

# 'UPCA·UHO' - Urban Housing Observatory

## College of Architecture, University of the Philippines

*a proposal for the establishment of a sustainable programme of  
research & development of housing in the Philippines*



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## 1 Shelter Situation Analysis

### Basic General Data

The Republic of the Philippines is an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands located in the South East Asian-Pacific Region. The present government is headed by its second woman president, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. It is classified by the World Bank as a developing country with a lower-middle income economy<sup>1</sup>. The National Capital Region (NCR), which is more known as Metro Manila, is the country's capital and the seat of national government agencies. It is as well a hub of prime industrial and commercial establishments. Metro Manila is considered a megacity as it now ranks with the world's most populous cities, having more than 10 million population particularly by day. The city is where the most observable shelter-related problems are found.

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank Data and Statistics (<http://web.worldbank.org/wbsite/external/datastatistics>)

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Figure 1 shows a snapshot of Metro Manila's prominent skyline, the Makati CBD (central business district), where around it lie samples of chaotic shelter situation. It is a paradox picture of high-end, posh gated housing for the rich & the famous, while nearby are found a number of informal settlements where shelter condition is at its worst. This striking contrast is repeated over and over again in not so few urbanized centers in the Philippines.



**Figure 1:** A View of Metro Manila megacity (Photo credit: Jeanette Cruz, HUDCC, 2004)

## Demography

Table 1 summarizes the demographic features of the country showing in varying years' record, figures such as the rate of population growth, urbanization, and household size, among other things. Noticeably, the country's population is young and large which can be a strong economic advantage. However, the growth rate of 2.36% is apparently a downside. The current population of almost 88 million people is an enormous figure to sustain considering the lean condition of the economy.

Particulars	Figures	Remarks
<i>Population</i>	87,857,000 (2006)	2.36% growth rate in 2000-2005
<i>Sex-age structure</i>	0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19 20-24 age brackets in the range of 4-6 million	basically young generation
<i>Migration</i>	1.03 million OFW	(2005)
<i>Urbanization</i>	62.4%	(2005)
<i>Fertility</i>	3.2% (2000-2005)	2.8% projection in 2005-2010
<i>Life expectancy</i>	70 yrs (2000-2005)	71.2 yrs projection in 2005-2010
<i>Child Mortality</i>	36 (1995-2000) 25 (2005-2010)	Children under 5 yrs old

<i>Household Composition</i>	5 persons (NCR) 4.2 persons (country)	(2000)
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**Table 1:** Demographic Features of the Philippines

## Economy

Table 2 presents some essential figures describing the current economic condition of the country. The economy is admittedly on the take off and many put positive speculation that it can be sustained provided the coming national election<sup>2</sup> will be orderly, no major financial crisis coming, and if the Leftist-Muslim rebellion is tamed.

Particulars	Figures	Remarks
<i>GNP/capita</i>	5.7%	(2005)
<i>Poverty Inde</i> : <i>annual per capita</i> : <i>threshold</i>	24.7% Php 12,267.00 (US\$ 220.64)	(2003), 3.97 million families living below poverty line
<i>Annual family</i> : <i>Income</i> : <i>Expenditue</i> : <i>Saving</i>	Php 147,888.00 123,690.00 24,190.00	(2003)
<i>Labor Force</i>	36.4 million	(2007), 38% women
<i>Unemployment</i>	7.8%, 2.4% growth of employment from 2005	(2006) (32.3 million employed), (13.6 million, informal sector)
<i>Public Expenditure</i> : <i>debt service</i> : <i>education</i> : <i>health</i> : <i>housing</i> : <i>military</i>	10.9% 4.26% 1.6% 1.3% 1.0%	(1998-2000), taken as % of GDP

**Table 2:** Summary of Economic Indicators (NCSO,DTI, HUDCC, Habitat)

The poverty incidence is still high though, with many families still below the poverty line. Unemployment is relatively high although decreasing in recent years. The big labor force (36.4 million) is one of the country's strongest assets. With a

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<sup>2</sup> The national election was held on May 14, 2007. This included the selection of Senators, the Representatives to the Lower House, and local government officials. It was generally peaceful although tainted with accusations of cheating, which is common characteristics of Philippine elections. The opposition won majority of the Senate seats but the Lower House as well as the local government positions remain in strong control of the administration candidates. This somehow gave the present government of President Gloria Arroyo a chance for political stability.

