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# Building Resistance

## Urban Poor Communities in Mega Manila United for an Affordable, Decent, Pro-People Housing



KALIPUNAN NG  
DAMAYANG MAHIHIRAP



### INTRODUCTION

“We’re treated as if we’re not humans.” (Interview, evicted resident, 2024).

The problem on settlements and housing have been a longstanding issue in the Philippines as citizens find the difficulty in affording it due to uneven development and lack of political will to eradicate it. Although the Philippine government observes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and implements national policies to combat homelessness, its responses remain subpar and out of touch to the conditions of the urban poor. UN-Habitat (2023) notes that, in 2022, the housing backlog of the country was recorded at 6.5 million, with 3.7 million informal settlers or Filipinos living in “high-risk areas”. They also stated that half a million of the informal settlers recorded reside in Metro Manila. The enormity of the data may already be considered as an indicator of crisis, yet the state remains ill-prepared to address it.

By experience, Inklusibo has seen the detrimental effects of evictions in various communities. In Sitio San Roque, Quezon City, tactics such as arson, harassment, and intimidation were observed as residents resisted the construction of the Quezon City Central Business District and the unjust relocation packages offered by the government. Just recently, residents of Sitio San Isidro in Quezon City were forcefully evicted from their homes which caused severe trauma to women and children as they were forced to build make-shift houses along Quezon Avenue. Numerous narratives on evictions have shown its negative and life-threatening effects towards people, and many evicted residents always wonder why they are secluded from the affluent’s idea of development.

As a response, Inklusibo, along with its partners Kalipunan ng Damayang Mahihirap (KADAMAY), IBON Foundation, UP CIDS Alternative Development Program, conducted the Zero Eviction Forum to understand the experiences of select urban poor communities in Mega Manila regarding evictions and co-design a campaign that advocates for zero eviction and addresses the root causes of homelessness. Beyond the aim of understanding the experiences of urban poor communities, Inklusibo designed the toolkit to help communities conduct their local zero eviction fora to give them a working knowledge of the intensity of the evictions in their respective areas.

## METHODS

The workshop was divided into three sections: the first part of the activity involved community mapping followed by conducting focus group discussions (FGD), and the last activity was meta card writing. The groups were divided based on the entities that contest their residency in a particular area, namely: 1) private claimants; 2) government projects, and; 3) relocation projects.

Table 1 lists the particular areas that are affected by the mentioned entities pushing for eviction of residents. Areas threatened with demolition due to future government projects were further divided into two groups. One facilitator and one moderator were assigned for each group, wherein the facilitator gave out the guide questions and managed the flow of discussion, and the documenter recorded the responses of each participant.

*Table 1. Areas under threat of demolition due to private claimants, and government projects, and residents that were relocated*

Entity(ies) involved	Area(s)	
Private claimants	Malabon City	Cornelio Martinez Francisco Homeowners' Association (CMF HOA)
		Sitio Sais
		Ulingan
	Navotas City	Quintos St.
		S. Policarpio St.
Government projects	Quezon City (QC)	Krus Na Ligas
		Pook Arboretum / San Vicente
		Tatalon
		Pangarap Village
		Sitio San Roque
		NIA Road

	Manila City	Tondo
	Caloocan City	Pangarap Village
	Communities along Laguna Lake affected by Malolos-Clark section of North-South Commuter Railway (NSCR)	
Relocation project(s)	Caloocan City	Camarin Residences 1

Table 2 lists the list of general guide questions used for the community mapping of all clusters, while Table 3 lists the specific guide questions particular to each of the three clusters. The workshop's last exercise, meta card writing, encouraged participants to write a single word or phrase on meta cards to answer each of the following questions:

- **To assess the fundamentals:** What can we collectively work on?
- **To assess sustainability:** What resources, machineries do we currently possess?
- **To establish a campaign:** How can we help each other?

*Table 2. List of general guide questions for all clusters for the community mapping*

Activity	Instructions and questions
Community mapping	<p>Draw your community using crayons on the Manila paper. Show what your community looks like and what are its attributes. Use the guide questions below.</p> <p><i>(Sa activity na ito, i-drawing ninyo ang inyong komunidad. Gamit ang krayola at Manila paper, ipakita kung ano ang itsura at ano ang mga katangian ng inyong lugar. Gamitin ang mga gabay na tanong sa ibaba para sa pag-drawing ng iyong komunidad.)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the landmarks and/or establishments* in your community? <i>(Anu-ano ang mga pangunahing establisyimento na mayroon sa inyong lugar?)</i></li> <li>2. How far is your community from the establishments you enumerated? Is it within walking distance, or do you need to take public transportation? <i>(Gaano kalayo ang inyong komunidad sa mga nabanggit niyo na establisyemento? Ito ba ay kayang lakarin o kailangan sumakay ng pampublikong sasakyan?)</i></li> <li>3. What other characteristics of your place might contribute to your community life? <i>(Ano pang ibang katangian ng inyong lugar na maaaring magbigay ng kontribusyon sa inyong</i></li> </ol>

