

Civil society and public sector cooperation: Case of Oplan LIKAS

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Established in 2011, the *Oplan Lumikas para Iwas Kalamidad at Sakit* (LIKAS) aims to relocate roughly 120,000 informal settler families (ISFs) from danger areas along major waterways in Metro Manila. The said program is in line with a 2008 Supreme Court writ of mandamus, which required the reservation of a 3-meter easement zone along those waterways and the resettlement of ISFs.

While one of the reasons for the establishment of the program was to respond to the writ, its roots can be also found in the advocacy of the urban poor sector, especially in its demands to increase the funding for social housing, in-city relocation, and integration of People's Plans. Their efforts consequently led to the allocation of PHP 50 billion to ISFs and the involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) as early as the program formulation stage. The Oplan LIKAS positioned CSOs as coproducers of the program and provided an opportunity to integrate long-existing approaches of the grassroots organizations into a major state-funded intervention.

This *Policy Note* documents the successes and challenges of public sector–civil society engagement

under the Oplan LIKAS in Metro Manila. It also highlights the lessons learnt that can be drawn for the crafting of related policies in the country.

Coproduction of housing services in the Philippines

Coproduction refers to “the process through which inputs used to produce a good or service is contributed by individuals who are not ‘in’ the same organization” (Ostrom 1996, p. 1073). This approach was inscribed into the Urban Development and Housing Act and the Local Government Code, which both positioned CSOs as active counterparts of the housing delivery process. It was also embedded in a number of housing programs, such as the Community Mortgage Program of the Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC) or the incremental modality of the resettlement program.

Because of these policies and programs, communities became involved in the production of services, such as the formalization of their neighborhoods to become eligible to infrastructure services from local government units (LGUs) (Galuszka 2014). To a

certain degree, this approach supported the upgrading of informal settlements and strengthened the role of communities as a key stakeholder of the process.

Nevertheless, the broader shift in housing governance has yet to be attained in the Philippines, as can be seen in the overwhelming number of housing units delivered through classical and developer-delivered resettlement program of the National Housing Authority (NHA) (Ballesteros and Egana 2012). Similarly, the high number of ISFs in Metro Manila, currently pegged at 1.3 million by the World Bank (2017), suggests the existing approaches are not sufficient to address the housing shortage.

Because of this, the urban poor continued working to extend their input into housing governance through the development of independent programs and new formats of engagement with the public sector (Galuszka 2013). This includes the 2005 establishment of a stronger movement, the Urban Poor Alliance, that came up with a 14-point agenda to unite and steer their actions (Karaos and Porio 2015). This was later on translated to a 10-point covenant with then presidential candidate Benigno Aquino III and directly informed the establishment of the Oplan LIKAS.

Civil society input in the program formulation

This new role of CSOs can be best captured within three areas of influence on the program. These include

1. the allocation of PHP 50 billion as a response to the advocacy of the urban poor to infuse more resources into the social housing sector;
2. the assumption of in-city relocation and People's Plans (Box 1) as guides in the implementation of the Oplan LIKAS; and
3. the appointment of civil society representatives and public officials supportive to their agenda to the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) and the SHFC, which are

Box 1. Two key points of the urban poor and civil society agenda: In-city relocation and People's Plans

In-city relocation

One of the key advocacy points for the urban poor sector is in-city relocation. The reasoning behind it links to a number of issues documented in off-city resettlement sites. While off-city resettlement may reduce disaster-related risks, it is also associated with the increase of unemployment in target communities, lack of livelihood opportunities, and delayed delivery of some of services.

This advocacy of the urban poor has been recognized within the works of the Informal Settler Families National Technical Working Group (ISF-NTWG). The draft policy guidelines elaborated in Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1 series of 2013 likewise indicate that "the relocation of the affected ISFs shall be on-site, near city, and in-city, and in accordance with the People's Plan in which the affected ISFs have been adequately and genuinely consulted. Off-site shall only be resorted in accordance with People's Plan" (ISF-NTWG 2013).

People's Plan

The People's Plan is an alternative shelter planning approach, which integrates principles of bottom-up planning and positions the concerned communities as a leading stakeholder in the delivery of a variety of functions within the resettlement process. These functions include community profiling, land acquisition and development, involvement in architectural and engineering design, site development, financing, management, and community development plans.

