

***TREATING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES AS ASSETS:  
THE COMMUNITY PRODUCTIVITY PROJECT (CPP)***

**POVERTY REDUCTION THROUGH INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

(2011 revised proposal)

**SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW**

An old adage states: “Give a person a fish, and he or she will eat for a day. Teach a person to fish, and he or she can eat for a lifetime.” Public policies for reducing poverty reflect these two approaches, providing either subsidies or training. But what if most low-income people are already “fishing” by working diligently to produce and distribute goods and services, yet they simply are not earning enough? If this is the real problem, then it calls for comprehensive solutions based on “Inclusive Economic Development Strategies” with mainstream society actively supporting the efforts of low-income people to enhance their incomes, productive capabilities, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Global Urban Development (GUD), an international non-profit organization founded on the principle of “Inclusive Economic Development: Treating People and Communities as Assets” is launching the Community Productivity Project (CPP) together with Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and the United Nations. The CPP is designed to establish a new policy paradigm by documenting how productive low-income people are, how hard they work, how much value they create, and the close relationships of their economic activities to the formal economic system.

GUD and SDI will conduct the CPP in partnership with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat), under the framework of the Millennium Development Goals, specifically the goal to “Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger” by the year 2015, along with Goal 7, Target 11, “Have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers,” together with goals promoting environmental sustainability, gender equality, public health, education, and development partnerships. The CPP will be conducted in several urban low-income communities around the world over a three-year period. In each case a lead local partner will work with many other local, regional, national, and international stakeholders. The CPP will develop a new template of Community Productivity Indicators to help educate the world about the real economic potential represented by low-income people. Further, the CPP will use its community-based research process as the catalyst for designing and implementing inclusive economic development strategies in these same low-income communities. This project will help move global poverty reduction policies toward generating equitable and environmentally sustainable prosperity, innovation, productivity, and quality of life that includes and benefits everyone.

The global CPP policy initiative will be conducted in four urban low-income communities around the world over a three-year period: Cape Town, South Africa;

Mumbai (Bombay) India; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and London, U.K. In each case a lead local partner will work with many other local, regional, and national stakeholders in support of the CPP.

The CPP will challenge flawed assumptions about poverty that skew the construction, collection, and dissemination of economic data by governments, private sector organizations, and international institutions. In most cases, low-income people are considered to be officially unemployed, and their daily output is not counted as part of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), nor are their modest earnings included in the National Income Accounts. Often low-income people and communities are marginalized and relegated to the shadow world of the “informal economy,” leaving a country with a “formal economy” that excludes millions of people, in some cases even the majority of the national population. The CPP intends to challenge the standard assumption that low-income people are not working to provide anything of value to the larger society, and demonstrate that the reverse is true: low-income people are working hard in difficult circumstances, with little or no help from the formal system, and they are contributing more to the overall economy than they are getting back in the form of cash income or in public assistance, infrastructure, and services.

Including everyone within the formal system and properly counting their real economic contribution is only the first step toward a new solution to the age-old challenge of poverty reduction. Once the productive activities of low-income people are fully understood and accounted for, formal institutions can begin to work more effectively with low-income people. Economic development should include poverty reduction in order to succeed in the long run, because increasing the productivity, competitiveness and income of the low-income population is one of the most important means of generating and sustaining overall economic growth. In short, a more inclusive economy is a more productive economy. Public and private sector leaders can enable low-income people to become better compensated for their current work, and develop new capacities to earn more in the future. The production from low-income people today is a significant contribution to the economy. An entrepreneurial spirit, along with knowledge, skills, and willingness to learn and improve, already exists in most low-income communities.

Former Executive Mayor Nomaindia Mfeketo of Cape Town, South Africa supports the CPP to help reduce poverty and encourage development in her city. During the apartheid regime, her mother created a livelihood by selling fruits and vegetables, yet according to official statistics, she was unemployed. Her family received no help from government; indeed, they were hampered by regulations. Policies recognizing the economic contributions of the millions of people like Mayor Mfeketo’s mother, by assisting rather than hindering their efforts, will foster much higher rates of economic growth.

The CPP will be conducted in two phases. Phase One will record the economic activity in low-income communities and demonstrate the value that low-income people contribute to the global economy. In Phase Two, inclusive economic development

strategies will strengthen the linkages of low-income people and communities to the formal economy, market their skills more effectively, and identify better ways to coordinate investment, infrastructure, services, regulations, taxes, and other tools to promote greater production and higher incomes.

Together, Phase One and Phase Two of the CPP constitute an inventive approach, and deserve to be implemented for two main reasons: first, because the CPP concept can help build popular support for global poverty reduction, by directly connecting such efforts to the goal of producing sustainable prosperity for everyone through inclusive economic development; and second, because full implementation of the Community Productivity Indicators and the Inclusive Economic Development Strategies will demonstrate more effective methods of producing income growth both for people in need and for society overall.

## **THE BASIC CONCEPT AND FRAMEWORK OF THE CPP**

The CPP will substantially improve global poverty reduction efforts by changing the way that public policymakers, private investors, and civic opinion leaders view the role of slums, informal settlements, the informal economy, and low-income communities in urban life and economics. The project's urban focus makes it particularly important for achieving UN Millennium Development Goal Number 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), and Goal Number 7, Target 11 (improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020), along with related goals promoting environmental sustainability, gender equality, public health, education, and development partnerships. The CPP premise is that the best way to deal with poverty is to directly involve all low-income people and communities in a dynamic and inclusive economic development strategy for the nation, region, and metropolis. The CPP concept represents not only an attempt to deal more comprehensively with poverty reduction, but also a better way to conduct economic development itself, by identifying more effective tools to generate sustainable prosperity and quality of life for all.

Many governments and other institutions regard low-income people and communities as liabilities, either to be kept out of or driven out of urban areas, or to be minimally ameliorated through welfare programs and basic sanitation improvements. However, low-income people and communities can also be viewed as economic assets that generate, through a great deal of energy and effort, both their own livelihoods and substantial productive value for the larger economy. Such dynamic activity can and should be utilized to increase overall economic growth worldwide, by including low-income families and communities inside the mainstream of formal economic, political, and social life, rather than marginalizing them.

