visitors use the library every month including researchers, students, journalists, community activists and training groups.

### **Videos:**

Video documentaries related to URC work shown on the media

- Lyari Expressway - Infocus - 2nd February 2014, Dawn News. Click on link: [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1ax1yw\\_infocus-2nd-february-2014\\_news?from\\_related=related.page.int.meta2-only.4b3d7ebcb480229965b36b3cfe670f26139175631](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1ax1yw_infocus-2nd-february-2014_news?from_related=related.page.int.meta2-only.4b3d7ebcb480229965b36b3cfe670f26139175631)

Other recent video links

The video can be watched on the following links:

- Karachi Rising - The unplanned Densification of low income housing (English version) click on link: <http://vimeo.com/79388545>
- Karachi Rising - The unplanned Densification of low income housing (Urdu version) click on link: <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B5wAvR9ZHsxAMVIFX2ZRYnljUVU/edit?pli=1>

**Website**

URC has developed its website to extend the outreach of its information dissemination. The web address is [www.urckarachi.org](http://www.urckarachi.org). The website is being updated on a regular basis.

URC also has started its page on facebook. The page can be viewed through link: <http://www.facebook.com/URCKHI>. URC circulates current information and news clippings on city development through face book page on regular basis.