The approach has been recognized in the works of the ISF-NTWG as well as in its first operational guideline in 2014. It also guided the implementation of specific programs under the umbrella of the PHP 50 billion fund program, particularly the High-Density Housing of the Social Housing Finance Corporation.

Source: Author's compilation

two of the three main implementing agencies, including NHA.

These areas raise a promise which, from the civil society perspective, would bring about a real change in the way housing process is conceptualized and delivered in Metro Manila. These progressive foundations, however, were not easily translated into practice. Related issues are best documented by two dimensions of the program.

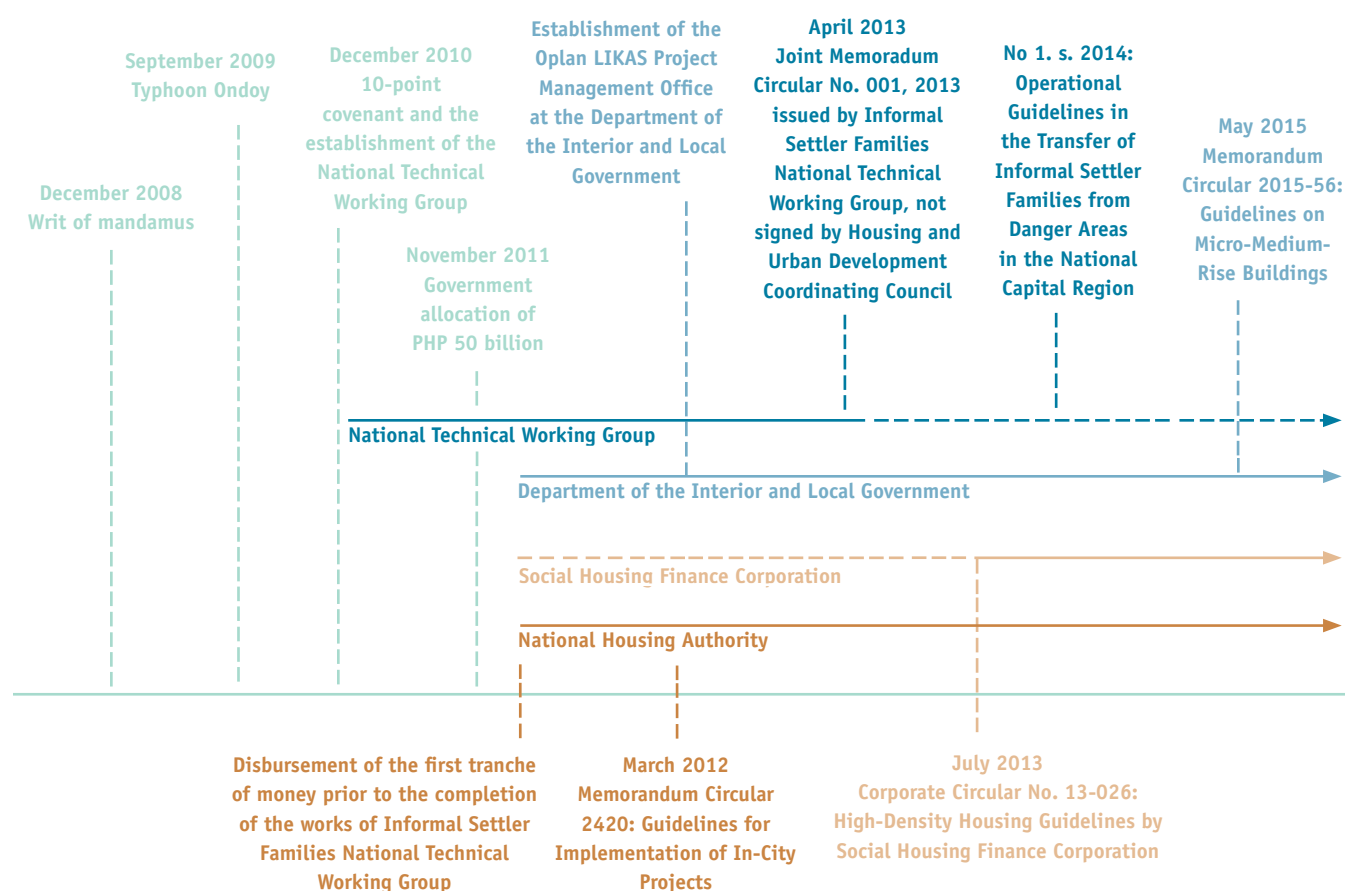
Implementation logic

In spite of declared focus on in-city relocation and People's Plans, the implementation logic of the program promoted rapid and mass delivery of

uniform housing product. This is related to the manner the PHP 50-billion fund was released in PHP 10-billion installments on a yearly basis.

