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16 MARCH 2026 | 08:00 am

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By: Bethany Bell

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## **DZRH**

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## **THE MANILA TIMES**

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### PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

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**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

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[Austrian glaciers disintegrating due to climate change, say scientists](#)

By: Bethany Bell

Scientists are warning that glaciers in the Austrian Alps are not just shrinking, but are disintegrating, because of climate change.

The latest report on glaciers by the Austrian Alpine Club say they "continue to shrink dramatically in length, area and volume".

"Many glaciers are not only shrinking in length but are increasingly entering a phase of structural disintegration," said Andreas Kellerer-Pirklbauer from the University of Graz.

"Exposed rock ledges, sections of ice breaking away and glacier tongues collapsing in on themselves are increasingly shaping the landscape."

In its annual report, the Austrian Alpine Club, said 94 out of the 96 glaciers that it measured over the past year in Austria, had shrank.

The report said the most badly affected glaciers during this period were the Alpeiner Ferner glacier in Tyrol, which shrank by 114.3m and the Stubacher Sonnblickkees in the province of Salzburg, which lost 103.9m in length.

Austria's largest glacier, the Pasterze in Carinthia, also continues to shrink. The report said it was very likely that the glacier tongue would break off in the coming years, splitting the glacier in two.

The report said the trend was once again due to climate change. "A warm winter with little snow and an exceptionally warm early summer, with June being almost 5C warmer than average," it added.

It said temperatures at the high-altitude stations were 2C (3.6F) above the long-term annual average.

Gerhard Lieb, who runs the glacier monitoring service with Andreas Kellerer-Pirklbauer, said the weather conditions in recent years had been "extremely unfavourable for glaciers".

"Many glaciers are now losing so much mass that they barely react to periods of short-term cooling, such as that seen in July 2025," he said.

Climate change is particularly evident in the Alpine region, the scientists said.

Progressive warmer temperatures, they said, were leading to "more extreme weather events and natural hazards".

"Alpine infrastructure is increasingly at risk; and as the glaciers disappear, the landscape is undergoing profound changes," the report said.

"Climate change has long been a reality in the Alps, and we are experiencing its consequences... right now," Nicole Slupetzky, Vice-President of the Austrian Alpine Club said.

"It is no longer a question of whether we can still save the glaciers in their former state. It is a question of mitigating the consequences for ourselves".

## DAILY TRIBUNE

### [PHL lacks sufficient data to track climate action progress - UN](#)

By: Sean A. Magbanua

In the latest Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2026 of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Philippines and other Asia-Pacific countries lacked adequate measured targets to track the progress for UN Sustainable Development Goal #13 on Climate Action.

According to the UNESCAP report, many countries in the Asia-Pacific region have less than a third of their targets sufficiently measured for Climate Action, indicating a regression in the region's climate action efforts.

However, neighboring countries such as Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Timor-Leste have between 50% and 75% of their measured targets showing positive trends in their Climate Action efforts.

Only climate action and gender equality measures were lacking in the Philippines, but for the remaining 15 SDGs, the country had 50% to 75% or more of the targets measured by the UN.

The SGD Climate Action comprises five targets including resilience & adaptive capacity, climate change policies, climate change awareness, UNFCCC commitments and climate change planning and management.

As 2030 approaches, UNESCAP hopes for faster and more coordinated action across the region, with most of the 17 SDGs still falling short of their targets.

"Since 2015, progress has been made, but none of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals are fully on track", UNESCAP said.

The organization also noted that the Asia-Pacific region will miss 103 of the 117 measurable targets.

"Existing data show that the region is on track to achieve only 14 targets by 2030, with seven SDGs having no targets on track", the UN regional entity also stated in their 2026 annual report.

