



**UN-HABITAT**



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### **Housing Strategies in the Asia-Pacific Region: Learning from the Past and Addressing Present and Future Challenges<sup>1</sup>**

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## 1. Preamble

This paper argues from the outset that the proper functioning of the housing sector is essential for a country's economy and overall development. Therefore, it is important that governments, policy makers and housing practitioners realise the need to address housing within an analytical and operational framework and a well-articulated normative view of housing. This viewpoint has been sanctioned and endorsed by the concept of shelter in the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements and the Vancouver Action Plan (1976)<sup>2</sup> and the Habitat agenda and Istanbul Declaration (1996)<sup>3</sup>. Adequate shelter means more than a roof of one's head. In other words, we advocate a view about housing and not houses.

The intimate linkages between of a well-functioning housing sector and a country's economy and its impact on the overall development have been internationally acknowledged<sup>4</sup>. With that in mind, governments, policy makers and housing practitioners need to address housing with a holistic and multi-sector approach that recognises infrastructure provision, land supply, the availability of finance, the supply of building materials and the existence of a construction industry and technology and labour as fundamental pillars and inputs needed for the realisation of housing (and not only houses). This should be articulated and governed by enabling institutional and legal frameworks that recognizes property rights, security of tenure and the right to adequate housing. The inter-linkages between these fundamental inputs to housing and the circuits with other sectors of the economy explain the sizeable impact of a well-performing housing sector in a country's overall development process. The illustration in Figure 1 stresses these articulations.

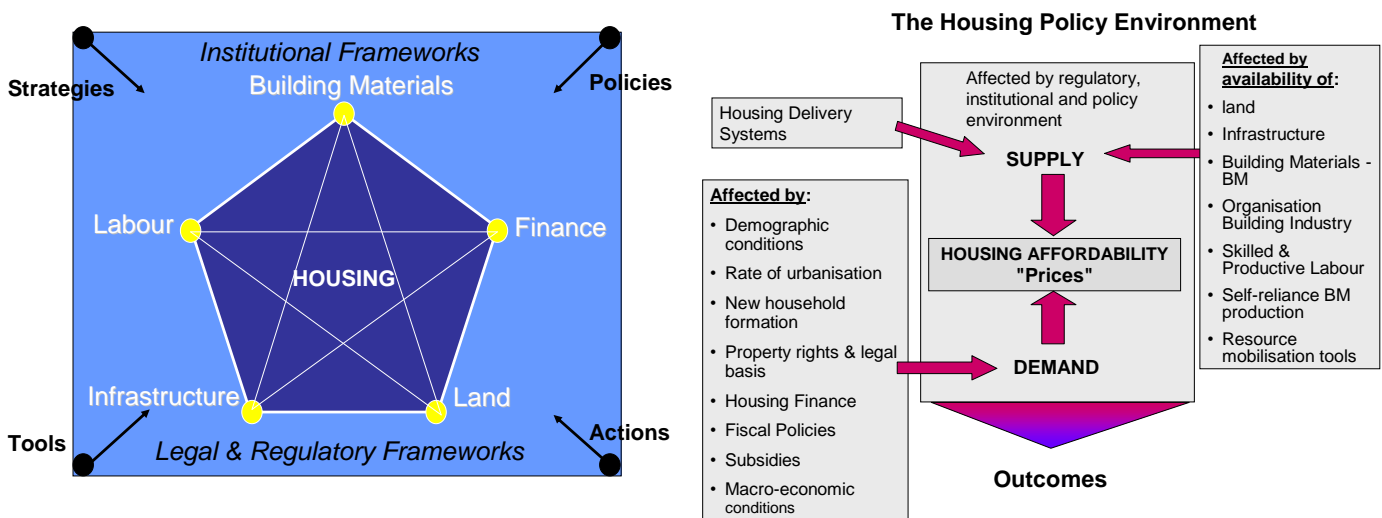


Figure 1: A Normative View of the Housing Sector and the Policy Environment to Deliver Affordable Housing (source: C.Acioly, IHS, 1994; 2003; World Bank, 1993)<sup>5</sup>

Depending on how government policies address these issues and the instruments and strategies applied one may experience either positive or adverse impacts on the demand or supply side of the housing sector that will ultimately prevent or boost informality in housing and land supply. In other words, housing policy matters! The delivery of affordable housing options and wide range of

housing opportunities to address differentiated needs and demands is ultimately a function of slum formation and deteriorating of living conditions of many groups of society.

One of the questions to ask is how Asian-Pacific governments have performed in organising, mobilising and delivering these inputs in their cities? How much do we know and to which extent has each country learned from the success and failures of particular policies and approaches undertaken by its neighbours? What is common and what lessons can we draw up to this point in time? What actions and recommendations can we outline in order to boost regional cooperation in the field of Housing?

