

Linking the Movements of the Urban Poor in ASEAN and Japan to Create Land and Housing Justice

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Introduction

This paper summarizes the results of my research with urban poor movements in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan, which I conducted as an API Fellow from July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012. The paper is divided into three parts, detailing first the problems of insecure housing and evictions stemming from the dominant neoliberal model of development experienced by the urban poor in all four countries; then the creative responses to these problems devised by the urban poor themselves, who are struggling to build a better future; and finally, my approach to linking the urban poor movements in each country with each other in order to create a form of ‘grassroots globalization’ carrying the potential to counter the injustices of neoliberalism through concrete joint action based upon genuine solidarity of the urban poor.

Neoliberal development: The root of the problems of land and housing injustice

Eviction of Slums in the Philippines

The Philippines is a country in Asia that has rather large economic and social disparities. A concrete example illustrating this fact is the number of urban poor living in settlements that are unfit for human habitation. According to official statistics, there are as many as 14 million urban poor in the Philippines. In the area of Metro Manila alone, there are around 558,800 urban poor families, or more than 3 million people living in slums.

Aside from economic problems stemming from having to earn a livelihood as labor in the informal sector, the problem of not having access to basic services and having to tap electricity and water from third parties at high prices, and lacking physical upgrading of communities, it may be said that the problem of evictions is an important problem of slum dwellers in the Philippines.

At the beginning of the 1970s, during the Marcos era, there were around 30,000 slum families living in the Tondo slum along the Manila Bay. These families were targeted for eviction due to a project of the Philippine government to expand the port. But by setting up a system of mass struggle, the slum dwellers of Tondo were able to build up negotiating power with the government.

The slum dwellers came together to establish ZOTO, or Zone One Tondo Organization, in order to resist eviction. With the support of the Philippine Ecumenical Committee for Community Organization (PECCO), ZOTO used community organizing as the primary means of organizing the people and mobilized on the issue of housing rights until they achieved victory. The Philippine government had to allocate 430 hectares in and close to Tondo for a relocation project to accommodate around 30,000 slum families.

After toppling the Marcos dictatorship through people’s power in 1986, the government of President Corazon Aquino rewarded the urban poor for their role in the struggle for democracy by allocating land on the original location to the SAMA-SAMA community and squatters in Taguig, Metro Manila. But after that, President Aquino let the market mechanism take over in determining the disposition of the urban land of the poor.

Even though the urban poor movement, under the banner of the Urban Land Reform Task Force, and the civil society sector, such as the Bishops-Businessmen’s Conference, as well as Cardinal Jaime Sin, helped each other in pushing for the House of Representatives to pass the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA), which was then signed into law by President Aquino in 1992, compromise with capitalist groups and the free market mechanism turned UDHA into a law that did not serve the purpose of urban land reform for Philippine slum dwellers. In the

end, slum dwellers were still frequently evicted to distant areas outside of the city. UDHA has a loophole for evictions without having to wait for a court order in the case of communities residing in areas that the state considers to be danger zones, public places, or areas where infrastructure projects will be constructed.

Therefore, even though there is an Urban Development and Housing Act, Filipino slum dwellers are still faced with evictions and resettlement to areas outside of the city. It might be said that the important force causing slum evictions in Metro Manila is the neoliberal development model, which emphasizes large-scale investment by the private sector and urban beautification to make livable cities.

In 2007, the Chairman of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority, Bayani Fernando, was excessively committed to removing slums from the city. Communities residing alongside canals, rivers, and roadways were put under pressure for their buildings to be demolished and the inhabitants moved.

Urban Poor Associates monitored the situation and found that from 2004 to 2008, more than 90,000 slum families living along the railway had their houses demolished and were relocated to resettlement areas outside of the city in order to make way for the North Rail-South Rail Linkage Project, which has become notorious for corruption and, in mid-2012, had not yet moved forward in implementation.

There were also communities that were likely to be evicted in 2012 such as R-10 Community and Delpan Community. In R-10 Community, close to the Port of Navotas, more than 1,500 families were being notified by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) that they must demolish their homes and move away to make way for a road widening project, even though the DPWH could modify its plan and construct the project on the opposite side without having an impact on the community.

In Manila, Delpan Community, which has been located on the Pasig River for over 20 years, received a notice of eviction from the Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission, because the government wants to beautify this area.

Urban development of the elites and the impact on the poor in Indonesia

After the end of the Second World War and the declaration of Indonesian independence in 1945, Jakarta and big provincial cities became a magnet, attracting people who were trying to escape rural poverty by going to the city to find work as laborers.

UN-Habitat analyzed the urban population growth in Indonesia and found that “In Indonesia it has grown from 20 percent of the total population in 1975, to 40 percent today, constituting about 90 million people. By 2025, our research projects that 60 percent of all Indonesians will be living in towns and cities”.¹

Rapid rural-to-urban migration eventually resulted in the problem of a shortage of housing. When workers from rural areas were unable to find any land of their own in the city due to high prices, they had little choice other than to pioneer settlements on plots of land that were not being used, such as reclaiming coastal areas and swamp land, subdividing unused lots, plots in public spaces along railway tracks, canals, rivers, roads and under bridges.²

According to estimates by the Urban Poor Consortium, there are approximately 877,190 families living in slums in Jakarta, or around 3 million people.³ At the national level, data from 2009 indicates that Indonesia has as many as 8 million people living in slums.

