

# Urban Poor Development Strategies

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His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. Ephesians 3:10-12

## A. Shalom House: A Theoretical Model

The Shalom model of community development below has been used as a theoretical model for an integrated urban poor development strategy. The house represents the church, the people of God. She is the catalyst for change in the slums. The church is founded on the Word of God, the Bible. Shalom is the roof ? it is the goal of the church.

The columns of the house correspond to the four minimum basic needs of the urban poor, viz. health, livelihood, education and housing. The beam binding all the columns is community organizing (CO); it is what provides sustainability. CO creates synergy by combining resources that produce a momentum and power absent with unorganized individuals. An organized community with a corporate personality can access resources or funding not available to individuals or families.

See image attached. (Figure 1)

### 1. Evolution of sustainability

The evolution of the term sustainability culminates with shalom. Sustainability as Wall Street originally used the term was financial sustainability (a defense against dole-outs, where poor borrowers could pay their loans and thus shoulder the costs of money lent). It evolved into ecological sustainability to counter the destructive impact of unregulated business on nature?? carbon emission, deforestation, overuse of pesticides, etc. Then it evolved into social sustainability to give the poor direct access to capital?;because often the microfinance service providers get wealthier each year but the borrowers remain perpetual borrowers. Political sustainability was brought about by the need to view the work from the big picture, realizing that there can be no prosperity without basic human rights??due process, suffrage, etc. Gender sustainability also followed because women perform more than half of the world's labor. The trend is clear. The world seeks for what will work and what will last. The answers are found in the Bible: what will work and last is whatever is in accord with God's will. The conclusion of an old book, *In Search of Excellence*, (1) made this clear years ago. What the 1,000 top corporations had in common were the virtues in Proverbs??pay your laborers just wages, work hard, be honest, save, etc. This is the picture of shalom where there is harmony with God, fellow human beings and nature.

### 2. Definition of success

The author is a founding member of Mission Ministries Philippines, Inc. (MMP).(2) MMP plants churches in the slums of Metro Manila. Peter Wagner taught that the most effective form of evangelism is planting small, new churches. With the present urban trends, urban poor church planting will be the most strategic mission focus for generations to come.

These churches act as catalysts for change in the slums. MMP's definition of success is twofold. On the individual level, success means the poor cease to be just receivers but also become givers.(3) Giving is a good test that the person has been born again. On the corporate level, success means the community is organized to meet common needs.

MMP has tailored its strategy to follow the Shalom model. MMP follows a two year fast-track church planting strategy resulting in a church of about 50 adults, a BB (4) drugstore, grocery for the poor, and a preschool.

The house model is a simple theoretical model, proven through many years of work in the slums that can guide workers in undertaking community interventions.

### 3. Land and Housing

The greatest revolution in land and housing in the Philippines came about with the work of Gawad Kalinga.(5) Habitat for Humanity promoted low cost housing(6) for the poor at a rapid rate of several thousand a year. Habitat's results were quickly overtaken (7) by GK beginning 2005. (8)

The two have a similar approach, but one likely reason for GK's tremendous success is that GK doesn't require the beneficiary to have title over the land where their house will be built. Both GK and Habitat build houses at very small cost; around P100,000 pesos (9) at a minimum of 32 sq. m. (maximum of 60 sq. m.). The beneficiary contributes labor and pays a low monthly amortization of around P300 pesos (10% of real (10) wages and only 3% of the legal minimum wage) just as with Habitat. The amortization is computed at not more than 20% of the family's available income.

The problem with Habitat's requirement of land ownership is that to get an affordable lot, the housing project often has to be offsite where the land is cheaper and more affordable. This means that development occurs in city outskirts where there are no roads, public transport, hospital or schools, and far from places of employment. GK has turned these lands into assets. (11) Instead of viewing their informal nature as unstable, GK, in a paradigm shift, treated them as positive features, thus promoting social harmony by uplifting the dignity of the squatters who, in turn, own up to their responsibility for protecting and preserving the peace and order of the community. A lot of social preparation is needed to make this program succeed and to prepare the people for the eventual accounts payable in their finances, when all of their funds are already committed to absolutely necessary items like food, water, transportation, etc.

