
Action Research on the

**Multi-dimensional Vulnerabilities of
Women Workers in the Informal
Sector**

Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research, Inc. Philippines

June 2015

Disclaimer

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed herein are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Asia Monitor Resource Centre.

Acknowledgments

This study was initiated by the Asian Monitor Resource Centre in the interest of promoting women's welfare from the perspective of the Philippines. The report was prepared by Rochelle Porras (Project Coordinator) and Jose Carlos Maningat (Head Researcher). The team worked under the overall guidance and supervision of the Ecumenical Institute for Labor Education and Research, Inc.

Contents

Disclaimer	2
Acknowledgments	2
Background	4
Objectives, outcomes and main outputs of the study	4
Strategy	4
Action Research on the Multi-Dimensional Vulnerabilities of Women Workers in the Informal Sector	5
Introduction	5
1. The Filipino Women Workers	6
1.1. Mapping of women workers in the Philippine economy	6
1.2. Women in the informal sector	9
2. Geopolitical profile of target communities	10
2.1. Sitio San Juan	11
2.2. Hapilan, Tondo, Manila	12
3. Methodology and Survey Results	14
3.1. Baclaran	15
3.2. Tondo	18
4. Focus Group Discussions	20
Conclusion	23

Background

The project presents accounts of how women in the informal sector in two urban communities in Manila make the most of available resources in order to rise above their seemingly disadvantaged situation within the economy. “Kababaihan sa Komunidad Para sa Disenteng Trabaho” is a women empowerment approach that seeks to amplify women workers’ call for decent work through advocacy and leadership training at the community level. It provides a venue where women informal workers can consolidate their voices for regular and decent jobs, for higher wages, and for the scrapping of policies promoting gender-based discrimination at work and in the community.

Objectives, outcomes and main outputs of the study

The project’s overall objective is to help women workers in the informal sector identify and address social, economic, and political vulnerabilities. The consultations with the women in the communities serve as key data gathering instrument and empowerment platform. Through peer-to-peer sharing of life stories and struggles, women workers are enabled to pinpoint common issues and craft common solutions. In the process, conditions for potential organizing among women workers in communities are laid out.

In particular, the action research on the multi-dimensional vulnerabilities of women workers in the informal sector seeks to identify issues affecting informal women workers in the social, economic and political spheres through interviews, focus group discussions and community surveys among select impoverished areas in Metro Manila. Identifying key issues of informal women workers followed by strengthening their organizing and leadership capacity will help improve their economic self-reliance, promote workers’ rights, and expand their participation in the alleviation of poverty.

Strategy

The research process has the end goal of bringing the research back to community with the aim of contributing to the organizing and campaign efforts of women’s groups and community organizations. To obtain an overall grasp of the demography and key issues of the target communities, surveys were administered to two chosen areas in Metro Manila. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to substantiate the initial demographic profile and to come up with a qualitative description of the key issues. Based on the results of the action research, women organizers will be encouraged to draft a specific program for organizing and campaign, which will be carried out beyond the study’s scope and duration.

Finally, advocacy and leadership training will be conducted to encourage women workers to become leaders in the two communities. These leaders will organize a campaign on decent work, among other key issues. The training aims to raise capacities of women workers to identify tactical campaigns, mobilize community support, and to engage key policymakers at the local and national level. Here, the women workers will be oriented on basic campaign strategies, public speaking, propaganda writing, and basic lobbying.

Action Research on the Multi-Dimensional Vulnerabilities of Women Workers in the Informal Sector

Introduction

The Philippine informal sector, broadly defined to include even those non-regular workers in formal employment arrangements, accounts for a major portion of the country's labor force. The sector serves as refuge for workers who lose their jobs or are earning insufficient incomes and must take in additional work to meet the needs of the family. The Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act of 1988 defines informal sector as composed of poor individuals who operate businesses that are very small in scale and not registered with any national government agency, and workers in such enterprises who sell their services in exchange for subsistence wages or other forms of compensation. While official government statistics do not capture the real size of the sector, independent estimates reveal that more and more women are engaged in precarious work. Marasigan and Serrano noted that "although the share of men in precarious work was higher than that of women for the period 2000 to 2010, the overall trend for men was one of gradual decline while that of women was of gradual increase."¹

Women constitute a large portion of the Philippine informal sector and are mostly found in small home businesses, contractual jobs in the manufacturing and service sectors, and other underdeveloped sector of the economy. Based on the gender statistics in 2012, there are around 4.02 million Filipino women who are self-employed while 2.35 million Filipino workers render unpaid family work, mostly in the rural sector. In the "formal" economy, Filipino women are concentrated in the low value added jobs in the manufacturing and wholesale and retail trade sectors, usually as contractual or casual workers. The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) noted that women are more likely to move in and out of the labor force "to balance productive and reproductive work," but more significantly women are prone to suffering meager wages and exploitative work arrangements.²

Under the semi-feudal economy, Filipino families are facing an ever increasing pressure to sustain a living as more and more women enter the labor market under vulnerable conditions. This leads to important questions on the level of women workers' vulnerability. What kinds of jobs do women work on, especially those in urban poor communities? How much do they earn from such jobs? What issues in their community/ workplace do they want to be addressed? By gathering data at the community level, the extent of vulnerability of women workers will be documented.

¹ Serrano M. (2014). "The Rise of Non-standard Employment in Selected ASEAN countries." Jakarta: ASEAN Services Employees Trade Unions Council, p.74

² <http://pcw.gov.ph/wpla/magna-carta-workers-informal-economy>

1. The Filipino Women Workers

1.1. Mapping of women workers in the Philippine economy

Over the years, the labor participation rate of Filipino women workers has slightly improved from 48.1 percent in 1998 to nearly 50 percent in 2012, although the labor participation gender gap remains at nearly 30. In nominal terms, the number of women workers in the labor force increased from 11.14 million in 1998 to 15.8 million in 2012 (an increase of 4.66 million). Employment rate is slightly higher for men than women until 2005, when the Philippine government adopted revised definitions in the labor force survey that significantly cut the number of unemployed.³ This is reflected on the unemployment side, wherein jobless rates were higher for women than men until 2005. It can be assumed that bulk of those excluded from official labor statistics are women.

In nominal terms, the number of employed women increased by 49 percent to 14.75 million during the 1998-2012 period, compared to the 77 percent increase among men during the same period. Employment levels dipped for both sexes during 2000 and slowed down during 2006. Figure 1.1 shows the number of employed individual men and women from 1998 to 2012.

