

Case Study

Relocation in Manila

Instructions

Read the case study, discuss with your group and provide recommendations for resettlement programs that can take into account the needs and respect the human rights of those furthest behind.

Thousands of families in the Metro-Manila area have been relocated by the government to areas outside the capital as part of a plan to clean polluted urban waterways and to move people from dangerous locations that often flood.

Eighty of the families living under the bridge were relocated in 2014.

Challenges for the families

In the preparation phase:

- Difficulty to obtain and cost of administrative papers to be eligible
- Weak literacy skills to ensure that the birth registration papers contain no errors
- Four different relocations sites – not easy for families to be relocated together
- Uncertainty and delays on the dates of relocation: children not matriculated in school
- The complexity of the administrative process and inconsistencies in the available information about sites made it hard for each family to be housed in the site they wanted to choose

In the relocation phase:

- Adapt to the new circumstances
- Earn a livelihood: street vending to passers-by in the bridge
- Separation of the family: one bread-winner must return to Manila to have any hope of earning money
- Lack of income and the lost of scholarships impacts attendance to school: families were not able to pay for uniforms, materials and food.
- Hard choices: sending elder children to work versus going hungry
- Increased expenses: mortgage payment versus rent free under the bridge. Water bills and less availability (often must be pumped and carried). Electricity bills.
- Less family and community support and solidarity

Examples of support and solidarity among neighbors:

"We know well how to pay back our neighbors for help we receive: when we have no money, we give rice or onions, or we propose services, such as getting water at the pump for them."

"I also run errands for neighbors, like going to the market for them. Then they give me some money or some of what they have bought."

After relocation:

- Some of the strongest families were able to thrive following their resettlement.
- For others starting over from scratch was too hard.
- Families who could not find any new way to earn money ended up returning to Manila. This made them ineligible to ever be rehoused again or to contribute with the knowledge gained through their lived experience.
- Families were required to demolish their home before being allowed to be relocated.
- Need to rebuild house that in many areas the police demolished daily.