		<p><i>pamumuhay sa komunidad?)</i></p> <p>*churches, local government offices, marketplaces, hospitals and/or clinics, parks, schools, etc.</p>
FGD	Livelihood, human rights	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the most common jobs or sources of income of the people in your community? (<i>Ano ang karamihang trabaho o negosyo ng mga tao sa inyong komunidad?</i>)</li> <li>2. What are your reasons for staying in this community? (<i>Anu-ano ang dahilan kung bakit kayo nanatili sa komunidad na ito?</i>)</li> <li>3. Aside from the threat of demolition, are there any more cases of human rights violation in your community? If yes, please elaborate. If none, are there elements coercing the residents to accept financial compensation in exchange of self-demolishing or leaving the community altogether? (<i>Mayroon bang mga paglabag sa karapatang pantao na ginawa laban sa komunidad bukod pa sa sapilitang pagpapaalis sa inyong komunidad? Kung mayroon, anu-ano ang mga ito? Kung wala, may mga elemento ba na kumukumbinsi sa mga tao sa komunidad na tanggapin ang alok ng pag-alis?</i>)</li> </ol>
	Relocation offered by the government, if any	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is the private claimant/local government contesting your area offering relocation? If yes, where? (<i>May naging alok ba ang claimant/gobyerno/pribadong korporasyon/o ang nangangamkam na relokalasyon sa inyo? Kung mayroon, saan nila balak kayo ilagay?</i>)</li> <li>2. Aside from relocation, what other forms of compensation do the competing entities offer to your community? (<i>Bukod sa relokalasyon, ano pa ang kanilang ihinahain sa inyo upang mapilitan kayo sa kanilang kagustuhan na umalis kayo sa komunidad?</i>)</li> </ol>

**Table 3. List of specific guide questions for each cluster**

Cluster	Specific guide questions
Private claimants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you know about the claimants who want to take the land where your community stands? If so, what evidence have they presented to claim that it belongs to them? (<i>Alam niyo ba ang mga taong gustong kumuha ng lupa ng komunidad? Kung oo, ano ang ebidensya na kanilang isiniwalat upang sabihin na ito'y sa kanila?</i>)</li> <li>2. From what year did the private claimants start contesting their claim to the land? How did it all begin? (<i>Mula anong taon sinimulan</i></li> </ol>

	<p><i>ng private claimant na ilaban ang pagkuha sa lupa ng komunidad? Paano ba ito nagsimula?)</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Have there been any threats made by the private claimant against the community? If so, what are they? (<i>May mga banta na bang ginawa ang private claimant laban sa komunidad? Kung oo, Anu-ano ang mga ito?)</i></li> <li>4. What steps has your community taken to fight for the right to remain in your residence? (<i>Anu-anong hakbang na ang nagawa ng inyong komunidad upang ipaglaban ang pananatili sa inyong tinitirahan?)</i></li> </ol>
Government projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you know what kind of project or establishment the government plans to construct in your area? Is it associated with a private company or corporation? If so, what is the name of the company or corporation? (<i>May alam ba kayo sa kung anong uri ng proyekto ang ipapatayo ng pamahalaan sa inyong lugar? Ito ba ay kasama ng isang pribadong kumpanya? Kung oo. ano ang pangalan ng kumpanya?)</i></li> <li>2. From what year did the agency start threatening the community with eviction? How did it begin? (<i>Mula anong taon sinimulan ng ahensya na pagbantaan ang komunidad ng ebiksyon? Paano ito nagsimula?)</i></li> <li>3. What other threats did the community face from the agency wanting to acquire the land? (<i>Ano ang mga iba pang banta ang nakuha ng komunidad mula sa ahensyang gustong makakuha ng lupa?)</i></li> <li>4. What steps has your community taken to fight for the right to remain in your residence? (<i>Anu-anong hakbang na ang nagawa ng komunidad upang ipaglaban ang pananatili sa kanilang tinitirahan?)</i></li> <li>5. What arrangements did the agency offer to the community? Were you offered anything in return for leaving your homes? What were they? If it was a relocation, where was the prospective housing? (<i>Anu-anong mga tipo ng kasunduan ang iminungkahi ng ahensya sa komunidad? Sila ba ay may inalok sa inyo kapalit ng inyong pag-alis sa inyong tinirahan? Anu-ano ito? Kung ito'y reloasyon, saan ang inaalok na pabahay?)</i></li> </ol>
Relocation projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Who or what agency proposed the relocation to the community? (<i>Sino o anong ahensya ang naghain ng reloasyon sa komunidad?)</i></li> <li>2. What prompted the sudden proposal of relocation? (<i>Ano ang kadahilanan ng biglaang alok ng reloasyon?)</i></li> <li>3. How was the relocation proposed to you, and what was the</li> </ol>

	<p>community's reception to this offer? (<i>Sa paanong paraan inalok sa inyo ang reloasyon at ano ang naging agarang tugon ng komunidad sa alok na ito?</i>)</p> <p>4. What year did they first make you an offer to move? Where were the relocation sites? (<i>Mula anong taon sinimulan ang pag-alok ng reloasyon sa inyo? Saan binabalak kayo palipatin?</i>)</p> <p>5. What measures has the community taken to fight this? (<i>Anu-anong mga hakbang na ang ginawa ng komunidad upang labanan ito?</i>)</p> <p>6. What are the qualities of the relocation offer that has been given to you? How far is it from your existing residence? (<i>Ano ang katangian ng reloasyon na inalok sa inyo? Gaano ito kalayo sa inyong kasalukuyang tinitirahan?</i>)</p>
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## RESULTS

