Providing basic urban services to the urban poor continues to be a challenging task, especially in developing Asia, where increased urbanization has reduced poverty but worsened inequality and vulnerability. Over almost three decades now, slum upgrading has evolved as a favored planning tool for extending essential infrastructure and services to slums and squatter settlements. Following the spread of decentralization reforms in Asia, participatory slum upgrading (PSU) is increasingly becoming a local government intervention. Experience suggests that institutional collaboration among the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, as well as strong grassroots participation by the urban poor communities are critical for successful PSU. Two local government-led, post-decentralization PSU programs – the Slum Networking Project (SNP) in India and the Comprehensive Kampung Improvement Program (CKIP) in Indonesia – are deemed innovative and successful. Using a comparative case study approach, this research shows that while some of their outcomes are indeed encouraging, two key elements of PSU success – scaling-up and sustainability – are less promising because of: a) less than desirable involvement by NGOs; b) inflexible institutional arrangements; and c) limited community participation. Macro-level regulatory frameworks, local governance characteristics, and socio-cultural idiosyncrasies are found to cause these shortcomings.

**Dr. Ashok Das’** research explores innovations in and challenges to ameliorating urban poverty in developing countries, with a primary focus on India and Indonesia. Community participation and empowerment, slum upgrading, decentralization and local governance, and the role of civil society in development are his key interests. His doctoral work explored the nature, measurement, and comparison of empowerment arising from participation in slum upgrading programs in India and Indonesia. He is interested in how different institutional arrangements and socio-cultural factors inhibit or contribute to empowerment in different contexts. His newer research explores impacts of integrated microfinance on urban poverty alleviation, and local government-led and community-based efforts for disaster response and preparedness. Dr. Das holds a B. Arch degree from the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi; M. Arch and MA (Environmental Planning & Management) degrees from Kansas State University; and a Ph.D. in Urban Planning from UCLA.

**We are firm believers in food-based learning. Excellent refreshments will be served. Please bring your own cup, plate/bowl and utensil. The public is invited to attend.**