

JOURNAL

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THE SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL

The Social Welfare and Development (SWD) Journal is the official journal of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), featuring social welfare and development articles and researches, including those with policy and program implications. The SWD Journal is published every semester (June and December).

It usually contains six sections, namely: the editorial, original research articles, articles on SWD guidelines, articles on program and policies, brief reviews and letters to the editor.

Its target readers are: DSWD national and local offices, SWD organizations/institutions, SWD committees on the Senate and House of Representatives, national government agencies (NGAS), non-government organizations (NGOs), donor agencies, researchers, the academe and the general public.

Articles for the Journal are solicited from DSWD officials and staff as well as members of SWD organizations (such as the National Association of Social Work Educators, Inc., Association of Provincial/City/Municipal Social Welfare and Development officers), academe and NGOs. All articles are peer-reviewed.

Message
of the Secretary



Sunflower greetings!

This year-end SWD Journal issue seeks to leave readers with a better understanding of solo parents and informal settlers: DSWD field office VII prepared recommendations on strengthening the implementation of the Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000, and Ms. Arlen Ancheta wrote about the importance of tidal streams or *esteros* in informal communities.

We are also sharing an article on the innovative use of information technology to help planners and implementers to better track health service delivery to children and women.

The article entitled “Implementation of the Solo Parents Welfare Act by the Local Government Units (LGUs) in Region VII as Experienced by Beneficiaries” studied 28 municipalities in the provinces of Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental, and Siquijor to validate if the bill has led to increased empowerment among women. While the results were informative, they also pose challenges. There remains a lot to be done, especially at the local level, to fully implement the law.

The article “Estero as Contested Space” posits that *esteros* are a valued human settlement, having been transformed over time into informal communities, more than being mere waterways.

Lastly, the article by UNICEF Philippines “Promoting Effective Real-time Governance for Children and Disadvantaged” is about an innovative information and communication Technology (ICT) tool that features data collection using mobile phones to monitor and obtain data on key health indicators. The project Real-time Monitoring of Key Material and Child Health Indicators through the use of Community Health Tracking System (rCHITS) hopes to inform the readers on an innovative strategy of data collection and storage at the barangay level.

I am positive that this journal will stimulate further discussions and inspire more research on understanding the vulnerable and marginalized sector of society. The Department continues to encourage knowledge benefiting the SWD sector through research that is relevant, timely and practical.


CORAZON JULIANO-SOLIMAN
Secretary

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOLO PARENTS WELFARE ACT BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS (LGUs) IN REGION VII AS EXPERIENCED BY BENEFICIARIES AND IMPLEMENTERS

DSWD Field Office VII

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this investigation was to determine how the Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000 is being implemented by the LGUs of Region VII as experienced by the beneficiaries. At a more specific level the research aimed at examining the compliance of LGUs on the delivery of the benefits to the solo parents as mandated by the Act.

A total of 28 municipalities in the provinces of Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental, and Siquijor composed the study sample. From each municipality, a representative sample of 10 solo parents was gathered to answer a structured questionnaire and to participate in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). As representative of the LGU, the social welfare officer also answered a structured questionnaire.

Results indicated that except for the parental leave, the solo parents did not receive any of the benefits mandated by the Solo Parents Welfare Act. While some very few solo parents participated, for instance, in a livelihood program, or availed of one form of financial or medical assistance, these individuals did not receive these benefits because of their being a solo parent. Instead, they received such benefits because they belonged to the women's organization or because they were senior citizens for whom the benefits had been designed.

The results of the FGD further revealed that majority of the solo parents (89.7%) are not aware of the Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000. The social welfare officers cited work overload, lack of funds, lack of government support to disseminate information on the Act and to deliver the mandated benefits.

BACKGROUND

Republic Act 8972 or the Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000 was passed on November 7, 2000. The Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) was

approved on September 7, 2003. Under this Act, solo parents assessed and issued with solo parents identification cards (IDs) by the concerned City/Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office (C/MSWDO) can avail of parental leave, flexible work schedule, livelihood development services, counseling services, critical incidence stress debriefing, special projects for individuals in need of protection, educational benefits, housing benefits, and medical assistance and health packages. For five years after the approval of the IRR, there has been little information about the implementation of the law.

The Solo Parents Welfare Act which was just implemented in 2003 targets mostly working women as beneficiaries. However, there seems to be a limited implementation of the law, such that to date, there are only 5 pilot areas or Regions whose implementation of the solo parent act is closely monitored by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). They are Region IV A, Region IV B, NCR, Region V and Region X. Specifically, the Social Technology Bureau of the DSWD is doing this in coordination with the Local Government Units (LGUs) who were mandated to issue solo parent cards signed by the Municipal Mayors in the locality so that card holders can avail of benefits intended for this group of women.

Implementation of the Solo Parents Welfare Act is being coordinated in an inter-agency committee headed by the DSWD. The other agencies are Department of Health (DOH), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Civil Service Commission (CSC).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine how the implementation of the Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2000 is being implemented as experienced by the beneficiaries in selected municipalities in Region

VII. More particularly, the study looked at:

1. The services or benefits being availed of by solo parents as mandated by the Act with respect to parental leave, flexible work schedule, livelihood development services, psychosocial services, such as counseling services, critical incidence stress debriefing, parent effectiveness services, self-concept or ego building, crisis management, parent effectiveness services, and spiritual enrichment, special projects for individuals in need of protection, such as temporary shelter and legal assistance, educational services, housing services, health services, such as medical assistance, and others.

2. The facilitating and hindering factors in the delivery of services in relation to local policy, funding allocation intended for the implementation of RA 8972, manpower in the implementation of the law, awareness of the provisions of the Act, advocacy activities from the Field Office, and appreciation in the availment of the benefits as a solo parent.

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

RA 8972 or An Act Providing for Solo Parents and their Children is a law in support of State policy to promote the family as the foundation of the nation, strengthen its solidarity and ensure its total development.

Definition of Solo Parent

A "solo parent" under this Act is any individual who falls under any of the following categories:

1. A woman who gives birth as a result of rape and other crimes against chastity even without a final conviction of the offender: Provided, That the mother keeps and raises the child;
2. Parent left solo or alone with the responsibility of parenthood due to death of spouse;
3. Parent left solo or alone with the responsibility of parenthood while the spouse is detained or is serving sentence for a criminal conviction for at least one (1) year;

4. Parent left solo or alone with the responsibility of parenthood due to physical and/or mental incapacity of spouse as certified by a public medical practitioner;

5. Parent left solo or alone with the responsibility of parenthood due to legal separation or de facto separation from spouse for at least one (1) year, as long as he/she is entrusted with the custody of the children;

6. Parent left solo or alone with the responsibility of parenthood due to declaration of nullity or annulment of marriage as decreed by a court or by a church as long as he/she is entrusted with the custody of the children;

7. Parent left solo or alone with the responsibility of parenthood due to abandonment of spouse for at least one (1) year;

8. Unmarried mother/father who has preferred to keep and rear her/his child/children instead of having others care for them or give them up to a welfare institution;

9. Any other person who solely provides parental care and support to a child or children;

10. Any family member who assumes the responsibility of head of family as a result of the death, abandonment, disappearance or prolonged absence of the parents or solo parent.

A change in the status or circumstance of the parent claiming benefits under this Act, such that he/she is no longer left alone with the responsibility of parenthood, shall terminate his/her eligibility for these benefits.