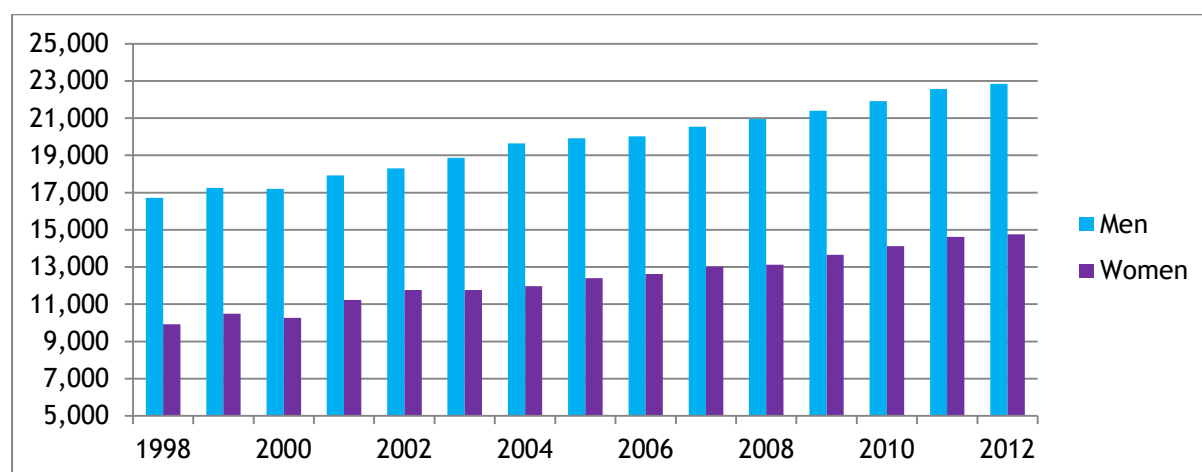


Figure 1.1-1: Employed persons by sex, 1998-2012 (in thousands)

Source of basic data: 2013 Gender Statistics on Labor and Employment

The increase in the employment of female workers is mostly from the wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles, and personal and household goods subsector, coinciding with the very rapid expansion of malls and other commercial enterprises and confirming that women workers mostly compose the informal sector. From 2008 to 2011, women workers in the subsector increased by 14 percent from 3.88 million to 4.43 million. The subsector will be discussed in detail later. In 2012, the subsector’s classification was disaggregated in official statistics to create a separate classification for household goods.

³ The new definition does not count the “discouraged” workers for more than six months as part of the labor force.

Based on the latest gender-based employment statistics by industry (see Table 1.1-1), most Filipino women workers are concentrated in the wholesale and retail trade and in agriculture. Around 4.14 million Filipino women workers are in the wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles subsector, representing 28 percent of the total women employment. The figure is 60.37 percent of the total employment in the subsector, which means that 3 out of 5 workers in wholesale and retail trade are women. In the agriculture sector, there were 2.96 million Filipino women or 20 percent of total women employment during the same year. But agricultural jobs remain dominated by men (72.21 percent) based on conservative official statistics.

Table 1.1-1: Employment of women workers by industry

	14,751	% share to female employment
Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry	2,962	20.08
Fishing	131	0.89
Mining and Quarrying	22	0.15
Manufacturing	1,385	9.39
Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	17	0.12
Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	14	0.09
Construction	47	0.32
Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	4,144	28.09
Transportation and Storage	87	0.59
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	925	6.27
Information and Communication	124	0.84
Financial and Insurance Activities	248	1.68
Real Estate Activities	93	0.63
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	86	0.58
Administrative and Support Service Activities	314	2.13
Public Administration and Defense; Compulsory Social Security	811	5.50
Education	883	5.99
Human Health and Social Work Activities	304	2.06
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	111	0.75
Other Service Activities	1,525	10.34
Activities of Households as Employers; Undifferentiated Goods and Services-Producing Activities of Households for Own Use	515	3.49

Source: 2012 Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics

A closer look at Figure 1.1-2 indicates that undifferentiated goods and service-producing activities of households for own use which is part of informal economic activities, remain in the domain of women (90.99 of total employed are women). Other economic areas with relatively high female employment are service activities (70.96 percent), education (73.58 percent), accommodation and food service activities (58.88 percent), human health and social work activities (69.41 percent) and financial and insurance activities (56.75 percent).

By major occupation groups, men dominate the figures (7.35 million) as of 2012. One in every three Filipino women workers is labourer, contributing to the unskilled workers (5.19 million) of 2012. There are more female professionals (1.23 million or 68 percent of the total) than male professionals (578,000 or 32 percent). Women also account for 1.3 million of

clerical jobs (63 percent). However, top-level positions remain in the domain of men (52.44 percent) albeit a small margin.

