

The Quest for Adequate, Affordable, *and* Humane Housing: Decentralization, Local Government and the People's Plan

by
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Abstract

For many centuries, the world has been urbanizing. One of the more extreme issues in recent urbanization trends is the development of mega-cities. These great multi-million person urban conglomerations have emerged in all countries. Many of these megacities are made up of a variety of local administrations, which greatly exacerbates the problem of governance. Governing those smaller units together in one integrated whole poses a new and thorny problem for urban administration. This is especially the case in dealing with the urban poor and homeless, and with the widespread problem of squatters. This case study deals with Metro Manila's ultimately unsuccessful attempt to address its problem of homeless squatters, and the role of decentralization in that process. The failure of the project offers important lessons about the role of local government in addressing these issues.

Keywords: Philippines, Manila, Informal Settlers, Urban Housing, Local Governance

The Setting

A picture of urban poverty

Traversing the Philippine National Railway from Beata-Pandacan to PUP-Sta. Mesa Stations is a tour of the miseries of the urban poor. There are scavengers beside the tracks and "hanging" shanties beneath the bridges. Walls cut off the towering condos of the rich from the shanties and tents of the homeless. Shanties demolished by the government are beside the railway, right next to these same high-rise structures. A handful of dilapidated tents house 150 homeless, and jobless, Filipinos in a camping area bereft of any urban services. Day by day, ordinary commuters on "trolleys" (informal carts pushed along the tracks) pass by and see these scenes as normal. For social policy advocates, however, they represent a major social problem that demands attention and action.

The informal settlers living in the tents and hanging houses came from towns and provinces all over the Philippines, and as far away as Tawi-tawi, Sulu, and Basilan Provinces. They travelled to Manila just to be beggars. Typical families come from the nearby provinces, with only one member (or perhaps none) who can minimally read and write. They live like vagabonds, without toilets and sanitation, water and electricity, healthcare facilities, employment or educational resources. They are classified as informal settler families, and because they are not organized they are underrepresented.

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These families reflect a major movement in Philippine society: the massive and rapid urban migration that can be traced back in the 1950s. The proportion of urban dwellers rose from about 25 percent in 1950 to peak in the early 1990s at just over 50 percent, then declined to about 45 percent in 2010. During this period, the total population of the Philippines rose from 20 million to 92 million. The booming industrial development and rapid population growth drew people from the provinces to the cities in search of a better life. This gave birth to the first generation of *Maralitang tagalunsod* -- the Filipino term for urban poor. They were the farmers, unemployed, and less educated who flocked to Metro Manila. Without the capacity to compete with better educated urban residents, most of them became part of the urban poor – slum dwellers, unemployed or underemployed, without sufficient livelihood, security of land tenure, and basic public services. A fragment of these urban poor are called “*iskwaters*”, a term equivalent to “land grabbers”. These are the Informal Settler Families (ISFs) of today and the focus of this case.

The Philippines and Metro Manila

The Philippines is the first democracy founded in Asia with a republican government. It is mainly an agricultural country. The industries that form part of the economy are concentrated in highly urbanized areas like those in the National Capital Region (Metro Manila), Cebu in the central islands and Davao in the south. In the 2010 national census, the Philippine population reached 92 million. The population was estimated to be 104.2M at the end of 2015 (Countrymeters 2015), the 12th highest in the world and 2nd in Southeast Asia, next to Indonesia. The projected totals for 2020 and 2025 are 108.4M and 116M respectively (Population Pyramids 2016).

Metro Manila, the National Capital Region (NCR), is located on the Southwestern part of Luzon Island between Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay. The NCR is composed of 16 cities and one municipality. In the 2013 national census, Metro Manila had a population of 11,855,975. As the center of industrial activities in the country, the dramatic increase of Metro Manila’s population through the years was fueled by rural poverty and migration. As a result, the large fragment of people added to Metro Manila’s population is composed of the urban poor. In 2010, the majority of the urban poor in the NCR were informal settler families numbering around 556,526 families, or more than 2.8 million people making up over 20 percent of its population (Inquirer.net 2015).

