International Encyclopedia of Civil Society

With 40 Figures and 44 Tables
Introduction
Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) is an international network of country-level “federations” of grassroots organizations representing the urban poor, the homeless, and squatters from over 30 developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. An advocate of pro-poor urban policies, SDI today is an internationally respected voice in urban poverty-alleviation and development.

Brief History
The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (AHCR) initiated cross-country exchanges involving grassroots organizations, poor urban communities, and NGOs in the late 1980s laid the foundations for SDI. SDI was formed in 1996 in South Africa as a network of federations representing 11 countries. Federations from India, South Africa, and Thailand were among the prominent founding members.

Mission
SDI’s mission is to empower the urban poor, particularly poor women, by helping them gain full citizenship rights as city-dwellers. It strives for active participation by the poor in urban planning processes and in shaping pro-poor policies. SDI’s initial mission to strengthen horizontal grassroots associations has now expanded to advising and collaborating with governments, and international donors and multilateral institutions concerned with urban poverty, shelter, and management issues.

Activities
Advocacy, low-cost construction, financing, research, and publishing, and policy advice in various areas of urban development constitute SDI’s activities. Community-led mapping of squatter settlements and their enumeration; organizing poor women for community leadership; building low-cost houses and toilets; providing water supply and sanitation; generating household savings and community finances; leveraging external finance; and campaigning for security of tenure are among its main activities. SDI facilitates the exchange of knowledge and experience in these activity areas across countries. Through partnerships with governments, international development agencies, academic institutions and other development actors, it attempts to reorient their roles, responsibilities, and relationships for the benefit of the urban poor.

Structure and Governance
Rising donor interest in SDI’s activities led to the establishment of its secretariat and its registration as a legal entity in South Africa in 1999. The individual federations are quite autonomous in their governance and engagement with their respective governments. A group comprised of two to three persons from the founding member federations guides SDI’s operations, with Jockin Arputham of India as its President.

Funding
Funding for SDI has mainly come from northern NGOs, development agencies, and private foundations. Some long-standing donors are the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), Homeless International, UK’s DFID, Cordaid, Misereor, Selavip, and the Ford and Rockefeller foundations. In 2007 the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (United States) donated $10 million to SDI.
Accomplishments
SDI has been able to improve the lives of thousands of poor people, and bring about changes in state policy for the urban poor. Now international institutions seek its advice and expertise for improving global urban policy. For instance, SDI works with Voices of the Poor (World Bank); the Global Campaign for Secure Tenure (UN-Habitat); and the Cities Alliance. Jockin Arputham, SDI’s president, received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award in 2000.

Cross-References
▶ Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
▶ Coalitions and Networks
▶ Federations, Nonprofit
▶ Ford Foundation
▶ Rockefeller Foundation

References/Further Readings

Sierra Club
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Introduction
The Sierra Club is the United States’ oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. Since 1892, it has been working for the preservation and protection of natural resources throughout the United States and around the world.

Brief History
Founded by the noted US conservationist John Muir (whose image appears on the back of the California Memorial State Quarter) in 1892 to fight a proposed boundary reduction in the size of Yosemite State Park, the Sierra Club has grown to become the largest and most active environmental organization in the United States. Throughout the late nineteenth century, the club became the voice for the nation’s wilderness areas and led efforts in the conservation and preservation of these areas for future generations. Through the influence of Muir and other noted members such as Ansel Adams, Edward Taylor and Marion Randall Parsons, the club was able to affect US federal environmental, parks and National Forest policy and is largely responsible for the current state of National Forests and Parks. One of the greatest environmentalist Presidents, Theodore Roosevelt attended an early Sierra Club outing in Yosemite and reconfirmed his commitment to the preservation of wilderness areas in the United States as a result. Throughout its more than 110 year history, the club has spoken up for the protection of wilderness areas and has enjoyed great success in protecting and enlarging these areas.

Mission
The mission of the Sierra Club is to explore and protect the wild places of the United States and other countries. In addition, the group seeks to promote the responsible use of the Earth and its resources through the education of individuals and motivation of these same individuals to participate in the renovation and protection of these areas.

Activities
The efforts of the Sierra Club are carried out through its chapters and field offices, which are responsible for and committed to local action. These chapters and field offices work for the protection of the environment through educational programs, local advocacy and a series of “outings.” Through these Sierra Club outings, individuals and groups are able to come face to face with the wild places of the country and are educated regarding the need to preserve, protect and defend these areas. In addition, the Sierra Club Foundation provides financial support to the club and other organizations engaged in projects focused on the environment. These grants are offered in three different areas – public education, litigation, and training. The directors of the foundation seek out individuals and organizations engaged in activities consistent with the overall mission of the club and, through the foundation, provide financial support to those efforts. The foundation does not accept unsolicited proposals.

Structure and Governance
The club is made up of more than 1.3 million individual members across the United States and Canada who are