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IMPRESSIONS ON THE 1995 WORLD YOUTH DAY (WYD): THE MANILA EXPERIENCE

Outline

An attempt to illustrate how planners and organizers, alike, may provide solutions for big events taking place over a short period of time, like the 1995 World Youth Day, operating under limited resources, that a developing country like the Philippines is usually faced with, without drawing adverse effects on the environment, likewise taking into consideration the concept of sustainability, in the process, will be done, in connection with ISoCaRP's 38th International Planning Congress' theme. This paper will be presented mainly in narrative form subdivided into three parts, namely: the Pre-WYD, the WYD and the Post-WYD.

Introduction

The World Youth Day, one of the biggest international religious festivals, particularly conceptualized by the Roman Catholic Church and officially approved by the Pope, has been taking place every two years, since 1985. This celebration is a worldwide youth movement primarily aimed at inciting, especially the young Catholics in taking up a more proactive role as Christians in every society and thereby to renew, revive and/or rediscover a more vigorous Christian life in general, and faith, in particular. This urgent calling for re-evangelization, meaning: to preach the gospel, as well as to encourage new converts or returnees to Christianity belongs to the so-called 'priority list' of the Church.

Celebrating World Youth Days has since become an annual event. The event is a vehicle for youth to gather and give witness to the world that peace is possible. There is a strong theme throughout these gatherings of global peace and unity. The event alternates between local celebrations and an international gathering. Every two years, the gathering of international youth is held in a different country.

It all began in Rome (1985), then in Buenos Aires in 1987 with estimated 1 Million participants, then in Santiago de Compostela, Spain (around 600,000 people), followed by Tschenstochau, Poland (1991), with more than 1.5 million visitors. The 5th World Youth Day in 1993 took place in Denver, USA with around 700,000 participants. A decade after the 1st WYD Celebration, came the most attended, largest ever, event, which took place in Manila, Philippines, estimated to have over 4 million participants, composed of the youth, adults and children, Christians and non-Christians, alike.

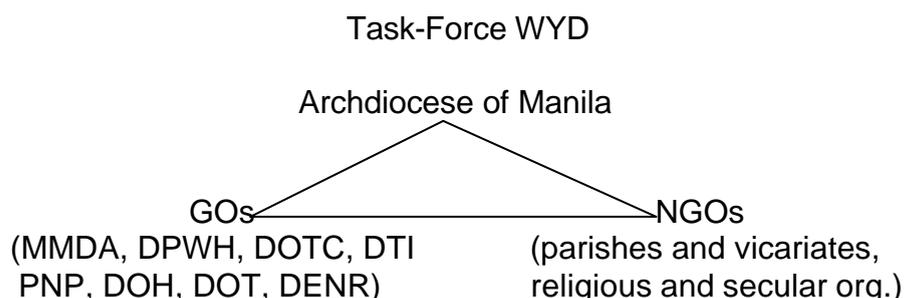
The Philippine folk, known for its hospitality, congeniality, joviality and most especially for its inspiring religiosity, as well as for having a rich

and fascinating culture with a manifold of faces to offer (folklore, good food, beaches, nature, languages, reasonable prices on goods and services, etc.), likewise, an intriguing combination of foreign influence and modern society, like; fashion, malls, cellular phones, fast food, traffic and smog..., made the country an obvious choice for the year 1995. Moreover, the Philippines is the only Christian country in Asia. According to the 1990 local Census, 88.88 percent are Christians, among which are 82,92% Roman Catholics, 5.43% protestants (composed of the Baptists, Evangelicals, Lutherans, Methodists, etc.), then, some 0.53% 'Born Again Christians.' The remaining 11.12%, are composed of the Moslems with 4.57%, the 'Aglipays' (2.63%) and the 'Iglesia ni Kristo' (2.34%.)

Pre-WYD

Manila's bid to host World Youth Day became official in 1993 when the Philippine Conference of Catholic Bishops unanimously endorsed the plan and on Palm Sunday of 1994 in St. Peter's Square in Rome, young Catholics from the United States handed over to representatives of the church in the Philippines the World Youth Day cross. The pilgrim cross goes from one continent to another. The idea of having the youths of the world gather together for prayer and renewal was the brainchild -- and continues to be the love --of Pope John Paul II. With his strong belief that the future lies in the hands and hearts of dedicated and loving young people, he came upon the idea and has selected each of the cities himself.