### Private Claimants

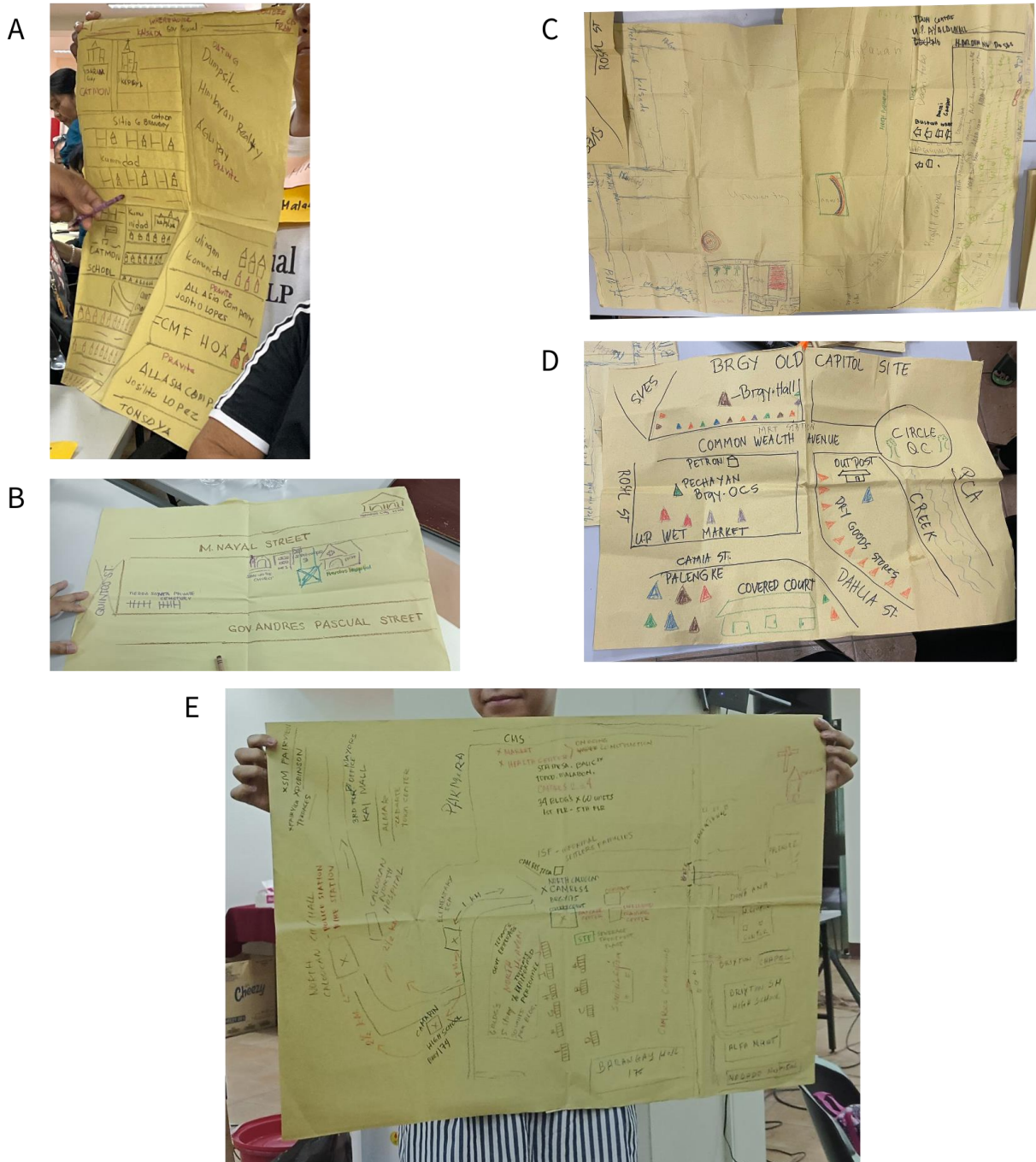
#### *Malabon City*

The case of CMF HOA is a struggle of the residents against Joselito T. Lopez, Chief Executive Officer and President of All Asia Structures, Inc. Lopez claims to have bought the land that CMF HOA resides in from its former owner, Cornelio Francisco, namesake of the said property. The residents asserted that Francisco has already donated the land to them, implying that the purchase made by Lopez is questionable. Both Francisco and former Mayor Canuto "Tito" Ureta signed the memorandum of agreement (MOA) for the said donation, however, there was no copy of the said MOA existing in the Malabon City Hall. Further, both Francisco and Ureta have long since passed to prove the claim of CMF HOA residents that the land was donated to them. Consequently, the residents of CMF HOA gained no support from neither the local government unit (LGU) nor the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (PCUP).

