In the midst of climate change and climate-related disaster risks

DECEMBER 2008

COPE BICOL

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Raising Policy Questions

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What we know about Climate Change and how it is affecting the Philippines

Water puddle formed from the force of water due to heavy rainfall that preceded and accompanied Typhoon Frank (pictures courtesy of the province of Iloilo

Over the past years, Philippine scientists have called our attention to the following:

While Climate Change has been an existing phenomenon, the patterns of changing climatic conditions have dramatically fluctuated over the past decades. Changes in temperature, rainfall patterns, sea level rise, and frequency and strength of typhoons have been abrupt and erratic --- rendering it difficult for many communities to predict changing climate patterns and make corresponding preparations, necessary responses, and changes in behavioural patterns that will effectively and sufficiently facilitate resilience and adaptation.

The Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment Report concludes that Climate Change is now largely influenced by anthropogenic factors --- of which carbon emissions rank first. Although countries like the Philippines contribute less carbon emissions (0.9% carbon emissions per capita (tons)), based on the IPCC AP4 Report, the impact of carbon emissions on increasing global temperature will have devastating effects. "The type, frequency, and intensity of extreme events, such as tropical cyclones (including hurricanes and typhoons), floods, droughts, and heavy precipitation events, are expected to rise even with relatively small average temperature increases."

Drawing lessons from a presentation of Dr. Rex Cruz on the findings of the IPCC AP4 Report, a grim picture is painted in the future for South, East, and Southeast Asia characterized by:

- Accelerated warming.
- Increased annual precipitation (or increased rainfall).
- Increased occurrence of extreme weather events including intense rains.
- 10% to 20% increase in tropical cyclone intensities in South, East, and Southeast Asia.
- Increased inter-annual variability of daily precipitation in Asian summer monsoon.
- Storm surge heights and increased risk of coastal disasters amplified by stronger winds with enhanced sea surface temperature and low pressure.
- Increased likelihood of continued sea level rising.

In the April 2008 meeting of Philippine scientists in the province of Albay, scientists outlined the following observations in the Philippines:

According to a meta-analysis of Climate Change studies in the Philippines done by Dr. Emmanuel Anglo from the work of several scientists, there are observed trends of

- More hot days and warm nights; fewer cool days and cold nights;
- Increasing number of tropical cyclone occurrences in the Western Pacific (where the Philippines is located);
- Typhoon crossings are most pronounced over Visayas;
- Sea-level rise in coastal areas; and
- Longer dry periods, but heavier rains during wet season. There is a significant reduction of rainfall over Northeast Luzon and a significant increase of rainfall over Western Visayas during La Niña.

Resilience of many ecosystems will be exceeded due to climate change, land-use change, over-utilization of resources, and pollution.

Some facts that may bring a rude awakening:

- Days and nights in the Philippines have indeed been warmer.
- Heavy rainfall-induced flooding and landslides have increased.
- Typhoons are now frequent in Visayas, Mindanao, and Palawan (the latter two have once been known as typhoon-free areas).
- More people are affected because more people are living in areas at risk to natural and human-induced hazards.

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Hope for the Philippines: Of mitigation, adaptation, and resilience

What we know about the Government's Work

Caught in the fury of climate-related forces that have reacted to anthropogenic changes, Filipinos have attempted to respond in multiples ways. The government has:

*Created the Inter-Agency Committee on Climate Change, the Presidential Task Force on Climate Change, and the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Climate Change and Global Warming;

*Signed the UNFCCC in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992; the Senate ratified the UNFCCC in 1994, which means that the Philippines commits to its provisions as a Non-Annex 1 Party;

*Signed the Kyoto Protocol on April 1998 and ratified it in November 2003;

*Initiatives on:

Assessment : ADB Climate Change Project (1991) that contained vulnerability studies; GHG Mitigation Assessment under the Asia Least Cost Greenhouse Gas Abatement Strategy (ALGAS);

Governance: Integrating CC concerns into government development plans and programs through local development units and through the National Action Plan on Climate Change;