The community settlements in which these slum households live are not recognized, and hence remain excluded from the government’s official urban development plan, even though as early as 1968, then President Suharto initiated the Kampung Improvement Program specifically in order to physically upgrade urban communities,

such as by building roads and footpaths and laying drainage pipes. However, because this program emphasized physical improvements in the environment rather than giving secure land rights to urban communities, many times, “upgraded settlements were later demolished in favor of new business and commercial facilities”.⁴

The economic growth of Indonesia in the 1970s that began with the rise in oil prices on the global market resulted in large-scale investment in land and construction. By the 1980s, the real estate sector had greatly expanded, facilitated by the easing of financial banking regulations and the expansion of the middle class.

This situation led to the hoarding of land for speculative purposes in the 1990s, especially in Jakarta, where speculators held 40 percent of all land in the central part of the city.⁵

Liberal economic development, combined with a vision of the elite that demanded modern urban development, became the main factors causing urban land use conflict between the state and business interests, on the one hand, and slum dwellers, on the other, leading eventually to the eviction and demolition of slum communities.

In the opinion of Sutiyoso, the Governor of Jakarta from 1997 to 2007, “The Regional Government for the district of Jakarta holds the mandate to create a capital city which is orderly, safe, comfortable, clean and beautiful, so that Jakarta is representative of a capital city. However, the regional government faces the obstacle of unhindered urbanization and it is mostly the people with social welfare problems who obstruct the [public order laws]. Because of that, the regional government has chosen the means of law enforcement”.⁶

The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights has found that from 2001 to 2003, 10,321 urban poor households, or approximately 50,000 people, were adversely affected by evictions that took place in Jakarta.⁷

Furthermore, Human Rights Watch, which has collected data on the eviction of communities

in Jakarta that took place from 2001 to 2006, has found that “[t]he government has used excessive force to conduct the evictions and failed to provide alternative housing or other assistance to the displaced”.⁸

The eviction and demolition of slum communities did not just occur in Jakarta. The urban poor in various other large cities were also confronted with this phenomenon. Surabaya is the second largest city in Indonesia. In 2002, the Mayor of Surabaya evicted communities along the Wonokromo River in order to beautify the areas alongside the river. This eviction caused hundreds of urban poor households to be displaced and dispersed from their original location.

Makassar, a provincial city in southern Sulawesi, was full of eviction problems because it was a target of capitalist groups that were grabbing land away from the poor. Karuwisi Community was evicted by a private individual in 2004 after the High Court issued a verdict against the people. Thirty-five families had lived there together for more than 30 years, having purchased the land from the original settlers. But the fact that they had pioneered the land was meaningless in the absence of legal documents that could be submitted to the court.

For the poor in Makassar, the nightmare did not end there, since many other communities were forced to follow in the footsteps of Karuwisi. Lepping, Bontuduri, Kasikasi, Bontoala, and Bulogading are all poor people’s settlements over which private parties are trying to claim ownership. Some of them are now already in court, and if one considers the fate of Karuwisi, it seems that the communities’ chances of winning in these cases are not very high.

Lampung is a seaside city in southern Sumatra. But on the beach that stretches 27 kilometers long, the peace and quiet, livelihoods of fisherfolk, and contentment of the communities are disappearing. This is because the local government and foreign capital are pushing for their Waterfront City Project which, if implemented, will change the face of Lampung into an economic zone and tourist city.

At present, many land development companies are claiming possession rights over land along the coast, which is where the communities are settled. If they are not demolished and removed, it is truly difficult to imagine where the original settlements of the poor could be inserted along the seaside that will be full of commercial centers, business districts and entertainment areas in the future.

Based on the above-mentioned information, it might be concluded that the problems of land grabbing and evictions are still the number one enemy of the urban poor in Indonesia.

The violation of housing rights of the urban poor in Malaysia

The history of the urban poor in Malaysia goes back as far as the post-Second World War period after Malaysia received its independence from Britain in 1957. With Kuala Lumpur as the government administrative center and the commercial and industrial center of the country, the capital became a magnet attracting people into the city.

In addition, the ethnic conflicts between the Malays, Chinese and Indians that led to the bloody race riots in May 1969 was another factor that resulted in moving people into the city, since the Malaysian government adopted a policy to have rural Malays move into urban areas in order to create an ethnic balance in the population of the large cities.⁹

Therefore, Kuala Lumpur and the large cities became destinations for putting down new roots. But the number of homes was insufficient. Land in the city and houses, both for purchase and for rent, were expensive. The newcomers therefore had to struggle to find their own housing. Some set up houses in communities that already existed, while others pioneered new settlements in vacant areas, most of which were located on state-owned land.

The squatters formed local branches of the ruling parties, and were protected by these parties and provided with facilities like water, electricity, health and education.¹⁰ When their lives began to settle down, the communities of the urban poor

gradually began to form and became a resource base for labor to develop the modern economy of Malaysia.

