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# INTERPLAN

A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DIVISION  
OF THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION

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Editors **Lynn Abdouni, Andy Cross, Jay Skardis, Michelle Tullo, Antonella Salmeron**

American Planning Association International Division  
1030 15th St NW  
Suite 750 West  
Washington, DC 20005



American Planning Association

**International Division**

*Creating Great Communities for All*

As always, the end of the year is a time of self-reflection. Whether we wish to do so or not, there is a cosmic imperative to think about the year that has gone by and set goals for what is to come. Like many, I have a tendency to spend more time thinking about regrets, failures, and uncompleted tasks than accomplishments. Perhaps this is okay; guilt can be as good a motivator as anything. Looking at what we have achieved as a division, though, the totality of our achievements is really something to be proud of. I am grateful for the privilege of being part of this wonderful organization.

The coming year is a special one for me, as it will be my last year as Chair of the International Division. Like presidents, APA division chairs are limited to two terms in office. Unlike most presidents, I am incredibly fortunate to have a fantastic team of leaders and volunteers that I get to work with. In truth, several of them are much larger contributors to the success of our division than I am. Still, the looming transition has me thinking about what I really want to accomplish before I go.

The International Division has established an exciting new partnership with the Humphrey Fellows Program at MIT, and I am looking forward to finding new ways to capitalize on this relationship. This year's Fellows are an incredibly accomplished group of professionals; their presentations at this year's World Town Planning Day provided insights that we would not have gotten anywhere else. The Division has also been successful at establishing the Humanitarian Planning Committee, the Aging and Resilience Committee, the Climate and Sustainability Working Group, the Japan-United States Collaboration Group, and the Planifiquemos initiative. The goal for the coming year is to connect these initiatives more closely with APA's Policy and Advocacy groups.

There are a number of exciting new endeavors coming from APA national that I would like members to be on the lookout for. In January, APA will be releasing its first-ever trends report as part of its foresight initiative. This report is APA's attempt to get ahead of the rapid changes to planning work instead of being reactive. This year's National Planning Conference will feature a new hybrid format, allowing members to participate whether they are attending in-person or remotely. The in-person component is something that I have missed badly over the past two years; seeing you all is a source of joy for me. I am hopeful that I will have the opportunity to see many of you in San Diego.

This is a good time to encourage all Division Members to consider the role that they would like to play in the division going forward. Elections for Executive Board are coming up next summer, which means the time for nominations will be arriving soon. Other volunteer positions open up regularly in the division, and our committees are always looking for new participants, even if you cannot commit to anything more than coming to a meeting or webinar. Please reach out to me anytime if you have an interest in being more involved.

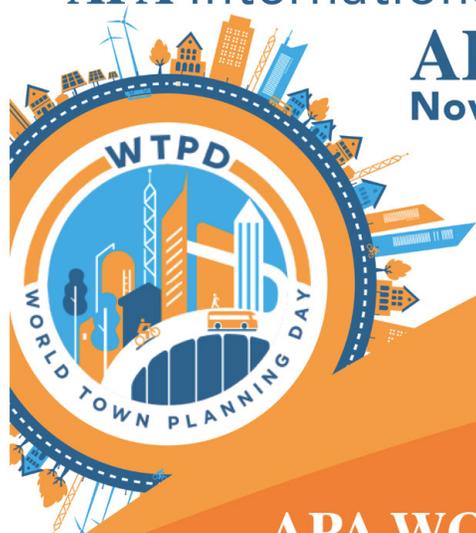


*Michael Kolber, AICP, is a senior planner for the City of Trenton, NJ. He worked for the NJ Departments of Environmental Protection and Community Affairs and served overseas as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Burkina Faso and as a Monitoring Specialist for the International Rescue Committee in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Domestically, Mr. Kolber served as a volunteer in the United Way of Greater Union County and the Manhattan Borough President's Office. Michael has an M.S. in Urban Planning from Columbia University.*

APA International Division presents:

**APA WTPD 2021**

**November 8, 2021**



PLANNING FOR  
INTER-GENERATIONAL  
EQUITY

**APA WORLD TOWN PLANNING DAY 2021**

# Planning for Inter-generational Equity

## Division-led APA World Town Planning Day 2021 a Success!

By Kate Holmquist, AICP, RLA, Vice-Chair for Special Projects, APA International Division

Each year the International Division organizes the American Planning Association's World Town Planning Day (WTPD) event, bringing together planners, urban designers & placemakers from around the world. Held virtually on November 8th, the 72nd annual WTPD conference, led by Division Vice-Chair Kate Holmquist and Coordinator Michelle Tullo, honed in on the cross-cutting globally relevant topic: Planning for Inter-generational Equity.

As the world faces global crises like climate change and pandemics, planning for sustainable and equitable communities requires both long-term thinking and immediate action. Speakers joined us from over 15 countries to explore how planners can be changemakers today and support intergenerational equity at the community, national and global scales.

Seven sessions, including the Young Planner and Fast + Fun series, looked at equitable climate adaptation, implementation and accountability, and asked "who needs to be at the table today" to represent future interests. The event also served as a debut for the Division's new Climate & Sustainability Work Group, who hosted the successful session "Inclusively Resilient Urbanism," taking a comprehensive look at the implementation side of inclusive climate action to address social inequalities. With 7.5 hours of programming on the progressive topic of inter-generational equity and strong turnout from morning until evening that nearly doubled registration over last year, the International Division earned impressive commendation from the American Planning Association (APA).

The event brought together a diverse array of speakers and attendees to great success. International perspectives and experiences we were able to showcase are critical to the global knowledge-sharing and collaboration that are at the heart of World Town Planning Day — and that the International Division works to bring to APA.

# An update of the Japan-United States Collaboration Group

By Jing Zhang, Vice Chair of Communications, APA ID

## Mission and Goals

The mission of the Japan-United States Collaboration Group (JUSCOG) is to initiate, promote, and facilitate collaboration between American planners and Japanese planners through networking, knowledge sharing, and project partnership. It has three goals: 1) building and maintaining a platform where Japanese planners and American planners can network and exchange knowledge; 2) developing and distributing materials on topics that are of interest to both countries; and 3) facilitating collaboration between Japanese and American planners on projects and researches.

## What we have done

Since its inception in March 2021, the group has invited 4 guest speakers in its monthly meetings, developed 8 pages of summary notes on disaster mitigation, organized a training on disaster mitigation and planning delivered by the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center, and is developing an International Student Peer Paring Program (ISP3). Currently, the group has 21 members including 3 representatives to Japan.

## Be an APA Interest Group

Recently, the JUSCOG submitted an application to APA for establishing an Interest Group of Japan and United States Collaboration. Japan and the United States hold prominent roles in promoting sustainable urban development across the world. The two countries also face common challenges including disaster risk management and recovery, housing, and aging communities. A robust and effective collaboration in urban planning between Japan and the United States will benefit the two countries and the rest of the world. It will also demonstrate the power of democracy in addressing global urban issues.

The group is waiting for the APA Division Council's feedback on this application.

 American Planning Association  
 International Division  
 Creating Great Communities for All

**Japan Collaboration Group**  
**INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PEER PAIRING PROGRAM (ISP3)**  
 Connecting planning school students in Japan and the United States

**Purpose**  
 - Broaden perspectives in urban planning and design.  
 - Build intercultural competence.  
 - Develop friendships with planners around the world.

**Program Start** January 2022, and every following odd-numbered month.  
**Program Length** 12 Weeks.

**Registration** Ongoing. No Deadline. Go to: [www.isp3.org/registration](http://www.isp3.org/registration)

**Eligibility** Students in planning or planning-related majors at universities in Japan and in the United States. Planning-related majors include architecture, landscape architecture, public administration, public policy, geography, urban studies, civil engineering, and natural resource management.

**Successful Participants will**  
 - receive a certificate and be recognized on the APA ID website and the ISP3 website;  
 - be invited to publish an article in the InterPlan Newsletter to share their pairing experience.