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large number of overseas workers sending cash from abroad, the economy has been steadily stable and has weathered much of the past crises.

The housing supply is always a factor of the economy. A robust economy can possibly redound to a more effective housing delivery system. The Philippines has to make greater strides in accelerating its present economic take off so as to address better the serious housing inadequacy that the country is experiencing.

## Shelter Related Facts and Figures

### **Housing Situationer**

The continuous battle against the acute inadequacy of housing preoccupies each administration that sits to govern the country. And it seems no long lasting solution is coming yet in sight. As *Table 3* shows, housing production is way behind the increase of household units per year due to population growth plus the backlog. The production capacity of both the public and private housing producers is overwhelmingly disproportionate to the staggering housing backlog that ought to be met. Corollarily, the current housing output is likewise disproportionate to the growth of population and the consequential increase in the number of households that need to be provided with shelter annually.

### Actors in Shelter Delivery and their Roles

#### *The National Government Bodies*

The Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) is the main authorized body of the national government that implements its national shelter program. The HUDCC has under its umbrella other shelter agencies namely, the National Housing Authority (NHA), the National Home Mortgage and Finance Corporation (NHMFC), the Housing and Land Use Regulatory Board (HLURB), the Home Development Mutual Fund (HDMF) and the Home Guarantee Corporation (HGC).

<i>Particulars</i>	<i>Figures</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
<i>No. of Households</i>	<i>15,271,545Hh</i>	<i>(2004) new 250,000 per year</i>
<i>Housing stock</i>	<i>882,823 units</i>	<i>(2004)</i>
<i>Housing Need</i> : backlog : Informal settlers : homeless : substandard : new household	<i>(3,637,704 units)</i> <i>1,872,747</i> <i>1,255,382</i> <i>6,747</i> <i>214,155</i> <i>1,550,802</i>	<i>needed for 2001-2004</i>
<i>Population density</i> : country : NCR	<i>255 p per sq km</i> <i>617 p per sq km</i>	<i>(2004) 2.36% growth p.a 1.6 % MManila</i>
<i>Housing Production</i> : public : private : others	<i>(340,000 units)</i> <i>220,000 units</i> <i>90,000 units</i> <i>30,000 units</i>	<i>Approximate per year (2005)</i>
<i>Resettlement Projects</i> : North rail project : Suth Rail Project	<i>35,690 Hh</i> <i>39,430 Hh</i>	<i>other resettlement projects: Mt Pinatubo, Fort Boni, Clark, Subic, Poro Point, NLEX, SLEX</i>

**Table 3:** Housing Statistics in the Philippines (NCSO,DTI, HUDCC, Habitat)

HUDCC is the primary agency that prepares, integrates, coordinates and supervises plans, programs and activities of the government relative to urban planning, development and renewal, including land use, zoning, housing provision, regulation and finance, and marginal settlement. Currently there is a move to elevate HUDCC into the Department of Housing and Urban Development (DHUD). The DHUD Bill now in Congress seeks to rationalize the existing institutional set-up for housing and urban development. The present housing set-up is complex and characterized by overlapping functions, mandates and programs of various agencies involved. The DHUD shall eventually serve as a “one-stop shop” that will provide the housing needs of the country and will facilitate and ensure availability of affordable housing. The bill sees the need to restructure the different housing agencies and corporations. The HUDCC (which is merely a coordinating body) then shall be strengthened and empowered with direct control and supervision over all housing agencies and corporations.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Medium Term Philippine Development Plan, 2004-2010.*