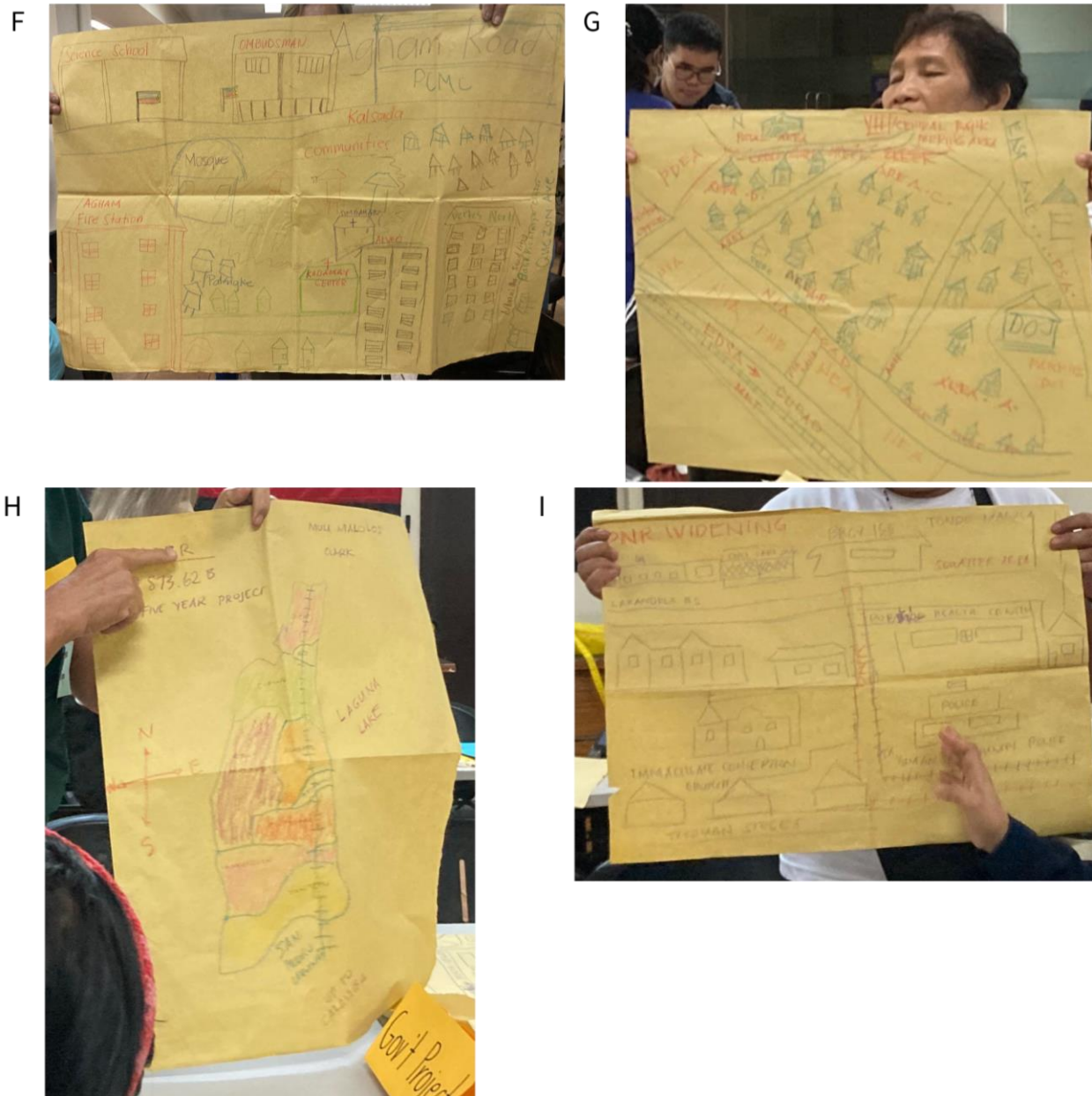
56 families from Gov. Pascual Street comprise some of CMF HOA. These families were displaced from Gov. Pascual and were forced to move to CMF HOA, however, their numbers dwindled down to 25 families due to offers of financial compensation and due to internal conflicts. It was reported that the financial compensation for Gov. Pascual residents amounted to 150,000 PHP, wherein 120,000 PHP came from the claimant and 30,000 PHP came from the LGU. At the present, the case filed by Lopez against the residents of CMF HOA in January 2019 has already reached the Court of Appeals.

Communities in Ulingan and Sitio Sais also face the threat of demolition. A certain Leongson was mentioned by the participants as the claimant of the property in Ulingan. In Sitio Sais, there used to be a claimant that filed a case against the residents in 2017, but lost in the Regional Trial Court (RTC) in 2019. However, the residents are facing yet another threat of eviction due to a mid-rise building

(MRB) set to be erected on their land. Many have conveyed their worries over the MRB construction due to the danger being posed by the existing dumpsite in Sitio Sais (Fig. 1A).



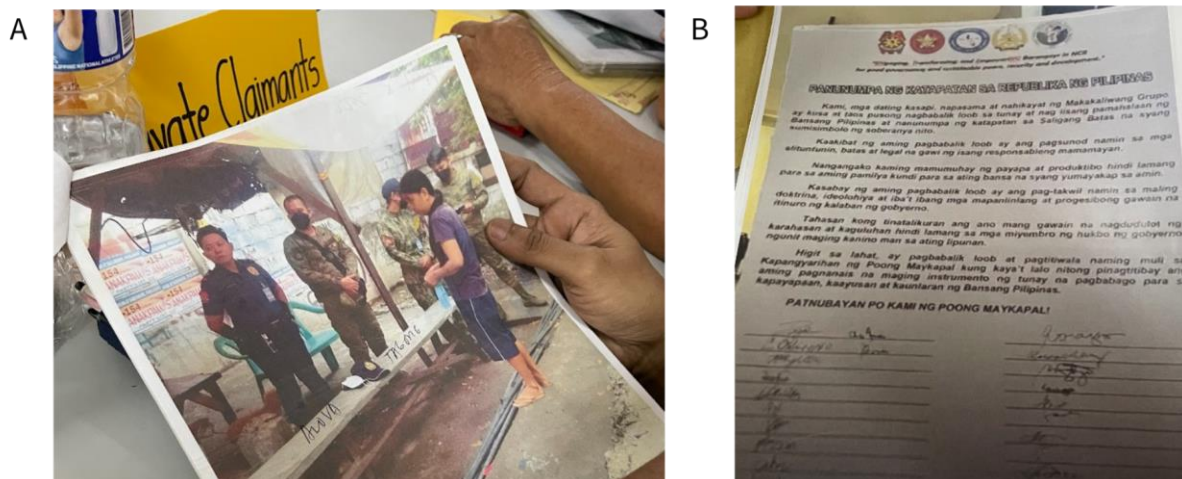




**Figure 1. Community maps drawn by the residents.** These are the communities affected by threat of demolition in (A) Malabon City; (B) Navotas City; (C) Pook Arboretum, QC; (D) Barangay San Vicente, QC; (E) Camarin Residences 1, Caloocan City; (F) Sitio San Roque, QC; (G) NIA Road, QC; (H) Communities along Laguna Lake, and; (I) Tondo, Manila City.

