

# Inclusive Planning as a Tool for Social Integration: Case studies from Asia and the Pacific

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Donovan Storey, The University of Queensland, Australia

## **Overview**

The Asia-Pacific region has experienced dramatic growth and change in the post-war period. In the main these changes have been seen as epitomising successful development. The transformation of the Asian tiger economies, Japan, and more recently the rise of India and China as global economic powers is also reflected, on a smaller scale, in the rural and urban development revolutions in Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. While Pacific Island states have struggled to match the economic development trends of their larger Asian and Australasian neighbours, change and social transformation has been no less profound. The rapid shift from rural/subsistence to urban/monetary economies, and the social-cultural change this has brought, has provided enormous challenges for political systems which have in some cases proven fragile (Murray & Storey 2003).

Nevertheless despite broadly successful economic experiences, the region is as notable for high levels of inequality which have persisted, and in a number of cases have intensified (e.g. South & West Asia, and notably Nepal, Sri Lanka & Bangladesh) (Kabeer 2006: 64; Sen 2000). National economic success stories have often acted to shadow the region's struggle to effectively address social, political and economic marginalisation. Indeed, even in the economically successful and rapidly globalising examples of India, Thailand and Vietnam, development has augmented old divisions and created new ones. There has been problems in converting national economic growth into sustainable benefits in the form of inclusive human development (Cook 2006). There is no clearer and more obvious manifestation of these inequalities than in the region's booming but highly inequitable cities (Beall 2000; Kabeer 2006).

In the Pacific Islands, economic growth has been characterised by its unevenness and vast chasms are clearly evident in the lived experiences of small urban elites and the large number of rural (and increasingly urban) poor who live without services, infrastructure, access to health care and education. This is especially so in the Melanesian states of Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, which share many of the indices of the poorest sub-Saharan African states (Storey & Abbott, forthcoming). Indeed, exclusion threatens progress towards a number of the MDGs (AusAID 2009). Notably these are across a number of indicators (reduction in child mortality; access to water and sanitation; reduction in maternal mortality; gender equality in education; universal primary education) but also a broad range of states, such as the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Vanuatu (Storey & Abbott, forthcoming).

Planning has too often exacerbated the uneven outcomes of development. In many cases planning has furthered the marginalisation of socially excluded populations from the decision making process. Still, as is evident in the case studies which follow, successful interventions can act to address the complexities of exclusion, including the social relations and institutions which variously cause and buttress social inequality and deprivation (de Haan 1999). In so doing, this discussion paper illustrates two examples where planning (at both the 'formal' & 'informal' level) has sought to create socially inclusive outcomes. Quite deliberately I have chosen arenas which have highlighted planning and governance failure in the past; that is, settlement upgrading and environmental sustainability in Bangkok, Thailand, and urban safety and violence prevention in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. Though notoriously problematic areas for urban planning, in recent years some success has emerged from innovative, and more inclusive programmes.

I argue here that improved outcomes have occurred because the process of planning has shifted toward involving the participation and even ownership of largely excluded or marginalised populations in both the design and decision making process (Cook 2006; Kabeer 2006; Storey 2003). Social exclusion is multidimensional; rarely do people suffer from a single form of exclusion (de Haan 1999). Indeed, the case studies below exemplify the multidimensional forms of exclusion which exist in poorer communities, which result from and reinforce a relative lack of power to influence decisions and control resources which affect people's lives. These two case studies, from the Pacific and Asia are the Baan Mankong ('secure housing') programme in Thailand and the Yumi Lukautim Mosbi ('Lets

looks after Port Moresby’) campaign in Papua New Guinea. Both programmes are important in the issues they address (slum upgrading and urban sustainability in Thailand; urban safety in Papua New Guinea) but also in their illustration of innovative planning partnerships, and thus offer lessons for development planning oriented towards social inclusion as both means and ends.

### **The Baan Mankong Programme, Thailand**

There are an estimated 5,000+ low income communities across Thailand, constituting a population of approximately 8.25 million (CODI 2009). In Bangkok alone there are more than 1,500 recorded informal settlements, or roughly 300,000 households. Many of these communities are considered ‘illegal’ and subsequently are not entitled to infrastructure and services, and rarely do they enjoy the benefits of waste collection.