Criteria for Support

Any solo parent whose income in the place of domicile falls below the poverty threshold as set by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and subject to the assessment of the DSWD worker in the area shall be eligible for assistance: Provided, however, that any solo parent whose income is above the poverty threshold shall enjoy the benefits mentioned in Sections 6, 7 and 8 of this Act.

Benefits and Services

A comprehensive package of social development and welfare services for solo parents and their families will be developed by the DSWD, DOH, DECS, CHED, TESDA, DOLE, NHA and DILG, in coordination with local government units and a nongovernmental organization with proven track record in providing services for solo parents. The DSWD shall coordinate with concerned agencies the implementation of the comprehensive package of social development and welfare services for solo parents and their families. The package will initially include:

- a. Livelihood development services which include training on livelihood skills, basic business management, value orientation and the provision of seed capital or job placement.
- b. Counseling services which include individual, peer group or family counseling. This will focus on the resolution of personal relationship and role conflicts.
- c. Parent effectiveness services which include the provision and expansion of knowledge and skills of the solo parent on early childhood development, behavior management, health care, rights and duties of parents and children.
- d. Critical incidence stress debriefing which includes preventive stress management strategy designed to assist solo parents in coping with crisis situations and cases of abuse.
- e. Special projects for individuals in need of protection which include temporary shelter, counseling, legal assistance, medical care, self-concept or ego-building, crisis management and spiritual enrichment.

Furthermore, solo parents shall be provided employment benefits and protection, such as flexible working schedule, provided, that the same shall not affect individual and company productivity; non-discrimination with respect to terms and conditions of employment on account of his/her status; and, parental leave in addition to leave privileges under existing laws of not more than seven (7) working days every year for solo parents who have rendered service of at least one (1) year.

Moreover, other mandated agencies or institutions shall provide appropriate services, to wit, the DECS, CHED and TESDA shall provide the following benefits and privileges:

1. Scholarship programs for qualified solo parents and their children in institutions of basic, tertiary and technical/skills education; and
2. Non-formal education programs appropriate for solo parents and their children.

In addition to the above, solo parents shall be given allocation in housing projects and shall be provided with liberal terms of payment on said government low-cost housing projects in accordance with housing law provisions prioritizing applicants below the poverty line as declared by the NEDA. And finally, the DOH shall develop a comprehensive health care program for solo parents and their children. The program shall be implemented by the DOH through their retained hospitals and medical centers and the local government units (LGUs) through their provincial/district/city/municipal hospitals and rural health units (RHUs).

RESEARCH METHOD

The study is qualitative in nature and as such is descriptive, and used survey and focus group discussion in gathering data.

Study Areas

The research was undertaken in the whole of Region VII or Central Visayas composed of four provinces, namely, Bohol, Cebu, Negros Oriental and Siquijor. A total of twenty-eight (28) municipalities were chosen. Table 1 below lists the profile of the cities and municipalities under study in terms of class, the province they belong to, and the number of respondents in the FGD.

Table 1. List of LGUs, Class, and Number of Respondents in the FGD

Province	LGU	Class	Respondents (FGD)
Bohol	Baclayon	4 th	9
	Balilihan	4 th	4
	Batuan	5 th	8
	Bien Unido	4 th	9
	Cortes	4 th	8
	Dagohoy	5 th	10

Province	LGU	Class	Respondents (FGD)
	Davao	4 th	10
	Loay	5 th	8
	Pangasinan	4 th	12
	Tinidad	3 rd	4
	Valencia	4 th	8
Cebu	Alcantara	5 th	9
	Badian	3 rd	5
	Carman	3 rd	14
	Davaobantayan	5 th	24
	Ginatian	5 th	11
	Lapu-Lapu City	2 nd	12
	Maga	3 rd	12
	Ronda	5 th	7
	Sogod	4 th	10
Negros Oriental	Bayawan	2 nd	12
	Dumaguete City	2 nd	16
	Culhangan	5 th	7
	Sibulan	2 nd	12
	Tayasan	3 rd	11
Siquor	Enrique Villanueva	5 th	7
	Siquor	4 th	10
TOTAL	28		272

The Respondents

Respondents from the LGUs represented by local social workers in twenty eight randomly selected LGUs out of the original thirty-three (33) LGUs were gathered for this study. Five (5) municipalities refused outright to be included in the sample. Each LGU was asked to gather a group of at least 10 solo parents to become respondents. The respondents were taken from the LGUs with the highest number of solo parents based on a list submitted to the DSWD. These were also those classified as solo parents with or without identification (ID).

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Only LGUs implementing the benefits were studied. Moreover, solo parents who were employed were not part of the FGD unless they were working in the municipal hall. No interview was done of solo parents who were not included in the LGU list, whether male or female.

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The presentation of the research results is divided into three main sections. The first section presents a descriptive picture of the profile of solo parents of Regional VII. The second section describes services and benefits availed of by the solo parents as mandated by the Act. This section also includes a picture of the extent of delivery of these services as well as the facilitating and hindering factors affecting its implementation.

Profile of the Solo Parents

Age. Table 2 shows that the mean age of the solo parents is 42.6 years. The youngest solo parent in the representative sample is 17 years old while the oldest is 73. The oldest individual is taking care of grandchildren who were left by their parents to their grandmother for custody, thus, qualifying her as a solo parent.

Table 2. Profile of Solo Parents According to Age

Number of Respondents	Youngest	Oldest	Average
269	17	73	42.6766

Sex. Majority of the solo parents (almost 97%) are females as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3. Profile of Solo Parents According to Sex

	Frequency	Percent
male	9	3.3
female	263	96.7
Total	272	100.0

Educational Attainment. The figure below shows that a large portion of the representative solo parents either have college degrees (28.3%) or have some college level education (25.4%).

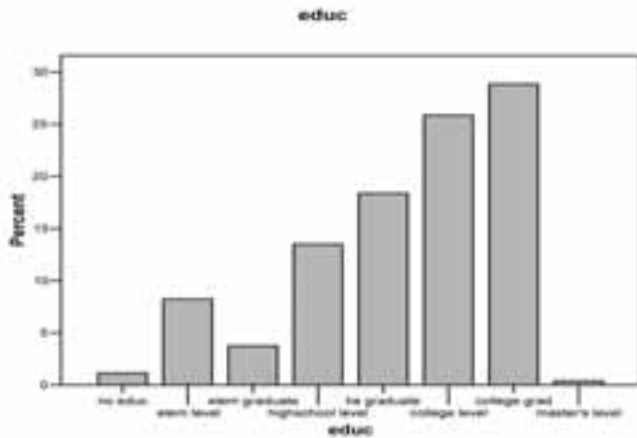


Figure 1. Profile of Solo Parents According to Education

Family Size. Table 4 shows that the number of family members in a typical solo parent household reached a mean of 4.5, with a low of one family member and, for one solo parent, a high of 13 members in the family.

Table 4. Profile of Solo Parents According to Family Size

	N	Fewest	Highest Number	Mean
Number of Family members	251	1	13	4.5179

Income Level. As shown in Table 5, the average earning per month of the solo parents is approximately P3,800 pesos. This large variation of salary distribution includes in the picture 53 solo parents without any source of income at all and one who earns P30,000 a month.

Table 5. Profile of Solo Parents According to Income Level

	N	Lowest Income	Highest Income	Mean	Std. Deviation
Monthly Income of Valid N (listwise)	258 240	.00	30000.00	3812.9	4472.322

Status of Employment. Based on the research findings, only seven percent (7%) of the sample solo parents are employed.