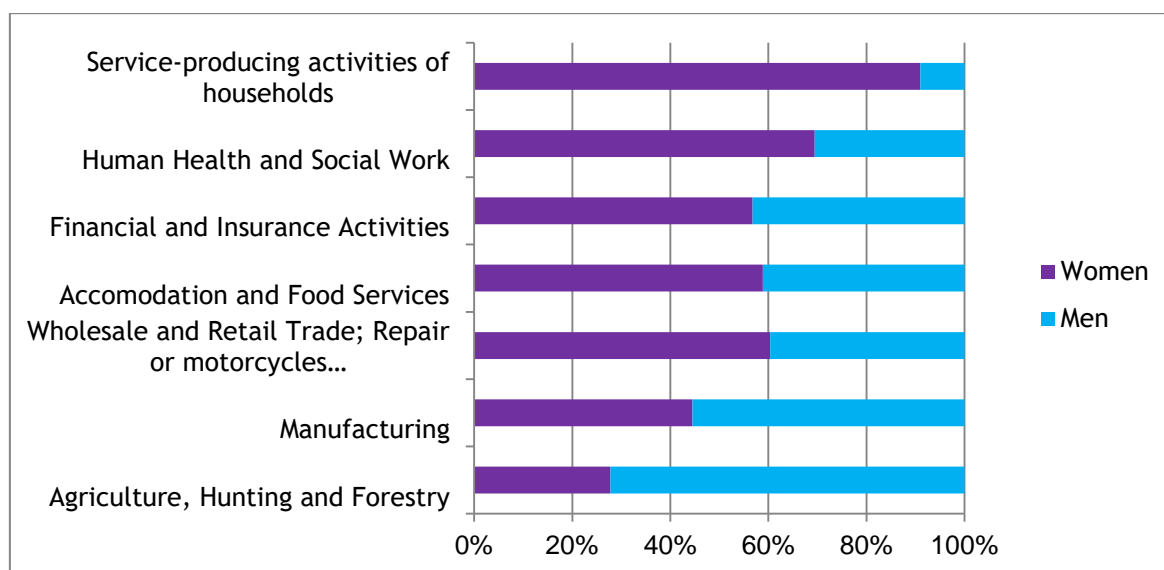


Figure 1.1-2: Gender distribution in major industry groups

Source of basic data: 2013 Gender Statistics on Labor and Employment

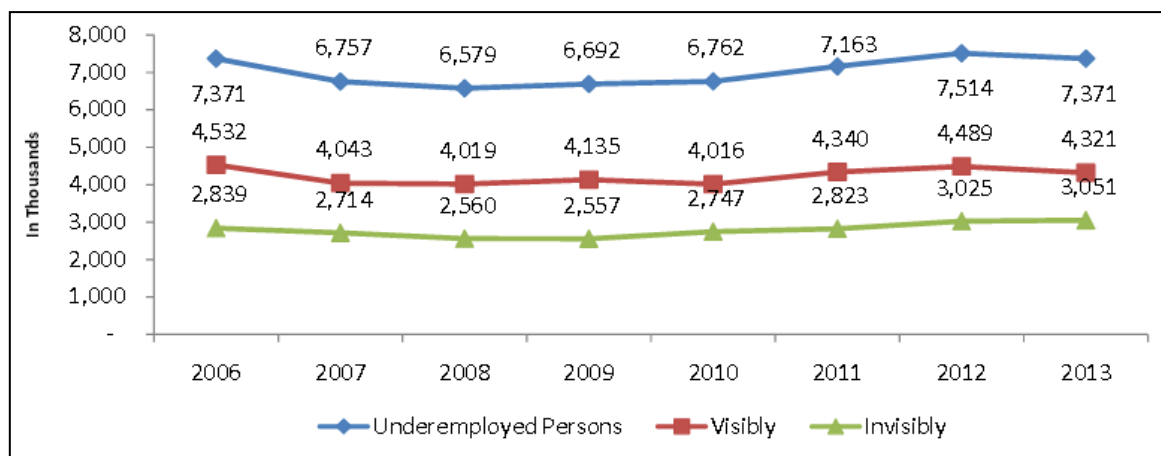


Figure 1.1-3: Underemployment in the Philippines (2006-2013)

Source of basic data: 2013 Gender Statistics on Labor and Employment

In terms of underemployment, the trend that men are more likely to be underemployed has not changed since 1998. As of 2012, there are 2.39 million underemployed women (16.2 percent) compared to 5.13 million underemployed Filipino men (22.4 percent). According to the Bureau of Labor and Employment Statistics – Department of Labor and Employment (BLES-DOLE), underemployment in the Philippines is generally increasing by an average of

0.1 percent annually with its peak in 2012 for the period 2006 to 2013.⁴ These figures highlight an increasing number of workers who are employed and working for at least 40 hours a week, but are seeking additional work to augment their income.

The continuous increase of underemployment in the country is bolstered by contractualization and other labor flexibilization schemes that further press down wages. Contractualization is allowed under DOLE's Department Order 18-02, allowing various subcontracting arrangements. Based on the government's conservative estimate, there are 1.15 million non-regular workers as of 2012, more than half of which are contractual workers.⁵ The rest are casual workers, probationary workers, seasonal workers, and apprentices/ learners. The survey however does not include a gender-based breakdown of data on non-regular workers.

Meanwhile, on the unemployment side, the jobless rate is higher for men than women until 2005 when the definitions in the official labor statistics were modified. In 2012, there were over 1 million unemployed women (6.7 percent) while there were 1.77 million unemployed men (7.2 percent). These figures are conservative given that jobless workers, especially discouraged workers over a long period (who are mostly women) are likely to be not included in the statistics. Elsewhere in Southeast Asia, women are more likely to be unemployed (5.1 percent) than men (4.4 percent) according to estimates by the International Labor Organization (ILO).⁶

1.2. Women in the informal sector

ILO defines informal sector as private unincorporated enterprises that are unregistered or small in terms of the number of employed persons. An "unincorporated enterprise" lacks legal entity independently of its owner(s). Subsequently, informal employment pertains to one or more of the following: (a) own-account workers and employers employed in their own informal enterprises; (b) members of informal producers' cooperatives (not established as legal entities), if any; (c) own-account workers producing goods exclusively for own final use by their household (if considered employed given that the production comprises an important contribution to the total household consumption and is included in the national definition of employment); (d) contributing family workers in formal or informal enterprises; and (e) employees holding informal jobs in formal enterprises, informal enterprises, or as paid domestic workers employed by households. In line with the international definition, countries for which data are shown, define employees holding informal jobs as employees not covered by social security as employed persons, or as employees not entitled to other employment benefits.⁷

⁴Labstat Vol. 18 No. 20, August 2014 Trends and Profile of the Underemployed from http://www.bles.dole.gov.ph/PUBLICATIONS/LABSTAT%20UPDATES/vol18_20.pdf

⁵ Based on the 2012 BLES Integrated Survey

⁶ <http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/business/01/24/12/pinoy-men-more-likely-be-unemployed-women-ilo>

⁷ As adopted by the ILO International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) series of 1993 and 2003 respectively

Six in every ten underemployed worked for less than 40 hours in a week.⁸ By class of worker, women account for only 37 percent (8 million) of total wage and salary workers in the Philippines as of 2012. Of this figure, 1.68 million work for private households as helpers often with compensation below the minimum wage while 4.76 million work for private establishments. Meanwhile, 4 million Filipino female workers are self-employed, usually in home businesses (“sari-sari” stores), home-based work for garments and shoemakers, direct selling and personal services. According to Frianeza, home-based subcontracting is a rapidly increasing informal work: “Recruited in the circuits of homeworkers are mostly women who are commissioned to do productive work in their own homes. They are engaged in various low-paying and back-breaking production work in garments, handicraft, shoes and toy manufacturing; food processing; metal craft, leather craft and furniture making.”⁹

Another 2.35 million render unpaid family work mostly in the rural sector, although the estimate is still conservative. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) notes that “though not counted in official statistics, women are active economic actors such as landless workers, traders of agricultural and fishery products, and engaged in micro-manufacturing enterprises.”¹⁰ Women do almost all kinds of labor in agriculture from ploughing, care of seedlings, weeding and harvesting. From 1999 to 2003, women's participation was significant in planting/transplanting, manual weeding, care of crops and harvesting. Women were least involved in land preparation and furrowing. In palay farming, about 35 percent to 49 percent of the farming households hired women workers in pulling and bundling of seedlings, and in planting and harvesting activities. Women workers were least employed in coconut farming, particularly in the removal of coconut meat.¹¹

The Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) noted that while the informal sector accounts for around 61 percent of the country gross domestic product (in 2006), workers in the sector “do not receive sufficient social protection and benefits, and their invisibility in the country's economy causes lack of access to economic opportunities.” It added that informal women workers are at “high risk in times of illness, disability, work injury, maternity, unemployment and old age.”¹²

2. Geopolitical profile of target communities

The National Capital Region (NCR) is the most populous region and busiest metropolitan area of the country. It is also the center of financial, commercial and industrial, with the seat of government (located in Manila, the capital city of the Philippines, and is the second largest city in the country). The region is composed of the cities of Caloocan, Las Piñas, Makati, Malabon, Mandaluyong, Marikina, Muntinlupa, Navotas, Parañaque, Pasay, Pasig, Quezon City, San Juan, Taguig, and Valenzuela, and the Municipality of Pateros, in an area of approximately 638.55 square kilometers. The 2010 census of National Statistics Office,

⁸ LABSTAT Updates Vol. 18 No. 33 Trends And Profile Of The Visibly And Invisibly Underemployed 2006 - 2013

⁹ Frianeza, Maybelle. Women in the Informal Sector in the Philippines: A Situationer

¹⁰ <http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/ae946e/ae946e03.htm>

¹¹ Bureau of Agricultural Statistics

¹² http://pcw.gov.ph/sites/default/files/documents/laws/wpla/2013/October/webmaster/magna_carta_workers_informal_economy.pdf

under the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) show that NCR had a population of 11,855,975, equivalent to 13 percent of the national population.

