



## Examining Stakeholders Collaboration: A Case of Relocating Informal Settlers in the Philippines

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**Abstract:** When to collaborate? Getting heterogeneous social actors to cooperate is a challenge in conducting relocation efforts in the Philippines. Despite the presence of institutional opportunities in harnessing the participation of different stakeholders, collaboration remains an elusive quest. Hence, the primary goal of the study is to explain under what conditions are actors willing to cooperate in providing the informal settlers with decent housing. Through the use of a case study approach in the community of Sta. Cruz Village in Dipolog City, interviews and survey were used to gather the perspectives among the stakeholders involved. Results yield that actors are willing to collaborate if trust is present, use of social norms rather than formal rules, presence of an avenue to discuss issues and the potential outcomes. Also, the efforts of the different stakeholders satisfied the expectations of the beneficiaries according to the survey.

**Key Words:** Collective Action; Collaborative Governance; Stakeholders; Informal Settlers; Philippines

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### *1.1 Background*

The quest of improving the lives of the poor and informal settler families has been challenging most developing countries. Institutions of government failed to fulfil its obligation in addressing the demand for humane settlements. This institutional collapse is often attributed to the use of top-down approach, hierarchical decision making strategies and domination over the relevant stakeholders and the beneficiaries. As a consequence, there are minimal and limited outcomes to relocation efforts aiming the achievement of decent and quality

life among the informal settler families.

Hence, it should be recognized that agencies of the government cannot solely address the problem of housing. It has no monopoly over resources and technical expertise in terms of the scale of the problem. Therefore, cooperation of relevant stakeholders can be an innovative and functional tool. However, consideration has to be made on the underlying conditions to fulfil the process of collaboration and achieve the desired outcomes.

Given these premises, the study embarks on a case study of relocating informal settlers through the synergy of efforts among varied stakeholders in Sta. Cruz Village, City of Dipolog in the Philippines.

This can achieve the primary goal of the research in identifying pieces of underlying conditions for stakeholders to involve themselves in a collaborative process to provide the housing needs of the informal inhabitants of a specific community.

### *1.2 The Idea of Collaboration*

Collective action (Olson, 1965), through the participation of different stakeholders has been gaining prominence as strategic and effective approach to development after witnessing government's failure. Collaboration of formal and informal actors creates an inclusive domain. It can be likened to the levelling of the playing field where power and authority are diffused among actors involved. Sharing of resources and expertise is one of the promises of collaboration since actors in a group generates synergy of efforts to achieve a particular goal.

Feiock (2013) and Ansell and Gash (2009) have developed the logical framework on collaboration among heterogeneous stakeholders. It explains the ingredients of an effective cooperation by the catalyst to make actors decide to be involved in the process of collaboration. It also illustrates the mechanisms suitable to the management of a collaborative group. As a consequence, greater chances of achieving the collaborative desires are ensured.

In concrete terms, most developing countries in the world in general and urban centers in Southeast Asia share sentiments in the Philippines on the issue of increasing informal settlers and the demand for shelters (De Soto, 1989; Roy & AlSayyad, 2004; UNESCAP, 2005; Brandon & Lombardi, 2005).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The research employs a case study research design. In this manner, a profound analysis can be made on a specific real-world phenomenon (Yin, 2013). Qualitative and quantitative data are required to fulfil a case study. These two kinds of data are produced using the tools of focus group discussions and a self administered survey. Treating the data comes with the aid of content analysis and regression analysis on the variables under study.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After generating perspectives from the stakeholders, the following results with specific discussions are produced:

The relocation project initiated by the local government of Dipolog City paved way for the improvement of life conditions among informal settlers. It is driven by the intention to improve the settlement conditions of those families residing along the coastlines of barangays Central and Miputak. Corollary to this goal is the rehabilitation of Dipolog's shoreline and the construction of a boulevard for economic and tourism purposes. Through an executive order issued in 2000, a resettlement plan was created and a steering group was formed composed of different stakeholders. There were two phases of the relocation project. The focus of the first phase is on the acquisition, site development and the transfer of families from barangay Central. The second phase is the transfer of families from barangay Miputak, creation of livelihood activities, completion in providing the required facilities and amenities in the community.