The Problem

Urban Poverty and Homelessness

Homelessness and informal settling seem to be a universal ingredient of urbanization. A report of the United Nations in 2005 stated there were an estimated 100 million homeless people in the world (Homeless World Cup 2015), mostly in urban areas, and an additional 1.6 billion living without adequate housing (Boston.com 2011). In Metro Manila, shanties, and slums are everywhere. Habitat for Humanity estimated a housing backlog of 3.5 million (The Standard 2013), while the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council estimated it at 3.8 million (Senate Economic Planning Office 2006). At an average Filipino family size of 5, this indicates that approximately 19 million Filipinos (19 per cent of the population) are without decent and humane housing.

One of the cornerstones of democracy is the promotion of social justice. For the urban poor, a major aspect of social justice is adequate housing. The 1987 Philippine Constitution specifically calls for social justice in all phases of development. Moreover, in 1992 the Philippines passed Republic Act 7279, otherwise known as the Urban Development and Housing Act. It aimed to provide adequate housing to all the Philippines. It remains largely ineffective.

In 1994, the Comprehensive Integrated Shelter Financing Act² was passed to institutionalize the funding of various housing programs under the National Housing Authority, allocating 5 billion pesos (about USD 106 million) annually for the National Housing Authority. The Law compels condominium and real estate developers to allot 20 percent of an investment's total cost to socialized housing projects.

The slum communities often are located in areas classified as dangerous by the government. They commonly are situated along waterways prone to flooding. There are eight major waterways in Metro Manila namely: Pasig River, Tullahan River, San Juan River, Manggahan Floodway, Tripa De Galina Creek, Estero De Maypajo Creek, Maricaban Creek, and Estero de Sunog Apog.

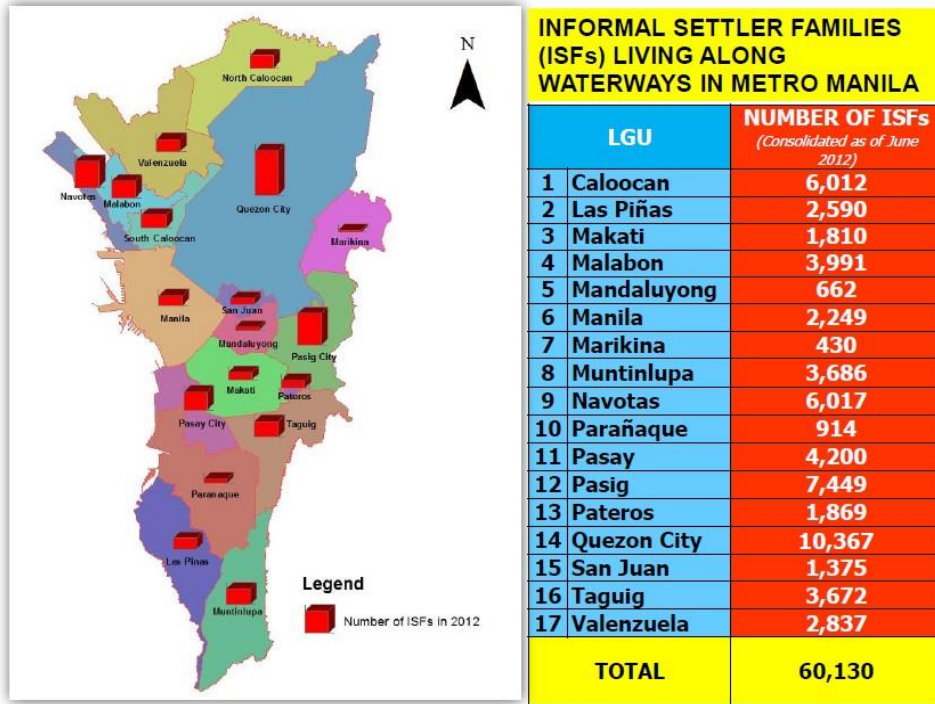
Of the 556,562 Informal Settler Families (Inquirer.net 2015), about 60,000 (over 10%), live along these waterways (Figure 1). Along these waterways alone were 19,440 ISFs scheduled to be cleared. Others are in "Danger areas" that include railroad tracks, garbage dumps, shorelines, and under transmission lines. The more tragic reflections of homelessness in Metro Manila are the cemeteries that are supposed to be the resting places for the departed but instead become the "paradise" for the ISFs. Mausoleums owned by opulent families are used as informal shelters, a scenario where the dead are luckier than those alive because they have a resting place.

