CAPSTONE PROJECT

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

Brittany Brown and Ellie Ballard
September 2019
Capstone Project:
UNANIMA International in Collaboration With Sophia Housing on Family Homelessness in the Philippines

Brittany Brown
Ellie Ballard

September 2019
Acknowledgement

Research has been supported by UNANIMA International and the Program of International Relations at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, New York University.

Supervisor: Professor Michael John Williams
Table of Contents

Introduction 1
   Acknowledgements 2
   Table of Contents 3
   Abstract 4
Section I 4
   What is Family Homelessness? 4
   Definition of Family Homelessness in the Philippines 4
   Historical Context 7
   Family Homelessness in the Philippines- Statistic 7
Section II 11
   Root Causes of Family Homelessness 11
   Domestic Violence 11
   Human Trafficking 13
   Drug Abuse 13
   Climate Change and Natural Disasters 15
   Population Growth 16
   Characteristics of Family Homelessness 16
   Inadequate Housing 16
   Poverty Related Trauma 20
Section III 20
   Current Policy Response and Strategies 20
   Department of Social Welfare and Development 21
   Modified Conditional Cash Transfer for Homeless Street Families 23
   Good Practices 25
   Department of Social Welfare and Development 26
   Philippine National Police-Women and Children’s Protection Desks (WCPD) 27
   Shortfalls 27
   Department of Social Welfare and Development 27
   Philippine National Police-Women and Children’s Protection Desks (WCPD) 28
   NGO Involvement 28
   Homeless People Federation of the Philippines, Inc. 28
   Venecitian Missionaries Social Development Foundation, Inc. 30
   Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay) 31
   UN Habitat 31
   Urban Poor Resource Center of the Philippines 32
Section IV 32
   Sustainable Development Goals- United Nations 32
   Sustainable Development Goals- Philippines 33
   Philippine Development Plan 33
Section V 36
   Recommendations 36
   Conclusion 37
Abstract

In the Philippines an estimated 4.5 million individuals are homeless, 3 million of which live in the country’s capital city of Manila, the largest homeless population of any single city in the world. Women and children are especially vulnerable to the root causes responsible for the homeless crisis in the Philippines, which include but are not limited to unemployment, domestic violence, human trafficking and natural disasters. This report examines the complex social contexts of the homeless crisis in the Philippines and seeks to understand how both government and NGO policies are working towards combating this epidemic, as well as analyzing the ways in which they are failing to do so.
SECTION 1

What is Family Homelessness?

Family homelessness is a chronic and systemic issue experienced by women and children across all corners of the world. There is currently no agreed upon and universal definition of homelessness; however, the United Nations Statistical Division defines homelessness into two categories (1) rooflessness, or someone living on the street without a shelter and (2), “persons with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation (including dwellings, shelters or other living quarters); and persons usually resident in long-term ‘transitional’ shelters or similar arrangements for the homeless.”

The working definition of family homelessness as used by UNANIMA International is, “Families who do not have consistent residency or the support needed to maintain a residency of their own who live episodically, temporarily or chronically in temporary housing, including shelters and locations not intended for human habitat or settlement.”

There are three primary domains by which homelessness can be addressed; “Security (legal title, ability to pay rent, etc.), Physical (durability, protection, etc.), and Human (social, family life, safety, etc.)”

Definition of Family Homelessness in the Philippines

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.” Homelessness is also defined

---


https://www.realchangenews.org/2012/02/08/homelessness-philippines
in terms by the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) and the social welfare programs, who refer to their homeless beneficiaries as citizens comprised of:

“Individuals or families residing in urban and urbanizable areas whose income or combined household income falls within the poverty threshold as defined by the National Economic and Development Authority and who do not own housing facilities. This shall include those who live in makeshift dwelling units and do not enjoy security of tenure.”

(Republic of the Philippines, 1992, Section 3)

The UDHA definition of homelessness does not differentiate between citizens living in slums and street dwellers. Although there is no distinction in definition, the livelihoods of families living in slums can look vastly different as compared to individuals living on the street. Families living in the street under temporary shelters may be capable of earning a livelihood while being homeless, as opposed to those who the government considers to be “squatters, transients or mendicants.” Under the UNHA definition, homeless families living on the streets of the Philippines include those in temporary shelters, vacant or public places, or under makeshift spaces made from various materials.  