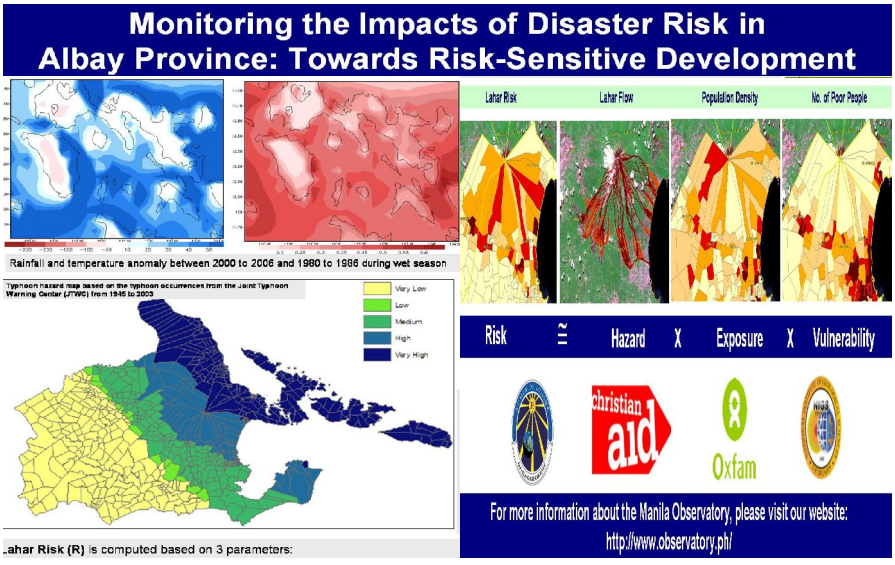
Mitigation: 1990 National GHG Emissions Inventory; reduction in GHG emissions through the GHG Abatement Awards; slowing down the growth of GHG emissions as stated in the Philippine Climate Change Mitigation Program; establishment of the CDM National Authority, Operational Framework and support systems for the Philippines; promoting a climate-friendly energy supply mix through the Philippine Climate Change Response Action Plan (PCCRAP); promotion and passage of the Renewable Energy Law;

Capacity Building: Enabling activity on CC to prepare the country's initial national communication to the UNFCCC; UNDP-funded capacity development study on the CDM; extension of the latter through the Institutionalization of the GHG Inventory and Public Awareness; Dutch government-funded capacity development for the CDM in the Philippines.

There is also a sustained effort amongst Civil Society Organizations to address Climate Change impacts. However, specific to the work of Christian Aid partners, there has been a commitment to develop clear CC adaptation measures to show that (1) there is Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and mitigation capacities among vulnerable communities, but scientific innovations will facilitate the use of more appropriate technologies to address CC impacts and disaster risks, and (2) there is wisdom in endogenous approaches to CCA. Following the Bali action plan guidelines on adaptation, here are what Philippine partners have been able to develop and engage in:

On 1.c (i)

a. Assessments: Manila Observatory has developed a climate-risk assessment methodology that attempts to calculate climate-related risk down to the village level; in cooperation with another partner COPE --- a CCA and DRR strategy will now be piloted in key cities in the Bicol region



b. Integration of adaptation actions into sectoral and national planning: in local development planning (case of MACEC); lobby for integration of CCA in national development plans (inclusion of CCA in CC and DRM legislation documents)

c. Enable climate-resilient development: pilot integration of CCA and DRR in agriculture (case of PhilNet-Visayas)

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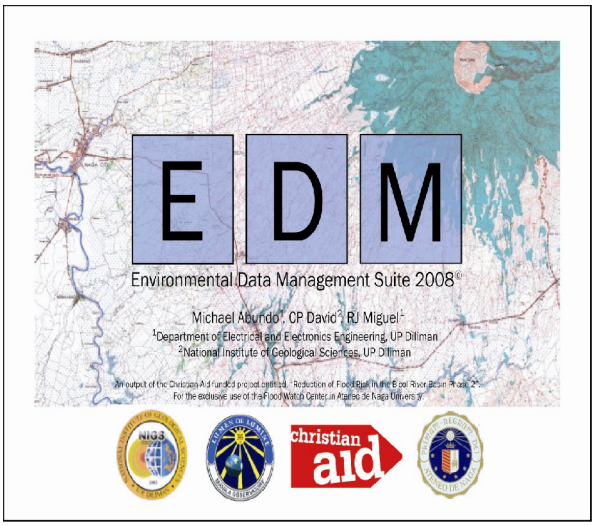
On 1.c.(ii)
a. Risk management from climate-related risks: hazard-specific adaptation measures in environmental protections (i.e. PRDCI/PhilNet-Visayas); livelihoods (i.e. PRDCI/PhilNet Visayas to address heavy rainfall livelihood concerns) and SAM Ipil/Philrice to address riverine flooding livelihood concerns;

Tulakbong for vegetables exposed to heavy rainfall. PRDCI/PhilNet Visayas

On 1.c. (iii)

a. Disaster reduction strategies from Climate Change impacts: EWS for riverine flooding due to heavy rainfall (i.e. SAC Infanta and MO/UP National Institute of Geological Studies); disaster preparedness for high-risk urban poor communities (i.e. COPE) and for small islands highly vulnerable to typhoons/storm surges (i.e. SAC Infanta, Coastal Core, MACEC)



Environment Data Management Suite being developed by UP NIGS and MO , along with home-based weather stations, as part of the effort to develop innovations in early warning systems

On 1.c (iv)
a. Economic diversification: sustainable livelihoods and health protection for coastal communities exposed to typhoons and storm surges (i.e. Coastal Core)

Local partner of Coastal Core Sorsogon in the economic diversification for sustainable livelihoods

On 1.d (iii and iv)
a. Cooperation on research and development of current, new, and innovative technology: continuous engagement with the scientific community to develop strategies to address specific climate-related risks (i.e. Scientific conference in April 2008 with top Philippine scientists on CC; partnerships between CA partners and UPCSWCD, UPNIGS, UPLB, MO, PhilRice, etc)

b. Ways to accelerate deployment, diffusion, and transfer of affordable environmentally-sound technologies: Learning Circles that link scientific institutions with community-development practitioners; Together with IDRC's Base of the Pyramid project on scientific innovations, a Southeast Asian learning exchange on CCA and DRR is currently being developed and will be held on February 2009.

