



S T O R I E S

CH 2

RESURGENCE

IBON

IBON URBAN STORIES

CH. 2 RESURGENCE



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List of Acronyms

ADBP	average daily basic pay
CALABARZON	Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon (Region IV-A)
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
COA	Commission on Audit
COPRISS	Control on Prevention and Removal of Illegal Structures
DEPDev	Department of Economy, Planning, and Development
DepEd	Department of Education
DHSUD	Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development
DOH	Department of Health
DOTr	Department of Transportation
DPWH	Department of Public Works and Highways
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
EPIRA	Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001
FLW	family living wage
FTI	Food Terminal Incorporated
GDP	gross domestic product
GOCC	government-owned and controlled corporation
ICC	Investment Coordination Committee
IFPs	Infrastructure Flagship Projects
ISF	informal settler families
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
Kadamay	Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap
km	kilometer
KMK	Kilusan ng Manggagawang Kababaihan
LNK	Lungsod ng Kabataan
MMSP	Metro Manila Subway Project
NAIA	Ninoy Aquino International Airport
NCR	National Capital Region
NEDA	National Economic and Development Authority
NGCP	National Grid Corporation of the Philippines
NGO	non-government organization
NHA	National Housing Authority
PCMC	Philippine Children's Medical Center
PDP	Philippine Development Plan
PLM	Pinagkaisang Lakas ng Maralita
PNP	Philippine National Police
PNR	Philippine National Railway
PNR-SLH	Philippine National Railway South Long Haul
PSA	Philippine Statistics Authority
PUV	public utility vehicle
QC-CBD	Quezon City Central Business District
SGCC	State Grid Corporation of China
TNVS	transportation network vehicle service

Introduction

Philippine urbanization is a peculiar case. There is the illusion of economic growth and development, but poverty realities are everywhere. This best describes the National Capital Region (NCR), otherwise called Metro Manila.

Touted to be the center of industry and finance, Metro Manila is congested and replete with images of dysfunctional urbanization. Poverty is stark in the urban landscape on the one hand, while the government carries out land reclamation and conversion and demolition of slums on the other hand.

Urban development is framed within neoliberal economic policymaking. The thrust is highly concentrated on infrastructure, real estate development and gentrification projects to attract foreign investment and serve the interests of big business. The working people are trapped in poor working and living conditions to sustain this framework.

Philippine urbanization is a manifestation of economic underdevelopment, where poverty is most severe in the countryside while the cities do not offer any better opportunities. Farmers' landlessness and indebtedness have only worsened after decades of fake land reform programs. The state has not made any public investment to develop agriculture, much less to pursue rural industrialization.

The Philippine economy lacks modern industry. Despite being presented as transformative and grounded in tried-and-tested strategies, the current Philippine



Development Plan (PDP) remains fixated on a globally competitive growth agenda and fails to articulate a clear national industrialization policy – an essential foundation for strengthening the rural economy and building industries that can serve and sustain both rural and urban populations.

Provision of infrastructure continues to be government's main thrust, while allowing private businesses to identify the sectors and areas to be developed, with profit as the primary objective.

The poor have always demanded to be included in development planning, but the government, which is supposed to be the duty bearer in upholding the people's rights and welfare, even blames the poor's clamor for hindering so-called urban development.

IBON's Urban Stories is a study of specific urbanization issues, such as land reclamation and conversion, demolition of slums and overall displacement of the poor. Using life stories as methodology, the main aims of the IBON Urban Stories are: to highlight how the urban population are affected by these issues and how they deal with these issues; to identify the policies that facilitate these issues; to reveal who actually benefits from the development plans; and to show how people continue their fight for their basic rights. In this second series, the main basis for IBON's choice of whose stories to highlight are individuals that come from different communities who commit their lives to the long struggles of the urban poor.





THE URBAN POOR

Many studies of migration within or outside a country's border have emerged, but all share one similarity – people migrate to improve their well-being.¹ Various studies may present different ways of how people migrate, the utility provided by migration, and the capacity of the individual to migrate. They may differ on the methods of determining migration flow, but all theories agree that people migrate for greener pastures.

In the Philippines, urban areas are defined and institutionalized as the center of economic growth and opportunities. This can be depicted by the extensive urban development plan and gentrification efforts, particularly in Metro Manila, which also propagate to adjacent areas of CALABARZON and Central Luzon.²

Because majority of development projects are in urban centers, the economic and financial activities are also contracted there.³ The basic pay is relatively higher than in other regions, and there is proximity to public services and utilities. These, in contrast to the lack of improvements in the farmers' lives in the countryside where landlessness is pervasive and the rural economy remains underdeveloped, contribute to the influx of rural population to the urban centers.⁴

According to the latest report of the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), 58.9 million or 54% of the 109 million total population of the country in 2020 lived in urban barangays.⁵ This is an increase of 7.2 million from the 51.7 million urban residents in 2015. At present, five (5) out of 10 persons are living in the cities, and it is estimated that 84% of Filipinos will be residing in urban areas by 2050.⁶



The NCR has the largest urban agglomeration in the country. As of May 2020, the region has 13.5 million population. This accounts for about 12.4% of the Philippine population in the said year, which makes NCR the smallest in terms of land area but the second most populated in the country.⁷

Rapid urbanization has resulted in a massive crisis in urban housing. It has not only necessitated the absorption of surplus workers and provision of social services and utilities, but it has also increased the need for shelter.⁸ Since government planning is unable to meet these needs, the poor have resorted to the informal economy for alternative employment and for housing. People have been pushed to live in public lands, slums, tenements, relocation sites, railways, waterways, dump sites, streets and highways – referred to as informal settlements.

The settlers try to make ends meet for the high cost of living in urban areas by engaging in informal jobs with unsteady and variable incomes based on job seasonality and without government protection. Examples of these are sales workers, vehicle repairmen, construction workers, jeepney drivers, street vendors, household helpers, scavengers, factory workers, and other informal and contractual workers. These are the urban poor.

In the latest data of the Department of Human Settlement and Urban Development (DHSUD), the number of informal settler families (ISF) has reached 5.9 million as of 2021. (See Table 1) The urban poor federation, Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (Kadamay), however places the figure of urban poor at 30 million all over the country.

INFRA FOR THE RICH

PDP 2023-2028, although claimed to be a course of action for deep economic and social transformation, ironically remains within the neoliberal framework that bares the country to foreign trade and investments. Policymakers insist that these are to bolster job creation and hasten poverty reduction, but the claims are contrary to the realities of the wide number of the urban poor and majority of Filipinos.⁹ Building infrastructure, which is favorable to foreign investors and big business but primarily displaces the urban poor, is the major strategy of the PDP.

Under the Marcos Jr administration and even the Duterte administration before it, the biggest portion of the national budget has been allocated to infrastructure. (See Chart 1) For 2023-2025, the infrastructure sector has cornered an average of 27.1% of the national budget.

As of February 2025, there are 207 Infrastructure Flagship Projects (IFPs),

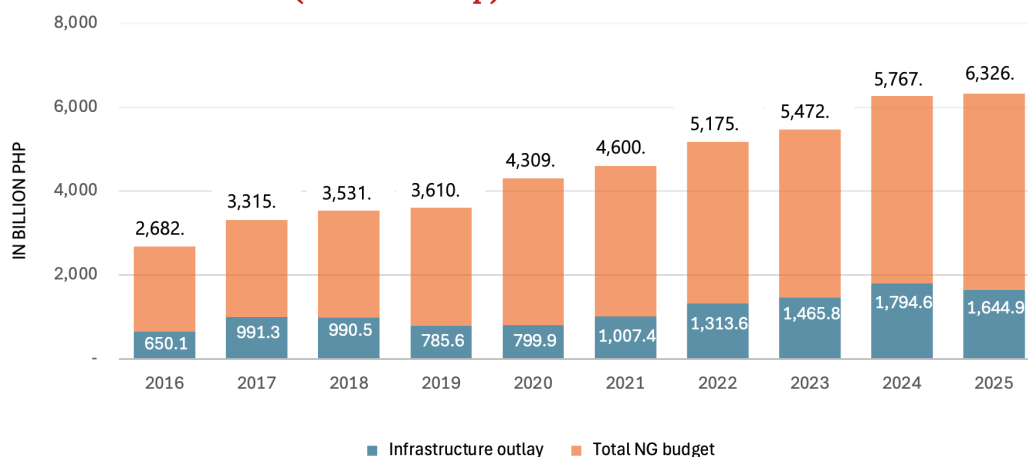
of which 139 are dedicated for physical connectivity and majority are concentrated in NCR. (See Chart 2) The government is straightforward in justifying to the public that the IFPs are designed to accelerate and strengthen foreign trade and attract foreign investments.¹⁰

Most of the loans for these IFPs go to the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).¹¹

Housing as business

This amount of prioritization for large infrastructure projects, however, is asynchronous to the productivity of housing programs that could accommodate the growing urban poor. Often, infrastructure projects are built at the cost of the shelters of the urban poor who in the end are relocated to remote areas.

