

# **THE HOUSING CRISIS IN CENTRAL ASIA**

## **Report of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) Mission to Almaty (Kazakhstan) and Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan)**

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## Abbreviations and Local Terms

### Abbreviations

ACHR	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
CM	Centimetre
DIA	Dutch Interchurch Aid
HIC	Habitat International Coalition
M	Metre
M2	Meter Square
OPP	Orangi Pilot Project
SPARC	Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres
TG	Tenage: Kazakh Currency
UN	United Nations

### Local Terms

Akim	ruler
Ashar	collective Work
chai	tea
chaikhana	tea house
kish-mish	rasins
mehman-khana	guest house
namaz	Muslim pray
roza	breakfast
nan	bread
Ryon	district
yourt	tent

# PART ONE: MISSION REPORT

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Background to the Mission

Dutch Inter church Aid (DIA) has been working with problems related to homelessness and informal settlements in Almaty and Bishkek. In early 1995 it felt that it required professional advice on the subject. In this connection it contacted Habitat International Coalition (HIC) who in turn requested the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), a Bangkok based Asian NGO, for assistance. As a result, an ACHR mission to Central Asia was organised. No specific terms of reference were developed although certain directions were indicated in a fax from DIA to the mission members (see Appendix - 1). The mission was seen primarily as an exploratory one that would set certain directions that DIA could follow in the future.

### Brief History of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are a part of the Central Asian steppes. They first appear in documented history in the fourth century BC. At that stage they were inhabited by the Iranians who were a sedentary people. In the sixth century Turkish tribes from Mongolia moved into this area and ruled over it for three centuries. This Turkish empire, dominated by nomadic culture, disintegrated into splinter groups. In the ninth century a fusion of the nomadic Turkish culture and the Iranian sedentary culture began. This culture has since then dominated the history of Central Asia, and, in spite of the fusion, each has maintained its separate identity.

With the coming of Islam, the Iranian civilisation was Islamised and this in turn effected the culture of the entire region. Chingiz Khan conquered Central Asia in the thirteenth century after which the region was divided among his descendants and group identities, based on these divisions, started to emerge by the sixteenth century. It was at this time that the Kazakh and Kyrgyz people formed *khanates* or states. However, there were many groups in these *khanates* whose origins were non-Kazakh and non-Kyrgyz. In addition, the culture of the sedentary population was Iranian and that of the nomadic population, Turkish. Unlike many of the groups, the life-style of most of the Kazakhs and Kyrgyzs depended on the exploitation of the steps. As such, the society in the states was pluralistic and identity was the result of language or of a specific function within society.

The Russians started moving into Central Asia in the early eighteenth century and in 1730 the Kazakh Khan accepted their overlordship. By 1876 the subjugation of Central Asia by the Russians was complete. From 1840 onwards Russian settlements started to emerge on the Central Asian steps and by 1911, forty percent of the population in the step *oblasts* was Russian. This influx forced the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyzs to change their life-styles since they could not continue as nomads with sharply reduced lands.

Central Asians struggled against Russian rule and two powerful movements for the assertion of their identity emerged. One was Pan-Islamism and the other Pan-Turkism. There was no movement around smaller national identities such as Kyrgyzs, Kazakhs, Uzbeks and others. However, the First World War and the Russian Revolution marginalised these movements and Central Asia became a part of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet definition of a nation was born out of the European experience. According to this definition a nation had to have a "common language, territory, psychological make-up and historical experience". The application of this definition in the Central Asian context meant an artificial division of a vast area, inhabited by a pluralistic society into smaller entities. Each entity contained within it a large number of other ethnic minorities who were not conscious of their differences from the major group. History had to be re-written to suit this new concept of nationalities. Furthermore, the groups

had to distance themselves from their Iranian, Turkish and Islamic past that unified them in psychological terms and unified their elite in terms of culture and language. The Arabic script was replaced by the Cyrillic and Persian and Chaghatay Turkish by the Russian language and the local Turkish dialects of the different republics.

Soviet rule established a state run socialist economy in Central Asia. The republics were dominated by Moscow through an over-centralised planning and financial system which was run by Russian and/or Russainised local elites. All production, employment, social sector facilities and infrastructure development was carried out and delivered by the state. As a result, excellent education, health, transport and housing facilities were developed for most urban centres in the region and as a result, the republics have social indicators that are far superior to all Third World countries (see tables in Appendix 2). However, as a result of these policies, 95 percent of all industries by 1989 in the Soviet Union, were supervised by the Centre and just one or two factories supplied "the entire Soviet market with anything from rails to sewing machines". Thus, the republics had no economic independence or even sustainable economies.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of independent Central Asian Republics in 1991-92 has created major problems for the new countries. Replacing the old socialist model which linked the republics to a larger Soviet system, by a more independent economy with an emphasis on privatisation, has created many problems. Factories have closed down. Real incomes have fallen. There is large scale unemployment. There is increasing pressure to pay for social sector facilities and major subsidies on housing, culture, health, education and transport have been curtailed and are likely to be curtailed further. Economic growth rate in both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan is more than minus 5 as opposed to 6 for Indonesia, 2.9 for India and 8.2 for Thailand. Average inflation between 1985-94 is between 101 to 150 percent (see tables in Appendix 2).

A number of First World NGOs are increasingly getting involved in Central Asia and trying to help communities cope with a very difficult situation. However, there is no tradition of NGOs in the Soviet republics and no tradition of collective community work or community organisation that is independent of the state. This constitutes a major constraint in the NGOs replicating the work they have done and the experience they have gained, in other countries. In addition, there is also the desire of the new republics to look back to their pre-Soviet history and link it with their present. In such conditions, it is necessary to understand the processes of change in the new republics and the actors that are involved in them.

## **2. THE HOUSING RELATED CRISIS IN ALMATY AND BISHKEK**

### **Sources of Information**

The sources of information in this section are derived from conversations with community leaders, NGO activists, government officials and residents of informal settlements and dormitories, and on observations made during field visits. Details of these conversations and observations are given in Arif Hasan's travel notes made during the Mission's visit to Central Asia, which form part two of this book.

### **Housing Supply in Almaty and Bishkek Under the Soviet System**

Under the Soviet system all organisations that employed people had dormitories for their employees. After a period of working for two to four years, accommodation was usually given in the dormitory after which the individual or family applied for an apartment. If one was lucky, an apartment was provided by the state in ten to fifteen years. However, many people "died without getting an apartment". Priority was given to people who were close to the Communist Party or had "connections" in the bureaucracy. As such there were a large number of "homeless people" in the Soviet system as well.

To get work in any area of the country a Residential Registration Certificate was required. This was very difficult to obtain and as a result migration from one area to another was controlled. However, clandestinely migration did take place and people lived in rented rooms and cellars. As a matter of policy Kazakhs were not given Residential Registration Certificates for Almaty. They were told to live in their villages and "look after their animals".

Estimates differ, but it seems that during the Soviet period the state developed about 800,000 square metres of housing per year in Almaty. However, since 1990 the state has been able to develop no more than 400 plus apartments and these too for pensioners. The rest of the demand has not been met.

### **The Collapse of the System and Its Repercussions**

With the collapse of Soviet economy towards the end of the eighties a massive migration from rural to urban areas began. There was large scale unemployment as collective farms could no longer be managed and agricultural production could no longer be transported to the cities. The process of privatisation aggravated the situation. Salaries were not paid, and it seems that in most cases they are still not paid. The people adopted a barter economy to survive. This rural-urban migration, coupled with the failure of the state to construct apartments, constitutes the housing crisis in Almaty and Bishkek. In this crisis, the control on migration through the Residential Registration Certificate process was no longer possible.

### **The December 1986 Movement in Almaty**

In December 1986 there were large scale demonstrations against the state in Almaty. These demonstrations were the result of certain political decisions taken by Moscow which were conceived by the Kazakh ethnic group as anti-Kazakh. The demonstrations were ruthlessly crushed and people who had participated in them lost their jobs and their places of residence. A number of people died and ninety-nine persons were sentenced to long periods of imprisonment.

In 1988, Mukhtar Shakanoff, deputy in the Supreme Soviet, began a human rights movement called the Zheltoksin (December) Movement. The movement started revealing all the terrible

things that happened during the 1986 repression and demanded that the people who suffered should be rehabilitated. The Movement was supported by the people and there was considerable unrest. The

homeless people were among those who supported the Zheltoksin Movement and demanded housing for themselves from its platform.

## **The Movement of the Homeless in Almaty: The Process**

As a result of the Zheltoksin Movement a number of organisations of homeless people were formed and they were supported by the Movement leaders, Kazakh intellectuals and public figures such as film and theatre actors. These organisations were formed in June 1990 and they organised their members to take over vacant land in the city, build their *yourts* and start living in them. Right now there are nine such settlements in Almaty. In December 1991 the organisations started taking over empty apartments and houses in the Askay district and giving them to their members. However, the police removed them from these premises within two weeks. In January 1992 the organisations started taking over empty rooms in the dormitories of various organisations. There was brutal police retaliation but there was some limited success as well.

On May 29, 1992 the various organisations joint together to form the *Otao* or Unity Movement. This was followed by a hunger strike of twenty one persons outside the Supreme Soviet on Lenin Square. The government was embarrassed and realised that unless it could satisfy some of the demands of the homeless, their movement would continue to grow.

## **The Repercussions of the Movement of the Homeless in Almaty**

### ***Formation of the Committee for the Homeless***

In June 1992, as a sequel to the hunger strike, the government formed the Committee for the Homeless. The Committee chairman was a bureaucrat and he took his orders directly from the *Akim* or Mayor of the city. The Committee legalised the takeover of the lands and dormitories and developed standard plans and estimates for the development of the settlements by the Almaty General Plan Company, a state enterprise. According to these plans, the plot owners were supposed to build their houses as per government specifications, which are complex and expensive to execute. The government was also supposed to develop physical and social infrastructure, which it has not done as yet.

An important decision of the Committee was that if persons who had been allotted plots did not start living on them within two years, the plots would be taken from them and given to other people. This decision has not been firmly implemented.

### ***Formation of Baspana***

On December 29, 1994, the Committee was dissolved by the *Akim* and in the decree that dissolved it, it was stated that the functions of the Committee would be vested in an NGO called Aa-Ou Baspana. However, it was only in May 1995 that such an NGO was created. It was created as a confederation of nine organisations of homeless people. It is responsible for allocating plots, cancellation of plots, infrastructure development, housing support, and the creation of social facilities. The state has no budget for the activities of Baspana.

### ***The Housing Bank***

The government has also instituted a housing bank which is supposed to give loans for house building provided the owners have a piece of land to build on. The criteria for acquiring a loan is that the loan should be repaid in a period of thirty years in instalments. However, each instalment should not be more than thirty percent of the applicant's income. This weeds out people with low incomes from the scheme. Another reason for their being weeded out is that the standard houses prescribed by the state regulations are extremely expensive to build and have complex specifications. These building processes and specifications were developed for the state companies that constructed housing under the Soviet system.

## **The Situation in Bishkek**

The situation in Bishkek is similar to that in Almaty. However, unlike Almaty, the government of Krgyzstan has provided some basic infrastructure in a number of settlements. Water lines with standposts have been provided along the main access roads. Electricity for small scale domestic use has also been provided, though no energy is available for cooking and heating. The government has formed a *ryon* (district) committee for looking after the interests of the informal settlements in each district of the city. These Committees consist of elected residents and do very little apart from identifying development activities that the city administration could undertake, and lobbying for them. The decision to carry out these developments, however, rests with the administration.

In addition to providing some basic infrastructure the government has also instituted a *Ashar* (collective work) Business Association. The purpose of this organisation is to help in the establishment and development of small business enterprises through credit. A credit programme for housing was also initiated and a number of standard houses on government specifications were built as a result. However, the programme was discontinued in 1992. No further land for housing has been allocated after 1991.



### **3. OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS**

#### **The Cities of Almaty and Bishkek**

The cities of Almaty and Bishkek are well planned. The roads are lined with trees. There are pavements, open plazas, parks, a number of monuments and memorials, museums, art galleries and theatres. The public housing is well designed and reasonably well maintained by Asian standards. Public transport is efficient and is also well maintained. There are no garbage dumps and the meat, fruit and vegetable markets are also clean and hygienic. People in these markets are, by and large, well dressed and do not advertise their goods by shouting or in any aggressive manner. The two cities are definitely Eastern-European in physical and sociological terms and not a part of Third World Asia.

#### **The Homeless and Their Leadership**

There is a major difference between the homeless people in Almaty and Bishkek and those in Third World Asian cities. The homeless in these two cities are hundred percent literate. Many of them are architects, engineers, doctors, university professors and almost all the others have studied at a vocational school. The leadership is also drawn from the "specialists" and they have very little understanding of populist strategies and collective action that are operative in Third World cities. They are not willing to absolve the state from its responsibilities and they are reluctant to accept "substandard" development.

It seems that most of the homeless are young people. The average age according to one source is thirty years. They are entirely of Kazakh and Kyrgyz origin and are migrants from the rural areas. Many of them, however, have been living in the city for over ten years. They claim that they had their own homes in the countryside but there was no work over there and hence no money to live on.

#### **Government Departments and Officials**

The Mission only met with government departments and officials in Almaty. The offices were well maintained and well equipped. The officials had a good understanding of the problems in the informal settlements and had a lot of sympathy for the residents. There was no contradiction between their description of conditions in the settlements and the causes for them and those given by the leaders of the various organisations of homeless people. Unlike Third World Asian bureaucrats and administrators, they did not blame the people in any way, but blamed the conditions in the country and the period of transition that they were passing through.

#### **The Housing Building Process in the Settlements**

##### ***The process and problems of building***

The family that wishes to build a house, first builds a *yurt* on the plot and moves in. All the residents that the Mission spoke to had built their own "temporary" houses. They had not employed hired labour or skilled workmen. They had left space, as per the regulations of the city administration, for building the standard government specified house or "permanent" house as it is called. They did not think that they would be able to build a "permanent" house in the foreseeable future.

They face a number of problems in building. First, they have no idea of how much the house will cost them. Then, there was the problem of acquiring tools such as an excavator, an electric saw, a generator for operating machinery, and shuttering for casting in-situ walls and foundations. Clay is the cheapest form of construction for walls. However, good clay in almost all cases had to be acquired from long distances and the cost of transportation was considerable. The houses were not earthquake proof and they were afraid that they would collapse in an earthquake. None of the houses had any drawn out plans or details on the basis of which they were constructed.

### ***Types of technology used***

Wall technology in the houses that were visited by the Mission was of four types. One, mud wall cast in-situ; two, mud walls in pre-cast sun dried bricks; three, timber boarding with timber lattice work on either side covered with mud plaster; and pre-cast concrete blocks. The roof is always the same. It is pitched to a steep slope and consists of a triangular timber truss covered with asbestos sheets. The false ceiling consists of timber rafters with timber boards above and a false ceiling of hardboard below. The boards are covered with six to seven centimetres of earth which serve as insulation. The floors are of timber boards raised on timber battens. This separation from the earth keeps the floor warm and free from humidity.

### ***Comments***

The settlements are well planned. This is because the leadership that occupied the land and developed them, had the support of the professional people that formed part of the membership of the organisations of homeless people.

In Almaty and Bishkek, at the very most ten percent of the houses in any given settlement are built according to government specifications. In addition, more than half the plots that have been acquired for the settlements are lying vacant. In Bishkek, more plots have been built upon because of the partial availability of water and electricity and because the city administration exercises its right to take away the plots of people who have not built their homes. In Almaty, large scale building activity has taken place in those settlements which have not been "legalised" so far. This is perhaps because of a fear of losing the land if it is not occupied. In Almaty again, some of the settlements are "informally" expanding into areas beyond their boundaries.

In Almaty, over 2,500 plots out of 5,000 which have been allocated, are lying vacant. In addition, there is a waiting list of 12,000 persons. The exact number for Bishkek could not be ascertained but it seems the people on the waiting list are larger. However, neither in Bishkek or Almaty has any land been made available by the government to the informal builders after 1991.