The global experience of UN-HABITAT gives evidences that the access to and mobilization of these inputs can be greatly facilitated by an enabling shelter strategy, which ought to be inclusive and participatory in nature, and nurtured by active government responses. This should be translated into an objective and result oriented policy that may result in housing becoming more affordable and consequently widening opportunities for various social groups and particularly weaker economic groups. Curbing informality and slum prevention are direct functions of good housing policy. And in doing so, governments will progressively work to meet the challenges facing the achievement of the MDG 7 Target 11<sup>6</sup>.

### **Enabling Shelter Strategies**

Enabling shelter strategies<sup>7</sup> were first articulated in the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 that was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1988. The comprehensive framework for action envisaged in this strategy sealed a fundamental shift in thinking and action on housing and shelter issues that envisaged a future with adequate shelter for all<sup>8</sup>. This was a milestone in housing policy development that has influenced a generation of housing practitioners and national housing policies, later ratified and further elaborated in the Habitat Agenda, adopted in 1996. The major shift from previous shelter policies was the shift of government's role from 'provider' to 'enabler'. Simply said, governments are encouraged to mobilize resources of other actors and facilitate their deployment for the efficient provision of shelter of various types for various different target groups.

A recent review of two decades of experience with executing an enabling shelter strategy that was undertaken by UN-HABITAT<sup>9</sup> reveals among other things that for its full realisation, certain areas still require further reforms, namely decentralisation (legislative and fiscal reforms to enable 'municipalisation' of housing policies), participation (civil society participation and empowerment to achieve equity and equality) and partnerships (to enable an integrated multi-stakeholder approach to housing with governments becoming coordinators and facilitators). Additionally, other bottlenecks have been identified in various levels that hinder access to fundamental inputs to housing, as mentioned above, such as land, infrastructure and finance.

## **2. Housing in the Asia-Pacific Region in a Snapshot**

The Asia-Pacific cannot be looked as one single region. Despite the diversity encountered in the several of its sub-regions, one can identify some commonalities. Regarding the focus of this paper, one can easily affirm that the Housing sector in the Asia-Pacific region has undergone significant developments during the last decades with countries experiencing a diversity of policies with different results and impacts.

### **Housing Reforms**

Some countries embarked into comprehensive housing reform programmes geared to enable housing markets to function properly and help boosting private ownership of housing like for example China, the Russian Federation, Vietnam, Mongolia and several of the former Soviet republics that moved from a centrally planned to a market economy. The process of privatisation and the unprecedented transfer of ownership in the housing stock have transformed tenants into homeowners and made possible the emerging of different housing supply mechanisms and a gradual retreat of the State. The changes in the building materials industry and technology and the privatisation of state-owned building enterprises were other additional transformations that were introduced in the supply side of the housing market. These fundamental reforms have highlighted the need of a regulatory framework to govern and enable the maintenance and management of high-rise multi-family housing stock, a new role for homeowners associations and a radical shift in the role of local governments in the refurbishment and retrofitting of old housing stock. Last but not least, it disclosed the vulnerability of certain social groups not capable to cope with the onus of becoming homeowners and the high-energy consumption attached to the building technology and construction techniques previously applied.

### **Facing the Challenge of Slums**

In other countries where the problems of slums and informal settlements were more acute we have witnessed different types of policies that resulted into distinguished national and/or citywide programmes that brought the region to the forefront in the struggle to provide adequate housing and improve the living conditions of low income households like the Kampung Improvement Programme in Indonesia, the Community Mortgage Programme in the Philippines, the Million Housing Programme and One Hundred Thousand Housing Programme of Sri Lanka and the National Slum Development Programme and the Slum Networking Approach of India, and the national slum upgrading and community development Baan Mekong Programme in Thailand just to mention a few.

These programmes and approaches have existed for many years resulting into an accumulated institutional memory, capacity enhancement and lessons learned in tackling informally developed human settlements and with improving the living conditions of low-income households. Many of these programmes have become a showcase in how to address slums, informal settlements, access to land and inadequate infrastructure in Asian cities.

### **From Citywide to National programmes**

In the case of Indonesia's Kampung Improvement Programme-KIP, for example, the 'scaling-up' of the programme was followed and articulated with complementary programmes such as the Integrated Urban Infrastructure Development Programme-IUIDP. And the new generations of KIP projects reveals more pro-active city governments, greater participation and increasingly more responsibilities taken by local residents. The IUIDP-programme was designed and executed to articulate and integrate physical and financial planning and implementation of urban infrastructure. This was to be achieved in parallel to a process of devolution and decentralisation of responsibility for the provision of infrastructure from central to local government, within the parameters and guidelines set by central government for planning, programming and budgeting. One important dimension of this programme was the in-built component that enabled local capacity building and on-the-job training of local staff. These experiences in Indonesia highlight the importance of capacity building and institution strengthening as sine-qua-non condition to enable decentralised delivery of one of the fundamental inputs for the progressive realisation of the right to adequate housing: infrastructure and services.

