

## **Regional Workshop on Putting Safety First for the Urban Poor on the Local Agenda – Marikina, Philippines**

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF SESSION 1: OPENING CEREMONIES**

#### **From Mayor Marides Fernando of Marikina City**

- Marikina's vision of a safe and clean city evolves around safety from diseases, dangers, violence, and calamities. It also follows the popular philosophy of "fixing broken window panes" in pursuing peace and order, which implies that people adapt themselves to the environment so that when it is in disarray, bad elements reign in public places, and when it is fixed, order pervades and bad elements are supplanted by law-abiding citizens.
- Other programmes and facilities have supported this Clean and Safety Programme, with pedestrian sidewalks, a network of bicycle lanes, formal settlement sites, and idle lands converted to viable productive spaces like recreational areas.
- Promoting urban safety goes beyond law enforcement by entailing collective and innovative efforts to reduce opportunities for the commission of crimes, to control of spread of diseases, to build disaster-resilient communities, and to address socio-economic issues like poverty.

#### **From Elkin Velasquez of UN-Habitat, Safer Cities Coordinator**

- The message of social prevention is cooperation among various sectors, national and local governments to dialogue and work together to advance reforms in education, social protection, and other dimensions of community life and the victory to be attained in this endeavor will produce social cohesion, thereby, reducing poverty.
- Our safety (the cities' safety) is a matter of social cohesion, a matter of social prevention, and a matter of working with the community.
- In Latin America's experience, prevention policies applied at the local level are able to advance reduction of crimes. Thus, UN-Habitat works closely with local authorities, precisely for the purpose of coordinating, improving capacity for decision-making in order to make public policies and social prevention programs.
- The time has come for concerned people like this group to facilitate change and dialogue such as this regional workshop where everyone present can learn from experiences and what is taking place in the different cities.
- Thus, there is the need to come up with future agendas, one of which is to create regional framework/action to understand our role and biases in increasing our capacity to resolve local problems.

## **From Karin Andersson of UNESCAP**

- UNESCAP is the regional arm of UN with the objective of working for/facilitating south-south cooperation among members.
- Urban safety has been taken as a primary concern of the organization, considering threats to human security as becoming a major issue in Asia-Pacific with the increasing victims of domestic violence, organized crimes, and other related crimes. Under this situation, it has been the poor communities who are often the victims of institutional and other types of crimes, and worst of all, legal services are out of reach for the poor.
- The importance of looking into policies and approaches is very apparent. Thus, the conference intends to promote dialoguing with the communities and police, and to, consequently, improve the lives of the urban poor.

## **From former Mayor Mary Jane Ortega of CITYNET, Secretary-General**

- As a former elected official and now elected as the first female secretary-general of CITYNET, our province has showcased urban safety in its very basic form, as in streetlightings, provision of solar lamps (in consideration of the “brownout” occurrences in the Philippines), sufficient public parks, and rubberized flooring in children’s playgrounds.
- A safer city could prevent disasters, whether man-made or natural. Life span can be an indicator of people’s security condition. In La Union (Sec-Gen Ortega’s province), the citizens have a life span of 75 years, the longest in the country. This is because of peace and order.

## **From Usec David Lozada of Department of Health, Republic of the Philippines**

- Urban safety is the agenda of both national and local governments in the Philippines.
- It is the exercise of political will that enables these governments to provide the needed services to the urban poor communities to enable them improve their lives, thereby, making themselves secure.
- Areas covered in ensuring safety among the urban poor: community participation, strong human resource management, etc.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF SESSION 2: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR URBAN SAFETY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

