



## NEWS ROUNDUP

19 MARCH 2025 [08:00 am]

---

- Dulaang UP takes on the climate crisis
- [Opinion] If US attempts World Bank retreat, the China-led AIIB could be poised to step in – and provide a model of global cooperation
- Heat index in 3 areas to reach danger level on March 19, 2025
- The Cost of Carbon: Can Taxes and ESG Save the Planet?
- Environmental Health: Should it be a core subject in Cebu universities?
- DPWH completes P141.84-M flood control project along Peñaranda River

### CCC IN THE NEWS:

- [Opinion] Let's talk about money and climate change

## BUSINESS WORLD

### [Dulaang UP takes on the climate crisis](#)

By: Brontë H. Lacsamana

The second offering of Dulaang Unibersidad ng Pilipinas' (Dulaang UP) 47th season is tackling pressing issues on the climate crisis through a twin bill: one play exploring local mythological creatures' perspective of a disrupted balance, and the other depicting the experiences of everyday Filipinos who attempt to address the crisis.

## ECO BUSINESS

### [\[Opinion\] If US attempts World Bank retreat, the China-led AIIB could be poised to step in – and provide a model of global cooperation](#)

By: Tamar Gutner

Donald Trump's animosity toward multilateralism and international organisations is well known. Just hours after taking office on Jan 20, 2025, the US president announced his intention to withdraw from the World Health Organization and the Paris agreement on climate change.

## **GMA NEWS**

### **[Heat index in 3 areas to reach danger level on March 19, 2025](#)**

By: Sherilyn Untalan

Three areas in the Philippines are expected to record a heat index danger level on Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

## **MANILA STANDARD**

### **[The Cost of Carbon: Can Taxes and ESG Save the Planet?](#)**

Human activity has made normal climate change abnormal. In our quest to expand and modernize our living conditions, we ironically destroy the very thing that allows us to live: the environment.

## **PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER**

### **[Environmental Health: Should it be a core subject in Cebu universities?](#)**

By: Jessa Ngojo

I've been in the media industry for just two years—fresh out of college and internship. A month after graduating, I was fortunate to join CDN Digital as a social media specialist and writer.

## **CCC IN THE NEWS:**

## **GMA NEWS**

### **[\[Opinion\] Let's talk about money and climate change](#)**

By: John Leo Algo

2025 for the Philippines is not just defined by the elections. It is also defined by change against climate change.

**Information and Knowledge Management Division**

## **BUSINESS WORLD**

### **Dulaang UP takes on the climate crisis**

By: Brontë H. Lacsamana

The second offering of Dulaang Unibersidad ng Pilipinas' (Dulaang UP) 47th season is tackling pressing issues on the climate crisis through a twin bill: one play exploring local mythological creatures' perspective of a disrupted balance, and the other depicting the experiences of everyday Filipinos who attempt to address the crisis.

Mga Anak ng Unos, which runs from March 28 to April 13, combines these two brand-new plays to "deepen our understanding of climate realities."

"It looks at critical convergences in theater-making, nature, and the human condition," said Dulaang UP artistic director Issa Manalo Lopez during a March 8 press visit for the forthcoming twin bill.

"These performances explore how human ways of living shape and dictate ecological conditions driving destruction and endangering the existence of all life forms. They arise from the urgent need to respond to the global climate emergency as the earth's temperature surpasses the 1.5-°C critical threshold, an escalation marked by catastrophic weather that disproportionately intensifies climate change effects and impacts on developing nations," Ms. Lopez said.

Mga Anak ng Unos is the first of Dulaang UP's offerings under "DUP INNOVATE," a lab dedicated to the creation of new, developing, and original works from Filipino theater practitioners.

## **GODS AND CREATURES**

The first play is Sa Gitna ng Digmaan ng mga Mahiwagang Nilalang Laban sa Sangkatauhan, written by Joshua Lim So (who is in the Carlos Palanca Award for Literature Hall of Fame), under the direction of José Estrella. As the title hints at, the play shows bathalas (gods) and mythological creatures in the middle of a war against the sangkatauhan (humanity).