## **Innovations in Accessing Land**

The region was the birthplace of several innovative programmes that introduced principles of partnerships in the supply of land and infrastructure that has benefited low-income households. These experiences have inspired many countries beyond Asia and the Pacific and are often referred to as good shelter practices. Some of the more renowned examples are the land sharing approach practiced for example in Thailand and Indian cities where a close cooperation between governments, land owners and squatter communities has made possible the achievement of security of tenure and infrastructure improvements in favour of low income households while providing at the same time opportunity for landowners to regain part of their land stock. The enabling and facilitating role played by governments was the key for the success of this approach, particularly in servicing and regularising land use. These cases highlight the power of negotiation contrary to litigation and the opportunities offered by densification and reconstruction processes that respectively maximise the use of land and infrastructure, and therefore of public finance, and the replacement of old housing structures.

## **Financing Access to Land**

Another partnership modality was introduced by the Community Mortgage Programme-CMP of the Philippines. The CMP is a national programme that has made possible for organised communities of low income households legitimately represented by their officially registered community-based organisation-CBO to access finance to acquire land with the support of non-governmental organisations-NGO. In this programme, NGO's act as loan originators and catalysts to enable the poor to access land and further transform their settlement into neighbourhoods. The CMP reveals that the partnership CBO-NGO is facilitated by a government programme and enables low-income households to resort to legal, technical and operational assistance from NGO's. Many faith-based NGO's got engaged in the programme and some went beyond the programme's umbrella developing a much pro-active attitude in searching, negotiating and purchasing land directly from landowners.

## **Enhancing Private Sector Participation**

The Slum Networking policy as practiced in several Indian cities provides positive evidences of a citywide approach that advocates an integrated upgrading of the slum stock in a city that takes into account their contiguity and settlement configurations when pursuing their integration into the urban fabric. This maximises the provision of infrastructure networks and environmental improvements. The programme supports the partnership of local NGO's, micro-finance institution – MFI, the municipality and the private sector. The interesting aspect of this approach is that it strongly focuses on community development and promotes the establishment of neighbourhood groups, women's groups and youth activities and creates a framework to mobilise community savings and credit groups for undertaking physical works. The examples from India indicate that micro-finance makes a difference by making services affordable and costs to be shared between community, municipality and private sector. The community development approach and the principle of cost sharing amongst community members sharing an alley and/or trunk of infrastructure is also the guiding principle of another show case programme in Orangi Project in Pakistan, widely known as OPP. The success of the programme in forging partnerships and locally financing access to infrastructure called the attention of national and international funding agencies making possible its multiplication elsewhere in Pakistan and other Asian countries.

## **The Importance of Housing Finance**

Several of the examples mentioned above reveal that the availability of finance is one of the prerequisite for the full and progressive realisation of adequate housing. Actually the access to finance proves to be a fundamental element to enable the housing sector to work for low-income households as well. In addition to private banks and mortgage providers, countries of the Asia-Pacific region show vigorous housing finance systems and institutions like specialised housing banks, national savings and credit institutions like Korea's housing bank and India's Housing and Urban Development Corporation just to mention two of them. But it is Singapore's Central Provident Fund that shows a sustained flow of financial resources in social and public housing provision, standing out as a sustainable mechanism – under certain conditions – and a showcase of a housing fund that enables the realisation of the principle of adequate shelter for all.

The Central Provident Fund-CPF is a compulsory savings scheme for Singaporean workers to provide a secure retirement. Both employees and employers contribute a certain percentage (dependent on age) of their monthly income to the fund and the government helps by exempting CPF earnings from tax and guaranteeing payment of CPF savings. The various schemes of the CPF enable the purchasing of homes, family protection and asset enhancement. Housing can be purchased through two schemes, namely the Public Housing Scheme and Residential Properties Scheme. The performance of the CPF shows that over the years the fund has become increasingly self-reliant and promoting homeownership and boosting increasingly better housing quality. The success of CPF can be measured by 2006 data<sup>10</sup> that reveals that 95% of employees aged 21 and above, owned public housing properties bought with CPF savings and 66.8% of employees aged 21 and above, owned residential properties bought with CPF savings. It is worth noting that Singapore has managed to eradicate slums from its territory during the last 50 years of intensive housing policy implementation. The experience of Singapore's housing provident fund has certainly inspired other countries of the region to implement similar fund and savings constructions to widen access to adequate housing, for example, The Philippines, Sri Lanka and China.

