



# Different Folks,

# 3 Different Strokes

There are many ways to skin a cat. Similarly, there are various paths to urbanization and there are diverse ways of treading these paths. A look at eight cities though show some similarities in how local government units (LGUs) deal with the challenges and changes that go with urbanization.

Some cities urbanized because of their strategic locations, others because of national government mandate. There were those whose urbanization and progress were largely dependent upon one firm or one industry, which led to lessons about expanding one's economic base.

With urbanization looming in the horizon, some resorted to metropolitan arrangements, others employed participatory governance. Many realized the need to make their local revenue generation more aggressive.

## At the right place, at the right time

Lipa, Tagum, and Zamboanga City owe their urbanization to their strategic locations. Lipa is only one and a half hours away from Metro Manila and thirty minutes away from Batangas City, where an international port is located. Tagum is at the crossroads of two progressive areas. It is the doorway to the northern regions of Mindanao and Davao City. Zamboanga City is the gateway to Southwestern Mindanao. Their locations jumpstarted their economic growth.

For Lipa, which gets the spillover of development from Metro Manila and Batangas City, its centralized location makes it an ideal financial center of Region IV, with the number of banks increasing steadily. Being at the crossroads, Tagum is the trading center for gold, agricultural products and other services. On the other hand, Zamboanga City, with its port facilities, is the hub of Southwestern Mindanao for trade and transportation.

Their locations made them fertile ground for investments and trade. Livelihood opportunities became abundant, attracting migrants seeking for greener and better pastures. These paved the way for urbanization.

## On the spotlight

The national government agenda can influence urbanization trends. The branding of Mindanao as “the land of promise” and the inclusion of Bohol in the Philippine Tourism Master Plan are just a couple of examples. These brought Zamboanga City and Tagbilaran into the spotlight.

### SOCIAL WELFARE

## Meeting Needs, Building Hopes

Public office is public service. Meeting the needs of the various sectors in a city or municipality delegates a big responsibility to administrators.

In Iloilo City, the City Social Welfare and Development Office (CSWDO) carries six major functions: (1) day care services, (2) nutrition program, (3) emergency assistance program, (4) practical skills development and job placement, (5) self-employment assistance, and (6) other special social services.

Much of the programs of the CSWDO have benefited children ages 6 and below. With the help of the World Bank Early Childhood Care and Development (ECD) Project, CSWDO continues to improve day care services and nutrition programs in various barangays. As of April 2004, there were 251 day care centers in the city. Only 25 out of the 180 barangays in the city do not have day care centers, a big improvement from 32 in 2002.

Another big chunk of the budget is the emergency assistance program, which amounted to P5.136 million in 2003. Victims of calamities, accidents, and squatter families, which need to be relocated avail of the assistance.

The CSWDO also extends its hands to the street children and the out-of-school-youths in the city through scholarship programs and leadership trainings among others.

Meanwhile, Zamboanga City has a unique experience in providing social services. Among those the city government is working on are the less privileged and marginalized deportees from Malaysia.

The One-Stop Shop Crisis Assistance Center was established to assist repatriates in the processing and documentation of travel employment papers, including the issuance of free passports.

On the other hand, the Regional Disaster Coordinating Council continues to implement the necessary program of action for the “halaws” not only in Zamboanga but throughout the region.

The city government is also addressing the health and education needs of the migrants’ children.





Tagbilaran and Zamboanga's image became that of "a place to be" for tourism and a better life, respectively, for tourists and migrants alike.

With the government promoting Mindanao, migrants trooped to Zamboanga City. This spurred economic activities in the city and lured crowds of transients. However, the ethnic strife in Mindanao and the worsening peace and order situation in the area has tarnished its image as "the land of promise".

On the other hand, the development of Tagbilaran's feature as the gateway to Bohol became one of the province's top priorities. Various infrastructure developments were undertaken to create the right tourism atmosphere. Compared with Zamboanga, wherein the campaign lured people to become permanent settlers, the campaign for Tagbilaran hopes to attract tourists into the province of Bohol, which boasts of a good many natural attractions.

### Vulnerability of one-firm cities

Iligan had a phenomenal net migration of 14.5% because of the livelihood opportunities that its major industries offered, particularly, the National Steel Corporation (NSC). These industries pushed Iligan to industrialize with many Iliganons, even the LGU, relying on these industries for livelihood. When many of these industries shut down, including NSC, it brought with it the economy of Iligan. This compelled its residents to look for jobs elsewhere. Iligan City's population growth rate of barely one percent (0.93) during this crisis was attributed to outmigration. More residents were leaving Iligan during this time with a net migration of negative 9%.

Olongapo suffered the same experience as Iligan whose urbanization was brought about by beefing up the support services needs of the US military facility, was ravaged when the military bases were closed down. This was worsened by the eruption of Mt.

#### REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

### Promoting Vasectomy in Tagum

Migration played a significant role in the city's rapid urbanization in the early 80s during the gold rush in the Davao region but no doubt the relatively high population growth rate increase presents an overwhelming challenge for the city government in supplying adequate basic services to its constituents.

Realizing that resources can hardly keep up with the growing demand, the local government embarked on population management programs to influence the tempo of population growth. Aside from premarriage counseling and making artificial family planning devices available at the City Health Office, the city government is encouraging males to voluntarily undergo a vasectomy. The City Health Office was tasked to administer the program while the surgical procedure was carried out by the Davao Provincial Hospital, charged against the city's annual contribution to the provincial hospital.

## THE ADOLESCENT-FRIENDLY HEALTH SERVICES NETWORK

## More is Better

A bleak future apparently awaits those who are touted to be the hope of it.

A number of studies show that figures on unwanted pregnancies, abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, and drug addiction continue to soar among the youth who comprised one-fourth of the country's total population. Adolescence is a critical period in a person's life. It is a time when young people discover themselves as individuals and establish life-long patterns of adult behavior and relationships. Unfortunately, many young people go through this period without information or skills they need to make responsible decisions.

The public and private sectors have long been addressing this problem on the youth. However, most of the programs fail because they tend to work independently. They fail to recognize that the interrelatedness of the causes should bring about a holistic solution.

The national government has recently delegated to the local government units (LGUs) the problem on the booming population, an offshoot of poor reproductive health knowledge and practices. The LGUs are now in a very influential position to spearhead programs for their constituents. Interestingly, however, programs nowadays consider the problem as part of the solution—the youth.

### Not only one

In 2003, the Save the Children Federation (SCF) based in Manila launched a network of adolescent-friendly health centers. It was piloted in Las Piñas, Parañaque, and Taguig. The network aims to ensure better delivery of a comprehensive package of quality reproductive and sexual health information to the Filipino youth.

Emphasizing the role of networking, it pools together government agencies, LGUs, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), and most important—the parents and youth organizations. The network ensures the quality of delivered services through six standards: (1) trained health service providers, (2) adequate space and service, (3) youth involvement, (4) sufficient privacy and confidentiality, (5) availability of referrals, and (6) information, education, and communication materials.

All these actions, however, have to thrive in a supportive policy environment. Hence, on top of its priority, the network conducts advocacy activities among local government officials for them to allocate funds, create resolutions, and support clinics focusing on adolescent reproductive and sexual health.

### Bringing back hope

The lifeline of the network relies on building on its human resources. The network is proud of having trained more than 100 nurses, midwives, and barangay health workers in handling and treating adolescent clients.

A core group of trainers, the first to undergo training, have been conducting these training courses for their colleagues. They have also served as models, mentors, and coaches to fellow service providers.

In the little time the network has been operating, it already has taken big leaps as more organizations continue to link up.

It may still take time for alarming figures carried by studies on the Filipino youth to drop. But the experience of the Adolescent-Friendly Health Services Network definitely proves that it pays to work with partners.



Pinatubo, resulting in outmigration in the early 90s. The population grew by barely 1.45% annually starting in 1991.

Faced with the dilemma of “deurbanization”, Iligan chose to reinforce its tax collection and cultivate its neglected agriculture and tourism. Notable was Iligan's effort to draw on the participation of its residents in dealing with the crisis. Olongapo, on the other hand, took advantage of its Subic Bay Freeport and converted the US military facility to industrial

parks, thus reviving the city's economy. Employment rate and jobs considerably increased.

## TEAM

Metropolitan arrangements are the wave of the future. More and more urban areas are realizing the cost-effectiveness of planning together and pooling their resources with other LGUs to improve their basic services delivery across city borders. These





metropolitan arrangements highlight the importance of cooperation between and among the different LGUs involved.

This is clear in the cases of Metro Iloilo and Metro Cebu. In both cases, Iloilo City and Cebu City are the core

cities. Due to their rapid urbanization, their neighboring cities and municipalities experience the spillover effects of their developments.

People attracted to the jobs and opportunities these urban centers offer also chose to live in the nearby cities

and municipalities. In addition, the neighboring cities and municipalities' nearness to the core cities make them attractive to investments and trade. These are the positive spillover effects.

As the neighboring cities and municipalities urbanize as well, they also experience urbanization's negative effects. Pressures on the water supply become evident. Problems in garbage disposal and solid waste management set in, with the increasing volume of wastes and growing lack of space for dumps. Housing also becomes a problem as the squatter population soars.

In the case of Iloilo City and Cebu City, they signed memoranda of agreement with their respective neighbor cities. Both are now part of metropolitan development councils. Iloilo City, along with its neighbor LGUs Pavia, Leganes, San Miguel, and Oton, is now part of the



Metropolitan Iloilo Development Council (MIDC). Together, they compose Metro Iloilo.