### *Local Government*

Currently, the local government units (LGUs) have a blurred and weak role as housing provider in its own territory. This is caused by weak financial standing, lack of competency in urban planning function, and ambiguous housing mandate from the law. However, the new DHUD bill will empower the LGUs through the creation of Local Housing Boards in every city and municipality. The proposed Local Housing Boards to be created in all LGUs shall formulate, develop, implement and monitor policies on the provision of housing and resettlement areas. These will be tasked to observe the right of the underprivileged and homeless for a just and humane eviction and demolition.

The Boards shall be empowered to implement the following; (a) prepare local shelter plans; (b) assist in the preparation of CLUPs; (c) approve preliminary and final subdivision and development plans; (d) evaluate and resolve issues in the issuance of development permits; (e) ensure compliance with the 20 percent balanced housing requirement<sup>4</sup> in the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA); and (f) identify lands for socialized housing, among others.

### *NGOs & CBOs*

The non-government organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) are important partners of the government in providing housing for the poor. In the country, two dynamic NGO groups such as the Gawad Kalinga (GK) and the Habitat for Humanity are currently the most popular in their projects of house building for the underprivileged. The record shows that the two organizations have already provided a total of 8,979 housing units for the improvement of the plight of slum dwellers.

CBOs such as those organized by homeowners (especially in slum areas) help in the program of shelter provision. Many have been working with the NGOs and LGUs to implement housing projects in their localities. CBOs usually provide the manpower for volunteered 'sweat equity' programme<sup>5</sup> as a requisite to owning a house. These organizations also lobby for government action on land ownership and housing

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<sup>4</sup> *This requirement provides that in every housing development project, at least 20 % of the units or project cost shall be for socialized housing.*

<sup>5</sup> *'Sweat equity' means the share of would-be beneficiaries of a housing unit in a housing programme of the GK or Habitat. It requires that the household beneficiary contribute a specified number of hours of work in the housing construction site to be considered for an award.*

provision through the Community Mortgage Programme (CMP). In private subdivisions, homeowners associations help maintain the upkeep of the community through their monthly contributions.

#### *Private Sector/Housing Producers*

Private housing development is active in the Philippines particular in the more profitable segment of the medium to high level categories of housing production. High level development firms such as the Ayala Land, Megaworld, Robinsons, and the Villar group of companies among others have contributed to the upper-end housing stock. For the lower bracket of housing, developers particularly those belonging to established organizations like the Socialized Housing Developers Association (SHDA) are seen as effective contributors. They help in the identification of land for housing, joint venture developments with the government, and as financiers of housing projects for socialized, middle-income, and the open market housing.

#### *Research Institutions*

Academe-based research institutions like the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) which is domiciled in the U.P. once in a while give information on issues about housing. But the research works being carried out in different government institutions appear to be of *partial initiative* in nature as evidenced by the lack of compiled reliable data on various areas particularly dealing with urban poor housing. Housing as a subject has received continued interest over the years but studies remain isolated in scope. There is a need for consolidated study efforts focusing on this very relevant topic.

#### *Housing Programmes*

The government housing programmes for the poor include the HUDCC's Asset Reform Programme; the NHA's programmes on slum upgrading, sites and services, land tenurial assistance, community land acquisition support, grants-in-aid for housing, cooperative housing, resettlement, emergency housing assistance, housing materials assistance, medium-rise housing projects, and completed housing; and the Community Mortgage Programme of the NHMFC.

## ***The Absence of Comprehensive Programme for Research & Development of Housing in the Local Context***

There is an absence of real and sustained programme of research on Housing in the country and it is a sad reality considering the gravity of the housing problem and the urgency required to provide adequate shelter to the burgeoning population. This absence can be seen in virtually all areas; in the academe, the industry, and even in the government.

