

PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT

Listening to the Voices of Families Living in Extreme Poverty



ATD Fourth World Philippines

Participatory Action-Research 2011-2013

Towards Increased Understanding of Housing and Education Issues

A contribution to the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda

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The International Movement ATD Fourth World is an international non-governmental organization, with no religious or political affiliation, that works with individuals and institutions towards the eradication of extreme poverty. Working in partnership with people facing persistent poverty, ATD human rights-based approach focuses on supporting families and individuals through grassroots presence and involvement in disadvantaged communities

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FOREWORD

In this document, you are invited to read about a participatory research study conducted in the Philippines in a context where improving life conditions of the poorest is a shared concern across different sectors including government, international institutions, services, churches, peoples' organizations. At this time when many families living in informal settlements in Metro Manila are relocated for security and environmental reasons, it has been stated that relocation strategies of the government agencies should, as a top priority, prevent the displacement of families from their source of livelihood and schools and establish sustainable livelihood activities in relocation areas. Holistic approaches trying to address health, education, and income concerns of very deprived people are implemented, such as the Philippine Conditional Cash Transfer program "4Ps". Likewise, education stakeholders already offer a wider range of learning pathways with more entry and re-entry points at different ages and educational levels, such as the Alternative Learning System.

At the international level, encouraging also is the United Nations' High-Level Panel report of June 2013 about the Post-2015 development agenda entitled: "A new global partnership: Eradicate poverty and transform economies through sustainable development". This UN report underscores some remarkable successes linked to the MDGs, but it also recognizes that these goals did not sufficiently seek to reach people living in the most extreme poverty, those who are the most excluded. The report offers the vision of a new type of development, centered on people and concerned about the planet, based on five 'transformative shifts', in which each and every State, institution and person has a share of responsibility. The first one recommends to "Leave no one behind", by continuing to work toward eradicating extreme poverty and discrimination in order for everyone to enjoy their human rights. The fifth transformative shift entitled "Forge a new global partnership", aims at instilling a spirit of solidarity, of cooperation and of mutual responsibility between governments, people living in poverty or marginalized groups, multilateral institutions, companies and academia.

This participatory research of ATD Fourth World is meant to be a contribution to this global effort toward development programs which leave no one behind and aim to encourage all people to contribute their experience to improve these programs. The long term commitment of ATD Fourth World's teams with communities of Metro Manila for over 20 years made this research possible. Time is needed to create the proper conditions for reaching the most isolated people within the communities, building trust and action based on their effective participation.

The outcomes presented in this document describe some mismatch between programs addressing housing and education issues and the strategies developed by families and communities to cope with these two aspects of their lives. The research includes proposals coming from people living in poverty. They reflect their expectations to be given opportunities to invest their experience and skills in the design of these programs. A participant in one of the research partner groups used to live with other families who constructed makeshift dwellings along a main city road in Metro Manila. For years, each working day, a demolition squad arrived and forced them to tear down the shelters where his family and others lived. Every evening, like his neighbors, he rebuilt it so that the family had a roof for the night. The following comment of this man sums up well the main purpose of this study: "They come to chase us away, but they have never asked us why we are here." (2011, ATD Philippines)

Claude and Patricia HEYBERGER,
Delegates for Region Asia-Pacific,
ATD Fourth World

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“Who wants this kind of life?
We dream of a better life, including decent housing
and a full education for everyone.
We act in order to move on but we cannot do so
much acting alone.
We need support.
We also wish to contribute to development, excluding
no one, leaving no one behind.
We want to work together as partners.
This is how everyone’s dignity and rights can be
respected.”

(Members of the ATD study group)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In line with its goal to build awareness of extreme poverty and finding solutions to address it, ATD-Philippines has undertaken this participatory action-research in direct collaboration with people living in extreme poverty, grassroots practitioners and academics. This Participatory Action Research, which is part of an international research conducted in 12 countries, aimed to evaluate the progress and impact of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in improving the quality of life for these populations of people with first-hand experience of extreme poverty. ATD believes that sustainable development for all can only be actualized when people living in extreme poverty are considered and addressed as partners and implementers rather than mainly as beneficiaries.

The research participants made different recommendations for local and national policies, some of which are:

1. **Leave no one behind and guarantee support for the most vulnerable families. All policies or actions need to be evaluated against their impact on the poorest group of the addressed population.**
 - **Housing:** Acknowledge shortcomings of relocation projects in order to improve them, drawing on the experiences of families and communities who have already undergone previous demolition and relocation, including insights of families who came back to the city.
 - **Education:** Develop financial assistance no longer based on school performance alone, in order to go on supporting children passing through a difficult time or avoid exclusion of slow learners.
2. **Support effective participation of persons living in poverty in the development of programs and policies. Create an environment that fosters free and full expression for all involved.**
 - **Housing:** Mandate developers to inform the families who will be affected by demolition and relocation of their proposed project. Give these families the opportunity as well to come up with their own proposal and contact NGOs or other citizens who can orient them about their rights and

options, and help them to organize their plan of action. They can then present their proposal to the developers and discuss a mutually agreeable solution.

- **Education:** Encourage teachers to interact regularly with the parents (including home visits) and consider them as the first and most important educators of the children.

3. Strengthen coordination, whilst encouraging holistic and cooperative approaches involving civil society to the fullest extent possible.