As the battle between the gods and humanity unfolds on stage, audience members are compelled to ask if we are indeed at war and if there is still time to change the course of the conflict.

“The worldbuilding in the script is from actual folk tales. We have gods who sustain themselves through humans, alliances of a military nature in their war on mankind, and many more,” Popo Amascual, the play’s assistant director, told BusinessWorld.

“From makeup to tattoos, we try to keep it all grounded in the original lore. The flavor we add are how these creatures could be strategic in their missions under this overarching war related to the climate crisis,” she added.

The dramaturgy team said that Mr. So, as the playwright, had a few sources for the script. One was permaculture farms, which are characterized by self-sustaining agricultural zones or ecosystems, inspiring the various planes of existence of the mythological creatures; the other was Edgar Samar’s book *Mga Nilalang na Kagilagilalas*, which is basically a compendium of mythological creatures based on folklore from all over the archipelago.

“This play has dialogues between these creatures and interactions with humans who have been abusive towards the earth. It all stems from local folklore. We have bathalas, aswangs, diwatas,” explained Ms. Amascual.

Their differences in language, being from different regions in the Philippines, make up “an intriguing aspect of the play that other folklore-based tales haven’t really tackled,” she added.

Other members of the artistic team include dramaturgs Anril Tiatco and Jem Javier, dramaturg-in-training Gaby Asanza, set designer Mark Dalacat, costume designer Carlos Siongco, lights designer Barbie Tan-Tiongco, and sound designer Jack Alvero.

The cast of the ensemble piece, in alphabetical order, are: Raymond Aguilar, Tristan Bite, Kris Caaya, Jasper Cabra, Exequiel Camporedondo, Sheryll Villamor Ceasico, Kenneth Charles Famy, Belle Francisco, Lee Lim, Sarina Sasaki, Jigger Sementilla, Genalyn Suelto, and Ingrid Villamarin.

## HUMAN RESPONSES

*Climate in Crazies*, the second play in the twin bill, looks at the expanse of global experience and “zooms in on the local and more personal experience of the global climate emergency.” It is directed by Issa Manalo Lopez and Tess Jamias and is based on Australian playwright David Finnigan’s *Scenes from the Climate Era*.

The ensemble transposed the original text into the Filipino understanding of the crisis and everyday problems, solutions, attitudes, and actions addressing it. This means it was written through the process of devising, which refers to a collaborative method of forming a script.

“In adapting the text, it wasn’t enough that we translate. It was part of our decision-making to either let go of sentiments that were too foreign or to try to make them more local,” co-director Ms. Jamias told BusinessWorld.

Ms. Lopez, also a director of the play, added that Mr. Finnegan’s script was already a combination of different conversations — with his father who is a climate scientist, and even with her as she told him about her experience in Tacloban with Typhoon Yolanda.

“Our aim is to make it accessible. We don’t want the audiences to passively absorb information. We want them to relate with the characters who are trying to segregate, doing their part, and also expressing doubts about their real impact,” she explained.

As hinted by the title, *Climate in Crazies*, a pun on the word “crisis,” the goal is to tackle the serious issue with “humor, levity, and playfulness.” While Mr. Finnegan meant for the text to be transposed to different countries, Dulaang UP’s version will mark the first from the perspective from a developing country, not from the global north.

Ms. Jamias said that in the process of developing the play, the artistic team and ensemble have been on a journey themselves. “We’re all trying to understand the climate crisis. What we want to do is to bring the audience on that journey.”

Other members of the artistic team include dramaturg Nikka De Torres, set designer Mark Dalacat, costume designer Carlos Siongco, sound designers Jose Buencamino and Sage Ilagan, and video designer Tofie Falcon.

The cast is composed of actor-devisers Delphine Buencamino, Bong Cabrera, Herbie Go, and Ethan King.

## ECO BUSINESS

### [\[Opinion\] If US attempts World Bank retreat, the China-led AIIB could be poised to step in – and provide a model of global cooperation](#)

By: Tamar Gutner

Donald Trump's animosity toward multilateralism and international organisations is well known. Just hours after taking office on Jan 20, 2025, the US president announced his intention to withdraw from the World Health Organization and the Paris agreement on climate change.