Other institutions, like the Asian Development Bank (ADB), have started in recent years to provide housing finance to urban poor and informal settlers who normally are not covered by government-sponsored housing finance schemes. For instance, the ADB is supporting housing sector projects through the \$30 million Development of Poor Urban Communities Sector Project (DPUCSP) in the Philippines which is implemented in collaboration with the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP). The DPUCSP supports new socialized housing and upgrading of existing (mostly informal) human settlements throughout the country. Complementary to this, a Metro Manila Urban Services for the Poor Investment Program (MMUSP) is under preparation; this is planned to become a \$487 million 10-year multi-tranche financing facility assisting local governments in provision of site development, infrastructure and financing for new socialized housing or home improvement. The DPUCSP is piloting rights-based tenure forms like usufruct and long-term leases which are becoming bankable collateral, and is promoting microfinance mechanisms for home improvement and livelihood activities. A further innovation in the banking sector is the acceptance of community-based home-owners' associations (HOAs) as eligible borrowers. In order to keep end-user costs for housing low, the MMUSP is preparing to provide cross-subsidies for poor households. These cross-subsidies will be sourced from revenues of commercial components which are going to be developed as part of the program."

### **Alternative Mechanisms to Access Housing Finance**

It is in the Asia-Pacific region that one realises the importance of finance and resource mobilisation to support the improvement of housing conditions of low-income households. Paradoxically the region equally reveals the failure of formal housing finance through two phenomena. The first one is reflected in the rise of federations of the poor established as a response to overcome their

difficulties in accessing formal housing finance and often exclusion from formal mortgage and credit services. Asia-Pacific was the birthplace of these innovative vehicles to mobilize resources, boost social cohesion and community strengthening. These federations are very active in the Philippines, Thailand, India, Vietnam, Cambodia and Sri Lanka for example, and are formed on the basis of a network of savings groups and social mobilisation instruments that help poor households to collectively mobilise resources to access housing inputs, particularly land<sup>11</sup>. These autonomous and totally decentralised savings and credit systems indicate a new form of financial resource mobilisation that is increasingly being supported by NGO's like India's National Slum Dwellers Association and the Homeless People's Federation of the Philippines. It is worth noting that this phenomenon is being transferred to other continents via the network of NGO's and grassroots organizations.

These federations are supported worldwide by an international NGO<sup>12</sup> through its local affiliates and the International Urban Poor Fund<sup>13</sup>. This fund supports activities of federations of informal savings groups that are formed by poor households whose objective is to collectively save money and improve their neighbourhoods. The improvement agenda encompasses but not limited to accessing land and securing tenure, improving sanitation and water supplies and in some cases building houses. The ultimate goal is to enhance the capacity of poor households so that they become active development partners. It is worth noting that the organisation and mobilisation of networks of savings and credit groups is the foundation of a nation-wide slum upgrading programme in Thailand, called Baan Mekong Programme. The programme's innovation is that it is executed via an NGO with support from government and through a networking approach that boosts inter-communities collaboration and mutual learning. The principle of sharing and exchanging experiences is one of the keys for the success of this programme.

### **Growing Informality and Threat to MDG Achievement**

The second phenomenon that gives evidences of the failure of formal systems of finance and mortgage services to reach poor households in the Asia-Pacific region is the ever-increasing population living in slums, informal settlements and dilapidated and inadequate rental tenements. This raises fundamental questions about housing affordability and the functioning of housing and land markets that are apparently excluding the poor. It is either a question of poverty (people are poor and cannot afford housing), or housing and land markets are distorted (disparities in housing and land prices related to incomes), or the absence of housing policies simply do not offer alternatives for low-income households, or all together these factors may be the underlying causes of growing informality. Because many countries are experiencing high economic growth rates resulting into many people moving out of poverty lines, one could suggest that the increase in population living in slums is less a problem of poverty and more a problem of disfunctioning markets and the lack of adequate housing and land policies to enable them to satisfy their housing needs.

According to UN-HABITAT's Global Urban Observatory, 42.2% of urban residents in Asia are slum dwellers. In absolute numbers Asia has the largest share of the world's slum population (581 million in 2005)<sup>14</sup>. The magnitude of this demand for adequate shelter among other basic needs poses enormous challenges in terms of housing supply and government policies in addition to endangering national governments' capacity to meet the MDG<sup>15</sup>, Target 11. In addition to that many governments of the Asia-Pacific region still resort often to forced evictions, despite of the fact that most countries have signed and endorsed several international covenants and human rights agreements, including the right to adequate housing. Some exceptions are the negotiated resettlements of the population occupying land alongside the railroad in The Philippines and India

where CBO's and NGO's worked together with governments, minimising the adverse impacts of evictions.

