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ECO BUSINESS

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DAILY TRIBUNE

Partnership forged with malugay

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INSIDER PH

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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Scaling up agroforestry could provide a boost to Philippine climate resiliency while raising farm incomes, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said.

In a December paper, the ADB said agroforestry, which integrates tree planting with crop and livestock farming, can help address land degradation, declining forest cover, and food insecurity.

The bank noted that forest cover in the Philippines fell to about 24% of total land area in 2020 from 35% in 1990, largely due to agricultural expansion and unsustainable upland farming practices.

"Forest cover in the Philippines decreased dramatically, from around 10 million hectares in 1990 to about 7 million today. This loss is primarily because of large-scale deforestation and forest encroachment from crop cultivation, which remains a significant issue," the ADB said.

The ADB said deforestation has been further worsened by unsustainable farming practices in upland areas, where monoculture, intensive tillage, and heavy chemical inputs remain prevalent.

"These practices have contributed to adverse environmental impacts, including increased erosion, declining soil fertility, and increased vulnerability to climate-related calamities," it said.

The bank said agroforestry offers a viable alternative to conventional upland farming by restoring soil health, improving water retention, and stabilizing slopes, while allowing farmers to diversify production.

Integrating trees into agricultural systems can help regulate microclimates, reduce erosion, and protect crops and livestock from extreme weather, it added.

The ADB said trees also help mitigate climate change by sequestering carbon, as well as providing other ecological services. Citing a 2010 study, the ADB said agroforestry systems in Mindanao store three times more carbon than traditional tree plantations.

According to the ADB, common agroforestry practices in the Philippines include alley cropping, taungya (planting crops alongside young forest tree seedlings), multistory systems, tree-crop grazing, slope agriculture, and natural vegetative strips.

Crops considered suitable for agroforestry include durian, mango, mangosteen, and jackfruit, which can be grown alongside cacao and coffee. The ADB noted the practice of coconut-pineapple multistory systems in Cavite, and coffee-cocoa multistory systems in Mindanao.

However, the ADB said wider adoption in the Philippines remains constrained by high upfront costs, delayed financial returns, limited access to credit, and weak market linkages.

“The poorest farmers are constrained by an inability to suffer a short-term reduction in yields, short planning horizons, high discount rates, aversion to uncertainty, and availability of land, labor, and capital at key times of the year,” it said.

The ADB said smallholder farmers often lack financing for establishing seedlings and early maintenance, while returns from tree-based systems may take years to materialize.

The bank said targeted public support will be critical to address these barriers, including concessional financing, conditional cash transfers, and payments for ecosystem services.

The ADB said financial institutions, including the Land Bank of the Philippines, could play a key role in developing loan products suited to longer investments in agroforestry.

Greater private sector participation, particularly from agribusinesses sourcing coffee, cacao, and other tree-based commodities, could also help strengthen market access and encourage wider adoption.

ECO BUSINESS

[Opinion] Climate adaptation more than covers its cost

By: Mekala Krishnan, Annabel Farr and Kanmani Chockalingam

Humanity has long learned to live with extreme weather. Much of the Netherlands would be under water were it not for centuries of ingenious adaptation to the constant threat of flooding. Likewise, ancient communities on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates developed ways to capture and direct excess water to nourish and protect fields.

But the number of places exposed to extreme weather will only grow. According to new research from the McKinsey Global Institute, Advancing adaptation: Mapping costs from cooling to coastal defences, the world spends US$190 billion per year on investments in 20 key adaptation measures that protect roughly 1.2 billion people. But three billion more people, over three-quarters of whom live in low-income regions, have only limited protection.

Extending developed-economy standards of protection to all exposed places would require US$540 billion annually. That means there is a US$350 billion gap, 60 per cent of which is needed to help low-income areas build greater resilience. Moreover, adaptation costs will rise. On current emissions trajectories, the world is likely to reach 2° Celsius above pre-industrial levels by about 2050, exposing an additional 2.2 billion people to heat stress and another 1.1 billion to drought, for example.