On the other hand, Cebu City is part of the Metropolitan Cebu Development Council. With it are its three neighbor cities (Mandaue, Lapu-Lapu, and Talisay) and six other municipalities. Together they form Metro Cebu.

Organizing these metropolitan development councils helps address the problems associated with rapid urban growth, which are experienced by all member LGUs. Metro Cebu and Metro Iloilo have recognized that through cooperation they can provide certain urban services more efficiently and effectively. After all, Together Everyone Achieves More (TEAM).

## Echoing the true needs of the folks

Any effort in handling urbanization is ineffective if it does not mirror the real concerns of the people. Lipa, Iloilo, Tagum, Iligan, and Olongapo know this well as they explore participatory approaches in their governance.

Tagum's City Council teamed up with *purok* leaders in visiting barangays and other activities to keep an eye on implementing ordinances passed. The City Council also took the initiative of educating its *purok* leaders on legal matters.

Iligan moved a step higher with its public consultations before formulating its land use and midterm plans. It expanded its efforts by requiring barangays to come up with their own barangay development plan (BDP) before they could get their share of the city budget. In coming up with the BDP, the barangays employ participatory resource appraisal to uncover the needs of their constituents.

### REVENUE GENERATION

## Getting More to Do More

Money makes the world go round, especially cities.

Revenue generation has always been one of the key concerns of any city administration to keep it operating and ensure the delivery of services to its constituents.

In Lipa City, revenue generation in the past 10 years may seem to be a roller coaster ride. Nevertheless, it managed to bounce back especially in 2002 when income posted a growth rate of 15%. In 2003, it reached PhP422 million.

Part of the city government's success was due to amendments made to its Revenue Code to generate additional income. Aside from tax amendments, the city government also invested in computerization of its collection system. This also gave birth to the one-stop shop project for faster transaction and issuance of permits.

A user's fee called Environmental Management Fee (EMF) has also been imposed on households for the city's comprehensive waste disposal and management system.

Lipa City's effort to improve its revenue collection was not left unnoticed. In 2000 and 2003, the city government received recognition for being first in the collection of RPT citywide in Region IV. In addition, it was one of the awardees in the "best in tax collection efforts" category in 2002.

Tagum City is getting the right amount of tax, not imposing new ones. Aside from tax mapping and the one-stop shop, the city government deploys a revenue task force, which visits establishments and bring the renewal process right at their doorstep.

Tagum City officials definitely know how to take care of business. They recently enacted a "Code for Economic Enterprises" which codifies and refines the various ordinances governing its economic enterprise. Alongside is the formation of the Economic Enterprises Regulatory Board that ensures and oversees the effective and efficient management of the enterprises.

Getting more and saving more money seems to work in Tagbilaran City.

The city's expenditure is decreasing in recent years (within 45-55% cap for 2000-2003).

The city's aggressiveness in tax collection is evident in the increase of the locally sourced revenues from PhP71.6 million in 1999 to PhP101.6 million in 2003.

True to the idea that taxes do mean improved services, Iloilo City's collection of 1% additional property taxes amounting to PhP56.5 million went to its Special Education Fund (SEF). Moreover, an increased collection of RPT in 2003 which resulted in a surplus enabled the City to supplement the budget for the Iloilo City School Board in 2004.

## No Goliath

How the Quezon City government was able to solve its mammoth budget deficit through improved tax administration

A ballooning revenue deficit and debt may have been his greatest challenge when he was elected mayor of the largest city in Metro Manila in 2001.

Now on to his fourth year as Quezon City's top official, Feliciano Belmonte Jr. is proud to have solved the problem and paints a bright future of the city.

Together with city treasurer Victor Endriga, Belmonte improved the city's tax administration through a "carrot and stick" approach.

The "sticks" are direct measures to increase tax collection. These include strict monitoring of delinquent payers and property auctions; submission by business establishments of detailed financial statements and prerequisite permits; and direct withholding of taxes from the city's contractors.

On the other hand, the "carrots" were measures in the form of incentives and services to encourage city constituents to pay their dues on time. "Outstanding" taxpayers were even recognized by the mayor in a ceremony.

Within 18 months at the helm, Belmonte was able to solve the city's fiscal problem. From PhP2.3 billion in 2001, own-source revenue rose to PhP3.9 billion in 2002. The city even closed the year 2002 with a surplus of PhP0.5 billion.

Apparently, the city government's solution to the seemingly insurmountable fiscal problem was not just by increasing tax rates. More importantly, it is exercising a strong political will and creating a conducive environment for all taxpayers in one of the highly urbanized cities in the country.

## EDUCATION

### Free to Learn

The best way to empower people is through education.