### 4. Community Mortgage Program

Complementing the GK initiative is the Community Mortgage Program (CMP), a law passed during President Cory Aquino's time, which provides for the purchase of land by squatters under certain conditions. The Philippines is one of the countries in the world with very good land laws for the poor. The features of the CMP include:

1. The purchase must be with the consent of the owner.
2. The price is not more than the fair market value.
3. The purchaser must be a community association or organization (not individuals or families).
4. The government will advance the purchase price to the owner. Once paid, the owner leaves the picture so the deal is simplified to one between the government and the community association.
5. The community association will pay amortization through government housing agencies like NHMFC (12) or Pag-Ibig at 6% interest per annum over a maximum period of 25 years.

The community association has self-regulating powers, such as the power to expel a recalcitrant member and substitute another family. The project is usually done with the help of Originators who act as middlemen, facilitators, and community organizers. The law grants them a lawful fee and accredits them based on certain qualifications.

The success of the CMP is undeniable. As observed by this author in Tatalon,(13) titling created a stabilizing element outweighing the impact of other forms of community interventions. In just a decade, shacks were replaced with concrete houses and businesses grew. The settlers were more confident to build and invest, because now they owned the land and had secure tenure. (14)

However, the matter of recalcitrant members has proven to be a heartache for urban poor community development workers. Usually 10% of the community becomes recalcitrants. No amount of social preparation can ensure against amortization failure, being declared recalcitrant, and ultimately eviction or replacement.(15) The usual candidates for these evictions are the widows, abandoned mothers, the sick, and the elderly?;precisely the people the church was called to help and protect.

## 5. Political will and urban planning

Housing and land ownership remain a very controversial political issue.(16) The development and location of squatter communities are often the handiwork of unscrupulous politicians. Large squatter communities serve as convenient places for vote buying during elections. Squatter communities balloon when mayors also engage in selling illegal or informal occupancy rights to desperate families. A community can spring up in 24 hours, complete with roads and delineated lots. No industrial zone can survive without these sources of cheap labor, and neither can any politicians win without them.

Ultimately, only a strong political will exercised through wise urban planning will solve squatting. Many of the ultra modern and expensive overland trains running through Metro Manila today could have been built as provincial lines, and at lesser cost since the Philippine National Railroad already owns the land on which the tracks are built. Very few residents would opt to stay in the slums if they had a choice, especially if travel time and cost were the same. (17) A World Bank study has shown the horrendous cost of traffic congestion in Metro Manila in terms of loss of working hours and health costs.

Slum properties are also very expensive.(18) Fires (usually arson) can decimate entire communities overnight. Slum life also means epidemics, bad water, no electrical connection, and floods. Pilfering or electrical power theft is very rampant. The MERALCO(19) partly solved the problem long ago by allowing illegal settlers to legally connect by mass metering without land title or permits. In some slums however, even the minimum documentation cannot be secured, resulting in the filing of criminal charges. (20)

## 6. Livelihood

Only 10% of the total poor population needs capital for business (to go into livelihood) while 90% still need employment??which is hard to come by??causing many to seek employment abroad. There are more than 10 million Filipino Overseas Workers (OFW) mostly employed as domestic helpers and construction workers.(21) These OFWs remit a total of \$14 billion U.S. dollars(22) annually to the Philippines, more wealth generated than the top 10 largest Philippine companies. (23)

When it comes to providing capital for the poor, the challenges are staggering. 90% of livelihood startups fail. Microfinance can only service less than 20% of the bankable poor. (24) What is clear is that microfinance can only do so much. It cannot reach the poorest of the poor (80% of the poor) because the first requirement for a loan is having a business. Still, MMP and other NGOs will engage in these starts up so that the survivors, the 10%, can move up into the microfinance sector, access the microfinance service, and grow. The poor are truly bankable. The microfinance industry standard of 97% repayment worldwide shows this. (25)

## 7. The national strategy for poverty alleviation

The national strategy for poverty alleviation works this way: startups are developed from the poorest of the poor who constitute 80% of total poor. These startups grow to become small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). SMEs nationwide provide 70% of the jobs for the entire Philippines today. Once they become small or medium enterprises, they can now access the microfinance service. (26)

MMP operates a grocery for the poor, which gives a credit line for groceries for sale instead of cash. After a study(27) made on the cash flow of small sari-sari (convenience) stores in the slums, MMP links up these stores to Suy Sing, the largest distributor of grocery products in the Philippines. Suy Sing prices are lower than that of groceries and department stores, and at a minimum purchase of P25,000.00 Suy Sing will deliver anywhere in Metro Manila for free.