---


The Modified Conditional Cash Transfer for Homeless Street Families (MCCT-HSF) is the government's most recent policy response to solving the crisis of family homelessness. The MCCT-HSF defines homelessness in terms of who can qualify as a beneficiary of their services. They recognize four types of family homelessness: families on the street, families of the street, homeless street families, and community-based street families. Families on the street, as defined in the table below, comprises 75% of homeless families while families of the Street makes up 25% of homeless families in the Philippines.

---


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Defining feature</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Families on the street</td>
<td>Earn their livelihoods on the street, and include displaced homeless street families and community-based street families</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families of the street</td>
<td>Long-term homeless families who form more or less stable street communities</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graphic 1.2: Different kinds of homeless families as defined by MCCT-HSF. (2012)

**Historical Context**

High poverty and homelessness levels in the Philippines are not without historical context: indeed, the country’s history of colonization and political corruption helps to explain why its citizens suffer higher rates of deprivation in comparison to some of its Southeast Asian neighbors. Rather than thinking of the Philippines as a country that lacks resources, it is more useful to take into account the fact that the country was once abundant in resources that have been tragically depleted because of its long history of malfunctioning political system and legacy of colonization. As such, the Filippino population began and continues to rely mainly on the service sector for employment, considering that the agricultural sector in the Philippines is on the decline as well. The problem with this dependence is that the service industry is often limited to short hours of work, instability and low earnings, conditions that contribute to poverty.

**Family Homelessness in the Philippines- Statistics**

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. An estimated 1.2 million children reside on the streets of the Philippines, 700,000 of which are in the capital Manila.12

The following data comes from the Philippines Statistics Authority (PSA), the Philippines government primary statistical arm that reports data from the most recent census in 2015. The PSA 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.”13 In 2018, a family of five needed to make Php 10,481 a month to meet basic food and non-food needs. Families making less than Php 10,481 ($205.71 USD) monthly are considered to be living below the Philippines official poverty line. In 2018, 16.1% of Filipinos were living below the poverty threshold. This means that 21 out of every 100 Filipino families did not earn enough to meet their food and non-food related needs.14

In 2014, children were the third poorest sector—behind fishermen and farmers—with a poverty incident rate of 35.2%. Women represented the fifth poorest sector with an incident rate of 25.9%. Youth were sixth, at an incident rate of 21.1%.15 The PSA does not offer any statistics specifically on women and children as a family unit, and since the data posted here is taken from the Philippines census, it means that the census does not collect this data either.

---

FIRST SEMESTER 2018
POVERTY STATISTICS

Republic Act 8425 of 1997 (Social Reform & Poverty Alleviation Act) defines “Poor as individuals and families whose income fall below the poverty threshold as defined by the NEDA and/or cannot afford in a sustained manner to provide their minimum basic needs of food, health, education, housing and other essential amenities of life.” (Section 3 of the RA 8425)

POVERTY THRESHOLD is the minimum income required for a family or individual to meet the basic food and non-food requirements, also known as the POVERTY LINE.

POVERTY THRESHOLD
In the first semester of 2018, a Filipino family with five members needed around Php 10,481 on average monthly to meet their basic food and non-food needs.

16 out of 100 Filipino families did not have sufficient income to meet their basic food and non-food needs in the first half of 2018.

POVERTY INCIDENCE
The proportion of families or individuals with per capita income less than the per capita Poverty Threshold to the total number of families or individuals.

1 out of 5 Filipinos belonged to a poor family in the first half of 2018.

PHILIPPINE STATISTICS AUTHORITY
Social Sector Statistics Service (SSSS)
Poverty and Human Development Statistics Division (PHGSD)

CONTACT INFORMATION:
VILMA A. GUILLEN
Assistant National Statistician, SSSS
0917 770 1100, 0917 770 1101, 0915 792 358-1991
philstats seis@pcp.gov.ph
www.pcpcgov.ph

Legend
- Provincial Poverty Incidence among Families for Quarter
- Urbanized
- Rural

Food Threshold
The minimum income required for a family or individual to meet the basic food needs, which satisfies the nutritional requirements for economically necessary and socially desirable physical activities.

Food Threshold
A Filipino family with five members needed around Php 7,337 on average monthly to meet their basic food needs during the first semester of 2018.

6 in 100 Filipino families did not have sufficient income to meet their basic food needs in the first half of 2018.

Subsistence Incidence
The proportion of families or individuals with per capita income less than the per capita Food Threshold to the total number of families or individuals.

9 out of 100 Filipinos did not have enough income needed to meet their basic food needs during the first half of 2018.

Poverty and subsistence incidences among families across major island groups decreased during the first semester of 2018.