A number of academic institutions may have been doing partial studies about housing and related topics but there is no concrete, continuous programme of research specifically devoted towards the advancement of knowledge for the development of housing and finding long lasting solutions to all its problems. The leading schools and universities offering architecture degrees such as the University of Sto. Thomas (UST), Far Eastern University (FEU), Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP), Central Colleges of the Philippines (CCP), and Mapua Institute of Technology (Mapua) among others, appear to have noncomprehensive, non focused studies on housing just like the University of the Philippines College of Architecture (UPCA). This is attested to by my students in the Master of Architecture Graduate Programme who themselves are faculty members in these schools.

Industries may have their own research and development programmes but understandably the knowledge generated is usually restricted and not easily disseminated to the public due to proprietary reasons. Most are research generated overseas and do not necessarily represent the local context.

In the government side, the picture is likewise bleak, as its 'hands are already full' so to speak in what to give priority to considering the myriads of problems it has to address. The present thrust of the government is to produce and provide shelter fast, physically at least, and the need for a deeper understanding of housing in all its contexts takes a lesser importance. The idea that advance knowledge generated through research can provide long lasting solution to the problem better than the current thinking is still a hard-sell commodity to policy makers who face the daunting task of utilizing what is available at hand, for pragmatic reasons or otherwise.

Government agencies, such as the NHA, HLURB, NCSO, and PCUP do make reports of their projects, statistics, studies which are often used by researchers as



database. However, such data may be limited or sometimes of low reliability because of being produced through non systematic, nonvalidated means of collection or through endless reference or quotations from other agencies' reports which are themselves referred from other unverified sources. This fact was strongly brought to fore when during the Manila phase of this advanced training course, audiences with the NHA, PCUP, and the mayors of Manila and Quezon City were granted. During the open forum, the executives of the NHA and PCUP were unanimous in knowing that their data is conflicting and 'outsourced'. The Manila Executive Secretary gave a figure of 80,000 units of housing backlog or deficits in the city; the Quezon City Executive Secretary on the other hand can not categorically state a specific figure. This seems highly ridiculous on the face of the well-publicized 3.6 to 4 million housing backlog/deficit that the country allegedly has. Manila is one major city and therefore claiming to have only around 2% of the country's housing deficit puts its figure in a dubious state. Quezon City is the biggest city in the country but being fussy in its statistics would not help any further in delivering the needed shelters for the poor.