2.1. *Sitio San Juan*

One of these cities, Parañaque, located at the Southern portion of Metro Manila, is the third largest in terms of land area. It has sixteen (16) barangays with two (2) distinct districts. Sitio San Juan, one of the two local areas that the research focuses on, is situated in Baclaran (63.72 hectares of land area), a barangay with a population of 23,120.¹³ It is the second most densely populated barangay in its city with about 363 persons per hectare.

The total population of 15 years old and over in Parañaque is estimated at 459,658 persons but only 63.7 percent or 292,802 are in the labor force or economically active persons and those not economically active persons (house-keepers, students, aged and others) are 36.3 percent or 166,856 persons. The employed labor force is composed of 55.1 percent or 144,550 male and 44.9 percent or 117,796 females. On the other hand, unemployed labor force is 44.9 percent or 13,673 males and 55.1 percent or 16,778 females. Underemployment rate is 15.2 percent with a total of 39,877 person underemployed. There are 23,528 males and 16,350 females underemployed.¹⁴

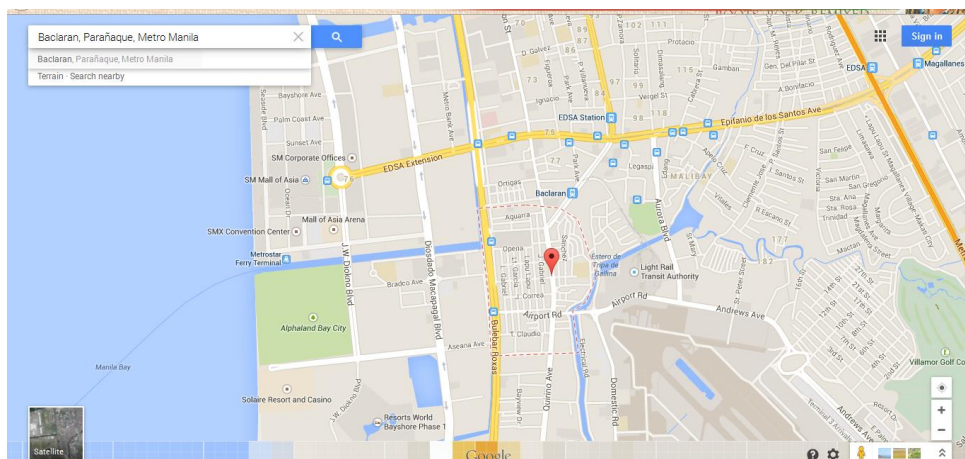
Table 2.1-1: Employment data in the City of Parañaque, 2013

Age Group Both Gender	In The Labor Force		Underemployed
	Employed	Unemployed	
15 - 19	27,156	4,955	4,130
20 - 24	40,638	8,951	6,180
25 - 29	44,732	5,168	6,800
30 - 34	40,298	3,929	6,128
35 - 39	31,614	2,022	4,808
40 - 44	24,975	1,614	3,786
45 - 49	19,335	1,162	2,939
50 - 54	13,538	709	2,058
55 - 59	9,051	642	1,372
60 - 64	5,325	570	809
65 - over	5,689	729	867
Total	262,351	30,451	39,877

Figure 2.1-1: Location of Sitio San Juan, Baclaran, Manila

¹³ 2013 Population Projection of the Research and Statistics Division, Parañaque City Planning and Development Coordinators Office

¹⁴ 2013 Population Projection of the Research and Statistics Division, Parañaque City Planning and Development Coordinators Office



The barangay of Baclaran is well known for its flea markets (“tiangges”) along the road that sell everything from electronic gadgets to clothes and bags. The shops are open every day except for Wednesday, which is the day when most people in the area hear mass at the Baclaran Church. The area also has a sizeable public market where retailers and wholesalers do their business. The various informal economic activities serve as livelihood of the residents. Particularly, Sitio San Juan is home to many informal women workers who try to earn a living either through these “tiangges” or by finding temporary jobs in surrounding malls.

2.2. Hapilan, Tondo, Manila

Consequently, another local area chosen for the research is Hapilan, located in Tondo, Manila. Manila has a total population of 1,652,171 (13.94 percent of NCR population, using the PSA 2010 Census of Population and Housing) and is divided sixteen areas: Binondo, Ermita, Intramuros, Malate, Paco, Pandacan, Port Area, Quiapo, Sampaloc, San Andres, San Miguel, San Nicolas, Santa Ana, Santa Cruz, Santa Mesa and Tondo.¹⁵ Females accounted for 51percent while males comprised 49percent of the total population. These figures resulted in a sex ratio of 96 males for every 100 females. The young dependents (0 to 14 years) comprised 28.5 percent of the household population while the old dependents (65 years and over) have a total share of 3.7 percent. The working-age population (15 to 64 years) accounted for the largest share, which is 67.8 percent of the total population. Among the districts comprising the City of Manila, Tondo was the most populous with a population size making up 628,000 or 38 percent of the total population of the city.

Now, many residents face poverty and increasing population living in slum areas. An estimated 4 million (37 percent of the total population of Metro Manila) live in slum areas according to PSA’s 2006 data. In particular, Barangay 105 Hapilan has 25,844 (PSA 2010 Census of Population and Housing) with many residents living under bridges and along polluted creeks.

¹⁵ For complete population census, you may refer to the 2010 Census of the National Capital Region http://web0.psa.gov.ph/old/data/sectordata/2010/2010CPH_ncr.pdf

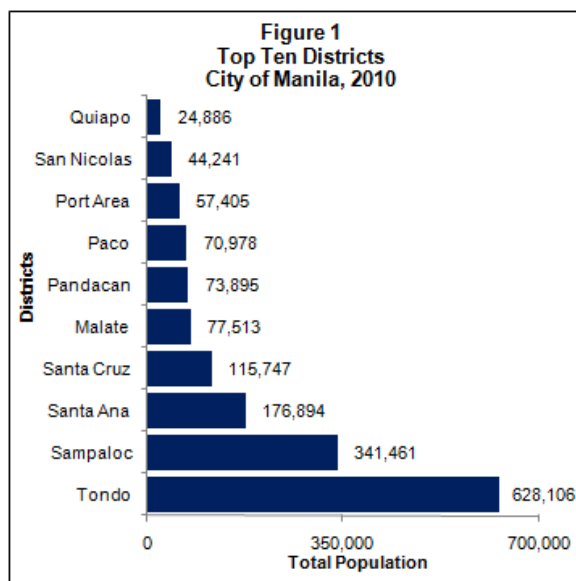


Figure 2.2-1: Population data in the City of Manila, 2010

Hapilan belongs to Tondo known for being one of the most densely populated, poorest and most underdeveloped areas of the country. Hapilan is a Visayan word for “tapunan” or dump site and it is alternatively called Happyland after Gawad Kalinga, a Philippine-based organization that aims to end poverty by building houses and providing livelihood for the poor worked on a project in the area. Hapilan is now where residents of the once notorious Smoky Mountain reside. Smoky Mountain, a large landfill of over two million metric tons of waste that operated for more than four decades may have closed but the poverty-stricken lives it used to house still looms.