GUD, SDI, UNDP, and UN-Habitat will work with local and global partners in a two-part action research and public policy initiative to identify and quantify the real economic contribution and asset base of low-income people and communities. The lead local partners in the four target cities are listed in the table below:

### **CPP Target Cities and Lead Partners**

<i>City and Country</i>	<i>Lead Local Partner</i>
Cape Town, South Africa	Development Action Group
Mumbai (Bombay), India	SPARC
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Rio de Janeiro Municipal Government
London, U.K.	The Young Foundation

The research thesis is that the informal economy, informal low-income settlements, and low-income urban communities in general, far from being economic liabilities, generate much greater economic product and value than they get back in the form of income, aid, infrastructure, or services.

This concept follows the pioneering work of Hernando De Soto in *The Mystery of Capital*, but has a different emphasis. Hernando De Soto, a member of the GUD international Advisory Board, focuses on formal land ownership and property titling, whereas the CPP also emphasizes other factors such as stable employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, small business ownership, and community improvement. A more important distinction is that the CPP model is based on maximizing the economic asset value that already exists within low-income people and communities, whereas Hernando De Soto's policy prescription argues that substantial value will be created only after major institutional reforms are implemented at a future date. The CPP concept also draws on the substantial work of the microfinance/microenterprise movement. Dr. Muhammad Yunus, founder and Managing Director of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh and winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, is a member of the GUD international Advisory Board, along with Sam Daley-Harris, Director of the worldwide Microcredit Summit Campaign and a member of the GUD international Advisory Board. In addition, the CPP builds on a great deal of research and action about many other forms of community-based development, including the policy of grassroots empowerment first articulated in the 1970s by global urban development policy experts such as John Turner in *Housing by People*, and by Dr. Janice Perlman, President of the Mega-Cities Project, a member of the GUD Board of Directors, and Co-Chair of the GUD program committee on Inclusive Economic Development: Treating People and Communities as Assets, in her award-winning 1976 book, *The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro*, and in her 2010 book, *Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro*.

Working with local grassroots community-based organizations, governments, and policy research institutions, GUD, SDI, UNDP, and UN-Habitat will target one major low-income urban community for case study research and action in each of the four cities from both the developing and the developed world that are listed in the above table. The project will mobilize citizen activists in these low-income communities to conduct basic surveys documenting the economic production and distribution that is generated from

within their area. For example, the Community Productivity Indicators may include data to measure business investment, wholesale and retail sales, value added, employment, wages and salaries and other incomes, business and household savings and capital assets, land tenure and property ownership, manufacturing, services, suppliers, contractors, construction, business linkages, human and community capital, and other forms of productive enterprise.

GUD, SDI, UNDP, UN-Habitat, and the four local partners will use this information to develop an economic model called the Community Productivity Indicators. Similar to the work done by Social Compact and Living Cities in providing research for marketing low-income urban neighborhoods to US retail chains, the CPI model will be scientifically robust, so as to achieve credibility with opinion leaders from the private sector and the economics profession. The data will be published in aggregated form to protect the identity of informal producers and traders. Obtaining this data through community organizing will help grassroots activists build their organizational capacity and leadership skills, empowering them to take more effective action on their own behalf.

In the first phase of the CPP, researchers in the four cities will collaborate with GUD, SDI, UNDP, UN-Habitat, and other global partners to design the concept of the Community Productivity Indicators. Participants will thoroughly test the CPI methodology to make sure it offers a practical way to collect and organize data in the four low-income communities. This one-year process of data collection and analysis will offer many opportunities for researchers to share with local, regional, national, and global policymakers the significance of the CPP: that a substantial amount of economic value is already being produced by low-income people and communities. Policymakers who actively support “Inclusive Economic Development: Treating People and Communities as Assets” can generate more inclusive, dynamic, and productive economies.

During the two-year Phase Two of the CPP, GUD, SDI, UNDP, and UN-Habitat will work with grassroots leaders in these same four low-income urban communities to design and implement community-based economic strategies based on the research results and data from the Community Productivity Indicators constructed during Phase One. These strategies will be realistic and pragmatic, building on the strengths of the fundamental assets and competitive advantages of the community, the most important of which is the strength and skills of its people. Such strategies will propose feasible reforms to be carried out by various levels of government, the private sector, and international donors, enabling people in low-income communities to obtain financing, expand markets, gain access to resources, and receive training and technical assistance. The public sector will benefit from additional tax revenues, and everyone in the city, region, and nation will benefit from enhanced prosperity and improved quality of life.

The foundation for the Community Productivity Project is strong. The four cities and urban regions have been selected because they have public and private leadership that supports turning the local CPP initiatives into economic success stories. As a scientific tool to measure change in community productivity over time, the CPP will be a

yardstick for benchmarking the success or failure of the project’s four local Inclusive Economic Development Strategies. The entire three-year CPP process represents a special partnership among international agencies, national and local governments, the private sector, and civil society that can be replicated throughout the world. Finally, the management and oversight for the CPP team already is in place (see table below).

**CPP Project Team**

<i>Title</i>	<i>Name</i>
Project Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Marc Weiss, GUD Chairman and CEO; Ms. Nancy Sedmak-Weiss, GUD Secretary-Treasurer and Chief Legal Officer; Ms. Sheela Patel, Chair of SDI, SPARC, and the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) in India; Mr. Jockin Arputham, President of SDI and NSDF and a member of the GUD international Advisory Board; and Mr. Sundar Burra, Senior Advisor to SPARC and a member of the GUD international Advisory Board</li> </ul>
Global CPP Methodology Advisory Board Chairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Nefise Bazoglu, GUD Senior Fellow, Head of GUD’s Istanbul office, a member of the GUD Board of Directors, Co-Chair of the GUD program committee on Building Gender Equality, and former Head of the Monitoring Systems Branch of UN-Habitat in Nairobi, Kenya</li> <li>• Mr. Patrick Wakely, Emeritus Professor of Urban Development and former Director of the Development Planning Unit (DPU) at University College London in the UK, and a member of the GUD Board of Directors.</li> <li>• Dr. Emiel Wegelin, Program Coordinator of the GTZ Cities Development Initiative for Asia at the Asian Development Bank in Metro Manila, Philippines, and a member of the GUD Board of Directors</li> </ul>
Global CPP Policy Advisory Board Chairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. William Cobbett, Manager of the Cities Alliance at the World Bank in Washington, DC, and a member of the GUD international Advisory Board</li> <li>• Sir Peter Hall, GUD Vice Chair, and Bartlett Professor of Planning and Regeneration at University College London in the UK</li> <li>• Ms. Wandia Seaforth, Chief of the UN-Habitat Best Practices and Local Leadership Program (BLP) in Nairobi, Kenya, and a member of the GUD Board of Directors</li> </ul>

## **CPP COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS**

GUD, SDI, UNDP, and UN-Habitat will implement the CPP in four cities from both the developing and the developed world, because the need for treating low-income people and communities as assets is not confined to any one continent or hemisphere.