The Baan Mankong (‘secure housing’) programme grew out of initiatives in the late 1990s which encouraged greater community organising around upgrading and community-based environmental management. It resulted from a growing frustration with environmental and housing conditions in Bangkok (particularly) and the failure of government directed programmes to improve urban life. Formally initiated by the Thai government in 2003 Baan Mankong is facilitated through the Community Organising Development Initiative (CODI), a unique government-NGO collaborative partnership. CODI’s board consists of a balance of government representatives, community organisations and professionals. In essence CODI acts as a forum between local government, government departments, the municipality and the poor. Its mandate is to more effectively act as a platform for government communication with and support of communities through small loans for upgrading, but has since evolved into an important instigator of community development more generally and thus a ‘meeting ground’ between the State and the urban/rural poor.

As a core objective Baan Mankong seeks to organise communities to bring about improved shelter, living standards and more secure tenure (Boonyabantha 2005). In doing so CODI, through Baan Mankong, channels government funds to community initiatives through infrastructure subsidies and soft housing and land loans. Communities are expected to manage these funds and also contribute their own, in order to realise goals in housing improvement, environmental sustainability, improved services, greater tenure security and

improved health outcomes amongst other objectives relative to need. CODI, as the coordinating body, acts as facilitator in partnering communities with NGOs, academics, professionals, local/government departments and other support agencies to realise their goals. Community strengthening is sought through the establishment of democratic and accountable local organisations which must prioritise needs, manage projects and develop necessary community savings programs. In order to transcend community isolation, wider networks are developed which may include municipal, city, provincial or nationwide alliances. At present there are a number of urban poor networks which share experiences and innovations, and even include international partnerships (e.g. via the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights, and Shack/Slum Dwellers International).

While ostensibly a housing project Baan Mankong has notably shifted the dialogue of State-urban poor relationships. Through the programme communities are provided with the incentives to develop community infrastructure and to use grants to employ people to work with the community, such as architects and engineers etc (of interest, this had led to an organised movement of informal sector builders and labourers *chang chumchon* who are often contracted in community upgrading; CODI 2008:8). The system then is potentially radical in terms of empowering communities, as it encourages the development of community 'people's plans' through organising, identifying needs, and addressing priorities. Eventually these local-level initiatives are intended to form the basis for city plans. The scale and ambition of Baan Mankong has always been impressive, having as a target improved tenure security for 300,000 households in 2,000 poor communities across 200 Thai cities, a figure which represents approximately half of all urban poor communities in Thailand (Boonyabanha 2005:25).

In mid-2009 Baan Mankong had grown to substantial proportions, though still short of these targets. Almost 80,000 households had benefitted from on-site upgrading/reconstruction or reblocking. The majority of tenure negotiations resulted in cooperative land ownership with long term (5+ years) tenure agreements typical. In so doing the Baan Mankong programme has provided the impetus and opportunity for poorer communities to consolidate themselves and to develop into more sustainable settlements.

New relationships between civil society, the State, academia and the urban poor have led to a regeneration of sorts for planning. In Asia's rapidly growing cities the participation of urban poor communities are assertions of citizenship. Baan Mankong offers an alternative vision of

urban sustainability within and beyond Thailand which is inclusive of the poor. Notably, an important reason for success has been in a complimentary commitment of the government sector towards a deepening of democratic processes at the city and national level in support of community-centred innovations.

### **Yumi Lukautim Mosbi Project (YLMP), Port Moresby**

There have been a number of initiatives to address crime in Papua New Guinea, and urban crime in Port Moresby in particular (UN-Habitat 2005). Few have been sustained over time, and none have substantially altered a deteriorating trend in levels of urban safety. In recent years, however, a number of innovative responses have emerged based on a broad spectrum of partnerships and a coalescence of actions. The origins of the Yumi Lukautim Mosbi Project (YLMP) can be traced back several years though its formal launching dates to 2005.