Solo Parent Category. Figure 2 below shows that "death of spouse" is the main cause (41.2%) for becoming a solo parent. The second cause is being unmarried (19.9%) followed by being abandoned (14.3).

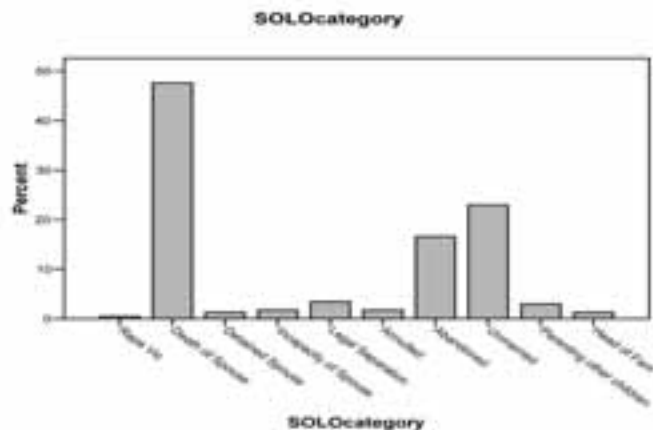


Figure 2. Profile of Solo Parents According to Solo Parent Category

Service/s Availed of under the Solo Parent Act. Table 6 below shows that majority of the solo parents are not able to avail of the services and benefits provided in the Act.

Table 6. Profile of Solo Parents According to Services Availed of by the Solo Parents

Services	Frequency (%)	
	Availed	Not Availed
Parental Leave	14 (5%)	258 (95%)
Flexible work schedule	7 (2.8%)	265 (97%)
Protection against Discrimination	2 (0.7%)	270 (99%)
Livelihood	23	249

Services	Frequency (%)	
	(8.5%)	(91%)
Counseling	19 (7%)	253 (93%)
CISD	5 (1.8%)	267 (98%)
Parent Effectiveness Services	21 (7.7%)	251 (92%)
Self-concept/ Ego building	3 (1%)	269 (99%)
Crisis Management	10 (3.7%)	262 (96%)
Spiritual Enrichment	7 (2.6%)	265 (97%)
Protection	5 (1.8%)	267 (98%)
Temporary Shelter	4 (1.5%)	268 (98%)
Legal Assistance	4 (1.5%)	268 (98%)
Educational Services	6 (2.2%)	266 (98%)
Housing Service	5 (1.8%)	267 (98%)
Health Services	79 (29%)	193 (71%)
Medical Assistance	79 (29%)	193 (71%)
Total		272 (100%)

In the Focus Group Discussion that was conducted, the general findings in Table 6 also show that although there are very few individuals benefiting from some services, they did so because they are residents of the municipality or because they are members of other identified organizations, such as women's or senior citizens' organizations for whom the services are offered, and not because they are solo parents or because such services had been designed for them.

Facilitating Factors: From the Perspective of the Service Providers

As can be gleaned from the results of this study, the service providers could not really identify any specific factor that facilitated the delivery of services for solo parents. In fact, the results of the FGD indicated that most of those who received services got the services from NGOs or by being a member of a people's organization, and not because of any effort of the mandated service providers.

Perceived Blocks or Hindering Factors: From the Perspective of the Service Providers

A. Lack of Priority given by the LGU for this Act.

1. **Absence of Local Policy.** The research showed that from the perspective of the service providers (MSWDOs), the implementation of the Solo Parents Welfare Act is fraught with many deficiencies, gaps, and difficulties which hindered the delivery of services to solo parents. As far as local policy is concerned, Table 7 shows that twenty-six (26) out of the 27 LGU's indicated that there was no municipal/ barangay/city resolution that has been drafted for the Solo Parent Act. This may be largely because of the lack of priority given by the LGU for this Act. Absence of a resolution therefore was one major factor hindering the implementation of the solo parent act.

Table 7. Local Policy/Resolution

	Frequency	Percent
No Resolution	27	96.3
Missing Data	1	3.7
Total	28	100.0

2. **Lack of Manpower / Focal Person.** Data shown in Table 8 indicate that almost seventy nine percent (79%) of the LGUs have assigned a focal person to 'work' on the Solo Parents Welfare Act. However, all of them admitted that the programs designed for the beneficiaries have not really been implemented due to lack of manpower. FGD results indicate that the social worker's primary reason for the difficulty to conceptualize programs or to deliver the appropriate benefits for the solo parents was due to lack of manpower, work overload, and the fact that some existing programs can overlap with the solo parents' needs and that they can just ride on such programs. Considering that most MSWD Offices are manned by a single social worker who is expected to deliver all social welfare services in the municipality, any program which is not monitored by external agencies will not be prioritized in terms of implementation. This, according to the social workers, is the most important hindrance to the implementation of the solo parents welfare act.

Table 8. Manpower/Focal Person

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No	5	17.9
	Yes	22	78.6
Total		27	96.4
Missing		1	3.6
Total		28	100.0

3. **Lack of funding allocation.** As can be seen from Table 9, sixty one percent (60.7%) of the LGUs indicated that the Solo Parent Act has not been allocated budget from the 5% GAD budget. Although the Municipal Social Workers are aware that the Solo Parent Act could be appropriated budget from the GAD, seventeen (17) out of the twenty eight (28) LGUs expressed that they have not availed of such budget because they have not conceptualized programs for the solo parents.

Table 9. Annual Budget

		Frequency	Percent
No		17	60.7
Yes		10	35.7
Total		27	96.4
Missing		1	3.6
Total		28	100.0

B. Weak Advocacy

1. **Lack of awareness on the Solo Parents Welfare Act.** The local social workers admitted during the post questionnaire discussion that there were initial systematic efforts done by the Field Office such as sending of letters to all the LGUs with a copy of the Act attached. There were social workers who attended seminars/orientation about the Act. Apparently though, these activities were not sustained. In effect, IDs expired and the lists of solo parents were no longer updated. Lack of information dissemination is evident at the grassroots level as shown in the gross lack of awareness of the Act among the solo parents themselves. As shown in Table 10, it is noteworthy

that the percentage of the solo parents who are not aware that there is such a Republic Act is very huge. Almost 90% of them have not heard of the Act. When probed during the FGD regarding their unawareness, the major reason given was the fact that information on the matter had not been disseminated to them. It is important to note that it became more and more apparent during the FGD that those who are aware of the Act are either solo parents working in the Municipal hall as government workers or employees who are interested in the extra seven-day leave of absence granted by the Act. Consequently, as can be seen in Table 6, the large majority have not availed of the services mandated by the Solo Parents Welfare Act.

Table 10. Awareness of the Solo Parents Welfare Act

		Frequency	Percent
Not aware		243	89.3
Aware		28	10.3
Total		271	99.6
Missing		1	.4
Total		272	100.0

C. Absence of Official List

While 39% (11 Municipalities) indicated that they submitted an official list of solo parents in response to advocacy efforts and request from the Field Office, only 5 of these LGUs provided the researchers copies of such list. Since there were no follow up advocacy activities by the Field Office, the local social workers appeared to have conveniently forgotten or misplaced a copy of the Act. Without constant reminders from the Field Office, they also relegated the implementation of the Act to least priority.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The LGUs are not fully implementing the Act as shown by the fact that solo parents are unable to avail of the benefits or services due them because of the following:

1. Inadequate dissemination. Solo parents are not aware of the Act due to inadequate dissemination of the law by the agencies concerned.