- **Housing:** Support community organizing and foster solidarity in poor neighborhoods and relocation sites, including through regular meetings between the people and other concerned stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental.
- **Education:** During training time, teachers should be given more opportunities to understand the experiences and efforts of families, parents and children, coping with the most difficulties.

4. Monitor the implementation and the effects of programs and policies on those living in extreme poverty.

- **Housing:** Improve the implementation of the Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) of 1992: “the local government unit, in coordination with the National Housing Authority, shall provide relocation or resettlement sites with basic services and facilities and access to employment and livelihood opportunities sufficient to meet the basic needs of the affected families.” (Article VI, Urban renewal and resettlement, Section 29, Resettlement)
- **Education:** Improve the monitoring of the schools, teachers and parent-teacher associations on the implementation of regulations as set up by the Department of Education, for example regarding bullying and the collection of fees from parents.

This research has generated opportunities for people living in extreme poverty to contribute their experience and knowledge, thus helping to describe some issues they encounter and coping strategies they develop. It

provides vivid testimony to the evidence of insecurity of housing, jobs, family income, schooling and education for those living in extreme poverty. In addition, it demonstrates that many families are eager to have a say about their children's education, their family well-being and the community environment.

Furthermore, the assessment of a number of development and poverty reduction programs implemented both by the Government and NGOs in the participating communities, helped participants identify chances and challenges of those programs. Establishing spaces for dialogue and partnership is an important step, not only for the international post-2015 agenda, but also for grassroots and national-level policies and actions.





RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The perspectives come from 90 adults, 18 years old and above, whose families experience extreme poverty in Metro Manila, and from local partner organizations and individuals working towards poverty eradication.

People experiencing extreme poverty participated in all the steps of this study: from topic definition, to input and analysis as well as validation of the outcomes.

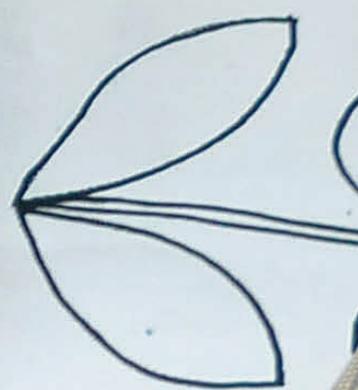
This Participatory Action Research is part of an international Research conducted in 12 countries: Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, France, Haiti, Guatemala, Madagascar, Mauritius, The Philippines, Peru and Poland. The findings of the international research are published in the report: *Challenge 2015: Towards Sustainable Development that Leaves No One Behind*. Download the full report at: bit.ly/ATDMDG



Don

Para sa pag-aaruga, pagmamahal,
at pagmamahal,

Love,



METHODOLOGY

We asked the following research questions:

Housing:

What are the conditions needed for government or private housing programs to be successful particularly for the most underprivileged?

Education/Learning opportunities for all:

Which support systems are needed to achieve a meaningful and successful learning environment, leading to decent jobs and living conditions for all, including the most underprivileged?

We conducted focus group discussions (FGD) during monthly forums at the ATD center & in the communities.

Twenty-five members of the communities took part for more than one year in a study group which:

- Met monthly
- Interviewed 14 families in five communities and 10 partners
- Visited seven organizations and relocation sites
- Surveyed 54 households in four communities
- Read and analyzed official documents and articles.

We interviewed and shared information and experiences with other partners in charge of designing and implementing programs and experienced community workers.

Four delegates took part in two seminars organized by ATD International in Europe in January 2013.



THE RESEARCHERS IN THE ATD STUDY GROUP

Our Profile

We live in four different communities of Metro Manila:

1. In a public cemetery, either inside mausoleums, with the authorization of the owner, or in makeshift structures on top of tombstones. We are not afraid of the ghosts. We don't count any more the number of burials and tears we have witnessed.
2. Under a bridge and just above a canal. We have to be very creative and resourceful in building our rooms. Without a degree, somehow we are architects. We know how to organize what little belongings we have in such a tiny place.
3. In a small, upgraded, informal settlers' area. We don't make ends meet but some of us manage to live in formal housing, though only a minority.
4. Under a bridge and another waterway, with our houses regularly demolished, obliging us to often move elsewhere nearby.

We mostly work in the informal economy as:

- Street vendor or mobile vendor
- Caretaker of tombs/mausoleums
- Parking attendant
- Laundry woman
- Pedicab driver
- Tricycle driver
- Sari-sari store vendor
- Masseur

- Separating and selling materials for recycling
- Buying and selling (scrap wood, etc.)
- Asking for alms
- Charcoal packaging (market)

Some of us work in the formal economy as:

- Construction worker, carpenter, painter
- Food-court saleslady
- Janitor
- Street sweeper

We earn less than the minimum wage

On average, we earn PHP190/day, while the minimum wage is PHP466/day. Some of us earn more than this while others earn less.