**Fee** Free to everyone.

**Pilot Period** Sept-Dec, 2021

**Contact** Project Manager - Jing Zhang, AICP | [jingzhangaicp@gmail.com](mailto:jingzhangaicp@gmail.com)

**Interact with us on social media**  
 [www.facebook.com/groups/jpnusaicp3/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/jpnusaicp3/)  [www.linkedin.com/groups/13989654/](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13989654/)

**ISP3.org** | Japan Collaboration Group: [international.planning.org/community/japan/](http://international.planning.org/community/japan/)

If you are interested in joining this group, email jing at [jingzhangaicp@gmail.com](mailto:jingzhangaicp@gmail.com)

# An update about the Planifiquemos project

By Jing Zhang, Vice Chair of Communications, APA ID

The mission of Planifiquemos project is to provide useful resources for planners and members of Latino communities to work together. To be more specific: 1. Help planners better engage, learn from, and assist members of Latino communities. 2. Provide people with the knowledge of urban planning for more effective participation in the planning process.

### *Project development timeline*

#### **March, 2021 - Spanish Translation**

Planifiquemos was initiated in March 2021 by the American Planning Association International Division. The original intent was to develop a handbook providing Spanish translations of terms and concepts used in planning, so planners can better engage Latino communities in the planning process.

#### **April - Latino/Hispanic Culture**

An advisory board was established in later April, and the project moved beyond its initial task to include the introduction of Latino culture to U.S. planners. It also started to consider introduce urban development in LATAM countries to U.S. planners.

#### **June - Knowledge Share**

The project was further extended, aiming to empower Latino communities with knowledge of planning. It embraced the idea that residents who understand key concepts and tools in planning can better advance their interest in the planning process. The project was to create a comprehensive handbook.

#### **October - Partnership with FIU**

The Planifiquemos team started to partner with Federación Iberoamericana Urbanistas (FIU), officially expanded the scope of the project to Latin American countries and even the Iberian Peninsula.

#### **November – present. Build with Webflow**

The team started to develop the website on Webflow, aiming to create a professionally developed full website serving planners and Latino communities.



### *Want to help?*

If you are a planner, you can help us create, review, or edit the content on various planning subjects: land use & urban design, transportation planning, planning for housing, planning for public health, and hazard mitigation & recovery.

If you are confident in translating English into Spanish, you can help us do some translations.

More information is on [Planifiquemos.org](https://www.planifiquemos.org) (website is under construction). Feel free to contact Jing at [jingzhangaicp@gmail.com](mailto:jingzhangaicp@gmail.com)

# Women in Planning and Architecture in Qatar: A Conversation with Dr. Mark David Major

By Kate Holmquist, AICP, RLA, Vice-Chair for Special Projects, APA International Division

I recently had the honor of co-organizing the first Women in Planning events at the International Society of City and Regional Planners' World Planning Congress in Qatar. While meeting women planners working in the Department of Urban Planning at the Ministry of Municipality in Doha, I was surprised to learn about an interesting phenomenon: a high percentage of planners and architects are women. I further learned about one main reason for this: Qatar University's overwhelmingly female students graduating from the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning.

The Qatar government has invested heavily in education, with Qatar University's 2008 annual average expenditure on higher education per student exceeding the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average by 45%. (1) Significantly, while women make up less than 30% of Qatar's population, they have comprised the majority of Qatar University's student body since its inception, and in 2017 women with at least a bachelors degree or equivalent outnumbered men two to one within the Qatar population twenty-five and older. (2) These trends have naturally had an influence. The female labor force participation reached 53% in 2016, exceeding the world average of 49.5% and Middle East and North Africa regional average of 21.6%. (3) While the reason for the women-only nature of the Qatar University undergraduate program in the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning is rooted in the culturally required gender separation of the campus, it represents an important opportunity for women.

Dr. Mark David Major, APA International Division Member and Assistant Professor at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning at Qatar University, invited me to visit the University and we sat down for a virtual interview about his experience working in the all-women undergraduate program.