Residents of CMF HOA, Ulingan, and Sitio Sais are mostly employed in contractual work, in factories and manufacturing, and in construction. One of the main reasons why the residents remain in their communities is the near proximity of their residences to where they work. Moreover, they strongly believe that they have developed their communities, stating, *“Kung tutuusin tinutulungan namin silang paunlarin ang komunidad eh, masisipag naman kami* (Actually, we are helping [the government and the concerned agencies] develop the community; we are hardworking, after all).”

Their resolve to remain in their communities, however, was faced with several counts of intimidation, harassment, and red-tagging (Fig. 2A-B). Some residents were also forced to surrender as CPP-NPA members (Fig. 2B)



**Figure 2. Evidence of presence of state forces and of red-tagging in CMF HOA, Malabon City. (A) Presence of Philippine National Police (PNP) in the community. (B) Red-tagging and impelling residents to surrender as members of leftist groups (i.e., Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA)).**

### Navotas City

The property along Quintos Street up to Tierra Santa (Fig. 1B), a cemetery, gained two competing claimants in 2003: the Santoses and the Alonzos. The latter currently owns the land along Quintos Street, and the Santoses challenged the Alonzos' claim to the property. The scheme that developed from the rivalry between the two families is the availability of parcels of land for purchasing by the residents. Although some residents expressed their willingness to purchase property from the landowners, some questioned the legitimacy and legality of the process. This resulted in the split of the existing housing association, wherein the other group of homeowners who agreed on purchasing are being offered rent-to-own housing schemes.

Residents in S. Policarpio Street struggled against two competing claimants as well since 1993: the Navotas LGU and the Policarpio family. Either way, both parties will have the residents evicted. The Policarpios have won the property through bidding, but its bid of sale has already been voided. Nonetheless, the claimants, together with the barangay officials, have offered 40,000 PHP to the residents in exchange for leaving their homes. The options given were for them to vacate the property, to self-demolish, or to pay rent covering the months June to October in the year 2022. The residents revealed that, per household, paying the overdue rent would cost them 10,200 PHP per individual. Similar to the CMF HOA residents in Malabon, a case was filed against the S. Policarpio residents and has already reached the RTC. Further, a notice of demolition was released to the residents in April 2001 and in February 2022. 15 houses were demolished in 2022, while 12 households opted for self-demolition.

Navotas, a commercial fishing city, is surrounded by shipyards. Hence, most of the residents take up welding as their main source of income. Some work as private employees, barangay employees, and vendors. Similar to the residents of the Malabon City communities, they cited sentimentality, length of stay, and near proximity of their residences to places of work as the reasons why they remain in their communities.

Similar tactics of displacing people were observed in both cities under the private claimants cluster, such as financial compensation and offering relocation sites. If neither of these encourages the community members to leave their residences or self-demolish, the claimants were reported to coerce the residents to leave. Additionally, the residents have expressed that internal conflicts within the community were taken advantage of by entities that want to proceed with the demolition. Both groups also added that they were given little to no support to their cause by their respective LGUs.

## **Government Projects**

### *Quezon City*

Residents from communities of Sitio San Roque, NIA Road, Krus Na Ligas (KNL), Pook Arboretum / San Vicente, and Tatalon make up the QC cluster of the FGD.

Sitio San Roque, situated on Agham Road, Barangay Pag-Asa, is within walking distance to Ayala Vertis North, Office of the Ombudsman, Philippine Science High School Main Campus, Alveo, and Manila Seedling Bank Foundation, Inc (Fig. 1F). Within and near the community are places of worship, marketplaces, and several other schools from primary to secondary. On the other hand, Metro Rail Transit (MRT), Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA), Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Department of Justice (DOJ), and Public Attorney's Office (PAO) are within reach of the community residents along NIA Road (Fig. 1G).

Pook Arboretum are two separate areas, but are both located in Barangay San Vicente and are waging a similar campaign. Pook is close to Philcoa and UP Bliss, while Arboretum is part of the UP Diliman campus. Only the latter will be affected by the PGH Diliman plans, but both areas are asserting on-site development. Specifically, Blocks 2, 4, and 5 in the Arboretum will be displaced to make way for the 21 billion-Peso hospital in Diliman. The residents of Pook Arboretum have designed a counter-proposal, called the People's Plan, and they have already organized a committee to build and plan the housing they want. They have placed emphasis on the fact that the People's Plan is a communal plan, not one created by local politicians. Designs in the People's Plan include the total cost and construction plans for a five-floor MRB. Other construction plans in UP Diliman that will displace communities are the Science Complex expansion, which was mentioned to displace residents of Area 17 and Purok Aguinaldo, and the Engineering Complex expansion, which will displace residents of Villages A, B, and C.