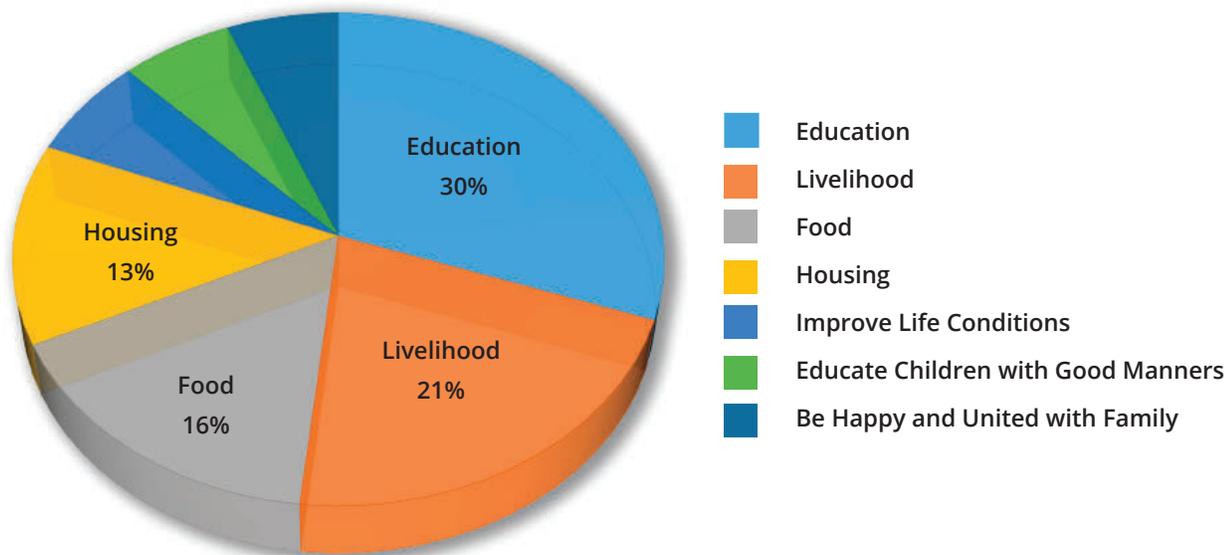
Most of us are self-employed, having informal work. We live near our source of livelihood and utilize whatever skills we have learned or experienced. A minority (around 15%) has contractual, casual or regular employment.



WE DO HAVE PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES

With very low and unstable income, a family cannot spend on everything.

Based on our survey, the priorities of the families in these communities are:



We dream and want to find a way out of poverty.

"They come to chase us away, but they have never asked us why we are here."

(M. D., whose makeshift shelter along a waterway was destroyed almost daily for two years)

"I became interested in the study group because it is about education and housing. Those two things are all I dream of for my grandchildren. I want to find a way, while I can and while I am still alive, so that they will finish their education. It will give them more chances to find a decent job."

(Ms L., grandmother living in a public cemetery)

We can't afford the rent of formal housing.

Informal settlements offer us lower rents and the possibility to connect to electricity and water according to our means. Then we can spend more on food, education, and health.

Moreover, in difficult times, we can rely on other community members or relatives.

The city offers multiple livelihood opportunities.

The survey of our research listed more than 40 types of different earning or supporting activities.

"Here I can sell cigarettes, bottled water, candies, and newspapers along the highway. I know there will be people buying". (M. W, living under a bridge)

Why do we keep living in these dangerous or inhospitable environments?

We always have to choose between "impossible choices":

- Purchase materials for the school projects or buy food?
- Pay for the snacks of the children or buy medicine for a sick husband?
- Move to the relocation site to have a real 'house' or stay in Manila to keep our livelihood and scholarships?

There are endless impossibilities...





MANILA BULLETIN
THE NATION'S LEADING NEWSPAPER

atacañang rules out takeover of oil firms

Hillary's RP visit starts today

Talk with President Arroyo, dinner set at Palace

GMA, Ermita, Calumpit leave Lakas-Kampi

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Hillary won't raise VEA review during visit

Washington report exceeded

'Whistle-blowers should be spared'

INQUIRE

'Impeachment too late'

With trials for new 100-page

Seagrass: Chances slim, says

Together To Get There

10th Anniversary

2000-2009

GMA, Ermita, Calumpit leave Lakas-Kampi

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Hillary won't raise VEA review during visit

'Whistle-blowers should be spared'

From: GMA

Confidential disclosure possible

BUY & SEE

CHRISTMAS GIVEAWAYS

WIN!

WIN!

WIN!



UNSUCCESSFUL RELOCATIONS

We have experienced unsuccessful relocation.

Into the unknown

"On the day of the demolition and relocation, we didn't know at all what the relocation place would look like."
(M.W. relocated to Bulacan in 2006)

Starting from nothing or from the very bottom

"We knew there was no house but just a piece of land. We had to clean and remove all the weeds in order to build the house. They gave us the first tranche of money for the construction of the basic structure of the house and then succeeding tranche later to continue the construction. But this money was not released quickly. We also had to spend part of it on food because my husband found no livelihood and therefore had no income."
(Ms. B., living under a bridge)

The absence of income opportunities

"I tried selling cigarettes, water and soft drinks, as I used to do in the city, but there was no highway there. I tried different livelihoods, peddling knick-knacks, repackaged food such as onions and garlic. I tried collecting and selling bottles and other recyclable items. But it wasn't enough."
(M.D., returnee from Bulacan)

"Most of the people around were poor too; it was difficult to find families for whom to wash clothes or provide other services! We stayed there for ten years. My husband had his job in the capital and was earning 200 pesos/day then. So he only came home once a week. The transportation fare was 70 pesos per person for one way."
(Ms. M., returnee from Bulacan)

The relocation affected our children's access to school.