MMP charges 2% per month for the loan, adjusted to 1.5% when paid every 15 days. MMP also gets a rebate of 0.02% from Suy Sing credited to MMP directly; the rebate graduates when the purchase increases. The markup pays for overhead costs. The design dispenses with the need for warehouse, delivery vans and salesmen.(28) All the outlets' books are done centrally in MMP, making it competitive with large businesses.(29) The goal of the grocery is to reduce the price of commodities in the slums (microfinance usually increases prices in the slums because of the high interest rates). Also, the program enhances the viability of the sari-sari store by linking it with a cheaper source of goods undergirded with professional and centralized bookkeeping.

## 8. Education

MMP has more than 400 preschools all over Metro Manila and a few in the nearby provinces. MMP believes that education is the best available way out of poverty because it broadens the horizon of opportunities for the poor, compared with microloans or employment.(30) Education means learning to speak English or becoming proficient in IT or computer. BPOs(31) are important developments in our economy and provide an alternative to overseas employment.

One of the threats to the BPO earnings in the Philippines is the constant lowering of the English proficiency among Filipinos. The need to improve the educational system cannot be overstated and could be the only hope for our country's survival in the harsh and highly competitive environment of globalization.

## 9. Health

Due to health reasons, fifty percent of microfinance loans don't get paid?;not just because the borrower got sick but because someone in the extended family did.

The World Health Organization has already determined that providing tap water effectively eliminates more than half of the sickness in the community. (32) When people wash use a tap during washing, germs get carried away and are rinsed, unlike when people use a dipper or tabo. A tabo retains germs. A recent study also shows that more people die from drinking dirty water than from any other causes, like wars or other violence.(33)

Another health intervention is the training of volunteer community health workers. Ninety percent of patients in poor countries never see doctors but are helped by community health volunteers. There is much reason to promote primary health care more than the more prestigious (but largely useless) tertiary health care.

## 10. Botika Binhi

On the average, the poor in the Philippines spend less than 1% of their income for medical or health needs. Medicines are very expensive in the Philippines. This prompted Dr. Emma Palazo, a public health doctor from one of the best Philippine medical schools, to establish what is now a nationwide

organization, Botika Binhi (BB) that provides cheap medicines. BB submitted a proposal to the German Embassy in the early 80s and won first place for most effective delivery of health services (Hamis Award). The Philippine government later copied and disseminated the BB to all parts of the country. The Department of Health awarded her foundation an initial P5 million pesos to promote the concept to all barangays (barrios). After 5 years, another P5 million was given under the auspices of Dr. Flavio as head of DOH and later, Senator of the Philippines.

Today, there are close to a thousand BBs all over the country. It orders more than P7 million worth of generic drugs from local manufacturers and can deliver to BB outlets anywhere in the country for free. The cost of the medicines to the outlets is the same as that of the factory price because BB is a non-profit organization. It acts as a federation, leveraging its size by buying in bulk for all the outlets.

The BBs are owned by the community. It begins with just 5 to 10 mothers, with as little as P500 pesos starting capital and quickly grows in a year to more than 50 mothers, with P10,000 pesos capital. All BBs are run by contributions of the members.(34) The outlets can markup as high as 150% or more, without exceeding the market average price. The government's goal for the BB is to sell at 60% of the market price, but the BB average price is even lower despite the high mark up. This doubles their capital in just a few months time. The BB is also located inside the community, doing away with transportation costs. All the income is used for purchase of medicines and none goes to dividends, patronage or refunds. At the start, they purchase only medicines for the most common sicknesses (cough, fever, pain, infection and diarrhea). As their capital grows, they can also buy medicines for hypertension, tuberculosis(35) and diabetes. The bigger the capital, the more the BB can service the community.

Early in the life of the slum community organization, too much initial funding or responsibility can be damaging. Botika Binhi follows the principle of starting small, allowing management skills to catch up with the increased responsibility, gradually increasing the capabilities of the members.