Decent and humane shelter is only one among the many problems the urban poor face. Demolition of their informal shelters is always an imminent possibility for the ISF. Anytime the landowners (or the quasi-landowners) demand access to their lands, the government assists by tearing down the squatters' settlements. Aside from the threat of demolition, the ISFs are the constant victims of a number of human rights abuses, including loss of life during the demolitions. Their political and societal participation is also limited because the slum communities are not fully recognized by the government.

Elections would appear to provide the one political process from which the poor might benefit. During elections, the same urban poor are the regular targets of corrupt politicians who are trying to organize block voting. After the election, however, there is a return to normal and the poor are again political and social untouchables.

² CISFA- RA 7835

Figure 1. Informal Settlement Families in the Different Local Government Units of Metro Manila



(Department of Public Works and Highways 2013)

Supply-Driven Relocation Policies

Cities typically bring increased land values as more activities can be packed more densely into smaller spaces. These higher land values drive cities upward, especially since the advent of the skyscrapers in the 19th century (Ness 2009). Areas of metro Manila are now dotted with high-rise buildings for both business and residential uses. The process is circular: the higher the land values, the higher the buildings, and the higher the buildings the higher the land values. The impact on relocation policies is to make them supply driven, i.e. “Where can I get the cheapest land?” This also implies relocation far from the city, where land values are lower. This in turn locates the poor far from job opportunities, which is a major cause of failure for many relocation programs. It produces a kind of “Yo-Yo” effect. Squatters and urban poor are relocated far from economic opportunities, which leads them to migrate to be closer to their jobs and right back to their original locations.

There are two more implications of this supply-driven strategy for squatter relocation policies. One is that they are enhanced by aesthetic and power considerations. Urban slums are an eyesore, especially irritating to the wealthy and politically powerful. Urban renewal programs often focus on the beauty to be created by new buildings, parks, malls and monuments. Thus there is an aesthetic power enhancing the supply-driven relocation policy. The other implication is the exclusion of the poor from any decision-making power in relocation. As pointed out earlier, this often results in a lack of adequate housing and even the most basic urban services such as schools, utilities, and health services.

From the government’s perspective, homelessness and informal settling are also closely related to pollution and waste problems. The location of slums on urban waterways inevitably leads to heavy water pollution, turning the bodies of water into large waste canals.

National Government Agencies are charged with providing housing through public housing projects as their institutional function. Table 1 shows the housing projects the Philippines government has created, some of which are aimed at squatter relocation. Using the supply-driven approach, in the three years 2010 to 2012, the government provided housing for some 366,801 families at a total cost of nearly 226 billion pesos (USD 5.4 billion). This means that aside from the housing provision activities under the ISF program, the Philippine government also is producing substantial socialized housing on an annual basis. The housing production undertaken by national government agencies is supply driven and is still the main paradigm used in relocation and resettlement in the country.