Chart 1: Infrastructure and the national government budgets, 2016-2025 (in billion Php)



Source: Department of Budget and Management Budget of Expenditures and Sources of Financing

The current ways of the government to address the worsening housing crisis is through privatization and commodification of housing.¹² The government transfers its role as a provider of housing to the private business sector.

By incentivizing the construction of socialized housing, the supply of houses increased. The National Housing Authority (NHA) reported that a total of 9,600 housing units were started, and 15,856 housing units were completed for the fiscal year 2023. These figures represent performance rate of 118% and 42%, respectively, compared to the respective targets of 8,123 housing starts and 37,913 housing completions.¹³

Majority of these housing units come from projects under NHA's Resettlement Program for ISFs Affected by Infrastructure Projects, particularly the ISFs affected by the construction of the Philippine

Table 1: Number of informal settler families, 2021

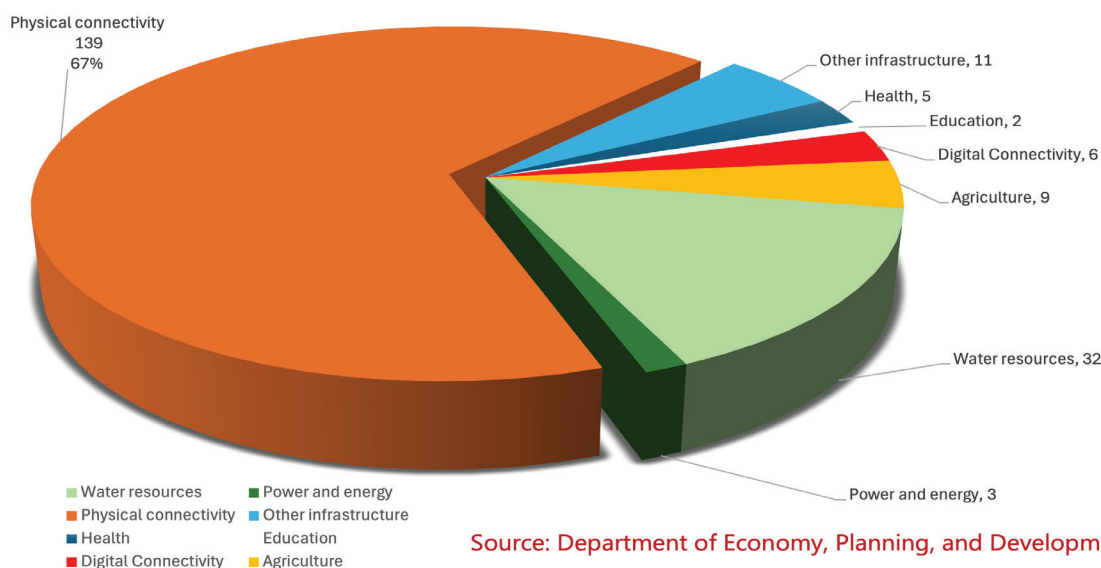
AREA	NUMBER OF INFORMAL SETTLER FAMILIES
Philippines	5, 942, 680
NCR	255,116
Luzon, Net of NCR	3, 753, 537
Visayas	1, 028, 442
Mindanao	905, 585

Source: Department of Human Settlement and Urban Development

National Railway South Long Haul (PNR-SLH) Project.

These housing units are not for free. The government provides these as socialized housing with subsidized loans and long amortization terms. But the problems of affordability and accessibility, the lack of basic utilities, and the long distance between the housing project and the poor's livelihood sources are still apparent. The unresolved situation leads to thousands of unoccupied housing units.¹⁴

CHART 2: Infrastructure flagship projects by sector, as of February 2025



Source: Department of Economy, Planning, and Development

Sacrificing the poor

The urban poor come to the city only to be absorbed into the “reserve army” of labor as odd-jobbers, service providers, construction workers, factory workers, house helpers, drivers, vendors, or to be anything worth a few pesos. The PDP perpetuates this informality as it is poised to continue the strategy of promoting a service instead of a producing economy. The attraction of foreign investment is also premised on the offer of cheap labor.

In June 2024, the most jobs created are in construction, which grew by 938,000 to 5.8 million; wholesale and retail trade by 527,000 to 10.6 million; accommodation and food service activities by 396,000 to 2.6 million; and manufacturing grew by 353,000 to 3.9 million.

These sectors are also the main contributors to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the second quarter of 2024, where construction had 16% share; services, 6.8%; and wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles with 5.8% share. Yet, workers in these occupations do not have job security, receive meager remuneration, and work under harsh and hazardous conditions.¹⁵

These sectors are recognized to be those paying below the national average daily basic pay (ADBP). They are among the six worst paying in the country, with an ADBP of Php540 for construction, Php470 for wholesale and retail trade, Php486 for accommodation and food service, and Php546 for manufacturing. These are all far below the national ADBP of Php616 and are not even half of the Php1,207 family living wage (FLW) estimated by IBON as of July 2024.

Meanwhile, the so-called gig economy saw significant growth particularly at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes service providers through digital platforms – they are hired online and may work anywhere and paid based on outputs. The country has approximately 1.5 million registered freelancers, based on a recent study, which could be higher as many gig workers are undocumented.¹⁶ There is also a surge in transportation network vehicle service (TNVS) riders whose pay depends on their location and hours of work. In 2024, there were around 40,000 Grab registered drivers, of which 30,000 were in Metro Manila, while there were 30,000 Angkas riders.^{17,18}

Precarious jobs, low wages, along with the constant increase of prices of basic needs – the urban poor swim in this swamp of poverty. It appears that the “tried and tested strategies” only mean pursuing an economic agenda that is beneficial to only a few sections of Philippine economy and dismissive of the urban poor's basic rights, including being in the city.

The most ironic is that the government's so-called development projects, apart from excluding the urban poor, regard the urban poor as hindrance to progress.

Metro Manila Subway Project

Dubbed as the project of the century, Metro Manila Subway Project (MMSP) is a 36-kilometer (km) long subway being constructed from East Valenzuela to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), initially connecting 16 stations and a depot. It will be the first mass underground transport system in the Philippines proposed by the DOTr in partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). It was approved by the National Economic and Development

Authority's (now Department of Economy, Planning, and Development or DEPED) Investment Coordination Committee (NEDA-ICC).¹⁹

The MMSP covers key components, which first include the 16 subway stations, including their corresponding construction yards and shield machine bases; underground section or tunnel in-between the stations; the Valenzuela depot; and the interoperability area between Food Terminal Incorporated (FTI) station and Bicutan PNR station.

To date, there are 17 identified stations of MMSP as the DOTr decided to expand from the original plan. These are: East Valenzuela Station (located at the depot site); Quirino Highway Station; Tandang Sora Station; North Avenue Station; Quezon Avenue Station; East Avenue Station; Anonas Station; Katipunan Station; Ortigas Station (formerly Ortigas North); Shaw Station (formerly Ortigas South); Kalayaan Station; Bonifacio Global City Station; Lawton Station; Senate Station; NAIA Terminal 3 Station; FTI Station; and Bicutan Station. (See Map 1)

This project will fan out across 30 barangays in Metro Manila – one barangay each in Valenzuela City, Makati City, and Pasay City; two each in Taguig City and Parañaque City; four in Pasig; and 19 in Quezon City.²⁰

According to the DOTr, the primary objective of the MMSP is to address the prevalent traffic congestion in Metro Manila, as it will offer the commuters alternative mode of transportation and will result in the reduction of the volume of vehicles on the road. However, the project is not accompanied with a plan for the affected jeepney, bus, and public utility vehicles (PUV) drivers and operators.



