Kaantabay sa Kauswagan - An Urban Poor Program
in Naga City

By MOST Clearing House

Background

The Kaantabay sa Kauswagan (or Partners in Development) Program is a social amelioration program primarily designed to empower squatters and slum dwellers which comprise some 25 percent of the city population residing in 21 urban barangays of Naga City. So far, it has resettled 2,017 families to relocation sites with a combined area of 33 hectares; secured homelots for 789 squatter families; and upgraded 27 urban poor communities which host around 2,700 families.

Anchored on the belief that the urban poor is a vital sector in Naga's quest for total development, the program addresses the sector's two main problems --(1) the absence of security of land tenure, and (2) the lack of basic infrastructure and facilities in their communities-- primarily by adopting a "partner-beneficiary" perspective in dealing with clients. This approach sees the urban poor both as a program partner and beneficiary, and as such is compelled to actively participate in every step of problem resolution.

In response to these major problems, the Program focuses on two main components: (1) land acquisition which provides as sense of permanence to the urban poor's occupancy of a property, and (2) urban upgrading which provides decency, ease and comfort to daily life in the blighted areas.

By institutionalizing a functional mechanism for permanently settling land tenurial problems between landowners and land occupants; elevating living conditions of the urban poor through on-site upgrading projects for blighted urban poor communities; establishing intra-city relocation sites for victims in extreme cases involving eviction and demolition; and providing them livelihood opportunities by introducing a livelihood component to the Program, the Kaantabay sa Kauswagan was able to shape new strategies in cushioning negative impacts of urbanization.

These strategies include accessing various modes of land acquisition--like direct purchase, land swapping, land sharing, community mortgage, and resettlement; institutionalizing a separate window catering specifically to urban poor clients of the lending arm of the local government; and evolving a financing scheme anchored on internally-generated resources of the beneficiaries.
Narrative

BEFORE

Before Kaantabay sa Kauswagan (or Partners in Development) Program came into being, Naga was grappling with a serious urban poor problem which is characteristic of any other rapidly urbanizing city in the Philippines and even the world.

A bitter fruit of urbanization, the obtaining situation in Naga was then distinguished by adversarial relationship and frequent animosity between the City Government, the urban poor and private landowners. Cases of squatter eviction and ejection are rampant, and demolitions are commonplace.

The problem has been worsening over time. In magnitude alone, around 5,000 of 19,500 households in 1990 were classified as squatters and slum dwellers, almost double the figure in 1980. Not only the absolute number but also their share in the total population had risen. In 1980, the National Statistics Office reported that only 14.6 percent of households in Naga were squatters; during the program's inception in 1989, they already account for 25 percent of the total.

Their number notwithstanding, the sector is mostly unorganized. In all of Naga, there were only 9 urban poor associations when the program was born. On the other hand, majority of individual urban poor families go on with their lives--and face attendant threats of ejection and demolition--practically in their lonesome. Previous local government administrations share a part of the blame for this situation. For so long a time, they had been indifferent to the plight of squatters.

This indifference primarily shows in the following:
- The blighted condition of 27 urban poor communities in Naga which lack basic services such as shelter, potable water, streetlights, pathways and drainage.
- Government's passivity in the face of squatter ejection and demolition by private landowners which masks its tacit approval of such measures to eradicate these urban "eyesores."

AFTER

Six years after Kaantabay sa Kauswagan was launched, Naga's urban poor have been empowered and mainstreamed back in society, primarily through a fair, credible and effective tripartite mechanism for solving land tenurial issues that the Program has institutionalized.