"In the relocation site, when my children were in elementary, the school was nearby. But the high school was far away. They would have needed to take a tricycle cab, costing 250 pesos every week. We couldn't afford this."

(Ms. M., returnee from Bulacan)

The relocation compromised scholarship opportunities.

"If we would transfer our children to the relocation site, the scholarship they received in Manila would be stopped permanently. We knew we could not cope financially without the scholarships."

Our eldest had to go back to Manila with her dad, so that she could continue her schooling. But my other children really had to stop school for a whole year. "

(Ms. L., living under a bridge)

Coming back to the city is not really a choice.

Many families had no choice but to return to their original informal settlement but they were labelled 'professional squatters,' as stated by the law.

"In 2009, my husband lost his job that he had in Manila. All of a sudden we had no more food. Our neighbors gave us some food, but we became ashamed. So we came back to live under the bridge. I knew I would find work as laundry woman for better-off families I had served before."

(Ms. M., living under a bridge)

"For the first time in my life, we starved; there was no food for my children. We tried but we really couldn't survive living there."

(Ms. L., returnee from Cabuyao)

For me, relocation alone is not effective. We would have stayed at that relocation site if it had been more complete. There should be schools at walking distance, scholarships to support our efforts, hospital and job opportunities."

(Ms. M., returnee from Bulacan)

NEAR SITE AND IN THE CITY

Near-site or on-site relocation would be our first choice

“President Aquino has ordered the construction of on-site or near-site resettlement areas for informal settlers living along waterways in Metro Manila. President Aquino himself gave instructions that all relocation strategies of the government agencies should, as a top priority, prevent the displacement of families from their source of livelihood and schools.”

(In “Waterway squatters to be relocated on site”, Philippine Daily Inquirer, March 21, 2013)

Proposals for more peaceful and successful relocation:

“What we want is a real relocation: a house and lot with around Php 200 a month mortgage. With this, we will have at least something that we can call our own – for ourselves, for our children and grandchildren. Even if we would live outside the cemetery, we would continue to work inside it. Being tomb caretakers is our livelihood, thus, we cannot live far from here. That’s a very important point for us.”

(Community members living in a cemetery)

We, therefore, propose to:

- Involve families and communities as partners and take advantage of our past experiences of evictions and relocations to improve relocation projects.
- Disseminate precise and comprehensive information regarding livelihood and services at the proposed relocation areas.
- Provide us with the assistance we need – financial support as well as presence, guidance and companionship to ensure we can continue to access basic services.

- Organize transportation to maintain the livelihood that we still have in the city, while we are looking for and developing another livelihood in the relocation site or around it.
- Reach out to some of us who are not used to applying for administrative documents and provide us with regular guidance and support. Encourage us to save as the cost can reach up to PHP1000, for copies of registration or no record of birth certificate of every family member, police clearance for the head of family, transportation, etc. The high cost of such documents could also be reconsidered by the administration.
- Offer training and livelihood opportunities meeting our existing and potential skills and fitting the livelihood opportunities in and around the relocation site.

Good practices to replicate

Many of the residents from a community in Tondo, Manila used to earn through making charcoal in a traditional way, which is quite harmful to the health and the environment. Supported by an NGO, they chose to relocate in Bulacan, 40 km north of Manila where they imported their livelihood to their new place. There, they improved the technology using smokeless kilns, generating more income thereafter. The community members managed to buy a vehicle to facilitate commutes back and forth to the city.

In the law

The Urban Development and Housing Act (UDHA) of 1992 states that *“the local government unit, in coordination with the National Housing Authority, shall provide relocation or resettlement sites with basic services and facilities and access to employment and livelihood opportunities sufficient to meet the basic needs of the affected families.”* (UDHA, Article VI, Urban renewal and resettlement, Section 29, Resettlement)

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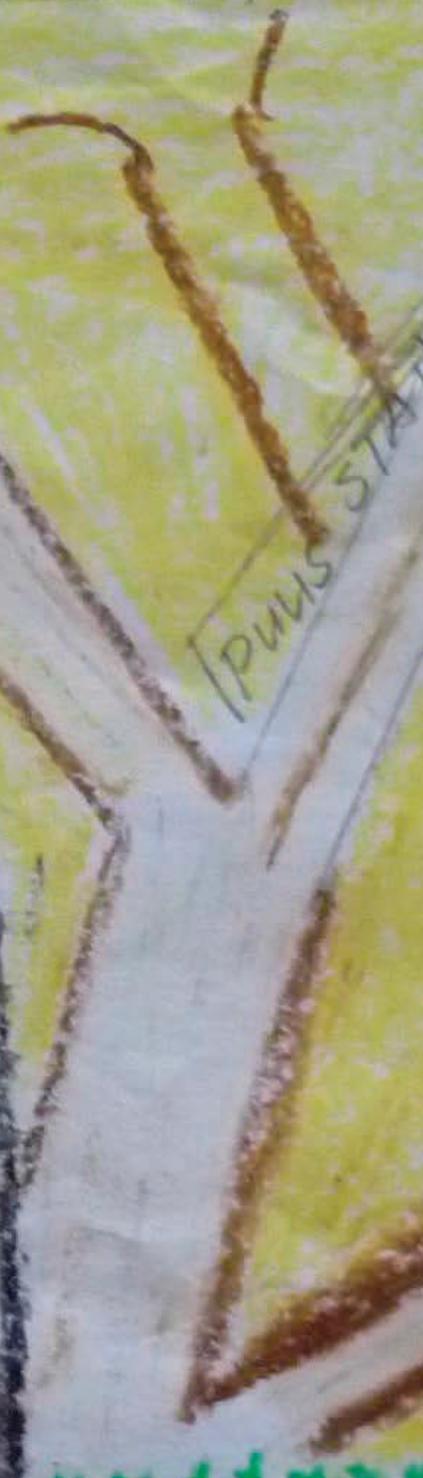


Barangay
Hall

SIMBAHAN



PUBS STATION





PARTNERS IN RELOCATION

We have experiences and ideas to share!

