



Arcasia Committee on Social Responsibility (ACSR)

Report on ARCASIA Committee on Social Responsibility (ACSR) Events, Kathmandu, Nepal

Date: 5th and 10th October, 2013

Venue: The Soaltee Crowne Plaza Hotel and The Radisson Hotel, Kathmandu, Nepal

1) 2nd Meeting of ACSR

On the 5th October, the 2nd ACSR Meeting was held at The Soaltee Crowne Plaza Hotel which was attended by 14 Member Institute Representatives.

The Meeting Attendance were:

Chairman, Ar. Joseph Kwan (HKIA), jkuda@netvigator.com
Ar. Sounantha Kanlaya (ALACE), nanokly@gmail.com
Ar. Desaparamy Abhay (ALACE), paroth_1990@yahoo.com
Ar. Dr. Bundit Pradabsook (ASA), aoodbrando@hotmail.com
Ar. Saliwa Tkakulvech (ASA), punnavech@hotmail.com
Ar. Liu Peng Steve (ASC), liupengsteve@vip.sina.com
Ar. Farhana Sharmin Emu (IAB), fsemu@hotmail.com
Ar. Muhammad Arif Changezi (IAP), honsecretary@iap.com.pk
Ar. Sikandar Hayat Khan (IAP), sikandar@shkarchitects.com
Ar. Syed Zaigham S. Jaffery (IAP), xiaghamj@gmail.com
Ar. Sudhir B. Balakrishna (IIA), archsudhir@gmail.com
Ar. Terukazu Nii, (JIA), nivas@nii-architects.com
Ar. Sung Min Kim (KIRA), smkim@hanssum.com
Ar. Assoc. Prof. Norwina Mohd Nawawi (PAM), norwina19@gmail.com
Ar. Haji Abdul Halim Suhor (PAM), arhalimsuhor@gmail.com
Ar. Ms. Rita Soh (SIA), r.soh@rdca.com.sg
Ar. Ranjan Naresapillai (SLIA), sliagen@sftnet.lk
Ar. Suroj Raj Rajkarnikar (SONA – DUDBC), surojrk@hotmail.com
Ar. Sarita Shrestna Maskey (SONA – DUDBC), sshresltamaskey@gmail.com
Ar. Nghiem Hong Hanh (VAA), honghanhcts@yahoo.com

The meeting was well attended with presentations of country reports from ACSR members. At the conclusion of the meeting, the 2012 Action Plan was updated with actions for 2013 in particular to the proposed Symposium to be held in Kuala Lumpur during the ARCASIA ACA16 in June 2014.



2) 1st ACSR Symposium on Architecture and Social Responsibility

On the morning of 10th October, the 1st ACSR Symposium was held at The Radisson Hotel which was attended by ACSR Member Institute Representatives, SONA Representatives, local architectural practitioners and students from Nepal's schools of architecture. Over 100 participants attended this Inaugural Symposium where four local speakers and seven international speakers shared their project experiences in the area of Universal Design and Accessibility; and on Design for Natural Disasters.



3) Design Competition – Universal Design: Public Toilet for All July-October 2013

Most public and private buildings in Nepal are being made without considering the abilities, age and gender of the users. The provision of equitable physical accessibility to public infrastructure for persons with disabilities is continuously being neglected, evidenced in the fact that not one single public toilet in the heart of the capital at Kathmandu is accessible or usable by a wheelchair user.

In order to address these issues as part of the social responsibility and obligation pertaining to all Architects, the theme "Universal Design" - Public Toilet for All was chosen for a design competition as it is a most important part of professional life to be engaged meaningfully in society in every aspects of life with dignity.

At the close of entry submission in September 2013, there was a total of 49 design submissions, 17 from the professional and 32 from the students' category. Ten entries were shortlisted from each category, from which the three winners and two honourable mentions were all awarded with prize monies and trophies.

It is the intent that the winning design will be built in Kathmandu as a pilot scheme of the national standard for a universal design public toilet for all to be adopted by the Nepalese Government and others to follow.



4) Media and Press Coverage

Media interviews were conducted during the month of October 2013 in Nepal by The Himalayan Times and these appeared in the following articles.