Beyond sheer numbers, Kaantabay sa Kauswagan's single most important achievement to date was the institutionalization of such a mechanism that effectively addresses pressing problems of the urban poor sector. This mechanism brings together (1) government agencies, (2) urban poor associations and their allied NGOs, and (3) private landowners to solve standing tenurial problems with finality. Today, all land problems involving the urban poor in Naga are referred to and pass through this mechanism.
Program impact is also indicated by the following:
- INSTITUTIONAL. From only 9 in 1989, there are more than 70 urban poor associations in Naga today belonging to two citywide federations. They are amply represented in the city legislature, the City Development Council, as well as the Housing and Urban Development Board, Naga's main policy-setting body on housing matters.
- LAND ACQUISITION AND RESETTLEMENT. As of yearend 1994, the five-year old Program has made possible the disposal of 33 hectares of private and government-owned lands to 2,017 landless families. This means that it had already addressed the land tenurial concerns of about 50 percent of the urban poor in Naga. Further, an additional 25.4 hectares had been secured for the remaining unserved families.
- URBAN UPGRADELING. Moreover, the Program facilitated the renewal of 27 blighted urban poor communities in Naga, where multimillion-peso worth of basic infrastructure like pathways, drainage canals, shallow wells, public faucets, streetlights and multipurpose pavements were provided and/or upgraded.
- Finally, the Program is acknowledged today as a model urban poor program among Philippine local governments, and has already attained a measure of international recognition as well.

**Impact**

- Institutionalized a fair, credible and effective tripartite mechanism for solving land tenurial issues
- Organized the urban poor sector from only 9 organizations at the outset to more than 70 today
- Represented the urban poor sector in local policy-setting bodies, including the City Council
-Disposed 33 hectares of private and public land to 2,017 landless families
- Addressed the land tenurial concerns of about 50 percent of Naga residents in just five years of implementation
- Facilitated the renewal of 27 blighted urban poor communities that house around 2,700 families
- Evolved its own financing scheme utilizing internally-generated resources that now amount to about P500,000
- Is acknowledged as a model urban poor program among Philippine local governments today

**Sustainability**

The success and sustainability of the Kaantabay sa Kauswagan Program is anchored on the following:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES
ADOPTION OF A "PARTNER-BENEFICIARY" PERSPECTIVE. This approach sees the urban poor both as a program partner and beneficiary, compelling them to actively participate in every step of problem resolution.

STRATEGY OF FOCUS. At the top management level, a fundamental strategy is the strategy of focus that delimits coverage only to the urban poor sector in Naga. Client identification is facilitated by a single criterion: presence of land tenure problem.

Over the past six years, the program also chose to prioritize land tenurial concerns over shelter. This stemmed from the fact that while 72 percent of Naga residents own their house, only 44 percent actually own their homelots. But with land tenurial issues expected to be resolved by 1998, the program is now beginning to set its sights on shelter needs.

ROLE DEFINITION AND SPECIALIZATION. This stems from the recognition that there are certain areas where NGOs do much better than government. Thus, in community organizing and social preparation of beneficiaries, the City Government has relied on an NGO partner--COPE Foundation--which specializes on these tasks.

POLICY OF DEALING WITH ORGANIZATIONS, NOT INDIVIDUALS. This compels interested applicants to take the initiative in organizing themselves, thus facilitating community organizing.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Program's bias for the periphery is reflected in the TRIPARTITE APPROACH TO PROBLEM RESOLUTION observed by program partners. Basically, this involves (1) city and national government agencies; (2) urban poor associations aided by their NGO allies; and (3) private landowners. This was further institutionalized through the Naga City Housing and Urban Development Board, the main policy-setting body on housing concerns in the city.

Under this setup, national government agencies extend operational and financial support to the program's land acquisition thrust. Urban poor associations signify their support and commitment through their willingness to negotiate, get organized and raise equity for land acquisition and provide labor for urban upgrading projects. Finally, landowners show their cooperation through a willingness to explore more peaceful means of settling tenurial disputes as an alternative to squatter ejection and demolition of their shelter.

SUPPORTING SECTORAL STRATEGIES

At the project level, various supporting strategies were shaped, falling into three broad categories:

1. ON-SITE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES. These are basically aimed at facilitating transfer of land ownership from government and private owners to individual occupants. They include:
   DIRECT PURCHASE. This involves purchase of an occupied land by the City Government itself. The occupants then amortize the cost of their individual homelots to the City Government.
LAND SWAPPING. This involves the exchange of an occupied property with another of roughly equal value without occupants. The occupants then amortize the cost of their individual homelots to the new owner.

LAND SHARING. This involves working out a mutually acceptable arrangement over a property that allows both the landowner and the occupants to satisfy their respective needs.

COMMUNITY MORTGAGE. This allows the wholesale purchase of an occupied property using the community mortgage financing program of the national government.

