

Homeless Along the *Riles*: Urban poor families squashed under the tracks of development

■ Urban Poor Associates (UPA)

BETWEEN JANUARY and June 2006, a total of **thirteen (13) demolitions** took place. These demolitions affected **6,813 families**, the majority of which were occupying government lands. Only 3.8% of them were located in private properties.

Sixty six (66) percent (4,500 families) of those demolished were from Makati, Paco, and Pandacan. They lost their homes because the government wanted to use the land they were occupying for its own multi-billion peso **Southrail project**.

Another 800 families (11.74%) along R-10 road in Caloocan were evicted by the Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

The rest of the evictees were as follows: 213 families, whose houses were torn to pieces so as to give way to MMDA "beautification" project; 841 families affected by various local government projects of Manila and Quezon City; and 166 families evicted by officials of the University of the Philippines in Diliman who claimed that the university is exempted from the Urban Development Housing Act (UDHA), including its protective provisions against unlawful eviction.

Three demolition incidents involving 1,311 families (19.24%) were violent.

In one case, the affected people felt aggrieved because they had been residing for decades on land which they believed was owned by the national government. But a real estate company that claimed ownership of the land got the court to evict them.

In the second case, people reacted to the brutish way the policemen and

the demolition crew conducted the demolition operation. They entered houses without permission from the house owners, removing and stealing some of their belongings.

The third violent demolition was in Navotas, when the families residing along the R-10 road resisted the demolition operation launched by MMDA and DPWH. The affected families were offered P15,000 financial assistance because there were very limited relocation lots to offer. The financial assistance was less than the amount provided for by UDHA, which is equivalent to the daily minimum wage multiplied by sixty (60) days, currently at around P20,000. Only 80 families received P15,000 as financial assistance while some 20 families were relocated to Bitungol in Norzagaray, Bulacan.

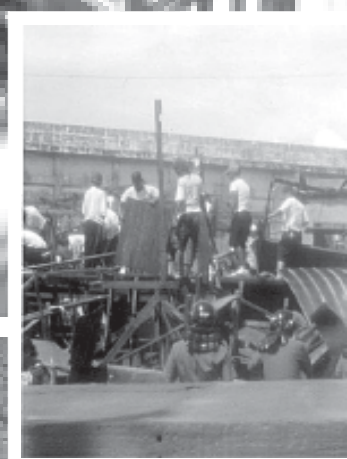
LIST OF DEMOLISHED COMMUNITIES

Date 2006	Location	Land Owner	No. of Families evicted	Notice	Con-sulta-tion	Relo-cation/ Finan-cial assis-tance	Ordered by	Imple-mented by	COMMENT
12 Jan to April	4 barangays: Magallanes, Bangkal, Pio del Pilar, San Antonio	Govt	3,000	None	None	Cabu-yao South-ville-Housing Project	PNR	NHA	Majority volunteered though relocation not adequate *Makati demolitions-counted as one continuing incident. With COC
20 Jan	Barangay Uno, Taguig Daang Riles	Govt	141				MMDA	MMDA	Demolition due to beautification project. No COC
17 Feb	San Vicente, UP Diliman Quezon City	Govt	166	With notice	None	P25,000/ family assistance from CHED	UP	UP	No COC
February 2006	Baseco, City of Manila	Govt	300	None	None	Allo-wed to transfer within Baseco	LGU	LGU	No COC











LIST OF DEMOLISHED COMMUNITIES

Date 2006	Location	Land Owner	No. of Families evicted	Notice	Con-sulta-tion	Relo-cation/ Finan-cial assistance	Ordered by	Imple-mented by	COMMENT
29 March 2006	Concordia Bridge, Otis Pandacan, Manila	Govt	32	None	None	P5,000	MMDA	MMDA	Beautifi-cation (Investors Corridor program). No COC
7 April 2006	585 EDSA, Cubao Quezon City Near Samson Technologi-cal School	Private	100	None	None	None	Court	Sheriff	Court order
18 April 2006	Central Avenue, Brgy New Era and Barangay Culiati across New Era University Quezon City	Govt	350			170 received relo-cation and P5,000; 180 families received P5,000	LGU	LGU	With COC Violent
May to June	Paco, San Andres, Vito Cruz, Manila	Govt	1,500			South-ville			Southrail Project
9 May 2006	Purok 6, Ilocos Street, Filinvest Road 1, Batasan Hills, Quezon City	Private	161	None	None	None	Court	Sheriff	Violent. Policemen threatened people with guns. Four were arrested but later released
9 May 2006	Mapagbigay st. corner Matapang Street, Barangay Pinyahan, Quezon City	Govt	151	Yes	Yes	35 were relo-cated. Others did not because they want on-site develop-ment	LGU	LGU	Reclaiming city land from informal settlers to build road. With COC

LIST OF DEMOLISHED COMMUNITIES

Date 2006	Location	Land Owner	No. of Families evicted	Notice	Con-sulta-tion	Relo-cation/ Finan-cial assistance	Ordered by	Imple-mented by	COMMENT
18 May 2006	Marcelo Compound, R 10 Sitio Sto Nino, Puting Bato Navotas	Govt	800	3 days		Government offered relocation to Towerville or P15,000	DPWH	MMDA	Violent With COC. Policemen pointed guns at the people
5 June 2006	Matapang Street, Barangay Pinyahan Quezon City	Govt	40	2 days	None	No relo-cation	LGU	LGU	Reclaiming city land from informal settlers to build road. With COC
14 June 2006	Sitio Masagana, Bicutan Taguig	Govt	72	Sep-tember last year	None	None	LGU	LGU, MMDA	Road widening. No COC