### **City/ Community Selection:**

Geographic diversity, supportive government and research institutions, and the existence and support of active grassroots organizations were key elements in the selection of project cities. The selection of low-income communities will be determined with the assistance of the lead local partners and other local partners and stakeholders.

**Cape Town - South Africa  
Mumbai (Bombay) - India  
Rio de Janeiro - Brazil  
London – U.K.**

In Cape Town, South Africa, the lead partner is the Development Action Group (DAG), a non-profit NGO that focuses on people-centered economic and community development and affordable housing in low-income areas. Another important local partner is the City Government of Cape Town, led by Executive Mayor Patricia de Lille. The City of Cape Town has a very good track record during the past decade of promoting inclusive economic development closely linked to poverty reduction.

In Mumbai (Bombay) India, the lead partner is the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC), a non-profit NGO that is Mumbai's leading grassroots urban development and policy organization, representing large numbers of low-income people and communities. SPARC, headed by Ms. Sheela Patel and Ms. Celine d'Cruz, provides a major leadership role in various national and international organizations, including Mahila Milan, a grassroots women's microcredit movement in India, the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF), and Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), whose President is Mr. Jockin Arputham, a member of the GUD international Advisory Board. Our key contact is Mr. Sundar Burra, Senior Advisor to SPARC, and a member of the GUD international Advisory Board.

In Rio de Janeiro, the lead partner is the municipal government, led by Mayor Eduardo Paes. Our key contact is Mr. Sergio Besserman Vianna, President of the Rio de Janeiro Chamber for Sustainable Development, Senior Advisor to the Mayor of Rio de Janeiro for the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), and a member of the GUD international Advisory Board. Ms. Marlene Fernandes, International Advisor at the Brazilian Institute for Municipal Administration (IBAM) in Rio de Janeiro, and a member of the GUD Board of Directors and Co-Chair of the GUD program committee on Metropolitan Economic Strategy: Advancing Innovation, Prosperity, and Quality of Life, will be actively involved in the CPP, as will the UN-Habitat Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, which is located in Rio de Janeiro.

In London, U.K., the lead partner is the Young Foundation, a major urban policy research organization that has published many important studies on the economic and social future of London and southeastern England. The Young Foundation works cooperatively with research faculty at University College, London (UCL), including the Bartlett School's Development Planning Unit (DPU). DPU plays a vital role in policy research and education for developing countries. Our key contacts are Dr. Geoff Mulgan, Director of the Young Foundation and former Head of Policy in the Office of the U.K. Prime Minister, and Sir Peter Hall, Bartlett Professor of Planning and Regeneration at UCL and Senior Research Fellow of the Young Foundation. Dr. Geoff Mulgan is a member of the GUD international Advisory Board, and Sir Peter Hall is Vice Chair of the GUD Board of Directors and Co-Chair of the GUD program committee on Analyzing Global Urban Development.

### **CPP ACTION RESEARCH**

The CPP is divided into two phases: 1) creating the Community Productivity Indicators with new economic information designed to reshape public policy; and, 2) using the CPI concept and data to produce Inclusive Economic Development Strategies that generate sustainable prosperity and quality of life for everyone.

#### **PHASE ONE: CREATING THE COMMUNITY PRODUCTIVITY INDICATORS**

The first step will be to develop a set of indicators that can accurately reflect the economic production and distribution that is generated by low-income communities. While these will vary considerably from place to place, they may include such items as business investment, wholesale and retail sales, jobs, incomes, manufacturing, services, suppliers, contractors, construction, business linkages, property investment, land ownership, and other forms of productive enterprise.

Along with designing a set of indicators, Shack/Slum Dwellers International and its partners will develop a methodology for data collection that is realistic, participatory and relatively inexpensive. Colleagues at UNDP, UN-Habitat, GUD, and numerous other organizations have been at the forefront of implementing community-led data collection, with positive results in their census activities. Working closely with these partners, SDI will develop a methodology that establishes a basic framework, but also allows for the variation and flexibility that will be required across the four CPP locations.

### **Global CPP Methodology Advisory Board**

The lack of reliable data on the productivity of low-income communities is of concern to a wide range of international and local organizations. Global Urban Development will coordinate its efforts through the development of a Methodology Advisory Board, Co-Chaired by Dr. Nefise Bazoglu, GUD Senior Fellow, Head of GUD's Istanbul office, a member of the GUD Board of Directors, Co-Chair of the GUD program committee on Building Gender Equality, and former Head of the Monitoring Systems Branch of the United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-Habitat) in Nairobi, Kenya; Mr. Patrick Wakely, Emeritus Professor of Urban Development and former Director of the Development Planning Unit (DPU) at University College London (UCL) in the UK, and a member of the GUD Board of Directors; and Dr. Emiel Wegelin, Director of the Cities Development Initiative for Asia (CDIA) at the Asian Development Bank in Metro Manila, Philippines, and a member of the GUD Board of Directors. The Global CPP Methodology Advisory Board will include key representatives from the four lead local CPP partners along with recognized experts from national and international organizations.

At the local level, research teams representing grassroots community groups, governments, and policy research institutions will conceptualize the most appropriate local CPI methodology and techniques for gathering and analyzing the data, using the recommendations of the Global CPP Methodology Advisory Board.

Data collection will be a major activity that serves two functions. First, it will provide the bulk of the information upon which the Community Productivity Indicators will be created and evaluated. Second, the data gathering process will strengthen the organizational capacity and leadership skills of grassroots community-based NGOs. The survey information will be kept anonymous as to its source and will only be published in aggregate form to protect the identity of the producers, traders, and workers.