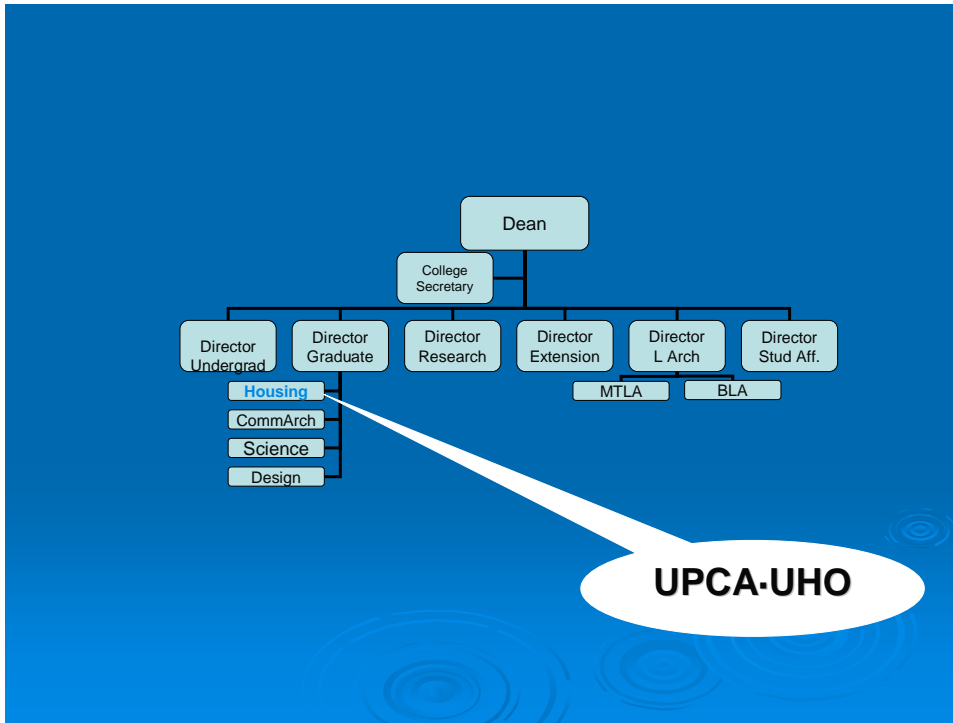
## 2 My Organisation

I am presently connected with the University of the Philippines as an Associate Professor of Architecture and formerly served as the Director of the Master of Architecture Graduate Programme (2004-2007). This position entrusted me to have oversight on the implementation of the Graduate Programme and find ways to further develop its curriculum. These tasks gave me the responsibility to propose innovations, liaise with various entities, local and overseas, both academic and non academic for the enrichment of the Programme. One particular focus the Programme is trying to achieve is to uplift the quality of research in the College, as research is the acknowledged 'soul' of the graduate course. This is the guiding principle that we currently subscribe to and used as basis in trying to institute and nurture a *culture of research* in the College of Architecture (UPCA).

How is my organization related to the topic of Housing and the issue of finding solutions to many of its problems? The diagram below (**Figure 2**) shows the present organizational structure of the UPCA and establishes how it relates very much to the

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topic. As one of the 5 specialization courses in the Graduate Programme, Housing is designated as a major area of study.



**Figure 2:** Present Structure of the UPCA and the proposed UPCA-UHO

This specific field of study will put the connection between my identification of a shelter problem and how my organization could be involved in finding solutions to it.

### 3 Shelter Problem

#### Identification of Critical Shelter Problem

The indisputable absence of real and sustained programme of research & development in the field of Housing in the country is ironic in the face of the fact that housing is a crippling national problem. This absence may lead to many other problems. It can compound the already tough situation if not render the attempts to solution as futile because measures taken maybe based on incomplete understanding of various facets that influence housing and therefore may not work long lastingly.

Without new knowledge and an indepth understanding of housing in its local context it would be difficult to find solutions that address the problem decisively.

**Who** is affected by the problem?

Everyone is affected by the problem.

For instance, policies made for solutions maybe hinged on faulty understanding of the housing situation. The problem of informal settlers is a case in point. It maybe viewed on the context of economy or governance more than addressing the causes that may be rooted in socio-cultural dimensions. Relocation can be an attractive option yet in many instances, many that have been done before failed without even realizing completely why, how, and what happened. Authoritative studies done before and after relocation for the purpose of impact evaluation among others, are not usually done. Research can fill up this void. If a competent body dedicated to studying holistically the matter of housing in its multidimensional, multidisciplinary aspects can be established, there are solutions that can be identified, not just in the issue of relocation but in many other areas of concern as well.

Another area where the problem affects many is in the matter of information management. Because of lack of research, data and statistics about housing are tough to get by. Try to write a report or a paper requiring data on housing production on national or local levels for instance, and one can painfully realize how difficult it is to obtain information that are even incomplete if not missing. A dedicated research institution can be a reservoir and data base of pertinent information that can be used as basis for policy making and action.

**Who** can influence on the problem?

The actors identified to be prime instrument in effecting a change in this particular problem are the people in the academe. Research is nurtured more in the academic environment than the restricted laboratories of profit driven industries. It is therefore ideal to have a center for research in an academic instituion such as the UPCA.

Research is a collaborative undertaking. Prime actors and intended beneficiaries can combine hands in doing a work of reseach. A center for research & development in the UPCA for instance can establish collaboration with government entities such as the NHA, HUDCC, HLURB, and NHMFC among other organizations. With the inclusion of other sectors such as the NGOs, CBOs, LGUs, and the like, a holistic approach to research in housing can be realized.