### **Land Markets and Land Management Instruments**

This highlights another fundamental input and dimension of housing, that is to say, access to serviced and affordable land and security of tenure. In most Asian cities suitable land exists but it is not available for development<sup>16</sup>. A densely populated inner city is commonly surrounded by residential area and linked up to peripheral agricultural areas via traffic corridors. Most of the land stock is privately owned and kept vacant for speculation purposes resulting in scarcity of serviced land and/or insufficient land being released for development and consequently exorbitant land prices. Land markets are severely distorted and poor households are hit hard.

What seems to sum up to it is the cumbersome and time consuming regulatory framework that not only results in costly and lengthy land delivery systems but also propels informal land subdivisions and slum formation. In that respect, we observe two remarkable phenomena in Asia-Pacific cities regarding land. One attempts to curb speculation and quantity of land holdings through legislation like India's land ceiling act, land banks and land pooling used by various countries. Some city governments have attempted to retrieve land under public ownership and create a stock of land to be used for social housing purposes but this has generated monopolies, more scarcity and propelling of informal land occupation and subdivisions.

The other phenomenon is the design and implementation of land management instruments<sup>17</sup> such as land readjustment projects that implies the partnership between governments and private landowners in land parcelling and land development. This has become very popular in the region for the simple reason that vacant land is privately owned and the only way to service it and bring it to a pro-poor development is to involve landowners in the scheme. Land readjustment is widely used in Korea and Japan, but also in India for example where the benefits of this approach can be assessed. It is worth noting that many countries in the region sustain a strong regime of private and individual property of land, almost unchallenged by land use ordinances, tax and land management instruments that results in city governments finding themselves without proper instruments to achieve equity in urban planning and resources allocation. It should be noted that notions such as land value capture taxation and other property and betterment tax instruments to retrieve part of the wealth created by property valuation as result of public investments is not widely applied in the region. In practice it means that city governments miss gold opportunities in revenue generation and fall short in meeting the goal of adequate shelter for all. Furthermore they fail to redistribute this gain to society as whole in the form of infrastructure investment in poor areas or in sustainable urbanisation projects.

### **Urbanisation and the Role of the Building and Construction Sector**

Urbanisation and economic growth in many countries of Asia-Pacific region is closely linked to a booming construction sector that not only supports the growth in the economy but boosts employment opportunities and technological development in addition to direct impacts on the financial services infrastructure. However, this growth comes with a price tag. There are many evidences of the severe impacts on the urban environment and on climate change. Large tracts of land, forests and waterfront sites are being converted into urban use. These projects are not always developed with a sustainable and environmental concern.

UN-HABITAT's State of the Cities Report estimates that Asian countries will continue to dominate global urban growth with an average annual growth rate around 3% meaning that by 2030 the



region will have become predominantly urban<sup>18</sup>. Some estimates reveal that the urban population in the region increases by 44 million people every year. This means 120,000 people are added daily to the Asian urban population, requiring the construction of more than 20,000 new dwellings, 250 kilometres of new roads and more than 6 mega liters of safe water<sup>19</sup>. The building sector is consequently booming in order to respond to this ever increasing demand for serviced land, housing, infrastructures and public services and propelling a profitable real estate market. This has a social cost and tangible environmental impacts associated with it. The building and construction industry alone is responsible for producing increasing greenhouse gas emissions, and consuming not less than 30<sup>20</sup> per cent of the total energy consumptions (electricity, fuels, water, etc.).

Rapid urban development needs to seek for sustainability, enhancing the resilience of cities to climate change in a cohesive way with poverty reduction and economic development. Sustainable housing had been experienced by many Asian countries over the last years, often to adapt to post-disaster contexts and high level of vulnerability to multi-hazards. In Pakistan for example, following the dramatic earthquake in 2005, UN-HABITAT supported a people's centred housing reconstruction process, using traditional, risk-resistant, low-cost and climate neutral building materials and construction technologies with results never accomplished before. Other Asian countries facing similar natural disasters are adapting housing, producing building solutions that minimize environmental impacts to better resist to these threats, promoting ones of the world's best practices in terms of sustainable shelter. Countries like Iran and Turkey for example, have boosted research and development on earthquake resistant architecture and construction which can pave the way to sustainable housing approaches and clean technologies both from structural and environmental perspectives.

The Asia-Pacific region belongs to the most vulnerable regions of the world and housing can actually play an important role in rebuilding communities after disasters. The work of many international agencies, NGOs and UN-Habitat in recent years illustrate that post-disaster reconstruction and disaster risk management have become essential in the development agenda of many countries. After the devastating Tsunami of 2004, UN-Habitat has undertaken a substantive amount of work in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. For instance, in Aceh and Nias UN-Habitat has been implementing projects funded by the international donor community; and it has executed two ADB-financed contracts, both of them for a value of close to \$10 million, to reconstruct housing and rebuild communities. The reconstruction program after the Tsunami of 2004 has been a remarkable multi-agency effort, and it provides many relevant lessons for the future. Asia and the Pacific will need to be prepared for future disasters, and there must be more disaster risk management and retrofitting of vulnerable housing stock. Inter-agency collaborations like the one between ADB and UN-Habitat have shown that effective synergies can be created through pooling of resources and capacities.