The project proponents also claim that it will significantly influence the Philippine economy as the subway is projected to create over 20,000 jobs during construction and surpass 100,000 employment opportunities once the subway becomes operational.²¹ However, the over 20,000 construction and related jobs are not permanent – over 20,000 workers from the urban poor will be left unemployed once the project is completed. The projection of 100,000 employment opportunities, on the other hand, is also overstated and easily offset by higher fares and user-fees.

It is also given special attention to attract foreign investments and will stimulate the growth of the country's tourism sector. With that objective, urban poor communities in the vicinity of the project who are deemed by the government as "eyesore" are expected to be displaced.²²

National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) Power Grid

National power transmission through the NGCP was streamlined under the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (EPIRA), the country's largest privatization program. The NGCP maintained a 25-year concession contract and 50-year franchise to operate and manage the country's power transmission in partnership with the private sector.²³ At present, it is composed of Monte Oro Grid Resources Corporation led by Henry Sy Jr; a former unit of the Ricky Razon group, Calaca High Power Corporation led by Robert Coyoito Jr; and the State Grid Corporation of China (SGCC) as a technical partner.

Thereafter, laws were passed to prevent the disruption of their business operation. For instance, House Bill No. 1224 of the

17th Congress and Republic Act 11361 or the Anti-Obstruction of Power Lines Act ensured the regulation of planting of high-growing tree or plant species as well as the prohibition of constructing structures below or within the right-of-way limit of power transmission lines.^{24,25} These laws give entities like the NGCP the authority to remove any obstruction without prior permission from the owners.

Philippine Children's Medical Center (PCMC) and QC-CBD Expansion

Formerly known as Lungsod ng Kabataan (LNK), PCMC is a government-run children's hospital in Quezon Avenue in Quezon City. It is a government-owned and controlled corporation (GOCC) that is administratively attached to the Department of Health (DOH).

The hospital started operations on 23 June 1980. It provides specialty medical care for children ages 19 and below, including high-risk pregnancy women and their newborns. The PCMC continues to expand its operations, starting from the creation of new divisions to building new facilities with private contractors.

The hospital is in the process of acquiring legal titles of three parcels of land from the NHA with a total purchase of Php943 million.²⁶ The Commission on Audit (COA) urged the hospital to take immediate

**METRO MANILA
PHASE I (V)**

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action to ensure the protection and interest of PCMC.

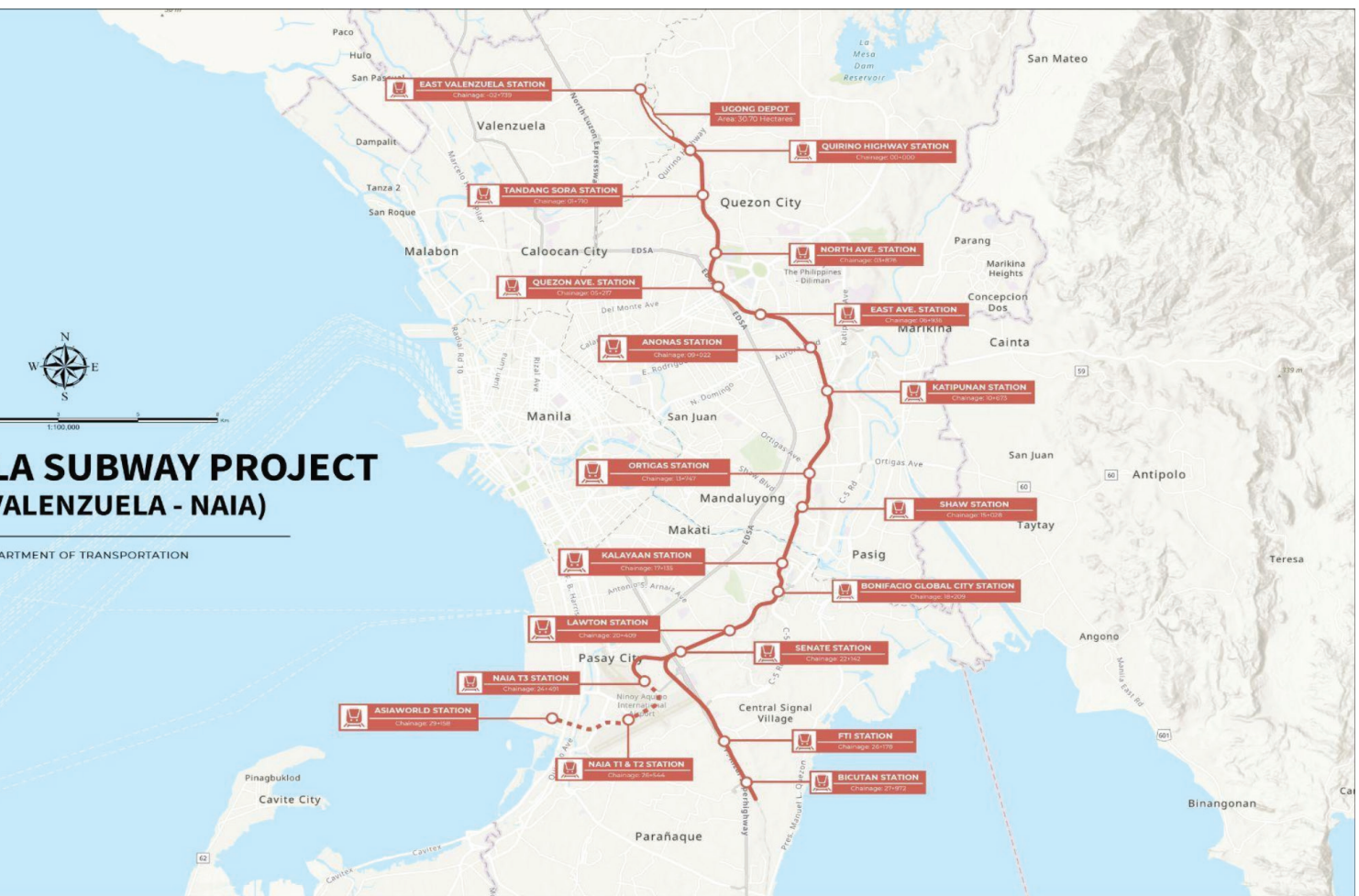
At present there are eight infrastructure projects, five of which are already beyond the target completion dates. These include a four-story cancer center building, four-story pediatric brain center, and a steel parking building. Soon after the reconstruction of the PCMC website in September 2024, the details of the other infrastructure projects were removed.

The PCMC expansion is just a portion of a much bigger urban development plan for the city, particularly in North Triangle – the creation of Quezon City Central Business District (QC-CBD). (See Map 2)

This is allotted the biggest land area among the cities in Metro Manila and was identified in a World Bank study that would be “the center of gravity of all commercial activities in the coming years”. The Quezon City local government is determined to prove its potential for more diverse and better-planned development and aspires to be The Green Lung of Metro Manila, The Knowledge Industry Capital of the Country, and The Health and Wellness Center in Asia.²⁷

The city land use plan identifies the big colonies of informal settlers as a major challenge facing the development of North Triangle.

MAP 1



Demolitions

There remains a broader pattern of evictions and demolitions across various urban poor communities in the country, often with little or no adequate relocation. But there's no publicly available or updated central registry tracking all demolitions nationwide.

Kadamay estimated about 4,209 families affected by demolitions in Metro Manila alone from June to October 2016, at the start of the Duterte presidency, and prior to that there were around 23,000 nationwide.²⁸ There was a ban on demolitions during the pandemic lockdown, and Kadamay feared then that if the ban would be lifted, some 50,000 informal-settler households risked being displaced.²⁹

News monitoring, especially those of alternative media, and reports from Kadamay showed that in Metro Manila alone, more than 8,000 families had been affected by demolitions from 2010 to 2025. (See Table 2) The patterns of court-ordered demolition, violent demolition, and arson are common in the monitored cases. (See Table 3)

Large infrastructure projects, such as railways, reclamation, flood-control, road and bridge construction roads drive away the urban poor from their settlements. Privatization of land and

infrastructure is behind the rush – private developers purchase and claim lands occupied by informal settlers and profit from privatized infrastructure, real estate, and gentrification projects. This is why demolitions oftentimes take place without proper resettlement or due process and are a persistent threat even as communities negotiate or resist.