The core research thesis for the CPP is that the data will show that low-income people and communities, far from being economic liabilities, generate much greater product and value than they get back from governments in financial aid, infrastructure, or services. Developing and sharing these findings with community residents, public officials, business and civic leaders, and with global audiences is a vital step in the process of raising awareness about the economic productivity and potential of low-income people and communities.

In Phase One of the CPP, the survey research, data collection and analysis will be carried out by local partners, augmented by cross-cutting mutual learning sessions facilitated by SDI, UNDP, UN-Habitat, GUD, and other global partners. These Integrative Workshops will enable the four local teams to develop a common methodological framework, and to discuss challenges in applying this framework, both in the data collection, and in formulating and analyzing research outcomes. The element of learning-by-doing, which will enhance the research and analytical capacity of the local partners, is a paramount feature of the CPP. The global team will support the local teams and play a central role in synthesizing the worldwide CPP results.

### **Information Sharing**

The diversity of cities selected for this project offers an exciting opportunity for global mutual learning. As the CPI methodology is developed and implemented, researchers in the various cities will communicate via internal newsletters, intranet, project-wide conference calling, worldwide Integrative Workshops, and global conferences. SDI will develop a **CPP Handbook** providing government, business, labor, civic, and community leaders worldwide with the tools and techniques, to create their own local Community Productivity Indicators.

## ***CPP METHODOLOGY***

The Community Productivity Indicators are one of the key features of the CPP. The success of this methodology can help establish a new and higher standard of data collection and analysis in low-income communities, and will help promote a positive and inclusive vision for such communities. The Community Productivity Indicators will be designed to meet three basic criteria:

- 1) They must be an economically sound model that will resonate with citizens, policy makers, and scholars.
- 2) They will reflect GUD's commitment to "Inclusive Economic Development: Treating People and Communities as Assets" both in the data collection and the extensive community participation.
- 3) The framework must be general enough to be applied effectively in very different economic, social, and political circumstances.

To ensure the highest quality and most innovative standards, a Global CPP Methodology Advisory Board will monitor and evaluate the CPP throughout its three years, and will be a source of innovative ideas, particularly in the project's early stages. The board's co-chairs are listed in the box on the previous page. Participants will include representatives from GUD, SDI, UNDP, UN-Habitat's Global Urban Observatory, the World Bank and the World Bank Institute, the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Cities Alliance, Habitat for Humanity International, Ashoka, the Institute for Liberty and Democracy, Social Compact, the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, Living Cities, Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing, Mother Centers International Network for Empowerment, Grassroots Women's International Academy, Huairou Commission, the International Housing Coalition, GROOTS International, and the United Nations Statistical Office. The formulation of the Community Productivity Indicators template as well as the actual data collection and analysis will be subject to the highest standards of rigorous scientific scrutiny, professional peer review, and public transparency.

The first phase of the CPP will be launched through an Integrative Workshop of the Global CPP Methodology Advisory Board that will review a wide variety of research questions. Soon after the CPP commences, this workshop will be held to reach consensus on a common methodological approach to be applied in all four low-income

communities, and ultimately, on a worldwide basis.

GUD, SDI, UNDP, and UN-Habitat have formulated a basic approach as a starting point. The Community Productivity Indicators will consist of a set of descriptive variables that will answer these questions: what do people do, what do they earn, what are their assets, how are they connected to the larger economy and society, and how well are their communities organized. In this sense the Community Productivity Indicators will be measuring both the economic productivity of existing activities, as well as the productive potential that exists within the community. Both of these will be enhanced through the inclusive economic development strategies.

Data will come from official government statistics, from official private sector statistics, from unofficial sources, and most importantly, from detailed survey research, both of households and of enterprises. Indeed, a focal point of the community-based research will be Mixed Household-Enterprise Surveys, conducted by grassroots activists and other local residents and workers. These researchers, trained by SDI and the lead local partners, will cooperate with local scholars who will supervise survey development, information gathering and interviewing, and data analysis. Grassroots activists and community-based researchers can earn the trust of the people, so that they will obtain accurate information that is vital to the project's success. All survey respondents will be assured of complete confidentiality, both to protect their individual identity, and to avoid revealing any specific data that could prove harmful to them. The purpose of the Community Productivity Indicators is to paint an aggregate portrait of economic life in the community, not make detailed descriptions of individual activities.

The CPP will draw on research methods and analytical tools developed over the past few decades to study the informal economy. These include the efforts of the UN International Expert Group on Informal Sector Statistics (the "Delhi Group"), the groundbreaking research of Jacques Charmes and his colleagues conducted for the International Labor Organization (ILO) along with more recent work from the ILO by Marja Kuiper and Kees van der Ree (a member of the GUD international Advisory Board), research reports by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the work by Martha Chen and her colleagues for the ILO and for Women in Informal Employment Organizing and Globalizing (WIEGO). Also, we will utilize the research by various scholars and experts that comprise the Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators jointly produced by the Calvert Group and Dr. Hazel Henderson, a member of the GUD Board of Directors, who formerly held the Horace Albright Chair in Conservation at the University of California, Berkeley and developed an earlier model called the Country Futures Indicators (CFI) as an alternative measurement to the Gross National Product (GNP). Recent studies of the informal economy in several U.S. cities by the Aspen Institute and the Institute for Social and Economic Development (ISED) with funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation employed survey research techniques that are instructive for the CPI project. The CPP will utilize well-known analyses by Keith Hart, Lisa Peattie, Janice Perlman (a member of the GUD Board of Directors), Hernando De Soto (a member of the GUD international Advisory Board), Amartya Sen, Manuel