An enormous amount of investment has gone into the houses that were visited. However, they are badly detailed. The timber sizes are excessive and can be reduced to almost half. The old technique of timber boarding for walls is still being used although timber is now difficult to obtain and expensive to buy and saw. In almost all cases window shutters have yet to be installed. Far better houses at a much cheaper cost are possible if technical support, based on participatory research, is provided to the residents.

## **Physical and Social Infrastructure**

### ***Water***

In Almaty, water is not available in the settlements. People travel to the nearest water source and bring the water by sledge in winter and by cart in other seasons. Often these water sources are in public institutions and they pay the caretakers at these institutions a small sum of money for taking water. In some cases water is purchased from private tankers who bring it to the settlement. State tankers are reluctant to come to the settlements since there are no proper roads in them.

Both in Bishkek and Almaty, some people have dug wells from which they acquire water. In some cases, these wells have been dug collectively and they have solved the water problem. However, according to government regulations, certain depths are specified (200 metres in Almaty) from which water should be drawn. Even after being drawn from such a depth state regulations require that water has to be filtered and chlorinated. Residents claim that water from their wells has not harmed them in any way and that they used to drink water from shallow wells in the countryside. The leadership of the settlements, however, feels that state regulations must be followed for health reasons.

In Bishkek, the state has laid water mains in a number of settlements but no distribution system. It plans to continue to lay water mains. This makes it easier for people to acquire water since stand

posts are seldom more than 250 metres from their houses. The idea of developing small cluster organisations and building their own distribution systems has not occurred to the residents.

### ***Electricity***

In Almaty, the government (except for one settlement), has developed no electricity network. People steal electricity from the nearest available overhead system, or come to an informal understanding with the caretaker of some nearby government institution. The caretaker receives a sum of money and he permits an illegal electrical connection to be installed. People sometimes collectively come to such an arrangement and collectively make the required payments.

In Bishkek, electricity has been provided for light domestic use. People, however, also use it for heating and cooking with the result that the system often gets "burnt". One of the functions of the Ryon Committees is to monitor the system and tell people not to use it for heating and cooking.

In Bishkek the settlements are planned in clusters of seven houses. It has been estimated by the leaders of October Ryon Committee that if a 40 KV transformer could be installed for each cluster, electric supply could be upgraded to serve heating and cooking requirements. The cost of such a transformer is supposed to be 6,000 Coms. Installation and related works would cost another 18,000 Coms.

We found no evidence of the use of small generators for electric supply in either Bishkek or Almaty, for individual families or as a commercial enterprise for selling electricity, as is common in Third World Asian settlements.

### ***Transport***

In many of the settlements people have to walk up to four kilometres to get to public transport. A number of residents have cars. However, we found no evidence of people who have cars using them commercially for transporting people from the settlements to the place from where they can get public transport. Another major deterrent to plying of public transport is the absence of good roads. In spring the snow melts, in rains, and the roads become muddy. In other seasons it is possible for transport to function, in spite of the bad road conditions.

### ***Social services***

Except for one settlement in Bishkek, there are no schools or health facilities in the informal settlements. Children are educated in state schools in the neighbouring settlements. Parents are not happy with this arrangement as it is problematic and expensive to transport children to these schools. However, they are not willing to send their children to schools within their settlements, if their quality and environment is in any way inferior to those of standard government institutions. At the same time, they claim that they cannot afford to purchase books and other materials required by their children for educational purposes. Previously these materials were supplied by the state.

The Mission came across no private schools or private day care centres for children in the settlements in either Almaty or Bishkek. However, many residents feel that such private centres could be successful.

There are a number of doctors and persons related to the medical profession living in the informal settlements but none of them has so far opened a private clinic. This is because it is still possible to make use of free government health services even though there has been some privatisation and the quality of services has declined considerably.

### ***Comments***

There is a general absence of private enterprise and initiative in the settlements. There seem to be two reasons for this. One, the people are used to government services which are of a fairly high standard and the idea of private sector social services is alien to them. Two, state permission has to be sought before any private sector enterprise can be initiated and a tax has to be paid. In Bishkek,

the informal settlements are considered areas of “privileged taxation” and are exempt from taxes. Residents claim that getting permission for private enterprise initiatives is not easy and requires catering to bureaucracy and corruption.

## **Income Generation**

### ***The meaning of “employed”***

In all the settlements visited by the Mission, there was large scale “unemployment”. Factories have been closed, workers have been laid off, salaries have not been paid for months and even unemployment benefits are not available. However, closer examination reveals that people are making money by “buying and selling” and other informal means. In Almaty, there was a general consensus that people in the informal settlements have a savings capacity of about 1,000 Tenge per month and in Bishkek the leaders of the Sverdlov Ryon felt that people in the informal areas of their district could save up to 100 Coms per month.

### ***Existing commercial activity***

In Almaty, the Mission came across almost no commercial activity in the settlements. People always said that it was difficult since government permission was required and taxes would have to be paid. However, some residents did speak about the existence of small scale businesses in their neighbourhood. In Bishkek, on the other hand, there is a lot of commercial activity in the settlements. There are *nan* (bread) shops; grocery stores; and candy and cigarette vendors. Some of the businessmen claim that they can expand if they have finances to do it. They claim that there is an increasing demand for the items they sell. Residents also say that they would prefer to buy their provisions at a neighbourhood shop, even if it costs slightly more, than travel long distances to purchase their provisions.

### ***Comments***

The reasons for commercial activity in Bishkek, as opposed to Almaty, is that it is comparatively easier to get permission for establishing a business in Bishkek than in Almaty. In addition, the informal settlements are considered areas of “privileged taxation” and small businesses operating in them are not taxed. In Almaty and Bishkek there are no credit support schemes for small businesses, and the Ashar Business Association, reaches very few people.

## **The Almaty Dormitories**

### ***Conditions in the dormitories***

The condition in the dormitories visited by the Mission was bad. They were damp, cold and overcrowded. The community kitchens did not function and people cooked in their rooms. The water supply and sewage systems had collapsed and the toilets were full of human excreta and waste water. Repairs are needed to the structure and floors. The women seem to be the more vocal and concerned residents of these dormitories. Each resident or family is supposed to pay 2,700 Tenge to Baspana for the operation and maintenance of these dormitories. However, no payments are received.

Electricity is regularly cut-off due to non-payment of electrical charges. The residents complain that they receive no bills and are not aware of what the charges are. When the electricity is cut they run around, find out what they have to pay, collect money and get it restored. When plumbing or sewage systems collapse completely, someone or the other takes an initiative and repairs them.

The residents feel very insecure in the dormitories and do not know when they may be turned out. They also feel that it is the job of the government to look after them and the dormitories and to provide day-care and schooling for their children. Although they feel this way, they have little hope that the government will deliver.

## ***Comments***

The residents of the dormitories claim to be “unemployed”. However, many of them do some sort of business. They have not considered forming an organisation, saving money for it, and taking over the management of the dormitories. They claim that the repairs required are large in nature, although conditions can be improved substantially by minor repairs. Similarly, no resident has thought of establishing a day-care centre for children or offering to keep the premises clean and being paid by each resident for this service.

## **Baspana, Almaty**

### ***The organisation and its problems***

As mentioned earlier, Baspana is a confederation of nine organisations, each of which has created an informal settlement. The functions of Baspana have also been explained earlier. The organisation of Baspana consists of a governing body and an executive consisting of office staff (an accountant and secretarial support). The present active leadership of Baspana spends almost all its time in lobbying with government for infrastructure for its settlements. Daily visits are paid to government offices and people visit the offices of Baspana to put pressure on the leadership “to do something” for the settlements. Baspana leaders, however, can do very little and almost all of them have become distanced from their members. Baspana leaders claim that if they were to receive salaries they would again become active. What this “active” means could not be ascertained.

The leadership is trying to find ways and means of getting housing credit for its house builders from external sources, such as international NGOs. It has seen that the state housing bank cannot give credit to poor people who are not “loan worthy” enough to repay it in thirty years at installments of thirty percent of their monthly income. It still has to realise that the scale of the problem is so large that it cannot be solved by small revolving funds from international NGOs. In addition, Baspana is supposed to cancel the plots of those of its members who do not occupy them in two years. However, it has not done this regularly and has only cancelled a few plots to put pressure on people. This can be seen by some members as “selective victimisation”.

Baspana has accumulated a big debt on unpaid telephone and electricity charges and unpaid office rent. It has paid for these in the past by selling plots in its settlements. In the same manner it has financed a number of its activities like bribing officials in the electricity department and paying planning organisations for preparing development plans for some of its settlements. However, it is no longer possible to sell plots since people and organisations prefer to acquire them in the city centre.

The organisation has recently received photocopying and fax facilities from DIA but it does not have the resources to pay for their operation and maintenance. DIA is also paying the salaries of six leaders of Baspana. In addition, DIA has financed a major part of the water supply system for Altyn Bisek, one of the informal settlements.

## ***Comments***

Baspana needs to re-establish contacts with its constituency which is the residents of the informal settlements. Since it has little hope of assistance from the state, it should spend less time lobbying with government agencies.

## **InterBilim, Bishkek**

InterBilim is an NGO which was formed in 1993 with the purpose of supporting other NGOs in building their capacity and for promoting their work. InterBilim is well-established, reasonably funded by external agencies and NGOs, and seems to have an efficient and dedicated staff. Its main links are with First World NGOs and agencies and it is not aware of the large scale of Asian NGO projects. InterBilim is supposed to have a board and a general body but these have yet to be formed. InterBilim promotes NGO coordination, arranges training courses, brings out a newsletter and provides legal

advice to NGOs. InterBilim approached the organisations of informal builders since, according to it, they behaved like NGOs although they only asked government for assistance.

### **Committee of Local Self Government of Informal Builders, Bishkek**

Bishkek has four Ryons and each has a Committee for Local Self Government. The committee members are paid US\$ 20 per month by the state. Their function is one, to help people in getting jobs; two, lobbying for acquiring physical and social infrastructure, which means sending requests in writing and their details to the relevant government agencies; and three, lobbying with the state for the operation and maintenance of infrastructure. In short, they are the intermediaries between people and government. However, they have no powers, except advisory ones. They are considering to unite to form one organisation that represents all the four *ryons* while each of the four organisations will maintain its identity. Such a move is opposed by InterBilim because InterBilim feels that this will not change the relationship between the Committees and the government but only create a new rung of bureaucracy.

### **Kazakh State Academy of Architecture and Construction**

The Academy has six faculties of related specialisation in architecture, engineering and construction management. The courses were arranged so as to deliver and serve the highly centralised Soviet model of housing and construction. With the collapse of the old system and the beginning of privatisation, the system of education at the Academy is no longer relevant to local conditions. The staff of the Academy seems to be well aware of this and are searching for more relevant alternatives. They are also aware of the housing issues in Kazakhstan and are quite competent to carry out research and propose alternatives. They can be of considerable use to any future housing related programmes of DIA.

### **Kapchigal Architectural Fund Company**

The Kapchigai Architectural Fund Company has developed a pre-cast timber-reed-gypsum technology and claims that it can deliver a house at US\$ 80 per square metre. The Company is also in the process of importing Belgium polymer technology for roofing and wall planning. The Chief Architect of the City is interested in promoting this scheme and feels that if credit support could be given to the scheme it would take off.

There are many snags in the proposed scheme. First, a demonstration house needs to be built and a firm price offered for it. History of such schemes in Asia have shown that costs can escalate by over hundred percent as compared to initially quoted prices due to the high cost of transportation of material, breakages in transportation, interest on loans, increased overheads and “unforeseen” costs such as currency devaluation. As far as credit is concerned, individuals already have a source of credit from the state housing bank and on that basis a commercial bank should be willing to provide bridge financing for the project.

### **The Repercussions of the Privatisation of Land**

It is inevitable that land will be privatised in Almaty and Bishkek. Once land becomes a commodity it will no longer be available in the city centre or near it for housing those that cannot afford the cost of formal development. If on the other hand, land remains free for a section of the population, it will be subject to speculation. In this manner a land mafia will be formed and will receive political patronage. This will put land and housing out of the reach of the poor and increase homelessness and poverty. Already there are cases where people who have been given plots in the informal Almaty settlements, are selling them to other people. The organisations that form Baspana or the Committees in Bishkek, have not given thought to these issues. There is still time to plan so as to make the process of land privatisation more equitable and less harmful to the poor.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

### **Emerging State Policy on Housing**

It is obvious from the economic policies that have been adopted by the state that the old system of providing subsidised or free housing to the urban population has come to an end. Land is already becoming a commodity and this will place both land and housing out of the reach of salaried people, the working class and non-affluent professionals. The emerging class structure is similar to that of Third World Asia. People will have to resort to informal processes to acquire land, infrastructure, housing and employment. This is already happening both in Almaty and Bishkek. The growth of capitalist farming in the rural areas will increase rural-urban migration. With a change in the economy, curbs on this migration, will no longer be possible.

### **Conventional Housing Strategies in A Free Market Economy**

The problem of housing in both Almaty and Bishkek is enormous and is likely to grow. From the example of Third World Asian cities (and more recently First World cities as well) the housing crisis cannot be solved in a deficit free market economy by conventional means. Aid given for the promotion of public housing, site and services programmes, conventional loans through housing banks, grants for infrastructure, private sector pre-fab built housing, and similar initiatives, can only deal with a small part of the problem. They will result in the creation of small islands of good housing in a sea of squalor. There are numerous such examples of First World NGO and/or government supported programmes in the Third World.

The best utilisation of small grants which can reach the largest number of people, is to facilitate people in doing what they are already doing. This facilitation can be provided through technical support, small scale credit and by developing the capacity of people to organise and lobby government and other agencies with realistic proposals. However, to adopt this approach one must first know what people are doing and how and why.

### **Barriers to the Suggested Approach**

Private sector and community initiatives can tackle a number of problems related to housing, infrastructure and employment. However, a number of barriers have to be removed to achieve results. The first barrier is psychological. The people and their leadership have to accept that they are capable of doing development work and that they do not have to depend on the state alone for providing them with facilities. This barrier can only be removed through dialogues and visits of the leadership and community activists to projects where such approaches have been successful. The second barrier is the social barrier. Small community organisations are required so that people can collectively save money and manage the construction of their neighbourhood or cluster infrastructure. This barrier can only be removed after the psychological barrier has been removed. Trained social organisers would be required to facilitate this process. The third barrier is the technical barrier. Technical advice, which is compatible with the sociology and economics of the community, has to be provided to them for building their homes, neighbourhoods and businesses. An organisation or unit has to be supported to develop this expertise. Research is an important element in this. The final barrier is the economic barrier. This can be removed by the development of low cost technology, incremental development, promoting collective savings and at a later stage by acquiring a revolving fund for credit.

### **Standards for Construction and Infrastructure**

Standards for construction and infrastructure that are operative in the Central Asian Republics are far too high for people to afford or build themselves. There is a need to rationalise these standards and to lobby with government to accept the results. The leadership also needs to be convinced that lower standards for processing water are not damaging to health. This can only be done by carrying out tests on water acquired through wells and discussions the results. Similarly, low cost earthquake

technology for building needs to be discussed with the state departments. UN agencies can facilitate this process.

### **The Present Situation in Baspana**

The Baspana leadership was able to mobilise people to acquire land and dormitories. The necessary organisation and agitation to achieve these ends was successfully developed and carried out. Now however, the Baspana leadership has to develop the means to help people build their homes and neighbourhoods. For this a totally different strategy and organisational structure is required. Instead of leaders and agitators the organisations require social organisers, technical people, monitoring of development activity and links with support organisations. Baspana can only perform what is being demanded of it if it is free from the worry of funding the operation and administrative costs of its office and support staff.



## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Research into Existing Processes Leading to DIA or Other Donor Supported Interventions**

#### ***Study process and cost***

The study will take about eight weeks to complete. It is recommended that the following persons/institutions be involved with it:

- an Asian architect or planner recommended by HIC/ACHR. He can come for two weeks at the beginning of the study and for one week at the end;
- persons from Baspana who have a technical background surfaces. Esen or Yarman, or both, could be a part of it;
- a senior student from the Academy of Architecture and Construction who is interested in doing a thesis on support systems to informal housing;
- a team of four students from a high school who can be trained to serve and record questionnaires from a sample size of 100 residents of informal settlements and 100 members who are on the waiting list.