## B. Biblical framework: the centrality of the church

The model above must be understood within a biblical framework. This framework emphasizes the centrality of the church in development or transformation.

The church is at the center of God's plan of redemption. The mission of the church is transformation, which is the institution of justice and righteousness in a fallen world. This transformation begins inside the church and is modeled by the church.

Today however, transformation is mainly being carried out by believers via parachurch organizations or NGOs. The call in today's world is for the church to accomplish transformation or holistic ministry without requiring that this transformation be first implemented in or demonstrated by the church.(36) The sad conclusion is that Christians have given up on the church ever becoming a model for transformation.

### 1. Gospel good news to the poor (37)

The gospel is not merely receiving Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.(38) We are saved not only to Christ but also to a family, a community??the church. It is in the church that one experiences the social, economic, and political dimensions of the gospel. These dimensions (39) are what make the gospel good news to the poor. (40)

The gospel is the people of God demonstrating the Kingdom. The center of the gospel is the reign of God. The message of God to the world is this: "Look at my people, they obey my commands, and I have blessed them. They share their wealth and the poor are cared for. They forgive each other and enjoy peace. If you want to be blessed in the same way, join the church by submitting yourselves to Jesus Christ." The church thus is central both to the gospel and to transformation.

If transformation does not work in the church, we have no business exporting it to the outside world.(41) When the church is no longer central to redemption, mission has already failed. (42)

When the church is not leading transformation, Christians will struggle with making the gospel whole (holistic). When the church is living out the Kingdom within, social action need not be balanced by evangelism or evangelism balanced by social action. When transformation is done from within the church and spills over to society, it is naturally evangelistic, because the Kingdom is possible only among a people who are redeemed, indwelt with the Holy Spirit, who have given up their attachment to worldly treasures. Thus, the only way to experience the gospel is to be born again. The Kingdom is not possible without the rebirth. The Kingdom makes rebirth imperative. But today, Kingdom and rebirth are easily separated. One can stand without the other! The gospel of this generation says we can be born again without living out or experiencing Kingdom life.

Evangelism not supported by a church that lives out the Kingdom is a mockery of the gospel. The person saved will be at a loss to define the social dimensions of the gospel. We have passed from the period when the need was for a balance between social action and evangelism. The need today is for an authentic church living as the Messianic community where God reigns in their midst. The issue is no longer holism but authentic community life.

## 2. Church herself is good news

The church does not only preach the good news, she is good news herself. She, the church, was the greatest revolution in the history of mankind. When the church was formed, the distinction between male, female, Jew, gentile, poor, rich, alien, citizen, slave, free, etc., was removed.

In addition, the church also instituted economic equality. It was a relative, seasonal and voluntary equality. These social and economic equalities instituted in the church ultimately led to the dismantling of the Roman social caste and hierarchy.

## 3. Poverty is not the problem

Poverty is not the problem. Greed is. Deuteronomy 15 introduced the idea of sharing in order to eradicate poverty. Jesus did not quote from this Scripture to prove that poverty will never go away. In context, he was saying that poverty will not disappear because God's own people will not share. The premise of the new social order in Deuteronomy 15 is found in verse 4: "there shall be no poor among you." Despite a very extensive promise of blessings, sprinkled with some warnings, God's people still refused to share. There is enough food to feed the whole world; people just simply don't care.

When we define poverty as the problem, we are putting the pressure on the poor. (43) If greed is the problem then the pressure will be on the rich. God's attitude to the poor is proof that poverty is not the problem: the poor are rich in faith and they are blessed, being heirs of the Kingdom. God however condemns the rich: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God (Matt. 19:24)."

## 4. No bias for the poor

There is no bias for the poor in the Bible. God sees rich and poor alike, sinners needing salvation. The problem is simply that God will always find it difficult explaining the Kingdom to the outside world when in the church, the rich live with their wealth unmindful of many poor in their midst (not just among the Philippine churches but also the rich church in America in relation to the poor church in the Philippines or Africa). It is therefore imperative that the church has the rich and poor together.