Some city governments, despite their many concerns, extend as much assistance to what could be the greatest investment they could do for the youth. This is by providing them, especially the less fortunate, free education.

The Lipa City Public College (LCPC) operated by the city government offers free education to poor yet deserving students of Lipa City and nearby towns.

The city government also ensures the improvement of the delivery of basic education. In collaboration with Synergia Foundation, De La Salle Lipa and Department of Education through the City Schools Division, it implements "Project K" which is short for "*Karunungan para sa Kinabukasan ng mga Kabataan.*"

Funded by the Ford Foundation, the project aims to improve the quality of primary education particularly the reading proficiency of Grades I-IV pupils. Specifically, it aims to assess the quality of primary education in reading proficiency; determine areas for strategic intervention; implement reforms in teacher preparation, teaching methods, curriculum, and instructional materials; and devise a mechanism for sustaining the efforts identified in the first two objectives and for generating resources for possible replication and expansion of the project.

The project started in 2002 and will run until 2006.

In the case of Iloilo City, education also remains the top priority. The city government provides scholarships to deserving yet financially incapable students to pursue college or enrol in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) courses. The Technical Institute of Iloilo City provides free technical and vocational education to children of poor families.



Public consultation is also the tool of choice of Iloilo City. In 1998, the LGU got the public's participation in coming up with ways to combat

urbanization issues. A series of planning workshops was conducted to come up with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) for 1998 to

2010. Various sectors that include the academe, NGOs, people's organizations, church, banking institutions, business clubs, civic clubs and other professional clubs were actively involved in these planning workshops. The CLUP was also formulated in close coordination with the four neighboring municipalities.

Lipa, on the other hand, focused on institutional capability building through VILMA'S MBN. The project hopes to make barangays self-reliant and strong through orientations, consultations, and capability-building trainings.

Olongapo instituted reforms and launched campaigns and projects championed by its residents. Residents also had a highly ingrained civic consciousness, sense of duty, and volunteerism.





## PEACE AND ORDER

## Taking care of business

A peaceful environment is always a prerequisite for development. The rights of all groups and individuals regardless of gender, social status, political belief, and religion have to be upheld to maintain societal order.

However, maintaining peace and order in a community does not always have to be the sole responsibility of law enforcers or the police. In fact, it is through closely working with the various stakeholders in the community when peace and order can be truly achieved.

The Lipa City Police Station (LCPS) has been receiving support from the city government and barangay-based organizations/task forces/groups. Despite the shortage in human resource, the LCPS has managed to improve its crime solution efficiency rating (CSER) through the years. Their labor began to bear fruit when they won third place in the PNP National Headquarters' search for the Best City Police Station in 2002.

Similarly, the Iloilo City Police Office (ICPO) has managed to deal with peace and order problems through its community oriented policing system (COPS). The system is guided by the principle, "The Community is the Police and the Police is the Community."

The barangay tanods take care of the crime intelligence while the police provide firearms.

This strategy also proved to be successful with a sharp decline in reported crimes since the early 1990s. Recently, the ICPO was adjudged as the Best City Police in 2003.

## Filling up the coffers

How much and how many services a city can provide its constituents largely depend on its revenue. This is why cities are aggressively boosting their revenue generation efforts.

Constrained by a five-year tax moratorium, Tagum intensified its drive to perk up local revenues through tax mapping, one-stop shop for tax collection, and the establishment of a Revenue Task Force. This Task Force facilitates tax collection by bringing the renewal right at the clients' doorsteps.

Lipa also came up with a one-stop shop for the processing of the mayor's permit and paying taxes. The city invested on computerization to encourage residents to pay their taxes correctly and promptly.

Tagbilaran, like Lipa and Tagum, also has a one-stop shop center for taxpayers. Satellite centers for tax collection are also established within the city to make payment easy. Delinquent taxpayers are sent demand letters and non-compliance means that their names will be published in the local newspaper at the end of the year. There are also incentives such as the 20 percent discount on real property tax given to early taxpayers.

Olongapo, with its strong political leadership used its savings to improve its service delivery and enhance revenue generation by establishing a one-stop shop for business permits, licenses, and tax payments; computerizing its real estate tax assessment, and upgrading the city-owned electricity distribution facility to cut down on losses.

Iligan capitalized on information technology. It benefited from the Tax Revenue Assessment and Collection System (TRACS, a software that hastens identification and collection of due revenues). The city also took advantage of the geographic information system (GIS) to identify new businesses and commercial areas more easily. These are in addition to its one-stop shop for tax collection and revisions in property assessment and revenue code.

Progress is the ultimate goal and urbanization and the accompanying population issues are the probable outcomes. If a city's dream is to progress, it must be prepared to face the inevitable challenges.

It may be that there are different strokes for different folks but the bottomline is for governance to be responsive to the needs of the people. ◆