According to data from 2001, the urban poor in Malaysia numbered between one and two million people, or 5-10 percent of the country's total population at the time. Because the existence of this group of the poor played a role in helping build up urban prosperity and economic growth for Malaysia, they enjoy a status as "urban pioneers". This definition is accepted among community organizers, who began using the term to refer to urban poor communities since the 1990s.

But for the ruling class, the term "urban pioneers" was meaningless. The urban poor were like pawns on a chessboard, who were sent to create economic prosperity. But once the city grew, land became expensive and investment waited ahead, the pioneers lost their value and had to make way for the interests of the capitalists, which came in the form of the discourse of development.

Or put more simply, urban poor communities were often forcibly evicted when the government and investors wanted to implement commercial development projects.

Mahatir Mohamad became the prime minister of Malaysia in 1981 and held power up until 2003. The goal of this leader was for Malaysia to build up and achieve economic might in the ASEAN region. Therefore, the city was a base for trade, investment and industry.

In the 1990s, the need to eliminate squatter areas became an important policy of Mahatir, especially in the areas under the jurisdiction of Kuala Lumpur City Hall and the Selangor State government. This was to open the way for all kinds of commercial projects that were waiting to be implemented.

A large number of hotels and condominiums appeared. The Petronas Towers were built in order to declare the country's material progress. Road expansion projects and railway track-laying projects popped up around the city. Added to the cost of construction of the new city Putrajaya and the

investment in communications technology such as the Cyber City project, the total budget used came to US\$ 32 billion.

However, this development path represented an insult to human dignity. Even though these various projects costing hundreds of billions of ringgit were the direct cause of the eviction of urban poor communities, the Malaysian government claimed it did not have enough budget to arrange for the resettlement of the evictees.

The case of Jinjang in Kuala Lumpur and Rawang in Selangor State concretely reflect the aforementioned problem. These two locations are temporary resettlement areas for people evicted due to railway projects in the early 1990s. Residents have had to live in temporary long houses in both locations for 20 years (1992 to present), even though the government promised it would only have them live in this temporary housing for six months to two years, after which it would arrange from them to move into low cost flats, which they would rent to own, thereby gaining secure housing.

The problem of the homeless in Japan

The origin of the problem of homelessness

It is generally accepted that homelessness became a social problem during the 1990s. Changes in the socioeconomic structure created factors of insecurity in many areas. In turn, these factors of insecurity are all causes of the problem of homelessness in Japan.

1. Factors of job insecurity

Survey results from 2003 found that construction, manufacturing and services are typical occupations taken by people immediately before they become homeless. More than 50 percent of the respondents were, inter alia, engaged in construction-related business immediately before they became homeless. The survey found that more than half of the homeless people were former “daily employees”, or “temporary employees and part-timers”, which means that in the process of falling into homelessness,

their status in employment had deteriorated and become unstable.¹¹

After the bubble economy burst, construction companies have switched from employing laborers from the *Yoseba* (*Yoseba* is the open air day labor market in large cities in Japan) to others such as illegal workers or students, who are employed directly or through magazine advertisements. Therefore the decline of the employment function of the *Yoseba* has resulted in rough sleepers massing in and around the *Yoseba*.¹²

2. Factors of housing insecurity

The government expects most people to get houses in the housing market by themselves and does little to provide public welfare housing for people who are not able to get housing on the housing market.¹³

The amount of public housing is low, and there are strict criteria for eligibility for public housing, which means few people can access it. These conditions are in line with results of a 2003 survey, which specified that most respondents (805 or 37.5 percent) lived in “privately-owned rented accommodation”, followed by 299 (13.9 percent) who lived in “laborer’s lodgings”, and 297 people (13.8 percent) who lived in “dormitories and company-run houses”—arrangements where the user has to vacate the room on leaving the company. Hence it can be said that a number of homeless people were in an unstable housing condition before becoming homeless.¹⁴

3. Factors of family insecurity

The instability of family structures has been rising due to decreasing family size and an increasing rate of divorce.¹⁵

Decreasing household size has also resulted in a crisis of family care. These changes increased the numbers of people beginning to sleep “rough”.¹⁶

In summary, the reason for a person becoming homeless in Japan probably does not stem from any one single factor, but it is because they face

many problems at the same time such as losing a job, lack of support from family, or debt. Particularly, a poor financial state drives them to be homeless.¹⁷

However, the various factors that lead to a person becoming homeless are all structural issues. Therefore, the problem of homelessness in Japan is a direct product of socioeconomic change.

The point of view of the state and solutions that do not get to the root of the problem

The Japanese central and local governments began to be interested in the problem of homelessness in the early 1990s. However, the point of the view of the state sector on this matter does not reflect an understanding of the socioeconomic structural change in Japan, which is the underlying cause of the problem.

Therefore, the various policies and measures that have emerged more importance on moving the homeless out of public spaces than solving the problem at its origins, whether unemployment, job insecurity, insufficient public housing, or family problems.

In Tokyo from 1992-1997, the homeless were managed by evicting them from public areas; especially when the homeless spread from Sanya, on the northeast of Tokyo, to Shinjuku Station and other business areas.¹⁸

But after the eviction of around 200 homeless people from Shinjuku Station in 1996 ended in violence, the public criticized the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's (TMG's) solution to the problem. As a result, the state sector had to change its method of solving the problem.