Dr. Major did not fully realize the importance of female role models to students until he started inviting successful women in architecture and urban design to visit his classroom. "These students only know of famous male Architects and Planners, and maybe Zaha Hadid," explained Dr. Major, "so when I am able to have a woman planner or architect speak directly with students, you can see how



Kate Holmquist visiting Architecture Design Studio 1 at Qatar University's Department of Architecture and Urban Planning: Students (left-to-right) Sara Al Baker and Noor Elbadri, and (on the right) Kate Holmquist, AICP Certified Planner and Landscape Architect, APA International Division Vice-Chair for Special Projects.

big of an impression it makes.” I witnessed this first-hand when I visited his ARCT 211: Architectural Design Studio 1, where I was surrounded by students eager to speak to me. It was humbling to feel these young women's excitement and invigorating to think that I might play a positive role in demonstrating opportunities for women in the field of planning. For this reason, Dr. Major makes it a point to invite predominantly female reviewers to his studio — graduates of the program, when possible, as students routinely express appreciation for graduates coming back.

In our conversation Dr. Major repeatedly emphasized how over time he has seen an increase in women “asserting themselves as students and young professionals,” something he attributes in part to seeing the success and recognition of program graduates in their community. Dr. Major was overflowing with praise for former students and graduates of the Department, now accomplished urban planners and architects in Doha. Women like Almaha Alyafei and Ghada Fetais who lead the Building Permits Section of the Qatar Ministry of Municipality; and Maryam Al-Kuwari, an Architect within the Street Beautification Program of the Ashghal Public Works Authority. He describes Moza Al-Obaidan, Architect with the Qatari government architecture and engineering firm of PEO, as “one of the most empowered women” to graduate from the Department. Ms. Al-Obaidan demonstrated how she is challenging the status quo, when after presenting at the recent World Planning Congress, she was invited by the Deputy Undersecretary to present to the Ministry of Municipality on the topic Qatari neighborhoods.

When I asked him directly about the role he saw himself playing in improving equality for women as a male faculty member, Dr. Major stated strongly that he sees his students’ achievements outside the context of gender. While we agreed on the importance of avoiding tokenism, in my short conversations with women planners in Doha, many fondly mentioned Ibrahim Jaidah. He is a regionally renowned Architect and guest lecturer at the University, and per Major a huge supporter of the Department and its students. It is safe to say that Dr. Major’s mentorship holds similar importance with his current and former students. It is critical to acknowledge that male respect and support can be equally instrumental in empowering women and changing the way they are viewed in traditionally and often still male-dominated professions.



Design Studio 1 students (on the left) Hanan Al-Emadi, Zahra Al-najar with (center) Design Studio 1 instructors Dr. Mark David Major and Arch. Velina Mirincheva and (on the right ) Sara Al Baker and Hawra Moosawi



Students, instructors, and guests after a Design Studio 1 final jury in October 2021 at Qatar University with (left-to-right): second-year students Noor Elbadri and Sara Al Baker, Dr. Mark David Major, AEB GCEO Ibrahim Jaidah, Arch. Reham Qawasmeh, Ashghal Arch. Maryam Al Kuwari, and second-year student Shams Allawi.

As the global planning community works to take action on UN-Habitat Sustainable Development Goals 11 and 5 — supporting safe, sustainable, and equitable cities and communities — shifting to gender-inclusive urban development models and integrating gender perspectives in the built environment professions will be critical. In my visit, I was struck by the tangible impact that the all-women undergraduate program has had on the experience of women in the planning and architecture professions in Doha in just 10 years since its establishment. In addition to direct benefits, increasing female representation has had additional transformative benefits. There is real power in women students and young professionals seeing a career path open to them.

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(1) Qatar General Secretariat for Development Planning, March, 2011. “Qatar National Development Strategy 2011-2016: Towards Qatar National Vision 2030” p.138. Doha, Qatar. [https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/nds1/Documents/NDS\\_ENGLISH\\_SUMMARY.pdf](https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/nds1/Documents/NDS_ENGLISH_SUMMARY.pdf)

(2) [Databank.worldbank.org](https://databank.worldbank.org). World Development Indicators, The World Bank Group: Education attainment indicator, Qatar, 2017. Last modified December 16, 2021. [databank.worldbank.org](https://databank.worldbank.org)

(3) World Bank. 2017. Progress Towards Gender Equality in the Middle East and North Africa Region. Washington, DC. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/28965> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

# Disaster Risk Mitigation and Recovery

## - A Talk with Robert Olshansky, Kanako Iuchi, and Ichiko Taro

Japan-United States Collaboration Group (JUSCOG)  
virtual meeting on August 10, 2021.