TOTAL: 6,813 families

SUMMARY

Location	Families Evicted	Land-owner	Ordered by	Relocated families	Families Given financial assistance	Violent Demolition
Makati	3,000	Govt	Phil. National Railways (PNR)	3000	P50,000 house construction loan	Voluntary demolition
Manila	1,832	Govt	PNR	1,500	1,500 families received P50,000 house construction loan; 32 families received P5,000 assistance	
Quezon City	968	Govt except for 2 cases involving private lands		170 relocated	166 families received P25,000 financial assistance; 180 received P5,000 financial assistance	2 violent demolitions

SUMMARY

Location	Families Evicted	Land-owner	Ordered by	Relocated families	Families Given financial assistance	Violent Demolition
Navotas	800	Govt		20	80 families received P15,000 financial assistance	Violent demolition
Taguig	213	Govt				MMDA provided neither relocation nor financial assistance

The Southrail project

Last year, the government removed some 20,000 families living along the railways from Malabon City to Malolos City to pave the way for the first phase of the Northrail Project.

Early this year, the government started to evict families in Makati City which will be affected by the Southrail project.

Just like what happened in the Northrail relocation, housing officials threatened the families living along the proposed Southrail project that if they refuse to transfer to the designated resettlement areas (in this case, the Cabuyao resettlement site and the Southville Housing Project), they will not receive any form of assistance.

Southville, which is 30 kilometers away from Makati, it is still not ready for habitation. The housing project lacks potable water, has inadequate supply of electricity, offers no livelihood opportunities, has no clinic and its school is inadequately equipped and lacks teachers.

Many of the relocated families were asked to sign waivers that would absolve the government of any obligations later on. The government described the resettlement process as “voluntary demolition and relocation” because there were no open and violent resistance on the part of the affected families.

In the Makati and Manila demolitions, the government mobilized the local officials to threaten and harass railroad residents to “voluntarily” demolish their houses and transfer to Southville. The RACs (Resettlement Action Center) were usually stationed in barangay halls where people were supposed to present the required documents to qualify for relocation

Homeless
Along the
Riles:
Urban poor
families
squashed
under the
tracks of
development

benefits. National Housing Authority (NHA) and local government officials called the affected residents to meetings and consultations where they were “convinced” to relocate.

Two communities resisted the government’s campaign to rush people to go to an ill-prepared resettlement site. One community in San Antonio was able to delay for two weeks their so-called voluntary relocation. However, residents said that two sell-out leaders sabotaged their resistance.

Another community in Pio del Pilar thwarted government’s efforts to transfer them to temporary tents while their relocation units were still being constructed in Southville. After one month, they finally agreed to transfer when their houses were completed.

Relocation and financial assistance

From January to June, NHA relocated some 7,000 families from the railroad tracks to the Southville Housing Project. The site, however, is inadequate: it has no drinking water, electricity is only available between 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM; transportation to and from the relocation site is mainly through tricycles, which is expensive; the schools are inadequate and ill-staffed; and there are no clinics in the area.

Southville is also situated right beside a private dumpsite which has been in operation for eight years. Most likely, this will have an adverse effect on the health of the people relocated there.

Each family was given a 40-square meter lot and provided with a tent for ten days during which the family was expected to construct a housing unit. Each family was given a house construction loan of P50,000, of which P40,000 was for housing materials and P10,000 for labor.

Most families, however, were not able to finish constructing their houses in ten days and many spent the money for food and other basic needs. According to them, their income drastically went down because their economic activities were disrupted by the demolition and the relocation process. The resettlement site is 30 kilometers away from Makati and



THE FIRST phase of Southrail project which covers South Caloocan to Muntinlupa will affect 31,739 families.

The Northrail and Southrail Linkage Project covers 700 kilometers from San Fernando in La Union to Legazpi City in Bicol. Nearly 2 US billion dollars in loans will come from the People’s Republic of China while the South Caloocan-to-Calamba part of the project will be funded from a \$100 million loan from the South Korean government. The project will entail the biggest planned displacement of communities and families in the history of the Philippines.

Vice President Noli de Castro, who is also the chair of the Housing and Urban Development and Coordinating Council (HUDCC), is in charge of the relocation and resettlement aspect of the Northrail and Southrail projects.



Manila where most of the families earn their living.

The loan incurred by each family for the house construction and lot repayment totaled to P150,000. They are expected to amortize this in 30 years.

Aside from the south railroad families, there were 2,313 other families evicted, but only 180 families were given relocation and only 426 families received financial assistance, ranging from P5,000 to P25,000.

Conclusions

The Philippine government as well as the courts continue to disregard or ignore domestic laws and international standards on the right to adequate housing of families affected by eviction or demolition. People are not given ample notification, they are not consulted and given adequate relocation.

In this the Arroyo administration does not differ from the previous regimes but it has chosen to call its resettlement policy as "incremental development" to mean relocating families to sites that are inadequate.

Worse, under the Arroyo government, something sinister and cynical has been added: the practice by various government agencies such as the NHA, DPWH, and MMDA of making project-affected families sign waiver documents stating that they freely accept the terms of the document. Through this, the government unburdens itself of its housing responsibilities beyond the terms stipulated in the waiver.

The MMDA under Bayani Fernando continues to carry out illegal and quite often violent demolitions with impunity and in defiance of the 1987 Constitution, UDHA of 1992, and Executive Order NO. 152 issued in 2002 stipulating that no demolition should be conducted without a clearance from the Presidential Commission on the Urban Poor (PCUP).

And worst, other government agencies such as the DPWH are emboldened and are duplicating the actions of MMDA.

■
Homeless
Along the
Riles.
Urban poor
families
squashed
under the
tracks of
development