Our analysis finds that at 2°C warming, the world would need to spend US$1.2 trillion annually to protect everyone exposed to climate hazards at developed-economy standards, or almost 1 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in affected places, by 2050. More than three-quarters of that spending would go toward protecting against heat and drought.

That may sound expensive, but the benefits of that adaptation would exceed the cost by roughly seven times. Air conditioners not only protect but also improve the productivity of indoor workers. Cooling shelters save lives in heat waves. Irrigation prevents crops from dying in hot, dry conditions. Sea dikes shield assets along coastlines from flooding. If deployed effectively, such solutions deliver immense value.

But recognising that adaptation is a good investment does not guarantee that the money will be spent. After all, the world spends only one-third of what's required today, and achieving developed-economy standards of protection at 2°C by 2050 will require 6.2 times as much as what is spent today. A lack of capacity to spend, competing priorities, collective-action problems, and other factors all threaten to hamper implementation.

Moreover, the challenges of scaling up adaptation could look very different in developed and developing countries. For example, the costs would be highest by far in Sub-Saharan Africa, reaching 3 per cent of projected GDP in exposed places, or about 50 per cent more than governments in the region spent as a share of GDP to service their external debt in 2024. The shares of GDP needed for protection at developed-economy standards by 2°C in the Middle East and North Africa and in India are somewhat lower; and in North America, they are lower still, totalling around 0.3 per cent of GDP in exposed places.

Economic development can help improve the capacity to spend, but even if adaptation spending grew in lockstep with GDP growth, only about 60 per cent of what is needed would be covered globally at 2°C. If lower-income regions were to increase spending in line with their anticipated economic growth, it would cover only one-quarter of the costs of adapting at 2°C. Moreover, the presence or absence of adaptation measures can itself influence the pace of economic development. Drought or flooding can slow income growth for smallholder farmers, and heat stress can affect the productivity of outdoor workers.

So, what can be done, and what role do different actors play? The good news is that many households can implement some adaptation measures on their own, particularly for heat. If made affordable, solutions like passive cooling (shade, natural ventilation, and so forth), reflective roofs, fans, or air conditioners can offer meaningful protection in many cases.

But governments also have an important role to play, especially in lower-income areas and communities. They can finance critical infrastructure like coastal protection, and establish cooling shelters to protect the public. They can also create incentives to adapt, by setting and enforcing standards that enhance resilience, while raising awareness of risks. And they can deploy targeted subsidies or procurement programs to make adaptation more affordable for households and small firms.

At the same time, businesses, particularly large ones, can manage their own exposures, both directly and indirectly through their supply chains. They can also innovate to help make adaptation measures more affordable and effective, such as by offering better and cheaper cooling systems to address heat stress.

Finally, financial institutions can leverage existing instruments to fund adaptation, such as by providing project-level finance for infrastructure like sea dikes. Blended finance approaches also could prove helpful in bridging viability gaps and attracting private capital, though more work is needed to scale these up. For developing economies, there are also opportunities to integrate adaptation into broader investments relating to energy infrastructure, transportation systems, or urbanisation. Embedding adaptation early in these projects is far cheaper than retrofitting or rebuilding down the road.

Effective adaptation can strengthen resilience, protect vulnerable communities, and support economic growth. The world has the tools, and the benefits are undeniable. The decisions we make today will shape our ability to thrive in the long term.

MANILA BULLETIN

Race to protect 30% of the oceans by 2030 gains momentum in Iloilo

As the world races to protect 30% of its oceans by 2030, the Philippines hosted the Asia Regional Large-Scale Marine Protected Area (LSMPA) Workshop in Iloilo City. The Zoological Society of London - Philippines (ZSL), in partnership with the Blue Nature Alliance (Alliance) and regional partners from government, academe, and non-governmental organizations, gathered to discuss science-based, community-driven strategies for large-scale marine protection.

Co-hosted by Big Ocean—a peer-learning network designed by and for managers of large-scale marine areas—with technical and financial support from the Alliance, a global partnership aiming to conserve 18 million square kilometers of ocean, the two-day workshop gathered representatives from the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Maldives, Vietnam, and the Solomon Islands to exchange insights on challenges and opportunities in ocean protection at scale—from policy gaps and governance issues to climate impacts, illegal fishing, and transboundary protection.

