

HOUSING THE POOR

in the New Millennium



EDUARDO JORGE ANZORENA, SJ
with **FRANCISCO L. FERNANDEZ**

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The Asian Experience

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PREFACE

Housing is a basic human right. It is an essential requirement to a life of dignity for the person and peace and economic prosperity for the nation.

Yet decent housing is wantonly denied to a large number of people all over the world. So many of them live under bridges, on the streets, in the squalid slums and in bed spaces worse than animal cages.

There are however efforts all over the world which promote housing for the poor. They are for me the beacon of hope that decent shelter is indeed possible for all.

For the past 25 years, I have tried to record in the SELAVIP Newsletter these lights of hope together with the problems in so many countries of the world. This book will compile these articles of the SELAVIP Newsletter and classify them according to some common themes which I think have emerged among the various approaches of housing the poor in Asia and the world. Each theme constitutes a chapter. Each chapter in turn serves as an approach that promotes housing the poor on its own or in combination with other approaches.

Like the SELAVIP Newsletter, this book is merely a collection of the lives, the works and the words of my many friends. It will feature a number of groups and individuals. It is by no means complete. Whenever possible, we will include their E-mail addresses with the hope that you will directly contact them for further information.

Many groups are not mentioned, not

because they are not important. There are just too many individuals and groups who do outstanding work.

Ten years ago, in my book "Housing the Poor - The Asian Experience", I wrote in the conclusion:

"The book has shown several ways wherein thousands of families have found access to housing. The last ten years showed remarkable developments as evidenced by the work of hundreds of committed leaders, community organizations, non-government organizations, professionals and even at times government. They have shown through actual experience that it is possible to solve the problem of housing of the poor using very little resources. What is required is political will to implement this in a large scale.

"But there is no political will.

"In the meantime, the poor in order to survive are forced to squat on government or private land. They live without basic infrastructure, facilities such as electricity, water and sewerage. They dwell on pavements, flood prone areas and dumpsites. Oftentimes, they spend a good amount of their meager income renting small cubicles designed as cages. Yes, the rapid urbanization and development in most third world countries have left the urban poor as squatters in their own country.

"Miserable as they already are, they face forcible eviction. And this threat of eviction painfully grows."

Today, ten years later, many things have happened. The world has grown so

much. The computer has made it so easy to write and communicate with one another. For instance, my newsletter used to be around thirty pages, typed manually and photocopied. Today with the computer and its spelling and grammar tests and the scanner, the newsletter often reaches 130 pages, printed and bound, and now also available in interactive CD in color.

Yes we have all grown. Some of our friends have passed away. A few groups have also disappeared. But most of us have continued. Our number has not grown so much. But the influence of many of our friends has grown tremendously, no longer just in the communities but also in the cities and in the whole country. Some have even extended their influence to other countries.

The housing situation of our brothers and sisters all over the world, even in developed countries, remains very bad, in

fact worse. The irreversible trend towards globalization, privatization and urbanization will without doubt also make the situation even worse.

But adequate housing for all and the war against poverty are now in the mainstream. We are much more experienced. Many more tools have been developed. The need and the opportunities have become very obvious.

I think governments and international agencies practically continue to do the same things as before, but now they include components and elements that are favorable to the poor. They have to do so. The accusation that they are creating instead of reducing poverty has become much louder. The compulsion to do something positive has become much stronger.

The struggle to promote adequate housing for all continues... with much more wisdom and age... with much more hope and joy.

Different groups adopt varying approaches. It is understandable. Different factors such as the situation of each society, the political climate of each country and the charisma of the people involved will all determine the actions that need to be taken.

It is very important for us to realize that each positive action is a very important stone in the construction of a more just society of our dreams.

It is also equally important for us to realize that our action however important it may look to each of us is merely a stone of the many stones required.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Eduardo Jorge Anzorena, 73 years of age and a priest of the Society of Jesus has a PhD in Architecture from the University of Tokyo. He received the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award for International Understanding in 1994.

Prior to his forced retirement around three years ago, Fr. Jorge taught architecture and philosophy of development at Sofia University in Tokyo, six months of every year. The remaining six months he literally traveled around the world visiting low-income housing. His travels to Asia were so extensive that there is hardly a project, no matter how small, that he has not visited.

With his retirement, it is not so clear what he is now doing in Japan. But we heard that he continues to give occasional seminars and lectures. But despite his retirement, he continues to travel around the world visiting projects and sharing stories about housing the poor.

Fr. Jorge also continues to publish the newsletter twice a year without fail since 1976. The newsletter is a chronicle of his travels containing stories of the activities of his countless friends in the world of housing. "No plans," says Fr. Anzorena, "For they are ever changing and cheap. Experiences are more interesting and life-giving."

Helping Fr. Jorge write and produce



Fr. Jorge with Sheila Patel of SPARC and Hosaka.

Hosaka Mitsuhiko is now a professor at Nihon Fukushi University of Nagoya (literally meaning the Japan University of Social Welfare), involved in two-master's programs on international development. Hosaka is major influence in Asia. As a former human settlements officer of ESCAP, he promoted exchange visits among NGOs and CBOs. This eventually helped led to the organization of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights.

(Email of Hosaka: vet05375@nifty.ne.jp)

this book is Francisco L. Fernandez, known as Bimbo to most people. He is the President of Pagtambayayong Foundation (literally meaning *Mutual Aid*), a non-government organization that promotes low income housing. He is also an honorary consultant of the Cebu City local government on housing and poverty reduction and a member of the board of a large number of national NGOs in the Philippines.

All of the above is in between taking care of his eight children, he says. He is 53 years old.

Bimbo began his career in 1969 as a

community organizer of the Catholic Church in the slums of Cebu City. He has since then organized and trained organizers in the various parts of the country. He was a Chairman of the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor and a Vice-President of the National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation in-charge of the Community Mortgage Program. He was in jail for six months during the Marcos dictatorship.

Bimbo has had extensive travels around Asia and in other parts of the world.

*Bimbo
with his wife Tessie Banaynal
and Pagtambayayong's car,
a Mercedes Benz in disguise.
Every year, the disguise improves.*

*Tessie is very active with women. He
founded Lihok Pilipina, a women's
NGO, and Bantay Banay, a reknowned
program against domestic violence.
(Her E-mail: lihok@mozcom.com)*



Fr. Jorge produces his newsletter with the help of a number of friends from the Philippines, among them Ana Ravago-Oliveros, Apple Edmilao-Quizon, Merian Martin-Gregorio and Gladys Ledina. His friends wrote this in 1993:

We began to help him with his newsletter in March 1990. Helping Fr. Jorge write is not easy, especially for us who do other fulltime jobs. His English must have been influenced by the Greek language he studied in the seminary. And never ending. You ask him for the meaning of a word and he gives you more examples and updates. You finish one article, he gives you two more. Encouraging him to use the computer did not solve the problem. It helped him write more and faster.

But we always looked forward to the work. Reading Fr. Anzorena is flying a magic carpet floating the enchanted world of housing.

Our goal was to make Fr. Anzorena more readable, but without losing his words and especially his views of the world. Fr. Anzorena has many stories. He has many ideas. But most especially Fr. Anzorena is a person so rich with conviction and so much at peace with the world.