In November 2000, the TMG initiated a program to establish a Supporting Self-Reliance Center (*Jiritsu shien*), whereby the goal was to get the homeless to come in and use the center to prepare themselves to go out and work and lead a self-reliant life. The center had a process to screen the homeless who had the ability to work and provided advice on finding work. However, it was not as

successful as expected. Of the 4,652 who entered the *Jiritsu shien* center, only 2,152 persons or 51 percent found jobs. The homeless supporters who followed up the group shared that these persons only got part-time jobs in which the pay could not cover apartment rent.¹⁹

Later, measures to solve the problem of homelessness were elevated into a law. In August 2002, the Law Concerning Special Measure to Support the Self-Reliance of the Homeless was passed by the Japanese parliament. The law was designed to have local governments find measures to help the homeless become self-reliant, with the central government providing budgetary support. However, this law has been criticized for being a tool to evict the homeless from public spaces.

Article 11 of the Law allows the manager of any public institution/facility, such as municipal government and public park, to take necessary actions to protect the facilities for appropriate use. It means that this law allows public authorities to evict the homeless for "appropriate use" according to their own definition.²⁰

Intent on preserving order and a beautiful city, the TMG came up with a new measure in 2004 to increase the efficiency with which the homeless could be evicted from public spaces. This measure was the Cheap Apartment Policy, which aimed to demolish the tents of the homeless in five main public parks in Tokyo. With this policy, the TMG coordinated with non-profit organizations to arrange for the allocation of apartments with rental rates of approximately 50,000 yen per month for the homeless for a period of two years, whereby the homeless would have to pay monthly rent of 3,000 yen, and after two years, be responsible for paying the full rental rate by themselves. Moreover, during the first six months, the TMG would find work for the homeless.

However, there is a serious criticism with this program. Some think that the real objective of the government to move homeless people from the parks was to maintain the cleanliness of the parks rather than to lift their quality of life.²¹

In interviewing a TMG official, the researcher found that the TMG did not dare to assert that the Cheap Apartment Policy was a success and had no statistical data indicating the number of homeless people who could pay their apartment rent by themselves after the first two years. The TMG official only said that this program was able to reduce the number of homeless people in public parks.

The policies and measures to solve the problem of homelessness in Japan fail to place importance on solving the problem at its origins. There has been no implementation of the provision of employment, employment guarantees, or low cost state housing programs. Instead, the various policies and measures are merely tools used to evict the homeless from public spaces in the name of order, beauty and livability of the city.

The response from below: Actions by the urban poor to demand land and housing justice.

Advocating for on-site upgrading and in-city relocation in Metro Manila

In order to bring about genuine urban land reform in Philippine society, Task Force Anti-Eviction, which was established in 2007 through the coming together of COPE, UPA, COM and the people's organizations in their work areas, has campaigned and mobilized to stop the eviction of communities and demand that the government arrange housing in the city for the poor, whereby it might be construction on the original site, or finding in-city resettlement areas for the construction of housing projects.

The Task Force Anti-Eviction reached an important breakthrough in the period during the presidential election campaign in 2010, when they joined together with many other urban poor organizations and established the Urban Poor Alliance (UP-All) to demand that presidential candidate Noynoy Aquino sign a covenant with the poor on the issue of policy, to solve the problems of the urban poor.

On 6 March 2010, more than 10,000 slum dwellers packed into the Delpan Sports Center. Their ten demands were handed over to Noynoy to sign. These demands included proposals to stop evictions, create land security by building on-site housing, and in-city relocation.

When the poor work hard, it is difficult for politicians to campaign irresponsibly. After being elected president, the Urban Poor Alliance followed up by holding Noynoy to his promise, leading to a meeting with the president on 23 December 2010.

On 10 August 2011, the policy on constructing on-site housing and in-city relocation became clearer when President Aquino announced the provision of 50 billion pesos in budgetary support for a five-year housing project for 100,000 slum families in Metro Manila.

For 2011-12, the government authorized a budget of 10 billion pesos for 20,000 slum families residing in danger areas, such as alongside canals or rivers. The budget was set to support housing projects in pilot areas in three cities, namely Manila, Quezon City, and Pasay, and the Department of Interior and Local Government was to take the lead in coordinating with people's organizations and NGO groups.

With the policy proclaimed and the budget arriving, what remained to be done was to make people's settlement plans that can be submitted to the government for approval.

The process of making settlement plans begins with gathering the views of the people regarding their housing needs, such as the characteristics of the houses they want to have, the physical environment, and flood prevention mechanisms.

One community that was considered to have a rather complete settlement plan was San Miguel, Barangay 412, Zone 42, which is situated on a limited area alongside a canal. Together with Palafox Associates, residents of San Miguel designed new two and three-story model houses to accommodate

approximately 128 resident households. Implementation would involve a budget for construction of around 282,000 pesos per unit, which would be repaid by the residents at a rate of 940 pesos per month for 30 years.

However, it is not the case that the path of the disadvantaged is smooth now that they are designing their settlements. In 2012, the Philippine National Housing Authority was also busy with presenting its settlement plan to the government. Its plan proposed only resettlement, involving the construction of five-storey medium-rise buildings with 24 square meter units. The average cost per unit is 500,000 pesos, which would be repaid over 30 years.