Among the 14 measurable targets in the Asia-Pacific region that have maintained progress toward achieving the SDGs by 2030 are international and national poverty reduction (SDG 1 – No Poverty); maternal and child mortality (SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being); technology for women's empowerment (SDG 5 – Gender Equality); international cooperation on energy (SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy); aid for trade (SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth); access to ICT and the internet (SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure); special and differential treatment (SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities); housing and basic services

(SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities); resources for biodiversity, ecosystem and forest management, and terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems (SDG 15 – Life on Land); and reduction of violence and related deaths and effective institutions (SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

**DZRH**

**[QC takes full ownership of climate program, showcases green building code 2025](#)**

By: Elijah Gaven Mitra

The Quezon City Government, in partnership with C40 Cities and the British Embassy Manila, formally marked the transition of the UK-funded Urban Climate Action Programme (UCAP) Climate Action Implementation portfolio to the city during a handover ceremony held at Novotel Manila Araneta City on March 13.

The event, titled “Building a Resilient and Inclusive Future,” signified the culmination of four years of collaboration aimed at strengthening the city’s climate policies and sustainability programs.

A highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of the Quezon City Green Building Code (GBC) 2025, which modernizes the city’s 2009 ordinance by raising standards for energy efficiency, water conservation, and renewable energy adoption. With the building sector accounting for about 60 percent of the city’s greenhouse gas emissions, the updated code is expected to play a major role in helping the city achieve its target of reducing emissions by 30 percent by 2030.

City officials said the new ordinance could reduce electricity consumption by up to 12 percent—or around 900 gigawatt-hours annually—by 2030. This could translate to a reduction of approximately 0.67 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions per year, equivalent to removing about 120,000 vehicles from the road, while also potentially cutting electricity costs for condominium residents by as much as 50 percent.

The program also highlighted Quezon City’s leadership in inclusive climate action, becoming the first local government in the Philippines to locally define good green jobs through consultations with marginalized sectors, including workers in the informal economy.

Through related initiatives and training programs, the city has integrated climate equity into the development system of more than 19,000 government employees, ensuring that the transition to a greener economy benefits all residents.

During the ceremony, the city also introduced its Solar Dashboard, a digital platform that maps solar adoption and identifies untapped rooftop generation potential across Quezon City.

The tool is expected to support policy discussions with national agencies such as the Department of Energy, the Energy Regulatory Commission, and power distributor Manila Electric Company as the city continues working toward its long-term goal of achieving a carbon-neutral future by 2050.

## MANILA BULLETIN

### [Pasig LGU, government research institute ink MOU to boost energy conservation programs](#)

By: Richielyn Canlas

The local government of Pasig and the Philippine Energy Research and Policy Institute (PERPI), a government research institute, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen the city's capacity in promoting programs for efficient energy use and conservation.

The signing ceremony was led by Mayor Vico Sotto, along with Sangguniang Panlungsod Committee on Technology, Communication, and Energy Chairperson Ryan Enriquez, and PERPI Executive Board President Angelo Azura Jimenez, together with other representatives from the local government and PERPI, on Friday, March 13, at the Temporary Pasig City Hall.

The agreement aims to boost the capacity of the local government in promoting programs and initiatives for efficient energy use and conservation, with the help of technical assistance and capacity development training programs from PERPI.

The agreement will also support the development of projects, the conduct of research, and the formulation of policies to help the city in areas such as renewable energy, climate change adaptation, sustainable community development, green jobs, and eco-enterprise development. The local government said that the programs to be launched will be overseen by the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Technical Working Group, led by the City Engineering Office, in coordination with the Sangguniang Panlungsod for proposed ordinances and other offices and departments.

PERPI is a government research institute established under the Philippine Energy Research and Policy Institute Act (RA 11572), mandated to conduct independent and multidisciplinary research in the energy sector and develop policies to ensure energy security, equity, and sustainability in the country.

## THE MANILA TIMES

### [\[Opinion\] Population vis-à-vis UN SDGs](#)

By Amado Tolentino Jr.