*Food Thresholds are estimated using actual prices collected by PSAs for the estimation of the Consumer Price Index (CPI). In preparation with the updating of the market basket, the estimated prices by CPI for First Semester 2018 Poverty Statistics were revised accordingly.
The PSA released the multidimensional poverty index (MPI) which provides information regarding Filipino deprivation dimensions. In 2017, Filipino families were most deprived in education, followed by health and nutrition, housing, water and sanitation, and lastly employment. Education contributed to the largest amount of deprivation among Filipino families at a rate of 36.9%.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Education dimension</th>
<th>II. Health and Nutrition dimension</th>
<th>III. Housing, Water and Sanitation dimension</th>
<th>IV. Employment dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>school attendance</td>
<td>hunger</td>
<td>ownership of assets</td>
<td>underemployment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational attainment</td>
<td>food consumption</td>
<td>toilet facility</td>
<td>working children not in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>health insurance</td>
<td>source of water supply</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tenure status of dwelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>housing materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>electricity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graphic 1.4: 2017 Multidimensional Poverty Index provided by the Philippine Statistics Authority (2018).  

---

Section II

Root Causes of Homelessness

Family homelessness in the Philippines can be a result of many factors, one of which is poverty as a result of unemployment. In April 2019, the unemployment rate was 5.1%\(^{19}\). While the unemployment rate is relatively low, 21.6% of the population earned wages that kept them below the national poverty line.\(^{20}\) There are numerous other social and environmental factors that may lead a woman and child to become homeless. 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.

Domestic Violence

Women and children are particularly susceptible to becoming victims of battery, domestic abuse, trafficking or exploitation. According to UN Women, nearly one in five women in the Philippines will experience domestic violence in their lifetime.\(^{21}\) Studies show that a mentality exists in the Philippines that domestic violence may be justified if women exhibit certain behaviors. In 2013, the Philippine National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) asked women if they believed that husbands were justified in beating their wives under a series of circumstances that included: if she burns the food, if she argues with him, if she goes out without telling him, if she neglects the children, and if she refuses to have sexual intercourse with him.


The NDHS concluded that women who are more educated and have a higher wealth status are less likely to justify domestic violence. The survey, “also indicates that women who are employed but not paid in cash, those who are currently married, those who have five or more children, and those who reside in rural areas are the most likely to agree with at least one specified reason for justifying wife beating.” A woman who wants to escape their abusive partner may not only be losing her primary source of income and security, but she will be defying cultural norms as well. Many shelters for women and children survivors of abuse are reported to have long waiting lists.

---


**Human Trafficking**

The relationship between human trafficking and homelessness among women and girls in the Philippines is reciprocal: while homeless populations are especially vulnerable to becoming victims of human trafficking, survivors of human trafficking who are attempting to reintegrate into Filippino society are also vulnerable to becoming homeless regardless of their housing status prior to their abduction. According to the United Nations, human trafficking is defined as, “exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual coercion, by the use of force, fraud and/or coercion.”\(^{25}\) Though accurate figures on sex trafficking are difficult to produce due to underground nature of the problem, it is estimated that there are at least 100,000 new victims abducted into human trafficking schemes in the Philippines each year.\(^{26}\) Many victims of sex trafficking in the Philippines come from the country’s most rural and impoverished provinces, and report that they found themselves involved in the illegal industry after recruiters exploited their economic desperation by deceiving them with promises of jobs as domestic helpers or restaurant workers.

**Drugs Abuse**

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime produced its 2018 World Drug Report with the theme “Women, Young people and Older People.” The report highlighted how women and drug use related to vulnerability in the Philippines, and the lack of community-based drug recovery programmes that are available. Professor Regina Hechanova from Ateneo University

---


makes note that there are no such programmes available for special groups, including women or children. The lack of resources is due in part to the social and cultural norm around drug use for women in the Philippines. The stigma follows the notion that women are not only putting themselves at risk, but the children they care for as well. While this may limit the amount of access women have to drugs, it also means that healthcare resources are not available to women who wish to recover from drug addiction.

In 2016 the UNODC reported that in the Philippines, sexual abuse and violence were a stronger risk factor to the use of drugs than its addictive qualities. 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. There is also a lack of gender responsive services available to women who are in prison for low-level drug crimes, even though there are a higher percentage of women in prison for drug offenses than men. This disparity is due to the fact that low-level crimes are more easily prosecuted.27 Such statistics reflect the region as well, “according to data reported to UNODC during the period 2012–2016, the largest numbers of women brought into contact with the criminal justice system for drug trafficking offences were reported in East and South-East Asia and Western and Central and Eastern Europe.”28

In a study conducted by Brigham Young University, drug use among children ages 13-17 was conducted comparing the rates of street children versus non-street children. The study concluded that street children with no contact with their families are 5.5 times more likely to use

illegal drugs than their non-street counterparts. Street children who maintain contact with their families are 2.8 times more likely to use illegal drugs than non-street children.  