In addition, the local government's approach to solving the problem appears to be in opposition to the national government's policy. According to a report in the *Philippine Inquirer* dated 5 November 2011, Quezon City had a plan to demolish the houses of more than 4,000 slum families living alongside canals and rivers and near roads, and relocate them to Montalban in Rizal Province and San Jose del Monte in Bulacan Province, which are both outside of Metro Manila.

The question is therefore to what extent will the Philippine government's policy to construct on-site housing and have in-city relocation be possible in practice? This is still an obstacle that blocks the way.

However, slum dwellers who are committed to the principle of housing rights will not just wait around to be given directions by the state. Instead, they will try to determine their own future, a future that is built upon the foundation of land and housing justice. As declared by Filomena G. Cinco, Chairperson of San Miguel Community, Barangay 412 Zone 42, "If the president will not allow us, we will not allow this to happen. We will mobilize, we will let the government know this is what the people want. We will make the media to be heard. This is what the people want. We want this housing project to come into reality".

Alternatives to solve the problem of housing of the urban poor in Indonesia

Suharso Monoafa, the former Minister of Public Housing, has stated in an interview that "in 2009, Indonesia had 8 million homeless families, families who had no proper health care and housing. With the assumption of building 500,000 houses for them per annum it would take 16 years to provide poor families with modest living quarters".²²

Nevertheless, in regard to this situation, Suharso Monoafa proclaimed the commitment of the government to resolve this matter, stating, "The government's target was to make 30 percent of Indonesian cities free from slums by 2019".²³ According to Suharso, the plan for the construction of housing for the poor was in accordance with the work plan that President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono initiated in 2007, which stipulated that within five years (2007-2012), the government would support the construction of 1,000 high-rise buildings containing low cost flats to serve as housing for the urban poor, whereby the government would provide a subsidy for the value-added tax.²⁴

However, relocating the poor in slums to low-cost flats in high-rise buildings allocated by the government may not be a very smooth solution, because this approach negatively affects the way of life of the poor, both economically and socially.

A report by the organization LOCOA on a visit to communities relocated to government flats in Marunda in 2009 states,

"This resident, who operates a small kiosk in the open space on the ground floor below her building, Blok Bawal, was one of only about 25 families out of a total of around 1,000 families who used to live in a community called Warakas, under the tollway, who voluntarily accepted relocation to Marunda in 2006. Of the 25 families from Warakas that moved to Marunda, only ten remain here today. The fact that so few poor families remain in Marunda reflects the overall non-viability of the site as an adequate relocation area, as there are no

livelihoods in the area, no schools or medical facilities, and insufficient transportation alternatives for those who do not own their own vehicle”.²⁵

The negative socioeconomic impact on slum community residents resulting from relocation to low-cost government flats has created no small degree of concern on the part of the administration, as reflected in the opinion of Fauzi Bowo, the Governor of Jakarta who, in reference to the relocation of communities along the Ciliwung River to flats currently being constructed by the government, stated, “We will study a number of aspects in conducting resettlement and the administration would do its best to minimize damage or disruption to the resident’s jobs and schooling”.²⁶

However, in regard to the solution to the problem of housing, it is not certain whether the urban poor in Indonesia are thinking in the same way as what the government is proposing for them.

At a meeting to keep abreast of the situation of relocation of communities along the Ciliwung River in Sanggar on 15 February 2012, there were residents from Bukit Duri RT 05, 06, 07, 08, RW 012, and Kampung Pulo RT 09, 10, 11 RW 03 in attendance. Some of them expressed the following views:²⁷

“The government thinks our communities are illegal, so it wants us to move”.

“My life is here. The people have helped to develop the area and make roads. I don’t want to move to anywhere else”.

“If we move to a flat, we won’t have any land and will have to pay rent. Our land is here. We want to live here. We want to upgrade our community”.

“Living in a flat, you have to pay high expenses, rent, water, electricity and transportation. We will pay less if we stay here”.

“We can upgrade our houses so that there is a high space under every house that can be used as

a communal area, and when it floods, we will be able to stay here”.

Aside from Jakarta, communities in other cities also have alternative recommendations to solve the problem of housing. With the coordination of Urban Poor Consortium (UPC), various urban poor organizations have adopted approaches and taken action to solve their own problems of land and housing.

In Surabaya, an organization of communities along the Surabaya River has been established called Paguyuban Warga Strenkali Suabaya (PWSS). Since 2003, with the support of UPC and civil society, such as universities in Surabaya, architects and lawyers, PWSS has undertaken many actions to make the local government accept the existence of communities along the riverside.

In line with the slogan “Relocation: no/ Renovation: yes” that rejected demolition and resettlement and proposed the alternative of onsite upgrading of communities, PWSS gathered information about the establishment of community settlements, made alternative plans, and also mobilized in a campaign to get the government to accept its proposal.

In addition, they took action to upgrade their settlements and the environment by shifting their houses inward from the riverside by five meters in order to clear this space for the development of public infrastructure and beautification by the community.