A survey conducted by the Canossa Health and Social Center (CHSC) in 2004 shows that 67.8 percent of the residents here peel garlic for a living. The same survey shows 99 percent of the community’s population earn less than the minimum wage. More than a decade after, many residents still peel garlic for a living. Women in Hapilan also work as vendors, helpers, and some are engage in a variety of laundry duties. A small number earn their living though contractual and part-time jobs.

There are some small sari-sari (variety) stores operated mostly by women. Most of the residents buy or credit their daily needs from these stores. The common arrangement for credit is to pay the store owner by the end of the week. These sari-sari stores are attached to their homes which enables them to work and earn, and at the same time monitor daily household chores.

Figure 2.2-2: Three generations of sari-sari store owners in Hapilan, Tondo.

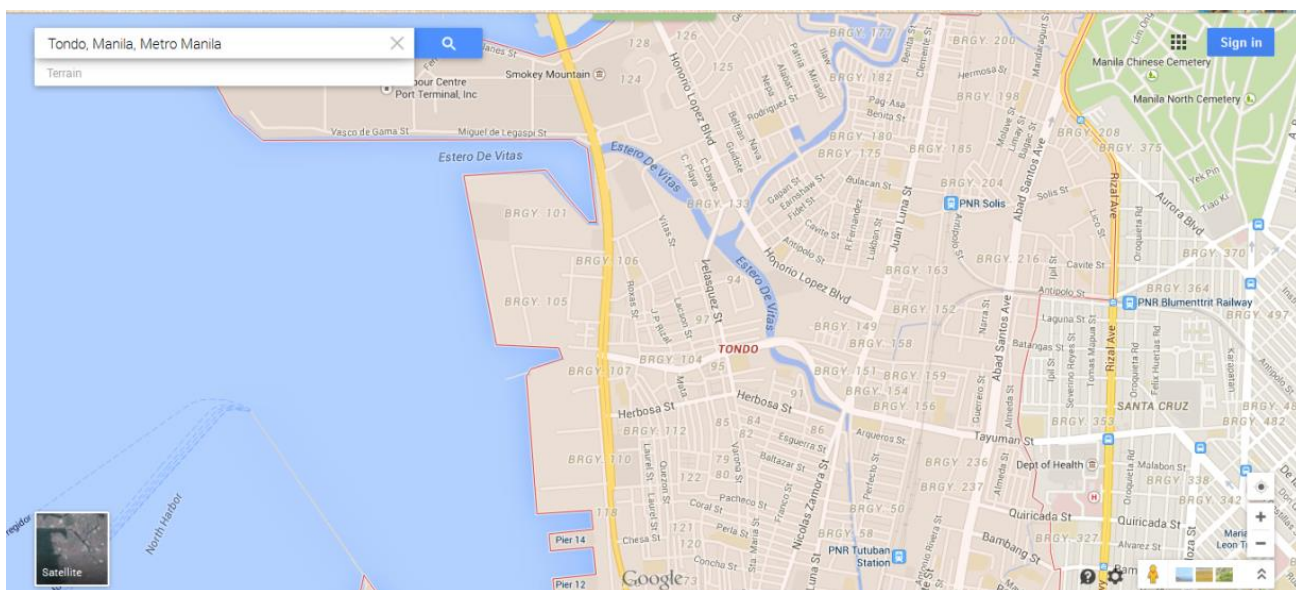


Figure 2.2-3: Location of Hapilan, Tondo, Manila

3. Methodology and Survey Results

For this particular part of the project, surveys were administered to two chosen areas in Metro Manila based on the initial desk research (Sitio San Juan and Hapilan). This is in order to obtain an overall grasp of the demography and key issues of the target communities, as abovementioned. The questionnaire generated was pre-tested a few times in one community. Comments and suggestions from the participants in the pre-test were

incorporated in the final version of the questionnaire (see Annex 1), used in the two specified communities. Debriefings were done after survey administration.

Moreover, focus group discussions (FGDs) were used to substantiate the initial demographic profile and to come up with a qualitative description of the key issues. Based on the results of the action research, women organizers will be encouraged to draft a specific program for organizing and campaign, which will be carried out beyond the study's scope and duration.

3.1. Baclaran

Profile of respondents

Table 3.1-1 below shows the ages and civil status of women randomly surveyed for the research. Out of the 98 respondents in Baclaran, 45 are aged 36-50 (45.9 percent), while 22 are aged 26-35 (22.4 percent). Only 12 belong to the 18-25 years old age bracket (12.2 percent). Fourteen respondents meanwhile are aged 51 and older (14.2 percent). More than half (55.1 percent) of the respondents are married while the remaining 31.6 percent are single. Those who live with their partners but are not married account for 9.2 percent of the total respondents. Based on the data, the majority of the informal women workers surveyed in Sitio San Juan, Baclaran are between 36-50 years old and married. Most households in depressed communities do not have sufficient income. Married women are prompted by necessity to work in order to provide extra income to the household even if the husband is also working.

Table 3.1-1: Distribution of respondents based on age and civil status from Sitio San Juan, 2014

AGE OF RESPONDENTS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-17	5	5.1	5.1	5.1
	18-25	12	12.2	12.2	17.3
	26-35	22	22.4	22.4	39.8
	36-50	45	45.9	45.9	85.7
	51-60	7	7.1	7.1	92.9
	61-older	7	7.1	7.1	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	

CIVIL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	31	31.6	31.6	31.6
	Married	54	55.1	55.1	86.7
	Live-in	9	9.2	9.2	95.9
	Widowed	4	4.1	4.1	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	

Employment

In terms of employment, 28 out of the total female community respondents are jobless (28.6 percent) while the rest (71.4 percent) are employed under various schemes. The 58 self-

employed women (59.2 percent) are in different ventures. Most of them are “sari-sari”¹⁶ store owners, sidewalk vendors (of drinks and snacks), on-call caregivers, promodisers, direct-sellers, and laundry-women. Various determinants have led to the respondent’s choice of self-employment which will be discussed later. Meanwhile, the rest are wage and salary workers.

