

Integrating rural migrants into urban life: Philippines

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Every day hundreds of rural migrants enter the city of Manila. Sons and daughters whose labor is not needed on the tiny family farm, villagers who can find no work, students seeking higher education, all flock to the city. Every ship, bus, banca brings its quota of men, women, and children who hope to find a better life in a new place. With little money and few skills most rural migrants have two desperate needs: employment and a place to live.

Finding work

New migrants manage to earn enough money for existence in the service sector of the economy. Vendors, helpers in the market, scavengers, drivers, sari-sari store operators may not earn enough to live alone, but each contributes what he can to the family income and all manage to survive.

Many new migrants perform services necessary to the functioning of an urban society. In an urban society which cannot afford waste, scavengers are resourceful in making use of everything that comes their way. Instead of being regarded as pariahs, those engaged in scavenging should be given free medical services and assured a fair income from their work. Many others who work at marginal jobs need a guarantee of just wages from employers and protection from labor contractors who may use trade unions to exploit labor.

One particularly crucial function is to train those with some skills for jobs which exist. Complaints have been leveled at vocational training programs, saying that they are not adapted to the jobs which are

available. Even after receiving instruction the trainees cannot meet the requirements of the particular trade or industry. Much more needs to be done through on-the-job training. In Asia, most of this type of learning has come out of small shops and industries. Much of the industrial employment in Asia, especially in Japan and Hong-Kong, is in small shops which sub-contract work from large industries.

Finding a place to live

Many migrants go directly from the pier or bus station to the home of a relative or barrio-mate. When the pressure of another family added to an overcrowded house becomes too great, the migrant seeks a place of his own. Frequently he assembles what materials he can and builds another squatter house near his barrio-mates.

Public reaction to squatters is generally hostile. Most people regard them as violators of property rights, since they have taken possession of land that is not theirs. William Mangin, who has done extensive work among squatters in Latin America, characterizes two public attitudes toward their way of life. The one he terms the "hard-nosed" view: squatters have no right to be in the city in the first place. They should have never left home. The best policy is to send them back to the country. If they can't be sent back to their original homes, then the best policy is to resettle them in places where they can earn a livelihood from the soil.

The other attitude Mangin calls the "bleeding-heart" view. Many people are moved to pity by the depressed

COMMUNITY SCALE		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
EXISTIC UNITS	MAN															
	ROOM															
	DWELLING															
	DWELLING GROUP															
	SMALL NEIGHBORHOOD															
	NEIGHBORHOOD															
ELEMENTS	NATURE															
	MAN															
	SOCIETY															
	SPACES															
	NETWORKS															
	SYNTHESES															

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conditions under which squatters live. They see the ill effects which poor housing and poor sanitary conditions have upon squatter families. They are also worried about the effects of these conditions upon the community as a whole. They fear that disease and crime will breed in the squatter family and spread to the whole society.

Both of these views toward the squatter community lead to a policy of relocation. Although a number of other approaches to the squatter problem have been made, none have been successful.

Relocation of squatters

The primary policy of the government toward urban squatters has been to resettle them on land outside the city. This policy began in 1950 when President Quirino created the Slum Clearance Committee; and it has been followed by each successive administration.

The reasons for the removal of urban squatters are varied, but the primary one is that squatting is illegal. Behind this is the fact that the government has other plans for the lands it is clearing.

A second reason is that city governments consider squatter housing both an eyesore and a judgment upon their administrations. Intermingled with this argument for relocation is valid concern for the lives of those living along railroad tracks and esteros. Many people lose their lives during floods and through accidents along the tracks.

A third reason given for the relocation of squatters is that they really desire to return to the rural way of life from which they have come. The fact is, however, that many squatters have jobs in the urban area and do not have a farming background.

During the two decades that the relocation policy has been followed in Greater Manila, over 20,000 families have been resettled. Over fifty percent of these families have returned to the city.

The Sapang Palay resettlement is a case in point. In 1963-64, nearly 6,000 squatters were evicted from Intramuros and Tondo and relocated in Sapang Palay, Bulacan. By 1970, a survey by CITRUS (The Central Institute for the Training and Relocation of Urban Squatters) showed that an average of 550 families had returned from Sapang Palay each year during the six-year period. The total constituted over sixty percent of those who had been relocated.

The government resettlement program in Carmona, Cavite, appears to be moving toward the same result.

Why do so many resettled squatters return to the city in which they have lived so miserably?