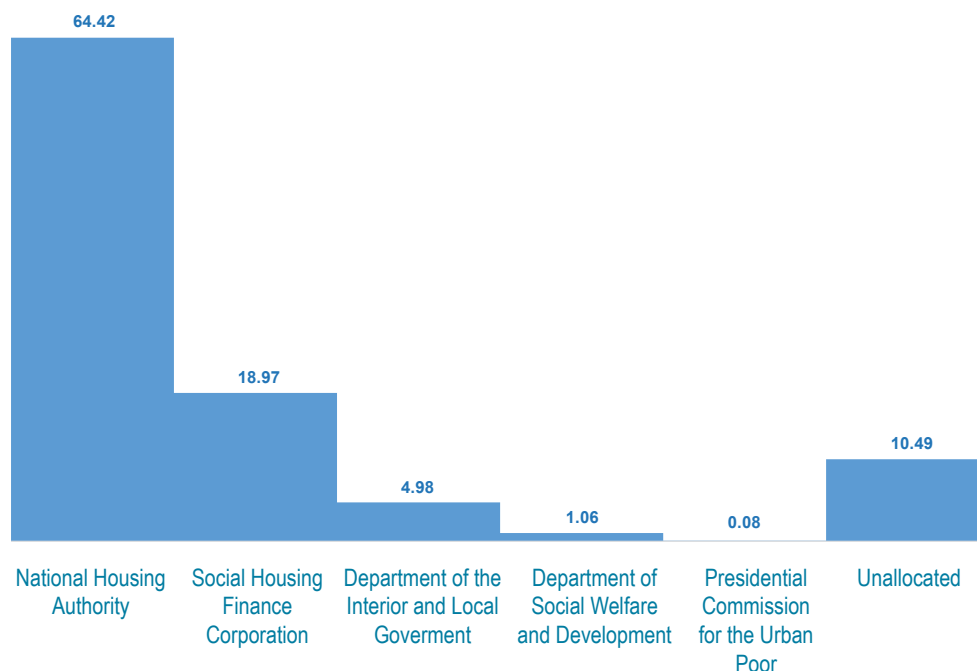
Amid the lengthy process of identification of in-city land within the People's Plans approach, the system promoted an agency which was able to spend the money fast. This resulted in the transfer of the first tranches of the fund to the NHA. Consequently, the agency went forward with classical off-city relocation projects. In the meantime, the discussions of the ISF-NTWG were still going on (Figure 1) and no official documentation was in place to safeguard the implementation of in-city projects in line with People's Plans, which at that stage were largely

Figure 1. Implementation logic of the Oplan LIKAS



Source: Author's compilation

Figure 2. Breakdown of the PHP 50-billion fund among agencies, in percentage share



Source: Department of the Interior and Local Government [DILG] (2018)

absent. Similarly, the program modalities developed within the agencies supportive to the agenda of the urban poor were only established later on.

It was only in 2013 and 2015, respectively, that the SHFC came up with the High-Density Housing (HDH) program and the DILG established Micro-Medium-Rise Building modality. Both programs promoted utilization of the People's Plans and the development of in-city multistory housing.

The delivery record

The second dimension of the program, delivery numbers, confirms that the approach promoted by the civil society was not fully integrated into the program. Over PHP 32 billion of the PHP 50-billion fund was sourced by the NHA (Figure 2). The agency utilized most of this money following its main mandate¹ and

¹ The mandate and expertise of NHA is predominantly on mass production of standardized housing units in the shortest time possible.

developmental routine and delivered large number of housing units in sprawling neighborhoods in far off-city locations (Table 1). Arguably, this approach experienced the same issues in the previous decades because the additional PHP 5.5 billion was reserved in 2017 for the provision of additional services and amenities under the supervision of the Presidential Commission for the Urban Poor (Bonaqua 2017). Similarly, the delivery figures of the HDH, which represents the civil society approach, remained very low (DILG 2017). Meanwhile, some of the People's Plans are still yet to be approved.