Back in 1973, the Philippines must have been the only country in the world with a policy on population embodied in the Constitution, which says: “It shall be the responsibility of the State to achieve and maintain population levels most conducive to the national welfare.” (Sec. 10, Art. XV, 1973 Constitution). Additionally, the Philippine Environment Code (PD 1152, 1977) provides a section on population-environment balance. Both legislations came when there was much concern about the rapidly growing Philippine population, aggravated by the decreasing availability of natural resources.

Actually, a Filipino, the late Rafael Salas, first executive director of the United Nations Population Fund, called the attention of countries about “the crucial links between population growth and development goals, and there is a need to take population factors into account in development plans.”

Overpopulation is the state of the number of human inhabitants “when there are more people that can live on planet Earth in comfort, happiness and health, and still leave the world a fit place for future generations.” It happens when the Earth cannot regenerate resources used by the world’s population each year.

If not controlled, overpopulation can bring about not only depletion of natural resources but also habitat loss and species extinction, increased global warming and climate change, lower life expectancy and emergence of new endemics, epidemics and pandemics.

To be more specific, forests are being cleared at a fast rate as the population increases. Forests are giving way to human settlements and industrial expansion. At the same time, lack of forest trees results in floods, soil erosion and naturally, food insecurity, which drives people to urban areas that need to expand to accommodate migrants from rural areas. There are also environmental refugees and internally displaced persons uprooted from their traditional habitat for environmental reasons, e.g., natural disasters, armed conflict, water and food scarcity. It is human nature that a person would do everything to survive. They would relocate to places where there are enough resources to go on with their lives.

Overpopulation, worsened by crowded living conditions, malnutrition and inadequate health care wreak havoc on the poor and increase their likelihood of being exposed to diseases like diarrhea and malaria, typical diseases caused by inadequacy of clean water while cholera, typhus, dysentery, gastroenteritis and hepatitis spread by contaminated water and dirty hands. There was a time when much attention was focused on prevention of infectious diseases like SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and Covid-19 (coronavirus disease 2019). The World Health Organization says Covid-19 is a new virus but like other pandemics in the past, it

is preventable, treatable and manageable. To cite an example, flu vaccines did not exist when the Spanish flu of 1918 hit many people. Medical historians say there was even a spike of the flu virus in 1920 followed by the equivalent today of “herd immunity.” It should be noted there were fewer people in those days. Increase in population means more people would get infected and infect others, especially in densely populated cities. Needless to say, overpopulation plays a role in the spread of viruses and emergence of pandemics.

Furthermore, the effects of environmental pollutants in the air or water, particularly those caused by chemicals, worsen the health problem. This is particularly true of industrial activities that involve chemical use or the deliberate release of chemical substances for specific purposes as in the case of agricultural chemicals.

In this connection, it is a declared policy of the State to protect and promote the right of the people to good health and instill health consciousness among them. (Sec 15, Art II, 1987, Constitution). Pursuant to the constitutional policy, laws adopted by the government to prevent and control prevailing health problems include, but is not limited to, compulsory basic immunization, penalties for improper disposal of wastes, formation of local water districts, construction and rehabilitation of existing water wells in barangay as well as a Water Code and a Sanitation Code.

#### Reproductive health law

With continuing accounts that the natural resources of the Philippines are uncontrollably decreasing brought by, among others, overpopulation, Congress enacted Republic Act 10354, or the 2012 Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act, despite objections by some quarters on religious grounds. The goal of the law is to allow people to make informed decisions with regard to their reproductive health as well as the education of people on all methods of family planning. It promotes programs that enable people to have the number of children they desire with due consideration to their health, and the resources available and affordable to them. As expected, the human right vis-à-vis a person’s right over one’s body figured much in the debates on the proposed law. There was expectation that wide acceptance of the new law could be tested by the use of the people’s power-related legal process called referendum in the 1987 Constitution, but it did not happen.

For a while, there were thoughts on the imposition of a penalty for reproducing beyond a predetermined but reasonable number of children. Not as drastic as the original “one child” policy in China but a burden or imposition of a tax on those who exceed a specified number of offspring. Or, positively approaching the matter, perhaps incentives for lesser children like educational benefits, etc., could be resorted to.