2. Absence of local Ordinance or Resolution. No local ordinance or resolution for the adoption of the national law for the allocation of budget for the implementation of the law. And there is no clear guideline on budget appropriation either.

3. Inadequate manpower. Lack of staff and focal persons to conceptualize programs and services and implement the provisions of the Law.

It is reasonable to say that the Solo Parent Act of 2000 has not been fully implemented with any degree of effectiveness. While initial systematic efforts have been done and seminars were conducted for the social workers, these were not sustained. IDs expired and the lists of solo parents were no longer updated. Lack of information dissemination was evident at the grassroots level as shown in the gross lack of awareness of the Act among the solo parents themselves.

There is lack of full implementation because majority of the LGUs have not issued any resolution supporting the implementation of the Law. Since no concrete program has been conceptualized to deliver the mandated benefits for solo parents, budget has not been appropriated even though most of the LGUs are aware that such could have been appropriated from the 5% GAD budget.

While the Republic Act on Solo Parents presents clear benefits for the solo parents, the perennial problem of execution at the LGU level is very evident.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

In response to the above conclusions, the following are strongly recommended:

1. Intensive dissemination of the Law specially to LGUs and Solo Parents themselves have to be conducted by the agencies concerned, i.e., DSWD, DOH, DILG, NHA, TESDA and LGUs. Moreover, information dissemination on the provisions of the Law within each agency concerned has to be consciously undertaken by the Personnel Unit so that Solo Parents in the

agencies concerned can avail of the benefits due them as well as encourage other Solo Parents to do the same.

2. A resolution will have to be crafted by the different Sanggunian, such as at the Provincial, City and Municipal LGU levels to ensure compliance to the provisions of the Law and allocation of budget for the implementation of programs and services for Solo Parents.

3. For the Central Offices of the different Government Agencies to issue directives to their respective regional offices for the compliance to the provisions of the Law.

4. Since the LGU social welfare offices are mostly one-man offices, local social workers become the default focal person for the solo parent programs and all other social welfare programs. It is therefore recommended that the LGUs designate a dedicated focal person for the implementation of the Solo Welfare Act and other women's programs.

5. Organization of the Solo parents from the LGU level to the Regional.

6. Institutionalize the assessment or monitoring in the implementation of the Law by concerned personnel.

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PROMOTING EFFECTIVE REAL-TIME GOVERNANCE FOR CHILDREN AND THE DISADVANTAGED – UNICEF PHILIPPINES

UNICEF Philippines



**Promoting
effective real-time governance
for children and the disadvantaged**

UNICEF Philippines: Innovative ICT tool features grassroots data collection, national sharing

Deftly tapping on the keys of her mobile phone, the young rural health worker could very well have been sending an SMS to her mother telling her that she'd be late for supper tonight. But this afternoon her phone is doing much more than 'texting'; it is sending information about a village neighbor who just gave birth to a baby boy, attended to by the village midwife. This information will almost instantaneously be received by their rural health unit, then by the municipal health officer in Glan, Sarangani in Southern Philippines, and then be posted on a data server in the national capital Manila. Aside from the mother's name, she will also key in other information like the child's weight and other such information useful to government health planners at various levels.

Since September 2011, UNICEF Philippines has been working closely with Globe Telecom and a university-based national agency to develop and field-test a computerisation project aimed at achieving a more effective and efficient system

of managing information on children and women, particularly those living in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

In the Philippines, the enormous volume of data collected daily in a typical government health centre – for the most part written on paper or cards – poses a significant challenge to a system in need of cohesive, relevant and timely health information critical to decision-making. There are about 42,000 barangays (villages) and about as many rural health units in the country. Typically, health data collection and consolidation is still done manually, thus prone to human error and also often results in delay that renders the generated information almost stale and irrelevant.

Over the last decade, however, information and communication technology (ICT) has grown so much that it has become a vital tool in both social participation and governance. For one, the rapid increase in users of mobile phones and personal computers, even in developing countries, has afforded governments and social planners new opportunities to collect, share, analyse and act on available data.

unite for
children

unicef 

Harnessing today's 'new world of data'

One foremost initiative that seeks to harness today's new world of data to gain real-time understanding of changes in human well-being is Global Pulse, an innovation initiative of the UN Secretary General's office. The initiative brings together expertise from UN agencies, governments, academia, and the private sector to research, develop, test and share tools and approaches for harnessing real-time data for more effective and efficient policy action.

UNICEF worldwide has its own Real Time Monitoring of the Most Vulnerable (RTMMV) project, conceived to help systematise and strengthen initiatives on collecting high-frequency data focusing on the most vulnerable children, women and disadvantaged populations. On-going work at UNICEF aims to generate experience on how real-time social monitoring systems can bridge information gaps. UNICEF has already established contacts and initial collaboration with other international development agencies, as well as government and civil society partners in a number of countries.

Conceiving real-time MCH monitoring in the Philippines

UNICEF's collaborative work with University of the Philippines' National Telehealth Center (NThC) takes full advantage of the great strides made in information and communication technology to

develop a system that is both extremely functional and cost-effective. While the system makes wide use of mobile phones, it also employs, in addition to regular desktop PCs, more sophisticated personal gadgets like netbooks and tablets and taps as well into popular web resources like e-mail, Facebook and Google map.

Called 'rCHITS' for 'Real-time Monitoring of Key Maternal and Child Health Indicators through the use of the Community Health Information Tracking System', the project traces its roots to the implementation in 2003 of CHITS, a computerisation project for government primary health care centres developed collaboratively by the UP College of Medicine Medical Informatics Unit and the health staff of Pasay City in metropolitan Manila. The International Development Research Center of Canada provided initial support while project management was assigned to NThC.


Originally conceived as an advocacy tool in support of community-based injury prevention, the project evolved into a computer-based system targeted primarily at serving community health centres. Later, in 2011, the rCHITS extension of the project was initiated as a result of UNICEF's engagement of NThC to develop a system specifically designed to monitor and obtain key maternal and child health (MCH) indicators in selected municipalities towards achievement of Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5, which is reduction of child mortality and improvement of maternal health.

3. Maternal Form


To go to the Maternal Registration Form page:
1. Select Enter New Form; and
2. Select Maternal Registration Form.

The end-user needs to gather the following fields from the patient:


1. CHITS ID
2. Field ID
3. OB Score
4. Date of LMP (mm/dd/yy)
5. Date of Next Appointment (mm/dd/yy)
6. Enter PIN



Enter Data
Enter new data for:
Registration Form
Immunization Form
Maternal Registration Form
Delivery Report Form
Birth Report Form
Death Report Form
CCT Absence Form
Inpatient Report Form
Feedback Form
CHITS/ Field ID Link Form



Maternal Registration Form A
Maternal Registration Form A
CHITS ID
Field ID
OB Score
Gravida
Para



Maternal Registration Form B
Date of LMP (mm/dd/yy)
Date of Next Appointment (mm/dd/yy)
Enter PIN

Figure 11:
Maternal Registration Form Link

Figure 11.1
Maternal Registration Form A (CHITS ID, Field ID, OB Score: Gravida Para)

Figure 11.2
(Date of LMP, Date of Next Appointment, Enter PIN)

In preparation for launching the rCHITS extension of the project, municipalities that could possibly serve as pilot sites were identified based on pre-determined geographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

Soon after, three municipalities were selected. Chosen as pilot sites were Sto. Domingo (in Albay, northern Philippines), Gamay (in Northern Samar, central Philippines), and Glan (in Sarangani, southern Philippines). While each differ from the two others in terms of



topographical feature, socio-economic status, and infrastructure support, all shared a common element – the strong willingness of their local government units (LGU) through their mayors, or local chief executives (LCEs), to carry out the project and prepare to benefit from it.