The key message of YLM is ‘A just, safe and secure society for all’. It both pursues crime prevention but also urban safety through linkages between provincial government, law and justice agencies, the private sector and communities most affected by crime. The YLMP is an initiative supported by AusAID and is run under the Law and Justice Sector Program. It is managed by the Urban Safety Advisory Committee of the National Capital District Commission (NCDC) which consists of representatives from the corporate sector, donors, women and youth councils, the church, media, police, local government and community representatives. Its advisory committee is the Law and Justice Sector Working Group. Of its key priorities the primary one is to:

Improve security and safety in urban areas, with Port Moresby to be the first to be addressed. A comprehensive approach to reducing crime that includes more effective agency responses and processing, building better relations with the community and improving corporation to support crime prevention.

In so doing the emphasis is on building coalitions and strengthening formal and informal strategies of law enforcement, dispute resolution, restorative justice and diversion. Consequently in dealing more effectively with crime, YLM is also seeking to consolidate community and city governance and enhance the role of (urban) institutions, planning and the functions of municipal authority.

YLM is characterised by a number of innovative and multi-sectoral strategies. Two points are important here; programmes are fundamentally directed at enhancing safety where individuals (especially women) and communities feel most vulnerable and secondly; opportunities are created for (especially) youth involved in criminal activities, through job creation, community development projects, positive engagement and so on. These tools and strategies are organic, often reflecting opportunity and the building of coalitions willing to support programmes. To date there have been four foundations of YLM:

- *Promotion of sport and youth engagement, particularly through schools and informal settlements*

The Sports and Youth Engagement Project has promoted sport as an option to crime in terms of diversion, but also in linking national sporting bodies to engage youth throughout Port Moresby. It has directly targeted youth in schools and settlements in the most troubled areas. More than 2000 young people have participated in netball, volleyball, martial arts, boxing and rugby competitions as participants or as trained coaches and instructors. Sporting teams promote YLM messages of *Say NO to Crime* and teams have also been mobilised into broader safety enhancement projects, including street cleaning and community awareness regards HIV/AIDS, violence against women and gender issues. Various competitions, between teams representing settlements which previously have been marginalised by sporting bodies have been covered by media, including live telecasts of games.

Mobilising youth into sports has also created sponsorship opportunities for business and a forum for disseminating information to groups which have otherwise remained outside of education and employment-based information channels. The balance of gender opportunity has also challenged young male perceptions and relationships to girls, where boys are expected to support and encourage girls as representatives of the community.

- Reintegration and skills development, which specifically targets the inclusion of private sector involvement, skills development and employment creation

A further key initiative has been to link crime prevention with skills development and partnerships between individuals, communities and the private/corporate sector. An important part of the success of YLM has been in the engagement of the private sector in supporting individuals and communities committed to safety and non-violence. Often it has been through business-community relations where most positive and sustained engagement has occurred, with local government as a facilitating (but not leading) partner. Businesses have been important in the rehabilitation, reintegration and skills development of offenders. In particular, links have been made between a number of businesses to develop work and trade skills of youth in the informal sector and to establish private enterprise in an ongoing (rather than one-off) role in skills development and employment.

This latter initiative has been highly successful, in both providing work for those with little hope of such opportunity, as well as developing a greater pool of workers for business. Just as important, it has created a greater opportunity for partnership between the private sector, government agencies, and communities affected by (and contributing to) crime. In 2008, 30 businesses, ranging from international hotels to government departments and the commercial sector, offered employment places for approximately 523 youths.

- Awareness of urban safety through positive stories, use of media and examples of community initiatives

An important initiative has been to produce and promote positive stories of community efforts in crime reduction and enhancement of public safety in all forms of media - by way of promotion with YLM Logo t-shirts for specific community activities (such as 'Clean and Green No time for Crime'; Say NO to cigarettes & marijuana; I love Mosbi – Don't rubbish my home'). Television 'infomercials' focus on being proud of the city (Port Moresby), respecting oneself and other communities, keeping out of trouble and working with each other. Such adverts feature not professional actors, but police, *raskols* (youth criminals) and members of the community living in and around Port Moresby.