The study, in addition to surveys, will involve in-depth interviews with selected residents, shop-keepers, suppliers of building materials and tools, and other actors in the settlement building drama.

#### ***Housing building***

The study will try and understand how people build their homes, how much they earn and invest in housing, and from what sources. It will document the difficulties they experience in the process of building and how they overcome these difficulties. It will also study the technologies that people use, their advantages and disadvantages (both economic and technical) and the peoples view of these technologies.

Based on the results of this process, proposals for interventions in house building will be developed. These proposals may consist of developing appropriate technologies that are sociologically acceptable and low cost; development of plans and estimates for house building; development of a workshop to provide advisory services, tools and supervision for house building; and/or any other services that the study may point towards. A unit to provide these facilities can be located in Baspana in Almaty or in InterBilim in Bishkek. The capital costs for the establishment of such a unit and its subsequent operational costs will be worked out.

#### ***Infrastructure***

The study will look into the possibility of developing community financed and managed infrastructure at the cluster or neighbourhood level. In Almaty, the possibility of getting water through boring or developing proposals for the government to extend water supply from existing mains will be looked into. In Bishkek, the possibility of clusters financing and building a distribution network from the existing water mains can be studied. Similarly, there is a need to promote proper sanitary latrines instead of the present system of open pits.

Once these proposals have been developed, assistance for their implementation can be made to a number of agencies such as WaterAid, UK. This assistance can be in the form of technical advice, provision of a hand-operated Vander-rig and perhaps a small revolving fund.

Similarly, the possibility of supporting an entrepreneur in developing a decentralised system of electricity for a cluster or neighbourhood can also be looked into and costed. If it is successful, other entrepreneurs can also be supported.

### ***Income generation***

The study will try to identify existing businesses, potential providers of social services and skilled women living in the settlement. A proposal for supporting some of them with credit will be prepared and costed. However, this activity should be taken up at a later stage when an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding has been established between the people and Baspana.

### ***Visit to Karachi for exposure and orientation***

The Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) Karachi, is one of the more successful programmes in the Third World that supports informal processes and community action. It would be useful if a group from Baspana could visit the OPP for a ten day period for exposure and orientation. The group will be horrified at conditions in the informal settlements in Karachi but they will understand the process of community organisation, technical support, research and extension, and government-NGO relations. From what the Mission gathered, a budget for this trip has already been arranged.

### ***Funding for the proposals that emerges from the report***

These proposals that emerge from the report will be costed. Their cost will not be excessive and can be supported by international NGOs or other bi-lateral agencies. A training component for making the proposals operative will also be prepared.

## **The Issues of the Dormitories**

### ***The vision***

The residents of the dormitories do not maintain them or pay electricity charges on a regular basis. However, there are a considerable number of skilled people in these dormitories. It seems that the dormitory residents can be organised to operate and maintain the dormitories at their own expense by creating a maintenance committee and a finance committee. Day-care centres for children can also be created and certain residents can be employed to clean the premises, dispose off the garbage and perform any other services that may be required.

### ***Physical and social survey of the dormitories***

The objectives mentioned in the above paragraph can be achieved by holding meetings to motivate the residents. This can be followed by making the residents carry out a physical and social survey of their dormitory. The survey would identify and cost the extent and nature of repair work and subsequent costs of operation and maintenance. Help for the technical aspects of this survey could be given by Baspana.

The social aspects of the survey would consist of listing the residents and family members, their incomes, their skills and other relevant data.

### ***Assistance from SPARC India***

Assistance for organising the survey, introducing the concept of savings for operation and maintenance of the dormitories and developing a scientific process of lobbying and negotiation with government regarding what the community cannot do, can be got from the Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC), Bombay (India). A two member team from SPARC could visit

Almaty for a two week period. This could be followed by a visit of women activists from Almaty to India. SPARC has been organising women's savings groups and has provided the People's Dialogue in South Africa with the sort of assistance that is being envisaged for Central Asia in this report.

## **The Role of Baspana**

### ***Restructuring of Baspana***

Baspana needs to be restructured. The leaders of the nine settlements should form the policy making board of Baspana. The board members should not receive any salaries except for those who are actively engaged in promoting development work.

The Baspana office should consist of an administrative wing consisting of accountants and secretarial support; a technical unit to carry out research and support house building and infrastructure activities; and at a later date a unit for providing support to income generating activities. The Baspana director should be paid and he should oversee its activities and keep in touch with government initiatives and policies. Each unit should monitor and document its own work along with photographs. Weekly meetings should be held to monitor the work, set targets and see that they are achieved.

However, this can only be done after the process proposed above is initiated. During the visit of Baspana representatives to Karachi, the process of documentation, monitoring and lobbying will also be explained. If they find it useful they will have no difficulty in adapting it to their local conditions.

### ***Funding Baspana***

Baspana's most urgent need is that its administrative, operational and related costs (including electricity, telephone, rent) are taken care of. A cost for these items must be worked out. Baspana will have to be austere in these matters. If it is not austere and utilitarian, it will be accused of dishonesty by its clientele and will inspire jealousy from other groups and organisations. All further sale of plots for financing Baspana's activities should be discontinued.

### ***Baspana newsletter and reports***

Baspana leaders admit that they have lost contact with their people. They are now constantly "running after the government". If the proposed development approach is to be successful, re-establishing contact with the people is essential. To establish this contact Baspana must start producing a newsletter. This newsletter should be sent to its entire membership including the 12,000 families that are on the waiting list. The newsletter must give the details of what the Baspana leadership is doing, what its difficulties are, and what are its future plans. Accounts should also be published in the newsletter so that there can be no accusation of dishonesty against the leadership. Quarterly reports must also be prepared.

The cost of producing a cheap newsletter must be worked out and a source of funding arranged for it.

### ***Kazakhstan NGO Report for the Habitat Conference***

Baspana should prepare a NGO report for the UN Habitat Conference being held in Istanbul in June 1996. This report will have a major impact and will bring the problems of housing in Central Asia to the attention of multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies, international and national NGOs, academic organisations, and concerned professionals. This will lead to the establishment of a working relationship between Baspana and some of these agencies and organisations. For the preparation of this report, assistance can be sought from the Academy of Architecture and Construction in Almaty. The report should maybe consist of

- a description of the old housing policy of the Soviet Union and its advantages and disadvantages;
- the problems that the policy faces in the new Kazakhstan;

- the repercussions of policy failure and the problems of homelessness, poverty and unemployment and their social and physical repercussions;
- the movement of Baspana, its origins, process, achievements, constraints and potential;
- recommendations to the UN, the Kazakh government, and bi-lateral agencies aimed at facilitating the housing process. Along with this figures, photographs and maybe a film.

The preparation of this report will also force the Baspana leadership to reflect on the history of the movement and its future directions. The involvement of the Academy of Architecture and Construction in the report preparation will bring in a fresh perspective.

The report should be sent to all relevant agencies and groups. A list of such agencies and groups can be had from HIC and ACHR.

### ***Materials from other projects***

Baspana office should acquire newsletters, case studies and videos regarding NGO programmes in other countries. It should make a synopsis of some of this material and translate it into Russian. The cost of making such a translation should be worked out once the material is received and relevant parts of it identified. A donor should be found for promoting such an activity. Material can be acquired from HIC and ACHR (they have a large number of videos).

### ***The issue of land privatisation***

Earlier in this report the repercussions of land privatisation have been discussed. It is essential that the poor are protected in some way when such privatisation takes place. Baspana should develop concrete proposals to off-set some of these negative effects and pressurise government into looking at them. These proposals can be developed with the assistance of other groups, including academic institutions, such as the Academy of Architecture and Construction. The proposals could consist of the following:

- A master plan of the city (which has legal cover) should be formed allocating areas for housing with maximum plots for low income or homeless people. Processes and procedures to discourage speculation should also be developed and information regarding them should be made available to the people and NGOs so that they can help to protect the land.
- The state should hold sufficient land for the future benefit of the city with the provision that they cannot be used purely for commercial purposes.
- The first right of purchase of land should belong to the person or community living on it.

These recommendations could also form a part of the NGO Kazakhstan Report to the UN Habitat Conference. At present “departures” are being made to the master plan of the city due to the city’s need for revenue. Most of these “departures” are being made to accommodate economic activity. Perhaps they need to be questioned.

### **Prioritising the Recommendations**

A number of recommendations have been made. However, for the time being only the following recommendations should be carried out:

- Research into existing processes leading to the establishment of a technical support unit for housing and infrastructure.
- Maintenance and operation of dormitories by residents.
- Baspana re-organisation.
- Baspana newsletter.
- Kazakhstan NGO Report.

## **6. ADDRESSES OF ORGANISATIONS MENTIONED IN THE REPORT**

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- 6.2 Sheela Patel**  
Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC)  
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- 6.3 Enrique Ortiz**  
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- 6.4 Somsook Boonyabancha/Kenneth Fernandes**  
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- 6.5 Perween Rahman/Anwar Rashid**  
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- 6.6 Joel Bolnick**  
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Suggested terms of Reference  
(Abstract from Ejoerd van Schooneveld's  
Fax to the Mission Members)

The Mission should deal with the following 'main areas' (in order of their priority)

1. Organisational development of NGOs dealing with housing/land rights and the problems of 'squatter areas'. There is very, very little experience with NGO work and the people are keen to get advise on organisation, on management, on ways to maintain good relations with the people that they work for community participation, etc.
2. How to develop concrete feasible plans for improvement of these parts of town. How to translate the existing macro-type of planning (for which the government claims to have no funds) into smaller projects that can be dealt with by the local NGOs (for organising their lobby towards the government and for starting implementation of some work on their own, eventually with donor funding)
3. How to lobby government (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) , multilateral donors and foreign governments (that give assistance to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).
4. Advice on technical issues (low cost housing, local production of building materials, employment creation), and on fund raising (how to make presentations, who to approach).
5. Improvement of the situation of women (female headed households, income generation, health).

As you can see the area is fairly large. It is understood (even appreciated) that a first mission needs to learn, to get acquainted. The expectations are not that you will be able to develop, with the partners, in the limited time available, glossy plans. The aim is to start moving on these subjects. People now feel blocked, need to get advise, need to see some (extra) light. The mission will hopefully be the beginning of a process of gradual improvement and (mostly autonomous) change.

Can this be the heart of ToR of your Mission ? Do you see points that need to be changed ? Please gime me a reaction.

## **PART TWO: ARIF HASAN'S TRAVEL NOTES**

**27 February - 12 March 1996**

### **Tuesday, 27 February**

We arrived in Almaty from Islamabad at 2 pm. The plane taxied round the Airport for over an hour as the runway was snow blocked. The temperature was minus 13 degrees centigrade. We took a taxi to Kazakhstan Hotel after calling Boris from the railway station near the airport. Kazakhstan Hotel is a grand affair in the Soviet style with complex security arrangements. Boris and Ernar arrived at the Hotel around 6 pm. Boris is an ethnic Russian and he is the interpreter employed by DIA. Ernar works for Baspana.

#### ***Conversation with Ernar***

Ernar is from the rural areas. He is 31 and married. His wife is also from his village. He studied energy engineering. He migrated to Almaty because his wife was working here. He has been here 10 years. He had no house for over 8 years and lived in a cellar.

In Soviet times migration from the rural areas of Kazakhstan to the city was discouraged. Rural people were told to look after their animals. To live in the city you had to get a residential permit which was very difficult to acquire.

In the movement of homeless people 21 persons went on hunger strike in 1992. People occupied 5,000 plots. "They" have an additional application for 12,000 plots. "They" means "Baspana", a confederation of nine organisations of homeless people.

Collective farms in the rural areas have broken down. Government rents them out to "entrepreneurs", sometimes without taking any rent for two to three years. These "entrepreneurs" then pay the salary of the staff and market the goods.

In government departments in the rural areas salaries have not been paid for many months.

Ninety percent of the urban housing demand is due to migration from rural areas and the migrants are all of Kazakh origin. There is no work in the rural areas and so people are leaving from there.

A one room apartment being sold by individuals costs about US\$ 5,000 and a two room one US\$ 10,000. Under the Soviet system after 15 to 20 years of work you were given an apartment. Now apartments are being privatised. There is a coupon system for privatisation which takes into consideration the age of the apartment and other aspects of depreciation on the basis of which a price is set for it.

### **Wednesday, 28 February**

Boris and Ernar picked us up from the hotel. We were given a tour of the city. We visited the "new" mall with all its imported goods and also the Bazar (the Zoloni or Green Bazar) which is similar to oriental markets. Ernar had us change hotels and as a result we shifted to the Almaty Hotel which is more modest, more lively and has less security than Kazakhstan Hotel. We had lunch with Boris and Ernar at the hotel and around 2 pm we arrived at the Baspana office. Here we met Esen, Yarman Jhamankolov (his surname means bad slave) and Malik. All three are Baspana leaders. Esen was originally the chairman of the Young Construction Workers and is a construction worker himself. Yarman began as a construction worker and then became a state bureaucrat. Malik was a school teacher.

## ***Discussions at the Baspana office***

We discussed various issues related to the conditions in Kazakhstan and the institutional set up in Almaty. A gist of the information given to us is given below.

The head of the city is the *akim* (from the Arabic *hakim*, meaning ruler). He is appointed by the President. The city is divided into eight *ryons* (districts) and each has an Akim also appointed by the President or the head Akim.

The Akim is supported by five deputies each dealing with a specific subject.

There is a city council consisting of 37 members elected by the people. It is called the *Maslikhat* from the Arabic *maslihat*). Almost all its members are government employees and so they cannot take any stand on any issue. It is a "council of puppets".

The council meets every 3 months to consider development and financial proposals put up by the executive. It always approves these proposals.

The executive in the city consists of various departments such as departments of housing, architecture, antimonopoly etc. In addition, there are committees such as for land management, area committees for state properties etc. All the services which were first the responsibility of the state are now some sort of a joint stock company.

Due to hunger strikes and demonstrations in 1990 and in 1992 (May to October) the government set up a Committee for the Homeless. According to Baspana the Committee was set up to break the power of the NGOs. It succeeded in doing this by putting the responsibility for the development of the informal settlements on Baspana NGOs.

To break the impasse that the movement of the homeless created, it was decided to give land for "right of usage" to the NGOs. If this land was not used in two years it was to be taken away. The Committee for the Homeless was dissolved after two years of its creation.

The NGOs were told to develop plans for development for the land and give them to the state to finance. Altyn Bisek (Ernar's organisation) spent 40 million roubles to develop plans of drainage, water supply, electricity and roads. It raised these funds by collecting donations, selling animal skins, doing commerce etc. However, the government has not kept its promise. It has not brought development.

Of the 5,000 plots given by the state, 2,500 are lying empty as people do not want to live without electricity, gas and water. Baspana has cancelled the plots of a number of persons since they have not built on the land in two years.

Under law the people have to build a certain type of house according to the plans of the city governments' Department of Architecture. They cannot afford to do this. So they build a temporary structure and start living on it leaving space, as per local government bye-laws, to build the "permanent" house in the future.

The government has taken 3,300 hectares from the neighbouring rural province and made it a part of the city and this land has been earmarked for housing. However, this land is 40 kilometres from the city and even then is not being given to the homeless.

The government has 29 dormitories. Six of these were taken over by Baspana and they house 700 persons. In 15 months there is a debt of two million Tenge on Baspana for these dorms due to unpaid electricity and water charges. Baspana is giving them back to the city. People cannot pay 2,700 Tenge per month for using these dorms. Before Baspana took them over they were partially empty.

Baspana has really become an intermediary between the people and the government. people ask Baspana, "get us this", "get us that", and they do nothing themselves.



Proper files of 1,200 persons who want land have been prepared. Plans of the settlements with development costs have been worked out. This is a lot of work. This is all that Baspana does now. They have reached a “stalemate situation”.

All areas have a Committee for Area Public Self Government (TOSS). These consist of a few persons per subdivision of the Rayon that are chosen by the area Akim. The committees are developed to strengthen the political base of the party in power.

Cooperatives of apartment owners are being established. For old people there are subsidies and they pay only 800 Tenge per month for living there. Others have to pay 3,500 Tenge per month.