PWSS persuaded the government to see that demolishing and relocating communities creates tremendous loss, while the community upgrading approach is more worthwhile in many respects, such as saving on capital investment, as well as socioeconomically. This is because people live close to their place of work and hence have economic security. In addition, social relations are not disrupted and broken as they are when communities are demolished and relocated.

The efforts of PWSS finally resulted in the provincial legislature of East Java consenting to pass bylaw 9 in 2007, known as PERDA No. 9/2007, in order to enable communities along the riverside in Surabaya to carry out settlement and environmental upgrading within five years, after which an assessment would be conducted to determine whether these communities should be permitted to establish permanent settlements.

In Makassar, an urban poor organization called Komite Perjuangan Rakyat Miskin, or KPRM, has responded to land grabbing by capitalist groups. Their strategy was to reach a political agreement with the mayor before the election in 2008, in which the issue of stopping evictions was one important part of the deal.

After the election, they used the situation in Kampung Pisang Community, which was being evicted by a private individual, in order to hold the mayor to this agreement. On 29 August 2010, the mayor of Makassar, along with local government agencies, came to Kampung Pisang to listen to the proposal of the residents.

With the technical support of a group of architects, a new community plan was drafted for a space of 7,000 square meters out of the original area of 3.7 hectares. This plan was proposed as a concrete alternative for the mayor to take and negotiate with the private owner in order to share the land with the 33 resident families. As a result, at present, the owner has consented to the principle of land sharing, but in mid-2012 there was still no agreement on the size of the land.

Kendari is another city in Sulawesi that has concretely seen the poor engage in settlement upgrading on the original location.

Bungkutoko is a community along a bay that has been established for more than 30 years. Fifty-five families have rented land from the private owner and built houses on their own. Their occupation is buying fish from the fish port and taking it to hawk in communities.

The residents of Bungkutoko lived like this up until February 2011, when they discovered that the land owner was going to sell the land to an investor to build a container terminal and the community would have to be demolished and its inhabitants move away.

At first, the residents had many different views. Some wanted to find new land elsewhere, while others planned to move into rented rooms. But after receiving advice from Germis, the organization of the poor with which UPC is working, the residents of Bungkutoko decided to come together as a group and negotiate with the state.

The residents of Bungkutoko proposed that the City of Kendari buy a plot of land for the community located not far away from the original location in order to carry out a new settlement project. By mobilizing, campaigning, coordinating and cooperating with the City of Kendari and the Ministry of Social Affairs, the proposal of the residents was finally accepted.

On the piece of land measuring 1.8268 hectares that the local government purchased and gave to the community, each family was to receive a 10 x 15 meter plot as well as budgetary support for housing construction from the Ministry of Social Affairs amounting to 10 million rupiahs per house. The people have set up a system of financial management themselves.

Construction of the new houses of the people of Bungkutoko was due to be completed in 2012. Therefore, this is another concrete case that UPC hopes will be a model for solving the problem of housing of the urban poor.

The advocacy of PERMAS for housing rights in Malaysia

The urban poor in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor State have come together to establish an organization called Persatuan Masyarakat Selangor of Wilayah (PERMAS) in order to protect the housing rights

of community residents. PERMAS has worked to organize communities, build grassroots leaders, hold training in human rights, as well as support resistance to the eviction of urban poor communities. The following accounts reflect one part of what PERMAS is doing.

Long Houses and the Distance Dream in Jinjang Settlement

Jinjang is an area that Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) arranged to serve as a resettlement area for urban poor communities in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor that were evicted due to a government railway construction project.

The first group of 1,600 families moved to the area in 1992, and occupied long houses that were built out of wood and low quality materials. The dream of the residents here is to gain the right to be able to rent-to-own low cost government flats, because DBKL had promised them that they would not have to live in the long houses for more than two years, and after that, everybody would be able to move into flats.

But the painful truth is that the temporary long houses have become the permanent residence of the people of Jinjang for the last 20 years, and the government project to build flats for the people has remained a distant dream for them. Therefore, in order to help them reclaim their human dignity, PERMAS has gone to work with Jinjang Community in demanding their housing rights.

On March 18, 2012, PERMAS held a forum to follow up on the solution to the problem of housing in Jinjang Community. They invited representatives of DBKL and the construction company to come and answer questions about the construction of the flats to accommodate the residents. At this forum, they reached the conclusion that the company would expedite the construction of the flats for the residents, who would rent-to-own at the price of 42,000 ringgit. However, the residents want the price to be 35,000 ringgit, so negotiations on this issue was likely to continue.

An Empty Promise in Rawang Community

When the government came up with a project to build double railway tracks, 229 railway families from Sungai Buluk were evicted and sent to live in temporary long houses in Rawang, Selangor State, beginning in January 1992.

The promise made by Selangor State to Rawang Community was that the people would only have to live in the long houses for six months. After that, the state would arrange for each family to be given a free plot of land measuring 40 x 60 feet, as well as develop the public infrastructure system for the community, whereby the people themselves would have to build their own houses. But after six months, Selangor State did not fulfil its promise. In 1995, the residents of Rawang followed up with Selangor State on the issue of land, but two years later, what they found was that Selangor State had a plan to construct low-cost housing to sell to the people at a price of 17,000 ringgit per unit.

