

I. SUMMARY

Despite remarkable economic growth in Asia and the Pacific in recent decades, the region remains beset by high levels of poverty. Nearly one billion people are living on less than one dollar a day, and many of them are in urban areas. Poverty reduction has become a priority concern for most developing countries in the region, and development agencies, nongovernment organizations, and the private sector are increasingly working together in this area. The Asian Development Bank (ADB), in particular, has responded to this concern by reexamining its own role in development, as a result of which poverty reduction has become its overarching objective. It was appropriate, therefore, to dedicate the millennial Asian Mayors' Forum to the theme of fighting urban poverty.

The Forum, held on 26-29 June 2000 in Shanghai City, People's Republic of China (PRC), was focused on addressing urban poverty issues; creating jobs for the poor; reducing poverty through partnerships; working together to improve slums; providing housing for the poor; and getting rid of urban wastes. There were also special sessions on improving service delivery to the poor and networking. Another important component of the Forum was a field trip to the Pudong new industrial area and Suzhou Creek, which enabled participants to view these high-priority urban programs in Shanghai.

The Forum commenced with the opening of the *Exhibition on Innovations in Fighting Urban Poverty*. The Exhibition (Box 1.1), while demonstrating the programs of cities and development agencies that have direct impact in

Box I.1. List of Exhibition Participants

Municipalities

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| Fuzhou, PRC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Housing Conditions for Medium- and Low-income People |
| Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The “Nhieu Loc-Thi Nghe” Canal Program |
| Jaipur, India | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Generation Through Waste Management |
| Lahore, Pakistan | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zone for Animal Protein Production |
| Mandaluyong City, Philippines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center for Education and Consciousness • Adopt-a-home for Kayumanggi-Ginhawa-Busilak • Employment for the Jobless • The Garden of Hope • Bringing the Government Closer to People |
| Marikina City, Philippines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squatter-free Marikina |
| Matale, Sri Lanka | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting Self-employment • Community Development Meeting with Low-income People |
| Negombo, Sri Lanka | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Living Conditions of the Poor |
| San Fernando, Philippines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid Waste Management—Controlled Dumpsite and Sanitary Landfill |
| Shanghai, PRC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Infrastructure Development |
| Tarlac City, Philippines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Government of Tarlac and Habitat for Humanity—A Public-private Partnership in Solving Urban Poverty |

Development Partners

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| ADB | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking as a Means of Improving Municipal Service Delivery |
| Asian and Pacific Development Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enterprise Management Centre • Global Smart Partnership Network |
| Governance and Local Democracy Project (USAID) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Solid Waste Management |
| Institute for Housing & Urban Development Studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andhra Pradesh Urban Services for the Poor |
| Urban Management Programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Poverty Reduction through Community Empowerment in Colombo • Environmental Management with Poverty Concerns in Nonthaburi, Thailand |
| US-AEP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US-Asia Environmental Partnership Program |

NGOs

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| Habitat for Humanity Philippines Foundation, Inc. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing for the Poor |
| Lumanti Support Group for Shelter, Kathmandu, Nepal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lumanti Living Well in the Urban Century |
| Waste Concern, Dhaka, Bangladesh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based Urban Solid Waste Management in Dhaka • Promotion of Recycling and Resource Recovery from Solid Waste |

reducing poverty, also generated discussion among the participants outside the Forum sessions.

The Forum sessions consisted of presentations on certain themes by a mayor/city leader, NGO representative and/or development agencies/private-sector representative. The presentations were followed by discussions both in plenary and in separate small-group sessions where participants exchanged experiences in greater detail, brought forth many issues and problems, and discussed possible solutions. The themes, outlined below, and associated discussions form the chapters of this volume.

Addressing Urban Poverty Issues (Chapter III) describes urban poverty concerns besetting most Asian cities today and how these are being dealt with through two levels of intervention: (a) by focusing on communities and community-based organizations and building their capacity, and (b) through decentralization to the local government level.

Creating Jobs for the Poor (Chapter IV) discusses three different perspectives of employment, savings, and credit initiatives in tackling the issues of livelihood and income security for the poor. The discussions among participants focused on the impact of the programs described, the opportunities and constraints, sustainability, and replicability. Interventions from the floor dwelt upon the need to encourage self-employment, and the consequent need for training and "re-skilling". The need for a paradigm shift from traditional welfare-oriented credit schemes to contemporary microfinance and employment-generation programs, was also recognized. The common thread running through various cities' experiences with employment and income generation was that the cities need to move from being providers of employment to becoming facilitators, creating enabling environments for skills upgrading, creating

Key Issues for Creating Jobs for the Poor

- Lack of capacity of local governments to generate gainful employment
- Ad hoc deployment of already scarce resources
- Glaring absence of a focus on skill development and training

opportunities, and increasing access to investment capital.

Reducing Poverty through Partnerships (Chapter V), comprises a specific case study of Colombo and a review of a range of poverty-reduction partnership initiatives and experiences across Asia. Experiences in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines, in particular, highlighted that for poverty alleviation efforts to succeed, there must be a shift in traditional bureaucratic approaches to contemporary management orientation. The responsibility for initiating and building partnerships lies most definitely with city governments. The city leadership must have a clearly articulated vision, well-defined goals, and a willingness to engage stakeholders in a "dialogue for development".