It seems that population reduction as an aid in the prevention of further degradation of the environment and natural resources has not reached the senses of many until the Covid-19 pandemic took over.

## Population vis-à-vis UN Sustainable Development Goals

Rapid population growth and natural resources depletion are interacting with one another in ways that are harmful to people's health and well-being. In assessing the overall policies and strategies of the government, one must examine them with particular reference to their bearing on the UN Agenda 2030 the essence of which is distilled in 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which include, among others, no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, sustainable cities and communities, affordable clean energy, climate action, and responsible consumption and production.

Congress must enact strict policies which truly integrate population issues with the sustainable development goals. The Philippines must lead in heeding the prescription pronounced by the pioneering Filipino population expert, Rafael Salas.

Take note that the government alone cannot have all solutions as they are subject to political, administrative, budgetary and other constraints. It needs active participation by the private/business sector, nongovernmental organizations, and international agencies and institutions. Likewise, there is the need for more concern for human progress and social justice as factors influencing a transformative population-environment balance framework for the Philippines.

## CCC IN THE NEWS:

### DAILY TRIBUNE

#### [Roots of resilience: Why forests matter to climate stability](#)

By: Secretary Robert E.A. Borje

When we talk about progress in the Philippines, we often point to what rises above the ground — skyways cutting through traffic, airports expanding connectivity and skylines climbing higher each year. These structures are visible markers of economic growth. For decades, they have been treated as proof of national advancement.

But in a climate-vulnerable archipelago like ours, the foundations of resilience lie not only in what we build. They also lie in the ecological systems that effectively, if quietly, stabilize our landscapes and sustain our economy.

Forests are among the most important of these systems. They are not simply ecological assets or timber reserves waiting to be extracted. In a warming world, forests function as natural systems that regulate water, stabilize landscapes, and absorb carbon from the atmosphere. Protecting them is not only an environmental concern; it is a matter of national stability.

The urgency of this reality becomes clear when we look at the numbers. The Philippines spans roughly 30 million hectares of land, yet today the Forest Management Bureau reports in 2022 that only about 7.22 million hectares — around 24 percent — remain under forest cover. It is important to note that these data include closed forest, open forest and mangrove forest and excludes shrublands, grasslands and plantations unless classified as forest land.

In spatial terms, this remaining forest area is roughly equivalent to the combined land area of Region I, Region II, and Region III.

In 1934, however, forest cover in the Philippines was estimated at around 17.8 million hectares. In other words, the country has lost more than 10 million hectares of forests over the past century — an area comparable to the combined land areas of Regions I, II, III, the Cordillera Administrative Region and the Bicol Region.

This ecological contraction is not merely statistical. It reflects the weakening of systems that regulate water, prevent erosion, sustain biodiversity and absorb greenhouse gases.

In an archipelagic country like ours, forests anchor interconnected ridge-to-reef systems that link mountains, watersheds, rivers, and coastal ecosystems. Healthy forests regulate rainfall absorption and groundwater recharge, stabilize soils, and slow the movement of water across landscapes.

These functions reduce flooding downstream, prevent erosion that clogs rivers and reservoirs, and limit sediments that eventually reach coastal waters and coral reefs.

What happens in upland forests therefore shapes the resilience of communities far beyond the forest itself — from farms dependent on reliable irrigation to coastal fisheries that sustain livelihoods across the archipelago.

When forests disappear, the risks cascade. Watersheds become unstable, flood risks intensify, and sediments degrade downstream ecosystems. These environmental disruptions quickly become economic ones. Farmers lose reliable water supplies, fisheries suffer from declining coastal health, and communities become more exposed to landslides and stronger storms.

Seen from this systemic perspective, forest protection becomes more than conservation policy. It becomes a form of national risk management.