"With the highest nearshore marine biodiversity in the world, Asia has long been at the forefront of coastal protection," said Laure Katz, Executive Director of the Alliance. Building on this leadership, the workshop addressed the urgency to extend marine protection to areas beyond 12 nautical miles through advancing science-policy-community interrelationships, preparing the foundations for an Asia Regional LSMPA Community of Practice, and developing a roadmap for large-scale marine protection.

Advancing Regional Collaboration in Conservation

The workshop underscores ZSL Philippines' leadership in science-based conservation and demonstrates how multi-sector, multi-country collaboration, supported by BNA, can accelerate progress toward the 30x30 target.

The Alliance believes that partnership is key to advancing ocean conservation. "The Blue Nature Alliance is working with over 130 partners globally to advance ocean conservation in 5% of the world's ocean as a significant contribution to the global 30x30 goal," said Katz.

Participants collectively agreed that the main pressures on Asia's marine ecosystems are pollution and climate change, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, sea-level rise, and habitat destruction.

They also emphasized key recommendations, including aligning marine conservation with food security objectives, developing long-term and equitable financing mechanisms with government support, harmonizing ocean-related policies for easier adoption, and enhancing public participation in conservation. These efforts showcase Asia’s ingenuity in building a strong foundation for marine protection.

“The potential for Asia is huge. It can be a trailblazer, creating a ‘Big Ocean 2.0,’ leading the second wave of large-scale protection, and showing the world that fisheries, food security, and conservation can be addressed together,” said Naiʻa Lewis, Director of Big Ocean.

Philippine Rise: One of Asia’s Most Ambitious Conservation Efforts

The proposed Philippine Rise Ocean Conservation Area, implemented by ZSL, in partnership with the Department of Agriculture–Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Fisheries Management Area 1, and the Alliance, would span approximately 150,000 square kilometers or 7.5% of the Philippine waters, potentially making it Asia’s largest single marine protected area protecting biodiversity while supporting long-term food security.

“The thinking around marine protected areas has long been at a much smaller scale,” said Edwina Garchitorena, Country Director of ZSL Philippines. “We know the challenges remain—from community understanding to governance alignment—but we also know the impact will be there. We are committed to helping make this shift happen.”

“The movement for large-scale protection with comprehensive solutions both nearshore and offshore has started in Asia with governments, particularly in the Philippines and Indonesia, taking bold steps in turning commitments into action,” added Katz.

Toward a Collective Path for Ocean Protection

The workshop showed that large-scale marine protection is increasingly feasible when grounded in science, policy, community participation, and global collaboration. “The Asia Regional LSMPA Workshop is the beginning of a meaningful journey to inspire bold action for marine protection for the benefit of people and nature,” shared Katz.

ZSL, together with the Alliance, Big Ocean, and regional partners, will continue advancing efforts to strengthen large-scale marine governance and mobilize collective action toward the achievement of the global 30x30 ocean protection target.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

LPA spotted outside PAR but unlikely to intensify
By: Ma. Cristina Arayata

Rains will continue to affect most parts of the country on Tuesday due to the influence of four prevailing weather systems, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said.

As of 2 a.m., a low pressure area (LPA) was located about 725 kilometers southwest of Pag-asa Island in Kalayaan, Palawan, outside the Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR).

PAGASA said the weather disturbance is unlikely to develop into a tropical cyclone within the next 24 hours.

Despite this, the trough of the LPA is expected to bring scattered rains and thunderstorms over the Zamboanga Peninsula, Basilan, Tawi-Tawi, and Palawan.

Scattered rains and isolated thunderstorms caused by a shear line will also affect the Bicol Region, Quezon, Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Northern Samar.

Meanwhile, the easterlies will bring similar weather conditions to the rest of the Visayas.

PAGASA warned that moderate to heavy rains in these areas may trigger flash floods or landslides.