*Climate Change and Natural Disasters*

Homeless families residing in the city areas may be comprised of citizens who were displaced from their smaller rural towns due to natural disasters, including fires and floods. Displaced families may lose their source of livelihood and jobs, as well as their homes.

According to UN Habitat, the Philippines is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world in terms of facing climate related natural disasters, “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.”

Natural disasters are cited as one of the largest inhibitors of the Philippines economic growth and development. Between 1970 and 2000, the Philippines paid Php 15 billion (USD $300M) in damages due to natural disasters. Typhoons in particular account for 76% of total damages. Poverty and vulnerability to natural disasters are linked in the Philippines, as many of the countries poor and homeless families live in rural areas on mountainsides, river banks, and floodplains; areas vulnerable to volcanoes, typhoons, and landslides. Natural disasters also

---

impact urban areas through the destruction of infrastructure, where major cities like Manila have been victims of mass flooding.\textsuperscript{32}

\textit{Population Growth}

Another major factor that is presently influencing poverty in the Philippines is a massive trend population growth that has intensified competition for jobs in the labor market, as well as access to housing. The population of the Philippines has increased from 43 million in 1970 to 100 million in 2014.\textsuperscript{33} This explosive growth during this period also occurred in conjunction with the depletion of natural resources such as forests and arable land, which has resulted in increasing food prices, yet another factor that compromises Filippino’s ability to make ends meet.\textsuperscript{34} An increase in population size makes families more vulnerable to unemployment in the formal sector due to competition. Loss of family income, particularly in a country with an average family size of 4.4 people, could result in family homelessness. This risk is especially elevated when you take into consideration the lack of available and adequate housing.

\textbf{Characteristics of Family Homelessness}

\textit{Inadequate Housing}

While the primary focus of this report is women and children in regards to homelessness, it is important to address the issue of inadequate housing as it relates to slums. 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 United Nations defines adequate

\begin{flushright}
\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
housing as a household having access to, “adequate privacy, adequate space, adequate security, adequate lighting and ventilation, adequate basic infrastructure and adequate location with regard to work and basic facilities—all at a reasonable cost.” However, the Right to Adequate Housing does not require the State to build enough housing for the entire population. Instead, it discusses measures that can be used as a tool to prevent homelessness.

As previously stated, the capital city of the Philippines, Manila, has the highest homeless population of any other city in the world. In search of economic opportunity, many Filipinos living in rural areas have moved to the capital, making Manila one of the most densely populated cities, with 800,000 people per square kilometer. While Manila is considered to be a rapidly growing city, the backdrop of the evolving skyline is lined with neighborhoods that are better defined as slums. The slums span 536 communities in Manila alone, and 10% of all slum dwellers in the Philippines reside in Manila. Many of these slums exist on either private or public lands, along garbage dumps, railroad tracks or polluted rivers.

The United Nations defines slums in the Philippines as, “buildings or areas that are deteriorated, hazardous, insanitary or lacking in standard conveniences.” Since so many of these areas exist over the Metro Manila area, it is difficult to determine the location of these areas. Slum dwellers are defined as, “the urban poor: individuals or families residing in urban

---


and urbanizable areas whose income or combined household income falls below the poverty threshold.”

Slums may be either temporary shelters made from salvaged materials, semi-permanent shelters, or permanent shelters. Residents of slums may also fall under the category of squatters, or residents who are unable to afford a rent that are illegally living in a house. Three-fourths of residents in Manila’s slums are long-term residents, residing in the slum for over five years. Majority of families have migrated from rural areas into the city in search of better economic opportunity. Half of the individuals residing in slums are employed in the formal sector, while


https://opinion.inquirer.net/87655/solving-the-slam-problem
36% are employed informally, such as domestic help, transportation (tricycles), and self-employment. Due to a lack of proper resources, slum dwellers may be forced to live in places that are uninhabitable, for the Philippines, this is often on top of garbage dump sites.\textsuperscript{41}

NGO’s have played a role in helping local government plan, build, and monitor safe housing in slum areas.\textsuperscript{42} Between 1990 and 2009, the proportion of the Philippines urban population living in slums declined from 54.3% to 40.9%. However, the individual number of slum dwellers has increased in the same time frame, from about 16 million to 18 million.\textsuperscript{43}