Forests are also one of the few climate strategies that advance adaptation and mitigation simultaneously. Healthy forests help communities adapt to intensifying climate hazards by stabilizing landscapes and regulating water systems. At the same time, they function as powerful carbon sinks that help reduce atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations.

The Philippines holds a particularly important position in this regard. As one of the world's 18 megadiverse countries, it hosts ecosystems that sustain an extraordinary share of global biodiversity. In a country where mountains, rivers and coastal waters form interconnected ecological corridors, protecting forests helps safeguard systems whose benefits extend far beyond the forest itself.

Across the Philippines, many forest landscapes have long been stewarded by indigenous communities whose cultural traditions evolved alongside the ecosystems they inhabit. Their knowledge reflects a practical understanding of how forests sustain water, biodiversity and livelihoods across generations.

Recognizing the importance of these natural systems — and the indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage that have sustained them — national climate policy has increasingly integrated ecosystem-based approaches to resilience.

The Philippines' first National Adaptation Plan (NAP) completed under the administration of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. identifies ecosystem-based adaptation as a central pillar of climate resilience. Protecting and restoring forests strengthens watershed management, reduces disaster risks, and stabilizes ecosystems that support communities.

Forests also contribute to the country's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement. Land-use management and forest conservation support mitigation efforts while reinforcing the ecological systems that help communities adapt to climate change.

Across the country, efforts to restore forest landscapes are gaining momentum. Through initiatives such as the Climate Change Commission's Net Zero Challenge, local governments and communities are mobilizing tree-growing and ecosystem restoration efforts that contribute to climate action on the ground.

Yet the deeper question goes beyond individual programs. It concerns how we understand development itself.

Development that ignores ecological boundaries may generate short-term gains, but it also creates long-term vulnerabilities. When watersheds degrade, soils erode, and biodiversity declines, the systems that sustain agriculture, water supply and local economies begin to weaken.

In a climate-vulnerable archipelago like the Philippines, safeguarding forests is therefore not simply about protecting nature. It is about protecting the ecological foundations that sustain national resilience.

As we commemorate the International Day of Forests, let us remember that the roots of resilience run deeper than any structure we build. They lie in the forests that stabilize our watersheds, regulate our climate, and sustain the living systems on which our nation depends.

### Investing in women for stronger families, communities

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) joins the nation in celebrating National Women's Month by declaring that empowering Filipino women is a strategic national investment.

"When we invest in Filipino women, we invest in stronger families, more resilient communities, and a more climate-secure Philippines," CCC vice chair and executive director Robert E.A. Borje said.

"We recognize women not only for their resilience in enduring storms but for their ingenuity in building the systems and strategies that allow our communities to thrive despite them," he added.

CCC Commissioner Rachel Anne S. Herrera, chair of the agency's Gender Focal Point System, said it is everyone's duty to address climate change and ensuring that all sectors, especially women, girls, indigenous peoples and persons with disability are not left behind.

The Commission's commitment to gender-responsive action is reflected in its own structure, where women occupy more than half of all positions in the CCC and they are actively shaping the strategies and policies that guide climate governance.

## MANILA BULLETIN

### [Project Niche empowers Pangasinan youth to tackle heat and plastic crisis](#)

Last Feb. 26 to 27, The Climate Reality Project Philippines held a two-day “Klima Eskwela: Climate Science, Arts, and Action” workshop at Pangasinan State University (PSU) Main Campus in Lingayen, Pangasinan.

Held in partnership with the Climate Change Commission (CCC), PSU and the municipal government of Lingayen, the event taught student leaders the fundamentals of the climate and plastic crises, in hopes of encouraging participants to develop innovative ways to promote grassroots solutions to these issues.

“We’re all here to talk about climate change, whose impacts you have much experience with. But we want you to understand not just the impacts but also the solutions,” said Aimee Oliveros, branch manager of Climate Reality Philippines.

Providing seed funds and mentorship to bring these ideas to life is Project Niche, Climate Reality Philippines’ project incubator and capacity-building initiative for the youth.

