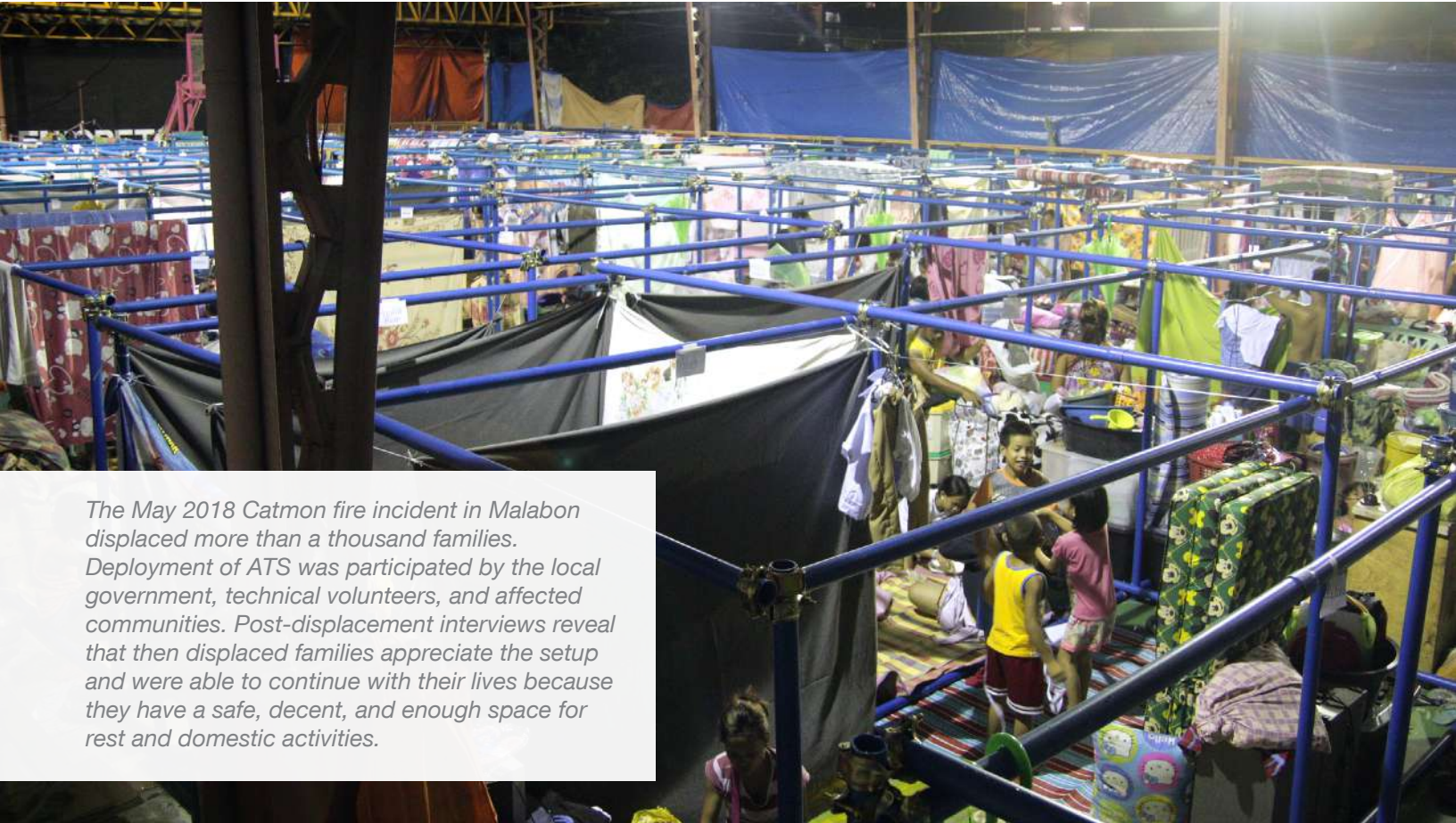


# THE ALTERNATIVE TEMPORARY SHELTER (ATS) SYSTEM: Safe and Dignified Living Spaces for Displaced Populations



*The May 2018 Catmon fire incident in Malabon displaced more than a thousand families. Deployment of ATS was participated by the local government, technical volunteers, and affected communities. Post-displacement interviews reveal that then displaced families appreciate the setup and were able to continue with their lives because they have a safe, decent, and enough space for rest and domestic activities.*

## Frequent, protracted displacement in urban areas

In many places across the Philippines, urban poor communities bear the brunt of and are frequently displaced by hazards and conflict. Displacement, in turn, further magnifies existing vulnerabilities by cutting off access to livelihoods, food, shelter, and basic services. To make matters worse, evacuation centers are typically cramped, lack WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) facilities, and feature inadequate shelter without privacy and protection from the elements. These conditions pose threats to the health, safety, and security of displaced populations, and put many women and girls at risk of gender-based violence.