![Proportion of urban population living in slum areas in the Philippines (%), 1990-2009](image)

*Figure 2.3: Proportion of Manila’s urban population living in slums from 1990 to 2009. (UN Habitat, 2003).*

The 2013 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) provides information on the characteristics of households in the Philippines. The NDHS defines a household as, “a person or group of persons who usually sleep in the same housing unit and have a common arrangement

---


for the preparation and consumption of food.” This loose definition means that inadequate housing units, such as the homes found in slums, are included in this data. The NDHS concluded that 96% of Filipino households used improved sources of water, with 37% of households drinking boiled water. In terms of household construction, 51% of households have cement flooring, and 87% of households have roofs made of iron or aluminum. Many families live in overcrowded homes, with two in five households use one room for sleeping for the entire family unit.44

Poverty Related Trauma

Aside from the trauma associated with the root causes that lead to homelessness, the side effects of poverty can also lead to trauma for women and children. For families living in slums with little to no access to running water or electricity, day-to-day life can result in trauma, as it does not afford the opportunity to cook, clean, or maintain personal hygiene. For children, living in small spaces crowded with family members does not allow for necessary space to sleep and study. Lack of personal hygiene may also discourage children from attending school.45

Section III

Current Policy Response and Strategies

The Philippines Constitution mentions homelessness in Section 9 of Urban Land Reform and Housing: “The State shall, by law, and for the common good, undertake, in cooperation with the public sector, a continuing program of urban land reform and housing which will make available at affordable cost decent housing and basic services to underprivileged and homeless

citizens in urban centers and resettlement areas. It shall also promote adequate employment opportunities to such citizens.” It goes on in section 10 to state that, “Urban or rural poor dwellers shall not be evicted nor their dwellings demolished, except in accordance with law and in a just and humane manner.” In reference to women and children, the Constitution mentions in Section 14 that, “There shall be priority for the needs of the underprivileged sick, elderly, disabled, women, and children.”

Policymakers in the Philippines respond to family homelessness through both a housing and welfare perspective. When tackling the issue of inadequate housing, it is seen as an urban development problem to be solved, while welfare programs offer support to individual families. Filipino policy prefers methods of creating low-cost housing and resettlement laws for homeless families over cash-granting social welfare programs.

*Department of Social Welfare and Development*

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). There are two primary programs under the DSWD that benefit homeless families, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4P’s) and the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer for Homeless Street Families (MCCT-HSF). A 2013 survey showed that 19% of Filipino families were beneficiaries of the 4Ps or MCCT program. The 4P’s program, “is a human development program of the national government that invests in the health and education of poor households,

---


particularly of children aged 0-18 years old. The first objective of 4P’s is to improve the health of young children and mothers by promoting preventive health care. Other objectives include increasing school attendance, lowering child labor rates, increasing household food consumption and encouraging families to get involved in community development initiatives. The program operates by offering families one of four cash grant incentives, so long as they comply to the following five conditionalities: (1) “Pregnant women must avail pre- and post-natal care and be attended during childbirth by a trained health professional,” (2) “Parents must attend Family Development Sessions,” (3) “0-5 year old children must receive regular preventive health check-ups and vaccines,” (4) “6-14 years old children must receive deworming pills twice a year,” and (5) “All child beneficiaries (0-18 years old) must enroll in school and maintain a class attendance of at least 85% per month.”

If all conditions are met, families are eligible for one of four program packages, including health, education, rice, and tax subsidies. The minimum amount a family can receive monthly from such programs is P300 ($5.90) a month, and the maximum is P600 ($11.80) a month. As of March 31st, 2019 4P’s benefited 4,183,403 active households. A majority of the funding is allocated to education grants, followed by health grants and rice subsidies.

---


Modified Conditional Cash Transfer for Homeless Street Families

In an effort to help those who might not qualify for the 4P’s program, the DSWD created the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer for Homeless Street Families (MCCT-HSF). This program is meant to benefit street families who are not covered under the requirements of the

---

4P’s. In 2018, through the MCCT-HSF the DSWD, “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.”