It is the rich who need the poor. The rich must seek solidarity with the poor in order that their spirituality will be authentic. I John 3 says the spirituality of the rich is dependent on the way they treat the poor.(44)

Any focus on Christian discipleship which consistently neglects the needs of the poor is a defective form of discipleship. Any spirituality that misses the poor is inadequate, deficient, and needs correction. ? Roberta Hestenes

## C. Conclusion

### 1. A united church

Two things need to be attended to immediately. One is the unity of the church. The church worldwide has to become one as Jesus prayed. Globalization(45) is forcing us to work together and cooperate to solve problems only a united church can solve.

In addition, the church needs to be united by bringing the rich and the poor together. We have separated the poor from the rich Christians. This way we need not be bothered by the scathing accusations of James about discriminating against the poor. We also need not worry about economic equality advocated by Paul and John which needs to be instituted inside the church, where the poor are cared for.

### 2. A poor church

To have the rich and poor together, the church, as Thomas Merton urged, should give up her desire for wealth and power. With so much wealth and power, the church has lost her voice, no longer able to speak to the world about greed and injustice. Her wealth and power compels her to protect the status quo which allows her to be wealthy and powerful, the same status that also exploits and oppresses the poor.

The church must seek to be poor and preach the gospel to the poor (Luke 4.18). Paul gave the pattern for the church??by the grace of God, ?Jesus who though he was rich, became poor in order to make others rich? (2 Corinthians 8:9). Without any vested interest in the present social order, the church can speak freely about world trade, minimum wage and migrant labor, pornography, war and other issues. But capitalism and materialism(46) have co-opted her gospel and she is now bad news to the poor.

The role of the church is not to help the poor, nor is the Kingdom a political agenda for solving poverty.(47) Her role is to showcase the Kingdom inside herself as a community where God reigns, as seen by the solidarity between the rich and the poor, a church that celebrates jubilee,(48) working ever onwards to shalom.

© The Lausanne Movement 2010Tom Peters and Robert H. Waterman, published 1982, a study about what made the top 1,000 corporations of the world successful.Mission Ministries Philippines, Inc., led by Dr. Corrie de Boer, has over 400 preschools and plants 3 churches a year in the slums of Metro Manila. It has more than 40 staff, most of whom are from the urban poor. Its goal is to align its church planting with the elements of world movement dynamics (see David Garrison on Church Planting Movements) in order to take advantage of the working of the Holy Spirit?;fast, economical, led from below or self-led, widespread, impactful and sustainable.Quote borrowed from Father Ben Beltran, SVD. In the slums, the poor find it very easy to join Bible studies or attend church, but giving shows a radical transformation for people so used to just surviving day to day.Botika Binhi, is discussed below. Botika is a word derived from Spanish that means pharmacy.Gawad Kalinga, <http://www.gk1world.com>Low cost is above P250, 000 pesos while socialized is below that. The value includes both land and house. In the CMP socialized housing, the maximum loan for both house and land is P160, 000 pesos.GK?s goal is 700,000 homes by 2010.GK is now being implemented in many poor countries all over the world. Its key success feature is volunteerism and networking (uniting various sectors for a common cause).Exchange rate of US\$1 to PhP46, April 2010.Real wages are those earned by domestic helpers?;laundry women, household helps, stay-in cooks, menial labor workers, tricycle