Therefore, in August 1998, the residents went to negotiate with the Chief Executive of Selangor State in order to demand that the local government procure land for them in accordance with the promise made in 1992.

The conclusion reached was that there were two alternative solutions: for the residents who still insisted on their right to land, Selangor State would provide them with land; for the residents who wished to buy houses, they would have the right to buy low cost houses that the government would build. But this conclusion did not give way to an actual solution in practice.

In 2008, there was a political change when the opposition party won the elections and came to power in Selangor State. Consequently, the hopes of the residents of Rawang Community brightened once again. On 16 April 2008, community residents went to meet with the Chief Executive and signed a new memorandum of agreement with Selangor State on solving the land problem. There were signs that the dreams of the residents would be realized.

But who would have thought that political power could play games with the people to this extent? After almost four years under the administration of the former opposition party, the problem of the residents of Rawang Community had still not been solved in mid-2012.

On March 19, 2012, the residents of Rawang Community joined together to protest at the Office of the Selangor State Government in order to demand that the power holders procure land for them in accordance with the still unfilled promise made to them 20 years before..

The fate of urban pioneers in Kampung Sentul Railway and Bukitjaril

Kampung Sentul Railway has been an Indian settlement for 120 years. The first generation of residents were workers on the British colonial Malayan Railway. They pioneered land that was still jungle, or land that was abandoned mines and gradually built their homes, creating Indian Hindu communities. However, under capitalist development, the path of the urban pioneers often ended with evictions, and it looks as if Kampung Sentul Railway is about to meet this same fate.

On October 24, 2011, community residents received a legal notice from Yong Teck Lee Company advising them that they must vacate the area, as the company claimed that it possessed rights over the land and wanted to use it for commercial development.

In mid-2012, 31 families in Kampung Sentul Railway Community, who are the descendants of the first generation of residents, were joining together to resist the eviction. The case has now gone before the court for it to decide whether Young Teck Lee actually has rights over the railway land. Moreover, the residents are also demanding that DBKL open up negotiations and issue land title deeds to the people, since their ancestors were the original pioneers of Sentul Railway and were railway workers who played a role in creating economic prosperity for Malaysia for over 100 years.

In Bukitjaril, the fate of the residents is similar to Kampung Sentul Railway. This is because the 41 resident families, who used to be workers on the rubber plantation estate, where they also lived for around 80 years, are being evicted by the government, which wants to use the land as a Muslim cemetery.

The residents of Bukitjaril Community are not asking for anything more than social justice. As those who pioneered the land and were workers who devoted themselves to the Malaysian rubber industry for 80 years, the former workers and their families want to ask for land sharing, requesting only four acres out of the total area of 26 acres to use for a housing project. The government could use the remaining 22 acres for other development purposes.

Resisting evictions in Tokyo

From Miyashita Park to Mitake Park and the struggle of Nojiren

Nojiren, or the Shibuya Free Association for the Subsistence and Well-being of the Homeless, has been working with the homeless in the area of Shibuya Ward since the 1990s. When Shibuya Ward evicted the homeless from Miyashita Park in order to open the way for Nike Inc. to come and construct a Futsal pitch, a skateboard area and rock climbing wall in 2010, Nojiren joined together with the homeless to resist the eviction. Even though they were not able to hold off the eviction, in the end, Nojiren was able to persuade Shibuya Ward to arrange for the area next to Miyashita Park to be used by around 40 homeless people to set up tents in which to live.

Nojiren opposed the erection of a fence to close off the Tokyo Metropolitan Children's Hall in 2011, since it affected the homeless who lived in the area, and it set up a public kitchen there. More recently, in June 2012, Nojiren resisted the closure of Mitake Park, since the park closure would force ten homeless people to move from the area. In addition, Nojiren also resisted the eviction of homeless people from the underground parking garage of the Shibuya Ward Office.

In a press release issued in regard to these most recent cases, Nojiren stated, “We demand of the Shibuya Ward the following three items: (1) Immediately stop the process of removing the tents that belong to the homeless from the Mitake park; (2) Allow them to relocate within the park while the public work project can still go on; and (3) Re-open the underground parking lot so that the homeless people can rightfully regain access”.

Standing up to fight in Tatekawa

The eviction of homeless persons from Tatekawa River Bed Park (Tatekawa-Kasenjiki Park) in Tokyo’s Koto Ward since January 27, 2012 was grounded in deceit and discrimination. The park’s 60 residents have had to face a number of brutal evictions for the sake of local redevelopment and an “environmental clean-up” in line with the construction of Tokyo’s newest record-height tower, the Tokyo Sky Tree.

But the homeless in Tatekawa were not willing to accept defeat. In a statement made to Koto Ward, they said, “We cannot allow this eviction, or any other, to ever happen. We are taking a stand to protest the shameless acts of violence and prejudice carried out by Koto Ward, Tokyo, and the country of Japan. We demand that the fence be taken down, the evictions be put to an end, and homeless person’s rights to live be recognized”. In order to compel the authorities to act in accordance with their demands, the homeless in Tatekawa dug in their heels to stage resistance against eviction from the park.