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*JUSCOG: What is your impression about the disaster recovery planning in Japan and the United States?*

**Robert Olshansky:** In the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, the Japanese central government was very committed. They swiftly allocated a large number of funds for local government and communities. Those funds helped a lot in expediting the recovery of critical infrastructures and jumping start projects in damaged areas. However, subtlety is missing in the recovery process. There was not a lot of public involvement in addressing the individual issues of each community.

In the U.S., it is quite the opposite. Local planning agencies are required to engage the communities and residents have various channels to have their voices heard to influence recovery plans. However, it takes a long time to secure federal funding, causing significant delays and disconnection in implementation.

**Kanako Iuchi:** I want to highlight several issues. First, consensus building. Small communities often have a better way to share information and collectively make decisions when they get hit by a major natural disaster. Their communication mechanism is rooted in cohesive relationships between community members. Such connection is difficult in big communities.

Second, access to resources really matters, including finance, technology, and manpower.

**Robert B. Olshansky, Ph.D., FAICP,** is Professor Emeritus of Urban and Regional Planning, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

**Kanako Iuchi** is an associate professor at the International Research Institute for Disaster Science (IRIDeS) at Tohoku University.

**Taro Ichiko** is a professor at the Tokyo Metropolitan University, focusing on Community Disaster Management and Disaster Resilience

Communities are lucky when they have a closer connection to the government, universities, and powerful people who have a voice in allocating those resources. Communities with better connections have a better chance to succeed in getting what they want in the rebuilding process.

The practice of consultants also impacts the rebuilding process. There were very few consultants who were able to stay with the community long enough to meaningfully incorporate the voice of the community in the process. In some cases, communities cannot afford consultants to the recovery plans.

The third is about the role of local government. The local government connects the central government and local communities. Policies at the national level had the intent to decentralize the decision-making in the recovery process. Local governments were encouraged to step up and take responsibility in responding to the needs of their communities. However, partly due to the Japanese culture of hierarchy and deference to authorities, local governments were more inclined to execute strategies handed down from the above, rather than improvising on their own.

In the U.S., I was involved in developing the BIG U plan for Lower Manhattan. Planners organized many events for consensus-building. However, there was a disconnection between planning and implementation. Because the execution of the plan is under a different sector of the government, many subtleties in planning were lost. It was discouraging that many good features identified in planning were disappeared in its implementation. On one side, public involvement should go beyond this symbolic level; on the other side,

planning and implementation should be more integrated.

**Ichiko Taro:** I agree with Iuchi sensei on the role of the local government. One thing I want to add in the context of the Tohoku region. The planning capacity of government in the Tohoku region is low when compared with that in Tokyo or Kobe. While the city of Sendai is a big power, the other municipalities are not. They often lack enough skills and resources to ensure that plans are well developed and executed. Many challenges in the Tohoku recovery process are quite unique in Japan.

**Kanako Iuchi:** I agree. Since around 2004, the Japanese government started to streamline the planning system. The number of planners and engineers working in the government was reduced. In addition, Planning in Japan is more about how improving the built environment in urban areas and less about developing communities in rural areas. Tohoku region has a small population. Often, there is no strong incentive to plan.

*JUSCOG: What are the key messages that you hope your student remember years after their graduation?*

**Robert Olshansky:** Planners should step up and catch the moment when it comes. On normal days, planners do all kinds of works, from land-use permit reviews to traffic studies. When it comes to post-disaster recovery planning, there is a short time frame when planners can make a huge impact for decades to come. Under time pressure, planners need to take charge and set out a long-term vision for the community they serve, using all the skills they trained years. Otherwise, planners only sit back and let other

professionals, such as engineers and emergency management staff, do planners' jobs.