What happened in the past?

Between 2000 and 2011, in our communities, we experienced either demolitions without relocation or relocations which, even if they included consultations, did not allow us to influence decision making nor visit the site beforehand.

“During the consultations, they didn’t speak about livelihood. The site visit was done only for the officials of the barangay. They told us it was nice and close to the schools. But, we discovered upon arrival at the site that our block was very far from the schools. We were misinformed. We were not shown pictures of the place.”

(Ms B., returnee from Cabuyao)

The present situation

In 2012/13, more consultation meetings with the communities were initiated by project developers but:

- “The project is already decided and framed. Even if we attend the dialogues, it is a real struggle to have our voices heard; they want us to follow what they want.”
- “The answers of the project developers regarding livelihoods, school transfer, access to health facilities as well as scholarship opportunities, fail to reassure the families.”
- “The dissemination of relevant information and documents is weak.”
- “The experience of returnee families is not really taken into account.”

In the law

“Adequate consultation” requires “effective dissemination of relevant information and documents, including:

- Alternative housing options and comprehensive resettlement plans;
- Reasonable time for the public to review, comment and object to the proposed project;
- Provision of advice about their rights and options;
- Public hearings where affected persons can challenge the eviction decision and/or present alternative proposals, articulate their demands and development priorities.

In case no agreement is reached on the proposals of concerned parties, an independent body having constitutional authority, such as a court of law, should mediate, arbitrate or adjudicate as may be appropriate”. (DILG Memorandum Circular 2011-182, Commission on Human Rights Advisory on the right to adequate housing and human treatment of informal settlers, point 9.)

We, therefore, propose that:

- The agencies in charge of the relocation announce that we cannot stay here; they meet with us, inform us about different options, without imposing a project.
- They give us time to think and come up with our own proposal.
- During this time, we can contact NGOs or other citizens whom we trust. They can inform us about our rights and other options, help us organize and possibly create our People’s Plan.
- After a few months, we meet again with the agencies in charge of relocation.
- We present our project, they present theirs, and we discuss them.

We are sure that the presence of NGOs who support us plays a role and makes us stronger.

In relocation sites, it is important to support community organizing and foster solidarity, including through regular meetings between the people themselves and all other concerned stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental.

Housing issues have to be tackled, taking into consideration several other aspects of our lives, such as livelihood, education, health, community ties and also our experience of coping with difficult situations.





Batang nahihirapang
magbasa.

Naranasan ko pong mahirap magbasa ng madilim at mausok, kasi po wala po kaming koryente dahil mahirap lang po kami, gamit lang po namin ay kandila, kaya kailangan ko pong magbasa dahil may exam po kami at kailangan ko pong mag-aral ng mabuti para makatapos po ako ng pag-aaral, kaya kahit madilim tinitis ko na lang po kahit madilim at mausok.

LIFE INSECURITIES AND EDUCATION

Many life insecurities threaten the right of our children to complete schooling.

Despite our efforts as parents, completion of schooling and training for our children remains low. 39% percent of the children in the survey group of our research had already dropped out of elementary school by the time the research was conducted.

Our survey of four communities shows that among the 54 households, only 34% of girls and 22% of boys (at the right level for their age) were attending school regularly, while almost 45% of girls and 57% of boys were not attending school at all.

Undocumented children

- Some of our children are undocumented. Late birth registration is complicated, long and costly.
- Undocumented children face problems in taking official examinations and have less chances of obtaining a scholarship.

Housing concerns

- We have irregular access to water and electricity, so that it is difficult for children to get ready on time for school or to do their homework.

"I studied with a scholarship until grade 6, and I was running for honors. During that time, I was hearing from the elders that our community will be demolished. I thought: It will be a waste if I transfer to a school in the relocation site! All my efforts for the past 6 years to have good grades will be for nothing. My family decided not to move yet to the relocation site."