Dixit said that transformation in the rural areas as there is only one toilet for more than 40 students," he said. Architect Abu Hena ZiaUddin from Bangladesh said that it is important that the built-up environment should be barrier-free and must be adapted to fulfil the needs of all people equally. "As a matter of fact, the needs of the people with disabilities coincide with the needs of the majority, and all people are at ease with them. As such planning for the majority implies provision for more than 40 students as code of ethics. "Accessibility for the disabled — and barrier-free access is the essential part of design process," ZiaUddin said. During the programme, Architect Noriyuki Okabe, a Japanese architect, informed about the Architect's role in disasters. According to Okabe, architects are expected to propose design process neither in building design nor in urban design. The process is to create or set up standards as code of ethics. Architects Registration Board, informed about Hong Kong's post quake reconstruction support work in Sichuan Province, China. ARCASIA Committee on Social Responsibility facilitated by the Society of Nepali Architects and Hong Kong Institute of Architects, organised the symposium to give rise to awareness regarding issues of Universal Access and Designing for Natural Disasters and further enhance the developing field of Architecture in Nepal.

“Social responsibility is something very new and having a charter will help convince governments and clients about what they should be doing”

“WE SHOULDN'T BE DEALING WITH ONLY RICH CLIENTS AND BIG CORPORATIONS BUT WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO SERVE THE OTHER SPECTRUM AS WELL WHERE THERE ARE THE NEEDY”

JOSEPH KWAN received his architectural training at the Queensland Institute of Technology Australia and has more than 34 years of experience in international architectural practice having worked in Australia, United Kingdom, France and now 25 years in Hong Kong. Kwan has also been the director of a Hong Kong NGO specialising in accessible built environments to help make Hong Kong more accessible for the elderly and people with disabilities. He was in Kathmandu for the ARCASIA 'Symposium on architecture and social responsibility' which is conducted as a part of the Architects Regional Council Asia 17th Forum 2013. He spoke with **Terence Lee** of *THT Perspectives* about the role of architects and socially responsible structures. Excerpts:



What is the vision and mission of ARCASIA?

ARCASIA is an organisation representing 18 countries or 18 professional institutes in the Asia Pacific region and we have a number of missions and the purpose is to cross fertilise ideas and help each other because among these 18 countries, there are countries that are more developed and others less developed. So I think our purpose is to help each other and share information, research, designs and our problems.

Is social responsibility gaining momentum among architects in the region?

I think absolutely. Social responsibility started only three years ago and I was asked to be the chairman for the social responsibility committee. In fact, what it meant was asking all the architects to remember that we all have obligations to benefit society and that's the question that needs to be balanced by not just serving

rich clients. We shouldn't be dealing with only rich clients and big corporations but we should be able to serve the other spectrum as well where there are the needy. We're not asking architects to give up their rich clients and get out of their air conditioned offices and be free architects. But we all have a responsibility to do things which mean looking after the environment, looking after our resources and helping the less able and even the disabled and disadvantaged. We need to look at human settlements and see what can we do as designers and architects and what can we do to select the right materials. For example, there are building materials that are very expensive and there is no reason for a country like Nepal to import such things from Germany or America when you most likely have some excellent building material here. All this adds up to social respon-

sibility of the architect. You don't go and buy expensive things but try to use the best resources that's available.

At the policy level, there is a serious lack in terms of legislation to make it compulsory for buildings and public infrastructure to be made accessible for all. What role can architects play?

I agree absolutely that this is lacking. This committee has only been three years in existence but our next move, that I hope we can complete by next July, is to formulate an ARCASIA charter on social responsibility. I hope this charter and convention will be adopted by governments, NGOs and professionals and that will set up the mandate. I hope the 18 countries will sign up for this and once you have a charter, it will give us a better focus on what governments should do, what NGOs and individual archi-

itects can do. Universities should also start bringing in social responsibility in the course and I think we need to work on it in stages. Social responsibility is something very new and having a charter will help convince governments and clients about what they should be doing.

What do you feel has been achieved with this programme in Nepal?

I think it's absolutely fascinating that we are holding our very first symposium on architecture and social responsibility in Nepal and I think it's due to the desire to do something more for the people of Nepal and that's why I'm so glad the Society of Nepali Architects have taken it upon themselves to drive the world by improving lives, especially for disabled people. I hope that our presence will help to promote and raise the issue of accessibility first. There's a

real need to provide access for people with disabilities which could be a wheelchair user, a blind person or a deaf person. I don't think there is enough of this in Kathmandu and there's room for improvement and space for making things better. This is one area. The other is in terms of disaster or natural calamities. Nepal perhaps faces the same natural threats and situation as Japan or Sichuan in China and there's a wealth of information that these countries have which has been gained painfully. This should be shared with the government of Nepal. The third issue or objective that we hoped to achieve through the design competition of a universal toilet that we held for students and professionals to create awareness about the issue. Through the competition, the students are now more aware of the special needs of a handicapped person. Hopefully they have realised these needs and so when they go out and build, they design their buildings with this part in mind. The other part is for professionals. Before this process, I'm sure many didn't know what to design for a blind or deaf person. I hope that once again brings up the level of awareness at the professional level. Finally, I hope that choosing the winning designs will be adopted by the government of Nepal and others and that they will actually commit to build these as prototypes of what a universal accessible toilet can be like and develop these as the standard design even for other cities of Nepal. There are really three tiers, awareness, education for professionals and physically asking governments to commit and build using such designs. So, it wasn't just a talk shop or workshop we conducted here but hopefully something that can be physically built and where we can professionally address the accessibility challenges for those with physical disabilities and disaster issues.