MAP 2

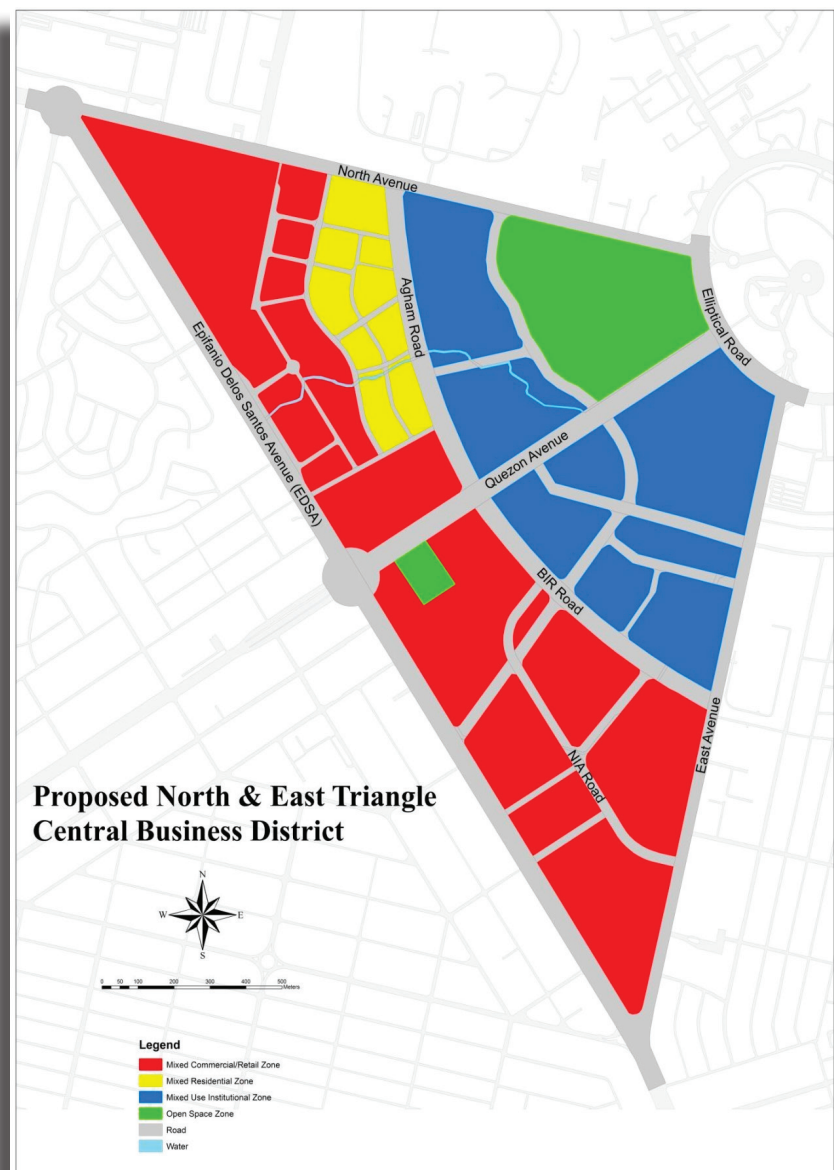


Table 2: Monitored demolitions in Metro Manila, 2010-2025

YEAR	DATE OF EVENT	CITY/SITE	TYPE	HOUSEHOLDS / HOMES AFFECTED*	STATED CAUSE / PROJECT
2010	Sept 23	Sitio San Roque, Brgy Bagong Pag-asa, Quezon City	Violent demolition	N/A (large community)	Start of clearing for QCCBD with Ayala Land; led to Aquino's "moratorium" on demolitions
2011	'Mar 30	Coastal Road (behind Lorenzana), Brgy San Dionisio, Parañaque	Demolition / eviction	76 families	Eviction by PRA on coastal land; alleged lack of due process, relocation demanded
	'Dec 12	Dypac Compound, Tondo, Manila	Demolition	~300 families	Community demolished in mid-December; part of broader Metro Manila clearing of poor communities
2012	'Jan 11	Brgy Corazon de Jesus, San Juan City	Violent demolition	123 families (last batch) lost homes; earlier waves affected more	Clearing of community to make way for new San Juan city hall complex
	'Apr 20	Agham Road, Quezon City	Large fire used as de-facto clearance	~150 families affected	Community in area targeted for QCCBD burned; residents and Kadamay leaders link fires to demolition threats ("demolition by fire")
	'Apr 23	Silverio Compound, Parañaque City	Violent demolition	Pop. of community ≈23,000 residents; substantial portion affected	Local gov't and SM-linked development; 1 killed, dozens injured/arrested during clash
	'Sept 19-25	Guatemala St, Brgy San Isidro, Makati City	Demolition / forced relocation	~256 families	City-purchased lot cleared; many residents forcibly evicted amid violence, some relocated to distant sites
2014	'Jan 27	Sitio San Roque, Brgy Bagong Pag-asa, Quezon City	Violent demolition	≥200 families lost homes	Agham Road widening as part of QCCBD; heavy police/SWAT deployment, use of tear gas etc.
2016	'Jun 16	Apollo St, Brgy Tandang Sora, Quezon City	Demolition with police operation	134 homes demolished	Houses tagged as "fire hazards" / no permits on alleged private land; residents say no clear court order, no relocation
2017	'Oct 18	East Bank Manggahan Floodway, Sta. Lucia, Pasig City	Mass demolition	~1,000 homes	Clearing of floodway; residents say it's like a "war zone"; linked to flood-control / river-widening
2019	'Oct 10	Ignacio St, Pasay City	Demolition	≥180 families	Court-ordered demolition on private land; notices and relocation info allegedly not properly disclosed to residents
2020	Within Sept	Legaspi St, Intramuros, Manila	Threatened demolition/ eviction	n/a; long-settled community (40-50 yrs)	Private company with court-granted civil case; residents ordered to vacate despite COVID "stay at home" regime and lack of relocation
	Within the year	Katuparan Housing Project, Vitas, Tondo	Threatened demolition	~5,000 residents	NHA project to clear existing housing for a new project; demolition threats vs existing urban poor residents
2025	'Dec 12	Purok 2, Brgy Makiling, Calamba City, Laguna	Sudden, violent demolition	40 displaced families	Private individual claiming titled ownership; demolition teams with 40-50 armed guards, no court order shown to residents
	'Nov 25	Palma St (Filinvest 2), Batasan Hills, Quezon City	Court-ordered demolition	"Mahigit 25" families; ~30 houses on 2,300 m ² lot	Private land with 2024 writ of demolition; Quezon City LGU and sheriffs enforced order despite rains and Christmas season

LGU - local government unit

N/A - not available

NHA - National Housing Authority

PRA - Philippine Reclamation Authority
QCCBD - Quezon City Central Business District
SWAT - Special Weapons and Tactics

Sources: Various reports monitored by IBON

Table 3. Observations on monitored demolitions in Metro Manila, 2010-2025

APPROXIMATE PERIOD	INDICATOR	VALUE / MAGNITUDE	OBSERVATIONS
2010-May 2011	Fires in communities under demolition threat	852 fire incidents	Kadamay notes many of these fires occurred in urban poor communities with looming demolition, suggesting "demolition by fire" pattern
2010-2012 (Aquino admin, early years)	Families affected by demolitions	>12,000 families	CTUHR monitoring of demolitions / eviction-related killings; 5 urban poor residents killed in demolition-related violence in same period
2014 (Aquino admin)	Recorded killings linked to demolition enforcement	≥14 cases of killings	Kadamay documentation of killings by authorities implementing demolitions
2019 (Pasay case only)	Families demolished on World Homeless Day	≥180 families	Single event – Ignacio St. demolition
2017 (Pasig case only)	Homes demolished in East Bank Floodway	~1,000 homes	Single event – floodway clearing
2020 (COVID period)	Residents facing demolition in single housing project	~5,000 residents	Demolition threats in Katuparan, Vitas amid pandemic; in-city housing controversy
2025 projection	Housing backlog by 2028	Up to 12 million housing units	Kadamay estimate; DHSUD target 3.2 million units vs much larger backlog

CTUHR - Center for Trade Union and Human Rights
DHSUD - Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development

Sources: Various reports monitored by IBON

BREAKING THE SILENCE

To provide space for the new PCMC facilities, the shelters and lives of families in Sitio San Isidro will have to give way.