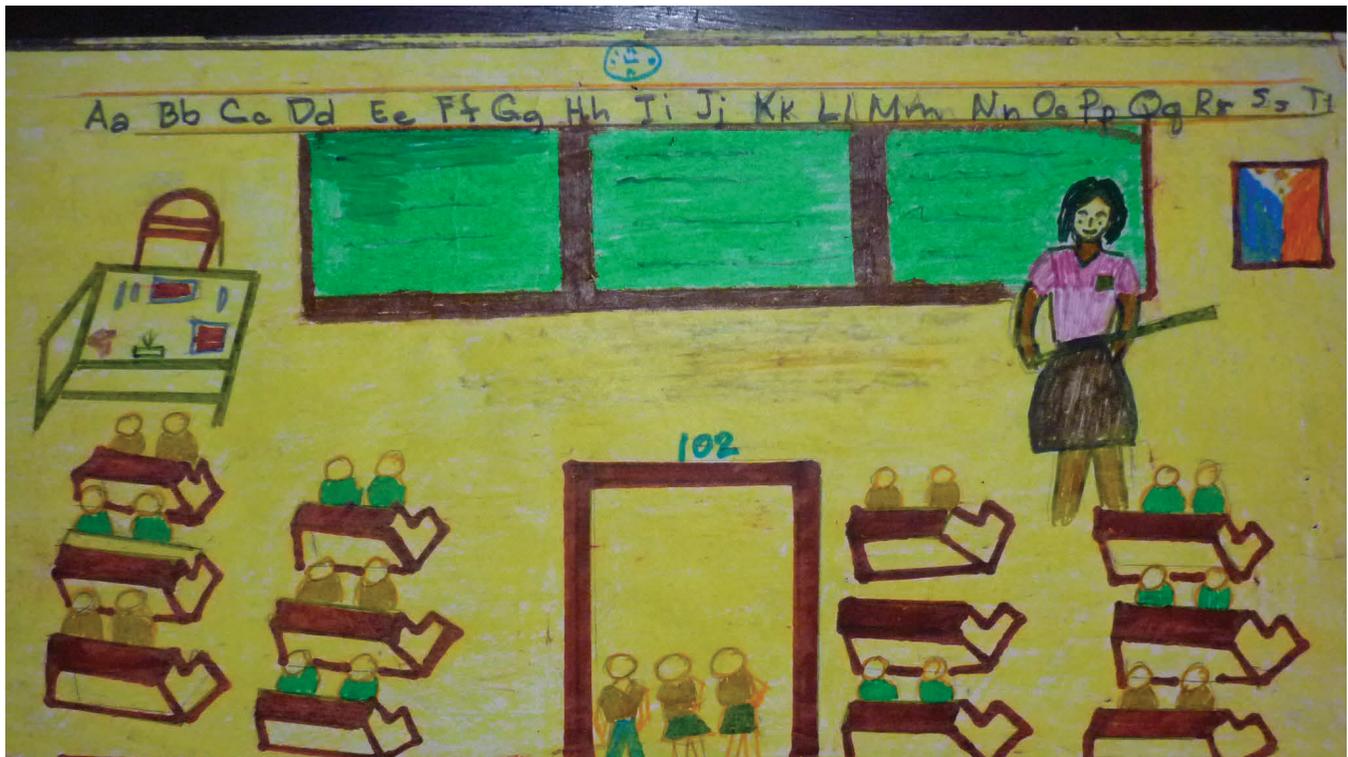
(A.E., 18 years old, living under a bridge)

Money matters

- Many children miss classes when they can't eat before school, or when they do not have Php20 to buy a snack in school, pay the transportation fees or expenses for homework projects, or because they didn't manage to provide the uniform on time.

Livelihood concerns

- Sometimes, children have to look after their siblings while their parents are working.
- Sometimes they engage themselves in whatever activities they can find to add money to the daily income, which makes their school attendance irregular.



WE WANT OUR CHILDREN TO LEARN

We want our children to have good learning opportunities, but it is not always easy.

The content of the school program is mostly academic and can be quite far from the daily knowledge, interests, life and needs of the students growing up in extreme poverty.

"My youngest son is in 2nd year high school. I argue with him every morning to make him get up and push him to go to school. He shows more interest in taking care of his pet animals than in the school subjects."

(Ms. S.R., living in an informal settlers' area)

"It is difficult for parents who did not finish school to help their children. This is the case for some of my neighbors, so I help them."

(Ms. L., living under a bridge)

"My daughter had to draw and color an apple. She made it green because she once saw green apples. But the teacher wanted it to be drawn in red."

(Ms. V. M., living under a bridge)

"Children have a lot of difficulties in concentrating and are afraid to make mistakes. Discouraged by mistakes and 'punishments' faced in the past, some children prefer not to try anymore. They will just tell us they cannot or they don't want."

(Guy, ATD full time volunteer, from his experience with a literacy program for 'out-of-school' children)

We therefore propose to:

- Experiment with school curriculum and alternative learning programs, combining life skills (passed on by families and communities) with academic or technical knowledge.

- Promote educational and cultural projects operating in or in close proximity to our communities, meeting the interest, the knowledge and the understanding of our children and ours as parents.
- The most talented, creative, passionate, flexible teachers should be allotted to the areas and students coping with the most difficulties. Provide these teachers with sufficient support.
- During their training, teachers should be given more opportunities to understand the experiences and efforts of those coping with difficult situations. They should be given additional skills so they can address the subsequent risks of absenteeism and learning difficulties.



As parents, we are the first teachers of our children. Hence, education should not be reduced to schooling and job readiness.

“Education is about the respect of others, and it is taught even before children go to school. We are already poor: if we don’t have respect for others, what will we be? In schools, they teach reading, writing rather than how to behave. In the community, we need to give positive influences to the child, help him or her to get along well with others and make friends.”

(Ms. B.H. and S.R., street library facilitators, living in an informal settlers' area)



Learning is essential...