THT property Plus

“Preparedness is the only way we can combat a natural disaster.”
— John Quinlan



Himalayan News Service
Kathmandu

ARE WE PREPARED FOR disaster?

According to the *Global Report on Disaster Risk*, Nepal ranks in the 11th position in terms of earthquake risk. Professionals worry that a catastrophe will ensue after a major quake, as the country lacks disaster preparedness and thorough planning in core as well as sub-urban areas.

Dr. Bijaya K. Shrestha, manager at Town Development Fund, states that dense population, rapid urbanisation without proper infrastructure development, haphazardly built buildings flouting the National Building Code (NBC), among others are reasons Kathmandu valley residents are at higher risk. While development of infrastructure was unavoidable in Kathmandu as it is the capital and centre of all activities, Shrestha says, “The government has not planned and strictly implemented regulations to mitigate risk and no concrete steps have been taken for disaster preparedness.”

Noriyuki Okabe, vice chairman of JIA Anti-Disaster Measures Committee, opines that the first priority of any government should be to prepare for disasters and safeguard its cities and citizens. Stating that building regulations in Japan were amended following the tsunami of 2011, he informs that they have adopted designs that help buildings withstand major tremors. Additionally, evacuation alternatives, use of seismic isolators and spring rubbers in the buildings along with earthquake resistant fixtures help to safeguard

Experts stress on the need for the government to wake up to the imminent threat of a major quake hitting Nepal

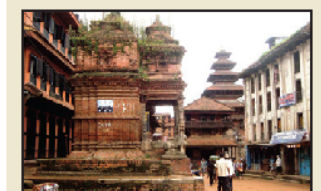
buildings. “However, the government of Nepal should wake up to possibility of looming disaster should a major quake hit the country and take corrective steps as soon as possible,” he says. Okabe further suggests all the concerned stakeholders to do the needful in making all structures, including cultural heritage, public and residential buildings, earthquake resistant because the country cannot afford rebuilding and restoring the whole city. “If existing buildings are vulnerable, retrofitting and reinforcement work should start along with planning of evacuation routes for various areas,” he opines. He also warns of the possibility of roads being inaccessible, should a major earthquake occur. “Hence, the government should formulate and strictly enforce special policies for buildings alongside roads to be quake resistant,” he suggests.

Shouket Kurakawa, ex-chairman of JIA Anti-Disaster Measures Committee, also highlights the need to follow proper engineering techniques, the use of quality materials, focus on earthquake resistant designs and employing of skilled workers during construction. He further suggests reinforced steel bars to strengthen buildings. Kurakawa says that proper use of glazing materials such as ACP, glass, aluminium, et cetera could be safer



than using traditional heavy materials like bricks, cement, wood, mud, et cetera. Swarup Gurung Koney, president of the Society of Nepalese Architects, says that as people are more aware these days and seek help from professionals during construction, the structures built in the last 12 years

are safer. However, admitting that there is room for improvement, he adds, “The government as well as professionals have to join hands to make the city more beautiful and secure.” He also states that the government should make the NBC mandatory for any construction and have master plan for disaster preparedness.



What about our cultural heritage?

Known as ‘The city of temples’, Kathmandu boasts of a large number of temples and historical buildings that add to the cultural and historical significance of the city. However, with the disaster preparedness plans not in place, there is imminent danger to these important structures. Ghural Raut, deputy director general of Department of Archaeology, says,

“The government has not done anything till date for risk reduction and management of cultural heritage sites.” Stating that the concept of disaster management is comparatively new in Nepal, Raut says, “It has only been around four years that people started to talk about the disaster management and there’s no law as such for mitigating the risks to the heritage sites.”



ARCHITECTURE

Change for the better and the worse

Coming to terms with the past is more complex than just preserving monuments and artefacts

preserving monuments and artefacts. The understanding of the past depends on the filters that skew the vision of the observer. The filters might provide different perspectives, depending on the observer’s ethnicity, religion and possibly even language. The perspective of the observer might also depend on an understanding of political, economic or social gain or loss. There are certain aspects of the past that particular persons or communities would like to highlight, which could be considered unacceptable to others.