To describe, the interaction of stakeholders involved in Dipolog's relocation project revolves around the important elements of homogeneity among participants, use of informal rules and norms and relationships established out of familiarity. Participants are homogenous in a way that they all reside in the same community. In all stages of the collaborative process to conduct relocation of informal settlers, there has been evidence of commitment among the participants to achieve the goals of resettling families residing along the coastal area.

Keeping in mind the different but complementing motivations in transforming Dipolog City, as well as the charges, which are to transform lives of hundreds of families in the area, that the relocation project entailed, the relationship and interaction among participants has been collegial from the creation of the relocation plan, implementation and sustaining the resettlement community. Stakeholders created mutual interaction in order to deliver their goal in changing lives of informal settlers. During discussions and meetings in crafting the plan, members from different departments were willing to share their expertise.



CESCOD, as a partner NGO, highlighted the real felt needs and wants of the informal settler families that must be given attention by the department heads of Dipolog city local government. The NGO partner has invited donations for the conduct of social preparations without burdening the local government. Sector representatives like the Women's Association are also given the chance to contribute in crafting the housing plan when they voice out the concerns raised by their members, concerns such as the difficulty on the access to facilities and amenities on the relocation.

Even though the representatives of the potential beneficiaries are given opportunities to participate in conceptualizing the relocation plan, there were conflicts and issues raised by the informal settler families. The informal settler families questioned the criteria for family selection, the distance of the relocation site and the assistance to be given. The criteria for family selection are those families who have been affected by typhoons and storm surges. The barangay officials, the social welfare and development office of CESCOD made use of personal relations and approaches like house visits and capacity building which involves developing and strengthening abilities and resources to fast changing Dipolog City in order to explain the intentions of the housing project. Prior to the actual demolition and transfer of families, the different stakeholders agreed among themselves specific tasks and responsibilities to assist the household members. The local government of Dipolog provided transportation, food and financial assistance and materials for the completion of building the houses. CESCOD contributed in the construction materials and conducted seminars on coping mechanisms in the relocation site.

At the stage of managing and sustaining the community and the persistent demands for support by the relocated families, the different stakeholders remained committed. CESCOD mentioned that even at the absence of material gains, it will continue to assist families. To these families improve in their lives can already be an altruistic and fulfilling reward. The beneficiaries have been continuously working hand in hand with the local government of Dipolog, CESCOD and other sectoral organizations to gradually achieve their demands, wants and even desire of getting security of tenure.

Cooperation among stakeholders is achieved in the conduct of relocating informal settler families since a lot of families had access to housing services. Thus the collaboration of the Local Government of Dipolog paved way on attaining their projected outcome. Hence, it is critical to uncover the effects of the relocation process in the lives of the beneficiaries. Following the logic of sampling, there are 125 respondents selected who answered the questionnaires. The following survey results depict the end products of the relocation process.

1) In terms of access to social services, it can be seen that many of the families relocated do not have access to potable water, electricity and health care. Only 20 percent of the total respondents may have access to these basic services. This issue is said to be critical since life condition among households may deteriorate. It can also be argued that the life condition maybe the same as what they experience in their places of origin.

2) About 40 percent of the respondent households said that their houses are built out of bamboo and light materials. Only 30 percent of the households claimed that their houses are built out of cement products. It is clarified by the beneficiaries during the discussion that the local government shall provide them houses built at the minimum with materials made out of cement. This is mainly attributed to the initial desire by all stakeholders involved that house should be build out of cement. Hence, the beneficiaries are asking the local government for further assistance to improve their own houses because what they get is not what they think they deserve since they are only grounding it from the houses they built prior to the relocation.