In 2017, conflicts and disasters caused 30.6 million new displacements across 143 countries and territories, according to the 2018 Global Report on Internal Displacement. In the Philippines, one of the ten worst-affected countries, 2.53 million people were displaced by disasters and 645,000 by conflict. But data on displacements at the levels of barangays and cities is hard to come by, and frequent, small-scale internal displacements of urban poor communities in Metro Manila, which are typically triggered by fires or demolition operations, receive scant attention and are thus difficult to track.

Despite the seemingly small scale of these displacements, however, the shelter needs of affected communities remain dire. The Alternative Temporary Shelter (ATS) system, a component of the Moving Urban Poor Communities in the Philippines toward Resilience (MOVE UP) Project, aims to help build resilience by safeguarding the right of displaced populations to safe and dignified shelter during disasters or emergencies.

## What is the ATS System?

The ATS System provides solutions to help meet the survival needs of disaster-affected populations, including security and safety, protection from the elements, and resistance to ill health and disease. It aims to improve existing temporary shelters and utilizes alternative spaces to address the lack of adequate temporary shelter. By doing so, it hopes to contribute to upholding human dignity and sustaining family and community life.

The ATS System consists of the temporary shelter structures themselves as well as guidelines for proper camp coordination and camp management (CCCM). It is implemented following these steps:

- 1. Identification of ATS Needs**
- 2. Designing and testing of ATS models and systems**
- 3. Integration of ATS in plans and facilitation of roll out**
- 4. Public awareness and advocacy activities**



*Selection of ATS model that best fits a community should involve not only the local government, but also the community, and representatives from vulnerable groups.*

The first step in the deployment of the ATS System is the conduct of a shelter needs assessment. This ensures that the solutions are context-appropriate and effectively address any identified gaps. It also helps ensure that resources are maximized.

Once the community's needs have been identified, implementers can develop their own ATS models or choose from several available models that were designed to cater to various contexts, taking into consideration the type of hazard, duration of displacement, location, and needs of the community. These are modular, quick to set up, made of locally available materials, and were created in consultation with communities and with expert input from the United Architects of the Philippines - Emergency Architects.

The cost per unit depends on the final design deemed most appropriate for a particular context. For instance, during a 2018 fire in Barangay Catmon, the Temporary Classroom Partition is seen as the model fit to use in the evacuation site. In providing this ATS model, the city of Malabon spent approximately Php 30 per family per day, for a total of about Php 350,000 for 100 families. Because the shelter is reusable, the cost of subsequent deployments may be lower.

After the deployment, post-interviews reveal that it also helped in minimizing the risk of diseases, psychosocial distress, and gender-based violence – benefits that far outweigh its low per capita amount.

Aside from the physical ATS structure, integral to the system's efficacy is proper CCCM, which significantly affects the dignity and recovery capacity of people in evacuation centers. A well-managed evacuation site meets the basic assistance and protection needs of its residents, and follows certain standards that define the minimum levels of acceptable quality.

## How does the ATS System help build resilient communities?



Collaboration is a key component of the system. The ATS process requires cooperation between national government agencies, local government units, civil society organizations, private sector, and the academe. As such, emergency shelter planning must involve inter-city, multi-agency, and public-private partnerships.

Most importantly, it calls for the meaningful participation of the displaced populations themselves. From the early stages of contingency planning, to the designing and construction of the ATS model, all the way to the formation of evacuation center committees as part of camp management during displacement, displaced populations must be actively engaged. By doing so, the ATS System not only contributes to building the resilience capacities of communities, but also helps improve social positions by encouraging community participation.

By fostering collaboration and partnerships, and seeking alignment with policies such as the Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1, s. 2013 (Guidelines on Evacuation Center Coordination and Management), the ATS System also helps foster a more enabling environment. Mainstreaming ATS in local development plans also contributes to the sustainability of these efforts.

It is important to note, however, that the ATS System is merely a short-term strategy. To truly move urban poor communities toward resilience, comprehensive actions based on needs assessment should be taken to result in more long-term solutions.



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