Table 1. Philippines Government Housing Projects

	2010	2011	2012	Total
Total all Agencies				
Households	109,557	130,153	127,091	366,801
Million Pesos*	73,547	73,595	78,628	225,771
National Housing Authority				
Households	24,723	47,248	56,221	128,192
Million Pesos	3,659	7,479	18,397	29,537
Nat’l Home Mortgage Finance Corporation				
Households	7,109	15,875	9,287	32,271
Million Pesos	369	928	548	1,873
Home Development Mutual Fund				
Households	62,041	45,296	46,898	155,235
Million Pesos	40,804	31,532	31,821	104,157
Home Guarantee Corp.				
Households	15,684	20,734	14,685	51,103
Million Pesos	28,686	33,655	27,860	90,202

Source: National Statistics Office, 2013 * 42 Pesos = 1 US Dollar

Finally, as if that were not enough, nature often turns deadly. Prior to its start and during the first year of the ISF Program, tropical storms “Ondoy” in 2009 and “Habagat” in 2012 caused more than a thousand deaths and loss of more than a billion pesos of property. The storms brought extensive flooding, and the major victims were the slum communities. Prior to “Ondoy”

and “*Habagat*,” some concerned residents of Metro Manila brought suit against eleven government departments and agencies concerning the polluted water of Manila bay. As a result, the Supreme Court of the Philippines issued a Writ of Continuing Mandamus that forced the defendants, government departments and agencies, to execute their institutional mandates to conduct projects and activities geared towards cleaning up and rehabilitating the bay.

The Intervention

Following the Supreme Court Writ of Continuing Mandamus, the recent natural calamities that exposed the vulnerability of informal settler families living in danger areas in Metro Manila, and to address the issues of homelessness in the Philippines, urban poor groups, propelled by fear from threats to have their housing demolished and be displaced, created an Urban Poor Covenant with President Benigno S. Aquino III. The President allocated 50 billion pesos (about USD 338 million) to an ISF Relocation and Resettlement Program as a result of the Covenant. This was done through a Special Allotment Release Order in November 2011. This funded a five-year relocation and resettlement program, from 2011-2016. The President also designated the National Housing Authority to be the overall manager, and it received 30 billion pesos from the 50 billion. Another 10 billion (about USD 112 million) was given to the Social Housing Finance Corporation while the remaining 10 billion was devoted for operational costs of the program. The program aimed to provide safe, secure, humane, affordable, permanent, and decent housing for 104,219 (Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council 2013) ISFs residing in danger areas within Metro Manila.

Through a Memorandum Order in 2013, President Aquino directed the Secretary of the Department of Interior for Local Government to spearhead an inter-agency collaboration of National Government Agencies, Non-government Organizations (NGOs) and Local Government Units (LGUs) within Metro Manila. The Memorandum followed the creation of the National Technical Working Group on Informal Settler Families (ISF-NTWG) that itself was composed of a number of national government agencies. In addition to these agencies, it aimed to involve NGOs and LGUs that were concerned about the relocation program.

Following the creation of the ISF-NTWG, Operational Guidelines for the transfer of informal settler families from danger areas in the National Capital Region were formulated in June 2014. The Joint Memorandum Circular introduced a paradigm shift from a “supply driven” to a “demand driven” approach (where the people with housing needs would like to be located) to fully address the homeless problem in Metro Manila. It mandated an on-site or, in the event that was not possible, in-city, or, if still not possible, near-city location. One of the most important innovations in the design of relocation and resettlement was the introduction of the “People’s Plan” approach or strategy using the Joint Memorandum Circular. This was to ensure the participation of the affected people through continuing collaborative efforts, aiming to institutionalize among them a strong sense of ownership of the program. The People’s Plan was to contain the specification and designs of the housing facilities along with an assurance of access to basic services like education, public transportation, healthcare, electricity, and water in the target resettlement sites.

Aside from the introduction of the People’s Plan strategy, the program included important innovative designs in the form of its projects. The Community Initiative Approach allowed political

organizations to apply to the National Housing Authority for technical assistance after they identified a parcel of land for relocation.