**Kanako Iuchi:** I would emphasize to my students that disaster mitigation and recovery planning is essentially about coordination, collaboration, and building synergies among various agencies under a long-term vision.

*JUSCOG: Some disaster mitigation and recovery plans are moving forward; some are not. What are the factors in successful pre-disaster planning?*

**Robert Olshansky:** People are the key. I am confident that people in disaster mitigation and recovery planning are competent. They can well handle future disasters. The Plan should work out okay. But the future is difficult to predict and post-disaster recovery is a very complex system. We still need to see how the plans actually carried out.

**Kanako Iuchi:** One key for success in Japan is a culture of awareness and preparation for disasters. Recovering itself is a part of the preparation for the next big disasters. Disaster mitigation has to be embedded in life. For example, understanding that they might face multiple major tsunami disasters in their lifetime, residents in the Tohoku area often put important personal belongings on the second floor. Attending a few hours of training or seminar is helpful, but it is far from sufficient. There should be a long-term effort to cultivate a culture of preparation for potential disasters over time.

*JUSCOG: What are common misconceptions about recovery planning?*

**Robert Olshansky:** It is easy to blame the government. Cherry-pick media can talk

to any unhappy residents on the street and point out a stain in the process. To be effective in disaster response and recovery, two elements are required: committed government and robust community. In other words, resource needs to come from the top, but energy needs to come from the bottom. Missing either one, the process will fail to achieve what it otherwise can accomplish. Simply sitting around for government assistance is the last thing a community should do.

**Kanako Iuchi:** Resilience planning is much more than sea walls or elevated structures. They look good in photos, but what is essential is intangible. One example is the wealth of social capital built up through community-based organizations. Those organizations directly give help to people at the block level. They receive fundings from the government and put that money to good use. As the recovery funding is running out, those organizations are struggling.

In addition, there should be more discussion about social perspectives in disaster response and recovery planning, such as vulnerable populations, inclusion, and equity.

END

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By Jing Zhang, Vice Chair of  
Communications, APA ID

## Knowledge Sharing Series

### - Disaster Risk Management and Recovery

# Lessons from Disasters

One-page Summary of the After Great Disasters : An In-Depth Analysis of How Six Countries Managed Community Recovery

**Recovery is a process, not an outcome.** It can be seen as four overlapping periods: emergency, restoration, replacement reconstruction, betterment reconstruction.

**The community has its ability to heal by adapting to changes.**

Those that see themselves as self-organizing and independent are most likely to recover. Resources should be used to support their recovery rather than prescribe the recovery.

## Things to Do

### *Enhance Information Flow and Collaboration*

Create new institutions or adapt existing ones to increase the number of communication channels and bandwidth. The purpose of recovery organizations is to support other agencies in doing their job and to inform, facilitate, influence, and manage various recovery actors. The process should involve a variety of stakeholders.

### *Plan and Act at the Same Time*

Deliberate efficiently in a compressed time. It can be done through: 1) focusing on urgent actions before turning to decisions that require more deliberations; 2) Consulting pre-disaster plans and identify opportunities to capitalize on opportunities for long-term betterment; 3) Slowing down to speed up. Time spent on planning and consensus building can result in more efficient reconstruction processes. 4) Hiring more staff and encourage more citizen involvement to increase planning capacity; Decentralizing information gathering and decision processes.

### *Empower Local Government*

Increase capacity and empower local governments to implement recovery actions. National governments are important sources of money, technical support, guidance, and oversight, but local governments are best suited to implement recovery and devise actions appropriate to their needs. Government-sponsored plans can encourage recovery investment for homeowners, businesses, investors, and higher levels of government.

### *Budget for Communication and Planning*

Budget for collecting data, maintaining media platform, providing technical advice, conducting community-level planning. The budget needs to be revised over time.