- A. As presented by Donovan Storey, the key findings on the urban safety and poverty in Asia and the Pacific are as follows:
- Despite poverty, Asian cities are not suffering from high crimes, though there are increasing levels of social and institutional violence. The implication is such that “failed cities” affect national economies and stability.
  - There are also developmental costs to urban insecurity, namely: hindrance to business growth, flight or absence of FDI, limitations to mobility and use of transport infrastructure, and migration causing loss of critical manpower.
  - Unsafe cities are also created by widening household tensions as a result of domestic violence which limits women and girls’ social life and affects their ability to participate economically.
  - Planning and design can ensure safe places. However, present planning approaches contribute to spatial segregation and exclusion; vacant spaces and even mixed-use public areas become unsafe and breed more insecurity.
  - There is a complex relationship between poverty and crime/violence, that is, poverty may result in crime and crime may result in poverty.
  - The youth are part of the urban problem because of issues confronting them, like the lack of opportunities in education, employment, social growth, poor environment, family breakdown, etc. Crime has become alternative socialization for these youth.
  - Safety is a local concern, thus, LGUs play a key role in safety partnerships with communities, link institutions, policing and social networks.
- B. Community Police Partnership in Bangladesh
- It came about as a response to the issue of “Are we ready to work together?”
  - It’s a programme in Dhaka where the community and police were brought closer to enable them work together on improving safety and security at the community level. The underlying approaches utilized were getting back to the community, consultation, and partnership.
- C. Safety for the Poor in Kathmandu
- Ensuring safety by the Metropolitan police: Some reforms put in place---

(1) professionalization of police force; (2) awareness programmes on drugs and crime prevention, especially among the youth; (3) formation of community-based networking; (4) setting up of anti-kidnapping unit. These have lowered the commission of crime in Dashain from 35 to 5 in 2010.

- Improving urban safety called for the (1) collaboration and coordination among police, LGUs, communities, and NGOs supported by poverty reduction programmes, (2) establishment of police stations in poor communities, neighbourhood watch groups, (3) advocacy work on legislation re: violence against women, as well as gender sensitivity programmes for the police, and creation of women and children's services, (4) building political commitment to make police force an independent security force, and (5) bringing the informal sector under the police security umbrella.
- Meaningful efforts of the city government: coordination among stakeholder agencies, from government to NGOs and civil society, completion of programme on "Towards the elimination of child labour," informal education, skills training and awareness programmes for the poor, enriching the accessibility of the poor to basic amenities, mobilization of community police to resolve security issues.

#### D. Urban Safety and Concerns of Bhutan

- Key issues on urban safety cover both tangible and intangible dimensions where planning serves as the main instrument in addressing them. Specifically, (1) owing to the country's geological and meteorological condition, their natural disaster preparedness programme includes strict design requirements and development control, construction of buffer protection, soil stabilization and watershed management; (2) on fire and crime/violence, the preparedness programme covers enforcement of fire safety code, partnership of police with sectors (youth, parents, school), visitation, awareness program, and response mechanisms (toll-free line and emergency patrol vehicles).
- Land use planning was made to be a process which included detailed analysis of natural systems and environment, testing, public consultations, and other related procedures.

### **Open Forum**

Points of discussion:

1. From the presentation shared on Bhutan's experience, it appeared that traditional planning doesn't do much. Bhutan must be able to cascade or share their approach in land-use planning, as in the case of the Philippines that knew what needed to be done considering its higher risk of flooding but didn't do it.

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2. Urban planning is land-based, rather than ecosystems-based, which is more holistic than fragmented. There's a need to look into our whole paradigm of development---can we undo what has been destroyed?
3. The Safer Cities Programme was able to innovate with its frameworks on reducing vulnerabilities.
4. The key message of the session is "What can be the best entry point?" in dealing with urban safety. As in the case of Paraguay, fire was the entry point for tackling other risks.
5. Urban safety in urban planning being brought to mainstream.
6. Need for legal improvement, that is, institutions to be built and laws to be passed to fight organized crime and to safeguard the public.
7. Community policing as a strategy as demonstrated by Dhaka with its successful community empowerment and its creation of partnership with communities.
8. Enforcement obligations of police have nothing to do with the lack of laws.
9. Quite inadequate laws on domestic violence and other related women issues. Need for advocacy work and training on gender issues because when women's rights are advocated, it creates negativity from men.
10. In the Philippines, LGUs are not even able to put up safety measures, for example, streetlighting. How can community initiatives be supported?