Sitio San Isidro is located beside the PCMC and extended along Agham Road near the Office of the Ombudsman. It is an urban poor community – tightly packed houses are clustered along dark and narrow inner alleys, and a creek runs through the dense settlement. Half of Sitio San Isidro belongs to Brgy. Pag-asa, the other half to Brgy. Project 6 – as if no local official wants to be solely responsible for the informal community.

Demolition began with the assistance of the local government, where the families were offered to be relocated in remote areas or to receive compensation from the government. Among them is the family of Gerald Arias, 23 years old, known by the community as Aries.³⁰

Aries is a typically introverted guy. He seldom talks and is often seen wearing his earphones and listening to music. He would mostly stay in the background during discussions, seemingly sullen until his cat jumps on his lap and Aries starts to pet his cat and open up.

His parents migrated from Surigao and Leyte in the 1990s to seek better chances of livelihood in the city. They ended up in Sitio San Isidro, where Aries, third among 10 siblings, grew up. His mom recalls that there were only three families in the community when they arrived. The

population eventually grew exponentially.

Violent demolitions

The first threat of demolition in Sitio San Isidro came in 2013. It was meant to make way for business establishments that would allegedly create jobs. But the residents resisted – for them, job creation was meaningless if they were to be relocated far from their workplaces and sources of livelihood. In fact, residents who were already given financial assistance and housing units in the relocation sites eventually left the sites and went back to Sitio San Isidro.

The residents set up a barricade along Agham Road and halted the demolition. Aries' family was spared.

Eleven years later, on 18 April 2024 at 6 o'clock in the morning, the community was jolted awake by a commotion. State forces were back – the NHA, the Quezon City Task Force Control on Prevention and Removal of Illegal Structures (COPRISS), and the Philippine National Police (PNP). Demolition operations lasted until 4 o'clock in the afternoon, leaving 50 families homeless and many children traumatized.

“Nagulat kaming lahat. Pero mas nag-alala ako sa mga bata. Naawa ako. Sila yung pinakanaapektuhan.” (“We were all caught off guard, but I was more worried about the kids. I felt sorry for them – they were the ones most affected.”) Aries couldn't



believe how the demolition team kept tearing down one house after another, even while children were still inside. This is quite ironic for PCMC.

Aries was there reasoning with the authorities during the demolition. He tried to stop the team, arguing that they were not allowed to demolish without permit and notice. The authorities argued that the structures they were tearing down belonged to those who had agreed to accept financial assistance. But Aries didn't buy that reasoning.

Aries explains that in a single structure or house, there are 7-10 rooms that are rented and/or shared by different families with 2-5 members. Thus, the other families living in the same structure where one occupant volunteers for the financial assistance are affected by the decision they did not make.

Government's wicked ways

The state forces had quickly set up a barricade around the areas where the houses once stood. Guards are stationed there now and fire warning shots whenever residents try to approach the barricade. The families who lost their homes can only watch from a distance – they've never been able to recover their belongings.

The authorities call the sitio a "danger zone" to justify tearing it down. But according to Aries, the danger is from the authorities – some hired goons deliberately block the waterways to cause flood and drown the community.

The community sought dialogues with the local government to demand better alternatives than the failed relocation.



During one of the negotiation meetings, an operator from the local government offered Aries money to put a live cat on fire and let it run wild in the community.

“Buti na lang ako ang inutusan, kasi kung iba yun, pwedeng pumayag. Hindi nila alam, mahilig ako sa pusa.” (“Good thing I was the one asked, because if it were someone else, he might have agreed. They have no idea I’m a cat person.”) Aries smiles and lovingly caresses his cat. In silence, he only affirms how much he values his community.

“Sila pa ang mas magpapahamak sa amin.” (“They’re the ones who would put us in even greater danger”)

Standing their ground

On the day of the demolition, Aries contacted Kadamay for help. A week later, the local government labeled Aries along with some residents of Sitio San Isidro as “good census” or as “structure owners”. They went to the Quezon City Hall for



a dialogue and were given Php10,000 financial assistance.

Offers of financial support to the residents continue as of writing. But Aries believes that financial assistance and relocation with access to livelihood and basic services should go hand in hand

Meanwhile, several non-government organizations (NGOs) have offered support to the community, putting special attention to the affected children and conducting psychosocial debriefing to address the trauma inflicted by the violent demolition.

Demolition has been halted so far – thanks largely to the community's collective resistance against the unacceptable relocation terms. Still, the organized residents remain steadfast and vigilant; experience has taught them that the authorities can be sneaky, and the residents are ever ready.

As for Aries, he has chosen to be a full-time member of Kadamay to organize and start a chapter in Sitio San Isidro. The chapter members dream of establishing community-led healthcare and wellness center, a preschool, and a public market.

Aries may be the quiet type, but he stands his ground in the face of oppression. In moments of crisis, he has proven his courage, standing at the front lines and speaking on behalf of his community – the only home he has ever known.

FIGHTING FOR TOMORROW

Sitio Gitna in Kaybiga (Brgy. 166), Caloocan City is a dense inner neighborhood with tight alleyways connected to feeder roads toward Mindanao Avenue Extension and Quirino Highway. Structures are mostly low-rise houses, of mixed materials, and small stores and micro-businesses. Several factories also surround Sitio Gitna, making it susceptible to safety and right-of-way issues.

What is most threatening for the residents, however, is the NGCP transmission tower right in the middle of Sitio Gitna. It is part of the San Jose-Quezon 230-volt 19-kilometer Line 3 project of the NGCP, which traverses the Metro Manila cities of Quezon City, Caloocan and Valenzuela, and the City of San Jose Del Monte in Bulacan. Line 3 aims to widen the power transmission corridor and relieve and prevent overloading of transmission lines currently serving Metro Manila. Structures and activities under and near the wires will have to be restricted and cleared.

Daily threat of eviction

Despite the threat, Sitio Gitna is a lively community, filled with the camaraderie and cheerfulness of people living there, one of them is the high-spirited Nanay (mother) Leng-Leng.³¹

Beverly “Nanay Leng-Leng” de la Cruz-Tan is 50 years old. Twenty years ago, local authorities urged her family to move from Valenzuela to Caloocan City because of the construction of the NGCP transmission

tower. The local authorities promised then that the project would not reach the place where Nanay Leng-Leng’s family transferred and is presently residing. The land was then being cultivated for growing crops.

In 2017, however, a transmission tower was built on the very land where their houses are standing. The tower is expected to emit high voltage electricity, and the houses near the tower should be demolished. The project is not yet operational and way beyond its target completion date in 2022. But the looming threat of eventually being displaced hangs over the community every single day.

A poor’s life

Nanay Leng-Leng has three children. Her husband is a security guard stationed in Bataan and seldom comes home. More than half of her life, she has tried various informal and subcontracting jobs to fend for her family.

She worked as a janitress at SM department stores when she was only 16. Until she was 19, she would shuttle back and forth from SM Bocaue to SM Cubao where there would be a slot for contractuales that a minor like her could fill in.

In her 20s, Nanay Leng-Leng worked at the Century Tuna factory in Taguig, where she was assigned to handle product

measurements. Her most recent livelihood is as an umbrella sewer in Las Piñas where she earns seven (7) pesos per dozen.

She spent 23 years working as a subcontractor for Aspen, assembling notebooks with steady, patient hands. Aspen is a factory in Nanay Leng-Leng's neighborhood.

In 1992 and 1993, life was even tougher – she worked day to night in two different companies to make ends meet. Nanay recalled her old routine: from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., she reported to Kentucky, a clothing corporation also in the neighborhood. After her shift, she hurried home, tended to family matters, snatched a moment of rest, and then headed out again. By 9 p.m., she was already at Aspen, working until 4 a.m., before starting the cycle all over again.

Other subcontractors would even bring their children inside the factory – a practice still allowed today – for the sake of boosting production. “Magpapapirma lang sila ng waiver. Ang nakalagay, walang pananagutan ang kompanya sa maaaring maganap sa bata,” Nanay Leng-Leng said. (“They would just ask the parents to sign a waiver where it says that the company will not be held liable for whatever untoward incidents may happen to the children.”)