drivers and street vendors. See also the De Soto experiment in Peru. De Soto in two books, *The Other Path* and *The Mystery of Capital* showed that land value increased when titling was increased or facilitated specially for the poor, in turn unlocking assets that can now circulate in the economy. His theory was that the reason capitalism flourishes in the West and fails elsewhere is due to the disparate access to capital. Although poor people in the developing world have assets, these assets cannot be transformed into capital because they are locked in the informal economy where they cannot be used as collateral for loans. Hernando de Soto, *The Mystery of Capital*, 13, 33-34, cited in Atuahene, 766. National Home Mortgage Finance Corporation. Located in Quezon City, Philippines, the squatters defended their rights ferociously against armed goons sent by the former dictator President Marcos. Hundreds died in the struggle. After the enactment of the CMP during the administration of Cory Aquino, the land was awarded to the occupants, thus paving the way for continuous growth, founded mainly on the security of tenure provided by titling. According to the NHMFC, the average loan amount under CMP from 1989 to 2000 was P28,039 pesos per beneficiary. That amount is but 15% of the average loan amount per beneficiary of the other government housing programs. Moreover, CMP's average monthly amortization of P185 pesos easily makes it the most cost-effective government program to allow land access for the poor. Cacio, *The Human Settlements Tools*, 8. A possible solution is for the community workers or the church to recruit sponsors for these potential recalcitrants. These sponsors who will pay only in case the potential recalcitrants cannot, to prevent eviction of the most needy and helpless. With urbanization, the biggest single factor critical to our survival is urban planning. The poor will need housing, livelihood, health services and education to survive. There will never be enough land for everyone. At the rate of 30% urban migration and 2.3% urban birth rate, cities will double their population in just 3 years. This will mean more pollution, garbage, epidemics, crime, congestions, traffic jams and shortages of water, housing, schools, hospitals, etc. It takes 2 hours to get to work, the same time to get to Bicol or Pangasinan on a fast train. Given that opportunity, most slum dwellers will opt to live in the provinces, enjoy the fresh air, raise chickens and vegetables and own their own home, compared with the dismal condition in the slums, epidemics, criminality, and land tenure instability. A 100 sq.m. lot in the city cost more than P200,000 pesos (US\$4,000 dollars) for the rights only, not the title. Sometimes the MERALCO, a private utility company in Manila given a franchise by the government to provide electrical power, frustrated with the power pilferage, will send disguised agents to offer legal connections. When the poor families fill up the form (name, address, etc.); the information needed for the filing of a criminal case?; they will wake up several months later with literally hundreds of warrants of arrest being served in their community. A mad scramble ensues, with everyone fleeing in all directions from arresting officers. South Africa slums have long ago adopted prepaid cards for electrical connections, which solves the problem of power theft or bureaucratic red tape which are difficult hurdles for the poor who want to get legal connections. Dr. Jojo Remigio, *Diaspora*, lecture given 12 February 2010. The government must be careful about this. Half of the money actually goes to the malls, which is why during the recession, SM (a domestic corporation which owns most of the malls in the Philippines) topped the most profitable company list, with increased net profits during a bad year, 2009. The other half of the billions of dollars of remittances goes to housing. Filipinos love to buy a home as an investment for the future not realizing that a house is not always an asset. It can be a liability due to monthly costs for maintenance, repairs and annual taxes. These OFWs need to be taught to buy properties that generate revenues, e.g. when rented out, adding to their cash position. The government should note that most of these purchases are for 5 or 10 year amortizations, while the job tenures abroad are usually just a year. The default potential can result in an economic crisis of a national scale. The Philippines currently is 4th in total world remittance from overseas workers. Ahead are China, India and Mexico. Mexico is just a doorstep away from America which gives it an advantage the Philippines does not have. China and India are super big populations which would not make them comparable with the Philippines. In short, the Philippines, comparatively speaking, gets the highest overseas remittance in the world. The poor population can be ranked like a pyramid, with the top 20% being bankable or having a business that can utilize microloans. The bottom 80% are not bankable poor because they have no existing business and will need simply employment. The microfinance will not go to them. Start-ups fail 90% of the time. Professor Mohammad Yunus, founder of