**When** does the problem appear?

The lack of sustained research has been there ever since and perhaps it is rather a reflection of the national situation than a selective area occurrence because the

absence is not only found in Housing but in most fields of endeavour as well. It may have been a matter of national of policy or the lack of it, but in an economy the level of which is like the Philippines', it is readily understood without further explaining that research lags behind most other areas that are of priority at the moment. This idea perhaps also answers the question -*why* this problem exists.

## 4 Proposal for Change and Improvement

There are many problems that characterize the shelter situation in the Philippines. But one common denominator among these problems is the scanty amount of research that is devoted to the comprehensive understanding of Housing in the local context of the country, which is the very problem identified at 3.

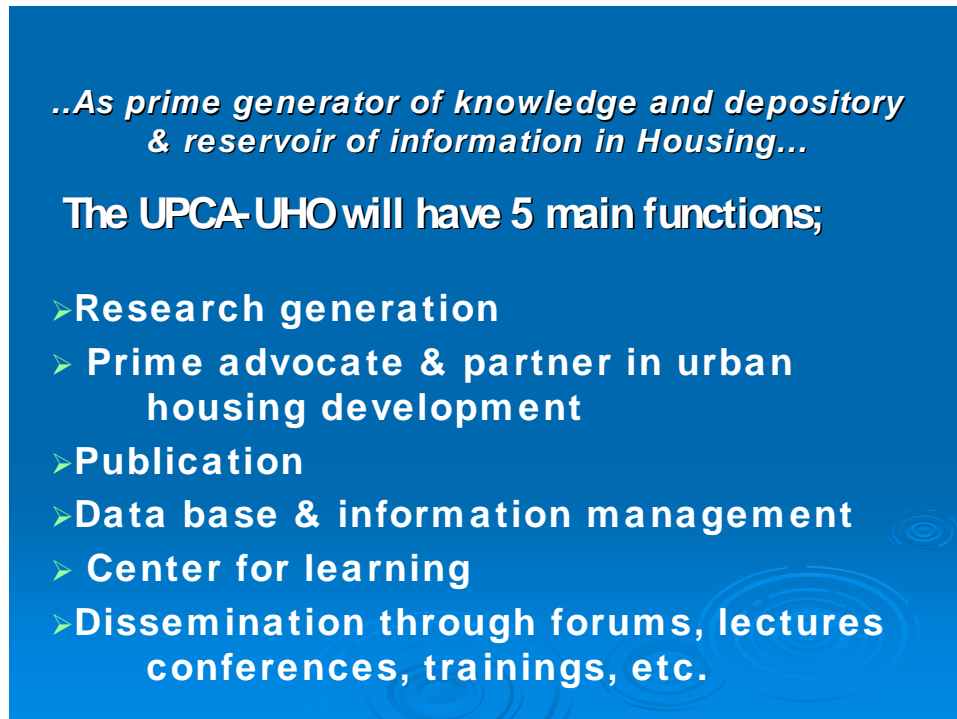
While there are at the very least initial steps to study Housing, the efforts have been paltry. There may be a number of works and studies that have been done but most appear to be of partial initiative in nature. And although Housing as a subject itself has received continued interests over the years, studies remain sparse and isolated in scope. There is a need therefore for consolidated study efforts focusing on this very critical topic. And this is where the UPCA could get involved in.