Table 3.1-2: Employment of respondents from Sitio San Juan, 2014

EMPLOYMENT OF RESPONDENTS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Regular	5	5.1	5.1	5.1
	Trainee/ Probationary	1	1.0	1.0	6.1
	Casual/ contractual	6	6.1	6.1	12.2
	Self-employed	58	59.2	59.2	71.4
	Unemployed	28	28.6	28.6	100.0
	Total	98	100.0	100.0	

Income

Out of the total respondents, 20 earn below P3,000 per month (20.4 percent), most of whom are self-employed. Meanwhile 13 of the respondents (13.3 percent) earn somewhere between P3,001 – P5,000 per month, which still is far from the computed monthly minimum wage of around P11,184 (\$251.94 at an exchange rate of \$1=P44.39¹⁷). Nearly half of the respondents either declined to disclose their income level or is without any income source. Only 2 respondents say they earn between P10,001 – P13,000 per month. The frequency of income varies as well. Some earn daily (i.e., sari-sari store and carinderia owners, vendors, helpers, and garbage collectors). Others earn weekly (laundry-women, promodisers) and the rest like some of the housekeepers earn bi-monthly depending on the specific nature of their jobs. Table 3.1-3a and 3.1-3b show the respondents’ income distribution in relation to their employment status.

Table 3.1-3a: Income of respondents from Sitio San Juan, 2014

INCOME OF RESPONDENTS					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 3,000	20	20.4	39.2	39.2
	3,001-5,000	13	13.3	25.5	64.7
	5,001-8,000	8	8.2	15.7	80.4
	8,001-10,000	5	5.1	9.8	90.2
	10,001-13,000	2	2.0	3.9	94.1
	13,001 and above	3	3.1	5.9	100.0
	Total	51	52.0	100.0	
Missing	System	47	48.0		
Total		98	100.0		

Table 3.1-3b: Employment Status-Income Crosstabulation from Sitio San Juan, 2014

¹⁶ Sari-sari stores are small convenience or variety stores, located almost anywhere in the Philippines. Following the Filipino concept of retail, partly due to the limitation of minimum wage, people can buy goods in smaller units or “tingi” from sari-sari stores. A great number of sari-sari are undocumented and unregistered.

¹⁷ The exchange rate of \$1=P44.39 (average for 2014) is used throughout the research (<http://www.nscb.gov.ph/stats/pesodollar.asp>)

EMPLOYMENT STATUS-INCOME CROSSTABLATION

	Income						Total
	Below 3,000	3,001-5,000	5,001-8,000	8,001-10,000	10,001-13,000	13,001 and above	
Regular	0	0	2	2	0	1	5
Trainee/ Probationary	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Casual/ contractual	1	3	1	0	1	0	6
Self-employed	19	10	4	2	1	2	38
Total	20	13	8	4	2	3	50

Relevant issues

Apart from inadequate income and lack of security of tenure, informal women workers also experience several more issues within their communities, contributing to their present condition as informal workers. Considering that they live in poor urban areas, they are more exposed to security, safety and health hazards within the confines of their communities. Based on the FGDs, the five relevant community issues include low wages, contractualization, sexual harrassment, lack of job opportunities and threats of demolition of their community. The results of the ranking of issues can be understood in the context of the labor market composition in the community, wherein 4 out of 5 are either self-employed or unemployed. Table 3.1-4 below tabulates these issues necessary to be addressed according to the total number of respondents.

Table 3.1-4: Issues raised in the community affecting informal workers

Issues	Percent of total respondents
Lack of jobs	70.41
Low wages	42.86
Demolition	38.78
Sexual harassment	37.76
Contractualization	30.61

Of the five identified issues, lack of jobs was deemed the most necessary to be solved (70.41 percent). Following lack of jobs, 42.86 percent of the total respondents agree that low wages is also a key issue. Meanwhile, those who said that demolition and sexual harassment are key issues account for 38.78 percent and 37.76 percent, respectively. Only 30.61 percent said contractualization should be addressed as key problem. Threats of demolition of their community are another issue that the respondents are worried about. The community is categorized as illegal settlers by the government as they allegedly either occupy idled public land which is now being eyed for a new infrastructure project.

Figure 3.1-1. Residents protest against impending demolition in 2012 (Bulatlat.com)



Sexual harassment is also a concern, although only 37.76 percent of respondents said it is a key issue. Finally, contractualization is another issue that the respondents want to be addressed. Contractualization, in its many forms, is essentially the hiring of workers in short-term agreements whether fixed or not. Under the Labor Code (1989), employers are not mandated to provide contractual workers any, let alone same, benefits that regular workers do. For instance, contractual women workers do not enjoy the benefits of maternity leave. Respondents attest that contractualization have also made it easier for employers to kick them out of their jobs if they are found to be pregnant, using their short-term employment as grounds.

3.2. Tondo

Profile of respondents

Table 3.2-1 below shows the ages and civil status of women randomly surveyed for the research in Hapilan, Tondo. Out of the 99 respondents, 40 are aged 36-50 (40.4 percent), nearly the same as the number in Sitio San Juan, Baclaran. Meanwhile, 32 respondents are aged 26-35 (32.3 percent). Sixteen are between 18-25 years old age bracket (16.2 percent). There are 10 respondents aged 51 and older (10.1 percent). There is one respondent that is a minor. In terms of civil status, majority or 76 of the total respondents (76.8 percent) are married.

Table 3.2-1: Distribution of respondents based on age and civil status from Hapilan, 2014

		AGE OF RESPONDENTS			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	15-17	1	1.0	1.0	1.0
	18-25	16	16.2	16.2	17.2
	26-35	32	32.3	32.3	49.5
	36-50	40	40.4	40.4	89.9
	51-60	10	10.1	10.1	100.0
	Total	99	100.0	100.0	

CIVIL STATUS OF RESPONDENTS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Single	16	16.2	16.2	16.2
	Married	76	76.8	76.8	92.9
	Live-in	6	6.1	6.1	99.0
	Widowed	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	99	100.0	100.0	

Employment

In terms of employment, 93 out of the total 99 women respondents are informal workers (93.9 percent) while the 6 women (6.1 percent) are employed under various schemes of casual jobs. Most of the women earn by peeling garlic brought to them by various restaurant owners within and outside of Metro Manila. Garlic peelers earn as low as P15 per kilo to P50 or P60 per sack (\$1.13 to \$1.35 per sack) depending on the agreement. It takes about a minute to peel 10-15 cloves, and about a day to fill a single sack. Some of the women have sore skins and scalded hands from peeling garlic over time. Meanwhile, the minority of the women surveyed do laundry while others maintain a small sari-sari store.

Table 3.2-2: Employment of respondents from Hapilan, 2014

EMPLOYMENT OF RESPONDENTS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	6	6.1	6.1	6.1
	No	93	93.9	93.9	100.0
	Total	99	100.0	100.0	

Income

Out of the total 99 respondents, 50 earn below P3,000 per month (50.5 percent), most of whom are informal workers. Meanwhile, 18 of the respondents (18.2 percent) earn somewhere between P3,001 – P5,000 per month, and similarly to Sitio San Juan, still is far from the computed monthly minimum wage. Three respondents say they earn between P5,001 – P8,000 monthly. Only 1 respondent say she earn between P10,001 – P13,000 per month. The remaining 27 respondents did not disclose their income level or are without any income source. The frequency of income varies as well, similar to Sitio San Juan. Some earn daily (i.e., garlic peeling). Others earn weekly (laundry-women) and the rest like some of the housekeepers earn bi-monthly depending on the specific nature of their jobs. Table 3.2-3 show the respondents’ income.