In rural areas 50 percent animals have been slaughtered for food. Salaries are paid by wheat and other barter arrangements. New money is not known. “Can speaking at the UN stage help us ?”

The case of Kyrgyzia is different. People there have been given gas, electricity and other things in squatter areas.

We returned to the Hotel at 6 pm and walked around the neighbourhood.

## **Thursday, 29 February**

Ernar and Boris picked us up from the hotel at 9 am and after picking up Malik from the Baspana office we left for Taogul (mountain flower: Gul is Persian and Urdu for flower) settlement. We arrived there at 11 am.

### ***Taogul settlement***

Taogul has 1,027 plots but only 300 are occupied. We visited three families over there. In the first house that we visited, the husband was away. He is a construction worker and so he had no difficulty in building his house. The wife who does not work was at home with her beautiful son. They have been here three years. They grabbed the land in the 1992 land grab. Electricity is a problem. Water is carried from a stand post some distance from the settlement.

In the second house visited the owner did not want to talk. He is unemployed for the last two months. Before he was a driver in a state enterprise. The house is of clinker block with an asbestos roof.

In the third house visited we were received by a very pleasant woman with three children at home. The fourth child was at school. Her husband works at a furniture factory and she works in a thread factory. However, the factory is not functioning now and she has received no salary from the government this year. They have built the house themselves. It is in mud block and finished with a plaster of coal ash and cement. Electricity is got “informally” from the electrician of the nearby sanitorium. Four neighbours have got together to get it from him. Before he charged 1,000 Tenge per year but now wants 500 Tenge per month. They are trying to arrive at an arrangement to buy electricity from a man who has a legal connection in the neighbourhood. The children stay at home alone when she goes to work. The present house is temporary and was built with the little savings that they had. Now they plan to build a “proper” house, government style, but they have no money for it and no source from where they can borrow.

Taogul has a lot of big houses for the rich in it. These plots were given to these people by the Maslikhats Committee for the Homeless. People who are poor work as labour to build these houses and also steal building materials from the site for their own houses. There is no transport in the settlement because of the bad roads.

### ***Altyn Bisek (Golden Cradle) settlement***

From Taogul we travelled to Altyn Bisek settlement and arrived there around 12:30 pm. The conditions in the settlement are described below.

People have laid the water mains with DIA assistance, providing labour. Connections to their houses they have to make at their own cost. Electricity has also been provided by the state but the people, with assistance from the organisation, have put up the poles and wires for it. People have to pay for electricity but they sometimes do not pay and tap electricity illegally. Now that there is water and electricity there is no reason why people should not build. In spring everyone will be building. That is what the leaders think.

To get electricity and to pay the cost of planning to the state company, the organisation did business in skins, gave four plots to the state company staff as part of the fees (you can call it a bribe) and also gave plots to the important persons in the electricity department.

We had lunch at the house of the leader (he was not there) and discussed history, politics, a little bit of Islam. They are ignorant of Asian history of which they were very much a part till the last century, or of Asia's contribution to civilisation.

### ***Shamrack settlement***

From Altyn Bisek we travelled to Shamrack. All told the settlement has over 3,000 plots in three sub-settlements. The landgrab was organised by 2,000 "beginners". Of these 60 percent were professionals or "specialists". Among them were land surveyors, architects, engineers and professors. So they planned the area properly. The grabbers put up their *yourts* (tents) and started living. The leader here is Bibatima or Fatima (named after the prophet's daughter). She and her husband are "specialists". She has lived in Almaty for twenty years. She came here from the rural areas to study.

People cannot open shops. To do that they have to apply to Bibatima who then has to inform the Maslikhat who then taxes the shop. Many shops were given permission to open but they closed down due to lack of profits. If shops open without permission, they run into problems from the tax inspectors.

We sat in the house of a woman who had a small child and discussed things at length. The house was of clay and well finished.

It is not possible to bore for water without local government permission. According to regulations the water has to come from 250 metres below the ground. Even then the law requires that it is filtered and chlorinated. Ernar feels that this is how it should be.

People did dig a 30 metre deep well in the neighbourhood and used it for over nine months. It went dry in January. After winter they intend to dig deeper. The well water seemed alright. Nobody fell ill due to its use.

Most people get water from tankers. These are often private ones since government tankers do not come to areas where there are no roads. These private tankers perhaps get their water "free" through bribes.

Ernar feels that private schools could work as people would pay less to send their children to a school in the neighbourhood and save on transportation as well. For private enterprise development there are two problems: one, that state regulations discourage it and the state is still efficient; and two, that people are not enterprising.

Bibatima feels that shops and income generation activities in homes are possible without state permission but she is not sure.

### ***Jeltukshan (December) and Luchvastoka (light of the East) settlements***

We arrived at these two settlements, collectively known as Doman-Microrayon settlement, at 3:30 pm. Jeltukshan has 293 plots and 93 percent are occupied. Luchvastoka has 375 and 40 percent are occupied. These settlements have no electricity and no water. High voltage cables pass by the settlement but because of their high voltage they cannot be tapped. Small temporary houses (mostly

of clay blocks and asbestos roofs on timber trusses) dot the snow covered landscape. A dentist says that he works in the city and walks three kilometres to the main road to get a bus. He gets water from a water stand post three kilometres away. He brings it by sledge in winter and in a barrow in summer, spring and autumn. The idea of opening a private clinic has not occurred to him. Also how could he work without proper equipment and electricity ? Such considerations would not deter a dentist from practising in Third World Asia!

The people of Luchvastoka continue to expand their settlement, hoping for its regularisation. Architects working in the city government advise them on this expansion.

We returned to the hotel at 6 pm.

## **Friday, 1 March**

After being picked up from the hotel, we picked up Yarman from the Baspana office and visited the first dormitory whose management has been taken over by Baspana. We arrived there around 10 am.

The dormitory is a single storey building in plastered-over brick work, asbestos roof, hardboard false ceiling, floor boards (floating floor) and a central corridor. It has a common kitchen (which no longer functions, people cook in their rooms) and run-down leaking toilets. Twelve families live here in 15 rooms with children. The total population is about 70.

The dorm was originally built as a temporary structure to house on-site construction workers. The people are supposed to pay 2,700 Tenge per month per room but they do not. When electricity is not paid for it is cut off and they cannot cook and they freeze. They then collect money to have it restored. The building requires minor repairs but both Yarman and the residents insist that they are major and unmanageable by them.

Most of the talking at the dorm was done by Aalia Kumanbatiya. Aalia has land in one of the informal settlements but she cannot afford to build on it. She has no money. Previously she lived in a flat but moved here to avoid paying high rent. Her husband works in a newspaper as a journalist. She looks after the kids. She cannot find work. Khairat, the other person we talked to, was an artist. He was employed previously full time at the Supreme Soviet. He qualified from an art school two years ago. He has no work now. He had got a plot in Taogul but it was taken away as he was still a student and students are not permitted plot ownership. He is now married and has two kids.

The residents have an immense feeling of insecurity. They are afraid that they will be thrown out without being offered any alternatives.

The dorm stinks and is unhealthy and cold.

### ***The second dormitory***

We arrived at the second dorm around noon. This dorm has 17 families living in three sections of the barrack. The construction is similar to that of the first dorm.

We meet Daziza and Ilmeria. Daziza does most of the talking. She has been here four years. She lived in an apartment before and worked in a cotton factory. She received a spinal injury and had to discontinue heavy work. She now sells tit-bits in the market and makes enough money to survive. The police often takes away her things and fines her for she is not supposed to sell without a permit and it is not easy to get a permit. One has to pay bribes to get it and run around. She has a plot in the "squatter" areas but she will never have any money to build a house. Ilmeria said little. She has no job and also has children to feed. Her husband was a driver but now there are no cars to drive.

In another part of the house we meet Aasiya. She is twenty two and has just started to work in a candy factory.

The dorm often has no electricity as no one pays for electricity. They receive no demand for payments or any bills. When it is cut off they run around, gather payments and get it restored.

### ***The third dormitory***

We arrived at the third dormitory at 1 pm. This dormitory is a four storey affair in which 130 families live. Conditions here are bad and the premises have a bad smell. The sewer pipes leak. The toilets are full of excreta. There is only hot water; no cold water. The kitchens have been taken over for living purposes. Residents are ill due to unhygienic conditions.

People do not know when or how much to pay for electricity. Baspana has not informed them. A taxi driver living in the dorm is “an angle”. He fixes things (electricity and plumbing) when they go wrong. There is no collective effort in maintaining or operating the systems in the dorm.

When people moved here things were better. But then the state lost interest and then Baspana took over. However, Baspana does not have funds to maintain the dorm and nor does the state have funds or interest.

Many women have plots in the “homeless” colonies but they have no money to build and no men to build for them. They prefer to buy an apartment for US\$ 5,000 than build. They are angry women and worried about their future. They want to catch Nazarbayev by the throat.

A woman with an epileptic son has been given a telephone in one of the dorms by the telephone department on order of the hospital. This could not happen in Third World Asia !

### ***Discussions at the Baspana office***

After lunch at an ethnic Kazak place with Yarman, Boris and Slava, we held a meeting at the Baspana office with Yarman, Esen and Malik. Boris interpreted. The discussions are summarised below.

Dorms belonged to state factories. People working in these factories lived here while they waited for getting an apartment. This wait could last for 15 to 20 years or you could die before you got an apartment. The women in dorm three say that only Russians were given apartments and not Kazakhs.

Baspana consists of nine NGOs. All of them independently worked for homeless people. They came together during the 1990 and 1992 struggle for housing rights. All these NGOs, except for Altyn Bisek, are inactive. They are now only known as or operate through Baspana. Altyn Bisek is still alive because of the dynamism of its leader. Its origin is also different. It began as a movement for the development of Kazakh culture and a rediscovery of its history. The persons present in the meeting did not know if it still continues with these activities.

The leadership of Baspana, by and large, consists of professionals and teachers, including professors. Much of the membership is also similar. But then you also have the young construction workers organisation and there are also welders and taxi drivers.

The Baspana leadership stays together and in Baspana only because of the need of “hanging on to each other” to survive and because of a “certain fanaticism”. The organisations are inactive and there is not much money for the leaders in these activities.

Each leader has a certain area or settlement to look after. Almost every day he visits government offices to lobby for the implementation of the plans they have had drawn up but nothing much happens. They have all become intermediaries between the state and the people. The people are also contacted but they have no organisation and no representatives. The main issue they have to struggle for is legalisation of the settlements.



BASPANA OFFICE



A HOUSE IN TAOGUL



SHAMROCK SETTLEMENT



BIFATIMA ,MEMER OF THE COMMITTEE FOR AREA PUBLIC  
SELF GOVERNMENT,SHAMROCK



ALTYN BISEK SETTLEMENT



CLAY HOUSES IN JELTUKSHAN SETTLEMENT





THE FIRST DORM



AALIA KUMANBATIYA(DORM RESIDENT) WITH BORIS





THE SECOND DORM



ILMERIA (LEFT) AND DAZAZIA



THE THIRD DORM



WOMEN RESIDENTS OF THE DORM

Yarman earns some money by helping people in the process of legalisation. People do not mind paying. He has no other source of income.

Intellectuals, journalists and politicians do not help them. When the movement began writers and other important intellectuals approached the young construction workers so as to support them. But now they have all been bought over by the government.

Father Jorge and I told the Baspanians about community organisations and their work in Asia; about saving schemes; about simpler methods of water supply; low-tech methods for building for earthquake areas; private efforts for education, health and small businesses. They have problems in fully comprehending all this and are not willing to absolve the state of its responsibilities. They agree that organisation of people can be a big pressure on government but they are afraid of the governments' reaction to it. Arrests of the leaders can follow if pressure on the state is applied.

The preparation of an NGO report on Kazakhstan for the Habitat Conference in Istanbul in June was also discussed. They approved of the idea. A possible outline of the report was discussed. The issue of land privatisation and its repercussions on the city form, on politics, and on the poor were also discussed. They have never thought about these issues.

## **Saturday, 2 March**

No meetings are possible today as it is Boris's day off and no one else can speak English. Boris is a Seventh Day Adventist and Saturday is the Adventist's Sabbath. However, based on what I have seen and heard so far and on discussions with Father Jorge, I have a number of observations on the conditions and situation in Almaty.

Almaty is a clean and orderly city with reasonably functioning transport and a large number of cultural and sports complexes. The Green or Zoloni Bazar is also clean. Father Jorge observed that hawkers in the bazaar do not shout or advertise what they sell. They just stand quietly. They are law abiding, observe traffic lights, and form a sort of queue at bus stops. All this is in sharp contrast to Asian cities. In addition, shop signs are discreet and the new kiosks set up all over the city in the private sector are properly designed. No changes have been made to them by the owners. Almaty is definitely an Eastern European and not an Asian city. The wirt of the city government functions.

Unlike other Asian countries, Kazakhstan seems to have lost its language, history and culture - at least in Almaty. Everyone we met speaks good Russian, even amongst themselves, and are not very aware of their Turkish origins or their Islamic heritage. Even their names have been Russianised. They are not even aware of their pre-Islamic cultural links with Iran and India and seem to think that civilisation came to them with Russian (European) colonisation. A primary school child in Pakistan, India or Iran knows better.

All the people we have met (except for Boris and his brother, also Bifatima) have recently come from the country side. They say that they had homes there but no work and no money. They lived through barter and salaries for those who have work, have not been paid for months. The rural economy it seems has collapsed and this migration into Almaty is definitely going to increase. All the people we have met are of Kazakh origin. People do not know if there are any homeless Russians.

The Baspana leadership is, by and large, of educated "specialists" and so is much of its clientele. As such it is not fully supportive of populist unconventional processes. This is very unlike Third World cities. In addition, the clientele is all educated. It has developed conventional plans for the "homeless" settlements at an enormous cost and effort and is trying to force the government to play its

conventional role. In the case of the dorms as well, the emphasis is that the state should look after its people. However, with privatisation of land in the offing and a system of paying for health and university education already in place, it is unlikely that the state will be able to deliver. The Baspana leadership will have to decide whether it is going to keep running after the state to force it to perform or whether it is going to promote and support informal processes, to the extent it can. If it opts only for the former, then it will have to organise its clientele and use them as a political force as the movement for the homeless did in 1990 and in 1992. Even in doing this it must be clear of what can be achieved realistically - maybe just electric supply and identification and subdivision of new land. The other aspects of development can be done informally and if they are done on a fairly large scale they will become the "status quo", acceptable to the state, just as temporary houses in the homeless settlements have become.

Informal processes can be nurtured and supported in a number of ways. In the dorms meetings of the residents can be called to form an organisation with finance and maintenance committees. With technical help from Baspana repairs can be carried out. Money for this work can be collected incrementally and the work can progress as money is collected. The organisation can also pressurise the government to hand over the dorm to it legally. A woman can begin a day care centre in her room and people can pay her for it. Another can be employed to clean the toilets. To do this a detail survey of people living here will have to be undertaken, motivational work will have to be done, and perhaps initial financial support for admin purposes will be required. Assistance from the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) Karachi, and SPARC, Bombay could be useful. Once this is done in one dorm, it will become easier in others due to the demonstration effect.

In the case of new settlements the problem is twofold. One, government should deregulate to make incremental housing possible, lower its area standards, permit the use of simpler earthquake proof technology, and the decentralisation of electric supply and water source development. In addition, it should permit the establishment of commercial and social sector activities in people's homes. United Nations agencies and other bilateral agencies can help in this process by pressurising government to adopt new policies. People, if organised, can also exert pressure. These issues can also be taken up at the Habitat Conference in Istanbul in June 1996.