CRIANGAS DO



TOWARD A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION

Toward a spirit of cooperation and support among students, school staff and parents

"My daughter has difficulty in English, how to answer or do the reporting. She became ashamed. She has eight subjects, but she had grades in none of them. So I went to see the teacher, then she gave my daughter grades in four subjects. On top of this, because of our family name, she was called 'horse,' she was bullied and she started cutting classes. When she stopped, the teacher said: 'It's a pity', but she didn't do anything to help my daughter."

(Ms. B., living under a bridge)

"My daughter told me: I won't go to school today because I need to bring four boxes of floor wax and I don't have them. Sometimes, the teacher beats her on the hands for not bringing the materials, so now she's afraid."

(Ms D. living in an informal settlers' area)

In the law

In September 2013, the President of the Philippines signed the Republic Act 10627 or the "anti-bullying act" requiring all elementary and secondary schools to adopt policies to prevent and address bullying in their institutions. But based on our experience, the measures should also include protection against bullying by school staff.

"There is already the law but it is not yet implemented. Hopefully it will not just be on paper. Many parents have expressed that it is not easy to report because of fear that their child will pay the price for their complaints."

(Ms. V., living in a public cemetery)

"My classmates hid my pencils and laughed at me because I am not able to read. They should not tease me; they should teach me how to read instead!"

(K, 9 years old, living in an informal settlers' area)

We, therefore, propose to:

- Encourage teachers to interact regularly with us parents (including home visits) and to consider us as the first and most important educators of the children.
- Increase the number of venues like alternative learning programs which create good, respectful, fair, and strong relationships between providers/ teachers, students and community.
- Increase the coordination and collaboration among schools, Barangay, NGO volunteers, parents and other community members.
- Encourage all forms of parent organization in schools so that all of us feel welcome and are well informed about our rights and responsibilities and can contribute what we can in improving school conditions.
- Develop learning programs that encourage the practice of mixing children of different social levels. Instill the sense of cooperation between the advanced and less advanced students.
- Reward all students for their specific talents and efforts.



REAL COST-FREE SCHOOLING

We call for real cost-free schooling.

Public elementary and high schools require no tuition fees for a child to attend but the many indirect costs remain a burden for low-income families.

"In my son's school, there is an obligation to buy snacks. My child refuses to go to school when he doesn't have the money for a snack. I went with him to see the teacher and told her: 'We are not rich, I am just a laundry woman, and my child doesn't want to go to school when there is no money.' The teacher said: 'I didn't know this.' I replied: 'You have to know the life of your children.' What about the parents who don't dare to do this, who don't know how to speak out?"

(Ms. M., living under a bridge)

To reduce the costs, schools can:

- Improve the monitoring of the schools, teachers and parent-teacher associations on the implementation of regulations as set up by the Department of Education. These are meant to reduce the collection of fees from parents regarding uniforms, snacks, field trips, 'tickets', school and class improvement projects and graduation rites.
- Encourage teachers and students to use low-cost/easy-to-find materials and in-school time and resources (books, computers, Internet) especially for homework projects and school supplies.

Scholarships and educational assistance should be available to all and offered equitably.

The survey among 54 households in four communities shows that the number of children attending school who benefit from a scholarship ranges from 14% in one community to 66% in another. There are quite a few more providers operating in this last community.



Most of the time, the access to scholarship depends on the area in which people are living and on how the information is disseminated. A number of families experienced in the past years that they could not continue benefiting from their scholarship in relocation sites outside the city.

We, therefore, propose that:

- The granting of scholarships or educational assistance (LGU, DSWD, NGO, or foundations etc.) will be generalized for all students from low-income families, regardless of their place of residence or relocation and the number of school-age children in their family.
- The assistance will no longer be based on school performance alone, in order to go on supporting children passing through a difficult time and to prevent competition leading to the exclusion of slow learners.
- Information about scholarships in elementary, secondary and college levels will be more systematically spread in schools, barangays, and that illiterate parents are supported in the application process.





WE STILL WANT TO LEARN

We still want to learn and have opportunities to use our knowledge and be productive.

Lifelong learning:

- A majority of us could go to school, but we couldn't reach a high school or college graduate level. However, we are not giving up on this wish to continue learning.
- Livelihood programs and skills training promoted by NGOs, church groups, government agencies and educational institutions are our main learning opportunities.
- 40% of the surveyed people above 16 years old in one community have taken part in livelihood programs and skills training.

We therefore propose that:

- Our skills and knowledge acquired through life and work experience would be assessed and given accreditation by training institutions.
- People in our communities who are illiterate or who have not completed primary education will be given more chances to be enrolled in functional literacy, skills and livelihood training.
- Technical-vocational training should not require high school achievement.
- Skills and livelihood training become really accessible, affordable and include when needed, support for food, transportation or day care for young children.

Follow through

“Of course, you can have training! Our government is doing something to help people fight against poverty. But to improve the projects of the government, they should not let people go until they get a decent job. Job application remains a problem. After the TESDA training, people should be given referrals, and then follow through until they can earn a living by themselves. ”

(M.W.D. Living under a bridge)

We appreciate trainers who are able to build a friendly, personal, positive, firm but understanding relationship with the 'trainees': it increases the rate of success.

We are interested in learning more about education of our children in the seminars proposed by scholarship providers and Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) / Modified Conditional Cash Transfer (MCCT) programs. We appreciate “respectful guidance” that also offers us a possibility of dialogue about our own efforts, experiences and difficulties.

A person shall not learn on livelihood alone!