A center for research and development of Housing is being proposed in this study. This shall be called the **UPCA•UHO** (*U.P. College of Architecture Urban Housing Observatory*). It will serve as both the physical and conceptual venue for establishing a sustained, real programme of research & development in urban poor housing and shall function, among others, as follows (**Figure 3**);

a. Prime generator of knowledge in the field of Housing - As a leading research entity in this particular field, the **UPCA•UHO** will be in the forefront of research and will advance the frontier of knowledge through sustained research projects dealing with various issues in Housing. The knowledge generated can help provide long lasting solutions to the problems plaguing Housing.

b. Prime advocate & partner- The center will solicit cooperation among various entities both locally and abroad. It will seek partnership with academes, industries, international bodies, and government agencies for the furtherance of its objectives. It will advocate and influence public opinions through authoritative research outputs. The establishment of good track record in research and learning will be one of its

main goals. When this is achieved, it is envisioned that the center will be a strong force in the field of Housing. It should be able to influence policies made to effect change in the Housing field.



**Figure 3:** The proposed functions of UPCA-UHO

c. Depository and reservoir of information on Housing – As a lead body on managing information about Housing, the center will serve as a data bank & information center, and sharing of data with the public will be a major undertaking.

d. Center of learning - The center will move toward offering degree courses, holding of training and seminars for various housing sectors (LGUs, NGOs, CBOs, locales, among others), and conducting on-site research projects to tie in the knowledge derived from research laboratory with that of the real-world situation.

e. It will spearhead dissemination of information via publications, discourses, trainings, participation in local and international forums and other similar venues.

To realize the proposal, this initial study is carried out with the aim of laying out the basic requirements for the establishment of the center. The study seeks to;

1. derive an understanding of the present situation of the UPCA and the Housing field.

2. investigate and analyze how the existing policies, structure, and/or programmes both in the U.P. and externally would bear on the realization of the proposal.
3. Formulate and advance an action plan (process, methodology, or policy) that will put in the basic framework for the establishment of **UPCA-UHO**, a center for research and development of **urban poor housing** in the College of Architecture.

Strengths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Knowledge and attainable competence in the area of urban design &amp; planning, socio-cultural aspects of housing, and construction among other fields.</li> <li>2. Resources in terms of human assets</li> <li>3. Existence of strong networks both in academic and industry circles such as with local and international academic institutions (<b>Figure 4</b>)</li> <li>4. Focus can be instituted on issue of <b>urban poor housing</b></li> </ol>
Weaknesses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. College bureaucracy</li> <li>2. Low financial budget/asset of the College</li> <li>3. Inadequate existing physical development assets (lab, computers, etc)</li> <li>4. Research thrust not instituted</li> <li>5. Low level of research in the present situation</li> </ol>
Opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cooperation with local and international networks (<b>Figure 4</b>)</li> <li>2. Government's focus on Housing as a critical priority</li> <li>3. The presence of active NGOs, CBOs, etc. (<b>Figure 5</b>)</li> <li>4. Presence of many and variety of players in housing production (such as those in the middle-upper level bracket of housing production; learning from their experiences in the technical and management aspects can give insights on the provision of housing in the lower level)</li> </ol>
Threats	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Highly competitive spirit among actors in Housing</li> <li>2. Political instability might drastically change government focus</li> <li>3. Tight university bureaucracy</li> </ol>

**Table 4:** SWOT Analysis

In line with the aim of laying the basic fundamentals, a SWOT analysis (**Table 4**) shown above is made to determine the position of the UPCA in relation to the possible role it can play in helping realize the establishment of the **UPCA-UHO**.

**Present Linkages:**

1. **ACARE** - association of local Architecture schools for research & education, regular forums.
2. **MEGACITIES Conference** - association with Universities in Asia, regular international conferences.
3. **Collaboration** with Florida Atlantic U for housing research.
4. **Inter University** collaboration- tie up with the College of Engineering, Asian Inst. of Tourism for research.