Castells, Alejandro Portes, Saskia Sassen (a member of the GUD international Advisory Board), in addition to current research by Jo Beall, Jeemol Unni, Bish Sanyal, Judith Tandler, Naila Kabeer, Ananya Roy, Solomon Benjamin, Patricia McCarney (a member of the GUD Board of Directors and Co-Chair of the GUD program committee on Analyzing Global Urban Development), Edmundo Werna (a member of the GUD Board of Directors and Co-Chair of the GUD program committee on Inclusive Economic Development: Treating People and Communities as Assets), Vinay Lall (a member of the GUD Board of Directors and Co-Chair of the GUD program committee on Metropolitan Economic Strategy: Advancing Innovation, Prosperity, and Quality of Life), and many others. Also, the CPP will utilize the extensive research on urban land markets and informality in developing countries by Alain Durand-Lasserve (a member of GUD's Board of Directors), Geoffrey Payne, and Carole Rakodi. In addition, the CPP research will draw upon recent work on measuring urban poverty in developing countries by David Satterthwaite (a member of the GUD international Advisory Board), Diana Mitlin, and others at the International Institute for Environment and Development, by Caroline Moser, Martin Ravallion, and their colleagues at the World Bank, and by Mark Montgomery and others involved in the U.S. National Research Council's Urban Population Dynamics Panel 2003 study of *Cities Transformed: Demographic Change and its Implications in the Developing World*. The survey of slum dwellers by Shelter Associates in Pune, India, and the survey by Mayra Bunivic of the Inter-American Development Bank about informal sector workers in Quito, Ecuador, both reprinted in UN-Habitat's *The Challenge of Slums*, show how such research can yield the necessary information that official statistics ignore.

Global Urban Development will rely on the expertise of its partners in utilizing and assessing the reliability of government data. Our global partners in the CPP, UNDP and UN-Habitat, will provide vital intellectual resources from their own excellent work on the UNDP Human Development Index, the UN-Habitat Urban Indicators Tool Kit and City Development Index, along with the *Global Report on Human Settlements 2003* and its companion document, *Slums of the World* (both designed to establish the baseline for Target 11 under the Millennium Development Goals), plus two other recent UN-Habitat reports, *Financing Urban Shelter: Global Report on Human Settlements 2005*, and *State of the World's Cities 2006/2007*. Of equal value is the 2005 report by the UN Millennium Project's Task Force on Improving the Lives of Slum Dwellers, *A Home in the City*, along with the extensive background reports. Also important is the detailed research on urban-rural economic linkages by the International Food Policy Research Institute. Similarly, Thomas Kingsley of the Urban Institute, a member of the GUD international Advisory Board, will contribute the considerable experience of the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP) in the US to the CPP methodology. Other efforts to measure economic value in low-income communities will also deeply inform the CPP, such as the Neighborhood Market Drill Down process developed by Social Compact; the related research sponsored by Living Cities (the National Community Development Initiative) through the Urban Institute and the Brookings Institution, especially the Urban Markets Initiative at Brookings; the studies by Michael Porter of Harvard Business School and the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City (ICIC); and the Community Income Statement and Balance Sheet concept used by the Crossroads

Resource Center in Minnesota.

The CPP will also use the creative efforts of the microfinance and microenterprise movement in developing methods to measure productivity, because Dr. Muhammad Yunus, founder and Managing Director of the Grameen Bank, winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize, and a member of the GUD international Advisory Board, together with many other activists have already demonstrated the validity of Inclusive Economic Development: Treating People and Communities as Assets in their innovative work, and they have developed new methodological approaches to understanding and serving low-income borrowers. In this field, the leaders include a major international coordinating body affiliated with the World Bank, the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP), the Microcredit Summit Campaign, the Grameen Trust and the Grameen Foundation. CPP methodologists will draw ideas from poverty assessment measurement techniques incorporated in the Participatory Wealth Ranking, the Living Standard Measurement Survey, the Poverty Index, the Cashpor House Index, and other methods.

On the asset side, the CPP will be based in part on the seminal work of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute at Northwestern University, led by John Kretzmann and John McKnight, and the closely related research and teaching by the Coady International Institute in Nova Scotia, Canada. This will be supplemented by the work on Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) by Robert Friedman of the Corporation for Enterprise Development and Michael Sherraden of the Center for Social Development at Washington University in St. Louis (both member of the GUD international Advisory Board), by the research of Hernando De Soto's Institute for Liberty and Democracy on informal land ownership assets of low-income people, by the work of the UNDP and others on sustainable livelihoods, as well as the related work published in a recent book by Carole Rakodi, Tony Lloyd-Jones, and the authors of the various chapters in the anthology on *Urban Livelihoods*, sponsored by the UK Department for International Development.

The CPP methodology will be based on Mixed Household-Enterprise Surveys. Since these surveys will be conducted by low-income community leaders who live and work in the communities, it will be important for the CPP to study previous community-based survey research efforts. Accordingly, the CPP will consult with leaders of WIEGO to learn about research and organizing activities among workers in the informal economy by groups like the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India and the Self Employed Women's Union (SEWU) in South Africa, The CPP will also work very closely with the SDI's global partners, including the National Slum Dwellers Federation in India and the People's Dialogue in South Africa. And we will draw on the expertise of our lead local partner in Mumbai, the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC), which has considerable experience conducting grassroots surveys in urban slums, with methodological guidance by Sundar Burra, our key local contact. In addition, the CPP will make use of lessons learned from the large-scale initiative to create Community Based Information Systems (CBIS) under the Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) national program conducted several years ago in the Philippines.

The CPP survey research and interviews will document legitimate economic activities that may be technically illegal or considered officially informal due to lack of compliance with certain regulations, licenses, taxes, or fees (the so-called “grey economy”). According to analysis by the ILO and OECD, such economic activities constitute a major share of actual economic value produced in most developing and transitional countries, and a smaller but still a significant share of economic activity in the developed world. However, the CPP researchers will not attempt to count or quantify clearly criminal behavior, such as theft, violence, drug dealing, and trafficking of women and children for prostitution or pornography.

The CPP will compare the data gathered by local researchers with the official statistics for that same low-income community, as well as with official statistics for the surrounding city and urban region, and for the nation. In this sense, the Community Productivity Indicators will be similar to Social Compact’s Neighborhood Market Drill Down approach, which uses alternative data sources to demonstrate that the income level in inner city neighborhoods is significantly higher than is officially reported by the US Census and other government statistics. The CPP will go even farther, by documenting how that additional income is earned through productive activities.

Ultimately the CPP will produce a set of indicators as a baseline or benchmark from which to measure progress in prosperity and quality of life in each low-income community. At the same time, the Community Productivity Indicators will provide a much more detailed accounting of employment, income, assets, and other vital economic variables that establish a picture of the true economy of low-income communities. This information, too, can be studied comparatively, in measuring the present against the past, in comparing the community to other communities in the city and region, and in assessing low-income communities in relation to each other worldwide.