The northeast monsoon or "amihan" will cause light rains over the Cordillera Administrative Region, Cagayan Valley, and Aurora, while Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon may experience isolated light rains.

In Mindanao, the easterlies will continue to bring isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms to the rest of the region.

PAGASA also said moderate to strong winds and moderate to rough seas will prevail over Luzon and the eastern sections of the Visayas and Mindanao.

Elsewhere, winds will be light to moderate, with slight to moderate coastal waters.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

NIA modernizes irrigation through digitalization and AI

For decades, irrigation management in the Philippines has depended largely on manual monitoring, field inspections and on-the-ground reporting—an approach that worked in more predictable times but has become increasingly strained in recent years by climate variability, aging infrastructure and the growing demand for reliable water supply.

Today, the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) is undergoing a significant shift: from reactive, manual systems toward a more modern, data-driven model of irrigation management.

This transformation, now gaining momentum, reflects a broader effort to make irrigation services more efficient, transparent and responsive to the realities faced by farmers on the ground.

Modernizing a system built for another era
Irrigation systems across the country were largely designed in an era when weather patterns were more predictable and operational decisions could be made based on seasonal experience alone.

In recent years, however, prolonged droughts, sudden flooding and shifting rainfall patterns have exposed the limits of purely manual management.

“Climate change has altered the conditions under which irrigation systems operate,” NIA administrator Eddie Guillen explains.

An engineer by training who also hails from an agricultural province, Guillen has spent much of his career working at the intersection of infrastructure, public service and rural development.

“Relying only on experience and field reports is no longer enough,” he said. “We need better data, better forecasting and faster coordination.”

Under Guillen’s administration since 2022, NIA has begun strengthening its use of digital tools and centralized monitoring systems that allow engineers and managers to track irrigation performance across regions, consolidate information and respond more quickly to emerging issues.

What digitalization means on the ground

For farmers and irrigators’ associations, digitalization is not abstract technology. It is about more reliable water delivery, clearer communication and quicker problem-solving.

Traditionally, reports of damaged gates, silted canals or uneven water distribution could take days or even weeks to reach decision-makers. With centralized monitoring and improved data collection, issues can now be identified earlier and addressed more systematically.

“In many areas, farmers don’t need a deep understanding of the technology behind it,” Guillen said. “What matters to them is that water arrives when it’s needed, and that problems are resolved faster. Digital systems help us do exactly that.”

Irrigators’ associations benefit from clearer coordination with NIA field offices, more predictable schedules and better planning, particularly during dry spells or after severe weather events.

Using AI to anticipate, not just react

One of the most significant shifts under NIA’s modernization drive is the move from reactive to anticipatory management. By exploring Artificial Intelligence (AI)-assisted weather forecasting and data analytics, NIA aims to anticipate rainfall patterns, water availability and potential disruptions before they occur.

These tools allow irrigation managers to plan water releases more efficiently, adjust operations ahead of storms or droughts, and protect infrastructure from avoidable damage.

“AI and advanced forecasting don’t replace engineers or field staff,” Guillen emphasized. “They support them. They give us a clearer picture of what’s coming, so decisions are based on evidence, not guesswork.”

For farming communities, this translates into fewer surprises, better preparation and greater confidence during planting and harvesting seasons.

Supporting climate resilience and sustainability

Digitalization is closely tied to NIA’s broader climate-resilience strategy. Improved data and monitoring help identify vulnerable sections of irrigation systems, prioritize rehabilitation works and guide long-term planning.

By aligning technology with climate-adaptation goals, NIA aims to ensure that irrigation investments remain effective despite increasing environmental stress.

“Sustainability is not just about building new structures,” Guillen said. “It’s about managing what we already have more intelligently, so systems last longer and serve farmers better.”

This approach supports national objectives on food security, water sufficiency and climate adaptation; areas where irrigation plays a critical role.

Strengthening governance and institutional reform through technology

Beyond operational improvements, digital systems also enhance governance. Standardized data collection and centralized reporting promote greater consistency across regional offices and strengthen internal accountability.