The Community Mortgage Program provides mortgage funding for shelter projects in the form of loans from the Social Housing Finance Corporation. The Core Shelter Assistance Program helped disaster victims to apply for assistance from the Department of Social Welfare and Development. There was also a “*Balik Probinsiya*” project that provided travel assistance for the poor to return to their home provinces. The LGUs could also act as either the mobilizer or originator, when ISFs applied for Community Mortgage Program or High Density Housing, in producing in-city housing as mandated by RA 7279.

The ISF Program represented another paradigm for solving inefficiencies within the supply driven approach. It was an innovation aimed at confronting the many challenges of the country’s housing policies. The old approach still can be implemented, where possible, in relation to the program and is still the main paradigm being used outside of the ISF Program.

On the local level, the Operational Guidelines specified Local Inter-Agency Committees that were to serve as the working committees to spearhead the relocation and resettlement activities. The Guidelines also specified the development of Relocation and Resettlement Action Plans as the necessary tool of intervention in addressing the ISFs’ quest for decent and humane shelter. Furthermore, these Guidelines expanded relocation and resettlement efforts, not just as initiatives of the government (the supply-driven approach) but also as choice of the ISF (the demand driven approach). Through the Joint Memorandum Circular, the ISF beneficiaries would be provided with decent, safe, secure, and affordable housing, but most of all they would have a better voice in choosing the relocation site (whether near-site, in-city or off-city).

Local Government Units and Their Roles in Housing Provision

Decentralization in the Philippines was promoted by Republic Act No. 7160, or the Local Government Code of 1992. This authorized the empowerment of LGUs and devolved some portions of the state’s powers to the LGUs. Through decentralization, the LGU’s would now enjoy police, eminent domain, and taxation powers similar to that of the national government. As part of the decentralization process, the Local Government Code gave LGUs the task of providing housing to their constituents. This task was also strengthened by the advent of the National Housing Authority.

The Code has two objectives, to uplift the condition of the homeless and underprivileged and to make an equitable distribution of urban centers in the country. There are, however, many loopholes in the law. It does not stipulate which among the LGUs involved is accountable for the provision of basic services. As a result, the law creates vagueness about whether the sending LGUs or the receiving LGUs are the ones responsible for the provision of basic services. The reality in off-site relocation is that sending LGUs are more affluent than the receiving LGUs and providing services for the relocated families constitutes an unfair burden for the receiving LGUs. Therefore, accountability for basic services should be on the sending LGUs.

Another factor is related to court-ordered demolitions. Families of workers evacuated must be given monetary support equivalent to 60 days’ minimum wage. The National Housing Authority did not comply with this, however, because it can define demolition as un-programmed and therefore not included in the General Appropriations Act. These are some of the issues that make relocation and resettlement in the Philippines ineffective.

As the result of decentralization, the law codified specific tasks of LGUs in the pre-relocation, relocation and post-relocation phases (NHA 1992):

- Prepare a comprehensive land use plan aimed at achieving the objectives;
- Conduct an inventory of all lands and improvements within their respective localities;
- Identify lands for socialized housing and resettlement areas for the immediate and future needs of the underprivileged and homeless in urban areas;
- Certify the blighted status of lands;
- Identify and register all qualified socialized housing beneficiaries;
- Enter into joint venture projects with private developers;
- Provide basic services and facilities;
- Provide the program beneficiaries the opportunity to be heard and to participate in the decision-making process;
- Adopt measures to identify effectively curtail the illegal operation of squatting and squatting syndicates;
- Implement the prescribed procedures on the execution of eviction and demolition orders. Should relocation be not possible, provide financial assistance;
- Implement the relocation and resettlement of persons living in danger areas;
- Prevent the construction of any kind of illegal dwelling units or structures;
- Assist in initiating the organization of Community Mortgage Program beneficiaries;
- Promote the production and use of indigenous, alternative and low-cost construction materials and technologies;
- Submit a detailed annual report;
- Option of imposing an additional 0.5 percent tax on the assessed value of certain lands.

