



## Introducing health to a city's multiple settings

### *A more marketable aroma*

Puttering around her dry goods stall, L can laugh about the days when her shirts, fabric and other merchandise smelled like meat.

"I was stuck between a grocery stall and a meat stall," she says.

But that was before almost everything else in her city changed.

"We were really pitiful back then. Every-

thing smelled bad, there was so much litter, and no order in this market," she explains, while frowning at the memory.

Today the clothes she sells have a more marketable aroma.

Proper zoning has placed her stall near other dry goods and far away from the meat, fish and other wet products in the market.

Zoning was simply a common-sense policy by the city government. Yet it was that sensible and organized approach to doing things, which had seemed alien before, that made a difference.

### *A city overwhelmed*

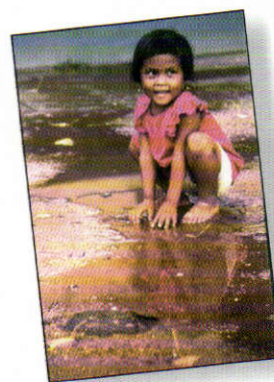
*Lis* like many other residents of expanding cities elsewhere in the world. She grew up in what was once a less complicated place originally built for a much smaller population. But as the growth of the population and the rise of industries began to overwhelm the city's services and infrastructure, the quality of life plummeted.

The lack of sanitation and other environmental problems threatened the residents' health. Crime was out of control. Schools, hospitals, and even jails were overcrowded, dirty, and lacking in basic supplies and facilities.



The city's political leaders were too beholden to vested interests to take bold steps to improve public services and reorient the local government to respond to changing times.

*L's* market was a microcosm of her city's ills. Not only did her merchandise not smell like dry goods, but the entire market seemed hazardous to health. Food sanitation barely existed, the grounds regularly flooded, and even petty crime was on the rise. Business





was bad. And the local politicians back then didn't care.

*L*'s daily activities involved a litany of miseries. Taking her children to school was a form of torture, as she had to expose her family to turtle-paced traffic through heavily polluted air. Once in school, her children would complain of a lack of water for washing and flushing, too many students in each classroom, and trash strewn about the school grounds. The stench of unflushed toilets would waft into the classrooms.

*L*'s husband *C*—who worked with a local cooperative—commuted to work but his route passed through squatter communities along the city's river where the police dared not roam. *C* was even robbed once when he had to walk home from work at night.



### *A new beginning*

Their lives in the city had gotten so bad that **L** and **C** were seriously talking about abandoning all that they had worked for and moving away, back to L's rural hometown to start all over again.

Then something happened. A new mayor inexperienced in traditional politics was elected and he did something that all the previous mayors had not done. He had serious discussions with groups of residents from many walks of life. He asked them about their problems. He solicited suggestions for solutions. From all these consultations, the mayor decided to focus on the people's health and safety, knowing that in meeting these basic needs, many other needs would be satisfied. He realized that the road to

improved public health could not be paved without improving environmental conditions along the way. The health of the local environment could not be separated from the health of the local residents. The mayor concluded that people in cities like his were not so poor as much as they were simply unorganized. So he used the power of his office to organize. He tapped the expertise of doctors and health workers but involved non-health personnel as well. He formed committees that would tackle health needs in each setting—schools, hospitals, workplaces, marketplaces, even the local prison. The committees identified priority problems and discussed ways of mobilizing resources to address them.







## **A healthier marketplace**

### *Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea*

Open food markets are lively, colourful places where the area's produce, and often local culture, are on display.

But they can also be dangerous settings. In Gordon's Market, Port Moresby, consumers were afraid of spending too much time shopping and exposing themselves to a risk of robbery and assault from "roving rascals". Typically, food meant to be frozen were sold from cartons stored under the hot sun; hordes of flies were brushed away from fish and meat displayed in the open; water for washing was scanty as many taps had been stolen and others were broken; toilet blocks were used for defecation, but faeces were still all over the floor; rubbish remained uncollected for extended periods; flooding created filthy grounds; and market cleaning staff were at high

risk of disease because of a lack of protective clothing and equipment.

The community's politicians heard the community's concerns and established a healthy marketplaces committee to address the stakeholders' health concerns. Such a committee was made possible by the government's and health authorities' commitment to the Healthy Islands concept and by their previous inter-agency activities aimed at making a broad group of people aware of the benefits of such a healthy settings approach. The local authorities then got involved and the Deputy City Manager realized the potential benefits to the broader community of establishing Gordon's Market as a healthy marketplace and a model healthy setting for the rest of the city to follow.

The local authorities, healthy marketplace committee, the market's management and the vendors collaborated to create a marketplace that was free of flooding through improved paving and drainage. Food was better protected by fly screens, and the illegal sale of high-risk foods was no longer permitted.