Reasons behind the shortfalls

Based on the initial engagement into the program, the civil society achieved an unprecedented success in steering the establishment of the PHP 50-billion fund and positioning itself as a key actor in the implementation of the Oplan LIKAS. However, the analysis of the implementation logic and delivery figures suggests that the civil society–public sector

Table 1. Target units and delivered number of housing in and around Metro Manila

Agency	Target Units	Number of Housing Units Delivered	Location
National Housing Authority	101,210 ^a	Completed: 85,053 Occupied: 63,022	Off-city: 75,215 families In-city: 9,838 families
Social Housing Finance Corporation	19,658	Completed: 3729 Occupied: 730	Off-city: 6 projects Near city: 9 projects In-city: 12 projects
Department of the Interior and Local Government	2,966 ^b	Completed: 434	Off-city: 1 project In-city: 7 projects

^aThe overall initial target for the program was set at 104,219 units for informal settler families. The numbers of the Department of the Interior and Local Government for the revised target for Social Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC) are used in the table, summing up to overall target of the National Housing Authority and the SHFC at the level of 120,868 units.

^b to be implemented by the SHFC and local government units
Source: DILG (2017 and 2018)

partnership experienced severe difficulties during the implementation phase, which prevented the integration and mainstreaming of the most progressive ideas defining the program. The main reasons behind these shortfalls include the following.

Program open to interpretation

Involved agencies were free to interpret how the program should be implemented, regardless of the works of the ISF-NTWG. While the guidelines developed by ISF-NTWG were already in place in 2013, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council only signed it toward the end of the program. The said signing was also under the condition that the contracts using portions of the PHP 50-billion fund prior to the full signature will not be superseded by the ISF-NTWG. As such, efforts to promote in-city resettlement and People's Plans were not internalized by all implementing agencies. Moreover, while the SHFC and the DILG have institutionalized specific approaches in line with the principles listed by the ISF-NTWG, the NHA largely followed the conventional approach (COA 2017).

Poor access to in-city lands

Access to in-city land remained a key obstacle for the implementation of the program in line with its

original assumptions. Out of 17 LGUs in Metro Manila, only 5 had updated comprehensive land use plans (CLUPs) in place (WB 2017). This meant there was no actual register of lands which could be used for socialized housing. While the People's Plans envisaged that the communities would look for their own land, the instrument was challenged by some LGUs that competed for the same resources (e.g., through purchasing the land identified by the community associations for their project). In some instances, the process of availing of public land was also contested by involved agencies, which planned to utilize the land for their own purposes and resisted its transfer for socialized housing. Consequently, the difficulty to obtain in-city land was used to justify off-city as best available alternative for the target communities.

Hasty implementation, lengthy preparation

The program was also characterized by a dual logic, in which focus on People's Plans was staying in contrast with the need for hasty delivery of housing motivated by disaster risk reduction measures and the requirement to distribute the reserved funds on a yearly basis. The preparation of the People's Plans, facing the land access challenge, was typically lengthy and required capacitation of the involved communities. As such, the setup of the project contained bias toward the faster

solution, namely, classical off-city relocation, which positioned the NHA as the main implementing agency.

Lack of strong organizations

Within many communities, the facilitation of People's Plans was hampered by the lack of a strong organization with a capacity to engage in the long and cumbersome process of negotiations with LGUs and key shelter agencies. Bearing in mind institutional obstacles as well as early release of money to the NHA, many communities agreed to accept the only available option at hand, the off-city relocation sites. As such, the concept of People's Plans was mainly utilized by strongly organized communities backed by supportive mobilizers.

Recommendations

While the program had a number of tangible achievements and legacies, its crucial element, the integration of civil society and the urban poor approaches into development practice of the public sector, has experienced major obstacles. The following recommendations concentrate on the way in which those can be addressed in policymaking.

Transform existing agencies

The transformation of the housing process requires not only an initiation of new programs but also the transformation of existing agencies. While the SHFC was able to build up on its rich experience of working with communities when adapting to new housing modality promoted by the civil society, the NHA largely stood by the conventional approach. The latter links not only to the competition for state resources but also to the experience of being embedded in the local housing scene and development practice backed up by decades of work.