One beneficiary of the DSWD program is Johanna Heart Genon, a recent high school graduate who grew up on the streets of Cebu City, Philippines. Johanna was raised in a cemetery, and was embarrassed to tell her classmates where she lived. Johanna explains how, “Maulaw gyud ko sa una kung mangutana akong mga classmates kung asa mi nagpuyo (In the past, I would be embarrassed whenever my classmates asked me where I lived).” In 2014 Johanna and her family became beneficiaries of the MCCT-HSF program through DSWD. Through the program, her family received a rent subsidy and was able to move out of the cemetery into a home. “In the past during the opening of classes, our parents were unable to buy what we need for our daily survival and what we needed for school, like uniforms and shoes. With MCCT, our parents were enabled to buy our school needs at one time when the school year opens),” Johanna said. Johanna went on to graduate from her highschools Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program, “My graduation means a lot to me because I never thought that I would come this far,” said Johanna.  

---

Good Practices

In 2010, the Philippines Government passed a women human rights law called Republic Act No. 9710, Magna Carta of Women (MCW). This law, “seeks to eliminate discrimination against women by recognizing, protecting, fulfilling and promoting the rights of Filipino women, especially those in marginalized sector.”\(^55\) The MCW holds all government agencies accountable to holding up the law to protect and promote the rights of women. Specific duties are outlined for twelve government agencies on how to uphold this law within their capacity.\(^56\) Out of this law, both the Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and Their Children (IACVAWC) and the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) were created. IACVAWC is charged with ensuring that the twelve government agencies uphold the MCW laws and regulations, as well as the specific duties each agency is tasked to accomplish. The PCW is, “the primary policy-making and coordinating body on women and gender equality concerns. As the oversight body on women’s concerns, the PCW acts as a catalyst for gender mainstreaming authority on women’s concerns, and lead advocate of women’s empowerment, gender equity, and gender equality in the country.”\(^57\)

The Commission on Human Rights to the Civil Service Commission and the Department of the Interior and Local Government are in charge of upholding the MCW to government

---


agencies. This includes carrying out penalties for government agencies or individuals affiliated with agencies that violate the MCW. Penalties can range from sanctions to fines.58

Department of Social Welfare and Development

The DSWD maintains forty-five shelters for women and children survivors of violence. These shelters are residential care units and temporary shelters. The DSWD also operates several crisis intervention units, catered to both women and children, that provide shelter, psychological help, treatment and rehabilitation to victims of abuse. The women’s shelter, the Haven, “provides temporary shelter and protective custody to women 18-59 years old who are victims of various forms of abuse.”59 The goal of Haven is to help victims overcome their trauma, and gain valuable skills to return to an independent life once they have healed. The Haven shares the story of Maria (a pseudonym), a nineteen year-old rape survivor who was forced to leave her home due to her family received numerous death threats after reporting the rape. Maria was sent to Haven, where she lived for a year as she recovered from the Trauma. Haven staffed escorted her to court hearings, provided safety and counseling for her trauma, and taught her life skills courses on cosmetology, cooking, sewing, and rag making. Maria was even able to sell the rags she made to save up money. The DSWD tells her story though an interview: “Mas naging friendly na po ako, marami akong nakilalang bagong kaibigan (I became friendlier and met several new friends),” she said. “Nakatulong po sila na makalimot ako kahit paano sa nangyari sa akin (They made me forget the ordeal that I went through),” she added.60

Philippine National Police—Women and Children’s Protection Desk (WCPD)

In 2004, Republic Act (RA) 9262—referred to as the Anti-violence Against Women and their Children Act—required that police stations have “women desks” that address crime against women and children in all police stations. Stations are also encouraged to recruit female police officers and staff to work at these desks, as well as implement gender sensitive training for all officers. By 2009, women and childrens desks were implemented in almost all of the police stations in the Philippines, estimated at 1,830 in total. Nearly 3,000 women police officers were hired and trained on how to handle gender sensitive crimes and issues.61

Shortfalls

Government reports on poverty are not believed to be accurate as, “these deprivations are not reflected in the official report on poverty since the methodology used is not based on meeting basic needs. It uses a highly simplified construct to estimate the poverty line, which is too low to fully capture the extent and depth of the country’s poverty.”62

Philippine National Police—Women and Children’s Protection Desk (WCPD)

Media and NGO’s have criticized the PNP’s use of Women and Childrens protection desks, stating that many times cases are assigned to male officers as opposed to the female officers hired for the position. The required gender sensitivity training has not been comprehensive, and in many cases female officers were found to be giving harmful advice, such as telling victims of domestic violence to reconcile their relationships. In some cases police

stations have gone against legislation and refused to interview victims of domestic abuse in separate rooms. In addition, many police stations do not keep a separate record book of gender-based crimes as they are required to do so by law.  