The other problem is that some agency or group, maybe Baspana, has to play a role in promoting informal processes and in making them the accepted "status quo". The important issue at present is to get the 2,500 empty plots in the settlements occupied. For this it is necessary to: one, develop cheap architectural plans for a one to four room "temporary" house, that can be built incrementally, along with cost estimates. The house should use earthquake proof technology (Babar Mumtaz, Arif Hasan and Father Jorge's contacts could help). These details should be sent to all members. Maybe a revolving credit fund for the construction of a roof for a one room, bath and kitchen house can be acquired from some source. Two, motivate people to dig shallow wells collectively for water supply. Some people have already done so. Maybe a Vander-rig could be introduced to Baspana for boring purposes and a hand pump installed on it at the peoples collective cost. Wells are already there. WaterAid could help. Again, neighbourhood organisations of residents are needed for this. Three, identify an informal sector activity taking place in the settlement, support it, and help in its replication (for example, home schools, child-care centres, informal transport, shops, clinics). If such an activity is working well or has potential, then maybe a credit fund for expanding it could also be established. This would increase incomes and create jobs. Four, find an entrepreneur to operate and extend electricity from a generator (if it is possible). And five, identify and grab land for the other 12,500 families on the waiting list or secretly extend the frontiers of the present settlements.

The above possibilities can only be explored if Baspana starts giving greater attention to its clientele and less to pursuing matters with the state. And then an organised population of 17,500 (5,000 plus 12,500) can be a far more forceful lobby than Baspana as it is structured today. But there are also other problems in the offing.

Privatisation of land (which is bound to take place) will turn land into a commodity. Land will then acquire a price and will no longer be available in the city or near it for low income housing. It is free today and if it remains so for any section of the population, it will be subject to speculation once it has a price. A land mafia will be formed as a result and will receive political patronage. All this will put land and housing out of the reach of the poor and increase homelessness and poverty. To counteract this it is necessary that a master plan of the city (which has legal cover) should be formed allocating

areas for housing with maximum plots for low income or homeless people. Processes and procedures to discourage speculation should also be developed and all this should be known to the people and NGOs so that they can help to protect the land. In addition, the state should hold sufficient land for the future benefit of the city with the provision that they cannot be used purely for commercial purposes. It is also necessary that the first right of purchase of land should belong to the person or community living on it. These recommendations could form a part of the NGO Kazakhstan Report to the UN Habitat Conference.

The Kazakhstan NGO report should may be consist of: one, a description of the old housing policy of the Soviet Union and its advantages and disadvantages along with the problems that the policy faces in the new Kazakhstan. Two, the repercussions of policy failure and the problems of homelessness, poverty and unemployment and their social and physical repercussions. Three, the movement of Baspana, its achievements, constraints and potential. And four, recommendations to the UN, the Kazakh government, and bilateral agencies aimed at facilitating the housing process, along with figures, photographs and maybe a film.

It is perhaps necessary to involve the architectural and planning academic institutions in part of the report writing and in a long term association with the movement of the homeless people. Students could be used for surveys, extension and research work. Links could be established with other institutions (Johan Silas, Indonesia; Dawood College, Pakistan) and with the ACHR Young Professionals Programme.

No further improvements to the Baspana office should be made. Such lavish improvements can isolate the community from the leadership and lead to accusations of dishonesty against it.

The above agenda cannot be carried out at once (even if Baspana agrees to some of it). The issues need to be prioritised. This can only be done through discussions and a process of continuous monitoring and self-critic.

### ***Visit to the History Museum***

Father Jorge and myself visited the History Museum in the afternoon where the work of a local artist was on display and a large number of Kazakh carpets were for sale. These carpets were famous all over India, Persia and in Ottoman territories upto the turn of the century. The ones for sale are not exceptional. Father Jorge's observation that the ladies looking after the museum were exceptionally helpful, knowledgeable and elegant is very true. You will not find such caretakers in any museum in Third World Asia or in the First World for that matter. Almost all service sector employees in Almaty seem to be extremely well-educated and cultured. For example, we discovered that our waitress at the Almaty Hotel is a piano teacher and a performer.

## **Sunday, 3 March**

Boris picked up from the hotel and after stopping at the Baspana office we went with Ernar, Malik and Yarman to Luchvastoka settlement and arrived there at 10:30 am.

### ***Luchvastoka Settlement***

Luchvastoka settlement has much more construction activity than the other settlements. The houses are small one or two room affairs and are badly built. The reason for this activity and its poor nature is that this area is not legalised and people have to physically occupy the land so as to get rid of the fear of losing it. In addition, with Baspana's assistance in planning, they are quietly extending the boundaries of their settlement into the areas belonging to the





THE ALMATY BALLET THEATRE



PUBLIC HOUSING IN ALMATY



THE ALMATY HISTORY MUSEUM



ZELONI BAZAR



THE SUPREME SOVIET,ALMATY



TOLGATS HOUSE IN LUCHVASTOKA  
SETTLEMENT





RAMMED EARTH WALL IN LUCHVASTOKA SETTLEMENT



TIMBER HOUSES WITH MUD STRAW  
PLASTER, LUCHVASTOKA SETTLEMENT

neighbouring *oblast* or province. The city architectural department staff informally advises them on where to extend and how and receives plots for their services.

There are four types of wall construction that are visible. These are, mud walls cast in-situ with a straw mix; mud walls in precast mud blocks; timber boarding with timber lattice work on either side plastered over with mud (many old buildings in Almaty are built like this); and a timber frame of a size of 3 metres into 5 metres with horizontal reed infill and reed lattice work on either side, covered with mud plaster. The first and fourth alternatives are considered the best due to their insulation qualities.

The roof is always the same. It consists of a triangular timber truss covered with asbestos sheets. The false ceiling consists of timber rafters with timber boards above and a false ceiling of hard board below. The boards are covered with 6 to 7 centimetres of earth which serves as insulation.

Asbestos sheets cost 120 to 200 Tenge for a sheet of 120 x 90 centimetres. Steel sheets of the same size cost 300 to 500 Tenge. Timber is available at 6,000 Tenge per centimetre uncut and 8,000 to 9,000 Tenge if all four sides are cut. Cement is 2,500 Tenge per ton and reinforcement 30,000 Tenge per ton. Angle iron 45 x 45 millimetre is 24,000 Tenge per ton.

The floors of the houses are of timber boards raised on timber battens. This separation from the earth keeps the floor warm. Children can play on them. Maybe the same result in insulation terms could be achieved if the floor would consist of rammed earth covered with felt and finished with PVC sheeting.

There are also a number of homes whose walls are made of cement-coal-ash block. Some have used old metal sheets for roofing. Most windows are just frames covered with polythene sheeting both internally and externally. Almost all houses are incomplete but people live in them.

At the site we spoke to Tolgat. He had guests in the house so we did not go in. He is young, married and has one child. He works in a fox farm that sells fox skins. People can no more afford to buy fox skins so the factory/farm is in trouble. Salaries are not being paid.

Tolgat moved to the site and put up a yurt where he and his family stayed while the house was being built. The yurt is now a store house for coal. The house consists of an entry, two rooms and a kitchen. The walls are of timber boards and lattice work on either side covered with mud. The roof consists of asbestos cement sheets and the false ceiling of timber battens and boards with an earth covering for insulation and hard board below. The foundation goes down only 20 centimetres but it is made of concrete. There is a felt damp proof course at the plinth level.

Tolgat says he has spent 200,000 Tenge on this house. Most of this money has been spent on timber. He spent 1,000 Tenge for roof timber and 7,000 Tenge on asbestos sheets. He bought uncut timber and hired a cutter for cutting it himself. He built the house without hired labour.

Tolgat made no drawn plan for his house or estimates. Without the assistance of his family he could never have succeeded in building it. People while building exchange tools and skills which they possess. So did he. Not having access to tools is a real problem and hiring them is expensive. In summer he will add to the house.

Tolgat gets water from two to three kilometres away. In winter he brings it on a sledge and in summer on a hand drawn cart. He and his neighbours get electricity from the fox factory by bribing the factory electrician.

### **Observations:**

Yarman is horrified at the poor construction of the houses and says that in case of an earth-quake everyone will die. He insists that conventional anti-earthquake technology is the only answer. However, there are much cheaper and effective alternatives available. A cheap low cost anti-earthquake house is a possibility and could be made by the residents themselves if plans, tools and technical supervision could be made available to them. Some research would also be needed.

Wooden floors could be replaced by felt-covered-with-PVC-sheeting ones. The false ceiling could be done away with. Timber sizes could be reduced and rules of thumb introduced to calculate them. Reed insulation could be sandwiched between the asbestos sheet roof and the plywood just below it.

The possibilities are enormous. Walls in in-situ mud could be cast in standard steel forms and lightly reinforced to take earthquake activity.

### ***Discussions at Baspana office***

We arrived at the ana office around noon and Father Jorge and I presented our thinking to Yarman, Ernar and Malik. We explained that in our opinion there were four elements that needed to be discussed. One, cooperative action for the improvement of dormitories. Two, the development of architectural plans, estimates, tools and supervision for house building in the settlements along with decentralisation of water supply and electricity and creation of informal social services. Three, the development of a Baspana newsletter and contacts with members. And four, looking at the larger city level issues and the Habitat Conference paper and its possible recommendations.

The group will consider these issues in the days that we are away in Bishkek and we will discuss them in greater detail when we come back.

We had lunch at a self service outlet owned by a Korean chain and left for Bishkek by car with Slava and Boris.

### ***On the Way to Bishkek***

We travelled through snow covered wheat fields with bear trees demarkating them. There were mobile petrol stations and collective farms with their residential and administrative centres of characterless architecture. Lot of yourts being used as shops and houses for road construction labour, lined the road at intervals. Rotting tractors and trailers were every where. However, there was excellent public transport on the road and heavy Volvo trucks carrying cargo and cars. This is certainly not the Third World.

We stopped for tea at a *chaikhana* and a Vodka. The people were very pleasant and though everyone was Kazakh, they all spoke Russian to each other.

Our car broke down as it could not climb the snow covered road. A tractor pulled it up to the top. We arrived in Bishkek at 11:30 pm and were put up at an apartment where a mother and son received us. The son is a biologist. Books and crystal glasses line the shelves in the apartment.

Entering Bishkek one gets the impression of a poorer though more spacious city than Almaty. The place is full of way side shops selling western goods, mainly alcohol.

### **Monday, 4 March**

We arrived in the offices of InterBilim at 10 am. The offices are tastefully done up and are well equipped. The building in which they are housed is known as Friendship House in which 22 cultural centres of different nationalities of Kyrgyzia are working. We met Aasiya, the director; Emil; Rustom the lawyer; Ilmeria and other staff members.

Aasiya talked about Kyrgyzia and the conditions in the country. She speaks English. She is not aware of the old history of the region but only of its history under the Russians and the communists. However, she says that the Kyrgyz were Zorastians before Islam came to them through the Uzbek invasion in the 13th century and in the 19th century a semi-autonomous khanate of the region was taken over by the Czars.

There are 80 nationalities living in Kyrgyzia. Most of them were brought here by Stalin. There are now also Afghan and Tajik refugees living in the country. Forty percent of the population of Bishkek are Russians. Many Russians left the town after independence but they are coming back (or have come back) with more Russians ! The population of the country is 4.5 million and that of Bishkek is 700,000 to 800,000.

The rural economy has collapsed. Whoever is strong enough grabs land. There are no jobs. Tractors have broken down and cannot get repaired. There is no transport for carrying food to the cities. People have tried to form associations but they have failed to solve these problems. People from the city go to the rural areas to buy food in bulk and sell it in the city. Good harvests are sent to Russia to earn money. The result of these conditions is that people are all pouring into the city.

Under the old communist system one was put on a waiting list for getting a flat. Scientists, professors, artists, all had to wait. However, only those people got flats who were close to the party. The system has continued with the result that a very large number of homeless people are highly educated. They have been forced to become squatters.

Aasiya was a school principal. Her school had 1,200 children and 80 teachers. There were 70 Russian schools in Bishkek and two or three Kyrgyz schools. Her school was the best of all of them. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union teachers did not receive their salaries in time. The salaries too could not cope with inflation. They were only US\$ 20 or so. Most families went into business but teacher's families are not businessmen but artists and intellectuals and they consider business insulting. But teachers did leave to do business to survive and the Russian teachers went back to Russia.

Many children no longer come to school but work at buying and selling. Their parents encourage them as they have no option but starvation and the government does not care about students not coming to school. Before it a student did not come, the reasons were looked into and the parents contacted. Ninety-nine percent of the population in the country is literate but now this figure is diminishing. Among the children there is crime and drug and alcohol abuse which were unknown before.

In 1990 things became serious. Beggars came onto the streets. Alternatives had to be looked into. Aid-giving agencies promoted the idea of NGOs to her. A survey of NGOs was carried out. There were 400 of them registered but most were on paper only. At that time Aasiya met J. Cooper, Director Training of the Peace Corps. She was teaching him Russian and Kyrgyz. With his support InterBilim was formed in 1993, with the intention of supporting NGOs. InterBilim means "Inter-Knowledge".

### ***Meeting with Iskandar***

Iskandar is a member of the Committee of Local Self Government of the Builders of October District. He arrived at the InterBilim office around 11:30 am and we had a long discussion with him. The important points of this discussion are summarised below.

The city is divided into four ryons or districts. These are Lenin, October, 1st of May and Sverdlov districts. In his district the settlement of homeless people has 2,500 plots of which 1,800 or so are occupied. The Committee of his district is a five member one. All told there are 8,000 to 9,000 plots in informal settlements in Bishkek. In his district the 2,500 plots are spread out in one settlement. The settlement was first squatted and then legalised.

The movement began with the formation of Ashar (meaning collective work), a "public association". It was formed by Juma Kazek, a philosophy teacher. Their demand was for the legalisation of squatters in Lenin Ryon. The government agreed and formed committees for each ryon and gave these committees plots for distribution and development. In addition, the government formed an "Ashar Business Association", for helping the establishment and development of small enterprises.

The Committees of Local Self Government (as these committees are known) have the following functions: one, providing people with jobs. People of the settlement contact the Committee, giving their qualifications and the Committee forwards their papers to the Central Employment Bureau. If there is no job available they get an allowance or they are sent for some other more relevant training. Two, lobbying for infrastructure; which means sending requests and their details in writing to the government. And three, lobbying for operation and maintenance of infrastructure.

Settlements in October district have electricity for domestic use but not for heating. People use it for heating sometimes and as a result the system gets "burnt". One of the functions of the Committee is to explain to people not to use electricity for heating. Water is available on the main roads from where people take it. In one settlement "full" electricity is being developed with Swiss assistance.

The central area of the settlements, consisting of social facilities and high-rise flats, is yet to be built. Electricity charges are 6.65 Coms per person and for water 2.18 Coms per person per year. Payment is made directly to a bank. Children go to schools in the nearby informal settlements.

The settlements have been designed by the architecture department of the city. The houses are in clusters of seven around a central space. The plot size is 400 to 800 square metres. Only 30 percent of the owners live in temporary houses. This is because 60 percent took credit for house building which was available till 1992 in small instalments at an interest rate of three percent. This credit is no longer available.

The plots for the October Ryon were given in 1990. Land for all the settlements in the four ryons were given between 1989 and 1991. After that no new land has been allocated. However, people who do not start living on their plots in three years after allotment have their plots cancelled and these plots are given to someone else. To get a plot you apply to the state Inspection for Monitoring of Individual Houses in Bishkek city. The Mayor decrees if you get or do not get a plot. The cost of registration, mutation and other legal requirements works out to 600 to 700 Coms.

Iskandar comes from the countryside and studied agricultural construction from 1983. Then he worked in Kyrgyz College. All the plot owners are Kyrgyz and have come to Bishkek from the countryside.

#### ***Further Meetings at the InterBilim office***

We had lunch with the InterBilim staff in the neighbourhood of the office and returned to the office for further meetings at 3 pm.

Aasiya explained that InterBilim is supposed to have a board and a general body. However, they have yet to be formed. The organisation's function is to strengthen NGOs by organising an NGO forum. NGOs from other Oblasts are also a part of this forum. Funding is acquired from the Euro Asia Foundation, ALC and DIA and this finances NGO coordination, training, newsletter, publication, legal advice and other activity in the South of the country.

InterBilim approached the informal builders since, though they only request the government for assistance, they behaved like NGOs. They have no access to the media and they are now forming a central organisation. What use will that be Simply more bureaucracy. The Committee members are paid US\$ 20 per month which is nothing. The builders have architects, engineers, artists, professors among them, all highly qualified people.