More efficient waste disposal and removal was introduced; cleaners were provided protective gear; toilets were cleaned up and maintained; and water supply was improved. The second-hand clothing stalls in the old market opposite the Gordon's Market were removed and the area improved. The security in the market improved as a result of this step and as a result of better fencing.

Since then, the number of vendors and consumers using Gordon's Market has increased to its full capacity. It's been a godsend for consumers craving convenience, cleanliness and safety. The dreaded "roving rascals" rove the market no more and the legitimate vendors can finally ply their goods in peace.



### *Re-engineering a city for health*

*L*, the market vendor, sat in the committee on marketplaces. Her husband *C* participated in the “healthy schools” committee. From the start, all the committees were concerned with two main approaches to improving health: health protection, which involved the “physical engineering” aspect of environmental health; and health promotion, the “social engineering” component that stressed the bigger picture of public health—local culture, sustainable livelihoods, and the situation of women.

“We wanted to restore order where there was chaos,” *L* said, in naming her market-

places committee’s priority. That was why they designed a way to divide the market into zones. One result was her dry merchandise smelling like clothes and not like meat or fish.

But that was only the start of the physical re-engineering. Drainage was improved so that it no longer flooded in the market. Proper sanitation thereafter became a fact of daily life. Electric fans were installed on the ceiling so that working even in the market’s deep interior became tolerable.



*Sanitation is the foundation of food safety. This public market undergoes weekly flushing with high-powered hoses.*

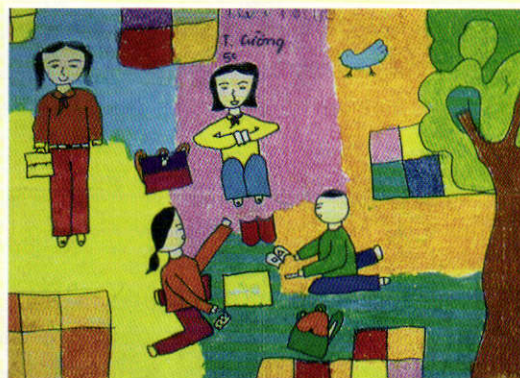


Then the committee became more ambitious and dreamed of a food laboratory for the market itself, to ensure the safety of the wet goods. For this project, they had to ask for a special budget from the mayor's office, which saw it as a business investment as well as a safety measure. Eventually, the mayor thought, a food laboratory would pay for itself in the form of better business. And it did. Consumers from outside the city began to buy their food from the market because of the cleanliness and the confidence they had in the safety of the merchandise.

At the slightest suspicion of spoiled meat or fish, customers and vendors would take samples to the laboratory for testing.



*A healthy marketplace is complete with a food safety laboratory, such as this one in Marikina, Philippines.*



## **Health-promoting schools**

*Ha Tinh and Hai Phong, Vietnam*

In Ha Tinh and Hai Phong, Vietnam the lotus flower is not just a symbol of beauty but an emblem for a healthy future.

In training sessions in these two cities, the lotus flower is used as a teaching aid to show the four key elements of a health-promoting school: skills-based health education, health services, physical infrastructure, and health policy.

While teachers, parents and health workers have been directly involved in all four elements, the community is seen as the base of the lotus flower. This WHO-funded demonstration project is a combination of health promotion and health protection activities, including strengthening the health component of the school curricula, the construction of more latrines and toilets, poster and drawing competitions, improved lighting, and the planting of school gardens.

School community action plans have been guided by WHO's "Guidelines for implementing health-promoting schools," which have been translated into Vietnamese.

Physical engineering fed into the city's efforts at social engineering. The quality standards in the market rose, and vendors began to expect nothing less. As revenues increased, the vendors who were mostly women acquired new influence in the city. They carried around the pride of being associated with a state-of-the-art marketplace. They policed their own ranks, using peer pressure to make others conform so that the standards they set would not be lowered by a few violators. For the incorrigibles, there

was another committee that imposed fines and other penalties. Out of the chaos came not only order, but profits.

For C, the motivation was not better business but a better future for his children. The healthy schools committee, on which he sat as a member, took stock of the high absenteeism and the low test scores of the city's public school pupils. Tackling the problems of the schools was a big job, so they wanted to start by doing something fairly simple, and it had to have instant impact.



wire, high walls, and the stench often associated with detention facilities elsewhere. It's well-guarded so there's little chance of escape. But it's also a clean, bright place where even the food is considered decent.

"I'd rather be here than in a regular prison," says Arnold, who is awaiting trial for a drug charge.

It is part of this city's effort to create healthy settings in almost every public facility, even in the traditionally neglected local jail. In many other places in the Philippines and in the Western Pacific, jails are

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