### **3. Challenges and Opportunities**

The previous section highlighted some of the diversity and the wealth of experiences that some of the countries of the region have undergone in terms of housing and shelter programmes. In this section we will summarise the most important challenges and opportunities.

Most Asia-Pacific countries are undergoing rapid urbanisation and the region is experiencing the appearance of mega cities and a network of several dozens of 1 million people-cities. This process is coupled with high rates of economic growth and increasing inequalities and growing numbers of poor households. The challenges are enormous but many opportunities for boosting sustainable

urbanisation if governments identify critical problems and promptly design responses and strategies to deal with them.

The countries that privatised its housing stock like the former Soviet Republics, Mongolia and others are now confronted with the virtual disappearance of rental housing and the collapse of welfare/social housing. This is not sustainable and it is severely affecting housing options for those not willing or capable to purchase housing. This also adversely affects residential mobility and the overall functioning of housing markets. The youth and newly married couples are seriously affected by the malfunctioning of the housing sector and scarcity of housing options.

In addition to that, the transition to a market economy has yet to fill gaps in the regulatory framework which hinders housing maintenance under private regime of homeownership and provides neither incentives nor enforcement mechanisms for the establishment and sustainability of homeowners association and/or condominium associations. Housing finance and land and property rights and the overall housing and real estate markets are not fully developed in these countries and this needs attention. Energy efficiency measures and legislation are being drafted in order to sustain refurbishment and curb high energy costs that characterised the old public housing states<sup>21</sup>.

A new phenomenon is being observed in these countries that is to say the multiplication of illegal buildings and informal settlements. This gives signs of possible shortcomings in housing and land delivery associated with the virtual cease of state provision of housing and the collapse of the centralised housing delivery system. But it may also be seen as evidences of affordability problems reflecting disparities in the ratio housing price-to-income that further reinforces the need to boost housing finance and up-scale the provision of serviced land.

In those countries that have introduced citywide and/or nationwide upgrading and regularisation of informal settlements and slums one can identify a common trend towards greater decentralisation in shelter provision and increasing participation of non-governmental stakeholders and private sector in order to enable community-based organisations and residents to assume an active role in shelter development initiatives.

Another trend identified in several countries relates to the establishment of housing micro-finance instruments either autonomously by savings and credit groups or through micro-finance institutions in order to facilitate access to land, services or infrastructure. There exist a wide range of examples and rich experiences in the region that needs to be properly documented, further assessed, the lessons learned disclosed and further disseminated.

#### **4. Framework for Regional Cooperation**

Many of these country and/or city experiences have been systematised in the form of research reports, best practice publications and through official websites, for example UN-HABITAT's on-line best practice database<sup>22</sup> and the Dubai International Award<sup>23</sup>. But not all experiences in the Asia-Pacific region are widely known. Some have been subject to external evaluations and publications while others are still ongoing and need to be appraised. This can be enhanced through the partnership between the national Housing ministries and experiences and lessons learned made available for all.

UN-HABITAT is currently developing its Mid-Term Strategic Plan (MTSIP) for the six-year time frame 2008-2013. This is a participatory and consultative process that will help identify areas of concerns as well as policy needs in the various regions of the world so that UN-HABITAT's work

can become more demand-driven and more supportive to the work of its national partners like Ministries of Housing and Urban Development. UN-HABITAT can facilitate the articulation of these needs and elaborate a regional housing agenda of priorities.

Multiple media and forums of information exchange on the results, approaches, prerequisites for success and critical analysis of the impacts of different experiences are key for improvements in housing policies in the region. As an example, UN-HABITAT, in collaboration with UNESCAP, has recently published a series of seven quick guides for policy makers in the Asia-Pacific region covering the broad field of housing, focusing on the following themes: urbanization, low-income housing, land, alternatives to eviction, housing finance, community-based organizations and rental housing. The guides are presented in an easy-to-read format, structured along the themes of trends and conditions, concepts, policies, tools and recommendations, and including a range of examples of ongoing initiatives across Asia. The guides are not aimed for specialists, and are targeted for national and local government officials and policy makers who quickly need to enhance their understanding on these topics. All the guides underscore the vital role of poor people themselves and community-based organizations as partners in finding solutions to housing problems. A set of posters and on-line concept checks (for training purposes) are also being developed as part of this collaboration. The guides are currently being translated into Hindi, and plans are also underway to translate them into Bahasa among other Asian languages.

