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**\*\*\*EMBARGO UNTIL MARCH 17, 2016\*\*\***

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **SPARC Wins 2016 Curry Stone Design Prize Vision Award**

*Advocacy Group Recognized for Giving Voice to India's Growing Slum and Pavement Dweller Population*

Mumbai, India (March 17, 2016) — The Curry Stone Foundation has named The Society for the Promotion of Area Resources (SPARC) as the 2016 Curry Stone Design Prize Vision Award Winner. For the past 30 years, SPARC has worked to organize, legitimize and advocate for India's urban poor, seeking to achieve the improvement of living conditions and advancements in the recognition of their rights as citizens.

SPARC's activities are based on the principle that the urban poor can and must become the makers of their own destiny and can play this role if given appropriate structural support. The strength of this organization comes through their alliance with the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) and Mahila Milan (Women Together), a collective of women living in slums. The organization works within provisional communities to address housing and sanitation challenges, move individuals towards financial independence, and help them gain visibility and access to public services.

Insecure land tenure, inadequate housing and a lack of access to basic amenities for the urban poor are some of the core issues facing today's rapidly urbanizing world. According to UN-Habitat, approximately 25 percent of the world's urban population lives in slums. In parts of India, the situation is much more dire. The World Bank estimates that more than half of Mumbai's inhabitants are pavement dwellers or live in provisional housing with inadequate sanitation, light, or water.

"Governments have allowed the proliferation of informal settlements by simply not caring for them," says SPARC founding director Sheela Patel. "This is not going to change unless people who are from those groups start making demands and changing their relationship to the city."

SPARC was founded in 1984 by a group of social activists fighting against the indiscriminate evictions of slum and pavement dwellers from their communities. The group expanded rapidly using their emerging relationship with NSDF and Mahila Milan to create an innovative federation model, named the Indian Alliance. Together, the Alliance organized the first comprehensive census of pavement dwellers, developed a credit system for their use while fighting for a more dignified habitat.

Today, through its alliance with NSDF and Mahila Milan, SPARC is active in more than 70 cities across India as a change agent with solutions that can be scaled for other groups domestically and internationally. In addition to policy advocacy, SPARC has facilitated the construction of housing for more than 8,500 families and built community toilets for more than 500,000 toilet seats in slums that have no facilities. Their nonprofit construction company—SPARC Samudaya Nirman Sahayak (SSNS) now jointly owned by the partners of the Alliance—has built 3,879 in-situ houses, rehabbed 3,900 units, built 878 community toilets, granted 1,324 loans to homeowners.



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“SPARC with the National Slum Dwellers Federation and Mahila Milan are driving change by using the knowledge and capacity of the urban poor.” said Emiliano Gandolfi, the Prize Director. “With their work they designed the social framework that enables underrepresented populations to have a voice in the decision processes that determine their quality of life.”

SPARC will be the subject of a short documentary produced by the Curry Stone Foundation. The Foundation aims to make widely accessible the work of our winners through videos, bringing light to their achievements, their approach and the specific challenges they face. The SPARC short documentary will premiere at the awards ceremony on March 17<sup>th</sup> and be released online the same day.

#### Presentation Events

March 16, 2016  
Curry Stone Design Prize Forum  
JJ College of Architecture  
10am-5pm

March 17, 2016  
Curry Stone Design Prize Vision Award Ceremony  
National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai  
In partnership with the Urban Design Research Institute  
6pm-8pm

#### About Curry Stone Design Prize

Curry Stone Design Prize is one of the most recognized social impact design awards, celebrating socially engaged practitioners and the influence and reach of design as a force for improving lives and strengthening communities. Founded in 2008 by Clifford Curry and Delight Stone, the Curry Stone Design Prize’s goal is to inspire the next generation of designers to harness their ingenuity and craft for social good by sharing and supporting the impactful work of leading social impact practitioners. Nominees for the Curry Stone Design Prize are selected by an anonymous rotating group of social impact experts representing different fields of design, as well as humanitarian advocates from related disciplines. Emphasis is placed on emerging projects and ideas that may not have yet been taken to scale. Each year, the winners of the prize receive a cash prize with no strings attached and are featured in a short documentary about their work, produced by the Curry Stone Foundation. [www.currystonedesignprize.com](http://www.currystonedesignprize.com)

The VISION AWARD recognizes individuals or organizations that have significantly inspired the design profession and the communities they engage through their continuing commitment to social impact design.