At 4 pm we had a meeting with members of the Committee of Local Self Government of the Builders of Sverdlov Ryon (district). These members are Aqal Bek Qurbankogaiev, Chairman of the Committee; Umar Qurbanov; Abdul Razzak Bayshan Bek; and Khan-e-Bek Qurbankogarev. Aqal Bek studied 11 grades and then went to a vocational school. He is an artist and has a legal private enterprise as an artist. He was a driver before. Umar used to work in the Department of State Management for Capital Development. Abdul Razzak is deputy director in the State Management for Capital Building and Khan-e-Bek is a "financial agent", whatever that might be.

The Committee members were very anxious in finding out what we had to give them. They were impatient with our questions. When we told them that we were not the World Bank and had no cheque to offer, they were disappointed. We explained conditions and movements to combat homelessness and government indifference in other Asian countries and they felt a bit better. We discussed their history and culture and they became friendly. All the Committee members are Kyrgyz and all of them have migrated from the rural areas.

There are four settlements in the Ryon. Ninety-nine percent of the population is Kyrgyz and all of it from the rural areas. Eighty to ninety percent are unemployed (proper job) and are of an average age of 30. They are all educated. Only 20 percent of the houses are on the standard government plan. The rest are "temporary". This is because no loans for construction were given in this Ryon. One settlement has full electricity and the others only for minor household use. Two settlements have

water in the central streets. The others take it from the neighbouring settlements. Some people have made holes (bores) of a depth of 30 to 120 metres and they sell water. Water is not only needed for drinking and cooking but also for gardening. Children go to neighbouring settlements for schooling. The roads are gravelled.

The names of the four settlements in the Ryon are Bakayata, Kelechek (future), Ene-Say (northern field) and Aktelik (white dream). Collectively, these settlements have 2,950 plots of which 1,940 are developed. In Bakayata 800 plots out of a total of 1,500 are developed; in Kelechek 350 out of 500; in Ene-Say 370 out of 450; and in Aktelik 420 out of 500.

Each settlement elects a representative. Then, according to its population, it elects a number of people who form the Ryon Conference and who then elect the Chairman of the Ryon Committee. In addition, there are street leaders who help the settlement leader; there is a Women's Committee which uses the Ryon charitable fund; and there is the Elders Committee which carries out disciplinary action.

The leaders are interested in credit for income generation and small enterprises. They say the government would welcome small private schools and shops in the settlement; small decentralised electricity and water supply systems operated by entrepreneurs, and or the community; and other similar efforts as it would solve the governments' problems. This is a very different perception from that of the builders of Almaty.

We exchanged views on Islam; spoke about politics in Pakistan; discussed the common vocabulary that Kyrgyz, Urdu, Arabic and Persian share; and we discussed history. So we have parted friends and will meet again tomorrow.

We returned to the apartment at 6:30 pm.

## **Tuesday, 5 March**

We met Iskandar Aliev of the October Committee in the InterBilim office and with him we left for the Kokjar (greenslope) settlement where we arrived at 10 am.

### ***Kokjar settlement***

1,800 of the 2,500 plots in the settlement have been constructed. Thirty percent are project houses and the rest are temporary (this contradicts what he said yesterday but looking at the settlement it seems what he says today is correct). The roads are muddy as the snow is melting. A large number of houses are incomplete.

The major problem is that people do not have electricity for heating. Iskandar says that if small transformers of 40 KV could be installed for each seven house cluster the problem would be solved. However, a transformer of this sort costs 6,000 Coms and with instalation and related work, it will cost 25,000 Coms.

We visited the house of Iskandar's brother in the settlement and talked to his sister-in-law, Khayal (Arabic for thought). She and her husband have been living here for three years. They came to Bishkek to study. She studied tailoring at a vocational school and he studied at the polytechnic. He now works as a state sanitary inspector. They had their own house in the village but no work.

They pay electricity charges at 21.60 Coms per month. They walk two kilometres to get provisions. A nearby store would be better. She takes orders from the neighbours for sewing but there are not enough orders to keep her occupied or to make much money. She has a sewing machine.

The water lines have been laid in the settlement on the main road. Iskandar says that if people had money they would lay the distribution lines themselves.

We also visited Inura (light in Arabic), wife of Auroz Bek. She operates a bread shop in the settlement. She sells 50 to 60 loaves each day and makes 0.50 Com on each loaf. Each loaf costs 3 Soms. She says she could sell much more if she had the capital to purchase more.

Shopkeepers are registered here but do not pay a tax. They apply to the Committee to do business and the Committee forwards the application to the concerned department. There is no question of refusal or tax as these settlements are "privileged areas".

### ***Bakayata settlement***

We went back to the InterBilim office from the Kokjar settlement and waited till 12:30 pm for Akal (brain/mind in Arabic) Bek. Then we went to his office and with him to the Bakayata settlement. He was delayed as he was busy in a meeting. We arrived at Bakayata at 1:30 pm.

Bakayata has a lot of small scale business activity. Houses are of poor quality. A bazar has been constructed but is not operative. A school building for 220 students has been constructed. The demand is for over 700 students.

Ash from the nearby hot water producing factory is deposited on the nearby ridge. When it is dry the ash is blown into the settlement by the wind. People mix the ash with cement and use it for construction. This is why so many homes are ash grey in colour. The roads in this season are muddy and the quality of housing is again poor for what the people have invested in it. As in the previous settlement, water is present on the main roads, and electricity is for non-heating purposes only.

Outside one of the houses we met Alma Gul. She and her husband, who works in a factory, have been trying to finish their temporary house for the last five years. The walls of the house are of clay. They got it free but paid for its transport in five trips by truck. Each trip cost them 250 Coms.

Alma Gul used to work as a children's physician. She now makes bread and sells it. She cannot expand her business as there are bakeries all over the place. It is good to have a school nearby that her child can go to, but she has to pay for text and notebooks and other items that he needs. Before these were all provided by the state. She and her husband used to rent an apartment before and moved here to save rent. She claims that there is widespread unemployment and that she, for one, has given up all hope that the state will help.

The settlement has 1,500 plots of which 800 are developed and of which 20 percent (about) are project houses.

### ***Ene-Say (mother field) settlement***

At 2:15 pm we arrived at the Ene-Say settlement. Conditions here are similar to the other settlements. There is a lot of small scale commercial activity. There are two fairly large privately owned shops as well, one in a tailor. Ninety percent of the 450 plots have been built on. Ten percent of the houses are project houses. A few buildings on the settlement fringe have been purchased by the Ryon on the advice of the Committee and turned into kindergartens. Before about 40 students used to come to the kindergarten but now the figure has declined to 19 because people cannot pay (or do not want to pay) 50 Coms for this facility. Students stay here till 6 pm and are given food and milk.

### ***Kelechek (future) settlement***

We arrived at the Kelechek settlement at 3 pm and walked down a few lanes. Akal Bek showed us the pumping station from where water is supplied to the settlement. The conditions are similar to the other settlements. However, on the southern sides of the settlement Akal Bek has permitted people from the rural areas to settle even though they do not meet the criteria of having lived in the city for three years. We talked to one of them who is from Jalalabad (near Ush). He bakes and sells bread. In his village every one bakes bread in their *tandoors* (oven).

### ***Meeting at Akal Bek's house***

Akal Bek's house is a modest "temporary" affair in the Kelechek settlement. Inside the house are his paintings. The themes have been taken from Kyrgyz history and folklore. One is about Manas and another one depicts the world mafia. He has three children and a wife who stays in the background.

Bread, American butter and *kish-mish* is served along with *chai*. The atmosphere, both in physical and social terms, is identical with a home in northern Pakistan and the nature of conversation and sense of humour is identical - so is the nature of formality. We discovered many words and concepts in common between Urdu and Kyrgyz.

Akal Bek opened a bottle of Hungarian Champagne and then of Vodka. Father Jorge and he offered toasts and a long discussion followed, the gist of which is given below.

A good temporary house of a size of 8 metres into 4 metres costs about 25,000 Coms. The roof costs about 40 percent of the total cost. 22 milimetres thick cut boards cost 1,200 Coms. Asbestos sheets of 110 x 170 centimetres cost 16 Coms and 1,000 bricks cost between 500 to 1,000 Coms. The nature of roof and false ceiling construction is the same as in Almaty although glass wool as an insulation is considered cheaper. All the five persons present at the meeting feel that the average paying back capacity of people in the settlement is easily 100 Coms a month.

### ***Our poetess landlady***

We got back to the apartment at 6 pm and during our discussions with our landlady we discovered that she is a well known poetess in the Kyrgyz language and has published six books. So we discussed a bit of poetry and find common poetic forms and words like *shair*, *amanat*, *sher*, *gazel*, *Qasida* etc.

There are hundreds of words in common between the Central Asian and North Indian languages and are easily recognisable. Most meta-physical, legal and semi-scientific terms are of Arabic origin. Poetic and formal terms are derived from Persian and also from Arabic. Many trade terms seem to have Prakritic roots. We also use numerous Turkish terms (which come from them) which are related to administrative and military matters. And naturally, most proper nouns are Islamic, and hence the same.

### ***Some Observations on the Situation in Bishkek***

Bishkek appears to be a far poorer town than Almaty. However, the centre of the city is spacious with a lot of large open plazas, monuments, green spaces and, by and large ostentations, but poor architecture. A lot more informal shops and eating places are visible than in Almaty. The people are friendlier and far more closer in pronunciation of Arabic and Persian words to Pakistan than the Kazakhs. The government appears to be far more in control than in Almaty and at the same time more liberal about permitting small private enterprises.





MOBILE PETROL STATION ON WAY TO BISHKEK



OFFICES OF INTERBILIM



INSIDE INTERBILIM OFFICE EMILE(LEFT) WITH ISKANDAR



LEADERS OF SVERDLOV RYON SETTLEMENT:LEFT TO RIGHT,KHAN BEK,ABDUL RAZZAK,UMAR QURBANOV AND AKAL BEK



ALMURA AT HER NAN SHOP:KOKJAR SETTLEMENT



KHAYAL,HER SON AND MOTHER IN LAW IN THEIR CLAY HOUSE:KOKJAR SETTLEMENT





A STREET VENDOR IN BAKAYATA SETTLEMENT



AN INCOMPLETE HOUSE IN BAKAYATA SETTLEMENT



MARX ENGELS MONUMENT, BISHKEK



A GATHERING ON INTERNATIONAL WOMENS DAY IN  
BISHKEK



SHASHLIC AND KEBAB KIOSKS ON WAY TO ALMATY



WATER STANDPOST ON THE WAY TO ALMATY

Regarding the housing situation, no major change can be brought about in it from the state without major investments. These investments cannot be made by NGOs since they need to be enormous and the problem will keep on increasing in geometric proportion for the time being, making such investments impossible. However, the people are already making large investments in their houses and settlements and getting very poor results in return. If they could be assisted in doing what they are already doing in a better way, things could improve considerably. Also, it seems from their leaders, that they have the possibility of saving money but are not used to the idea of doing it collectively. Similarly, much of the secondary and tertiary infrastructure for water supply that remains to be done could be done by them, provided they save money and are given technical support.

Almost all houses in the settlements are of mud and asbestos roofing. They have technical shortcomings, are badly detailed, and most of them would not last even an earthquake of a scale of four. There are problems of transporting clay to the site, of cutting unsawn timber (getting it sawn commercially increases its cost by over 100 percent) and of acquiring appropriate materials. Based on the above a possible programme would be: one, carrying out a small research into the housing process in the settlements. How a house is built; who does what and how; materials of construction and the difficulties in acquiring and using them; shortcomings in design and construction weakness in the homes; and the costs involved. On the basis of this research a small design cum supervision unit should be set up which can provide designs, technical support and tools along with detailed estimates. DIA could finance the establishment of such a unit and its operational cost. The unit staff would consist of an architect, a draftsman, a social organiser and perhaps an accountant. One or two demonstration houses could also be built for promotional purposes. However, the question is where and in which institution should it be created and who will staff and run it ? Can InterBilim take on this responsibility ? It needs to be discussed. Two, savings groups such as in Mahila Milan in India, in Gilgit in Pakistan and in South Africa can be developed in the Bishkek settlements. To introduce the people to these processes it may be necessary for key people from these projects to visit the Bishkek settlements and for Bishkek groups to visit Karachi and Bombay. Small savings groups are free of mistrust and politics, unlike large groups. The savings generated could be used for infrastructure or commercial development at the cluster or neighbourhood level (such as extending water supply into the cluster from the water mains) and technical support for it could be given by the technical unit described above. Since the most effective savings groups are women's groups, women from the Bishkek communities should visit the other Asian groups. Three, the commercial activity taking place in the settlements also needs to be studied and its constraints and potential need to be identified. The constraints should be removed and the potential promoted. Maybe at a later stage a loan and technical support programme for small enterprises could be introduced on the Orangi pattern. This would increase incomes and create more jobs. Four, the above programmes can only be successful if the necessary social and technical research is carried out and the process of its extension is developed. This means the development of social organisers and motivators from among the community and the development of a process of contacting people. This can be done by the creation of a newsletter explaining the programme to the people and publishing the profiles of successful initiatives and individuals. But then, can undertake all this ?

## **Wednesday, 6 March**

InterBilim had arranged a meeting with groups of builders at 10 am at its office. However, no body apart from Iskandar of the October Ryon attended. The others could not "make it". Aasiya and Emil came.

We presented our proposals before the group. They were supportive of them. They felt that the technical support unit could be created in InterBilim and that the extension work could be done by the Committees if their members could be trained. They felt that technical support can be provided by the government departments. However, our experience has been that such departments have their own systems, procedures and standards and cannot do research for grass root extension work. It would be better to have a young architect or engineer who could work for a few months with someone experienced in carrying out research on the sociology, technology and economics of people built housing and then develop alternatives. The group also felt that active women who could visit other



countries, learn what is happening there, and adapt it to local conditions with help from InterBilim, could be found in the settlements. Aasiya gave considerable importance to the exchange of information and maybe DIA can arrange that on a regular basis with the help of Father Jorge. There are after all, all sorts of newsletters, case studies, progress reports, extension literature and films that NGOs in Asia produce. The availability of this material and the exchange visits, Aasiya feels, would bring about a change of attitude in the people of the settlement in particular, and of NGOs in general. Under Soviet rule, she says, people were told how to build, how to live, how many rooms to have etc. This has become a part of their being. It must change.

Iskandar of the Committee of October Ryon has shown a deep interest in this whole visit. Maybe he could be cultivated. It is unfortunate that no one from the Lenin Ryon Committees could be contacted for, according to Iskandar, the Lenin settlements are the largest and very few houses have been built in them. They would be the most important client of the "technical support unit". Ashar, which operates in the Lenin settlement has also been uncontactable by InterBilim so far. They hope that they will be able to arrange a meeting tomorrow.

The meeting ended at 1 pm after which we went for a long walk in the city. We visited Furenze Museum, the Museum of History (previously Lenin Museum) and arrived back at the apartment at 5:30 pm.

## Thursday, 7 March

We were supposed to meet with Ashar and the representatives of the Lenin Ryon at the InterBilim office at 10 am. However, they did not come and we left for Almaty at 10:30 am.

The entire way to Almaty was covered with snow due to last night's heavy fall. Vast expanses of land, with small settlements in brown, dotted the oppressively white landscape. Bare trees with the nests of birds clearly visible. The whole landscape is similar to much of Balochistan and Afghanistan. We stopped at a small bazar surrounded by *yourts*. Women surrounded us asking us to come into their *yourts*. Boris choose one and we had a meal of *shahlic* and *nan*.

We arrived Almaty at 5:45 pm and checked in at the Almaty Hotel. There was no dinner served at the hotel today since it is International Women's Day and the hotel staff is off.