The government had to reaffirm, integrate, and implement these tasks with the advent of the 2011 ISF program. The Joint Memorandum Circular thus is an effort to realign the National Housing Authority to fit into the ISF program. It was an initiative to bolster the role of LGUs in socialized housing, but the Joint Memorandum Circular only *encourages* the participation of the LGUs and the private sector. There was no specific provision under it that defined the participation of LGUs in the Program. In order to overcome the Joint Memorandum Circular's limitation, the ISF-NTWG Operational Guidelines were created, introducing the Local Inter-Agency Committees at the frontline of the relocation program. Through the ISF's participation, especially those who have People's Plans, the Local Inter-Agency Committees were tasked to facilitate the creation of Relocation and Resettlement Action Plans.

LGUs in the Philippines are mandated to create subsidiary organizations in relation to socialized housing production. A Local Housing Board is a local special body devoted to addressing

shelter concerns in the formulation, development, and implementation of an LGU's comprehensive and integrated housing and land development program. Local Housing Boards are created by the Department of Interior for Local Government. A city or municipal mayor is the head. Other members include officials representing various NGOs and city or municipal departments. The Board serves as a special housing body responsible for forging local housing policy, plans and programs; and monitoring all evictions and demolitions, whether voluntary, extrajudicial, summary, or court-ordered. They also are charged with establishing a Local Housing Office that will implement the policies, plans, and programs adopted by the Board. Local Housing Boards are the principal organ of LGUs in implementing the 50 billion peso ISF Program.

The Urban Poor Affairs Office was created under the office of the Local Chief Executive of the LGU and is devoted to addressing the welfare and concerns of the urban poor in the locality. Its primary task in the ISF Program is to conduct the socio-economic profiling of ISF families, and the city/ municipality, and organize urban poor communities. It also facilitates consultation and dialogues with the affected urban poor families. The creation of these Urban Poor Affairs Offices is mandated by the 1987 Philippine Constitution that stipulates no resettlement of urban or rural dwellers shall be undertaken without adequate consultation with them and the communities where they are to be relocated. The Urban Poor Affairs Offices are established in all cities of Metro Manila and are mandated to design and implement housing and resettlement programs for underprivileged residents and informal settlers.

LGUs clearly were intended to be integral elements of the planning process. After the People's Plan had been drafted, the LGUs would be integrated into the Relocation and Resettlement Action Plans and then become part of the Local Shelter Plan. ISF Communities, in turn, would: (a) participate in the Local Shelter Planning and processes; (b) align the People's Plans with City Development Plans; (c) participate in the Local Shelter Planning Processes; and (d) continuously partner and collaborate with the LGUs in the plans' implementation.³ The integration of the People's Plan with the Local Shelter Plans of the LGUs then could be ensured with persistent effort and consistent partnership of ISFs with LGUs and, subject to their political will and ambition, the Mayors.

Resistance to the Program

The transformation from the old supply-driven approach to the new demand-driven approach was a challenging task because it required a huge change in the mindset of people unaccustomed to thinking about the welfare of the poor rather than of the powerful and wealthy.

From the government's perspective, the People's Plan was pro-people because they would decide things on their own. From the standpoint of the ISF, however, it was open to resistance. There were no clear guidelines on the identification of the beneficiaries of the program. The selection of beneficiaries was open to the political maneuvers of local government officials. Legitimate ISF beneficiaries attacked the Program because of this openness of the selection process to political bias. There were even recurring incidents where outsiders became the beneficiaries of the Program. Even some legitimate beneficiaries included their relatives and previous renters.

³ Omnibus Election Code of the Philippines, Article XXII, ELECTION OFFENSES, Sec V.