These value judgements can be as diverse as the number of communities that exist in the world. We have come to understand that this diversity must be respected. This has led to a major transformation in our approach to dealing with heritage monuments and artefacts. In 1994, the *Nara Document on Authenticity* was drafted to pave the way for a more accommodating approach to conserving cultural heritage, by bringing greater respect for cultural and heritage diversity to conservation practice. This means that heritage properties must be ‘considered and judged within the cultural contexts to which they belong.’ The ‘respon-

Kal Waise
Kathmandu

The dilemma of conservation is the unattainable aspiration of stopping the effects of time on objects of great value. The first paragraph of the 1964 *Venice Charter* states that it is our duty to hand the ancient monuments on to future generations in the full richness of their authenticity. We use this information to get closer to the truth of what the past was like to better understand our present culture and society. Coming to terms with the past is, however, more complex than just



Photo Courtesy: Kathina

stability for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, in the first place, to the cultural community that has generated it, and subsequently to that which cares for it. A delicate balance must be achieved between the values of these communities, international principles of conservation and the requirements of other cultural communities. A recent consultancy based restoration work was the reconstruction of the temple at Bhagwati Bahal in Naxal. In 2008, the entire structure was dismantled by the committee that had undertaken the task of improving the dilapidated three-tiered structure. The entire renewal procedure was carried out using local expertise. The structure seems to have been rebuilt practically as it was before. To retain a certain hint of material authenticity, some of the original materials were reused. It was possibly not considered necessary to restatene the ceramic tiles and murals of deities adorning the external walls of the temple. The temple has cleaned up well to look like other cleaned up temples, losing the scars testifying to its own unique history. The stainless steel railings protecting the remaining land from the ever widening road are, however, truly out of place.

Last year, the Tivedev temples near Thamel were restored by the community. There was enough money collected to replace the tile roofs with copper sheeting. The character of the temples has changed. This, however, shows the traditional progression of upgrading temples when sufficient resources are available. When the community restore their monuments, it verifies a continued cultural attachment that still exists and ensures the sustainable maintenance and upkeep of the facilities. For the conservation of our cultural and environmental heritage, a romanticised approach of preserving monuments in their exact material state might be easier to understand and enforce. To allow them to keep living, it would, however, be necessary to find the fine balance, allowing a certain amount of change, for better or for worse. (The author is an architect and can be contacted through paharnepal@hotmail.com)

UK experts urge lending reform

LONDON: Lenders to Britain’s property sector must change the way they value real estate to avoid a repeat of the meltdown that helped to cause the financial crisis, a report by banking and property experts said. The report by the Real Estate Finance Group (REFG), comprising of senior bank and property figures from companies including Wells Fargo, CBRE Group and Grosvenor, says that reform is needed to curb over-inflated lending at the top of the cycle and ensure that banks have



sufficient cash reserves to support post-crash recovery. The REFG was set up to propose a market structure and regulatory regime to guard against the practices that left many banks with portfolios of property loans that exceed the value of the underlying real estate. After years of excessive lending in the run up to 2008, banks such as Royal Bank of Scotland and

Lloyds have been hit by tough capital requirements that have forced a drastic reduction in their lending to the sector.

Merkel urged to ditch rent controls

BERLIN: A sharp rise in rental prices in German cities poses no risk to the broader economy and

introducing rent controls would only exacerbate the problem, economists said ahead of coalition talks between Angela Merkel and the Social Democrats. Chancellor Merkel’s conservatives and the SPD both pledged during the recent election campaign to impose a cap on rents in order to slow the rapid increases seen in



metropolitan areas such as Berlin, Hamburg, Munich and Frankfurt. Earlier this week the SPD went a step further, listing such price controls as one of its 10 conditions for entering a grand coalition government with Merkel. But a new study on the German property market by the IWI Institute in Cologne warned that caps may end up aggravating the supply-and-demand imbalance by curbing investor appetite for real estate, and slowing the construction of new apartment buildings.

AL may challenge SM’s project bid

MANILA: Philippines property developer Ayala Land Inc is considering bidding for a Manila Bay land reclamation project that rival SM Land has already offered to take on for USD 1.3 billion. Ayala Land, the country’s



biggest real estate firm, said it wants the government to give it another 60 working days at least to study a possible counter-bid for the contract to reclaim a 300-hectare area in the bay, which is being developed into a major Southeast Asian casino and resort hub. The deadline for bids is currently November. Ayala said in a statement that the timeframe was ‘too short

to develop a master plan (and) study the financial and environmental impact. There was no immediate comment from the government authorities overseeing the project. SM Land, owned by the Philippines’ richest man Henry Sy, earlier this month made an unsolicited offer to reclaim the bay area in Pasay City, just outside the capital Manila.