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This pedagogical guide, part of the 30GREAT Voices project, is designed for educational purposes.



**MARIA OFELIA A. MARTÍNEZ**

### [Voice #19: Maria Ofelia Arellano](#)

Maria Ofelia Arellano shares her experience of settling in the area over 45 years ago, when she and her family were struggling financially. They moved to a plot of land they could barely afford, with Maria pawning her machine to make the down payment. Initially, the neighbourhood lacked basic infrastructure such as water, electricity, and transportation, but Maria and her family worked hard to build their home. She recalls the challenges of collecting firewood for cooking and washing clothes in the river. Over time, things improved with the help of a community initiative that provided plumbing, making life easier. Despite facing many hardships, including the pandemic, Maria remains resilient and finds comfort in the peaceful community she helped build.

#### **Additional resources:**

[Voice #8: Emilia Jiménez](#) | [Voice #10: Flor Carabalí](#) | [Voice #12: Gloria María Fernández](#) | [Voice #15: José Vicente Taticuan](#) | [Voice #23: Nancy Sanchez](#) | [Voice #25: Olga Quintero](#) | [Voice #29: Ruby Moran](#) | [Voice #30: Sandra Ocampo](#)

Based on Maria Ofelia Arellano's video, discuss the following questions with your peers:

**Question 01:** How did Maria and her community address the challenges of lacking basic infrastructure, such as water and electricity, in their informal settlement? What role did collective efforts play in overcoming these obstacles?

**Question 02:** In what ways did Maria's experience highlight the importance of informal labour and resourcefulness in the early stages of informal settlement development? How can urban planning initiatives better support such community-driven solutions?

**Question 03:** Maria reflects on her neighbourhood's transformation from a space with no basic services to a more organised community. What are the key elements that urban planners should consider when supporting the gradual development of informal settlements while ensuring residents' active involvement in the process?

#### **Exploring connections:**

Below the image, you'll find additional voices that expand on themes from Maria's testimonial. We invite you to explore these perspectives and connect Maria's insights with broader discussions on *Care*.