

Poverty Assessment

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As soon as I got off the airplane, in the baggage claim area there was a money exchange kiosk where I was able to exchange my U.S. dollars for Philippine pesos. Currently the exchange rate is 44.62 Philippine Pesos for 1 US dollar. On March 6, 2014 I knew I was entering a new economic system when I arrived the Philippines. At that point I had little understanding of how much deeper a country's economic state goes when concerned with life all around.

As a result of the American rule over the Philippines, the country is now the most Westernized Asian country in the world. The effects of this is highly visible in the city we encounter today. The Philippines has one of the highest densities in the world. This means there are more people living in the city than in the rest of the island. The whole island is host to about 99 Million people¹. Metro Manila is made of various cities. Quezon City is the government chair of the entire country. A circumferential road with major intersections geographically connects it: Taft, Araneta, Edsa. With its land area of 161.126 sq. km., Quezon City is about four times the size of Manila.¹ Quezon City is also home to the highest population of the Philippines with a density exceeding 9,933 persons per kilometer.

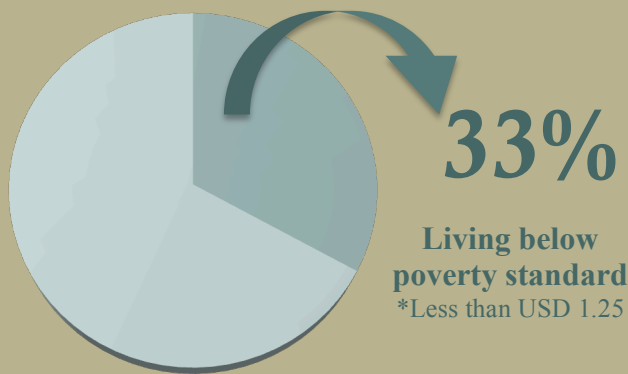
Poverty is present through the urban/rural divide however the report finds that urbanization does shields the poor from extreme dire conditions found in rural cities.¹ The living conditions of both urban and rural are just as hard but for different reasons. In rural cities resources are few and jobs are minimal but the large family network provides financial security and fills social needs. On the contrary, the poor living in urban cities have access to resources and entrance into informal/formal economy. Yet those living in the cities are limited by their small networks and lack of family.



Poverty Assessments: World Bank

State of the Nation

At a Glance



586: Slums in Metro-Manila

Table 1.1: Poverty in the Philippines

	Headcount index (Incidence)	Poverty gap index (Depth)	Squared poverty gap index (Severity)
1997	25.1	6.4	2.3
Rural	36.9	10.0	3.6
Urban	11.9	2.6	0.9
1998 (projection)*	27.8	7.6	2.9
1999 (projection)*	26.3	6.9	2.5

Social indicator	1987	1998
Life expectancy at birth, female (years)	65.9	70.5
Life expectancy at birth, male (years)	62.2	66.8
Illiteracy rate, adult total (% of people 15+)	8.4	5.2
Illiteracy rate, adult female (% of females 15+)	9.1	5.4
Immunization, measles (% of children under 12 mos.)	68.0	83.0 **
Low-birth weight babies (% of births)	18.0*	8.7 ***
Malnutrition prevalence (% of children under 5)	32.9	29.6 ***
Mortality rate, infant (per 1,000 live births)	45.0	32.2
Safe water, rural (% of rural population with access)	67.7*	81.0 ****
Safe water, urban (% of urban population with access)	80.5*	91.0 ****

(2001). *Philippines Poverty Assessment: Methodology*. The World Bank: Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit.

The World Bank's *Philippines Poverty Assessment*, attempts to give an in-depth analysis of the country's poor, potential resources and solutions to the issues raised in the analysis. The study agrees that there is evidently an overbearing power placed over the poor which does not allow them to move forward. Collectively this power-struggle ends up having direct results on the poor, a population which constitutes about 80% of the entire country. Within this 80% the poor are grouped into different categories: entrepreneurial poor, self-employed poor, laboring poor, and poorest of the poor. The poorest of the poor survive only on the day-to-day basis, only by begging or scavenging for food. The laboring poor are the farm laborers that have taken out loans are now living in a struggle to pay their debt and keep their families afloat. The self-employed poor run their own microfinance business only expanded and supported by their limited family network. The entrepreneurial poor although they live under the poverty level they capitalize their microfinance business enough to pay for employees and continue to maintain maximum inventory. In the Philippines 22.8 million are slum dwellers, 2.8 million are unemployed, and 6.7 million are functionally illiterate. The reality is that only a total of only 40 families own the entire country. The politics that determine the well-being of the poor are entirely controlled by this group of elite families. According to Plueddemann, "In high-power-distance cultures both leaders and followers assume that the leader has authority, respect, and status symbols. The leader has the right to make unilateral decisions that will be obeyed without question. In these societies, employees do not question managers, students do not challenge teachers, and children obey parents or other elders without questions." This leadership framework not only allows for the politics of the Philippines to be monopolized, but it manipulates its citizens into believing this is the right way.

"Poverty is a way of life. It affects what people do with their time and money, how they live, their command over resources, their status in the community their relations with the government and their sense of self-worth." (The World Bank, 2001)



Mission Ministries Philippines

Mission Ministries Philippines (MMP) was established as a means to push forward holistic and sustainable church planting among the urban poor of Metro-Manila. Today they serve the poor even outside Metro-Manila as the city's poor are being constantly pushed out of the center of the city. They partner with urban poor churches to plant sustainable communities that are cared for spiritually and physically. Out of the need to alleviate the poor's yoke the church planting process includes an initial survey of the community. The intention of this survey is to get to know the community as a whole, in attempts to see ways in which they can partner and support the community.