PSU is the third state university given the opportunity to implement a plastic-free campus initiative with funding through Project Niche. The two others were Caraga State University and Eastern Visayas State University, both of which hosted Klima Eskwela.

“The fight against climate change and plastic pollution will be won not only by policies or international negotiations abroad. It starts in the classroom and in your own homes. It is nurtured in our communities and fostered by the leadership of young people who are committed and willing to act,” said Atty. Rachel Anne Herrera, commissioner of the CCC.

Located along the Lingayen Gulf, the municipality of Lingayen is prone to a number of climate hazards typical of seaside communities, including coastal flooding and storm surges. But when asked about their own experience of climate change, PSU students said extreme heat is what they feel and observe most immediately.

“During the times na super init [here in Lingayen], it’s humid so yung heat ramdam na ramdam mo na talaga sya; if you’re not in a well-ventilated place, hihingalin ka talaga. It gets to the point na sa sobrang init nya, kahit malapit lang [ang pupuntahan mo], kailangan mong magtricycle because yung init n’ya— you’re gonna get burned,” said Marrian Flor Castro, first-year representative of PSU Lingayen’s Student Alliance of Future Biologists.

“During the times when it gets extremely hot here in Lingayen, it’s very humid, so you really feel the heat intensely. If you’re not in a well-ventilated place, you can end up short of breath. Sometimes it gets so hot that even if you’re only going somewhere nearby, you still need to take a tricycle because of the heat—you feel like you’re going to get burned.”)

Early this March, the community of Lingayen experienced a heat index of 40°C. In the same month last year, it reached an all-time high of 48°C, according to the state weather bureau, PAGASA. This “danger level” warns of high risks of heat cramps, exhaustion, and heat stroke. In fact, several heat-related medical emergencies were reported in Lingayen.

In addition to adverse health impacts, climate change has also disrupted the students’ learning. In recent years, the extreme heat has worsened to the point where classes had to be suspended for up to a week.

“Ang naging epekto po sa amin na mga schools na nagpo-produce ng mga isda, may times po na yung mga laboratories po namin, yung mga experiments po namin, yung mga isda—namatay po sila,” said Lance Phillip Urbien, fishery major and Supreme Student Council president of PSU Binmaley Campus.

“Ang nangyari po ay either termination po of the study or uulit kami. Akala po namin masaya na walang pasok— pero ‘yun pala, napabayaan namin. Kasi di rin kami papayagan pumasok ng school so hindi kami nakakapakain ng isda. Halos natuyo na pala ang tubig.”

and experiments were affected—our fish died. What happened was that our studies were either terminated or we had to start over. At first, we thought having no classes was good, but it turned out that things were neglected. We also weren’t allowed to enter the school, so we couldn’t feed the fish. Eventually, the water had almost dried up.”)

Urbien also connected these experiences with the challenges faced by Lingayen fisherfolk, whose livelihood is vulnerable to rising temperatures.

Their students’ struggles with climate change are not lost on PSU administrators. Lingayen Campus Executive Director Dr. Marie Claire Briones, expressed support for the students’ meaningful participation in Klima Eskwela.

“[Climate change] is a cry for help from nature; [it’s asking us] to be its stewards. This means doing something to address the crisis—using our voice. After all, what’s the sense of having one if we don’t use it?” said Dr. Briones.

A total of 75 participants attended the workshops, comprising science majors, youth organization leaders, and professors from PSU’s Lingayen and Binmaley campuses. By the end of Klima Eskwela, attendees were equipped with skills in project management and policy development.

Klima Eskwela’s lectures on the climate and plastic crises were delivered by Sophia Manzano, development management officer from CCC, and Joseph Pilapil, Climate Reality Philippines’ Plastic-Free Reality program lead.

Local climate action and solid waste management plans were also discussed by guests from local governments: Joe Simon Coloma, climate resiliency staff from the Pangasinan DRRMO; Clark Mamaril, local DRRM officer at the Lingayen Municipal DRRM Office; and Adamson Miña, Jr., an environmental management specialist from the Lingayen Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Office (MENRO).