Making existing data systems work seamlessly together

Beyond tracking MCH indicators was the larger task of evaluating how the data generated by the Rural Health Units can be integrated into existing electronic information systems of national government agencies such as PhilHealth, the Department of Social Welfare and Development's ECCD Information System, the Department of Education's Basic Education Information System, and the Department of Interior and Local Government's Performance Management System. At the municipal level, it will also need to draw data from the local civil registrar.

Hammad Masood, UNICEF monitoring and evaluation specialist, said "such interoperability adds value to the system by allowing local chief executives (LCEs) easy access to relevant real-time data resulting in enhanced government

efficiency and transparency, better informed decisions, better public service, and ultimately better governance."

Towards establishing a common understanding of each agency's role in the system, UNICEF Philippines held a series of consultations with its key government partners. Participating in one activity were key officials from relevant national government agencies (NGAs) for health, education, interior, disaster reduction, and social welfare who interacted with representatives from local government units. The NGAs shared and illustrated their existing information systems. Key indicators relevant to both LGUs and NGAs were also discussed and streamlined.

The discussions also focused on operationalising the Philippine Government Interoperability Framework (PGIF), a national policy that governs data sharing of government agencies, as well as a related law, Administrative Order 25, which details the creation of a taskforce that will harmonise the monitoring, information and reporting systems of all executive departments.

As the inter-agency consultations gathered momentum, two high-profile national government agencies, the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) and the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), as well as the Office of the Executive Secretary were called upon to help position the initiatives on a higher level and make the interoperability endeavor a priority of the Government.

Building community capabilities with hardware and software

"As a system, CHITS/rCHITS is both hardware and software. More importantly, it is a capability-building tool that introduces important concepts of health information systems management to rural health unit (RHU) personnel," said Dr. Geohari Hamoy, NThC research associate and project coordinator for rCHITS.

Employing free and open-source software, the system is extremely flexible and compliant to the standards of the country's Department of Health (DOH). The system is modular, which means various demographic data can be culled from

other databanks such as Philhealth's and the DOH's field health information and surveillance system. Also, once installed in a health center, rCHITS can serve as platform for other e-health applications such as e-learning and telemedicine.

According to Rob Nazal of Globe Bridging Communities, Globe Telecom's corporate social responsibility arm, "The rChits pilot program is a perfect opportunity to harness the power of mobile and broadband technologies to improve health monitoring and services in the country."

How the new efficiencies help data gatherers and planners

For rural and city health centers, the new found efficiencies translate to more efficient data entry and storage, faster record retrieval and therefore shorter waiting time for patients. This also means a smoother workflow and thus more effective monitoring of the community's health and delivery of basic health services.

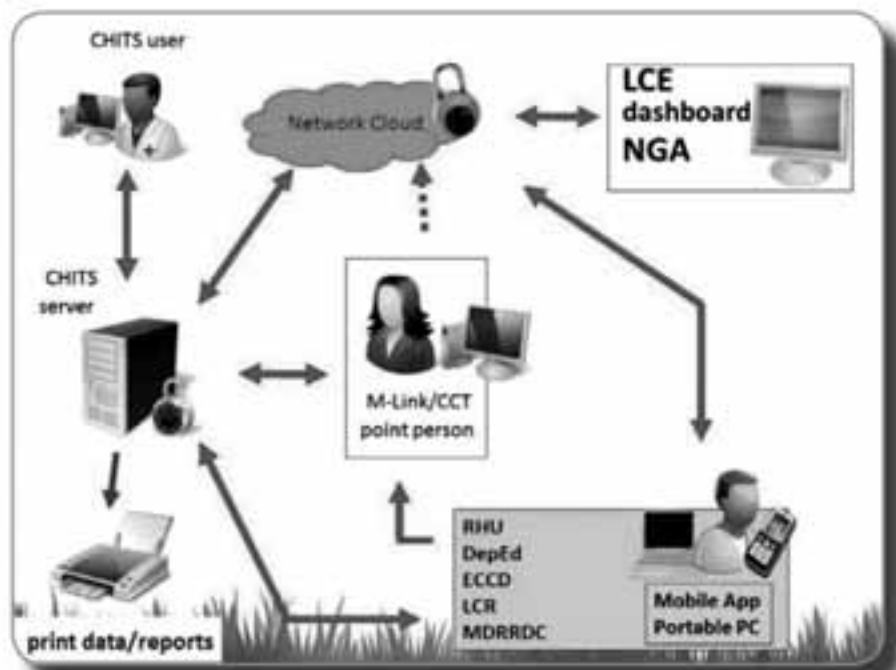
At the higher level of the city or municipal health office, fresh, accurate and more comprehensive

data at its fingertips translate to more timely submission of reports and appropriate planning, early detection of possible outbreaks, and better allocation of logistics and supplies.

As to local government units (LGUs), they can look forward to improved procurement and allocation of logistics and supplies as well as strengthening of their overall capacity to deliver basic health care services. Furthermore, engaging volunteers and community organisations in the project helps build and strengthen public-private sector partnerships.

Collecting, storing and retrieving data

rCHITS allows data to be gathered and stored at the barangay (village) level even when there is no access to Internet. Using a data encoding software called Frontline SMS, data gatherers send data via mobile phone to their barangay health unit where a point person stores the data. This data is later sent to the municipal health office and then to NTHC's server in Manila. Local health planners and local chief



Abbreviations for schematic diagram: LCE – Local Chief Executive; NGA – National Government Agency; M-Link – Municipal Link; CCT – Conditional Cash Transfer; RHU – Rural Health Unit; DepEd – Department of Education; ECCD – Early Childhood Care & Development; LCR – Local Civil Registry; MDRRDC – Municipal Disaster Risk Reduction Development Council.

executives gain access to fresh data by logging on to the network; these data they can use to guide them in decision making as well as planning their future activities. While access is open to many, care is given to make each piece of data secure and tamper-proof. Each user is assigned his/her own password and only data relevant to him or her is made available.

Just how much data can be stored and displayed in the system? The system is capable of storing information down to the individual patient level. In the rCHITS pilot areas, data including patient name and village of residence, household, diagnosis, immunisation status, and other information can be stored. Access to personal information, of course, is restricted to only those

concerned. Filtered information can then be processed at various geographic levels and along different statistical concerns.

Dr. Hamoy gives a few examples of how data is retrieved from the system for possible evaluation. A look at the database of Sto. Domingo (Albay) shows various data entered or updated, with notification of postings as in social media sites. A closer look shows that the town's geohazard map, recently developed by the LGU with partners, has already been posted. Moving on to Gamay, one learns of a very recent armed skirmish resulting in one fatality and several injuries. Some information are still to be verified so they are displayed in red; when verified, they turn green. In Glan (Sarangani), one sees a number of expected deliveries in Barangay Datal Bukay.