A subcontractor who assembles notebooks earns an average of Php3,000 per week, or Php429 per day, including weekends. He/she can assemble 6,000 pieces of notebooks per day, which means that the worker earns only 7 centavos per notebook.

Nanay Leng-Leng also found herself working for a business (also in the

neighborhood) registered as a mere “storage facility”, but which in reality operates a sly and dangerous side trade – altering expiration dates. Inside the factory, stacks of unopened food and beverage products are waiting to be repacked and relabeled. Some items are bound for export, while others are quietly redistributed to nearby groceries. Nanay recalled an incidence when the Bureau of Internal Revenue made a surprise inspection. The management panicked and locked all workers inside a storage room, hiding them from authorities.

Earnings from this scam of a business reach Php1,000 to Php3,000 – to be divided among 15-20 people who have worked together at one table.

“Ang dami kong ginawa pero hindi ako yumaman,” Nanay Leng-Leng made a facetious remark. (“I have done so much but I didn’t get rich.”)

How dehumanizing most of her experiences may be, Nanay Leng-Leng has continued to spend her days working in informal and precarious jobs. These are the only options she has to survive. These are the only options the community have that would put food on their plates.

When asked about the possible demolition, Nanay Leng-Leng paused to think – it would mean losing both their houses and livelihoods. Words were hard to find for Nanay Leng-Leng.

Living for others

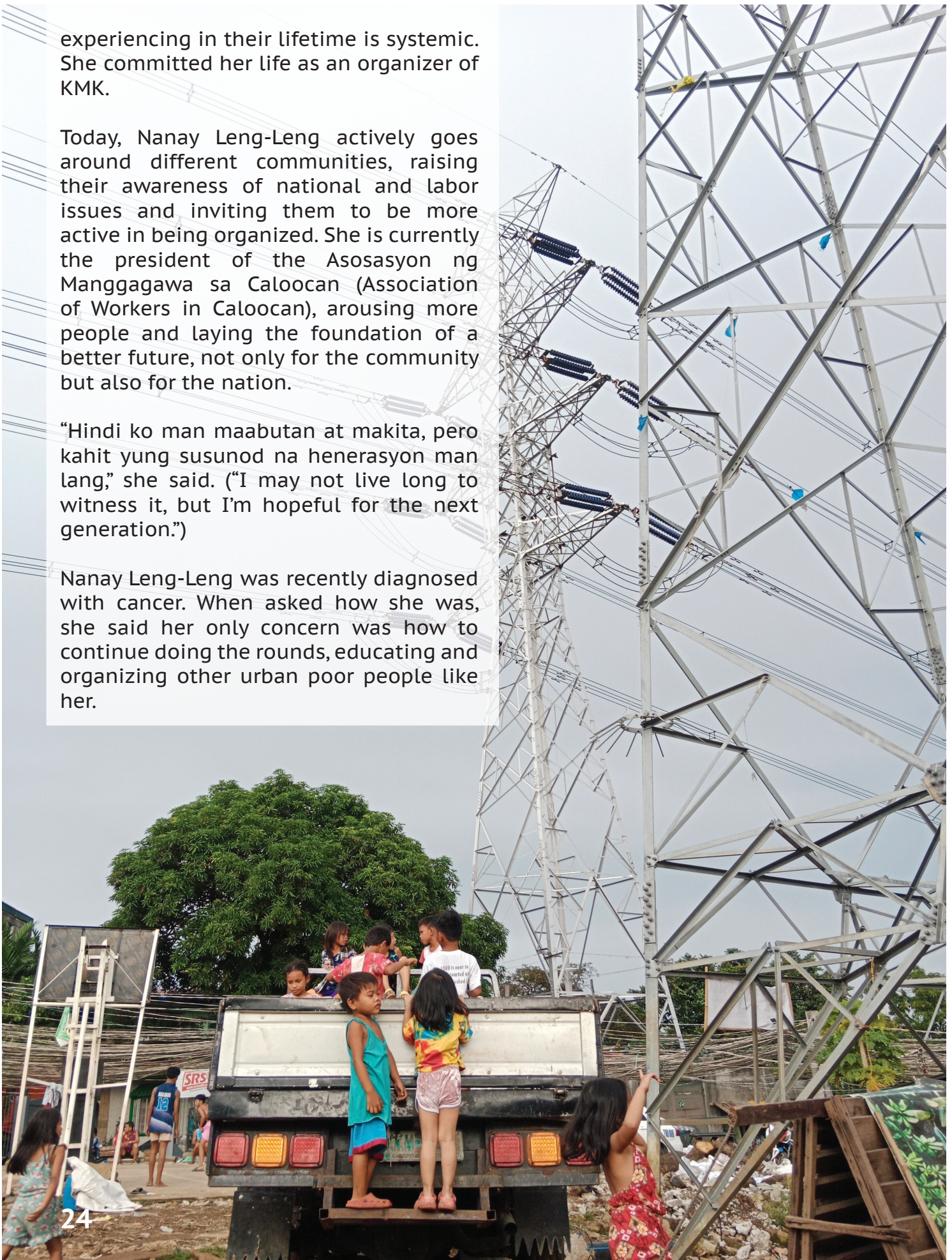
Nanay Leng-Leng came across the Kilusan ng Manggagawang Kababaihan (KMK or Women Workers Movement). She learned that the exploitation workers like her are

experiencing in their lifetime is systemic. She committed her life as an organizer of KMK.

Today, Nanay Leng-Leng actively goes around different communities, raising their awareness of national and labor issues and inviting them to be more active in being organized. She is currently the president of the Asosasyon ng Manggagawa sa Caloocan (Association of Workers in Caloocan), arousing more people and laying the foundation of a better future, not only for the community but also for the nation.

“Hindi ko man maabutan at makita, pero kahit yung susunod na henerasyon man lang,” she said. (“I may not live long to witness it, but I’m hopeful for the next generation.”)

Nanay Leng-Leng was recently diagnosed with cancer. When asked how she was, she said her only concern was how to continue doing the rounds, educating and organizing other urban poor people like her.







FIGHTING VIOLENCE

Lailani “Ate Lanie” Crebillo, 52 years old, was born in Ormoc, Leyte, but she was raised in Tacloban where she eventually met her husband.³² They got married in 1986 and started a family at tender ages of 16 and 19.

The couple used to help grow crops such as cassava, corn and rice on the small plot of land owned by Ate Lanie’s mother-in-law. When Ate Lanie became pregnant with their first child, she and her husband decided to go to Manila, where they hoped to find better livelihood and economic opportunities. That move marked the beginning of a life moving from one community to another.

Damayang Lagi

They first arrived in Brgy. Damayang Lagi in 1988. Brgy. Damayang Lagi covers 42 hectares in the 4th district of Quezon City, in the western edge of mid-to-upper class neighborhoods in an area commonly referred to as New Manila. The city government has classified it as among the high-risk barangays, being subject to flood hazard risk.³³ The name, Damayang Lagi, is Filipino for “always helping each other” – a tribute to the community’s spirit of bayanihan or mutual aid.

Brgy. Damayang Lagi has a population of about 19,466 or about 5,004 households.³⁴ It is a relatively young population – the largest age group is children 1-4 years old, and the median age is 28 years old.³⁵

In 1988, Ate Lanie and her young family moved to Brgy. Damayang Lagi because it was close to her husband’s work as a car mechanic in Banaue. Over the years, however, the family transferred from one place to another depending on where her husband could find work. They once lived in Manila, where their first child was born. They stayed for a few months in Manggahan, Commonwealth in Quezon City before moving to Antipolo City after her husband was offered a job as a family driver. It was in Antipolo where Ate Lanie gave birth to her second child.

In 1990, Ate Lanie’s husband found work as a taxi driver near Damayang Lagi, prompting the family to return to the area. However, due to the insecurity of their housing situation, they later went back to Tacloban. There, her husband worked as a tricycle driver, and the family stayed for four years. It was also in Tacloban where Ate Lanie gave birth to her third, fourth, and fifth children.

“Kung saan siya, doon kami. Wala akong hanapbuhay noon kaya sumusunod pa rin sa asawa.” (“We went wherever he was. I didn’t have a job then, so I just followed him around.”)