Digital records make it easier to track project status, monitor performance and support evidence-based decision-making—key components of institutional reform within NIA.

“Good governance depends on good information,” Guillen noted. “When data is clear and accessible, it supports transparency, accountability and better planning.”

These efforts complement NIA’s wider institutional strengthening initiatives, reinforcing internal controls while reducing reliance on fragmented or informal reporting.

“I grew up understanding how important water is to farmers,” Guillen added. “That perspective shapes how we approach our work, not just as infrastructure projects, but as services that directly affect livelihoods.”

This practical mindset has guided NIA’s push toward systems that are functional, durable and responsive to real-world conditions.

Forging ahead in 2026

As NIA moves into 2026, the agency plans to deepen its digital transformation: expanding centralized monitoring, refining the use of advanced analytics, and strengthening the integration between technology, climate resilience and irrigation operations.

The goal is not technology for its own sake, but a more reliable, efficient and farmer-centered irrigation system.

“Our responsibility is to ensure that irrigation keeps pace with the challenges ahead,” Guillen said. “Modern tools help us protect our infrastructure, support our farmers and secure our food supply for the future.”

CCC IN THE NEWS:

BUSINESS MIRROR

Social Watch weighs in on call for partial budget veto
By: Andrea E. San Juan

A budget watchdog has asked President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to veto several highly questionable items, totaling P319.04 billion in the ratified 2026 national budget bill, closely following a call by several groups for him to veto items they described as categories of “shadow, soft and hard” pork.

In a statement issued over the weekend, Social Watch Philippines (SWP) slammed the bicam members’ “last-minute insertions and lump-sum appropriations as a return to the old pork barrel system,” which the group called “a highly discretionary practice that is opaque and prone to political favoritism—despite public outrage over corruption and wasteful spending.”

Ma. Victoria Raquiza, Co-Convenor of Social Watch Philippines said the 2026 budget is not people-centered, despite what the Bicam Committee claims.

“It is extremely disappointing how Congress ignores the public’s anger over unprecedented levels of corruption and the alarming use of public funds to promote patronage politics,” Raquiza said.

What’s worse, she added: “Despite the Bicam livestreaming, numerous non-transparent side meetings and huddles took place, and major last-minute adjustments were undertaken outside of the public’s scrutiny, thereby undermining the vaunted transparency and accountability of the Bicam process.”

Raquiza said such actions “deepen the public trust deficit in government and intensify public cynicism toward the government’s commitment to uphold every Filipino’s right to a just and fair budget.”

The budget watchdog said SWP-flagged programs for veto are as follows:

• P81.94 billion increase in the Basic Infrastructure Program (BIP) and the Sustainable Infrastructure Projects Alleviating Gaps (SIPAG) program under the Convergence and Special Support Program (CSSP) (Department of Public Works and Highways)—These overlap with various projects under existing DPWH programs.

• P8.9B Farm-to-Market Roads (Department of Agriculture)—A last-minute adjustment requested during the bicam, which did not go through public scrutiny during the House and Senate hearings.

• P10B Presidential Assistance for Farmers and Fisherfolk (DA)—This duplicates funding, as financial subsidies or assistance worth P8.55B are already spread across existing DA programs and projects.

• P2.73B for the Tulong Dunong Program (Commission on Higher Education)—A duplication inserted by the House. CHED has already allocated P37.55 billion to cover the cost of universal access to tertiary education for all Filipino students enrolled in higher education institutions.

• P15.33B Disaster Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Assistance Program for Local Government Units or LGUs (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund)—This overlaps with other regular programs of the NDRRMF.

• P23.048M Philippine Pavilion at the 2026 United Nations Climate Conference (Climate Change Commission)—This is a bicam insertion, as it was not included in either the House or Senate versions; it is funded by unjustified cuts to the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Region X regional office budget for Domain/Land Recognition, Management and Development Services, and IP Human Rights, Legal, and Basic Social Services.

• P5.25B Confidential funds (various agencies[3])—As a general rule, civilian agencies must not engage in surveillance activities nor implement secret expenses. The President should lead by example by removing the confidential funds of his office.