The submergence tolerant rice line that is currently being shared by Philrice with partners in Zamboanga Sibugay affected by riverine flooding

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The Kyoto Protocol and The Bali Plan of Action

The implementation of the UNFCCC outlined in the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement that was a result of the UNFCCC and commits Parties to the protocol to stabilize GHG emissions, sets forth a higher target for developed countries compared to developing and less developed countries --- 5% below 1990 levels from 2008 to 2012. A slower warming of the atmospheric system will hopefully bring less climate-related risks to countries like the Philippines.

The Bali Plan of Action, on the other hand, has identified adaptation (paragraph 1(c)) as one of the five key building blocks (shared vision, mitigation, adaptation, technology, and financial resources) for a strengthened future response to Climate Change and "launched a comprehensive process to enable the full, effective, and sustained implementation of the Convention through long-term cooperative action."

-UNFCCC

OUR CONCERNS...

1. When foreign investment triggers higher carbon-emitting practices, to whom will the carbon emissions be credited?

2. In the application of CDM interventions in the Philippines and in any developing country in particular, to what extent are social acceptability and prior informed consent recognized as key requirements in the review of modalities and procedures for clean development mechanism agreed upon in Decision 3/CMP. 1 recalling provisions of Article 12 of the Protocol?

3. Cognizant of Article 12 of the Kyoto Protocol, we now ask the question as to how far has the CDM contributed to sustainable development in areas where the projects are implemented? How have people in project areas co-benefited from the project?

4. To what extent has the participation of other stakeholders, particularly civil society and peoples' organizations and local government units been facilitated in small-scale CDM projects that have been specified in Annex II of the FCCC/KP/CMP/2005/8/Add.1?

5. How is the government dealing with the conversion of remaining Philippine forests to agricultural land and other uses (i.e. mining, upland real estate development)? What cost-effective measures, policy, and institutional frameworks will the Philippines promote based on the SBSTA meeting on June 2008 in Tokyo, Japan on reduction of emissions due to deforestation and degradation?

6. How far has the Philippines gone in terms of updating a comprehensive greenhouse gas emissions inventory taking into consideration changes in land use patterns (Land Use, Land Use Change, and Forestry or LULUCF) due to rapid urbanization and the accompanying waste management practices, promotion of large-scale mining, mono-culture of crops, and use of unsustainable farming practices in agricultural areas?

7. Why are carbon emissions from indigenous and sustainable and organic agricultural practices being questioned whereas carbon emissions from rapid urbanization and mining are not?

Use of rice hull through a carbonizer for use as a potting medium in small vegetable plots in Barangay Gumang in Sorsogon

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Our Calls

- Include mining, rapid upland and lowland land conversion for property development , the use of land for urban wastes in the discussion on LULUCF and its role in the conversion of forest, grasslands, wetlands and their contribution to increasing carbon emissions.

- Invest in scientific studies to assess climate and disaster risks and to draw lessons in carbon capture coming from different industries, practices and from sustainable agricultural farming and forestry practices and soil management, that are now the subject of discussions in the CC meetings.

- In the discussions on LULUCF, bring attention to the plight of small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples whose sustainable farming and forestry practices are now being put into question under the negotiations in the reduction of emissions due to deforestation and degradation. This we deem as consistent to Art.3.3 of the UNFCCC that demands full consideration of the most vulnerable to the adverse effects of Climate Change (which includes many small-scale farmers and indigenous peoples in the Philippines).

- Following FCCC/SBSTA/2008/11, forest degradation, if measured as a process, should be quantified (i.e. degradation will have levels/extent of intensity vs associated emissions and losses of carbon) so as to factor in differences in the variations in forest degradation practices and their corresponding carbon emissions.

- Policy and institutional coherence particularly on concerns related to the Decision1/CP13 on enhanced action on adaptation particularly on matters relating to climate-related and disaster risk assessment, management, reduction, sharing and transfer; climate and disaster risk reduction; economic diversification to build resilience; and multi-stakeholder cooperation for adaptation. Given the latter, a clear avenue for civil society participation in the adaptation, disaster reduction and mitigation policy, planning, and implementation should be facilitated.

- Relaxation of IPRs, accessibility and diffusion of technologies, and access to funding/resources particularly with reference to the use and promotion of sustainable and environmentally-sound technologies that will guarantee the adaptation of communities highly exposed to climate-related risks.

- Incentive for the development of indigenous and community-based innovations in adaptation technologies to reduce dependencies of vulnerable communities to external support and in order to develop community resilience to climate-related risks.

- Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction, in the light of adverse impacts of Climate Change to countries like the Philippines, should be considered international and national priorities and immediate policies and actions to ensure the survival of many communities should not be left to the hands of a few experts.

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