Ate Lanie could only follow her husband, as he was the sole provider for their growing family. Even when he left them without notice to return to Manila for another woman, she was still compelled to follow him, bound by the need to support their children.

Black and blue

In 1995, the family settled again in Damayang Lagi, where they had already secured “housing rights”. But from that point on, life began to crumble. The violence started, and it would haunt them for many years.

Ate Lanie became a victim of relentless domestic violence. There were times, she shared, when she would run and hide from her husband, torn between the pain of his blows, the terror of his rage, and the fear that she herself might lash back in desperation.

In their cramped home, her children watched everything. They saw their mother beaten black and blue, her body bearing the bruises, her spirit slowly breaking. The trauma did not stop with her – it seeped into each child. Wounded physically and emotionally, Ate Lanie struggled to attend properly to the needs of her children during those years.

In 1998, desperate to protect her children from the toll of violence, she fled with them to Tacloban, determined to finally leave him behind. But even distance could not shield them – her husband followed. From then on, he drifted back and forth between Manila and Tacloban

– sometimes staying with Ate Lanie, but more often with his mistress. He stopped providing for the family, yet the violence never ceased.

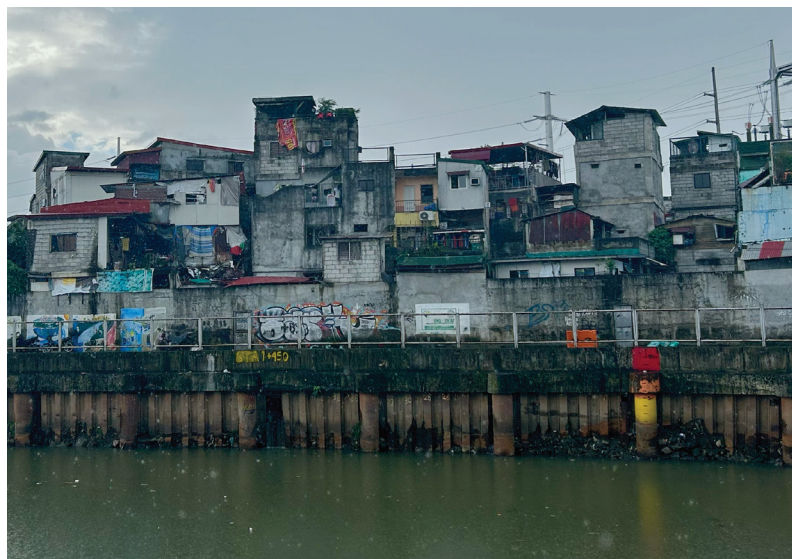
Young and naïve, as she would later describe herself, Ate Lanie accepted him again and again – not for love, but so her children might still have a father.

Battered but not beaten

It took five long years of cycle of violence before Ate Lanie was finally able to break free from her abuser. In 2000, during yet another brutal beating, her vision suddenly went dark, she grabbed a knife and stabbed him in the face. He was rushed to the hospital but died from tetanus three days later. No case was filed against her by her former husband’s family, as the act was recognized as self-defense.

“Hindi ako masaya sa nangyari, pero nakahinga ako nang maluwag. Para akong nabunutan ng tinik sa dibdib.” (“I’m not happy about what happened, but I felt a deep sense of relief. It was as if a thorn had been pulled out of my chest.”)

Ate Lanie was determined to build her life back and stand on her own, for herself and her children. Less than a year later, she went to Las Piñas, where she worked



as a stay-in nanny for five years, earning Php3,000 per month. When her oldest child was about to enter college, she knew she had to earn more.

She then worked as a subcontractor in a kikiyam factory in Cavite for a year, earning Php2,000 every 15th and 30th of the month, or roughly Php140-150 per day. The income was barely enough. She had to stretch every peso to cover daily transportation, monthly bedspace rent, food, and other basic needs.

Ate Lanie grabbed every livelihood opportunity she could to save up money, little by little, to bring her children from Tacloban to Manila – one child each year.

Awakening

In 2010, a sudden fire swept through the community of Damayang Lagi, reducing rows of shelters to blackened ruins. When the flames died down, nothing remained of Ate Lanie's home but ashes. In the middle of that devastation, the women's group, Gabriela, arrived to distribute school supplies and relief goods to the affected families. From then on, Gabriela organizers returned almost every day, facilitating group discussions, especially on the looming issue of demolition.

Ate Lanie shared that, at first, the threat of demolition did not concern her. She had little interest in the discussions and believed her family would be spared since their house stood far from what she thought was the “danger zone”. But her view changed after she attended one of the meetings, where it was explained how demolition often spreads beyond initial boundaries, especially in areas marked for development.

Since then, she came to believe that people should not wait for a threat to strike their own homes before they act or take a stand. More than a decade later, her realization proved painfully true: the river swelled and pushed closer and closer to her neighborhood, and today, Ate Lanie's house stands right at the edge of the river.

After her awakening to women's and social issues, Ate Lanie joined mass mobilizations. She became a member of Gabriela from 2010 to 2016, and later joined the KMK from 2016 to 2021. Today, she celebrates her one year as a full-time organizer of Lingap Gabriela, continuing in upholding the rights of women and the urban poor, and this time fighting demolitions and all forms of state violence.



SAVIORS IN OUR MIST

BLK

DIG

Angeline Mendoza, 40 years old, was one of the leaders in Sitio San Roque in Quezon City (read IBON Urban Stories Ch.1 Resistance) who braved the harsh pandemic lockdowns under the Duterte administration. She mobilized the urban poor to demand the quick distribution of sufficient aid and in the process faced different forms of intimidation from the authorities.³⁶

But Angeline's stance has remained unscathed. Angeline after all has a long history of constant resurgence from countless defeats.

No knight in shining armor

Born in Eastern Samar, Angeline is the oldest among seven siblings. They were orphaned when she was only 15 years old. Shortly after the passing of both parents, she and her siblings were separated and taken in by different relatives.

Angeline was taken in by her aunt's family in Abuyog, Leyte, where she spent most of her days enduring scorn and quiet cruelty that she never imagined experiencing at such a young age. "Parang hindi pamilya ang turing sa akin" ("I wasn't treated like family"), Angeline said in tears.

She was made to do household chores, including washing their underwear. Her aunt's family were unkind to her, often humiliating her and regarding her with unspoken contempt – treatment no one

should endure, not even a house helper.

One ordinary morning, her aunt brought her along to Quiapo in Manila, where she met someone who would later become her husband. She was 17 when she married the man. It was in part a way out of her life with her aunt, but also because she loved him and believed that he would save her from that miserable life. Only much later did she realize that he was no knight saving a damsel in distress at all, but something far from the rescue she had imagined.

Taking control

They raised a family in San Jose Del Monte in Bulacan. After giving birth to their first child, her husband started beating her. Angeline became a victim of domestic violence.

"Naging battered wife ako. As in bugbog talaga. May pagkakataong hindi na maidilat ang mga mata." ("I became a battered wife. I was badly beaten. There were times when I could no longer open my eyes.")

Angeline sold fruits in a wet market for a living and offered loans as a sideline. But due to the market's gradual expansion and being taken over by private owners, the vendors were faced with huge debts and losses. Profits always went to pay for increasing space rent, membership fees for the privatized market, and the like.

The beating from her husband would also intensify.

During rough times when she was helpless, she would run to her close family but was only told to accept her fate.

“Yan ang tadhana mo. Tanggapin mo na lang dahil yan ang bigay sa’yo.” (“That is

your fate. Just accept it because that’s what’s been given to you.”) Angeline recalled, repeating what she had been told every time, word for word. But Angeline refused to internalize this.

Angeline and the other vendors were eventually evicted from the market. It was at that moment when Angeline met her real champion – the organization Kadamay, which came in defense of the vendors. And she knew then that she was indeed in control of her life.

Salvation

Angeline eventually joined Kadamay. She saw the bigger societal picture of exploitation of workers, vendors and urban poor, of violence against women, and of the patriarchal culture that doubles the miseries of poor women like her.

She committed her life to serving the urban poor and being active in Kadamay, despite her family’s discouragement. She decided to take control of her life and chose to make her own future, i.e. where the rights of the urban poor and women are upheld and realized.

