

Kirtee Shah

Concerned that the 'architecture' he was learning at one of the best schools in the country, way back in the '60s, was not sufficiently oriented to the contemporary human settlements challenges, especially concerning the needs of the poor and the marginalized groups, Kirtee Shah set out to work with the homeless poor in the villages first and subsequently in the urban slums of Gujarat, India.

The search for 'content and social relevance' in professional work, the desire to serve the 'alternative client', and an attitude to de-learn and re-learn in face of new challenges have shaped Kirtee Shah's 50 year long professional career in six parallel and overlapping streams that include architecture practice, grass roots work as an NGO, policy advocacy, disaster reconstruction, institution development and project consultancy. His areas of specialisation include Urbanization, Slums, Affordable Housing, Urban Poverty, Disaster Reconstruction, Civil Society and Rlevance of Professional Education.

As a member of the Prime Minister appointed National Commission on Urbanization (NCU) in the mid 80's, he chaired a Working Group on Urban Poverty in India. Founder Director of Ahmedabad Study Action Group (ASAG; an NGO he set up with other likeminded colleagues and leads for the past 48 years) he was president of Habitat International Coalition for a decade in the mid '90s (HIC; a global coalition of civic groups, activists and professionals working on the housing rights and the people centered urban development). He is founder president of India Habitat Forum (INHAF), a twenty year old national network of habitat professionls and civil society organizations ; founder chairman of Home Losers' Service Association of Ahmedabad (HOLSAA; set up following the earthquake in Gujarat in 2001); president of Banglore based Institute for Cultural Research and Action (ICRA) for the past 30 years; one of the founders of the Ashoka Innovator for the Public, which now has presence in more than 90 countries of the world and is engaged actively with the institutional development activities of Citynet and Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR).

He has been on several committees set up by the Planning Commission of India; was on the Board of Directors of Housing and Urban Development Corpration (HUDCO), and has consulted with the UN agencies, the World Bank, Cities Development Initiatives for Asia (CDIA) and others.

He was associated, as an advisor, with the GOI's 50,000 houses project for the war victims in Sri Lanka and Chaired a Committee, set up by Hudco, for the Rejuvenation and Strengthening of the Building Centres Network in India. .

He is Chairman and Chief Architect of Ksa Design Planning Services Pvt Ltd., an Ahmedabad based firm of practicing architects, with projects in various parts of the country and outside.