## Friday, 8 March

Boris picked us up from the Hotel at 9 am. There was no traffic today because of the holiday for the International Womens Day. They take this occasion very seriously over here. We arrived at the PIA office at the airport for ticket reconfirmation. The offices were closed although those of other airlines were open. At 10:15 am we arrived at the Baspana office and met with Erner, Malik, Esen, Yarman and Ganish (a new person with a diploma in economics and four children. He lives in a dormitory). We enquired if they have considered the recommendations that we made before we left for Bishkek. They said they have been very busy and have not had the time. We repeated the recommendations. One, research into what people are doing leading to the establishment of a technical support unit for housing; development of appropriate plans, estimates, and technologies; and a supply system of tools and machinery for construction. A small unit consisting of a young architect and a organiser would be required for this along with a person from some organisation in Asia could direct this unit through three visits of two weeks each spread over a eight month period. Two, visit of activists to Pakistan and with women (if possible) to Bombay India (as a continuation of the Pakistan visit) to look at the women's saving movements. Three, visit from Mahila Milan, Bombay, of women programme leaders to organise women's involvement in savings and for the operation and maintenance of the dormitories. And four, the writing of a paper for the Habitat meeting.

The agree with the recommendations after long discussions but insist that they have no women activists. In this case, what we can do is to begin by sending Celine and Jokin from Bombay to introduce these ideas to the women in one of the dormitories and it can develop from there.



They want to know if a donor would finance loans for housing to the poor people so that a construction company could build houses for them and they could repay it over a period of time. We worked out the calculations with them for this scheme and showed them that US\$ 4 million would reach only 1,000 persons and to house their plot owners one would require US\$ 24 million and the people on their waiting list would require another US\$ 48 million. They were most disappointed at these figures. We explained again that if they have to reach the maximum number then it can only be done by knowing what people are doing and how, and of developing the means of supporting and improving on it. They understood.

We discussed their organisation. It appeared that it cannot pay its rent, telephone and electricity charges and the operation and maintenance of the machinery that the DIA has sent it. They are also concerned that they cannot pay the leaders of the movement. They further informed us that to meet their running expenses they sell off plots to commercial organisations. However, few commercial organisations want land anymore. They now prefer land in the city centre. They also told us that they cannot afford trained accountants and that is a major problem. In addition, they said that they also need a lawyer for Baspana.

We responded that it is essential that the organisation should not have to worry about its operation and maintenance costs but these costs should be minimal and the organisation's style austere. In addition, leaders should not be paid but those persons who form part of the executive of Baspana and professionals associated with it should be paid. We also pointed out that land should never be sold for running the organisation. This could lead to the organisation's complete disgrace and the government would then have the excuse to close the organisation down. As far as an accountant is concerned, a young person from the settlement should be recruited and trained through assistance of a senior accountant who can be paid for training, as we do in Pakistan. Alternatively, he can attend intense accounting courses, which according to Boris, are available in Almaty. As far as a lawyer is concerned, he is not really required.

The conversation then drifted. They became nostalgic for the origins of their movement, like Spartacus, before the Romans finally defeated him. They want to go back to those origins. We explained that those origins are no longer valid. People followed them because they promised them land. Now they have land and they will follow them again if they can help them to build. Their role has changed and only those leaders who can accept this changed role can survive.

Esen speaks of Mediat Kuljabaev, the leader of Shamrack. He says that he did what we are suggesting. He organised a centre in 1990 for building materials and machinery for construction purposes. The centre had a crane, an excavator and a bulldozer as well. His ideas, however, did not work, but no one knows why it was so. Mediat was the first organiser of the homeless in Almaty.

### ***Lunch at Ernar's***

Ernar invited us for lunch at his house. From among his colleagues only Yarman was invited. Ernar's wife works in a Swiss company. He says she earns twice as much as he. The conversation at lunch revolves around the Russian "occupation" period and the settlement of other nationalities in Kazakhstan and the extermination of the native population. Ernar says that they know very little of Kazakh history or the real history of the Russian period - but in spite of indoctrination their gut feeling is correct. They, however, admit that socialism gave them education, freedom from want and freedom from the fear of tomorrow. In spite of the chaos they are happy that Kazakhstan is "free" at last.

Ernar and Yarman also talked about the nuclear tests in their region and how a large number of persons who had been exposed to radiation had hung themselves or committed suicide. Their bitterness is intense.

Similar to the lower middle income class in Pakistan, Iran and India, I notice that in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan the women of the house do not eat with the guests but wait on them. The same is true of Ernar's house.

We also discussed the Kazakh language and I mentioned that I can follow most of the formal vocabulary on the Kazakh TV channel. They said that all this is new. They cannot follow many words

because they can only converse in Russian except for small talk in Kazakh. However, they felt that the language will evolve and the old words will come back again. I hope they keep the Russian terminology that they have acquired and do not try to replace it with dead medieval terms as the Indians have done.

### ***Further Discussion at the Baspana office***

We return to the Baspana office at 3:30 pm and the discussion continues. Father Jorge gives examples of women's power in India. Esen also gives examples of how women pushed their babies into the faces of policemen and government officials during the movement and how an NGO leader handcuffed his wife to a radiator in a flat he had occupied so that the flat remained his. At this stage we were joined by Samad Dyousef, one of the very first leaders of the movement. Samad is now the Chairman of the Board of Baspana and heads one of the nine NGOs forming Baspana. In 1991 Samad occupied 137 dormitory and chained 67 women to the radiators till they were accommodated in the building. Similarly, a large number of completed government flats were also occupied and women handcuffed to them. Most of these persons were given plots. For three years the movement occupied houses in this manner.

The importance of documenting this whole effort was raised by Father Jorge. It seems that Ganiesh has been doing this for some time but has not got very far with it. The documentation of this movement would benefit Baspana immensely, not only in getting international recognition, but in understanding itself and in determining future directions. Can some aid be given for doing this work ?

Samad Dyousef at this point raised an objection that although a mission (us) had come to Almaty the leaders of the nine organisations that form Baspana had not met with the mission. He indirectly blamed Altyn Bisek for this. A heated discussion ensued. The gist of it is that Ernar feels that the NGO leaders (most of them) are useless. They do not do any work, even if they are the founders of the movement. Samad agrees but feels that they do not work because they do not know what to do and they do not have any funds available for even just surviving. Questions are asked. Are these organisations now really needed for helping the homeless people ? Have they not outlived their utility ? Samad for instance does not do any work that is related to the homeless. He is a founder. That is all.

Esen at this stage drops another bombshell. He says that a lot of people who have received land are now selling it to people who have money and who could like to have a house away from the centre of the city. The possibility of this trend was something that Father Jorge had discussed with me just this morning.

Tomorrow Father Jorge and I will hopefully finalise some recommendations. On Monday meetings have been arranged with the School of Architecture, Chairman of the Maslikhat, Deputy Head of Construction City Administration, and the Kapchigal Architectural Fund Company that wishes to build low cost houses. On Tuesday before we go we will hopefully meet with the leaders of the nine organisations that form Baspana.

The meeting ended at 5:45 pm and we go back to Hotel Almaty.

### ***Comments on today's discussions***

Father Jorge feels that the Baspana team should not visit Bombay to begin with. Celine and Jokin should come to Almaty to work with one dormitory. In addition, Baspana has to determine its structure. People who get paid have to work on the projects we are proposing. You cannot just have leaders. You need motivators and organisers; technical people; office staff; and social organisers for a women's unit. A possible structure that comes to mind would consist of : one, a board consisting of the nine leaders of the different organisations who receive no salary. Their role will be advisory. Two, office staff for administrative and accounting purposes who get paid. Three, the staff of the technical unit who receives payments. And four, a women's team consisting of two activists who also receive payments.

## Saturday, 9 March

Today was Boris's day off so Slava picked us up from the hotel at 10 am and took us to three book shops. They were all closed. Saturday and Sundays are their days off. He then took us to the Tsum store. Once it was a government departmental store. Now it appears that spaces in it have been rented out to private parties. There are clothes stores with European names, electronic goods (most of them of Japanese make and almost twice as expensive as in a Karachi bazar), perfumes of European origin and a large variety of Turkish, Iranian and French crockery and glasses. People are continuously buying and selling. The largest rush is at the electronic stores. The buyers are of all types: rough looking, sophisticated, badly dressed, well dressed. Most of them are young. There is definitely money to spend in Almaty.

From the Tsum we went to the Universom store. It is still government owned and has no imported gadgetry to sell. It is cheaper than Tsum, but there were very few people over here. Most of them were older than the Tsum customers and by and large few of them were well dressed. The staff also was not as smartly turned out or as well groomed as the Tsum staff. The differences were striking.

We visited the Zeloni Bazar again. It was more relaxed this time as it was much warmer than the first time we visited it. Apart from raw food items all canned and processed food items are from other countries. Much of the paper products, pens, pencils and markers, are also of imported make.

We had lunch at the eating place on the mezzanine in the market. The *mehman khana* looks down onto the spice, flower and meat sections of the market. It is very lovely to look down for the colours are beautiful. The food, however, was bad but very cheap. A food shop selling such bad food, even if cheap, would not last long in Bangkok, Manila, Bombay or Karachi and after some years it perhaps will not last long here as well.

From the Zeloni market we went to a small Russian orthodox church. It seems to be a nineteenth century affair. The external surfaces of the building are emerald blue and green and it has a number of onion shaped domes in the Russian tradition. Inside there were no seats. That is perhaps because the orthodox stand in the church during prayer. Most of the paintings and internal decor of the church is closer to western Europe than to the eastern Orthodox tradition. Outside the church there were a large number of badly and insufficiently dressed women crossing themselves and asking for money as is common outside churches on Sunday in Asian cities that have a poor Christian population.

From the "emerald" church we went to another Orthodox church. This is a grand affair in a large park. The building is mainly pink and has a main dome (not onion shaped) at the crossing of the nave and the transepts, and a number of smaller onion shaped domes which are probably fake ones, for they are not visible inside. The church is undergoing a restoration process internally and by all western architectural standards, it is of poor quality. The art and surface decoration in the church is very much in keeping with the Orthodox tradition. A bookshop in the entrance foyer of the church sells reprints of paintings and promotional literature.

In the park, a little distance from the church, is the World War One and Two joint memorial with a flame in the memory of the dead. The design is fantastic but beautifully made and adds to the beauty of this lovely garden.

We got back to the hotel around 5:30 pm.

## Sunday, 10 March

At 10 am we left for Kok-Joke (blue hill) with Ernar, Boris and Slava. The sky was blue and there was bright sunshine. The character of the city changes in sunlight. The pink of the buildings appears more melow and all of a sudden the buildings acquire a depth as there are now deep shadows on the windows and under the balconies.

Kok-Joke is crowned by a TV tower. Boris claims that it is the highest in the world. The hill has lovely walks; there are eating places and there is the possibility of getting to the top of the tower. From the

hill one has a good view of Almaty. There are also the remains of a cable car system that functioned from near the Kazakhstan Hotel to here.

On the side away from the town, the hills look onto a valley with hills on the other side. There are a number of *dachas* on these hills with apple gardens. Ernar said that they once belonged to the state but are now private property. When they were the property of the state people went there to steal apples but now that is not possible. A *dacha* it seems costs anything from US\$ 1,000 to 5,000 and they are easily available.

From Kok-Joke we went to Meden Bay. It is so called because these were the estate of a rich man called Meden Bay. It is now a weekend resort and contains restaurants, skating ring, eating places and a dam that protects the valley from avalanches. There were horses to ride and 1,000 steps take you to the top of the dam. The paths upto the hill are icy and slippery.

The people at Meden Bay appear to be rich. We saw a large number of expensive American, German and Japanese cars. The people by and large are well dressed. Almost no public transport is visible. It is doubtful that anyone from the squatter settlements visit here. Ernar confirms this.

We ate at a place near Ernar's house and spent all our time discussing Baspana's problems.

In the evening we visited the theatre near the Hotel to see the ballet that was playing there. The conductress of the orchestra was a Kazakh and so was most of the cast and the other performers. The costumes and music, however, were entirely Russian-European. The audience was about two thirds Russian and the rest Kazakh or of mixed breed. The ticket to the performance is 250 Tenge. In the capitalist Asian cities, such a performance would not be available on a regular basis, and certainly not at this low cost.

News: Ernar said that the reason why the roads in Almaty were not frozen was because they had hot water pipes running under them.

## **Monday, 11 March**

Boris picked us up from the Hotel at 10 am and we visited a number of book shops but found no books in English. We picked up Ernar from the Baspana office and reached the Academy of Architecture at 11 am.

We were received at the Academy by Professor Alexey Abilov, Dean of the Architectural Faculty and Professor Bolat Kuspangaliev, Vice President of Education and Member of Correspondence of Eastern Countries International Academy of Architecture. The Rector, Ravel Atruhkevich joined us later.

The Academy of Architecture and Construction has six faculties. These are: one, Architecture: which offers specialisation in design and in housing and social issues. Specialisation is also offered in urban design with special emphasis on architectural environment. Two, Construction: with specialisation in industrial and civil construction and city economy. Three, Technology: which includes wood processing and other building items in construction. Four, Management: with specialisation in economics of the construction industry and management



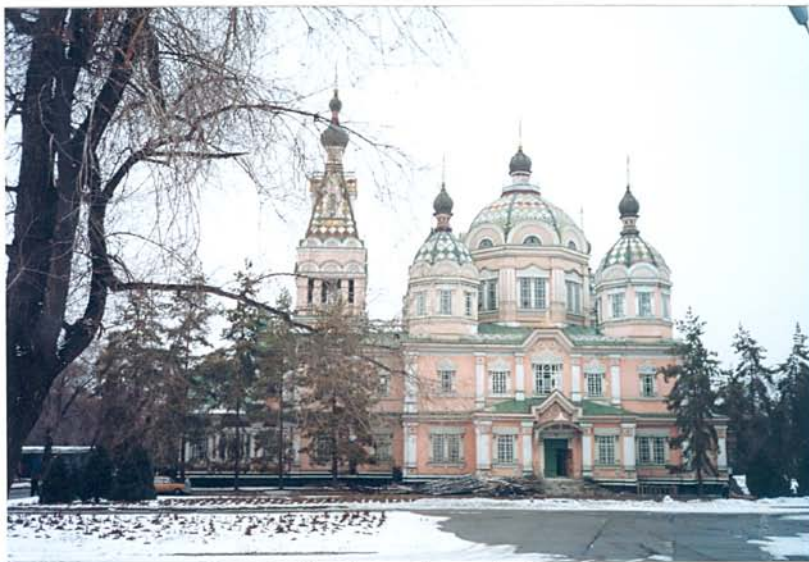
YARMAN'S FAMILY



ERNAR AND WIFE



IN AN ALMATY STREET



THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN ALMATY





MEDAN BAY



THE MASLIKHAT BUILDING

of construction. Five, Engineering systems: the faculty deals with issues such as gas, heating, surveying. And six, The Faculty of Water Supply and Protection of Water.

The six faculties complement each other and the courses here were designed to deliver the Soviet model of housing and civic and industrial architecture. However, as Professor Atrushkevich explained, conditions have changed and this system of education is no longer valid. Therefore the Academy is having problems as there is no demand for its graduates. Previously 500,000 square metres per year were constructed (mostly prefab) by the state through its centralised construction company. Now almost nothing is constructed.

Professor Atrushkevich painted a gloomy picture of the future of Kazakhstan and predicted that the homeless people would take over the new houses of the rich (whom he referred to as robbers and gangsters). He has an excellent understanding of international conditions and of the general fall in education and ethical considerations in planning and governance throughout the world.

We explained the reasons for our visit, conditions in Asia, our view of the housing situation, and the teaching of architecture in certain Asian institutions. All the three professors appreciated the concerns and in the end the Rector offered to consider a joint “participatory” research in the issues and problems of the homeless.

Professor Abilov (who speaks English, as he spent some time at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London) and Professor Kuspangaliev showed us the work of the students and around the studios. The premises are well kept. They are clean and orderly, very different from most Asian academic institutions. The work of the students was also of a much higher quality. The design projects included a church and a mosque. We were told that since the fall of the Soviet state students have started taking up the design of religious buildings and institutions as their thesis topics.

The visit finished with tea in a very comfortable teachers common room. The interests of the professors were the same as of architects all over the world. We spoke of the relationship of social and economic issues with architecture and on the question of “regionalism” in design.

The academy is an impressive and well staffed institute (350 students, 50 professors) and the teachers we met were very clear about the problems facing the built environment in their city and the academic problems facing the Academy. There is a need for communicating at length with the Academy and of establishing some joint projects or exchange programmes with other Asian institutions. In addition, the Academy, if it accepts our approach, can be an effective partner in dealing with the problems of the homeless.