Not all countries have a housing policy document in place and many do not have a comprehensive situation analysis in the form of a country and/or city housing profile. Such a profile is instrumental to disclose not only a normative understanding of the structure of the sector as a whole, the main public, private, community and research players; legislation, policy instruments and outputs of a given housing sector. But it also helps to identify key gaps and bottlenecks in the supply and demand sides of the housing market while suggesting avenues to improve the sector performance. UN-HABITAT's shelter profiling initiative, currently under phase of experimentation in four countries, can be a source of methodological and operational framework to assist governments and its partners in building an understanding of the functioning of a country's housing sector, identifying key issues and helping prioritise actions. This initiative may be instrumental for the Asia-Pacific countries and may result into additional guides to policy makers. UN-HABITAT is also considering the development of policy guidelines and tools to address land supply bottlenecks, property and land tax (as instruments to boost residential infrastructure provision within the framework of housing production); and the improvement and refurbishments of old housing stock.

Sustainable housing and sustainable building remain a challenge facing cities and their impacts on climate change, especially in a region boosting such a remarkable economic and urban growth. Climate change is nowadays one of the most important challenges faced by cities and local governments. Climate change and its dramatic consequences (floods, cyclones, and droughts) will affect first the urban poor settled in inadequate land and housing, often situated in fragile areas<sup>24</sup>. UN-HABITAT is pursuing a response to this challenge by developing the Sustainable Urban Development Network (SUD-Net). It is a global network of partners involved in supporting urban pro-poor and harmonious urban development. Through SUD-Net and its component on Cities and Climate Change, UN-HABITAT and its partners are working to reduce these risks, promoting an adequate and sustainable shelter for all and developing tools to reduce drastically the impact of buildings and urban areas on global warming. Research institutions, private sector companies and government agencies involved in building and construction technologies are encouraged to join UN-HABITAT in this effort, favouring not only regional but also global cooperation.

Given that land policies and land management instruments still need to find its way at the local city planning and urban management in most countries of Asia-Pacific region, the achievement of pro-

poor and sustainable urbanisation remains hindered. UN-HABITAT's Global Land Tool Network-GLTN<sup>25</sup> may be instrumental for the countries in the region and facilitate the implementation of pro poor land policies and boost innovation and up-scaling of land management tools. This will certainly help the development of policies geared to deliver affordable housing. The Network partners argue that the lack of these tools and problems in the governance of land are the main causes of failed implementation of land policies world wide. UN-HABITAT can support disclosing the major land-related bottlenecks in the Asia-Pacific region and through GLTN make knowledge and expertise available on land reform, land use planning, development of practical tools and improved land management and security of tenure.

Addressing land tenure issues is a complex endeavour. No single tenure option can solve all these problems when working on the problem of slums, informal settlements and illegal land subdivisions. Policy on land tenure and property rights can best reconcile social and economic needs by encouraging a diverse range of options rather than putting emphasis on one option, for example land titling. The Asia-Pacific region shows a variety of models like land lease and land use rights that are widely utilised in China for example. UN-HABITAT advocates a continuum of land rights and legal instruments, with land titling being only one of the legal instruments that can be applied in the Asia-Pacific cities. Regional cooperation and continue exchange of experience in the field of land policies can be facilitated by UN-HABITAT and be organised from the inter-ministerial conference as a departing point. This may boost greater understanding of land markets in the Asia-Pacific region and help cities to design effective land use planning, tax instruments and management tools that will assure proper revenue generation and more equitable distribution and coverage of infrastructure. It is likely that this will widen the supply of serviced land and consequently propel the supply of affordable housing.

Finally, UN-HABITAT underscores the importance of capacity building. These networks as well as the various guides and publications produce knowledge and cross-fertilisation that can be explored in expert group meetings, but also be adapted to serve capacity-building workshops and courses, and training of trainers from the Asia-Pacific region on core housing and land topics. UN-HABITAT can facilitate this initiative too. This Second Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development can play a fundamental role in this but also, and fundamentally, in the review of past and present experiences and design a way forward on key substantive areas that will lead to the progressive realization of the right to adequate housing.

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<sup>1</sup> *This concept paper was prepared by Claudio Acioly Jr., Chief Housing Policy Section of the Shelter Branch of UN-HABITAT. It has received contributions from Mohamed El-Sioufi, Christophe Lelande, Karan Samani, Asa Jonsson and Ulrik Westman of UN-HABITAT, and Florian Steinberg from the Asian Development Bank.*

<sup>2</sup> *Agenda item 10(c) from United Nations (1976), "The Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements", from the report of Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Vancouver, Canada, 31 May to 11 June 1976. UN (1976), Report of HABITAT: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. New York: UN.*

<sup>3</sup> *UNCHS (1996), "The Istanbul Declaration and The Habitat Agenda", United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), Turkey 3-14 June 1996. Paragraph 60, Chapter IV, Section B: 1.*