- Community engagement (where communities are encouraged to develop forums which build consensus on needs and seek funding for these initiatives)

A major part of the Yumi Lukautim Mosbi project has been direct community engagement, in particular using greater engagement to create demand-driven responses through engaging communities in crime reduction and urban safety initiatives, defined by that community. To date these identified needs have included music clinics, conflict resolution workshops and farming endeavours. A further innovation has been in creating safe spaces throughout Port Moresby (*Meri Seif Ples/Women's Safe Spaces*) for women escaping from violence in public places as well as at home. Partnered with the Port Moresby Chamber of Commerce and Industry the first patrons of the programme included the New Zealand High Commission and PNG Power.

In addition, residents from a number of communities have been encouraged to engage in community policing and patrols. Over the 2007/8 Christmas period 1280 youths supported police posts in performing neighbourhood watch duties in which participants were rewarded with certificates, but more importantly an opportunity to choose skills development courses with employers. Other youth living in a poor settlement of Port Moresby (6 Mile) have been working with local police in conducting foot patrols and awareness in the busier areas of the community to protect workers being harassed on their way to and from their workplaces. In return the PNG Manufacturers Council offered all 6 Mile youths participating in the project skills development and potential permanent employment.

To a great extent the success of YLM has highlighted the limitations of institution-based urban safety approaches in favour of community-focussed innovations which build partnerships around meeting needs, as defined by those affected by crime as well as perpetrators. In the past there has clearly been a lack of traction in projects which have been wholly 'owned' by government or donors. One of the key reasons for recent successes in YLM has been that communities have a greater stake in directing priorities, and these priorities reflect their actually existing needs. This same philosophy, of sharing ownership and the benefits of change, has also meant more successful partnerships, inclusive of communities, NGOs, the Church, local government and increasingly the private sector. In recognition of these considerable achievements, and level of innovation, the YLMP received a UN-HABITAT Certificate of Excellence, Crime Prevention and Youth at the United Nations Youth symposium in Durban, 2008.

## **Summary & Lessons**



What lessons can be drawn from these examples? The case studies are notably different, and indicate that successful interventions occur when they are specific to their environment. They are successful primarily because they met people's felt needs, and engage individuals and communities in the planning process. Kabeer (2006:70) describes this as 'inclusion by design' arguing that

In the final analysis, the greater the participation of excluded groups in the design of programmes and in the political decision-making processes which impinge of their lives; the less necessary it may be to address their problems in isolation from the rest of the population.

They also have made progress because they have attacked multiple dimensions of exclusion simultaneously. Baan Mankong is primarily an upgrading programme, but it allows for new forms of governance, develops environmental citizenship, encourages community savings, strengthens relationships between urban poor communities and so on. YLM engages 'new' stakeholder relationships which are dynamic and share a common goal (a safer Port Moresby). In both cases planning has been made more relevant to the norms and values of intended beneficiaries. In so doing, these forms of inclusive planning have strengthened both the planning process and deepened democracy. In embedding communities in both the process and outcomes of planning, both the institutions of State and society ultimately benefit.

Social inclusion need not result in the pursuit of one set path of integration into prevailing social and political norms (de Haan 1999). Indeed, an inclusive or open city 'requires the active construction of new ways of living together, new forms of spatial and social belonging and inclusion' (Halfani and Toner 2008: 6). The strengths of the case studies above lie in their transformative and organic nature. That is, societal relations have been enriched through these innovative practices which have sought new ways of realising aims. Indeed, one of the ambitions of social inclusion should be in the generation of new ideas which transform practices of planning. State institutions though still have an important role, in the making of political 'space' for such alternatives to exist or in the active support of such endeavours (see for example recent Australian national initiatives in embedding social inclusion objectives into all government policy; Commonwealth of Australia 2009). The case studies described above have proven resilient and more successful than previous initiatives because they met felt needs of communities; the benefits of greater social inclusion has resulted from the

tangible outcomes of safer communities, employment for youth, cleaner environments, more secure tenure, and greater opportunities to participate in the realisation of alternative planning futures.

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