## **PHASE TWO: INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

GUD, SDI, UNDP, and UN-Habitat believe in linking research to action. While the data collection and presentation of Community Productivity Indicators is a worthy endeavor in itself, its true value cannot be determined until it is used to implement inclusive economic development strategies that improve the livelihoods of low-income communities while contributing to the economic vitality of the city, region, and nation.

The first step in developing inclusive community-based economic development strategies is to understand how the selected low-income communities relate to the wider urban and regional economy. This phase of the project will develop economic profiles of CPP cities and regions. Collected information will include: city and regional economic trends, fundamental assets, dynamic industry networks, interregional and international trade and investment, business incentives and regulations, governance, transportation and infrastructure, education and workforce development, research and technology, and environment and quality of life.

Working closely with community, city, and regional stakeholders, the lead local partners, together with GUD, SDI, UNDP, UN-Habitat, and the global CPP partners, will create and refine Inclusive Economic Development Strategies for their target low-income communities, drawing upon lessons learned from the Community Productivity Indicators and the economic profiles. These Inclusive Economic Development Strategies will be realistic and pragmatic, building on the fundamental assets and competitive advantages of the four low-income communities and their surrounding cities and regions, the most important of which is the strength and skills of the people. Each Inclusive Economic Development Strategy will identify key changes and feasible reforms by various levels of government, the formal private sector, and international agencies. These reforms will be specifically designed to enable residents, workers, and entrepreneurs in low-income communities to obtain financing, expand markets, gain access to resources, receive training and technical assistance, and generally benefit from a variety of economic initiatives that will increase jobs and incomes for low-income families and communities, as the example of Shambob described in Appendix I clearly demonstrates.

Comprehensive in scope, the Inclusive Economic Development Strategies will involve a wide range of actions that may require years of coordinated effort to fully implement. The CPP partners will select immediate actions from among the many proposed action steps in their Inclusive Economic Development Strategies, and place priority emphasis on rapid implementation to produce tangible results. Coordinating with local and international funding agencies, and collaborating with a wide variety of key stakeholders, the CPP partners will, in Phase Two of the CPP, begin the process of generating significant and measurable economic and social improvement.

The future of these four low-income communities extends far beyond the formal completion of the CPP. Therefore, a critical component of the project will be facilitating strong relationships between stakeholders at the community, metropolitan, national, and international levels. A proposed element of the project is to establish local Economic Strategy Advisory Boards of community activists, government officials, business executives, labor and civic leaders, and others who have the vision, tools, and networks to finance and implement the Inclusive Economic Development Strategies over the longer term after the three years of the CPP have concluded.

Phase Two of the CPP builds directly on Phase One. The Inclusive Economic Development Strategies will be managed and led by the same local partners who developed the Community Productivity Indicators. The role of the global partners headed by GUD, SDI, UNDP, and UN-Habitat also will be similar in Phase Two: supporting the local CPP partners by helping to create common frameworks and by promoting cross-cutting mutual learning through global Integrative Workshops. At the completion of the three-year CPP, each of the four cities and urban regions will have developed a new vision, new skills, new relationships, new tools, and most importantly, new prospects for expanding sustainable prosperity and enhancing quality of life.

### **Identifying Stakeholders**

Shack/Slum Dwellers International recognizes that working with communities requires an understanding of the formal and informal institutions that create and prevent access to resources and power.

Addressing this challenge, the CPP emphasizes Inclusive Economic Development Strategies that empower all members of the community. Unlike local economic development that targets only certain types of businesses or those with the right political connections, the CPP approach insists that the only effective economic strategy is an inclusive one, treating low-income people and communities as assets who are integral parts of and contributors to sustainable prosperity and quality of life for the entire city, region, and nation.

Stakeholders will include people working and living in low-income communities, governments, businesses, labor unions, community organizations, civic associations, education and research institutions, philanthropic foundations, communications media, faith-based groups, and international agencies.

If the CPP is to become a widely used tool for productivity, inclusiveness, and empowerment, it is critical to extensively publicize the CPP findings to a wide variety of global audiences. The message – substantial economic productivity exists in low-income communities, and “Inclusive Economic Development: Treating People and Communities as Assets” will generate more inclusive, dynamic, and productive economies – must reach community stakeholders, scholars, practitioners, international donors and development agencies, governments, businesses, NGOs, and civic associations.

To ensure the widest possible acceptance of these new research and policy tools, GUD will convene a Global CPP Policy Advisory Board. In addition, Global Urban Development will work with educational institutions, international associations, and NGOs to train municipal officials, business, labor, civic, and community leaders to create Community Productivity Indicators, and to use these indicators to design and implement Inclusive Economic Development Strategies.

### **Global CPP Policy Advisory Board**

The main purpose of the Community Productivity Project is to transform global poverty reduction policies through Inclusive Economic Development Strategies, and to demonstrate in diverse global settings that treating low-income people and communities as assets is one of the best ways to generate sustainable prosperity and quality of life for the world. Accordingly, GUD will organize a Global CPP Policy Advisory Board to provide policy guidance on the following four issues: for designing the Community Productivity Indicators in Phase One; for utilizing these indicators as a guide for planning and implementing the Inclusive Economic Development Strategies in Phase Two; for identifying key lessons learned from the outcomes over the three years of the CPP; and for recommending new global policy and program initiatives and reforms. The Co-Chairs of the Global CPP Policy Advisory Board will be Mr. William Cobbett, Manager of the Cities Alliance at the World Bank in Washington, DC, and a member of the GUD international Advisory Board; Sir Peter Hall, GUD Vice Chair and Bartlett Professor of Planning and Regeneration, University College London in the UK; and Ms. Wandia Seaforth, Chief of the UN-Habitat Best Practices and Local Leadership Program in Nairobi, Kenya, and a member of the GUD Board of Directors. The Global CPP Policy Advisory Board will consist of the four lead local partners, global CPP partners, and representatives from major international organizations including Metropolis, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the World Bank, ILO, OECD, World Association of Cities Against Poverty, and other international organizations.