She has seen salvation in a new light, which is from the people’s collective action. In 2017, Angeline was one of the thousands of urban poor who forcefully occupied the idle housing project in Pandi, Bulacan, and won their rights.



OCCUPY PANDI

The Occupy Pandi Movement, the forceful takeover of government housing units in Pandi, Bulacan, which had been idle and unoccupied for years, was led by Kadamay in 2017.³⁷ It was in response to the government's inaction on the country's housing woes and as rejection of the government's failed partnership with the private sector to provide housing projects and basic utilities.

There are 36 housing projects located in 12 areas in Bulacan – 14 were built prior to the administration of former President Benigno Aquino III, while 22 were built after 2012 and are considered new resettlement areas. About 15,000 units remained unoccupied and in various state of deterioration by 2017.³⁸

Majority or 15 of the 36 housing projects are in the municipality of Pandi. Beginning 8 March 2017, some 6,000 families, mostly Kadamay members, occupied the units in Pandi, including those that had been unoccupied for at least five years.

Kadamay members have been given eviction notices by the NHA and have faced different forms of state attacks and red-tagging in March 2017. But the group relentlessly followed these with protest actions. In April 2017, former president Duterte announced that Kadamay members may live in the units they occupied as long as they do not evict police officers and soldiers who were already residing there. Since then, however, surveillance and red-tagging have only intensified.



For higher purpose

Red-tagging and militarization intensified in the Pandi housing project after it was occupied. After two years, undaunted, Angeline went to Quezon City to continue organizing the urban poor, particularly the residents of Sitio San Roque and Batasan Hills. Batasan Hills is the second most populated barangay in Quezon City next to Commonwealth, and one of the largest urban poor populations in the country.

She saw the worsening situation of the urban poor as caused by the pandemic lockdowns and government's inadequate response. Amid restrictions, Angeline mobilized residents to go to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Batasan to demand the prompt distribution of aid. Three thousand residents were given relief goods after the protest action.

Angeline is red-tagged, but it doesn't scare her as she is surrounded by her organization and the masses she serves. The last time she was red-tagged, the community helped her make a blotter

in the barangay office, report to the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), and file cases.

“Mas kinaya ko ang red-tagging dahil ang masa ang kakampi ko.” (“Being red-tagged is more manageable, because the masses are my allies.”)

When she was about to leave Pandi, mothers offered her transportation allowance and assured her that they would help in any way they could. Some even went out of their way to look for a place where she could stay in Quezon City.

“Pag ganun, alam mong may nagawa kang mabuti para sa kanila.” (“When that happens, you know you’ve done something good for them.”)

Angeline targets to develop 10 urban poor leaders every year, as she continues to immerse in different urban poor communities in the city – in her growing areas of responsibility as a full-time organizer. For the first time in years, Angeline is finally planning for a bright future.



YOUNG AND READY

Ryan James “James” Labiam Abaigar, 21, is the oldest among three siblings.³⁹ Their family used to live in what James describes as a big house in Cubao, Quezon City, beside the bus terminal of Victory Liner where his father worked as a security guard. But the house was eventually bought due to the expansion of the bus terminal. James’ family had to move out.

Too young to toil

The family would settle wherever his father was assigned. They had already lived in Central Luzon, Southern Tagalog, Caloocan City, Tatalon in Quezon City, Manila, Bulacan, Silang and Dasmariñas in Cavite, Batangas, and the list went on. But when his father abandoned their family and her mother passed away with the fourth child still in her womb, James had no choice but to step up as the guardian and provider of his siblings.

He was 14 when James started to work while still studying. He worked as a water boy, vendor, porter and scavenger. In 2016, the siblings went to their relatives in Calumpit, Bulacan. James completely stopped his studies and focused on earning money to meet their basic needs.

A year later, his father showed up. It turned out that his father became a member of Kadamay and had secured a unit in the Pandi housing project during the occupation of the urban poor.

His father urged them to move to Pandi. James was hesitant at first but eventually

agreed, disheartened by the Calumpit local government’s inadequate disaster response. His grandmother and youngest sibling came with them, but soon after their transfer to Pandi, their father left them again.

But old enough to fight

James was organized and became a member of the youth organization, Anakbayan. He was interested because joining would give him a chance to travel through basic mass integrations. He also picketed the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Education (DepEd), even as an out-of-school youth. James realized that there is more to learn outside the schools.

He later became an organizer for Kadamay in 2018 and Pinagkaisang Lakas ng Maralita (PLM) in 2020. He was assigned in various urban poor communities.

Upon the enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2020, red-tagging, harassment and abduction of activists became more rampant. James was abducted by the military in the same year.

He was supposed to meet his friend at Tungkong Mangga in San Jose Del Monte. But it turned out that his “friend” was an accomplice of the military and set him up, identifying him as a rebel.

In public, a group of men in civilian clothes attacked James and dragged him to their vehicle. Two men grabbed both his arms,



and when he tried to resist, they struck his left leg with a steel bar and kicked his right leg. He weakened and shouted for help, but people were just watching.

He later found out that it was the 48th Infantry Battalion which abducted him. James was in custody of the military in three days without others knowing. He was interrogated and mentally tortured.

“Buti na lang kami nakakuha sayo. Kung 71st nakakuha sayo patay ka na ngayon,” (“Good thing we got to you. Had it been the 71st, you would be dead by now,”) the military told James.

He was offered to work for them as an intelligent agent who would report every week. James couldn’t do anything but to just agree so he could be set free. But as soon as the military sent him back to Pandi, he refused to see them again and threw everything he brought with him back home.

These events left a deep trauma on James. His depression worsened when her 71-year-old grandmother from Pandi was brought by the same military men all the way to Fairview where their other relatives are.

“Tinawagan ako ng pamilya namin sa Fairview. Galit na galit kasi nandun yung lola ko at may mga kasamang hindi kilala. Pinapauwi ako at hinahanap daw ako,” (“I was called by our relatives in Fairview. They were furious because my grandmother was there, accompanied by strangers. I was being asked to go there as they were looking for me,”) James recounted.

He didn’t abide by them, as it was also during a lockdown. The organization helped James report the incident to CHR. After two days, the military sent his grandmother back to Pandi.

His group helped him process and overcome the trauma. James is fully recovered now from what happened two years ago but still cannot go home to Pandi. Nonetheless, what remains fixed in James is his hardened bravery and grit to continue the struggle, even if it means putting his life on the line.

“Hindi na ako takot. Handa ako sa pwedeng mangyari nang hindi nagpapabaya.” (“I’m not afraid anymore. I’m ready for whatever happens, without being neglectful.”)

TUMBALIK

The country's urban development plans remain in the neoliberal framework that guides the Philippine Development Plan. These are not designed to serve the people's needs. These are focused on infrastructure, real estate development, and urban gentrification, which are meant to attract more foreign investments. They are also premised on allowing private businesses to operate public services, thereby making these services even less accessible to the poor. Urban development plans are anti-urban poor and anti-development.

The country needs an economic development plan that focuses on agrarian reform, rural development, and national industrialization to create meaningful and gainful work and to serve the needs of the majority. The rural economy should be recognized as essential in ensuring and realizing the production of food and raw materials for industries, which in turn will serve domestic needs. Such would permanently stop rural-urban migration and genuinely pursue national development.

But the current government is not focused on such. It is obsessed with the kind of development that prioritizes foreign

corporations and big economic oligarchs to identify the areas and sectors to be developed, with profit as their primary objective. The urban poor communities get in the way of such profit-centered plan and should be cleared and demolished. Resistance should be met with brute force.

Tumbalik is a portmanteau of the Filipino words *tumba* (to fall or be knocked down) and *balik* (to return). In urban poor communities, it is a powerful call to action – to gather all the debris of their demolished homes and use these remnants to rebuild and reclaim the very land on which they once stood.

The stories of the urban poor illustrate that they will always find countless ways to survive. They will be there to secure their food and livelihoods. They will be there to assert and fight for their basic human rights. They will be there, despite being stuck in the cycle of poverty and oppression, demanding state accountability and better governance. They will be there rebuilding not only their homes but their shattered lives to dream of a better future for all toiling people. They will be there, rising from being knocked down, and waging an even stronger, greater, roaring resurgence.



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