The involvement of the National Housing Authority in the National Technical Working Group on Informal Settler Families created resistance to the implementation of the Program since its institutional mandate was to facilitate the creation of socialized housing through the supply driven approach. This mandate contradicted the hierarchy of options and its presence created obstacles.

The ISF housing program involved a huge sum of money, some 50 billion pesos. Some heads of LGUs and other National Government Agencies argued against the People's Plans and for government-provided relocation and housing production. Their opposition was supported in part by unresolved positions on the People's Plan approach.

The people's organization Kalipunan at Damayang Mahihirap or KADAMAY is a national democratic organization for the urban poor. It saw the relocation policies of the Philippines government as aesthetically driven and not inclusive of the urban poor. KADAMAY concluded that the National Housing Authority was in fact anti-poor because it only promoted the conversion of urban centers to cater for business enterprises. It further argued that relocation efforts without attention to employment, to livelihood, and to basic social services components for the beneficiaries would fail.

The Outcomes

The ISF program opened another approach for the government to take in solving the country's extensive homeless problem. It:

- Reassessed the supply-driven approach and its effectiveness in addressing homelessness in the country;
- Introduced the People's Plan approach as an alternative to the supply driven approach;
- Updated the counting and socio economic profiling of ISFs living along danger areas and Metro Manila waterways;
- Reaffirmed the Relocation and Resettlement Action Plan as an important tool to support LGUs' commitment to housing policies.

The People's Plans approach opened new opportunities as well as new challenges in the country's housing policies. The urban poor were given the opportunity to work hand-in-hand with the government to solve their housing problems through the ISF Program and the introduction of the People's Plan approach. However, consider the goals. The number of ISF in Metro Manila was estimated as 556,526. The new ISF project aimed to serve only those living in "dangerous" areas and who were organized into local community associations. This number is only 104,219, less than a fifth of all ISF. In effect these were highly conservative goals to begin with.

The ideas for a new, demand-driven program were welcome. The question is: Did this lead to any effective action? On the whole, the answer is No. To understand why, we first must look at the number of People's Plans actually created and fully implemented. People's Plans only commenced after three years into the implementation of the ISF program. Table 2 shows the number of plans at the four stages that were required to be completed during implementation. This shows a total of 137 plans currently in process, covering only 70,523 families. Unfortunately,

none of these plans has been fully implemented, and none of these families has as yet been relocated.

Second, there was a problem with how the money was allocated. The original project called for 50 billion pesos for the period 2011-2016. This allocation was classified under the Disbursement Acceleration Program, considered part of the president’s “pork barrel,” and is exempt from accounting. Moreover, by law, the Office of the President cannot be compelled to divulge where such a huge amount of money will be spent. According to members of the ISF-NTWG, the National Housing Authority received only 30 billion pesos of the 50 billion allocated. Ten billion of the remainder were given to SHFC while the remaining 10 billion were devoted to "operational costs" of the program.

Table 2. People’s Plans Submitted to the Department of Interior for Local Government *

Number of People’s Plans	Level and Status	Number of families covered
69	People’s Plan submitted to the DILG-PMO ⁴ for validation and issuance of certificates	31,464
26	With certificate of eligibility ⁵	14,320
10	With poor-feasibility ⁶	6,552
32	Now in SHFC’s Credit Committee	18,187
Totals		
137		70,523

*Source: DILG-PMO, People’s Plan Summit Meeting, 15 August 2014.

Third, it was difficult to reduce the number of people needing housing. Another project attached to the broader ISF program attempted to relocate families but had disappointing results. The “*Balik probinsya*” project (providing travel funds to send people back to their original provinces) was, from its inception, ineffective due to the constitutional liberty to abode and travel. The government cannot force people to migrate. Nor does the government have any means to check the whereabouts of the beneficiaries to determine if they ever left Manila. Moreover, the program does not include slum communities located outside Metro Manila.