1993 Latur Earthquake, India  
1995 Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, Japan  
2001 Gujarat Earthquake, India  
2001 World Trade Center Disaster, United States  
2004 Tamil Nadu Tsunami, India  
2004 Sumatra Earthquake and Tsunami, Indonesia  
2005 Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, United States  
2008 Wenchuan Earthquake, China  
2009 West Sumatra (Padang) Earthquake, Indonesia  
2010 and 2011 Canterbury Earthquakes, New Zealand  
2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, Japan  
2012 Hurricane Sandy, United States

## The role of government

- Mobilize financial resources
- Provide technical assistance and credible data
- Facilitate communications
- Invest in infrastructure
- Support recovery actors

## Common Challenges

- Obtain and manage the flow of money efficiently, effectively, and equitably.
- Gather, integrate, and disseminate information to support recovery actors.
- balance between speed and deliberation.

## Things to Avoid

### *Permanent Relocation*

Permanent relocation of residents and communities disrupts social and economic network, impede access to residents' livelihoods, When relocation is necessary, it must be voluntary with the full participation of residents.

### *Reconstruct Hastily*

It takes time to develop good site layouts, locations, and designs, including consideration for livelihood, civic service, and social networks. Rapid reconstruction should be checked by continuous deliberation.

# Humanitarian Work in the Philippines

- A Talk with Michael Sherman about the Humanist Alliance Philippines, International (HAPI)



*HAPI is a democratic organization with members from different social sectors aiming to defend each individual's right to personal and collective freedom, equal treatment and opportunity, safe and healthy living, and a world free from violence and division.*

*InterPlan: What are common misconceptions about the Philippines?*

**Michael Sherman:** Many people think the Philippines is a poor country. It is not. The Philippines is a very rich country. The Philippines is rich in natural resources and landscapes, beautiful cities and towns, culture, and people as well. The Philippines is a country very rich in traditions and culture. The reason that it appears to be a poor country is the income gap - millions of people live in poverty in rural as well as in metropolitan areas. Another less-known fact is that the Philippines has a deep western religious history. The major religions in the Philippines are Catholicism, various Christian denominations, and Islam. Catholicism and other Christian denominations come from the long colonial period of Spanish and American rule and Islam from the precolonial times. As we all probably know as American planners, Daniel Burnham had a long-standing planning relationship and career in the Philippines working on planning projects in the Philippines, specifically in Manila and Baguio.

*InterPlan: And that is the major difference between the Humanist Alliance Philippines, International (HAPI), and other humanitarian groups in the Philippines?*

**Michael Sherman:** Yes, HAPI encourages the Filipino people to get rid of stigmas, myths, religious superstitions. As an organization we don't care if the people we help are of any religion or faith. I would say that one of the main differences we are different from other humanitarian groups in the Philippines is we try to steer away from both religious and political affiliations when planning and executing our projects. Although it is true that we must coordinate and work with both groups, that does not

mean that we are obligated to support or push for someone else's agenda. In the Philippines, many groups/organizations that provide humanitarian assistance are sponsored by or are religious organizations and to get assistance they require people to go to mass or participate in religious activities. Humanitarian work based on religion has trade-offs. In most cases, they ask you to accept their religion for receiving the assistance they offer. We do not do that. Our mission is to help the less fortunate, regardless of what a person believes. We do not make a person sit through a speech or message to get food, clothing, or assistance from HAPI. We work to protect human rights, do good for the sake of simply doing what is right, and encourage our members and people we assist to make logical decisions not ones based on superstition or myths.

*InterPlan: Who is HAPI and what does HAPI do as an organization?*

**Michael Sherman:** HAPI is first and foremost, an organization that promotes secular humanism throughout the Republic of the Philippines. We do that in our many programs and activities. We are also a democratic organization with members from different countries and social sectors aiming to defend the right to personal and collective freedom, equal treatment, and opportunity for a safe and healthy life for all humans and a world free from violence, division, and trappings of religious ideology. HAPI is the only secular humanist organization in the Philippines that is SEC-registered and as part of our humanism outreach efforts HAPI has become one of the largest, bottoms up grass-roots humanitarian relief organization in the Philippines.