We are interested in acquiring also general knowledge and skills such as: English, computer competencies, raising children, social and political affairs, health care, etc. Doing so, we strengthen our self-esteem and confidence in interacting with others.

In the law

“To generate employment and income opportunities for the relocated families, the resettlement project should act as a conduit for the families to avail of manpower training and livelihood program through sustained networking and resource syndication activities.”

DILG Memorandum Circular n. 2011-182, in Section on Relocation, Point 6.

STEPS TOWARD RELIABLE SUPPORT

Chances and Challenges of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) and the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer (MCCT) programs.

In 2012-13, many families in our communities were 'identified' for the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer (MCCT) program led by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) of the Philippine Government.

We shared our experiences to assess this program aiming to improve access to health, education, decent housing and livelihood. We learned that:

- These programs' multidimensional approach has the potential to lay the foundations for complete, universal protection, reaching out to all families in need.
- Effective interagency coordination and feedback mechanisms could allow beneficiaries to contribute to improvements in the program.

However, we have concerns about the administration and consultation of the MCCT Program:

- The treatment of families living in cemeteries and informal communities as separate 'homeless families' does not strengthen the existing family, community support, solidarity, and security.
- Complying with the rules and regulations of the program is costly and time consuming.
- Information is often too evasive for families to understand the benefit of the program and to control its development.
- The frequent and unexplained delay in the pay out of grants jeopardizes the trust and progress of the beneficiaries.

- The program to shoulder the house rent could be better planned with us:
 - o The MCCT-HSF program asks us to find a place that can be rented for maximum of Php 3,000 a month. DSWD will pay for six months. After that, we will be the ones paying. They told us that they will provide livelihood training for us to find work but this is not enough to allow us to pay the rent by ourselves.

We are grateful that the Government has recognized the conditions of extremely poor families and is doing more to reach out to them with interventions that include social support and follow-up.

We appreciate the regular presence of the social workers in our area and their personal efforts to support some families who experience greater difficulties.

Family Development Sessions in the MCCT tackle important topics but we have several recommendations:

- Alternative ways to generate income should also be discussed, proposed and followed through especially when social workers implore parents to stop children from contributing to the family income.
- The content should be reflective of our real life situation and provide an effective space for dialogue.
- Consider the shortfall when the program only sponsors a maximum of three children per family.
- Education cost increases when children move up to higher levels yet opportunities to receive financial support diminish.

WORKSHOP WITH UNICEF

"Partners in Development: Listening to the Voices of Families Living in Extreme Poverty"

(A workshop in partnership with UNICEF and Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) - October 23, 2013 at Museo Pambata, Manila).

Delegates of the ATD Philippines Study Group presented the research findings about housing, education, social protection, and the participatory process. Representatives of international and governmental institutions, academics and NGOs shared views, practices and policy proposals that address poverty.

All participants highlighted the importance of such sessions to learn from each other. They realized they can help each other to improve policies and practices towards poverty and disparity reduction and that it is essential in order to reach sustainable development for all.

"Data from the recent UNICEF study show that 5.9 million children in the country are living in extreme poverty; only 75% of the children starting elementary and high school graduate; 1.4 million children live in informal settlements; many don't have access to safe water, electricity, toilets, information... We want to find solutions, all the more on the community level. "

Augusto Rodriguez, Chief of Social Policy, UNICEF

"What you request is what is already mandated by law. The problem is in the implementation. What is really important and still necessary is if we can get everyone to participate. And everyone's demand forces us to do what we should be doing."

Francisco L. Fernandez, Undersecretary of DILG

"It is part of our work at the National Anti-Poverty Commission to make the promises to the poor sectors more known and formal (...) and that the different agencies change their working style based on testimonies, declarations and statements like these."

Jude H. Esguerra III, Undersecretary of NAPC



"We made some adjustment [in the MCCT programs] to make sure that those who were left behind can be qualified, however we are admitting that we had our shortcomings in implementing this program. So we encourage and we thank these kinds of initiatives which can be a guide on how to design programs. We have a lot to change and we are open for talks about these to be of help; to work together."

Rhodora Toralde Babaran

National Program Manager, 4Ps Program, DSWD

"[Regarding the anti-bullying Act] Even if the perpetrator is a teacher or principal, there will be corresponding sanctions imposed. The Department of Education was assigned to implement rules and regulations. You can expect that all what has been discussed here will be discussed there."

Marilette R. Almayda

Director, Bureau of Elementary Education, DepEd

"Hopefully the additional budget allotted to DepED will be invested in the alternative learning systems, to reach more of the out-of-school youth (...) The civil society and NGOs are not part of local school boards which have little data about the out-of-school youth in their area."

Raquel Castillo, Education Network E-NET

"The concept of a house is not just a house, but it is our 'life.' We should have a stronger conviction and organization, be pushy but in a good way and with sense."

Jose Morales, President. Urban Poor Alliance

"Hopefully there can be more chances to discuss poverty with the poor. Let us encourage more people to unite with us for our objective – to end poverty. All of us will benefit from it."

M. D., delegate of the ATD study group



OCT 17

INTERNATIONAL DAY
TO OVERCOME
EXTREME POVERTY

KA PARTNER
PAKINGAN ANG BOSES
NANIMUHAY
SI MATH



"We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want."

Millennium Declaration, UN, 2000



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