In an attempt to discover why resettled squatters return to Manila, a study was made of 218 families who had been resettled in San Gabriel, Carmona. Most of these families had been removed from squatter areas in Quezon City and Makati. The interviewers noted that there were numerous empty or unfinished

houses and that other houses were occupied by older family members who were holding them for families that had returned to Manila. Families found it very difficult to live in Carmona for two basic reasons:

Lack of jobs in the area. Between half and two-thirds of the family heads have jobs in Manila. Twenty-one percent were engaged in the building trades; eighteen percent were drivers or delivery men; ten percent held jobs as laborers or cargadors; six percent worked in manufacturing; and fifteen percent held a variety of service jobs from market vending to selling bottles. They would prefer living and working in Carmona if jobs were available in the area. Since there are no jobs, they continue to make the long, expensive trek back into the city. Many times husbands stay in Manila during the week and return to Carmona for the weekend. But families prefer not to live separate lives so they find another place to squat in Manila.

Inadequate facilities for living. While families had been assigned lots, the resettlement area lacked water and electricity and robberies were a common occurrence. Water pumps had been installed in different sections of the settlement, but when these broke down they were not repaired. Electric light was considered essential because of banditry in the area.

For the family heads without work, who compose thirty percent of the sample, Carmona offers little hope for a livelihood. While living in Manila most families were able to put together some income from a variety of jobs. Since most of the families are in the same conditions in Carmona, these possibilities are limited.

If offered the alternative of working in Carmona with the guarantee of a job paying a minimum wage or living in Manila with their present job, the great majority would prefer to remain in Carmona. The main reasons are that they have their own house and lot; the area itself is quiet and has a good climate. However these factors are not enough to keep the people there unless some assurance is given that employment can be provided in the area. The families suggest that the government should encourage industry in the area. When asked what kind of economic development should be encouraged, the great majority suggested that factories should be established in the area, preferably textile or some type of handicraft industry. Many of the women suggested dress-making as the type of employment which should be encouraged. Very few mentioned agricultural enterprise as a means of a regular consistent livelihood. They saw agricultural pursuits only as a means of supplementing income.

Squatting: a national problem

When we look at urban squatting from a national perspective, we can see that the problem exists in all major Philippine cities. It is obvious that urban squat-

ting will not be solved in the near future unless drastic steps are taken. What is the basis for this assertion?

First, migration from the countryside will continue unabated as rural people seek the job opportunities and the education which the urban centers offer. For some time to come the cities can expect to grow by five to nine percent annually.

Second, economic development has not taken place fast enough to provide the job opportunities and the housing necessary to meet the expanding urban population.

Third, the government does not have the financial resources to provide housing for the large number of low income people in the urban population.

Fourth, even making the countryside more attractive will not cut down on rural-return migration. People desire and actively seek the life and conveniences of the cities.

Since freedom of movement is a basic right of the Filipino people, no end is in sight to the growth of the cities. We can also expect that squatting will continue to increase. Low income families cannot afford the rents charged for housing in the urban centers. They will continue to settle on vacant land to avoid paying the high rents charged for scarce housing.

Recommendations

Recognizing that rural to urban migration will continue in the Philippines, a long-range program must be developed. Migration and the growth of squatter communities throughout the Philippines cannot be dealt with on a piecemeal basis. Among the steps that the government should take are these:

- Build up other urban centers throughout the Philippines to encourage more even distribution of migration.
- Provide the physical infrastructure program in these urban centers that would give employment to semi-skilled people and make the areas attractive for the investment of Philippine capital in local industries.
- Develop manpower training programs in these urban centers related to actual job opportunities and to industries that would use the resources of the region.
- Acquire areas close to the cities which can be used for employing and housing low income people; provide these areas with the facilities necessary to attract industry (e.g. water, light, roads), and to make life liveable for the residents. The development of a program of "planned squatter areas" could channel new migrants and urban squatters to already available areas and take the pressure off areas planned for future development.
- Initiate, in larger urban centers where land for an individual house and lot is not possible, a building program of three- to four-story apartments. It is suggested that these areas be carefully planned in the light of Philippine social and cultural values and with the purpose of giving ownership of these apartments to the occupants. The present experiment in condominium housing should be evaluated as a possible approach to low income housing. If it proves effective it should be encouraged on a wider scale.
- Encourage the growth of community organizations among low income people as a means of developing local participation in the planning process. Co-operative housing associations should be encouraged to provide a channel for the planning and the administering of community housing programs.
- Discontinue any further relocations of families to resettlement areas such as Carmona.

Squatters are not a threat to the government. Most squatter relocations have taken place without violence. The squatters are, in fact, an essentially conservative people. They want to become a part of urban society. Their goal is to move into the ranks of the urban middle-class. This desire should be encouraged by the government. If the government thwarts their way into urban society, the squatter poor may listen to those who accuse the establishment of keeping power and wealth to themselves; ultimately, squatters may join those whose efforts are aimed at undermining the structure of government.