Major Issues for Reducing Poverty through Partnerships

- Need for a strong political will to build partnerships with poor constituents
- Role of NGOs
- Need to build capacities of not only local governments but also civil society

Working Together to Improve Slums (Chapter VI) brings to the fore issues related to land and security of tenure, modalities of slum improvement,

operational constraints, and potential for replication. Cross-sectoral viewpoints—from a public agency’s perspective and an NGO’s standpoint— were followed by a bird’s eye view of slum improvement programs over the last three decades and the lessons that we have not learnt from them. The discussions centered on community organizations, which emerged as probably the only way to make effective interventions in slum areas and informal settlements. Poor communities engaged in solving their day-to-day problems require technical and managerial support to improve their solutions. They are, however, averse to "owning" plans developed by others. It was highlighted that a shift from a project-based approach to slum improvement to an integrated program approach to poverty alleviation is urgently required.

Key Issues and Recommendations for Slums Improvement

Key Issues

- Availability of land
- Security of tenure

Recommendations

- Involvement of stakeholders
- Capacity building of the urban poor
- Strengthening local governments
- Improving correlation between national policies and local action impacting on the poor

Providing Housing for the Poor (Chapter VII) not only highlights national diversity in housing situations, but also presents three completely different approaches to supporting low-income housing for the poor. There is a range of housing

development options that have been tried and tested in various Asian countries. They include on-site community improvement, land sharing, reconstruction and development, land exchange, and readjustment. The essence of the discussions was that the role of local governments as enabler is quite critical. Governments must play the role of facilitator, enabling the land and housing market to operate freely, and regulating it as required to ensure equity. Additionally, local governments must ensure that all actors, not just the formal private sector, participate in the housing development process.

The participants also discussed the issue of land, and went on to recommend that two levels of intervention for land management be implemented. At the national level, there is a need to set out policy clearly, modify and simplify legislation, and develop a policy environment for private-sector participation. At the local level, it is important to ensure that housing for the poor is part of the city master plan or structural plan and not an ad hoc exercise.

Improving Service Delivery to the Poor (Chapter VIII) discusses how benchmarking and continuous improvement strategies can be effective in enhancing delivery of municipal services to the citizens, and the use of report cards for assessing their performance, effectiveness, and user-responsiveness in Calcutta and New Delhi in fighting urban poverty.

Networking (Chapter IX) illustrates by example the importance of organizing professional bodies of city managers and networks of cities for exchanging information and experiences, and identifying, documenting, and transferring best practices.

Getting Rid of Urban Wastes (Chapter X) illustrates different experiences and good practices of waste management given that the problems of solid waste are overwhelming Asian cities. Suggestions for improving waste management

emphasized, first and foremost, reduction in the volume of waste that enters the municipal system. This can be done through waste segregation at source, community-based composting, etc. It was also highlighted that legislation related to solid waste needs to be strengthened and stringently enforced. Also, inclusion of the informal sector in solid waste management, especially collection, segregation, and recycling is important. Private-sector participation emerged as a useful mechanism being used by a number of cities. However, whatever the technological and management options adopted, community awareness and involvement are critical to the success of the intervention.

The discussion that followed was varied and detailed and one of the most pertinent issues raised was waste management in slums and informal settlements. The poor and disadvantaged people who inhabit such settlements are the most critically affected by the pollution and unsanitary living conditions caused by waste "mis"management. Local governments, through mayors and other city officials, play a key role in decision making for urban waste management. This role must be performed in partnership with a wider cross-section of stakeholders in order to ensure sustainability.

Chapter XI contains the closing remarks of S.B. Chua who noted the richness of the deliberations, highlighted the achievements of the Forum, and summarized some of the key messages of the resource speakers.

The concluding session of the Forum, *Where Do We Go From Here?*, was dedicated to formulating concrete recommendations and actions on how cooperation among the participating cities can be expanded to increase the usefulness of the Asian Mayors' Forum in promoting change and fighting urban poverty. A proposal for a follow-up was presented, a three-year program for urban local bodies to mainstream poverty reduction in their

policies and operations either by (a) institutionalizing processes for fighting urban poverty, or (b) initiating a major pilot project to reduce urban poverty. The program would be accorded technical support from bilateral/multilateral organizations such as the ADB/ADB Institute, Urban Management Programme, The Urban Governance Initiative, CityNet, and other such agencies.

The proposal was discussed by participants in groups based on national/subregional representation. Groups were, however, free to discuss any other recommendations for follow-up.

The Philippines group endorsed the proposal and formulated a detailed program for its execution. This included visits among participating cities, preparation of urban poverty profiles, collection and dissemination of information on best practices, and institutionalization of an award system with the assistance of ADB and other sponsors.

Representatives from India committed to undertake wide-ranging programs for poverty reduction. Proposals included massive slum improvement programs based on participation, labor contribution, central and state funding, capacity building, and skill development. The group also emphasized that municipal bodies must demonstrate commitment by earmarking at least 10 percent of their own funds for poverty alleviation.

Delegates from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka stated that each city in the subregion would identify and work on a major pilot project to be achieved within three years. The proposals to this effect would be submitted in three months and would necessarily involve stakeholder participation, and include a poverty profile. The urban local authorities from the subregion committed to contribute financial and other available resources and to mobilize additional resources for the program.

A group of participants from East and Southeast Asia, including PRC, Indonesia, the Republic of the Fiji Islands, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Thailand, and Viet Nam, emphasized that institutionalization is the key to combating urban poverty. They endorsed the program presented and agreed to submit proposals to this effect. The local governments also committed to undertake one major pilot project in the areas of solid waste management, housing, capacity building, and city governance.

The donor agency representatives resolved to set up mechanisms amongst themselves and other support agencies for screening proposals. They also agreed to support national forums with membership of a select group of cities, and to extend support to associations of mayors. It was also decided to build an information database of available in-country resources and existing expertise in reducing poverty.