AktivAsia Pilipinas' Engr. Elaine Lopez facilitated the project management workshops, while Atty. Megan Mateo from CCC's Legal Services Division taught students about policy writing.

These sessions were designed to encourage learners to develop youth-led and community-based solutions to the plastic crisis, to be supported by resources from Project Niche.

For example, Miña discussed previous efforts of the MENRO to engage PSU in addressing its waste problem, including conducting a waste analysis and characterization study (WACS) in the university.

The WACS conducted in PSU showed the types of waste the institution produces, which can guide policies to reduce or eliminate certain types of trash, such as single-use plastics. Based on the study, 42 percent of PSU's waste was recyclables such as plastic and paper.

Drawing from these insights and the lectures conducted during Klima Eskwela, the students drafted potential policies to address waste in PSU. These include information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns, banning waste burning, and eliminating single-use plastics on campus through policies and regulations.

"Klima Eskwela opened up opportunities for us—as students, as a small part of the community, the small things we do can help solve problems [like climate change]. Na, even though you're small, your participation can be part of the solution," Castro added.

## PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

### [DILG to LGUs: Open streets, build parks to fight obesity](#)

By Jerome Carlo Paunan

The Department of the Interior and Local Government is urging local government units nationwide to organize community fitness activities, develop green public spaces, and adopt car-free Sundays as part of a coordinated push to combat rising obesity rates among Filipino adults.

The call, issued through a Memorandum Circular, supports President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s directive to prioritize the health and well-being of Filipinos.

Data from the 2023 National Nutrition Survey shows that four in every 10 Filipino adults are now classified as overweight or obese.

The DILG recommended that LGUs organize accessible outdoor activities such as fun runs, Zumba sessions, and community sports events, while also developing and maintaining parks, plazas, and open spaces equipped with accessible pathways and ramps to accommodate senior citizens and persons with disabilities.

Under the car-free Sunday model, selected roads are temporarily closed to motor vehicles and opened to pedestrians, joggers, and cyclists, with proper rerouting plans to minimize traffic disruption.

Several Metro Manila cities have already adopted the initiative. In Quezon City, a stretch of Tomas Morato Avenue is closed to vehicles every Sunday morning under a city ordinance authored by Councilor Irene Belmonte, who said the measure aims to promote active mobility and provide safer public spaces.

“Car-Free Sundays reflect our vision of a sustainable, people-first Quezon City,” Mayor Joy Belmonte said.

Caloocan City began implementing its own car-free program on March 8, closing a stretch of 9th Street in Grace Park East every Sunday from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. under City Ordinance No. 1158, Series of 2025.

Mayor Dale Gonzalo Malapitan said the move complements the city's broader health agenda.

“The streets of Caloocan are for people, not vehicles. We will keep working to give the public more safe and open spaces,” Malapitan said.

Marikina City closes part of Gil Fernando Avenue every Sunday from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m., building on the city's 52-kilometer network of interconnected bike lanes.

In Manila, Roxas Boulevard is designated car-free along a 2.3-kilometer stretch every Sunday morning, while Makati, Mandaluyong, Taguig, and Pasig have likewise opened key roads and districts to pedestrians and cyclists on weekends.

For the Climate Change Commission, Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert Borje said car-free zones serve both public health and environmental goals.

“Establishing car-free zones lowers carbon emissions, improves air quality, and encourages active, healthier lifestyles,” Borje said, adding that the initiative supports the country’s broader climate resilience and low-carbon development strategies.

The DILG has directed its Regional Directors to monitor and support these initiatives, and has encouraged LGUs to integrate health and wellness programs into their local development plans to ensure long-term sustainability.

The push for healthier, more walkable communities is consistent with the Marcos Jr. administration’s whole-of-government approach to public health and inclusive urban development, ensuring that Filipinos in every region have access to safe spaces where they can lead active and productive lives.

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