Table 3.2-3: Income of respondents from Hapilan, 2014

INCOME OF RESPONDENTS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Below 3,000	50	50.5	69.4	69.4
	3,001-5,000	18	18.2	25.0	94.4
	5,001-8,000	3	3.0	4.2	98.6
	8,001-10,000	1	1.0	1.4	100.0
	Total	72	72.7	100.0	

Missing	System	27	27.3		
Total		99	100.0		

Relevant issues

Hapilan, Tondo is another community that faces inadequate income, lack of security of tenure, and the fact that informal women workers also experience several more issues within their communities.

Based on the survey conducted, 93 out of the 99 respondents (93.9 percent) are not members of any organization in the community. Same survey brought the top community issue necessary to be addressed, according to the total number of respondents. This top issue is low wages according to 70 women respondents (70.7 percent). Another key issue identified by 61 of the total respondents is rampant contractualization (61.60 percent). Meanwhile, 47 respondents (47.5 percent) say sexual harassment must be solved first and another 47 respondents (47.5 percent) say that it crucial to solve lack of jobs. The issue of demolition appeared 47 times (47.5 percent) as well.

Table 3.2-4: Issues raised in the community affecting informal workers

Issues	Percent of total respondents
Low wages	70.70
Contractualization	61.60
Sexual Harassment	47.50
Lack of jobs	47.55
Demolition	47.55

Respondents also say that sexual harassment must be addressed. Unfortunately, the researchers are not able to get substantial background on the cases of sexual harassment in the community.

Lack of job opportunities remain as an obstacle for the women of Hapilan to be involved in decent work. Considering also the prejudice of employers towards one’s educational attainment, they continue to struggle to find employment that may help them get out of poverty. In fact, the survey showed that only 6 of the 99 women (6.1 percent) are employed but, they are employed under various schemes of casual or part-time jobs.

Finally, threats of demolition of their community continue to be an issue in Hapilan. The area wherein the community flourishes was meant to only be temporary housing for the informal settlers of the closed dump site, Smokey Mountain. Temporary thus mean that anytime, the scaffoldings, tarpaulins, and truck tires the residents piled and built to serve as their homes can actually be taken away from them anytime, and might leave them homeless.

4. Focus Group Discussions

Kryzelle and Rose are both 22-year olds and have been contractual women workers for years. Kryzelle is a staff for shoppiness.com, doing multi-level jobs in the customer service and finance-accounting. She was hired July of 2014 with a two-year contract and gross monthly salary of P15,000 (\$337.91). She previously was engaged as a contractual worker in 2GO (a courier company), Jollibee (the leading fast-food chain in the Philippines, and

Chowking (another fast-food chain, a wholly owned subsidiary of Jollibee). Kryzelle is single and her income serves as her modest contribution to her parents and younger siblings' earnings for their household.

Rose is an on-call Brand Ambassador 2 during events. Her job also varies depending on the immediate requirement of the company she works for (Coca-cola). Sometimes, she pastes stickers on Coke bottles. Other times, she convinces potential customers to buy the actual products, usually, when she takes on a job of being Brand Ambassador 3. As Brand Ambassador 2, she earns about P850 per day of an event (just a little above \$19). As BA 3, she earns P1,000 (\$22.52). There are days when she would come to work as marshal earning lower than usual: about P750 a day (\$16.90) or as a product sampler earning the daily minimum wage of P481 (\$10.84). If the event is not within Baclaran, her place of residence, she has to shell out extra money for travel fare. She will not be reimbursed for it. Whatever Rose earns, she divides earnestly for herself and her child. Her husband, who works abroad, and her mother also chip in for household expenses.

Bong, the community organizer who connected the research team to Kryzelle and Rose informed the researchers of the impending demolition. The residents are quite reluctant to relocate; they are being forced to transfer to a remote town in General Trias, Cavite. According to Bong, less than 10 families voluntarily demolished their houses. Some of them have returned to Sitio San Juan. This is the common plight of many Filipinos living in urban poor communities and Bong's familiarity with such encounters shows through.

It was during the martial law in the Philippines that a huge fire charred a large portion of Baclaran. Bong and his family were one of the first people to settle in the desolate area. Migrants from provinces outside Metro Manila also arrived and built their shelters in many vacant lots and idle properties. Bong notes that there is a significant Muslim¹⁸ population in Sitio San Juan. In fact, there was once a mosque in Baclaran called the Rajah Sulayman Grand Mosque has since closed in 2013 due to lack of legal land rights and road widening projects in the barangay. Prior to that, the demolition of the residents of about 300 Muslims in 2009 would now be known as one of the most violent demolition undertaken by the government against Muslim residents living around the mosque. The mosque was said to be surrounded by more than 5,000 Muslim residents. Consequently, Bong estimates that nearly half of the population in Baclaran are Muslims.

Struggling to get out of poverty as well, the Muslims earn their living by being side walk vendors beneath train stations. Most of them pay a whopping P30,000 (\$675.82) for the space they are occupying plus daily fees to the barangay office because they do not have a legitimate business permit to operate. The complex nature of securing a business permit brought many small businesses such as sari-sari stores and retail stalls in what is called the underground economy, catering to the day-to-day needs of the urban poor communities. Kryzelle, Rose and Bong note that Muslims in their area are industrious and hardworking. Although admittedly, their possession of small guns have caused grave concerns in terms of safety and security in their residence.

¹⁸ The once dominant Philippine Muslims became known as cultural communities from the southern part of the country.

As poverty persists, many struggle to live daily, engaging in whatever job that pays. Apart from safety and security, economical problems continue to degrade the lives of thousands of urban poor. Heads of the families remain to be not employed in the formal sector in Sitio San Juan (Paranaque City, of which Sitio San Juan belongs to, has an unemployment rate of 11.6 percent using Table 2.1-1: Employment data in the City of Parañaque, 2013) and at the same time, the women take on a dual-role in the household.

Nanay Annie, Nanay Ignacia, and Nanay Gemma are two of many mothers from Hapilan who get their daily earnings from collecting garbage (*namumulasi*). Nanay Annie's biggest earning as a *namumulasi* in a day amounts only to P200 (\$4.51). She picks mineral water and other plastic bottles, cartons, and paper products such as paper cups from piles of garbage in the streets. Oftentimes, Nanay Annie and her children would wait for fast-food restaurants around Manila to close so that they could ask for the garbage. She shares that those in Quiapo are the most difficult. The locality strictly prohibits rummaging the garbage. In order to get more areas covered and for her and her children to move faster, she also rents a side car¹⁹ which costs her P50 per day (\$1.13), almost reducing much of what she would earned after selling her collection to null.



Figure 4-1: “*Namumulasi*”. A man from Hapilan sorts the PETE bottles he and his wife collected for the day. His wife went to the junk shop to sell the first batch of PETE bottles they sifted earlier.