Neighboring barangay to San Vicente is Barangay Old Capitol Site, which is home to 9,000 residents in Philcoa. Residents of both barangays have come up with a People's Plan to counter government

plans that will displace them, and are waging for on-site development. Residents of Barangay Old Capitol Site will be affected by the ongoing construction of MRT-7 line, which spans 22.6 km and is traversing North Avenue in QC up to San Jose del Monte, Bulacan (Department of Transportation, DOT, n.d.).

Several claimants, both private and public, are involved in the land distribution of Tatalon. Meralco claims the southern part of the area, whereas the “green” east area is allotted for the *Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino Program* (4PH), a national housing project signed by the Marcos Jr. administration. Historically, roughly 25 sq. km of land was sold off by Marcos Sr. to Tan and the Aranetas. Villa España 1 and 2 are currently owned by the Aranetas. Remaining areas are owned by Lucio Tan, who reportedly offered residents 15,000 PHP to leave or self-demolish once he bought the property. The residents have recounted that there were no offers of relocation to them, only the financial compensation worth 15,000 PHP.

Residents of the mentioned communities mainly work as vendors, construction workers, and informal transport drivers (e.g., jeepney, tricycle, taxi). Since most government agencies and offices are located in Quezon City, residents of Sitio San Roque and NIA Road remain in their communities due to the prospective job opportunities and livelihood sources in the city. However, situations in the said communities remain precarious regardless of the abundance of opportunities. In Sitio San Roque, residents are forbidden to bring in even light construction materials to repair their homes. To ensure that everyone abides by this rule, security guards are placed on the entryways to the community. Moreover, fires frequently break out in communities like Sitio San Roque and KNL.

Aside from engaging in dialogues with the local government, the residents also chose a more militant approach to remain in their homes by establishing barricades (*Barikadang Bayan*) in their communities in 2010 (Sitio San Roque) and the 1980s (KNL), respectively.

### *Communities along Laguna Lake*

Fishing communities along Laguna Lake are faced with threat of eviction due to the construction of the Malolos to Clark section of the NSCR project. They are yet to receive offers of financial assistance and relocation. Similar to Sitio San Roque and KNL, the residents have taken a militant stance against the threat of demolition by conducting mass mobilizations and protests.

### *Caloocan City*

In the 1980s, Marcos Sr. divided areas of Pangarap Village (Barangays 181 and 182) and converted some into a resettlement area. Each lot is priced at 10,000 PHP, wherein priority buyers are military officials and cronies of Marcos Sr. As a result, most of the original residents were not able to secure their place. Shortly after the marriage of Irene Marcos and Gregorio Maria Araneta III in 1988, the couple acquired Pangarap Village. This mobilized around 2,000 residents, staking their claim on the land. Former president Corazon “Cory” Aquino then promised the residents to recognize this claim,

but this was not fulfilled. In the late 80s, residents of Pangarap Village were forcefully relocated to 2,500 ha of converted land in Tanay, Rizal named Bagong Pangarap Village. The said property in Tanay is inadequate for the 40,000 Pangarap Village residents, however, the Supreme Court (SC) is yet to decide on the case of Pangarap Village residents.

Similar to residents of CMF HOA, residents of Pangarap Village have been subjected to red-tagging and intimidation of state forces. Moreover, the Aranetas have cut off their access to basic utilities (i.e., water and electricity).

### *Manila City*

Residents from Tondo make up the Manila City cluster of the FGD. Community assets include a public health center, a school, a place of worship, and an informal settlement area (wherein fire broke out twice already) (Fig. 1I). Similar to communities along Laguna lake, NSCR construction is set to take place in the community, prompting eviction in their area. A proposal to relocate to Naic, Cavite has been discussed to the residents, however, they are reluctant to move because the new location is far from basic social services.

### **Relocation Project(s)**

Community assets of Camarin Residences 1 (CamRes 1) in Caloocan City include a health center, a marketplace, senior citizens' association hall, schools from daycare to senior high school, a police station, a fire station, and near proximity to the city hall, to malls, and to healthcare facilities among many others (Fig. 1E). The livability and accessibility of the area is still challenged as a result of a road widening project and a nearby sewerage treatment plant.

Further, since its establishment in 2014, wall paint and flooring remain unfinished, as well as safety details of the vicinity. Wide sliding windows were proven to be hazardous, especially to children. Residents mentioned that they have shelled out from 5,000 to 10,000 PHP for repairs and renovations of their housing unit. Megawide Construction Corp. managed the installation of electricity and implemented fixed charging of electric utility bills. As a result, residents were not able to cover the cost of their electric bill. Further, CamRes 1 needed to acquire a Certificate of Electrical Inspection which is worth 100,000 PHP. Fortunately, the incumbent mayor at the time settled the requirement cost. Plumbing and access to water also caused unrest to CamRes 1 residents. Plumbing in bathrooms and sinks easily break due to unsuitable pipe sizes, while access to water is limited due to exorbitant charges.

Even bigger challenges include the sewerage treatment plant and the animal husbandry within the community, wherein both lead to environmental contamination, resulting in illnesses among residents. "*Kung may ma-byuda, sunud-sunod na* (If one suffers from miscarriage, everyone else follows)," one resident remarked. Petty crimes became rampant as well due to lack of livelihood and job opportunities. In addition, security detail of NHA in the community has prohibited vending of

goods within the vicinity. A resident stated: “*Mas maganda ang kabuhayan sa pinanggalingan namin. Mayroon kaming babuyan kasi na ipinagbawal sa CamRes.* (We were better off where we used to live. We had piggery back there, but it's prohibited in CamRes).” They also noted the lack of support for their livelihood.

