

XI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

S. B. CHUA

Director, Capacity Building
Asian Development Bank Institute

We have now come at the end of three-and-a-half days of discussion on what we should do to help the urban poor. During this time, we have deliberated and exchanged views and experiences in formal and informal sessions. Judging from your active participation, it appears to me that the Forum has been useful in helping all of us acquire new information and ideas on how best to help our fellow citizens get out of poverty.

We have been well entertained and had the opportunity of enjoying the hospitality of our Chinese friends. We were invited to a sumptuous banquet by the Mayor of Shanghai, his Excellency, Mr. Xu Kuangdi, where he was kind enough to share with us how the Shanghai Municipal Government transformed the city into one that is now recognized internationally as a city that has low incidence of urban poverty.

We had a night tour of the city and the river cruise and we saw the beautiful lights on both sides of the Huang Pu River. We also saw Shanghai City by day when we were taken to Suzhou Creek and the Pudong area, a showpiece of exemplary city development by the People's Republic of China and our Shanghainese friends in particular. If we were to judge the level of development in Shanghai as the standard, the PRC could be classified in the not distant future as a developed rather than a developing country. Certainly, we are

very impressed by its rapid development and its double-digit growth year after year, and maybe that is its secret of getting rid of urban poverty. It certainly has enlightened me and I am sure all of you as well.

We listened to many eminent speakers who have outlined for us how to provide jobs for the poor, how to upgrade slums, how to provide housing for the poor, and how to get rid of urban wastes. You as participants were wonderful with your patient listening and questioning.

So as not to disappoint our resource speakers, I thought that the least we could do is to recall some of the key messages that they want us to remember. There are many, many important messages, but I can only highlight some of them for you.

To be effective in helping the poor, we need political commitment first of all.

- To be effective in helping the poor, we need political commitment first of all. As mayors you can play a very important role and, as Dr. Masaru Yoshitomi, Dean of the ADB Institute said, mayors do exert a vast amount of influence on the lives of the citizens whom they represent.
- Appropriate policies have to be designed to help the poor and these policies should be implemented in a consistent manner and followed through, even if there may be frequent changes of mayors in some cities.
- We could not agree more with the Mayor of Shanghai that the poor have to be taken into account in the overall development of any city and that they be provided with social safety nets, as Shanghai has done. Certainly, it is a good lesson that we can all learn from Shanghai.
- The Vice Mayor of Shanghai spoke of the need to have international cooperation so that we can learn from one another. We can also learn from the good practices and avoid

the pitfalls to effectively help the poor get out of poverty. His comment fits in very well with the Forum's objectives.

- The Vice President of ADB, Mr. Myoung-Ho Shin, encouraged us to establish a global architecture for poverty reduction. He emphasized that social stability is as important as global financial stability.
- Dr. Masaru Yoshitomi explained to us that growth could account for 60 percent of poverty reduction and the nature of growth is important for fighting poverty. However, more work has to be done in this area to help guide policymakers in their efforts to help the poor get out of poverty apart from through growth.
- Prof. Karina Constantino-David, our keynote speaker, warned us against allowing cities to grow beyond their carrying capacity. Other speakers echoed her views by telling us that perhaps we should also give priority to developing new cities and expanding the smaller ones.
- Others tell us that we need to improve governance in local city management, empower the poor, and develop multistakeholder partnerships with NGOs, community organizations, government agencies, etc. In effect, all are saying that everybody has to be involved if we are to have any success in curbing urban poverty.
- Still other speakers point to the need to take into account the level of development of a country when recommending what action a country should take to fight urban poverty.
- Even in the same country, no two cities can adopt the same modalities for curbing urban poverty. What works in one city may not necessarily work in another city. However, what is important is that we must share

knowledge of the best practices and adapt them in our own city as we see fit.

- On creating jobs for the poor, direct intervention by city governments through development of labor-intensive enterprises appears to be one option. Fuzhou City has demonstrated to us how it achieved success through direct intervention schemes for creating employment and income generation for the urban poor. Other means include training and retraining of the poor for self-employment and providing alternative means of livelihood. Participants share the majority view that providing credit for financing micro-enterprises appears to be an effective method of creating jobs for the poor. However, all agreed that the more appropriate role to be played by local governments in the long term would be to create an enabling environment for better job options for the poor.