*Michael Sherman, AICP, planner by choice, part time farmer, historic preservation advocate, humanitarian, HAPI Chair.*

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**Filipinos are very strong people. You can see a lot of smiling faces even when they are living in abject poverty. They are inspiring to me as an American, planner and most of all as a human.**

We are often asked “what does HAPI do?” To respond to that question, I have listed just a sampling of our work and associated programs.

- Launched HAPI Green Movement
- Hosted IHEYO Asian Humanism Conference
- Launched first HAPI publication, 'From Superstition to Reason'
- Launched The ARK (Acts of Random Kindness) Project
- Launched HAPI website v2
- Launched HAPI Nest and Farm
- Launched HAPI Secular Humanist Advocacy Development and Education (SHADE) project
- First HAPI General Assembly
- Launched HAPI Kids Nutrition Campaign
- Launched HAPI Pride and Straight Alliance
- Launched HAPI Library
- Launched HAPI website
- Laughter Yoga

In the larger picture, the HAPI works on an international basis with our primary focus on the Philippines as the main beneficiary of our efforts. It is our mission to promote secular humanism and help those in need, regardless of religion, non-belief, or political ideology. Our HAPI chapters include the LA Union, Dumaguete, Cagayan De Oro, Bulacan, HAPI Youth, Bacolod-Juniors, HAPI KIDS - Alabang, HAPI Junior, and HAPI Bicol - Sorsogon. The HAPI has about 9,000 online membership and hundreds of active volunteers on the ground. Please check out the video link to learn more about who we are as an organization and what we do to help humanity <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ddhiVIOjoE>.

*InterPlan: How American planners can help?*

**Michael Sherman:** Michael Sherman: There is a lot that American planners can do to help in the Philippines through working with HAPI. Overall, the cities need more planning rather than permitting. Some of the most critical issues that can be addressed through good land use planning includes the lack of good, standard affordable housing, lack of potable water and the lack of basic infrastructure in rural areas. Another important area where American planners can assist



*Michael and his goddaughter, Thalia*



*Michael and his friend Todd speaking to Barangay officials about small area plans and economic development planning.*

is in the planning for disaster mitigation and post-disaster recovery. Recently Super Typhoon Odette (Rai) ravaged the Visayas and there is great need for assistance in the recovery of those areas. As planners we can assist the local government units with developing and mapping coastal construction lines and evacuation zones and the development of post disaster redevelopment plans.

My hope is to have American planners come to the Philippines on a regular basis, leveraging their professional planning knowledge to help build communities, reduce poverty, improve nutrition in the squatter communities and assist with development of affordable housing. Having American planners involved at the grass roots will also help in developing partnerships and connections with planning professionals and planning schools in the Philippines.

*InterPlan: What does your life look like serving as a Chair for the Alliance?*

**Michael Sherman:** Michael Sherman: Being Chairman of HAPI at this time of Covid along with the 12-hour time difference makes it difficult to keep heavily involved on a daily basis. I am fortunate that the Officers in HAPI work with boots on the ground providing humanitarian relief

and implementing our programs while at the same time keeping the organization running like the not-for-profit business that we are. Our members and officers are the ones that do the work for HAPI. As the Chairman of HAPI I help with review and approval of proposals from our Chapters and focus groups such as HAPI Scholars, and HAPI Youth. It is easy to communicate with the members of HAPI as they are fluent in American English. I appreciate that the team schedules meetings with consideration of my eastern time zone.

When I am in the Philippines my focus has been on two things; nutrition for children and developing relationships with local government units, especially Barangay Alabang. Meeting with the Barangay Administrator and her staff from Barangay Alabang was one of the highlights of my last visit in 2019. During that time, we began the discussion of bringing American planners to Barangay Alabang to assist with small area plans and economic development planning.

Filipinos are very strong people. You can see a lot of smiling faces even when they are living in abject poverty. They are inspiring to me as an American, planner and most of all as a human. Please check out our website at [www.hapihumanist.org](http://www.hapihumanist.org)



# We Are the World We Are the Children

Join us at

[international.planning.org](http://international.planning.org)

[apa.international.division@gmail.com](mailto:apa.international.division@gmail.com)



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