Fourth, although the National Housing Authority identified at least 16 tasks for LGUs in housing provision, the national government failed to properly devolve authority and resources to them. The only responsibility given to the LGUs of Metro Manila was the registration of potential housing program beneficiaries. Even this can be subject to manipulation by local politicians when they include only their local patrons as beneficiaries.

⁴ Department of the Interior and Local Government-Project Management Office

⁵ Certificate issued by DILG-PMO after conducting an on-site evaluation to determine if families on the master list are living along waterways and in other dangerous areas.

⁶ Certificate issued by DILG-PMO to the Political Organizations that had secured all studies required by the SHFC

Fifth, there were no clear policy guidelines approving the People’s Plan at the outset of the Program. The Joint Memorandum Circular was not created until 2013, two years after the Program began, and was not signed by Vice President Jejomar Binay until the last quarter of 2014. Finally, it was just a guideline for the program and, in the end, in the absence of being given important responsibilities the participation of LGUs was only symbolic.

Table 3. Department of Interior for Local Government PMO Presentation on Peoples’ Plan Updates During October 2014

Number of Peoples’ Plans by Level of Action	
75	Total Number of Proposals Submitted to DILG-ISF PMO
56	With Orientation
39	For Land research
28	With Eligibility Certificate
14	With Pre-feasibility Certificate
16	SFHC Phase I Approved
3	SFHC Phase II Approved

Source: DILG-PMO ISF-NTWG Meeting Minutes October 2014.

The sixth factor was inconsistency in the process. ISF-NTWG added new steps to the passage and approval of People’s Plans as the project was being implemented. The NTWG increased the stages to 6 in October 2014 from just four stages in August 2014. Table 3 shows a very slow rate of processing of the People’s Plans. Their number decreases from the 75 proposed as they progress to each later stage. Only three are now in the approved Phase II. None has been completed as yet.

Seventh, the program failed to maximize the incorporation of the LGUs in the provision of housing. This can be traced to the unclear role of LGUs. Since the approach’s design requires collaboration between the people and the government there is no other form of government to collaborate with the ISFs except the LGUs because they operate at the grassroots level. With the People’s Plan approach, LGUs should have taken the lead in the implementation of the program on the local level.

Finally, the Program will face continuing challenges and threats. The local and national elections in May 2016 will affect the program in a number of ways. Politicians seeking the votes of the ISFs are likely to use the Program for that purpose. On the other hand, there will be some blockage of the program because Philippine law bans the release of government funds to projects for six months prior to the election. There may be an issue with funding since the Omnibus Election Code of the Philippines bars the hiring of construction workers for the relocation facilities six months before the May 2016 national elections. Furthermore, the code bans the disbursement of public fund within the forty-five days prior to the day of the election. Finally, the ISF program

term is coincident with that of the current President. In addition, sitting local government officials will not allow relocation at the onset of the election period because by relocating their local patrons it may decrease their votes.

These elections will produce a new set of government officials at both the national government and the LGUs. The new president will be installed and new programs will be crafted and implemented. The whole Philippine political system in general will have a different look because of the political culture that calls for destroying the legacy and images of ones' political predecessors and rivals by discontinuing their previous programs.

In conclusion, the program was unable to reach its goal of relocating 556,562 Informal Settlement Families in Metro Manila and provide them with safe, decent, and humane housing through the People's Plan Approach. It aimed at adding another ingredient to the socialized housing provision and policy of the government to solve the problem of homelessness and informal settling in the region.

The People's Plan approach may conflict with the constitutional right of the people to abode and travel. On the other hand, the approach introduced a multi-stakeholder collaboration and recognized people's choices to be the bottom line of socialized housing. In addition, it further extended the *staffing* of housing provision to local governments. However, for the LGUs to be properly utilized, they should be provided with a specific law and clear policy. The best units of government to handle relocation programs are those within the neighborhood because the local government officials have deeper understanding of the situation of their homeless neighbors. This program's outcomes demonstrate how essential the LGUs' participation is in relocation and resettlement.

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