The LGU Dashboard: putting real-time information to good use



On his computer monitor, Mayor Tim Capoquian of the pilot municipality of Gamay views an attractive web-based page that allows him to view data updates based on mobile reports submitted for the day. Other reports will show up on his dashboard-like display as information on types of social services and counts of these services for specified periods. The mayor is pleased that he does not have to physically drop by his municipality's line agencies anymore just to check

on their reports. "With just a click on the (LGU) dashboard, I get a quick idea of all the information I need!"

For Mayor Capoquian, viewing various related sets of information on his computer screen is much like looking into his car's instrument panel, thus the nickname LGU Dashboard given to the displayed indicators. Easy to read, it allows local chief executives to see a geographical view of their

community, evaluate relevant indicators, measure efficiencies and inefficiencies, and have the ability to identify and correct problems or negative trends. Ultimately the system is a powerful tool to monitor the welfare of a community's constituents and the performance of its different local departments.

Encouraging results in pilot areas

An early cause for concern was how some frontline data gatherers, particularly long-serving RHU staff and elderly midwives, would take to the new technology.

Experiences in the pilot sites, however, indicate that they do adapt to the system easily. Although initially apprehensive as to how the new system would change the way they work, they were later very appreciative of it as it eased their work and allowed them to accomplish more.

Initial evaluation of the pilot phase also indicated that the LGU dashboard as a visualisation tool for local chief executives was very well received.

The Department of Education, meantime, saw the long-term value of the project. With tracking of birth within the municipality and tracking of immunisation per barangay now possible, they can arrive at necessary statistical data as to how many children to expect to enter first grade in six years' time. This will release them from the very tedious annual mapping of expected enrollees.

The MSWD of Sto. Domingo, on the other hand, also said that the project would also help them

identify children of pre-school age per barangay. She agreed that these would facilitate the generation of monitoring reports for the health component of the national government's 4Ps program.

Challenges and Recommendation

Several issues at the municipal and village levels, however, still have to be addressed. For one, interoperability at the local level still has to be established. Internet connectivity remains a challenge for many far-flung barangays. Issues regarding unavailability of electricity as well as weak mobile phone signals still have to be resolved with service providers. A middleware is also proposed to synchronise Frontline SMS and CHITS with the LGU dashboard. Furthermore, stakeholders are

urging the government to make the use of ICT in health a priority policy in its health agenda.

The way forward

While pilot results have indeed been encouraging, evaluation of pilot phase results show that more time is still needed for behaviour change and capacity building at the community level. Increase in the participation of the community should be encouraged and local coordinators should be hired. This will impart in them a sense of ownership, which is a crucial aspect in sustainability.

It was also determined that a tracking system has a potential for monitoring the compliance of conditional cash transfer beneficiaries and made interoperable among various national government agencies, i.e. DOH, Philhealth, DSWD-NHTS, DepEd and others. Further, it was deemed important that LGUs issue relevant policies to ensure proper monitoring and evaluation.



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ESTERO AS CONTESTED SPACE

Ms. Arlen A. Ancheta

ABSTRACT

This paper illustrates how the tidal stream or locally known as estero among the Filipinos, is valued as a human settlement rather than a waterway. The estero is an important part of Manila's freshwater, linking the Pasig River and Manila Bay. Through time, the estero changed its landscape where easements are used as residential space, side by side with garbage and waste water. This study is a reflection on the rehabilitation project done at the Estero de Paco between 2010-2011, as a collaborative project of PRRC, AFI, PGA, LGU. Interview, focus group discussion, direct observation, photo documentation, remote sensing, survey, and review of secondary data were used to gather data. This paper argues that despite the dredging projects in the estero, policy on three meter easement and available relocation sites, informal settlers still return to the estero and face life's certainties.

Key words: estero, human settlement, rehabilitation

INTRODUCTION

The tidal stream locally known as estero, (a Spanish term with estuary as the English translation) is an important part of the natural environment of Manila. The estero, as used in this paper, refers to tidal stream that functions as a drainage acanal in populated districts of Paco, Manila. This tidal stream is part of the freshwater ecosystem linking Pasig River with Manila Bay and other rivers. It defined the political boundaries of the barangays, as well as weave communities and central business districts. As population increases through time and as space becomes scarce, an upstream of the estero was transformed into communities.

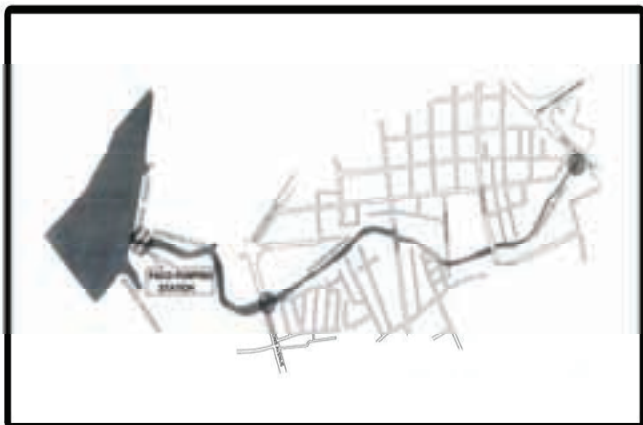
The estero as an ecosystem is made up of the surrounding human communities, institutional and commercial infrastructure and the physical

stream that provided economic and ecological services. Economically, the estero provided food (freshwater fish), water for domestic use, recreation and transportation avenue in earlier times while ecologically serves as a natural waterway from inland Manila to the Pasig River preventing floods, space break in urban Manila and habitat of freshwater fishes. Through time, most of them were transformed into informal communities, accessible to commercial establishments or use as garbage dump. Many have been obliterated and those surviving ones are endangered.

The Estero de Paco has undergone several dredging and desilting programs, as well as relocation in the past but informal settlers came back and claimed its stream bed. Interest groups from the government and private sector have been collaborating for the relocation and dredging of the estero but they were not successful in permanently clearing the easements. Thus the major issue this paper would like to explore is the reason why urban settlers reside near the Estero de Paco, and to determine what the estero has to offer that informal settlers keep on coming back. Survey, key informant interview, site observations, retrieval of documents were used to determine the background, presence of interest groups, identification of stakeholders and historical development of the estero. Remote sensing data, old maps, photographs, guide questions, visual recording, audio recording, and questionnaire were also devised to present a holistic view of the estero.

The Estero de Paco, as one of the tributaries of the Pasig River is a 3.3 kilometers (see Figure 1) extending its headwater at prominent land mark located near the South Super Hi-way and railway. It is located in District 5 of Manila that passes through Quirino Avenue to Barangay Cristobal, where it meets the Pasig River.