## **CPP OUTPUTS**

During the three years of the CPP, there will be numerous outputs at every stage: training materials, publications, meetings, workshops, and conferences (See attached detailed monthly timelines for Phase One and Phase Two of the CPP). In Phase One, working closely with the Global CPP Methodology Advisory Board, the Global CPP Policy Advisory Board, and other partners and stakeholders, GUD, SDI, UNDP, and UN-Habitat will refine the CPP methodology and research strategy, develop the survey instruments, and work with the lead local partners to create the Mixed Household-Enterprise Survey documents. Based on this new material, the GUD and SDI will produce two CPP Phase One training workbooks, the first to be used for training the professionals who will teach the local interviewers how to conduct the Mixed Household-Enterprise Surveys, and the second for training the interviewers and researchers in the four cities.

At the completion of Phase One, GUD and SDI will prepare a detailed CPP Handbook, which will include the results of the four sets of local Community Productivity Indicators, and feature the newly created global template for scholars and practitioners worldwide to replicate CPP research and create Community Productivity Indicators in their own countries and cities. In the second year of the Community Productivity Project, GUD and SDI will publish working papers describing and analyzing the first years' experience. In addition, GUD and SDI will work with the lead local partners to produce reports about the results of the Community Productivity Indicators from Phase One. These reports will be used for local CPP Summits, to be held in the second year, presenting the outcomes of the Community Productivity Indicators to the wider stakeholder community in each of the four project partner cities. Local CPP partner documents in some cases will be translated from English into other major languages.

For Phase Two, again working closely with the two CPP global advisory boards, GUD and SDI will produce a training manual on Inclusive Economic Development Strategies, and then will use this manual to conduct training among the local partners and stakeholders in each of the four cities (including the local Economic Strategy Advisory Boards). During Phase Two, GUD, SDI, UNDP and UN-Habitat will begin using the CPP Handbook produced in Phase One to train government officials and other key leaders worldwide in the construction and use of the Community Productivity Indicators. At the end of the second year of the CPP, GUD, SDI, UNDP, UN-Habitat, and the local partners, working actively with the four low-income communities, will have designed the Inclusive Economic Development Strategies and selected the immediate actions. These strategies, including the economic profiles, will be published in English and in some cases will be translated by the lead local partners into other languages. The published strategies will be extensively distributed, especially in the four CPP partner cities and countries, and will be featured in the second round of local CPP Summits that are intended to launch the implementation phase of the Inclusive Economic Development Strategies during the third year of the CPP.

In the third year of the CPP, GUD and SDI will produce a Practitioner's Toolkit that will explain the process of using the Community Productivity Indicators to design and implement Inclusive Economic Development Strategies, and to delineate the role of the various public and private stakeholders. GUD, SDI, UNDP, UN-Habitat and the local and global partners will use the Practitioner's Toolkit to begin conducting worldwide training on Phase Two of the CPP. Later in the third year, GUD, SDI, and the lead local CPP partners will publish local Phase Two case studies, describing the evolution of the Community Productivity Indicators and Inclusive Economic Development Strategies in each of the four low-income communities. These case studies, which in some cases will be translated by the lead local partners from English into other languages, will be distributed and used as educational materials.

Other possible outputs might include a popular book, a documentary film, and additional media coverage that would describe clearly in an entertaining format both the process and the outcomes of Phases One and Two of the CPP. These products, specifically designed to reach a much wider global audience, are not part of the initial CPP funding proposal, but can be added and financed once the CPP has commenced.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

The function of monitoring and evaluation is fourfold: to ensure the integrity of the CPP process, to provide opportunities for mutual learning, to demonstrate that the CPP activities will have positive and lasting outcomes, and to ensure that good results are sustainable.

The CPP will be guided by external supervisory bodies such as the Global CPP Methodology Advisory Board and the Global CPP Policy Advisory Board, as well as local partners within each of the four cities. By working closely with local and regional stakeholders in every aspect of the project, GUD, SDI, UNDP, and UN-Habitat will ensure that its activities are transparent and that there is ample opportunity for mutual learning. Throughout the three years of the CPP, GUD and SDI will facilitate ongoing communication between the local partners in the four cities as both a monitoring and a capacity-building tool. Local stakeholders who are implementing the Inclusive Economic Development Strategies will be empowered to monitor progress; while selecting the immediate actions, GUD, SDI, and the local CPP partners will organize and disseminate a comprehensive work plan of tasks, time frames, and responsibilities.

The Inclusive Economic Development Strategies will represent a solid commitment to sustainability by promoting community, city, regional, national, and global recognition of a new paradigm for reaching the vital goals of prosperity and quality of life for all. To ensure future implementation of the Inclusive Economic Development Strategies, GUD, SDI, UNDP, and UN-Habitat are committed to fostering strategic relationships among local and regional stakeholders and national and international agencies that will continue working on both community-based and

metropolitan economic strategies beyond the completion of the three-year Community Productivity Project.

## **LARGE-SCALE REPLICATION**

The dual purpose of the Community Productivity Project is to: 1) transform the way policy makers and others view poverty by developing knowledge about the real economic value of low-income people and communities; and 2) substantially improve poverty reduction policies through Inclusive Economic Development Strategies by creating a new model of global, national, regional, urban, and community economic development that is more effective in generating sustainable prosperity and quality of life for all. This new model is intended to influence the thinking and actions of international donor agencies, private sector executives, government officials, civic leaders, and community activists worldwide. At the conclusion of the three-year CPP, GUD, SDI, UNDP, UN-Habitat, and their worldwide and local partners will have pioneered a new paradigm that can be replicated globally.

The Community Productivity Indicators will become a new methodology and set of measurement tools with which to more accurately assess the complete range of economic activities and value-creation by low-income people. These new indicators will be accepted and widely used by government, business, academia, the media, and civil society as standard statistical and analytical tools, similar to the Gross Domestic Product and other methods of measuring economic performance. In particular, GUD anticipates that the Community Productivity Indicators will become quantitative tools for generating baseline data and tracking the progress of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and that the CPP approach will be adopted as a methodology by the United Nations, the World Bank, the OECD, the IMF, and other international agencies.