2. OFF-SITE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES. These are focused on the establishment of safety nets both for victims of eviction and demolition and those who want to have their own homelots. They include:

ESTABLISHMENT OF RELOCATION/RESETTLEMENT SITES. This involves acquisition of properties, consolidating and developing them as relocation sites for victims of eviction and demolition. In cases where the consolidated lot is underutilized, the site is opened for voluntary resettlement of urban poor families.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORIZATION TO SUPERVISE DISPOSAL OF PUBLIC LANDS. This involves seeking authorization from national government to supervise disposal of public lands, where urban poor families can be prioritized as beneficiaries.

3. SUPPORT STRATEGIES. These address peripheral program areas, including capability building and program sustainability. They include:

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SEPARATE URBAN POOR WINDOW UNDER THE COMPREHENSIVE LIVELIHOOD PROGRAM OF THE CITY GOVERNMENT. This facilitates action on and release of urban poor livelihood loans.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEPARATE URBAN POOR TRUST FUND. Aimed at financial stability, this trust fund was built on CMP origination fees, amortization for resettlement sites and sale of other government properties. As of June 30, 1995, it had an outstanding balance of P494,554.04.

PROACTIVE POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY, REPLICABILITY

To address expected increase in demand for program services, the following were adopted:

LANDBANKING. This refers to the acquisition of more public and private landholdings which will serve as future relocation sites. In 1994, a total of 25.4 hectares was secured.

STRONGER SHELTER PROGRAM. This involve piloting and adoption of new approaches to mass housing--row houses and tenements at the urban district, core shelter units at the relocation sites.

INTENSIFIED LIVELIHOOD COMPONENT. This is anchored on the principle that "giving a man a fish enables him to live for a day, but teaching him how to fish enables him to live for a lifetime."

ENHANCED FINANCIAL RESOURCE MOBILIZATION. This refers to a financing scheme evolved by the program that utilizes internally-generated resources. Here, the City Government uses the Urban Poor Trust Fund to lend as much as P10,000 per beneficiary to augment their equity in homelot purchase.

SHARING WORKSHOPS. This refers to local and national fora where the program is presented for possible replication by other local governments. Already, two
national workshops of the League of Cities of the Philippines and a regional sharing have featured the program.

**Indicators**

**IMPACT**

Disposed 33 hectares of private and public land to 2,017 families

Addressed the land tenurial concerns of about 50 percent of Naga residents in just five years of implementation

Facilitated the renewal of 27 blighted urban poor communities that house around 2,700 families

**SUSTAINABILITY**

Organized the urban poor sector from only 9 organizations at the outset to more than 70 today

Represented the urban poor sector in local policy-setting bodies, including the City Council

Evolved its own financing scheme utilizing internally-generated resources that now amount to about P500,000

Implemented a landbanking strategy that acquired 25.4 hectares for future program needs

Is piloting new approaches to mass housing to strengthen shelter component

**SUCCESS**

Institutionalized a fair, credible and effective tripartite mechanism for solving land tenurial

Is acknowledged as a model urban poor program among Philippine local governments today

**Contact**
Mr. D.C. Nathan Sergio/UPAO Coordinator
City Hall Compound, J. Miranda Avenue
Naga City
Camarines Sur
Philippines
4400
(5421)73-8391/(54)811-1286
Sponsor
City Government of Naga
Hon. Jesse M. Robredo/City Mayor
Juan Miranda Avenue
Naga City
Camarines Sur
Philippines
4400
(5421)73-2240/(54)811-1286 FAX

Partners
Community Organization of the Philippines (COPE) Foundation
Ms. Jo Vicente/COPE Coordinator
De Leon's Apartment, Calauag
Naga City
Camarines Sur
Philippines
4400
(5421)73-2675

Naga City Urban Poor Federation (NCUPF)
Mr. Honesto Perez/NCUPF President
Fraternidad Street, Zone 2, Tabuco
Naga City
Camarines Sur
Philippines
4400

National Housing Authority (NHA)
Mr. Marciano Pineda/NHA General Manager
Elliptical Road
Quezon City
Metro Manila
Philippines
(632)922-2460/(632)922-9820

Source: http://www.vcn.bc.ca/
Accessed on 01/05/2005