The bid came after the country's bishops, spent more than a year studying the feasibility of bringing World Youth Day to Manila without incurring a lot of expenses by taking into account the existing facilities, infrastructures and establishments in Manila especially the Luneta Park and its environs. The moment the event had been officially declared, the Philippine Catholic Church headed by the Archdiocese of Manila began with a massive information campaign on the forthcoming WYD in order to win as many sponsors/advertisers as possible, basically to take care of the 'fund-raising' part. Simultaneously, they coordinated with the Philippine Government spearheaded by the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) under the auspices of the Office of the President, to come up with Task-Force WYD for the main purpose of ensuring a well-planned, organized program of events. The Task-Force was composed mainly of GOs and NGOs, and moderated by the Archdiocese of Manila. The said Archdiocese was also in charge of coordinating and communicating regularly with the Vatican.



On the government side, matters regarding logistics were taken care of by the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) in cooperation with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH). Issues on transportation, traffic and telecommunications were shouldered by the Department of Transportation and Communication (DOTC). Maintenance of peace and order was for the Philippine National Police (PNP), whereas environmental concerns were assigned to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The Tourism Department (DOT) and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) had to coordinate/organize the accommodations and tours and the businesses (food and beverages, public markets, shops, laundromats...), respectively. In case of emergencies and health problems, the DOH or the Department of Health sent out medical staffs, ambulances to the events' sites, at the same time assigned additional beds to specific hospitals and clinics nearby. Helicopters, fire trucks, public and private schools, gymnasiums, sport halls and stadiums as well as cultural centers and parks were made available for the event, basically for security, emergency, accommodations (especially for the delegates coming from other provinces) and as venue for related activities.

The NGOs (composed of bishops, priests, nuns, seminarians, lay persons, and volunteers from secular groups) on the other hand, took charge of the fund raising, the construction and decoration of the stage at Luneta park where the Pope together with other priests and bishops held the final mass, posters, documentation, registration, facilitating the different activities, t-shirts, streamers, looking out for foster families who were willing to accommodate foreign and local delegates who were not able to find a place elsewhere. Moreover, the media - newspaper, radio and television both private and government owned, local and international, did a full coverage of the 5-day event.

The general planning, organization and coordination of such a colossal event required at least a year, but the whole intensive preparation actually took place only within six months prior to the culmination of the 1995 WYD. Each department/group was assigned to come up with proposals in managing the specific tasks assigned to them, before they have been approved by the Task-Force, and then first tested then later on applied.

WYD

The delegates have come on the invitation of the Holy Father from countries all over the world to listen to others and share their faith and life experiences, hence, felt the universality of the Church in all its diversity. This meeting on the Philippines made the world seem to be much smaller. The focus of WYD events is on young adults ages 18 to 35.

A number of activities and concepts have been thought of and implemented in line with the 5-day international celebration in January of 1995 in Manila, among which were: the International Youth Forum, prayer festivals, Holy Hours, pilgrimages or church visitations, prayer meetings, Holy Masses, praise, singing, dancing, theater plays and concerts, exhibits, bible readings and studies, catechism and workshops, tours, socialization. The pinnacle of the event-an all-night vigil and the final Eucharistic Mass on the 5th day con-

celebrated by none other than the Holy Father himself with other bishops and priests from all over the world at Luneta Park, were suffused with prayer, laughter and reflection. More than a mile of back-to-back pilgrims waited to enter the park for the vigil and Mass, therefore, a rerouting of traffic within Manila had to be undertaken. A 10-km radius (vehicle) ban around Luneta Park before the vigil and Mass had been issued to ensure order and security, hence, pilgrims were organized to walk from the North, South, East and West sides, so, some streets had to be closed for traffic during the last two days. Specific sites were assigned for parking, especially for those buses carrying pilgrims from faraway places. Likewise, vendors of foods, drinks and souvenirs have been designated places for their enterprises. Police forces, volunteers, toilets were strategically located, so as to maintain peace, cleanliness/hygiene and order.

All activities and measures had been practically carried out as planned except for some minor problems making the WYD indeed a total success.

Post-WYD

The big event had been planned and carried out with such fun, love and enthusiasm that a post-event trauma was never experienced, except for the fact that locals required some time to adjust from the euphoric state to normalcy. The logistics of this event are mind-boggling, on the scale of the Olympics, but with more attendance. It has served the purpose of promoting and bringing in a big fiscal turn over to the country, since income for small to big scale industries (whether in tourism, food and beverages, electronics, shoes and wearing apparel, etc...) had been generated. But more importantly, it has served the main purpose of the event, that is promoting peace, solidarity and spirituality among nations, hence cultural encounters in a unique, extraordinary manner ensued.

As aforementioned, only existing infrastructure and facilities were utilized, many voluntary jobs were created and all necessary security, hygienic and environmental measures had been taken cared of (0% crime rate, relatively clean environment), that a high level of sustainability (economical, environmental, social) has been achieved. Success, therefore, in this case, is not necessarily measured or based on extravagant display of new infrastructure and facilities but on satisfaction and sustainability, instead.

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