Figure 1. Location of Estero de Paco



Source: MMDA

hectares (see Table 1). Out of this area, the residential area occupies the largest with 39.21% or 36.68 has. The informal settlers form part of the residential area although in the land use statistics in Table 1 shows that they occupy 1.32 % only of the estero. The commercial and business sectors occupy second which are about 20.48% 19.16 hectares, and these areas are mostly along the Paco Market. The rest of the area are educational & cultural 6.51% 6.09 has.; government & quasi public 1.27% 1.19 has.; industrial area 11.67% 10.92has.; open area 0.64% 0.06has.; parks & recreational 1.56% 1.46 has.; religious & cemetery_0.48% 0.45has.; road 14.7% 13.75has.; and water body 2.61% 2.45 hectares.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Estero de Paco has a total land area of 93.53

Table 1: Land Use Statistics of Estero de Paco

LAND USE STATISTICS ESTERO DE PACO																						
LANDUSE CATEGORIES	BARANGAY																				Total (has)	
	615	662	664-A	671	672	673	674	677	678	679	680	681	682	683	684	685	686	734	736	800		829
Commercial and Business	1.46	-	-	-	0.75	4.71	4.14	0.12	0.90	1.02	0.11	0.97	0.57	0.21	0.68	0.72	1.55	1.26	-	-	-	19.16
Educational and Cultural	-	-	-	1.12	-	-	1.68	-	1.63	1.55	-	0.09	0.004	-	0.01	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.09
Government and Quasi Public	0.01	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.65	-	-	-	-	0.53	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.19
Industrial Area	-	-	8.31	-	-	-	0.50	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.11	10.92
Informal Settlers	-	-	-	0.08	0.19	0.10	-	0.02	-	0.11	-	-	-	-	0.03	-	-	0.58	0.22	-	-	1.32
Open Area	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.06	-	0.06
Park and Recreational	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.22	-	0.24	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.46
Religious and Cemetery	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.11	0.17	-	0.15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.03	-	-	-	0.45
Residential Area	0.05	-	-	1.81	4.72	2.43	3.97	4.30	2.18	1.00	2.95	1.74	2.06	1.07	1.99	2.54	1.92	0.07	1.89	-	-	36.68
Road	0.19	-	-	0.25	0.51	1.75	2.20	0.65	0.70	0.41	0.76	0.70	1.03	0.64	0.45	0.75	1.18	1.26	0.05	0.04	0.24	13.75
Water Body	-	0.38	0.59	0.13	0.18	0.14	-	0.33	-	0.14	-	-	-	-	0.08	-	0.08	0.03	0.02	0.00	0.36	2.45
Total	1.71	0.38	8.90	3.39	6.34	9.12	13.82	6.24	5.64	4.38	3.82	3.49	4.19	1.92	3.25	4.01	4.72	3.22	2.18	0.10	2.70	93.53
																						TOTAL
Minimum Width			16.13		5.99	0.99		5.99		0.99					2		2	1.49	1.49	0.98	16.13	
Maximum Width			30.02		20.13	18.93		20.13		18.93					13.42		13.42	4.3	4.3	2.22	30.02	
Length of River			269.74		456.99	321.36		456.99		321.36					376.01		376.01	224.69	224.69	30.29	269.74	3,327.87

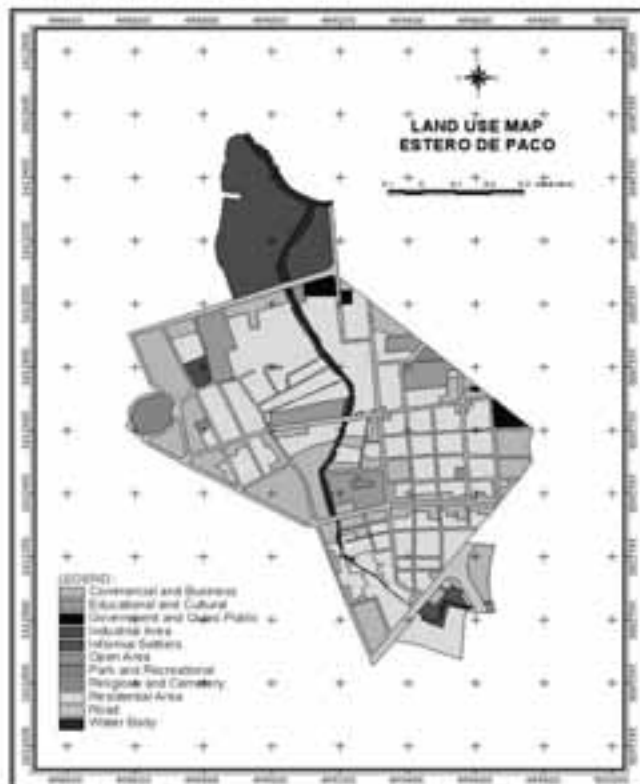
Source: Ortho-image map 2003

There are more than ten barangays located along the Estero de Paco and it has been used as political boundary of the barangays (see Figure 3).

Barangays between Quirino Avenue and Pedro Gil Street are mostly residential locales. Pedro Gil Street to Apacible Street is classified as

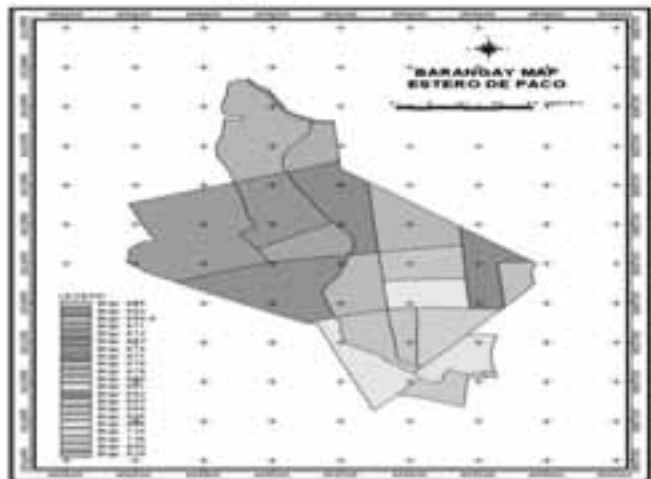
commercial and institutional, while the industrial area is located along United Nations Avenue. The land use statistics illustrates that commercial areas are located in Brgy. 673 where Paco Market is also situated; educational and cultural areas are located in Brgy 674 where Paco Catholic School is; industrial areas are in Brgy 664-A where UNILEVER is located, and most residential areas in Brgy 672, where most of the informal settlers are located (see Figure 3).

Figure 2. Land use map



Historical landmarks along the estero are the Paco Market, Paco Catholic Church and Paco Parochial School, Sikh Temple and UNILEVER Co. The presence of the market, church and school attracted the middle class to dwell along the estero because of accessibility and economic opportunities; whereas, the public elementary school along Apacible Street is sought by those who are unable to afford private education. Moreover, the Sikh Temple along UN Avenue is also accessible to the Indian communities in the Paco District.

Figure 3. The barangay map of Estero de Paco



Ortho image, 2003

(Ancheta, et al. 2011, unpublished report submitted to DOST)

A survey in 2010 (see Table 2) was conducted in the estero, with the settlers left after the relocation as respondents. Results show that most of the respondents reportedly first settled along the estero ($f=319$) and built their houses just beside it ($f=187$). According to the respondents, work is the reason for residing near the estero ($f=138$). Selling is said to be a major source of income although most of the respondents are unemployed ($f=121$), with a family monthly income of P30,000 or less ($f=115$), and has been living along the estero for 20 years ($f=123$).