• P138B for social protection and assistance programs with questionable increases, composed of DOH Medical Assistance to Indigent and Financially Incapacitated Patients (P51.6B), DOLE's Tulong Pangkabuhayan sa Ating Disadvantaged Workers (P22.4B), and DSWD's Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situations (P63.9B).

• P56.873B Local Government Units assistance fund—The threefold increase by the bicam is prone to patronage and political discretion.

For the P138B "ayuda funds" and the P56.873B LGU assistance fund, SWP has called on the president to pass a "supplemental budget immediately to revert the budget back to the National Expenditure Program levels of P63.4B and P6B, respectively."

The group also suggests a stronger "anti-epal" provision to stop all forms of political patronage and interference.

Meanwhile, to address transparency issues surrounding the P243.4B Unprogrammed Appropriations (UA), the group proposes two options for the President.

"First, retain all budget items except Budgetary Support to Government Corporations and the Revised Armed Forces of the Philippines [AFP] Modernization Program, as both already have dedicated budgets under special purpose funds," the group said.

This option, it noted, should impose “strict enforcement” of quarterly public reporting of UA releases through the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) and agency transparency seal portals.

The second option is a total veto of all ten UA items, subject to a supplemental budget that clearly identifies funding sources and provides a breakdown of expenditure details, it also noted.

DAILY TRIBUNE

Partnership forged with malugay

At the College of Forestry of Cotabato State University, Climate Change Commission (CCC) vice chairperson and executive director Robert E.A. Borje plants a malugay (Pometia pinnata) seedling into the ground in the presence of CSU officials on 23 December. The activity is part of a collaborative greening and resilience-building activity on campus.

The hardwood, which can grow up to 40 meters tall and used for making furniture, flooring and boatbuilding, also symbolizes the strong partnership forged by CCC with state universities and colleges (SUCs) in localizing the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and building capacities for transformative climate action.

“Every tree planted and grown is a step towards renewing its value for our communities,” Borje during his meeting with CSU president Dr. Sema G. Dilna and his team. “We thank the CotSU College of Forestry for choosing this species and for working with us to ensure these trees — and our partnership — grow strong.”

Borje stressed that the CCC will continue to engage stakeholders in line with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.’s vision of a climate resilient Philippines.

“We are turning communities into champions for climate,” he said.

Borje also met with officials from the Sultan Kudarat State University (SKSU) to advance convergence on climate adaptation, research and capacity building.

In a meeting with SKSU president Dr. Samson L. Molao and his team, he discussed leveraging the university’s critical role as an academic and research hub to build local climate capacities. The dialogue emphasized SKSU’s potential in driving evidence-based climate action in the region, with sustained support from Senator Loren Legarda, a long-time advocate for empowering SUCs.

SUCs are positioned to support the protection and rehabilitation of biodiversity across habitats and ecosystems, as well as enabling and empowering communities to lead ecological management. This includes helping establish collaborative research partnerships between local communities, researchers and environmental organizations to provide access to scientific expertise, enabling ecological assessment and better-informed decisions at a local level to improve the resiliency of ecosystems.

Developed under the leadership of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., the NAP aims to steadily reduce climate-related loss and damage and to build the country’s adaptive capacity toward transformative resilience and sustainable economic development by 2050.

The NAP serves as a national instrument for pursuing efforts at all levels of governance to address climate risk and reduce the country's vulnerability to climate change impacts by bolstering adaptive capacity, fostering resilience, and integrating adaptation into relevant policies and programs. It specifically identifies SUCs as supporting agencies in several key adaptation strategies, recognizing their critical role in translating national policy into local, on-the-ground action.

INSIDER PH

Green finance push to power PH climate action
By: Vanessa B. Hidalgo

As the Philippines prepares to chair the Association of Southeast Asian Nations this year, a whole-of-society approach is essential to effectively address regional priorities, including climate change, the blue economy, biodiversity and pollution.

It is no secret that the country bears the brunt of climate change, with its effects directly impacting lives, livelihoods, and infrastructure— and disrupting the economy in the process.