Life with dignity in Arakawa

In Arakawa City, around the Arakawa Riverside area near Horikiri Bridge, the government is implementing the Sumida Nature Conservancy and Onagigawa Weeding and Maintenance projects. After being subjected to heavy pressure by the state, around 40 people in the Arakawa Riverside Area moved away. Some of them went to receive social welfare benefits from the state, while others went to find other public spaces in which to set up their tents and live.

However, there are eight homeless people who are persistently struggling to remain in their tents in the area. They have come together and established a system for living together like a community. They hold meetings every Saturday to assess the situation of eviction and find a way to solve their problems. They have set up a food pantry for members, and help to buy dry foods to keep in this pantry. When members do not have any work or any income from collecting recyclable goods, they can come and take food from the pantry to eat. In addition, they are growing vegetables to eat.

Another important point is that the homeless in Arakawa are acting to counter and confront the state officials who come to pressure them to move away and enter social welfare programs. They are confronting these officials in the area where they live, as well as going to negotiate and press their demands at the offices of state agencies because this group of homeless people does not want to dismantle their community and move away, or accept social welfare. They are able to earn their own livelihood and they like living in a mutually dependent way, which they feel is a life full of human dignity.

Linking the movements of the urban poor in ASEAN and Japan to create land and housing justice

Neoliberal development emphasizes large-scale investment, using urban land to increase economic value, and creating order for the beautification and livability of the city. It has adversely affected the poor in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan by causing forced evictions and preventing the poor from being able to access appropriate housing in the case of the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia, as well as created the problem of homelessness in Japan.

However, the negative impact of neoliberal development has also caused the urban poor in all four countries to stand up and demand their rights. They have established urban poor movements to resist eviction, campaign on housing rights, and

propose concrete alternative solutions to solve their own problems. However, it is necessary to strengthen the struggle of urban poor movements in ASEAN and Japan by raising the level of their cooperation to the international level through globalization of the poor.

During my year of research (July 1, 2011-June 30, 2012), I attempted to link together the movements of the urban poor in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan, as well as Thailand, which is my own country. I undertook this effort so that the urban poor movements in these countries would have processes to exchange knowledge and experience among themselves, provide assistance to each other, and take action to strike back against neoliberal urban development, which adversely affects the urban poor. My efforts resulted in concrete linkages developing while I was doing research, as well as issues identified around which linkages can be built in the future.

Concrete linkages developed while doing research

1. Presentation of the experiences of the urban poor in different countries mobilizing on housing rights in order to create understanding and promote mutual exchanges of learning.

The researcher presented the experience of struggle of Four Regions Slum (FRSN) Network in Thailand to the urban poor movement in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan. FRSN's experience stands out insofar as they have established an organization of the urban poor at the national level and achieved success in pushing and compelling the state to allow slum communities located on land owned by the State Railway of Thailand to carry out housing projects on their original location without having to be evicted.

The researcher distilled lessons learned from the mobilizations and advocacy of the urban poor in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia in videos the researcher made called *The Struggle of the Poor for Urban Land in Metro Manila*, *The Path of Dreams and the Day of Struggle: The Experience of Advocacy of the Urban Poor in Indonesia*, and *Neoliberalism and the Life of the Urban Poor in*

Malaysia. Furthermore, the researcher presented these videos for the purpose of dissemination to the urban poor, NGOs, academics and students in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan and Thailand.

2. Encouraged the urban poor movement in the Philippines to take action on World Habitat Day

The researcher provided information about World Habitat Day, a day on which slum dwellers in many countries around Asia mobilize, resulting in Filipino slum dwellers and NGO workers from COPE, UPA and COM organizing a World Habitat Day campaign activity on October 26, 2011 with around 1,000 participants. This was the first time that this group of the urban poor movement organized an activity on World Habitat Day.

3. Arranged for a show of strength in support of resistance to the eviction of the homeless in Japan

In June 2012, while in Tokyo, the researcher learned of the closure of Mitake Park and the underground parking garage of the Shibuya Ward Office to force the homeless who resided in these locations to leave these areas. The researcher communicated with the Homeless Network of FRSN in Thailand and encouraged them to come out in force to show their support for the affected homeless people in Japan.

On June 25, 2012, 80 people from the Homeless Group in Thailand held a march to the Japanese Embassy in Bangkok in order to submit a petition to a representative of the embassy condemning the de facto eviction of the homeless from both places in Shibuya Ward, Tokyo, and demanding that they be allowed to return.

Issues around which linkages can be built in the future

Several issues exist around which linkages might be built in the future. Tentative work is already underway on the following issues, perhaps leading to concrete action in the not too distant future:

1. Coordinated planning leading to regional support for resistance against evictions of communities along rivers in the Philippines and Indonesia
2. Building relations between the homeless in Japan and Thailand
3. Creating forums for grassroots learning exchanges among urban poor movement leaders and activists from the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Japan, and Thailand.

NOTES

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¹² Yoshihiro Okamoto, Kazuo Hayakawa, Sadahisa Noguch, and Masumi Shinya, Homelessness and housing in Japan. Page 2/9.

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¹⁸ Boonlert Visetpricha, Management of the Homeless in Tokyo and Manila: Some Lessons for Thailand. Management. Page 327)

¹⁹ Boonlert Visetpricha, Management of the Homeless in Tokyo and Manila: Some Lessons for Thailand. Management. Page 328)

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