Table 2. Nominal Presentation of the Respondents surveyed in Estero de Paco

Profile	Most answered Item	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	254	62
Age	25 to 29	309	76
Highest Educational Attainment	High School Graduate	149	36.5
Place of Birth	CALABARZON	10	13
	NCR	10	13
Occupation	Vendor	81	20
	None	121	30
Work Status	No Response	144	35
	Permanent	117	29
Family Monthly Income	Php 3,000 or less	115	28
House Ownership	Owned	129	48
House Material	Wood and Cement	159	39
Length of Residence	20 yrs and above	123	30.1
First Settlement in the Estero	Yes	319	78
Distance of House to Estero	Just beside it	187	45.8
Reasons in Living near the Estero	Work	138	34
Community Activities in Cleaning the Estero	Clean up drive project	288	71
	Participation of the Community in the Cleanup project	310	76
Form of Participation	Not throwing waste near in the estero	245	60

Membership in an organization in Taking Care of the estero		310	76
Agencies Helping the Community to Clean the Estero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unilever • MMDA • AFI • DPWH • PRRC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 143 206 254 58 33 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35 50 62 14 8

Source: Survey Result conducted September 19, 2010

THE REHABILITATION OF ESTERO DE PACO

The year 2009 to 2011 was one of the significant developments in Estero de Paco. It underwent rehabilitation through the collaborative efforts of the government agencies, private sector and the NGO. According to a key informant, the time frame of the rehabilitation is seven years and the main objective is to revive its waterway and improve water quality to Class C as part of the Pasig River Rehabilitation Program. Class C water means that the estero is favorable for fishery, secondary recreational activities, manufacturing processes after treatment (DENR AO No.34 series of 1990). The estero is to be cleared from informal settlers and shanties that block the natural waterway, widen its easements through dredging and desilting for the water to flow freely. The rehabilitation of Estero de Paco as a tributary of the Pasig River was a pilot project of Pasig River Rehabilitation Commission (PRRC) and ABS CBN Foundation Incorporated (AFI) through Kapit Bisig para sa Ilog Pasig (KBPIP) as part of rehabilitating the Pasig River. The physical transformation of the estero has a two-phase method; social preparation and technical intervention (see Table 3).

Table 3. Rehabilitation Management of Estero de Paco

Objectives	Interest groups	Processes
<p>1. Social Intervention Clear the estero from informal settlers and shanties that constrict the natural flow of the water</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MMDA PRRC AFI NHA Barangay City of Manila Government agencies Private sector Academe NGO 	<p>Social Preparation Information campaign Collaboration Community-based estero mgmt River warriors Monitoring and Evaluation</p>
<p>2. Technological Intervention Stream widening, desilting and improve water quality</p>		<p>Technological Intervention Bioremediation Phyto-remediation Aeration Filtration Garbage traps</p>

Source: City of Manila, Key informant interview and observation, 2010

The social preparation was significant because it prepared the informal settlers on their road to relocation. An intensive information and education campaign was initiated by AFI in collaboration with the barangays on community organizing and solid waste management. According to a key informant, community organizing before relocation was crucial because it will prepare the informal settlers to adjust to their new communities. Usually, relocatees bring their estero way of life with them to the new communities. And doing so, they continue to practice unsanitary garbage practices that would become a big problem in the future.

One of the preparations before relocation is a trip to "Bayan ni Juan" site in Calauan, Laguna to realize the future that awaits them. After dismantling the shanties, the relocatees were transferred using government trucks assisted by the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Once settled in the new site, relocatees were given grocery goods and rice to help them as they start their new life. However, not all of the informal settlers were willing to be relocated. Accessibility to present job and interruption in the present school year were few of the concerns expressed by the informal settlers. Infact, AFI found it difficult to relocate the informal settlers in a barangay located near United Nations Avenue since the informal settlers chose to stay because they knew that limited social services are available in Calauan, Laguna.

Relocation was done piecemeal. Not all of the informal settlers were relocated at the same time since they were too many to manage. The relocatees have to dismantle their shanties first, gather their belongings then leave the estero. However, not all of the relocatees were satisfied with the new site. Though space was provided for their new homes, complaints of high cost of local transportation travelling to and from Manila, inadequate water and electricity have been raised.

The physical transformation of the estero took place by desilting and stream bed widening. Several remediation techniques were employed like bioremediation, aeration, filtration and garbage traps under the bridges. The AFI even used phyto-remediation in the up-stream portion of the estero and water plants to reduce pollutants. Participating

interest groups in the rehabilitation vary from government agencies to private sector, funding agencies, academe, communities and NGO. By 2011, the landscape of Estero de Paco was changed from a congested, stagnant and dirty tidal stream to a spacious, free flowing waterway.

CONCLUSION

Urban settlers chose to reside near the Estero de Paco due to its economic and ecological value. In earlier times, the estero was economically used as transportation route, fishing ground, extension of household kitchen and comfort rooms, or water provider for domestic chores. Later on, as migrants increased in the City of Manila, the easements on both banks of the estero provided space to informal settlers who are in dire need of cheap domicile. Some of the informal settlers even lay claim to the stream bed as their own property (Ancheta, 2011).

The estero has a geopolitical function, where it serves as a landmark and boundary of the barangay and at the same time provides accessible shorter route from one barangay to another. Ecologically, the estero has been the habitat of fishes and water plants, providing nutrients to land and water animals. As part of the Pasig River, and subject to the changing tides of the Manila Bay, Estero de Paco has a natural way of cleaning its stream water without disturbing the communities.

The Estero de Paco is similar to a “one stop shop” (Ancheta, 2011) accessible to the major highways and national roads. It is accessible to Quirino Highway, Taft Avenue, and United Nations Avenue. People can freely meet their needs around the Paco Parish Church, Paco Market, Paco Catholic School, Philippine General Hospital, and Justo Lukban Elementary School, a public elementary school while the UNILEVER Co provided jobs to factory workers residing along the estero. More importantly, the Paco Market along the estero has provided livelihood to the informal settlers as vendors, pedicab drivers, barkers and domestic helpers. Infact according to an informal settler residing along Pedro Gil Bridge, the reason people prefer to reside near the estero is due to “kaliwaan” scheme. “Kaliwaan” is local term referring to quick exchange of goods and money.

As I quote the key informant “mas gusto pa ng mga tao na tumira sa tabing estero kasi malapit sa palengke, ospital, eskuwelahan, simbahan. Madali magtinda at kaliwaan ang pera,” among the residents who are mostly daily wage earners.

The estero as a public good is a shared resource. It is not personally owned but everybody wants to get a share in a form of space either for waste dumping or as settlement. It has been used for transportation and washing of clothes in the 60s, fishing and swimming in the 70s and gradually, informal settlers residing along the easements and stream bed. The estero has been shrinking since the three meter easement on both banks has been occupied by informal settlers.

The relocation of the informal settlers to the “Bayanihan in Southville” in Calauan, Laguna is not an assurance that they will stay there for good. The site is an agricultural area surrounded by mountains and exactly the opposite of their “home along the estero”. They complained about less job opportunities, inaccessibility from government hospitals, expensive local transportation and limited commercial and industrial areas. Those working in Manila rent or stay with relatives and friends on weekdays and go home during weekends. It seems the informal settlers were not clamoring for space when they were relocated. Though they enjoy the fresh air, mountainous view, privacy of their homes and new communities, it seems their concern is the economics of relocation.

Monetary security is the main issue in the resettlement sites. Based on the survey conducted, getting jobs is the main reason why urban settlers are residing near the estero (Ancheta, et.al. 2011); and job availability entails cheap accommodation, affordable education and free medical services. Resettlement goes beyond space for the houses of the informal settlers. From new housing infrastructure, comes new communities, new social relations, a lot of adjustments with bigger household expenses.

The people in the new relocation sites have to earn a living for their family to survive. They are actually used to hand-to-mouth existence and daily wages, thus similar kind of income generating activities should be available in the

relocation site. The relocatees should be skilled and capacitated to face new challenges in the new site or they will go back to their old ways of "kaliwaan" in the estero. If the relocatees feel that they were just thrown in the new site to change the landscape of the estero, sooner or later they will come back and move to other informal colonies in Metro Manila.

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