Although the NHA already tested innovative and alternative approaches in the past, these approaches

never became dominant. The agency's bias toward the conventional solutions lies in its mandate, professional routine, established connections with the private sector, and capacity to respond to the political implications of the planning process. However, these solutions do not translate to the creation of sustainable neighborhoods or resolve the issue of homelessness in Metro Manila. Finding rapid modalities of delivery, which provide more flexibility in terms of housing design, integrate People's Plans, and create productivity opportunities, is essential for the agency.

Adopt a fixed legal basis for in-city relocation

A fixed legal basis for the in-city relocation and People's Plans remains a stronger instrument than the establishment of uniform guidelines for the implementation of the program. After all, even the program-level institutionalization did not ensure its implementation in line with its progressive foundations.

The government should also adopt a monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the decisions coming out of the works of ISF-NTWG and the Housing Summit. While those works push for the creation of progressive ideas and guidelines, their implementation is still preconditioned by the existing intrabureaucratic relationships and power structures. In the absence of tangible incentives, political will, and monitoring mechanisms, new approaches can be easily contested within the sphere of informal governance.

Adopt land-sharing and land-banking schemes

The precondition for the development of in-city social housing is the commitment of LGUs in resolving the land access issues. Alongside the creation of updated CLUPs and local shelter plans, this involves a number of alternatives for securing in-city land for socialized housing purposes, such as land-banking and land-sharing schemes or expropriation of forfeited properties,

a solution occasionally applied during the Oplan LIKAS process. If not addressed, the land access question may lead to the emergence of radical movements, which lean toward occupation instead of participation in governmental schemes.

Monitor and ensure compliance with in-city policies

Although developers were required by law to set aside 20 percent² of their commercial subdivision project areas or costs to socialized housing, the compliance with the law turns out to be largely counterproductive. Due to flexible interpretation of the law, passiveness of LGUs in securing in-city land, and unwillingness of developers to mix their commercial housing products with socialized housing, majority of the developers tend to comply with the legislation in far off-city locations (Pampang et al. 2015). The monitoring of the process and the focus on compliance with policies on in-city and near-city locations are key to advance the provision of adequate social housing in Metro Manila.

Utilize People's Plans across different modalities

Rapidity discourse, which promotes one particular approach toward housing delivery, needs to be confronted and counterbalanced with the socioeconomic data, which trace the implementation of different resettlement options. Based on the evaluation, conventional resettlement approach may be characterized by initially lower costs but fails to secure the welfare of the beneficiaries as good as alternative incremental and in-city approaches do (Ballesteros and Egana 2012).

² This is changed to 15 percent of subdivision area or costs as well as 5 percent of condominiums area or costs. Civil society critiqued the draft of the Balanced Housing Program Amendments Act, pointing out the risk of replicating the pattern of horizontal developments.



Established in 2011, Oplan LIKAS aims to relocate roughly 120,000 informal settler families (ISFs) from danger areas along major waterways in Metro Manila. While its establishment was informed by the works of ISFs Technical Working Group and civil society actors, its current implementation is still biased to the conventional approach, which pushes ISFs to transfer to off-city relocations. (Photo by the author)

The People's Plans, as an approach promoting in-city development and flexible adaptation of housing product to the needs of local communities, are in this context one of the key solutions that can be utilized across different modalities including the mid-rise buildings promoted during the Oplan LIKAS, as well as incremental development schemes tested in the past.

Conclusion

The experience of the Oplan LIKAS illustrates that civil society can serve as a main driver of development of new programs and policies. At the same time, it also suggests that a major role in the formulation of an initiative does not automatically translate into the implementation phase.

Despite the representation of CSOs into various implementing agencies, the bureaucratic, managerial, and intrainstitutional dynamics hampered smooth implementation of the most progressive ideas of

the program. Overall, the cooperation left tangible legacies of the cross-sectorial cooperation including

- the testing of model of mid-rise social housing led by the community organizations;
- the stimulation of new formats of cooperation between civil society and private sector; and
- the embedding of People's Plans in some of the documentation concerning future resettlement activities, such that in relation to the North-South Rail project.

Nevertheless, to maximize the outputs of the process and challenge the everlasting issues within the local housing sector, the government needs to address land issues on the local and national levels, review mandates and technical approach of leading shelter agencies, and embrace the possibilities of incremental development and inclusion of informal communities into the development process as a key for creating an inclusive and livable metropolis. 📄

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