Relocation arrangements remain ambiguous, as they were originally offered a rent-to-own housing scheme, but the contract (between the developer, Megawide, and the landowner) is bound to expire after 25 years. Some residents fail to comply with the cost of owning a unit in CamRes, leading to a notice of cancellation, which eventually leads to eviction. When asked why they were not paying, they answered: “*Hindi [namin] hangad na libre, ang hangad namin ay abot-kaya.* (We were not asking for free [housing], we were asking for an affordable one.)”

### **Demands, Moving Forward**

Figures 3A-D are summarized into the following points:

1. *What can we collectively work on?*

All participants collectively agreed that they needed to assert their rights. These include their right to housing, right to decent work and livable wage, right to education, right to universal healthcare, right to easily access basic social services, and the right to organize.

2. *What resources, machineries do we currently possess?*

Currently, the primary machinery that residents of each area have are the people's organizations they have previously formed. These organizations are crucial in amplifying their voices and collectively pursuing their demands. Their connections with government agencies and the local government are also considered important machinery.

3. *How can we help each other?*

Given the existing people's organizations in the area, the participants identified that the next logical step would be to form an alliance of residents not only from areas facing demolition threats, but from all urban poor communities. This would strengthen and amplify their collective struggle for their rights. By forming an alliance, communities can respond swiftly to demolition threats by assisting in anti-demolition campaigns or establishing *Barikadang Bayan*. Members can exchange ideas and strategies for resistance. Moreover, the alliance can include urban poor advocates, youth, students, and other volunteers who want to support the anti-demolition campaign. Together, the alliance can fight for affordable, decent, and pro-people housing.





*Figure 3. Meta cards written by residents (A) moved to relocation sites, and that are affected by (B-C) government projects, and (D) contesting private claimants in response to assessment of fundamentals and existing resources, and to campaigning for their right to housing.*

## DISCUSSION

UN Habitat (2023) further warns that, if left unaddressed, the housing backlog could climb up to 22 million by 2040. To grapple with this, the Marcos Jr. administration launched government housing projects in provinces under the 4PH (PNA, 2023). Moreover, the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) has been provided with 250 billion PHP in funds as well as a 12 billion-Peso revolving credit line for housing from Pag-IBIG (Manila Bulletin, 2024). While the 4PH program and other government housing projects are expected to help address the housing backlog, they may not be able to fully meet the community's need for affordable, decent, and pro-people housing. This is primarily due to the lack of consultations with the community regarding the design and features of these housing units. For instance, the relocation of CamRes 1 residents has been marked by numerous challenges, such as, the long commute to their jobs, combined with unreliable access to essential services like electricity and water, lack of sources of livelihood, and unfinished housing units. Moreover, the unreasonable price of rent and the threat of eviction hang over the residents. This cycle of housing and relocation, without addressing the root causes, will continue to force residents back to their original communities. The absence of community input will only worsen the situation and further discourage residents from availing these programs altogether.

Community-led plans such as the Community Development Plan of Sitio San Roque (Save San Roque Alliance, 2022), and the People's Plan of the residents of San Vicente and the UP Campus should be given due consideration by concerned government agencies and the LGU. These are housing plans that have been collectively decided upon by the residents themselves. Aside from the community planning the design of their new homes or relocation sites, they also have the authority to decide on the nature of the housing, whether it be on-site or in-city. This decision is crucial as it directly affects the livelihood of the residents. Furthermore, these plans also reveal the residents' capacity to pay for socialized housing.

The urgent need to bridge the housing affordability gap for the urban poor is highlighted by a 2022 study from Save San Roque (SSR) alliance. Their 2019 data showed that a staggering 91% of the 202 residents surveyed fall near or under the poverty line. Almost half of the population surveyed are mostly informal workers as well, with 64% of the structure owners and 68% of renters earning approximately 18,000 PHP monthly. With government housing units costing around 3,000 PHP (Table 4), this effectively takes up almost 17% of the primary income earner's wage. Moreover, the data revealed that the vast majority of renters were limited to paying 1,500 PHP in monthly rent, only half of the value of each housing unit, highlighting a significant affordability challenge. Community consultations and studies on residents' financial capacity to afford housing are crucial. Additionally, it is important to determine the number of primary income earners per family, the number of dependents, and the total number of occupants in the housing unit. As summarized in Figure 4, the



high cost of rent, the continuous increase in the prices of basic commodities, and stagnant wages are compounding hardships for the urban poor.

The Build, Build, Build (BBB)/Build Better More initiatives (Table 4) have had a devastating impact on the urban poor, saddling them with trillions of pesos of national debt (Bureau of the Treasury, 2024) and forcing them out of their homes. Joint venture agreements (JVAs) between the government and large private corporations pose a threat not only to the rights of the urban poor to the city, but also to their health and livelihood, to the environment, to the economy, and to the quality of life. The government's continuous reliance on loans from international financial institutions, like the World Bank (WB) and Asia Development Bank (ADB), to finance mega-projects under BBB and Build Better More program does not serve the best interest of the masses. The Pasig River Expressway (PAREX) project, for instance, is a JVA between the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and San Miguel Holdings Corp. (SMHC) (DPWH, n.d.). It exemplifies how these infrastructure projects can harm both the environment and the communities living along Ilog Pasig. Residents face not only the risk of displacement but also increased vulnerability to floods, noise and air pollution, and warmer temperatures due to the “urban heat island effect” (Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines, YACAP, 2022). Similar to government infrastructure projects, reclamation projects like those in Manila Bay will cause damage to the environment and the communities living nearby. Approximately 28 million people living near Manila Bay may experience more severe flooding, liquefaction, and land subsidence (sinking of land) due to the dump-and-fill activities in Manila Bay (Oceana, n.d.).