**Figure 4:** Present linkages of the UPCA with various entities

**Collaboration & Linkages with Housing Entities**



NHA  
HDM  
ACADEME

TAO

NGOs

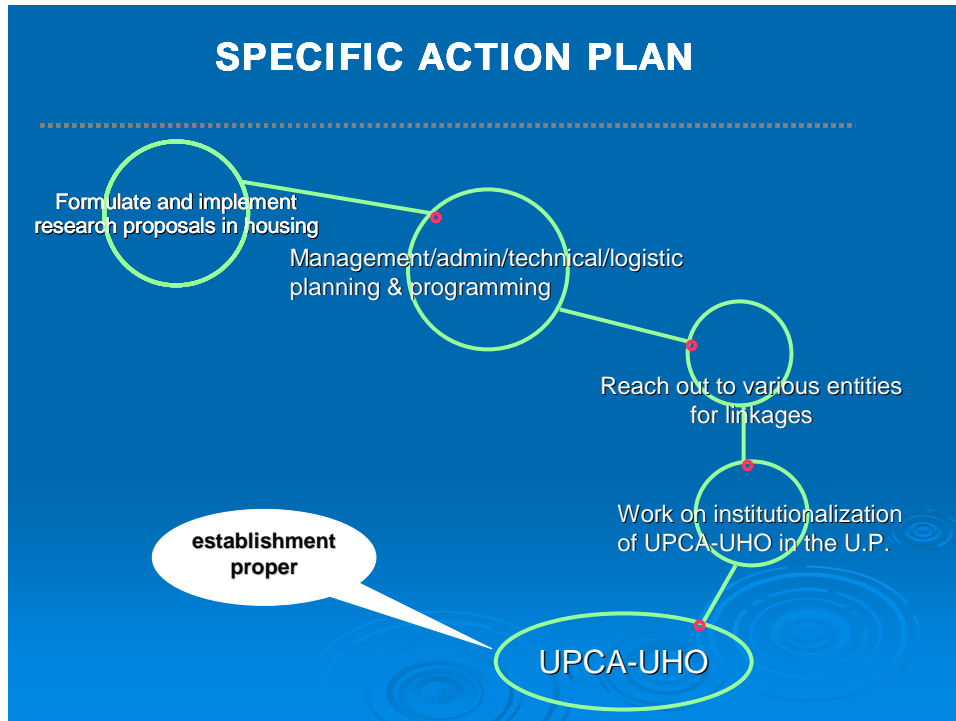
LGUs  
CBOs  
COOPs

*a partnership towards adequate housing...*

**'Manos a la Obra'**

**Figure 5:** Linkages with various organizations is a must to carry out an effective programme for the poor

## Annex: Action Plan



**Figure 6:** Action plan for the establishment of UPCA-UHO

The diagram in **Figure 6** shows the plan of action that will be pursued in the establishment of the UPCA-UHO.

A first concrete step to follow is the formulation and implementation of high impact research projects that will demonstrate competence in the delivery and performance in the urban housing field. These will serve as proofs of dependability and track record to attract interest and commitment for collaboration and contribution from other sectors. The U.P. system is an output oriented institution and requires concrete show of performance from its different institutions. The carrying out of research projects can be possible without yet the formal establishment of the UPCA-UHO center.

An important step to carry out simultaneous with the first is the aspect of planning/programming for the management, administrative, technical and logistical



matters needed for the UPCA-UHO establishment. The following measures can be undertaken;

- Study the structure of the College vis-à-vis the University's framework for instituting a change (bureaucracy, procedures, red tapes, impediments, etc.).
- Plan out clear strategies, structures, and options (fallback) that will fit in the existing framework and the anticipated adaptation.
- Formulate programmes, plans that involve short and long term goals & objectives and draw out specific 'work blueprint' (proposed staffing, budget/ financial plans, time-frame schedule, curriculums, output targets, etc.).
- Act and carry out initial undertakings as procedural tasks are simultaneously done.
- Check, review and implement.

These are things necessary to carry out the last step of actual institutionalization of UPCA-UHO in the U.P.

On the other hand, the establishment of linkages with various entities in the local and international levels can be pursued actively anytime from the period of planning for establishment and until an unspecified time when a healthy relationship with other organizations is achieved.

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