### ***Lunch at Yarmans' House***

We arrived for lunch at Yarman's house at 1:30 pm. Yarmans family was very hospitable. The meal was in the Kazakh tradition. These traditions were discussed at length and many of them are Islamic in origin. Yarman and Ernar feel that these traditions will come back (I hope not all of them come back!). They have lived in their homes even though they were not permitted in public for 70 years. They spoke about *namaz*, *roza*, etc. with some intensity but also with good humour.

### ***Meeting with the Chairman of the Maslikhat***

We arrived at the Maslikhat at 3 pm. Juma Beg Turiligdimoff is the chairman of the Maslikhat. He explained the structure of the city government to us. He told us that the city owns no land but has the right to use it and to sell it as per the master plan. However, due to the new conditions and the need for money, departures are being made to the plan mostly to accommodate economic activity (and I thought, the houses for the rich and politically powerful). These changes are proposed by the architect and approved by the Akim. All economic activity has to be carried out after permission is granted and has to be taxed. Previously there was “privileged taxation” due to which small scale activity could be exempted but not now. The Maslikhat is supposed to be a policy making body but the Akim, who heads the executive, is in reality all powerful. He further informed us that taxes are collected by the



city and over 75 percent of this revenue is given to the state. If all the revenue remained with the city there would be no housing and infrastructure problems. He admitted that the state has built only 400 to 500 apartments since 1990. These are for pensioners who are teachers and medical staff.

He also discussed a number of issues that are important to the informal builders in Almaty. He said that for the foreseeable future there does not seem to be a possibility of developing infrastructure for the informal settlements in Almaty. However, he emphasised that the temporary houses built by the people in the informal settlements cannot be destroyed or pulled down by the state. This is simply not possible. He also said that the state can give more land for the building of individual houses but only far away from the city. The problem, however, is of developing this land. Land issues are decided by a committee for Land Relations.

### ***Meeting with the Head of the Construction Department of the City Administration***

The head of the Construction Department is Mazan Shahid Ahmetovich Sergazian. We arrived at his office at 4 pm. He explained at length the housing issue and its causes. He said that before 1989 the city built 800,000 square metres of housing and this too was not enough for people had to wait for years to get a house or had to live in dormitories. In 1994 in comparison, the state only built 168,000 square metres.

All constructed housing is taken over by the Unions of Housing Economy. These unions are the intermediaries between the state utility services and the residents. All services and their operation and maintenance is subsidised by the state to a tune of 70 percent. This subsidy is now very difficult to maintain.

The government has established a housing bank which gives 30 year loans for house building. The rule is that 30 percent of a person monthly income should be used for the repayment of the loan. According to the Head, 60,000 families applied for the loan (30,000 from the Ryon administration and 30,000 from the industries) but only 47 of these could get the loan because most of the applicants were too poor to pay the loan back at 30 percent of their incomes in 30 years.

### ***Meeting with Nur Jan Abdul, Head of the Kapchigai Architectural Fund and Fazilov Sairan Ahmetjanovitch, Chief Architect of the City***

We were in Nurjan's office at 5:15 pm. He has developed a timber-reed-gypsum technology and can deliver a house at US\$ 80 per square metres. He is also importing Belgian polymer technology for roofing and wall cladding. The Chief Architect (who has just won a competition for a memorial for a national poet) is very anxious that a scheme using this technology and involving credit should take off.

There are many snags in the proposed scheme. First, Nurjan should build a demonstration house and make an offer (a firm one) about the price and then maybe an entrepreneur from somewhere, maybe Pakistan, would be willing to invest in the scheme. History of such schemes in Asia have shown that costs escalate by over 100 percent as compared to initially quoted prices, due to transportation of materials, breakage in transportation, interests on loans, overheads and "unforeseen" costs.

As far as loans are concerned, individuals already have a source of credit from the Housing Bank (if they are "loan worthy") and any bank would assist a company with bridge financing if it has demonstration houses, sufficient orders, and if its clients have a source of credit. So I do not see a problem here. Nurjan has yet to complete his homework.

We got back to the Hotel at 7 pm.

### ***Observations on today's meetings***

The officials we met today were all aware of the problems of the people and did not hide anything from us regarding the subject. In addition, they did not in any way blame the people for the state of affairs but economic conditions. This is a major difference between them and officials of most other Asian capitalist states.

The premises were clean, well kept and not at all ostentatious. There were no crowds of visitors in the offices as is common in Bombay, Karachi, Manila or Bangkok.

## **Tuesday, 12 March**

We reached the Baspana office for our final meeting at 11:30 am. Baspana members were gathered at the office premises. The purpose of the meeting was to try and understand the origins and the process of the movement of the homeless people. Since Samad was involved in it from the very beginning it was necessary to talk to him. So far he had not said much.

Samad comes from the Southern Oblast where the vast majority of people are Kazakhs. He came to Almaty in 1981 and became a boxing coach in a state run institution. He was one of the first participants of the December 1986 anti-Soviet Movement. As a result he was removed from his job and the government wanted to take him to court but for some reason it did not.

Till the December 1986 Movement he and his wife lived in a small family dorm. His wife worked as a university teacher. However, because of his involvement in the movement they were kicked out of the dorm and she lost her job.

He started to work as a construction worker on a temporary basis and she started to teach at a kindergarden. During this period they lived in different places, with friends or in rented premises.

Samad explained the 1986 December Movement. Konaive had headed Kazakhstan for 16 years. He was a Kazakh. He was replaced by Moscow with Kolbin. People were furious. They came out onto the streets and demonstrated. The police attacked them and there were battles between the people and the police. About 100 people died. Ninety-nine were convicted. Many lost their jobs and places of residence. There was terrible repression.

In 1988 Mukhtar Shakanoff, deputy in the Supreme Soviet, began a human rights movement called the Zheltoksin (December) Movement. In 1989 he started revealing all the terrible things that happened during the 1986 repression and demanded that the people who had suffered should be rehabilitated and those in prison should be released. The regime was embarrassed and in 1989 there were large scale demonstrations in Almaty against the Soviet regime due to Mukhtar's movement. It was a period of considerable unrest and freedom was in the air. The homeless people also joined the movement to press for their demands.

Under the Soviet system, you required a Residential Registration Certificate to get a job in a city. Kazakhs were not given these certificates. They were told "go and look after your sheep. You are not needed here". If one got a job then he was put on a waiting list for a place in the dorm of the organisation he was working for. After about four years he would get a place. Then he would put himself on a waiting list for apartments. If he was lucky he would get an apartment in about 15 years. Thus, there were lots of homeless people during Soviet times as well.

In 1989 conditions became very bad in the countryside and people started pouring into the city. They added to the number of the homeless. Meanwhile, when the market economy was introduced in the country, the government decided to sell some completed apartments in the city to rich people. This made the people on the waiting list and the homeless furious.

Ever since the Baspana leaders remember, people who want to hire or rent an apartment, gather at the Jetim (Yetim in Arabic) Burush (Orphans Corner) at the corner of Mokataiva and Konaiva streets. At the corner there were always a number of middlemen or agents who helped arrange deals. This was the only way to get accommodation as ads in the newspapers were not permitted. In 1989 and 1990 people gathered here in hundreds. Some people suggested that they organise to occupy land

and build their houses. Many organisations were formed as a result and in June 1990, the Shamrak organisation occupied land and settled its members in yourts over there. Other organisations did the same in other areas. The members of these organisations included architects, engineers, university professors and surveyors. So the settlements were planned although in the initial stages some settlement work was done in a disorderly manner.

In December 1991 the organisations started taking over empty apartments and houses in the Askay district. However, the police kicked them out after a two week occupation.

In January 1992 the organisations started to take over the empty dormitories. The dorms belonged to companies, institutions and other state organisations and only their members could live in these dorms. The organisations identified dorms which had empty rooms in them and allocated these rooms to some of their members. Then the dorms were invaded at a pre-arranged time. The members kicked the doors open and took over the rooms. The police would be called in and the members and their supporters would tie their children to furniture in the rooms and they would handcuff women to the radiators in the dorms. The police would beat them till they bled but they would not leave.

The police felt embarrassed when women waived their babies in their face. Sixteen dorms were occupied and Samad handcuffed 69 women to radiators in these dorms. The government wanted to arrest the leaders but they were afraid to do so because of the people.

On May 29, 1992 the various organisations joined together so as to coordinate the movement and organise it better. The federation of these organisations was called the *Otao* or Unity Movement. This federation was followed by a second hunger strike in June in which 21 persons participated. The strike took place in front of the Supreme Soviet on Lenin Square. On the third day of the strike the government decided to form a Committee for the Homeless and to give into some of the demands of the homeless. The Chairman of the Committee was a bureaucrat and he took his orders directly from the Akim. The Committee had four departments: administration, accounts, registration and monitoring, and construction.

The Committee legalised the takeover of the lands and the dormitories and developed standard plans and estimates for their development through the state Almaty General Plan Company. One organisation, Altyn Bisek had already had plans and estimates prepared informally as per government regulations by the staff of the company, some of whom were its members. Payments were made to them. However, none of the plans of the Committee materialised and people lived in the settlements without electricity and water or stole them from neighbouring state institutions, or acquired them through informal means.

On 29 December 1994 the Committee was dissolved by the Akim and in the decree that dissolved it, it was stated that the functions of the Committee would be vested in a NGO called Aa-Ou Baspana. However, no such NGO existed and an entrepreneur Minbaev tried to create such a NGO but never got it registered.

The Committee, while it lasted, tried to divide the movement by supporting one group against the other. It tried to recruit as its workers plot owners who it thought were not allied to any of the organisations, and sacked them when it discovered that they were.

Between the date of the dissolution of the Committee and the formation of Baspana in May 1995, no one was officially responsible for the affairs of the informal settlements. Baspana was formed as a confederation of nine organisations and it is now responsible for allocating plots, cancellation of plots, infrastructure development, housing and the creation of social facilities. The state has no budget for the activities of Baspana.

During the movement the leaders received full support from ethnic Kazakh intellectuals, journalists, theatre and cinema actors and actresses and from the Aral-Asia-Kazakhstan International Movement. They came to the hunger strike and expressed their solidarity with the homeless. Mukhtar, who is now ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, was a constant supporter.

At 1:30 pm we left the Baspana office for the Airport and from there by PIA to Islamabad via Tashkent.



## Abbreviations and Local Terms

### Abbreviations

ACHR	Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
CM	Centimetre
DIA	Dutch Interchurch Aid
HIC	Habitat International Coalition
M	Metre
M2	Meter Square
OPP	Orangi Pilot Project
SPARC	Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres
TG	Tenage: Kazakh Currency
UN	United Nations

### Local Terms

Akim	ruler
Ashar	collective Work
chai	tea
chaikhana	tea house
kish-mish	rasins
mehman-khana	guest house
namaz	Muslim pray
roza	breakfast
nan	bread
Ryon	district
yourt	tent

## SUGGESTED TERMS OF REFERENCE

### (Abstract from Sjoerd van Schooneveld's Fax to the Mission Members)

The Mission should deal with the following 'main areas' (in order of their priority):

1. Organisational development of NGOs dealing with housing/land rights and the problems of 'squatter areas'. There is very, very little experience with NGO work and the people are keen to get advice on organisation, on management, on ways to maintain good relations with the people that they work for, community participation, etc.
2. How to develop concrete feasible plans for improvement of these parts of town. How to translate the existing macro-type of planning (for which the government claims to have no funds) into smaller project that can be dealt with the local NGOs (for organising their lobby towards the government and for starting implementation of some work on their own, eventually with donor funding).
3. How to lobby government (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), multilateral donors and foreign governments (that give assistance to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan).
4. Advice on technical issues (low cost housing, local production of building materials, employment creation), and on fund raising (how to make presentations, who to approach).
5. Improvement of the situation of women (female headed households, income generation, health).

As you can see the area is fairly large. It is understood (even appreciated) that a first mission needs to learn, to get acquainted. The expectations are not that you will be able to develop, with the partners, in the limited time available, glossy plans. The aim is to start moving on these subjects. People now feel blocked, need to get advice, need to see some (extra) light. The Mission will hopefully be the beginning of a process of gradual improvement and (mostly autonomous) change.

Can this be the heart of ToR or your Mission ? Do you see points that need to be changed ? Please give me a reaction.

## COMPARATIVE STATISTICS ON POPULATION, ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT FOR KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN AND SELECTED ASIAN COUNTRIES

### POPULATION

	Population		Life Expectancy at Birth (Year) 1993	Total Fertility Rate (Birth per Woman) 1993)	Infant Mortality Rate (per 1000 Live Birth) 1993	Illiteracy Rate/a (%) 1990
	1994	Growth Rate (% per Annum 1985-94)				
Kazakhstan	17,027,000	0.8	70	2.5	29	3
Kyrgyzstan	4,667,000	1.7	69	3.6	34	3
Bangladesh	117,787,000	2.0	56	4.3	106	65
India	913,600,000	2.0	61	3.7	80	52
Indonesia	189,907,000	1.6	63	2.8	56	23
Thailand	58,718,000	1.6	69	2.1	36	7

a) Malnutrition data refer to any year from 1985 to 1993.

## ECONOMY

		GNP Per Capita					Share of GDP		
	GNP/a (Millions of US Dollar) 1994	US \$/a 1993	US\$ 1994	Real Growth Rate (%) 1985-94	PPP/b Internat ional dollars 1994	Average Inflation Rate (%) 1985-94	Agric ulture (%) 1994	Expors (%) 1994	Invest ment (%) 1994
Kazakhstan		1,410	1,110	-6.5	2,830	150.2	44	28	24
Kyrgyzstan	2,825	850	610	-5.4	1,710	100.9	35	34	30
Bangladesh	26,636	220	230	2.1	1,350	6.6	30	12	14
India	278,739	290	310	2.9	1,290	9.7	30	12	23
Indonesia	167,632	810	880	6.0	3,690	8.9	17	25	29
Thailand	129,864	2,110	2,210	8.2	6,870	5.1	10.	39	40

a) Malnutrition data refer to any year from 1985 to 1993.

b) Illiteracy figures in Italics refer to 1985



## ENVIRONMENT

	Energy Use (Oil Equivalent)		Water Use/a	
	Per Capita (KG) 1993	GDP Per Kilogram (US\$) 1993	% of Total Water Resources/c 1970-94	Per Capita (Cubic M) 1970-94
Kazakhstan	4,435	0.3	30.2d	2,294
Kyrgyzstan	965	0.9	24.0	2,729
Bangladesh	59	3.5	1.0d	220
India	243	1.2	18.2d	612
Indonesia	330	2.6	0.7	96
Thailand	673	3.2	17.8d	602

- c) Refers to internal renewable water resources  
d) Total water resources include river flows from other countries

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Eduardo Jorge Anzorena** is 63 years old. He was born in Argentina and is a priest of the Society of Jesus. He has a Ph.D. from the University of Tokyo and for six months of every year he teaches architecture and philosophy of development at Sofia University in Tokyo. The remaining six months he literally travels around the world visiting low income housing projects and community initiatives. He publishes a newsletter twice a year since 1976. The newsletter is chronicle of his travels containing stories of development of projects and programmes related to housing for the poor around the world. This newsletter has brought together various groups around the world with Father Jorge as the link between them. This link has created a vast network which has led to the development of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights and influenced and helped direct the work of numerous NGOs and individuals around the world. Father Jorge is the recipient of the UN Year for the Shelterless Memorial Award and the Magsaysay Award.

**Arif Hasan** was born in Delhi (India) in 1943, and migrated with his parents to Karachi (Pakistan) in 1947, where he has lived since then. He studied architecture at the Oxford Polytechnic, UK and established an independent architectural practice in Karachi in 1968. He is the author of a large number of important residential, commercial and educational facilities in Pakistan. In addition, he has been consultant to various community action groups, NGOs, government institutions and international agencies for housing policy, development and environmental issues. He has taught at the Department of Architecture and Planning, Dawood College, Karachi, since 1979 and has lectured extensively at various institutions abroad. He is the author of a number of books and publications on urban and development related issues and has received national and international awards for his work. Since 1982 he has been closely involved with the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi and is one of the founding members of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights.

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/Israr Rana\  
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