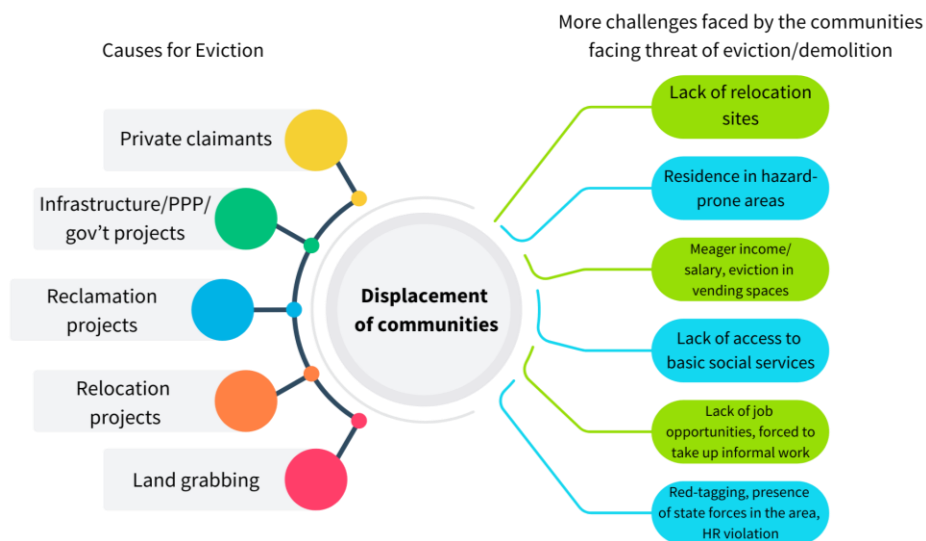
*Table 4. Summary of government projects that will displace urban poor communities in Metro Manila*

Government Project	Detail(s)	Community to be displaced
4PH / National Housing	A high-rise building will be constructed and each unit will cost 3,000 PHP monthly. The floor area will be depending on the family size. The governing body responsible for the project is the DHSUD.	Community(ies) along NIA Road, QC
	Only a part of Tatalon will be used for the construction of 4PH	Tatalon, QC
MRT 7	MRT 7 was one of former President Rodrigo Duterte's highly anticipated Infrastructure Flagship Projects (IFPs). The 77 billion-Peso PPP project is currently controlled by the San Miguel Corporation (SMC). The project claims a 30-minute journey time between	Barangay Old Capitol Site

	Quezon City and San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan using a 23-km light rail transportation line. The MRT-7 includes 14 stations located on three main roads: Commonwealth Avenue, Regalado Avenue, and Quirino Avenue. MRT 7 also includes an asphalt expressway that would connect San Jose Del Monte City, Bulacan to the North Luzon Expressway's Bocaue Interchange. (DOT, n.d.; IBON Foundation, 2023).	
Philippine National Railway (PNR) / Malolos-Clark section of NCSR	Rehabilitation and extension of PNR, particularly the Malolos to Clark section, is being built as the flagship scheme of the BBB railway investment program. NCSR is part of the 160-billion USD loan that Duterte signed in 2017. (Asia Development Bank, ADB, 2021)	Community(ies) along Tondo, Manila City and along Laguna Lake
Solaire Casino / Quezon City Central Business District (QC CBD)	JVA between Ayala and NHA	Sitio San Roque, QC
Infrastructure projects in UP Diliman	The implementing agency for the building of PGH Diliman is UP, and is aligned to be a Public Investment Program (PIP) (Public-Private Partnership Center, PPP, n.d.). The 21.3 billion-Peso facility will be constructed on 4.2 hectares of open space within the 493-hectare campus. It will have a total floor space of 80,000 square meters, including 13,600 square meters for parking (Philippine News Agency, PNA, 2022).	Pook Arboretum / San Vicente and Pook Aguinaldo
	Science Complex expansion	Area 17 and Pook Aguinaldo
	Engineering Complex expansion	Villages A, B, and C

Pasig River Expressway (PAREX)	The Pasig River Expressway Project is a 19.37-kilometer, six-lane elevated expressway that runs the whole length of the Pasig River. The project begins on Radial Road 10 in the City of Manila and will end with a connection to the South East Metro Manila Expressway (C6). (DPWH, n.d.)	Riverside communities along Pasig, Taguig, Mandaluyong, Marikina, and Manila
PGMA awarded part of the land to the Tuasons	SC originally ruled that the land belonged to the Aranetas, but during Macapagal-Arroyo's administration, part of Pangarap Village was awarded to the Tuasons	Pangarap Village, Caloocan City

In addition to various entities (i.e., private claimants, government projects, relocation projects) threatening eviction in their areas, the urban poor also face numerous injustices in their daily lives. These include, primarily, lack of job and livelihood opportunities, lack of access to basic social services due to its ongoing privatization, low wages, and human rights abuses (Fig. 4). Nonetheless, as the communities have already raised, collective action, asserting the right to housing through dialogues with the local government, and grassroots initiatives in housing design are the initial steps towards affordable, decent, and pro-people housing (Fig. 3A-D).



**Figure 4. State of urban poor communities facing threat of demolition/eviction**

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