GUD, SDI, UNDP, and UN-Habitat also intend that the Community Productivity Indicators will become a standard prerequisite for designing and implementing Inclusive Economic Development Strategies, and that the use of both the Community Productivity Indicators and the Inclusive Economic Development Strategies will become very widely utilized worldwide during the next two decades. The various guidebooks that the CPP will produce, along with the training for government officials, business executives, and NGO leaders, will help spread these ideas and techniques around the world. A popular book and documentary film can potentially be produced as part of the CPP to educate large numbers of people worldwide about the value of this “win-win” approach, demonstrate the human side of this important story, and serve as the basis for a much wider media campaign. Other media coverage will become an important means of spreading both the ideas and the potentially inspiring results of the CPP.

Finally, another outcome of the three-year global CPP will be to significantly shorten the time frame for similar activities in the future. After the project is completed and all of the published materials are disseminated, it will be possible for a local community to produce valid Community Productivity Indicators in a matter of months, rather than the one year time frame required for Phase One of the CPP. Communities

that choose to design and implement Inclusive Economic Development Strategies using the CPP model will be able to design these strategies within six months, and move the implementation period into highly effective action within the first year, building momentum and generating results that can mobilize even greater public support and produce tangible community benefits relatively quickly. Years of sustained implementation will be needed for dramatic and long-lasting improvements, but the ability to get off to a fast start and to rapidly build momentum will be one hallmark of the CPP approach.

## APPENDIX I

### **THE SHAMBOB SUCCESS STORY: WHY TREATING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES AS ASSETS IS THE MOST PRODUCTIVE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

In 2000, the same year that the Millennium Development Goals were launched at the United Nations, the Shambob Brick Producers' Cooperative received one of 10 worldwide awards for Best Practices to Improve the Living Environment from UN-Habitat and the Dubai Municipality. The Shambob story is inspiring because it demonstrates that people – their spirit, motivation, and determination – are the most important economic asset. Besieged with poverty and apparently hopeless future prospects, Shambob's people neither abandoned their homes nor pleaded for hand-outs. Instead, they found a way to transform their economy and substantially raise their incomes through hard work combined with a bit of creative ingenuity and some timely assistance from an international NGO.

Shambob is a village in Sudan, at the foot of the mountains which lie on the outskirts of the East Sudanese town of Kassala. Shambob's approximately 500 inhabitants are the descendants of nomadic herders who settled the area a century ago, drawn by its then lush grazing and plentiful water supply. Most of Shambob's Beja people continued to follow a semi-nomadic lifestyle until the 1960s, when small-scale irrigation enabled them to engage in a more settled form of small-scale agricultural production.

However, in recent decades, recurrent drought - coupled with increasing deforestation for fuel - has turned the once lushly vegetated area into a virtual desert. Each year, people in Shambob have had to drive their animals much longer distances to find sufficient fresh water. As time went on, increasing numbers of families were forced to slaughter their livestock, while their crops repeatedly failed for lack of water. In desperation, many people from Shambob turned to working as piecemeal laborers for Kassalla's brick manufacturers.

Enter Practical Action (PA), a British-based non-profit organization working to promote more sustainable uses of technology for economic growth and poverty reduction in developing countries. In 1995, PA began researching and testing more cost-efficient alternative brick production processes, kilns, and fuels, for the purpose of encouraging Shambob's inhabitants to set up in business on their own, thereby cutting out the middlemen in Kassalla.

The experiments were successful. Practical Action suggested using briquettes of compressed bagasse, a plentiful heat-producing waste material from the local sugar industry, as fuel to fire the kilns. In addition, they recommended adding bagasse to the brick mix in order to reduce the amount of wood needed as fuel. Further, PA also advised the use of a newly designed scotch kiln that requires less labor to load the bricks, and uses less fuel in firing them. Finally, PA demonstrated that better molding and more

controlled drying improved the quality of the bricks, which in turn offers potential customers substantial savings in mortaring and construction time. These innovations enabled Shambob's brick producers to market higher quality bricks at competitive prices.

In 1997, Practical Action assisted local leaders in establishing the Shambob Brick Producers' Cooperative. The Shambob community contributed 25 percent of startup costs, while PA secured the remaining 75 percent in the form of a loan to be repaid from profits. Those local workers and residents who had participated in the original 1995 research project taught their newly-acquired production skills to their neighbors and colleagues, and PA hosted workshops that taught the organizational, administrative, bookkeeping, legal, public speaking, and negotiating skills necessary for managing the cooperative, marketing its products, and negotiating with government agencies and financial institutions. By treating the people in their community as their number one asset, the residents of Shambob were able to substantially increase employment and raise their family incomes, which they succeeded in doing during their darkest moments, when there appeared to be no help and no hope on the horizon. Such is the power of people's energy, and harnessing it to reduce poverty, expand prosperity, and improve sustainability and quality of life is both the heart and soul of the Community Productivity Project (CPP).

## APPENDIX II

### **LIVING AND WORKING ON THE EDGE IN SHANGHAI: WHY ALL PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES ARE ECONOMIC ASSETS, EVEN WHERE THEY ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE FORMAL EMPLOYMENT SYSTEM**

*From Agence France-Presse, 2001*

A stone's throw from the glistening skyscrapers that tower over the eastern Chinese city of Shanghai, three-year-old Wang Kun lives with his parents in a hovel surrounded by festering garbage.

A 15-strong tribe of rubbish collectors live in three rows of jerry-built shacks at the side of a rubbish dump in Shanghai's southeastern Nanhui – one of scores of makeshift villages built on the outskirts of dumps around China's gleaming economic capital.

Wang Kun and his father Wang Jun are from neighboring Jiangsu province while many of their fellow scavengers come from central China's impoverished Sichuan province. Their numbers are growing.

“Rubbish collectors do play an important role in cities and authorities have an ambivalent attitude towards them,” said Sophia Woodman, research director of Hong Kong-based Human Rights in China.

Crackdowns on garbage collectors can be triggered for arbitrary reasons ranging from National Day celebrations to a senior leader driving past a cluster of migrant dwellings and “thinking we don't want this in our gleaming modern city,” she added.

For 26-year-old Liu Tian, his wife and four-year-old son, who live on top of a rubbish dump in Sanlitang village in Shanghai's southern suburbs, the insecurity is bearable.

The 800 yuan (97 US dollars) Liu can earn every month operating a machine that turns old plastic bags into rubber, is four times more than he would earn in his Jiangsu village.

“It's not a bad life. I earn much more than I would at home and when my son is old enough I want to send him back to school in Jiangsu,” Liu said.