<sup>4</sup> *UNCHS (1992) "Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. GSS in Action", Nairobi: UNCHS; UN-HABITAT (1991), "Global Shelter Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000"; World Bank (1993). "Housing: enabling markets to work". Washington: The World Bank; Angel, Shlomo and Mayo, Stephen (undated), "Enabling Policies and Their Effects on Housing Sector Performance: a global comparison". UN-HABITAT, (2006), Enabling Shelter Strategies: Review of Experience from Two Decades of Implementation. Nairobi: UN-HABITAT.*

<sup>5</sup> *Acioly, Claudio (1994). "Introduction to Housing: draft lecture notes", Rotterdam: Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies. World Bank (1993). "Housing: enabling markets to work". Washington: The World Bank.*

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Acioly, C. (2003). "Introduction to Housing Policies: how to make possible access to housing", background materials of the Housing and Land Specialisations, Urban Management and Development Master Programme-UMD. Rotterdam: Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies.

<sup>6</sup> By 2020, improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

<sup>7</sup> For review of this strategy, its implementation and evaluation of results, refer to the following publications, all available under [www.unhabitat.org/programmes/housingpolicy/publications](http://www.unhabitat.org/programmes/housingpolicy/publications): UNCHS, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (1991) *Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000*, Nairobi: UNCHS. UNCHS (1991). "Global Strategy for Shelter for the Year 2000 Sub-Regional Seminars to Support National Action". Nairobi: UNCHS. UNCHS (1991b) "Assessment of Experience with Initiating Enabling Shelter Strategies, Nairobi: UNCHS; UNCHS (1992) "Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000. GSS in Action", Nairobi: UNCHS.

<sup>8</sup> The progressive realisation of the right to adequate housing, as outlined in the Habitat Agenda, is central in the United Nations Housing Rights Programme. It is a joint program carried out with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, launched in 2002. The program is currently focusing on the development of indicators on housing rights, including security of tenure, in order to provide governments, policy makers, practitioners and activists, with tools to assess baseline conditions and measure progress in the realisation of this basic human right.

<sup>9</sup> UN-HABITAT, United Nations Human Settlement Programme (2006) "Enabling Shelter Strategies: review of experience from two decades of implementation. Nairobi: UN-HABITAT

<sup>10</sup> CPF Annual Report of 2006

<sup>11</sup> They organise and work in a very similar formula to housing cooperatives.

<sup>12</sup> Shack Dwellers International-SDI

<sup>13</sup> The Bill Gates Foundation has just granted a large amount to this fund aiming at improving the lives of slum dwellers.

<sup>14</sup> UN-HABITAT (2006). "State of the Cities Report 2006/7", London: Earthscan.

<sup>15</sup> "By 2020, improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, while providing adequate alternatives to new slum formation". This is the reformulated version of the MDG 11 statement as proposed by the UN Millennium Project, Task Force on Improving the Lives of Slum Dwellers, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Municipal Land Management in Asia: a comparative study. See <http://www.unescap.or>

<sup>17</sup> China for example, has introduced land lease, and boosted land markets through transactions involving land use rights.

<sup>18</sup> UN-HABITAT (2006). "State of the Cities Report 2006/7", London: Earthscan.

<sup>19</sup> UNDESA, Department of Economic & Social Affairs. World Urbanisation Prospects: 2005 Revision; 2007 Revision. <http://www.un.org/esa/population/unpop.htm>; Roberts B. and Kanaley T. (2006). 'Urbanization and Sustainability in Asia', Philippines.

<sup>20</sup> The International Energy Agency estimates that buildings account for 30-40 per cent of energy use worldwide, IEA 2005

<sup>21</sup> UN-HABITAT's Shelter Initiative for Climate Change Mitigation may provide tools and methods on how to deal with these issues.

<sup>22</sup> The Best Practices and Local Leadership Programme (BLP) was established in 1997 in response to the call of the Habitat Agenda to make use of information and networking in support of its implementation. It is a global network of government agencies, local authorities and their associations, professional and academic institutions and grassroots organisations dedicated to the identification and exchange of successful solutions for sustainable development.

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*23 The Dubai International Award for Best Practices was established in 1995 under the directives of the late Sheikh Maktoum Bin Rashid Al Maktoum during a United Nations International Conference. The biennial award, which recognizes best practices that have a positive impact on improving the living environment, reflects the policy and commitment of [Dubai Government](#) and the United Arab Emirates towards sustainable development of human settlements and protection of the environment on the basis of mutual international cooperation.*

*24 The World Bank estimates that losses due to natural disasters are twenty times greater (as a percentage of GDP) in developing countries than in industrialized nations*

*25 The Network has developed a global land partnership. Its members include international civil society organizations, international finance institutions, international research and training institutions, donors and professional bodies. It aims to take a more holistic approach to land issues and improve global land coordination in various ways*