Grameen and Nobel Prize Winner even boasts of a 100% repayment. Incidentally, effective interest rate of microfinance can go up as high as 45% per annum on two annual loan cycles. This cost is passed on to the buyers in the slums who are likely the poorest of the poor. Australia provides mentoring for new businesses to ensure a higher percentage of survival. Most sari-sari stores buy in Metro Manila from SM, Cherry, Pure Gold, or Makro (biggest department or grocery stores in the country). They all buy from Suy Sing. The sari-sari store borrows from money lenders at the 75% or 792% interest rate (borrow P500 and pay back P600 in a month period). They need to borrow a minimum of P10,000 pesos for their regular bi-monthly purchase. Then they take a taxi to bring the goods home which costs around P200 pesos. All these come up as overhead costs which they pass on to the poorer members of their community. This follows the classic model of Wal-Mart's just in time delivery. All purchases with Suy Sing are computerized, including logistical data such as place and date of delivery, items bought, and their respective prices. There are many studies showing that overseas employment has negative effects on the family. There are thousands of cases of broken marriages among overseas workers' families, when the lonely worker overseas finds a new mate (not unlike their elite counterpart in the expatriate/consultants community which has one of the highest rates of divorce). Children of overseas workers also tend to have less motivation for work or study and a few engage in drugs or truancy mainly because of the absence of a father figure in the home, someone who can discipline the kids. It may be similar to oil producing countries where the poor are getting poorer each time despite the vast oil revenues. Most oil producing countries are also authoritarian (not democratic). Oil does not appear to be a blessing in most cases. The second greatest income earner of the country, next to overseas employment, is Business Process Outsourcing. These are foreign jobs made available locally. They employ hundreds of thousands in call centers, and as medical transcribers, graphics animators and search engine maximizers. They are also not immune from the social ills plaguing OFWs. These jobs are mostly available to younger workers or fresh graduates and most are troubled by drugs, alcohol and sexual promiscuity, due mainly to the sudden affluence. Not all slums are poor. Maybe only 15% per cent are really poor. Most have take home pay higher than the minimum wage because the slum dwellers do not pay rent, while occupying prime lots close to good transportation or public facilities like schools or hospitals. They also don't pay electricity or water (they steal them). MMP has a rapid assessment technique: to determine if a slum community is really poor, the ratio of shops or stores should be about one shop to a hundred houses. Too many shops mean the stores can survive because they have enough customers, and customers mean they have money to buy, and having money means they have jobs. Besides the rapid assessment technique, one can conduct a survey, not by asking what their incomes are (they never know) but asking what their expenses are. A major expense usually is water. Slums with no water connections from the utility company have to buy water from tanker trucks that come daily. The cost is 3 times what this author pays and the water delivered through the tap where the author's middle class family can take showers and sometimes even drink directly from the tap. The water of the poorest of the poor is stored in drums (like the petroleum drums) and are susceptible to many kinds of disease (E coli). The water costs plus the constant water contamination resulting in disease contribute to making the poor even poorer. Mike Pflanz, "World Water Day: Dirty water kills more people than violence," says UN, <http://www.csmonitor.com>, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2010/0322/World-Water-Day-Dirty-water-kills-more-people-than-violence-says-UN> (accessed March 25, 2010). The author has done this many times and the poor are always surprised that the author is asking money from them for their membership contribution. They always expect outsiders or service providers to be the one to give them money. Although the UN provides all medicines for tuberculosis free for all patients, our experience in over 25 years of work with the urban poor is that the drugs are still not that available to all. The policy of the Department of Health is to scrimp on the distribution of the medicines, so that only to those who are actively contagious (using the sputum test) are given medicines, even if one is positive for TB in the x-ray. The church must live out the Kingdom and demonstrate the Kingdom. That means implementing social and economic equality, as well as, brotherhood and peace. We must not assume that our gospel is good news to the poor. For centuries our gospel has been bad news to the poor. In the colonial period, it has marched side by side with the Conquistadors who took the land of the natives by force and raped their women. The church has been linked directly with the world's greatest

