

## Policy Memorandum

**To:** UNANIMA International

**From:** Brittany Brown and Ellie Ballard

**Topic:** The State of Homelessness in the Philippines: Families, Women and Children

### Analysis:

There are an estimated 4.5 million homeless individuals in the Philippines today; 3 million reside in the capital city Manila, the largest amount of homeless people in any city around the world.<sup>i</sup> Homelessness in the Philippines is defined by the National Statistics Office as, “living in parks, along sidewalks, and all those without any form of shelter.”<sup>ii</sup> The Philippine Statistic Authority defines a family unit as, “a group of persons usually living together and composed of the head and other persons related to the head by blood, marriage or adoption. It includes both the nuclear and extended family.”<sup>iii</sup>

In 2014, children were the third poorest sector with a poverty incident rate of 35.2%. Women represented the fifth poorest sector with an incident rate of 25.9%.<sup>iv</sup> In 2017, Filipino families were most deprived in education, followed by health and nutrition, housing, water and sanitation, and lastly employment.<sup>v</sup> In April 2019, the unemployment rate was 5.1%.<sup>vi</sup> While the unemployment rate is relatively low, 21.6% of the population earned wages that kept them below the national poverty line.<sup>vii</sup>

Both women and children in the Philippines are susceptible to human trafficking, domestic abuse, and drug abuse; but also, are victim to more widespread causes like climate change and natural disasters. It is estimated that there are at least 100,000 new victims abducted into human trafficking schemes in the Philippines each year.<sup>viii</sup> One out of every three women and girls is a victim of violence, and 55%-95% of women in drug treatment facilities were sexually abused as children.<sup>ix</sup> According to UN Habitat, “the country [Philippines] is considered as one of the most disaster prone, ranking 12th among the 200 countries most at risk to natural hazards in the 2009 Mortality Risk Index of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.”<sup>x</sup>

While slum dwellers may consider themselves as having a home, the conditions in which they live are considered to be inadequate by international standards. The slums span 536 communities in Manila alone, and 10% of all slum dwellers in the Philippines reside in Manila.<sup>xi</sup>

Policymakers in the Philippines respond to family homelessness through both a housing and welfare perspective. The Filipino government has several programs in place to help homeless families in the Philippines, primarily housed under the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).<sup>xii</sup> If all conditions are met, families are eligible for one of four program packages, including health, education, rice, and tax subsidies.<sup>xiii</sup>

The DSWD created the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer for Homeless Street Families (MCCT-HSF), which “provid[ed] assistance to 4,636 active MCT-HSF beneficiaries nationwide. The forms of assistance include education and health grants, access to social services, and

economic opportunities, as well as, rent subsidy for a period of 6 to 12 months or depending on the clientele category of the household beneficiary to improve their living condition.”<sup>xiv</sup>

In 2010, the Philippines Government passed a women human rights law called Republic Act No. 9710, Magna Carta of Women (MCW) that, “seeks to eliminate discrimination against women by recognizing, protecting, fulfilling and promoting the rights of Filipino women, especially those in marginalized sector.”<sup>xv</sup> The DSWD maintains forty-five shelters for women and children survivors of violence.<sup>xvi</sup> police stations are required to have “women desks” that address crime against women and children in all police stations.<sup>xvii</sup>

One of the primary NGO organs helping homeless women and children is the Homeless People Federation of the Philippines, Inc. (HPFPI). In 2017 it had 8,138 community members that helped to promote the organizations five community driven approaches: (1) securing tenure, (2) upgrading and housing, (3) basic urban services, (4) disaster risk reduction and (5) post- disaster reconstruction and rehabilitation.<sup>xviii</sup> The Venecitian Missionaries Social Development Foundation, Inc., its three main development objectives, offers homeless women personal development training, health and nutrition support, as well as temporary shelter and permanent housing options.<sup>xix</sup> *Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay)* is, “The largest alliance of urban poor organizations in the Philippines, carrying out a long-term struggle for the eradication of poverty and for a just, free, and prosperous society.”<sup>xx</sup> UN Habitat has created a program titled the People’s Process—a community driven initiative focused on self-recovery of infrastructure by promoting technical and institutional capacities.<sup>xxi</sup> In 2010, the Urban Poor Resource Center of the Philippines (UPRCP) was created to help alleviate the devastation that typhoons cause on the poor.

As a member state of the United Nations, the Philippines has committed to achieving the SDGs. In 2016, the PSA issued Resolution No. 4 titled *Enjoining Government Agencies to Provide Data Support to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. Under President Rodrigo R. Duterte, the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2017-2022 was signed into action. The alleviation of poverty and homelessness are intertwined in all of the PDP goals.<sup>xxii</sup>

### **Recommendations:**

- It is recommended that the Philippines include homeless women and children in their census data as a disaggregated data.
- It is recommended that more emphasis is put on eliminating the root causes that lead to homeless women and children in the Philippines, including drug abuse, human trafficking, domestic violence, inadequate housing, population growth and tackling climate change.
- From the conclusion of this research, there do not exist adequate resources/hotlines for homeless women and children that provide safety, security and shelter. It is recommended that such resources are established via government institutions which will enable better data collection.
- The Philippines government needs to implement community-based drug recovery programs for women and children, as well as other special groups. This will help eliminate the stigma around women who use drugs, and help reduce the number of women in prison for low-level drug offenses.

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