Despite the damage and disruption, there is an opportunity to turn climate risk into investment potential.

A 2025 report by the Green Finance Institute (GFI) notes that the Philippines' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Implementation Plan estimates a $72-billion climate financing need across five sectors: agriculture, waste, industry, transport, and energy.

With public funds covering only 2.7 percent of this amount, unlocking private investment through innovative financing is crucial.

Developed in collaboration with the Department of Finance (DOF), the Climate Change Commission (CCC), and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, the GFI report identifies key barriers to private climate financing and proposes policy and financial solutions.

It also explores how the Inter-agency Task Force on Sustainable Finance, or the "Green Force," can serve as a national platform to bridge funding gaps and mobilize private capital toward the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and National Adaptation Program (NAP) goals.

Untapped sectors: transport and waste

The report highlights that, despite growing climate commitments, capital mobilization for the public transport and waste sectors remains limited. The Climate Bonds Initiative found that from 2014 to 2023, 35 percent of green bond funds went to energy projects, while mass transport and solid waste remain largely "untapped sectors."

According to James Hooton, managing director of missions at GFI, investors believe these sectors lack execution rather than ambition.

"The real challenge lies in the gap between political promises and commercial realities," he said in an interview with InsiderPH. "Renewables succeeded because clear policies, standard contracts, and predictable revenues made them mature and investable."

Hooton explained that public transport deals are often small and fragmented, with route and revenue uncertainty affecting bankability.

In the waste sector, low tipping fees, cheap landfill options, and unstable public-private partnership (PPP) arrangements make greener alternatives less competitive. Unclear regulations also add risk to emerging technologies like waste-to-energy projects.

Climate and infrastructure realities

Data shows that the transport sector contributes 23 percent of the Philippines' greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, with public utility jeepneys accounting for 15.5 percent of that total.

Despite the rollout of the jeepney modernization program, progress has been slow—only 4 percent of the target fleet has been replaced.

The waste sector contributes 13 percent of national GHG emissions. In 2020, the Philippines generated 18 million tons of municipal solid waste, growing by 3.4 percent annually.

Only 9 percent of plastic waste is recycled, resulting in an estimated $790 million –$890 million in lost value each year. Investment uncertainty has also slowed the development of waste-to-energy projects, according to the Asian Development Bank.

'Green Force'

Established in 2021, the Green Force, led by the DOF and CCC, aims to institutionalize sustainable finance and build a pipeline of green investments.

Working with GFI, it seeks to develop structured finance solutions and evolve into the Philippines Investment Platform, mirroring global models designed to mobilize private capital for climate goals.

“Capital will flow where there is a suitable risk-adjusted return,” Hooton said. “Public and development finance isn't about volume—it's about being catalytic: using blended finance and risk-sharing to pull in private money where it wouldn't otherwise go.

GFI works with governments and markets to make NDC ambition investable—through clear policy, institutional reform, credible pipelines, and transaction structures that can close and scale.”

He added that the private sector can drive the next wave of green investments.

“Domestic banks can step in with repeatable senior debt. Corporates can anchor long-term offtake. Foreign investors bring equity and project finance as execution risk falls. And once deals are proven and replicable, institutional capital follows.”

A coordinated path forward

According to Hooton, the most effective approach involves coordinated action across the entire value chain—engaging industry, developers, DFIs, and investors to turn NDC and NAP goals into an actionable Investment Greenprint.

This requires clear policies, efficient regulation, strong market infrastructure and catalytic capital for initial projects.

“As climate ambition grows, financing and institutions must expand with it,” he said.

Resilient green economy

Ultimately, the goal of the Green Force is to establish lasting and effective financing solutions that strengthen economic resilience such as developing robust transport and charging infrastructure and modernized waste systems that prevent flooding from clogged drainage.

“Success in three years looks like an 'investment greenprint' that converts NDC and NAP priorities into pilot transactions that show a pathway to scale—backed by enabling conditions and delivery structures so capital can move quickly to where it matters most,” Hooton said.

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