atrocities. Martin Luther gave the theological justification for the concentration camps when he wrote that Jews should be exterminated (which is now displayed in the Holocaust museum in Washington D.C.). Apartheid in South Africa was carried out with biblical passion, the white colonizers believing themselves to be the new Israel and Africa the new promised land, and seeing the black natives as the Canaanites whom God ordered exterminated. This same theology pervaded the thinking of the white colonizers of the New World, America, which resulted in the almost complete annihilation of the First Nations or Native Americans. The church has long been identified with the rich and powerful, protecting the status quo which oppresses and exploits the poor. This is a western habit of reducing the gospel to its barest minimum while the Hebrew works the opposite way, of complicating (integrating and creating whole) the gospel. Jesus made sure his gospel was good news to the poor in Luke 4. After the declaration of his mission, he began to enumerate the social, economic and political dimensions of this gospel, all of which are good news to the poor. Without community, Onesimus would have simply been saved to Christ; he would not be accepted into the new social order where Philemon receives him back not just as a slave, but also as a brother - and even worships with him as an equal. The main reason why the church seems useless in the face of social justice is that our gospel in the Philippines came from the American church of the early 1900. The American gospel of that period (and maybe still today) had no wherewithal to address social structural evils like corruption. The American church sees poverty as merely a personal ethical problem and the solution is simply sheer hard work on the premise that everyone has equal opportunity to rise from poverty if only they work hard, just as the middle class Americans today did. This is well illustrated in the book by Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith* where 2,000 respondents chosen for being evangelicals were asked if racism existed in America. Half of the respondents, who were white, said no, while the other half, who were black, said yes. The main cause of poverty in the Philippines as reported by the World Bank is graft and corruption and no amount of hard work will solve that. Filipinos who migrate to America are as hard working as any of the Americans in America and earn as much (nurses work three shifts earning more than US\$7,000 dollars a month). Clearly, the Philippine gospel needs to be re-examined, to fit it with tools that can address these social structural evils. The American gospel is individualistic and discourages community, which is critical in urban poor development. It also carries a scientific bias which cannot tolerate the tension of contradictions. The life of the poor is full of contradictions?; they worship a mighty God and they are being evicted from their homes, a loving God and they watch as their child dies slowly because they cannot afford to buy medicines, and a God who provides and tonight they will go to bed without dinner as usual. John Stott is right. We have a poor theology of church. Today, we have arrived at a state where we have church-less missions and mission-less churches. Many think the poor are lazy or are financial burdens. Often, evangelizing the poor is a means to inculcate somehow good moral values among them in order to lessen the criminality in the neighborhood. All these are wrong. Statistics shows that the poor lift up the burden of the rich more than the other way around. The Philippines has more than 10 million overseas workers (mainly domestic helpers, construction workers, nurses and seamen), and they remit over US\$14 billion dollars annually to the country, which is more than the net income of the top ten Philippine corporations. The poor are also good borrowers. The industry standard of 97% repayment in the microfinance industry is enough testimony to the bankability of the poor. In the SSS report, the greatest repayment of loans is among the poor and the highest default is among the rich borrowers. Asian Institute of Management, one of the top business schools of South East Asia, published a study many years ago that showed that the core poor (poorest of the poor) have three jobs? which meant to survive they have to work three times the normal. The poor too give more than the rich. In over 25 years of work among the poor, this author has witnessed the poor Christians giving easily more than 50% of their gross income while the rich struggle with giving 10% of their net income. The rich need the poor, not vice versa. There are more than 300 commands in the bible about helping the poor. I John 3 questions the spirituality of the rich this way: if anyone has a surplus of the world's goods and finds a brother (in the church) in need and does not provide for him, does the love of Christ abide in him? The way we treat the poor authenticates our spirituality. There are 3 trends today: globalization, urbanization and marginalization. Globalization has made it imperative for everyone to work together and cooperate, or else. Urbanization means most of the world now live in cities and most of these live in slums. This has altered radically the face of cities. In some cities, there are more migrant people than local born. In that case, the typical western, postmodern city has

become a majority pre-modern city populated by animists who don't speak English. Migrant workers will be the central issue facing the church for generations to come. Marginalization means the cities will rule, now that more people live in cities than in rural areas. And marginalization means as more globalization and urbanization happen, the gap between the rich and the poor will grow wider and create a potential time bomb that someday will split our planet. Cities will be the new battleground; future wars will no longer be waged between states and nations, but between rich and poor inside cities. The pioneering edge of missions is no longer the tribes but tribes inside these big and modern cities. The church must resist the present social order. Capitalism thrives because of the pyramid principle: it takes a million people working and living like slaves to build a pyramid or to sustain the lifestyle of the family of the Pharaoh. The Indian caste system works the same way. The reality is this: only a few will enjoy wealth (today the rich 20% own 80% of all the wealth of the world) and no matter what one does, most of the people of the world will always remain poor and die poor. For the American middle class to enjoy their wealth, factories have to move to India and China to take advantage of cheap labor. In addition, stricter enforcement of migration laws, border crossings and visas are instituted to ensure the vast majority of these so called "slaves" do not enter this isolated and artificial paradise, and ruin the pyramid arrangement. The Roman Catholic Church is wrong about the preferential option for the poor. She interprets it as a political agenda to eliminate poverty from the face of the earth, but allows her to keep her wealth. The option should mean the church gives up her wealth and seek to be poor with the poor, in order to be in solidarity with the poor. Debts are canceled, prisoners set free, land made to lie fallow, and foreclosed lands redeemed for free and returned to their original owners.