The survey process takes about a week, in which the site team goes house to house asking a few brief questions about each household. The purpose of the survey is to see what resources the community has to offer to the church. As a follow up to this survey, the site team will also host a small focus group with community members that are interested in being part of the church and together they develop a set of goals for the community.

Vision

“A sustainable church in every slum”

To make the slum church viable, we plant holistic churches that have a preschool, a drugstore cooperative and a livelihood project to help finance the church. All churches are planted in partnership with the local church to which the slum church eventually belongs.

Economic Survey

Opening Dialogue:

“Good morning, my name is Friend, I'm part of a team that is trying to build a church here in the community. We want our church to help the community so I was wondering if I can ask you some questions, can I have a few minutes of your time?”

Survey Questions:

1. Who is the head of your family?
2. Would the head of the family allow you to answer questions about the household?
3. How many family members are there in your household?
4. What is the job of the head of the household?
5. How many kids is the head of the household sending to school?
6. How many are in preschool?
7. How much is the household's total monthly income.
8. How much is your electric and water bill?

“Poverty appears positively correlated with household size, such that it is highest among households with seven or more members, while families with five or more members account for over three-fourths of total poverty.”
. (The World Bank, 2001)

Towerville 5

The Towerville 5 Barangay is located in Bulacan, a province that is quickly becoming urbanized as more and more urban poor city dwellers are being pushed to the fringes of Metro-Manila. Towerville 5 specifically is home to a dense population, as it has been turned into a relocation site for urban settlers. Although residents own their own land they are faced with limited resources, separated from the city, and are in a sense starting off in a community that is artificial.

Every Friday/Saturday I was able to join my internship coordinator as he made the trek outside the Metro-Manila area to Towerville 5 where he hosts weekly meetings for groups of small business women that are involved with the MFI loan program. The women meet up at one of their homes and they talk and have sweets for *merienda*, laugh and wisper secrets. The meeting officially starts with prayer and soon the women begin sharing about their week, their families, their problems, their businesses. The MFI officer prays for each need and then he jumps into a quick, lively bible study. This is the image of the poor engaging with their informal banking system. One of close relationships, warmth, and laughter.

From the visits I was able to observe the vast difference between communities in the midst of urban centers and Towerville 5, which hosts urbanized individuals amongst a high population, but rural nonetheless. Through first observations it is obvious that there is little to no greenery, all the trees and vegetation were cleared to build the reloaiton houses. Towerville 5 is aslo considered a food dessert, with extremely limited access to grocery stores. There access to jobs is also scarce as the relocation site is quite distant from Metro-Manila, where most jobs for the poor are available. Thetransporataion fare into the city also debilitates the poor from accessing the city's resources.

“Poverty in the Philippines is still a largely rural phenomenon despite rapid urbanization in recent years.”

(The World Bank, 2001).



Survey Outcomes



Area Profile

- Located in the mountainous side of San Jose Del Monte \
- Relocation site since 2007
- Composed of 1,600 families more or less
- Estimated three to five children per family
- Has a voting force of 8,500 led by a president of Home Owners Association.
- Occupations of men are in construction; others are vendors, tricycle drivers.
- Wives stay at home to manage the house and their children. They are trying to seek other ways to augment income.
- Breadwinners are contractual workers and being paid daily and weekly basis with no security.
- The site is far from the barangay proper.
- Prices of commodities including medicine and water bill is high while electricity is tolerable.
- Because the community is relatively young, there is no Christian church, only one pre-school and no drug store within the vicinity.
- The need of sustainable livelihood is imperative.

Goals & Objectives

“The team had a meeting and were able to come-up expectations in two to three years time.”

- Multi-purpose building (150 sq. mtrs.)
- Survey 500 families
- Botica Binhi
- Cooperative Store
- Medical Mission
- 200 members
- Feeding Program
- 20 disciples
- Sunday School
- Pre-school
- Water Baptism
- Youth Fellowship
- Men’s Fellowship
- Women’s Fellowship
- Daughter Church
- Livelihood
- Temporary place for different activities

The focus group agreed on these goals and tasks for the church, which include both church growth goals and programs for economic uplift.

More details:

<http://www.mmphilippines.org/current-mobilization/towerville5-sjdm-bulacan>



Conclusion

The poverty assessment conducted by MMP on new partnering communities is effective in helping assess existing resources, needs, as well as potential solutions. It differs from other Poverty Assessment techniques, such as CASHPOR as they don't measure personal poverty on the basis of material possession but rather measure it through the World's Bank scale of poverty, which focuses on salary and household size. The process MMP has taken into practice to conduct poverty assessment in communities is also a very relational and personal process, one that mirrors carefully the Filipino culture. Just as Filipinos are inclusive and inviting, MMP offers the community an opportunity to be engaged in the process of assessing their own community.

I find it extremely empowering that following the economic survey process, MMP hosts a forum discussion for community members to discuss issues and potential solutions, as to gauge them from the community's point of view. Very often we see outside organizations going into new communities and starting a program they deem will affect the community in a positive manner but ultimately end up harming the community as a whole.

The results of MMP's poverty assessment in Towerville 5 show us a community that is seeking programs for educational, health care, and economic uplift. The community also would like to see public space allocated for the community to use as a space to promote unity.

As MMP's relationship moves forward with the community it is able to effectively work alongside the community and aid in its development because before doing anything, they were willing to listen, to observe, and take in the community as it is. The poverty assessment functions as a tool for holistic ministry in the case of MMP because they are seeking to grow along with the entire community, not just within the walls of their new church plant.



Works Cited

- (2014). Mission Ministries Philippines. *<http://www.mmphilippines.org/current-mobilization/towerville5-sjdm-bulacan>*
- (2001). *Philippines Poverty Assessment: Main Report*. The World Bank: Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit.
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