War on Loitering

In June of 2018, President Rodrigo Duterte announced in a speech that he would begin a campaign to crackdown on loitering in the city, in which he stated that, “people hanging out in the streets should be ordered home, and if they refused, he would personally tie their hands and drop them into a river.” This decision has had a negative impact on homeless families and children. Police have been patrolling the neighborhoods of Manila, searching for individuals who are deemed to be loitering. In the first month of the initiative, nearly 60,000 people were apprehended, including children and families.

NGO Involvement

Homeless People Federation of the Philippines, Inc.

One of the primary NGO organs helping homeless women and children is the Homeless People Federation of the Philippines, Inc. (HPFPI). The HPFPI houses a network of eighty-eight registered urban poor community associations and eighty-eight non-registered savings groups over the entirety of the Philippines. 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. “The Federation’s work focuses on low-income communities in the high-risk areas, voluntary resettlement and post relocation activities, disaster management and reconstruction processes through community-led initiatives.” An initiative that HPFPI has adopted is promoting the accumulation of savings in local communities, both to directly finance community investments and to bring the community together for a common goal.

Operated under the HPFPI is the Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF), a shelter-related investment mechanism put in place to step in where government financing facilities are unavailable. The UPDF is resourced through community members, the national government and donor agencies. The five primary uses for the UPDF are (1) Land Purchase (2) Site Development (3) House Construction (4) Livelihood and (5) Community Upgrading.

Among other initiatives that pertain to community development, the HPFPI hosts shelter and reconstructive initiatives in the form of temporary and permanent housing, as well as housing repair.

In August of 2009, the HPFPI gained recognition for its help in Iloilo City after the city was devastated by Typhoon Frank in 2008. The UPDF was able to help the city adopt development planning and make use of resources to address concerns such as flooding and a lack of land tenure. HPFPI is able to do so through its partnerships with local city governments, as well as utilizing resources from local academic institutions for assistance. Other initiatives that have been implemented in Iloilo City include, “mangrove management, a community-based

---

flood warning system, and innovations to ensure access to and mobility within their housing sites.”

Image 3.2: “Completion of the Iloilo Flood Control Project, which includes construction of the Jaro floodway, will divert floodwaters from the junction of the rivers to the sea, significantly reducing flooding threats in the relocation site.”

Venecitian Missionaries Social Development Foundation, Inc.

An organization specifically catering to the needs of homeless women and children in the Philippines is the Venecitian Missionaries Social Development Foundation, Inc. (VMSDFI). Through its three main development objectives, VMSFDI offers homeless women's personal development training, health and nutrition support, as well as temporary shelter and permanent housing options. “VMSDFI currently works with 5,500 partners in carrying out its services for Women and Children, 4,000 partners for its Community Health and Well-being Programs, and 1,500 family partners for the Social Justice and Integrity of Creation Program.”

---


Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay)

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.” Kadamay gained notoriety in 2017 when they the protests to occupy idle houses built by the National Housing Authority (NHA). Protests outside of the NHA office became violent, as protestors were blasted with water cannons and barricaded by police. The NHA was accused of withholding 114,000 unoccupied housing units throughout the country to the poor. The Kadamay campaign exposed that 55,000 homes, meant for police or military personnel, remained unoccupied and rotting; housing that Kadamay believed could be used to house the homeless.

UN Habitat

According to UN Habitat, “the present environmental and social conditions in informal settlements are alarming. Overcrowding, inadequate access to basic services, insecure tenure and increased risks to public health are among the many issues. The lack of tenure itself delays connection to municipal infrastructure services, leading to suppressed property values, underutilized capital assets, poor living conditions, and high incidence of illness.” Of the 1.5 million Filipinos living in informal settler households, 51% are living in areas considered to be dangerous. In order to improve this situation, 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. To ensure the community is involved, People’s


Process collaborates with local governments and homeowner associations. People’s Process has worked in communities devastated by natural disasters in the Philippines, particularly typhoons.

_Urban Poor Resource Center of the Philippines_

In 2010, the Urban Poor Resource Center of the Philippines (UPRCP) was created to help alleviate the devastation that typhoons cause on the poor. The main objective of UPRCP is to promote a pro-poor discourse through collaborating with important social, academic and media agencies. UPRCP’s second institutional goal is to “help strengthen urban poor social movements in achieving food sovereignty, full and humane jobs, and access to adequate housing and universal social protection.” Under this goal, UPRCP specifies the need to, “To put particular emphasis on capacity-building and full participation of women and children and other marginalized groups within the urban poor.”

