

Urban challenges in metro manila

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Overview

As the world's population continues to grow our cities are being placed under increased pressure. This report will investigate the challenges megacity Metro Manila faces and the strategies utilised by the government to address these issues. It will also include additional information such as the current population density patterns in Manila, climate graph/weather trends and a proposed strategy to ease pressure continually being placed on the expanding megacity.

Metro Manila

Metropolitan Manila, otherwise known as the National Capital Region (NCR) or simply Manila is one of the three defined metropolitan areas of the Philippines. With an enormous population of 12 877 253 people, Metro Manila currently has a dense population of 71, 263 persons per square kilometre.

Push and Pull Factors

These impressive figures are due to several economic, political, environmental and social reasons causing large populations to live in Metro Manila, otherwise known as pull factors. A major factor is the numerous schools and universities offering high quality education – Manila has over 500 schools and 200 colleges with The University of Manila ranking 63rd out of 300 universities in Asia. The average literacy rate is 92% and majority of students attend colleges of high educational standard. The subsequent pull factor of Manila's educational systems is the excellent healthcare facilities in

developed areas of the city. Medical practitioners in Manila are graduates from top universities and a high percentile of them have studied in United States medical schools. In fact, St Luke's Medical Centre situated in Metro Manila is said to be one of the best hospitals in Asia!

Though there are several more large contributors to the high populations of Metro Manila, many people choose to leave the megacity for other reasons otherwise known as push factors. These factors could include the extremely high poverty rates. Around two million people living in slums live on a few dollars a day – almost enough to buy bare essentials such as rice. More importantly, Manila is also known for having major natural disasters with about five typhoons every year and constant floods. These natural disasters often kill livestock and other animals, creating a shortage of items and making it harder for an already struggling community.

Natural Disasters

Expanding on natural disasters in Metro Manila, recurrent flooding has been a problem for millions of people living in the metropolis. Tropical Storm Ondoy hit in 2009, causing damage and losses equivalent to approximately 2.7 percent of the country's economy (according to The World Bank: Metro Manila Flood Management). This recurrent flooding is caused by a shortage of green space within the city. This green space, rather than soaking up water that contributes to flash floods, has been replaced with construction sites and infrastructure. Most parts of Manila are situated in floodplains (area adjacent to a river that is inundated when water rises) that companies

transform into residential or commercial areas, therefore causing it to become flood-prone.

The Strategy

In response to these losses, the Philippine government pitched the Metro Manila Flood Management Master Plan approved by the NEDA (National Economic and Development Authority Board) in 2012. The plan proposed the construction of a dam in the upper Marikina River catchment area to reduce peak river flows entering Metro Manila during typhoons and extreme rainfall events. The environmental consequences of a large dam like this are numerous and varied, and includes direct impacts on fish migrations, animal habitats, natural ecosystems and sediments therefore making it an unsustainable method.

Though we can't prevent natural disasters from occurring, educating Manila's population on how to be ready for the common floods and typhoons can substantially reduce consequences. To prepare for natural disasters educational systems funded by the government could be used to educate Manila's populations on a highly effective tool called risk maps. Risk maps help communities to understand the hazards or risks in certain areas and encourage everyone to take action to reduce effects of a possible disaster. For example, they show where the safest buildings are or best routes to follow if orders are given to evacuate the area.

Overpopulation

Another challenge includes overpopulation. Metro Manila's population is expected to reach 14 million by 2030 whereas Mega Manila's population is expected to reach 30 million by 2030. The growing birth rates eventually lead to the prevalence of overcrowded, poor suburbs with limited access to resources called slums.

The Cause of Overpopulation in Manila

This overpopulation is due to the Catholic beliefs of many Filipinos, resulting in reluctance to use artificial contraception. Four years ago the Philippines passed a law guaranteeing access to birth control but is priced out of reach of the country's poor. Approximately 50% of pregnancies in Manila are unintended, according to the Guttmacher Institute, and more than 90 percent of unintended pregnancies occurred in the absence of modern contraceptive methods. According to the data collated by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), among 10 Filipinas aged between 15 and 19 years old, one has gotten pregnant; 8% are mothers and 2% are pregnant with their first child. From the Department of Health (DOH), the data they have gathered showed there have been over 30, 000 cases of AIDS/HIV recorded between 1984 and 2016. These statistics deduce that there are many apparent misguided notions about sex within youth communities. Given this alarming information, the government through the Department of Education has proposed stronger emphasis on educating the youth on how the reproductive system works. These strategies are neither sustainable nor unsustainable but will become a significant influence to the deterioration of slums in Metro Manila.

Summary

With the information provided, it can be deduced that Metro Manila faces many challenges such as recurring natural disasters, overpopulation and the prevalence of slums. These challenges can be resolved with comprehensive approaches funded by large businesses and government organisations to assist the ever-growing megacity. Additionally, the report hopes to promote the use of sustainable methods to enable the megacity to flourish into a nurturing environment for not only the millions of people living in Metro Manila today but for many future generations to come.