She sells the collected recyclable materials to the nearby junkshop. She keeps her eye on mineral water bottles as these cost more when sold to the junkshop (P13 per kilo or about 13 US centavos per pound). Ideally, the junkshops would recycle the PETE bottles through melting and molding processes and resell these to bottling companies. Nanay Annie reveals that junkshops nowadays would only wash the bottles! That is why they often look for whole bottles or ask consumers to give them the bottles immediately after consuming its contents. Selling solid steel to junkshops is a more favorable option for Nanay Annie as it costs a bit higher: P18 per kilo of steel (\$0.40 per kilo or less than 20 US centavos per pound).

¹⁹ A bicycle with a passenger cabin on the side.

Apart from *pamumulasi*, residents of Hapilan peel garlic for a living. Garlic-peeling is a wearisome task that involves the whole family. Usually, the peeler receives P60 per day of peeling or per sack of peeled garlic. There are no fixed terms in the business of peeling garlic. In addition, the peeler spends P15 (37 US centavos) more for water to soak the cloves in order to prevent spoiling them and/or to shield the peeler from its pungent smell. Nanay Annie expresses the levels of pains she is under from peeling for hours: extreme back pain and headaches. There are times when she and her family are not able to sleep because the garlic will be delivered to them at 3 in the afternoon and will be collected on or before 9 in the morning the following day. All these work will enable Nanay Annie to buy half a kilo of rice for her entire family for the day.

Meanwhile, Nanay Ignacia, also a garlic-peeler earns only P4 per kilo of garlic peeled (less than 10 US centavos). If she finishes 10 kilograms, she would buy half a kilo of rice and make *lugaw*²⁰ out of it. Nanay Gemma also peels garlic and shares the same soreness Nanay Annie experiences. Nanay Gemma’s husband is also an informal worker who sells *gulaman*²¹ daily. Oftentimes, they loan money to serve as their capital to buy the gelatine from the market. If they do not remit the payment by the end of the day, they loaner would put interest atop the original amount to be paid—a vicious cycle that brings many poor Filipinos buried in debt.

Nanay Annie, Nanay Gemma and Nanay Ignacia all attest that there are cases of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and crimes in their residence. They are also aware that drug users and pushers roam around. Thieves are rampant and they steal any thing and every thing including slippers and plastic basins. Nanay Gemma’s side car wheel was stolen a few days before the FGD.



Figure 4-2: A side car parked in Hapilan



Figure 4-3: A mother in Hapilan peels garlic and sell them for as low as P60 per sack.

²⁰ Lugaw is loosely translated to porridge and in this case, the porridge has no ingredients other than milled-rice cooked in water and soften until edible.

²¹ Sweetened artificial juices with gelatin (*gulaman*).

Conclusion

The study used the communities of Sitio San Juan in Baclaran and Hapilan, Tondo in Manila to describe and analyze the situation of informal women workers in urban poor communities. Both communities can be classified as within the most depressed areas in Metro Manila, and are both facing the threat of demolition. Out of the total 197 respondents surveyed in both Sitio San Juan and Hapilan, 151 women can be considered informal workers (76.6 percent) who are mostly sari-sari store owners, garlic peelers, *namumulasi*, sidewalk vendors (of drinks and snacks), on-call caregivers, promodisers, direct-sellers, and laundry-women. Majority of the respondents in two communities earn below the minimum wage

It was found out that a majority of women in the two communities are earning very low wages (mostly below P3,000 or \$67.58 per month). Nearly half of the respondents from Sitio San Juan either declined to disclose their income level or is without any income source. Data from Hapilan indicated very low wage levels among women workers (50.5 percent). This wage situation is reflective of the poor quality of employment in the community and affirms the very low income earned by Filipino women in informal jobs despite the income flexibility. A part from this, the survey showed that women workers are under diverse income arrangements. Some of them earn daily, others weekly and several others get paid twice a month.

The majority of respondents are mostly 36-50 years old and are married, striving to live through the precarious work they are engaged. Most of the informal jobs are home-based such as sari-sari stores and garlic-peeling, indicating how informal women are doubly burdened with the need to fulfil household roles and augment family income. Since informal work is usually done at home, children are also involved in the economic activities. All of the respondents who are married affirm that their spouse isn't earning enough for the family and that they would like to help ease the difficulty by engaging in whatever work that pays they are able to find. Even those who aren't married but are living together with their partner (cohabitating) feel the same. Most of the time, these are temporary kinds of jobs with unfixed pay.

The majority of the women surveyed in the two communities said that lack of jobs, low wages and contractualization are key issues that must be addressed. According to the respondents, if there are enough decent job opportunities that would accept them in spite of their educational attainment, they do not see any reason to stay unemployed or be engaged in informal work such as being paid for doing somebody else's laundry or collecting garbage. Struggling to rise out of poverty, the respondents agree that the current minimum wage of P481 per day is too small to meet the actual daily living cost of the household which may or may not include food, water, electricity, education of the children and health care. Part-time jobs and irregular patterns of employment result to low wages in the household, preventing the disadvantaged workers under it to live decently.

Respondents agree that minimum wage of P481 per day is too small to meet the actual daily living cost of the household which may or may not include food, water, electricity, education of the children and health care. According to them, if only their part-time jobs pay a little higher, their homes could be a lot better. Worse is that most of them are not even

earning daily minimum wage. Respondents also note that contractualization have made it harder for them to get continuous and consistent source of livelihood. Therefore, they struggle to move from one job to another, not able to improve on their skills and strive for higher wages.

In addition, respondents are threatened by demolitions. Women workers stand to be affected most by demolition as they will be uprooted from their work environment in the community and social support network. Most of the respondents from Sitio San Juan stated that they originally come from far provinces mostly located in the Visayas and Mindanao region. When they migrated (due to various reasons), they temporarily found shelter in Sitio San Juan until they become permanent residents. The settlement pattern of the respondents also varies but one thing was common: they migrated to Metro Manila some time ago in search of better job opportunities than what were offered in the rural areas they came from. Sitio San Juan has had numerous demolition threats through the years, and the residents (survey respondents) constantly fear that they will be evicted from their homes. They used to refuse relocation due to a multitude of reasons such as absence of distinct relocation sites and the distance to and from their current jobs.

The various flexibility schemes have made the men in the family employed only in seasonal and manual labor (including collecting plastic bottles on the streets) earning meager wages. Women meanwhile are forced to find jobs that they can do at home to augment their families' incomes.

Only a small segment of the respondents surveyed indicated that sexual harassment is as important as the problem on jobs and wages. This however should not be interpreted that there is low incidence of sexual harassment in the surveyed communities. Most of the women surveyed also do not belong to any community-based organization or association. Initial data gathering and dialogues with community leaders indicate that certain limitations for potential members to actively participate include economic reasons and family responsibilities. Women in the community are not only occupied with child-rearing and managing their homes' daily needs but also engaged in part-time jobs. The findings indicate that women in the surveyed communities are largely unorganized but are cognizant of the need to address issues related to jobs and wages. #