Section IV

_Sustainable Development Goals- United Nations_

In September of 2015, the United Nations adopted a global action plan containing 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that it hopes the 193 member states will carry out by the year 2030. The desire to eradicate global homelessness affects both Goal 11, “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable,” and Goal 16, “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.” While the language above

---

includes homeless families, the issue of homelessness is not explicitly discussed in any of the SDG’s.\textsuperscript{74}

**Sustainable Development Goals- Philippines**

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).* This resolution ensures that all necessary government agencies will provide the required data to monitor progress on completing the SDGs. This resolution also named the PSA as the official, “repository of SDG indicators in the Philippines.”\textsuperscript{75} The Philippine Institute for Development Studies has outlined in its 2018 report on the vulnerability to poverty in the Philippines, “the reduction of poverty is at the heart of the development agenda both nationally and globally. This is reflected in the Philippine Development Plan, and the worldwide commitment toward the Sustainable Development Goals. While the measurement of poverty is ex post and thus public interventions are directed at helping those who have been identified as poor, the government must broaden the scope of assessments and take account of the dynamics in poverty in public policy.”\textsuperscript{76}

**Philippine Development Plan**

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. The PDP goals for 2022 are as follows:77

- The Philippines will be an upper middle-income country by 2022.
- Growth will be more inclusive as manifested by a lower poverty incidence in rural areas – from 30 percent in 2015 to 20 percent in 2022.
- The Philippines will have a high level of human development by 2022.
- The unemployment rate will decline from 5.5 percent to 3-5 percent in 2022.
- There will be greater trust in government and in society.
- Individuals and communities will be more resilient.
- Filipinos will have greater drive for innovation.

The PDP refers directly to homelessness under its goal of Accelerating Infrastructure Development, in which it plans to, “provide secure tenure in affordable, safe, and disaster-resilient housing to underprivileged and homeless families.”78 The PDP references women and children under its goal of Promoting Philippine Culture and Values, in which it states, “strengthen the protection of the rights of vulnerable sectors of society (indigenous peoples, women, youth & children and persons with disability) to access cultural resources and to live a life free from discrimination and fear.”79

---

The goals outlined in the PDP intentionally overlap with the 17 SDGs. The graph below outlines the SDG indicators that are also found within the PDP as of May 2018.80

[Image of a matrix showing the overlap between SDG goals and PDP goals]

Graphic 4.1: Philippine SDG Indicators that are in the PDP Results Matrix. (May 2018)81

---


Section V

Recommendations

After conducting research on the status of homeless women and children in the Philippines, it is evident that not enough disaggregated data exists on the subgroup. While there is information available on family units in the Philippines, generally consisting of five or more members, there is little data to specify the situation for homeless women and children as a family unit.

Much of the statistics provided by the Philippines government for this report were outdated, usually comprised of the last census in 2010. As we look forward to the next Philippines census in 2020,

The office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights reports that, “it may be noted that there is lack of data and research on human development indicators specific to the homeless such as maternal mortality rates and morbidity rates caused by inadequate housing and homelessness.” Data collection on homeless populations in general is insufficient in the Philippines, and particularly so when it comes to homeless women and children. It is with the considerations mentioned above that the following recommendations be made:

- 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.

Conclusion

Within the context of family homelessness, women and children are underrepresented both in data collection and resource allocation in the Philippines. Homelessness comes about as an accumulation of one or several of the root causes previously mentioned, and therefore tackling the issue of homelessness is nearly impossible without first addressing the root causes leading to the problem. Better representation of homeless families in research and media in the Philippines will lead to the stigmatization of the status, allowing women and children to access help in a professional and productive capacity.

The Philippines does not currently have an adequate number of resources to solve family homelessness, and inefficient government practices by the agencies charged with assisting threaten to further perpetuate the issue. Through following its commitment to ‘Leave No One Behind’, the Philippines could effectively reduce the plight of its homeless women and children.
by committing to the SDG agenda, and using the government resources allocated to its highest potential.
References


Homeless People Federation of the Philippines.“Who We Are.” *Philippine Alliance.* 2017.

https://www.philippinealliance.org/hpfp


https://pantawid.dswd.gov.ph/about/


Petty, Martin. “Philippine President Duterte's Deadly Drug War Turned into a War on Loitering, Including Homeless and Children.” *Business Insider.* 2018.


http://www.psa.gov.ph/sgd


https://www.pcw.gov.ph_FOCUS-Areas/Violence-Against-Women/initiatives/iacvaWC


https://www.pcw.gov.ph/Focus-Areas/Violence-Against-Women/initiatives/iacvaWC