3) Majority of the respondents would say that they do not have the sense of security in tenure and therefore exercise on their property rights is limited. This issue is attributed to the housing scheme employed by the local government of Dipolog. The households are treated as mere stewards of their houses. The beneficiaries are not granted land titles. The local government owns the land. Hence, most of the respondents may not be willing to improve the structure of their houses due to the absence of security of tenure since they do not really have the right to own their houses.

4) Almost 70% among the respondents would agree that the local government and the non-government organizations did not encounter much problem in relation to one another in the relocation matters. The use of informal and social norms on the criteria for the beneficiaries is the key reasons why familiarity among the participants leads to building trust and confidence among themselves even though they don't have the capacity to own their lands.

5) As one beneficiary claimed, '*Mahirap din po kami ngayon pero umangat ng konti, meron pong pagbabago*'. This claim is made in relation to improvements in living situation are felt. It means to show that there are readily available means of livelihood after the relocation because the relocation site is located at the business district of the City. It can also be added that many of the respondents are able to sustain their income prior to and after the conduct of relocation.

6) Table 1 below shows that source of income and livelihood has improved after the beneficiaries are relocated.

Table 1: Test of Difference on Income Factor

	Uri ng Kabuhayan (type of livelihood)	
	<i>After</i>	<i>Before</i>
Mean	1.623762376	1.693069
Variance	0.537029703	0.634851
Observations	101	101
Pearson Correlation	0.656566547	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	100	
t Stat	-1.094284449	
P(T<=t) one-tail	<b>0.138229532</b>	
t Critical one-tail	1.660234326	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.276459064	
t Critical two-tail	1.983971519	

7) Table 2 below shows that the respondents may have experienced improvements in life condition despite some challenges on accessing basic services and facilities in the relocation site. It is shown in the overall test of difference in table 2 below on life condition that 95 percent of the respondents may be able see significant differences between their lives prior to and after the relocation. Differences may

range from life condition that will be based on the following factors: daily food intake, availability of basic services, health care access, debt management and relationship with neighbourhood

Table 2: Changes in Life Condition

	<i>After</i>	<i>Before</i>
Bilang ng Pamilya na may pinagkakakitaan (households with sources of income)		
Mean	1.584158416	1.594059406
Variance	2.205346535	1.843564356
Observations	101	101
Pearson Correlation	0.852777746	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	100	
t Stat	-0.127411798	
P(T<=t) one-tail	<b>0.449435169</b>	
t Critical one-tail	1.660234326	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.898870339	
t Critical two-tail	1.983971519	

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Despite the challenges and limitations to collaborate, collective efforts can succeed. Each of the participating actors substantially played a major role in harnessing the shortcomings of the others. These conceptual arguments are made real in the collaborative experience of relocating the informal settlers in Sta. Cruz Village in Dipolog City. Each of the agencies, groups and community members involved played an important role. To highlight, stakeholders consider key elements in the process of collaboration which include dialogue, norms of engagement, varying perspectives and material contributions.

The success of the relocation project is attributed to the collaboration of various stakeholders ranging from the City Government of Dipolog, CESCOD, the Sta. Cruz Village Homeowners Association and the Association of Women and to a certain extent the help of the group of the Chinese Commerce and Industry. The collaboration illustrated important elements like the participants motivations, interests, past experiences, capacity to contribute, exchange of information, modes of communication, relationships and





interactions created. Even though these elements were not shown in an egalitarian cooperation among the stakeholders, the leading role of Dipolog City local government was instrumental in steering the elements of collaboration with the other stakeholders to achieve the expected outcomes.

However, there are glaring issues that confronted some of the participating stakeholders which include coordination problems, discussion of issues on the relocation project, succeeding tasks and responsibilities that is to be performed, financial resources and misleading details on the relocation plan during communication. Policy directions can learn from this collaborative experience.

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