All agreed that if we all work together, we could improve and perhaps get rid of slums.

- All agreed that if we all work together, we could improve and perhaps get rid of slums. Actual case studies point to the need to first establish community-based organizations and build their capacity if we are to be effective in getting rid of slums. Involvement of the community is a must to ensure success, as demonstrated by the cases outlined by Dr. Pongsak Semson, Inspector-General, Bangkok Municipal Authority in Bangkok, and by Mr. Arif Hasan, NGO representative, in his presentation of the Orangi Pilot Project in Karachi. All speakers emphasized that the key to success for slum improvement is to adopt a program rather than a project approach and to involve the poor in all stages, with the municipal governments acting as the focal point for all poverty programs.

- Mr. Wegelin of the Institute of Housing and Urban Development Studies indicated to us that if we are to succeed in upgrading slums, the first thing we need to do is integrate slum settlements in the broader city economy in the interest of all, not only of the slum communities themselves. Next, slum upgrading must be seen as an ongoing process of facilitating shelter, employment, and income-generating opportunities. Involving women in the process is important in view of their power.
- There are various ways by which environmentally friendly houses could be provided to the poor. The cases presented point to the need to involve the community and the beneficiaries themselves as partners to enable socialized housing programs for the poor to succeed. The message that the speakers conveyed is that the poor must be included because they are the key actors and if you exclude them, you will have a recipe for disaster. Other issues that need to be addressed are land ownership and security of land tenure, and capacity building of the urban poor.
- On getting rid of wastes, the message appears to be that waste is not waste: waste is a resource. Landfill and open dumpsites are no longer acceptable options nowadays. One alternative is regeneration. A community-based waste approach involving households in the process is one option that has been successfully used in Dhaka and elsewhere for solving the waste problem. Dr. Sakurai from the University of Okinawa suggested that mayors are the key stakeholders for solving the problems of urban wastes. He emphasized that we should change the vicious circle to a positive circle

On getting rid of wastes, the message appears to be that waste is not waste: waste is a resource.

and outlined the steps for solving these problems through conversion of the solid waste management approach to the recycling waste management approach.

If this Forum enables us to move one more step forward in fighting poverty, it will be an important step.

Fighting poverty is not new. The problem is that there is more rhetoric than action. There has not been much success—close to a billion poor continue to live in our part of the world. If this Forum enables us to move one more step forward in fighting poverty, it will be an important step. I want to leave you with a story that may enable us to work harder toward fighting poverty.

One day someone lost his well-paying job but shortly was able to find another job that paid much less. He felt down and out and he wondered how he would be able to survive. He reflected and wondered how others in poor countries with a lot less than he had were able to survive. So he decided to visit a poor country to find out for himself. One day during his visit, he saw a big crowd in the city and wondered what had happened. There was a woman with four children who were struggling to survive on one dollar a day. In her desperation, she cut off the arm of one of her children in the hope that she will be able to raise the awareness of her plight and that her collection through begging will be sufficient for their survival. This incident changed the man completely and he decided to help even though he was so much poorer now than before. By the way, this is a true story.

I am sure you must have other similar stories to tell. In this story, the woman and her four children represent the poorest of the poor. They need our help. Let us give them our help.

I am very pleased indeed that you have now come forward and that every mayor attending this Forum will be preparing a program with a specific time frame to effect improvements on return to his or her home country. At the appropriate time, you

will inform the respective sponsors on what you have accomplished. We are really looking forward to you taking the first step to redouble your efforts to help the urban poor. Let us all help contribute to reducing poverty in this part of our world.

I would now like to thank our host, the Shanghai Municipal Government, for their hospitality and for the effort that its staff have made to enable us to conduct the Forum successfully in Shanghai. I would also like to thank the resource speakers, the moderators, the chairpersons, and our cosponsors for their contributions. I would also like to thank you as participants for your active participation and your contribution. Finally, I would also like to thank Gie Villareal and Michiko Yoshida, who worked behind the scenes, for their immense contribution and for their patience and dedication in solving a myriad administrative and logistical problems.