Could the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank be next?

Certainly, supporters of the twin institutions – that have formed the backbone of global economic order for 80 years – are concerned. A Trump-ordered review of Washington's support of all international organisations has led to fears of the US reducing funding or pulling it altogether.

But any shrinking of US leadership in international financial institutions would, I believe, run counter to the administration's ostensible geopolitical goals, creating a vacuum for China to step into and take on a bigger global role. In particular, weakening the World Bank and other multilateral development banks, or MDBs, that have a large US presence could present an opportunity for a little-known, relatively new Chinese-led international organisation: the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank – which, since its inception, has supported the very multilateralism the US is attacking.

#### AIIB's paradoxical role

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) was created by China nine years ago as a way to invest in infrastructure and other related sectors in Asia, while promoting “regional cooperation and partnership in addressing development challenges by working in close collaboration with other multilateral and bilateral development institutions.”

Since then, it has served as an example of an international body willing to deeply cooperate with other major multilateral organisations and follow international rules and norms of development banking.

This may run counter to the image of Beijing's global efforts portrayed by China hawks, of which there are many in the Trump administration, who often present a vision of a China intent on undermining the Western-led liberal international order.

But as a number of scholars and other China experts have suggested, Beijing's strategies in global economic governance are often nuanced, with actions that both support and undermine the liberal global order.

As I explore in my new book, it is clear that today the AIIB is a paradox: an institution connected to the rules and norms of the liberal international order, but one created by an illiberal government.

The AIIB is deeply tied to the rules-based order as displayed through its many cooperative connections with other major multilateral development banks, such as the World Bank and the Japan-led Asian Development Bank.

As such, the AIIB may present a Chinese counterpoint in a landscape where US leadership is receding.

The cooperative design of the AIIB

For decades, multilateral development banks have served the important task of lending billions of dollars a year to support economic and social development.

They can be vital sources of funding for poverty reduction, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development, with a newer emphasis on climate change. These international lenders have also been remarkably durable in today's climate of fragmentation and crisis, with member nations actively considering ways of further strengthening them.

At the same time, MDBs perennially face criticism from civil society organisations who highlight areas of weak performance and are concerned about potential downsides of the major MDBs' greater emphasis on working more closely with the private sector. MDB expert Chris Humphrey has also noted that major "MDBs were built around a set of geopolitical and economic power relationships that are coming apart before our eyes."

When Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013 proposed creating the AIIB to lend for infrastructure development in Asia, there was a lot of suspicion among major nations about China's intentions.

The Obama administration responded to the move by urging other countries not to join. Its concern was that China would use lending to gain further influence in the region, but without adhering to strong environmental and social standards.

Nonetheless, all the other major nonborrowing nations, with the exception of Japan, joined the new bank. Today, the AIIB is the second-largest multilateral development bank in terms of member countries, behind only the World Bank. It currently has 110 member nations, which translates to over 80 per cent of the global population. With US\$100 billion in capital, it is one of the medium-sized multilateral lenders.

From the get-go, the AIIB was designed to be cooperative. Jin Liqun, who became the bank's first president, is a longtime multilateralist with a long career at China's finance ministry and past positions on the boards of the World Bank and the Global Environmental Facility, as well as a vice presidency of the Asian Development Bank.

The international group of experts that helped design the AIIB also included former executive directors and staff from the IMF and other development banks, as well as two Americans with long careers at the World Bank who played leading roles in designing the bank's articles of agreement and its environmental and social framework.

How the AIIB took its cue from others

The bank fits into the landscape of other multilateral development banks in a variety of ways. The AIIB's charter is directly modeled on the Asian Development Bank's foundation, and built into the AIIB's charter is the bank's mission of promoting "regional cooperation and partnership in addressing development challenges."

The AIIB shares similar norms and policies with other major multilateral development banks, including its environmental and social standards.

Alongside borrowing foundational principles, the AIIB also works in close conjunction with its peers. The World Bank initially ran the AIIB's treasury operations. The AIIB has also co-financed a high percentage of its projects with other multilateral development banks, particularly in its first years.

In a recent sign of cooperation, in 2023, a deal between the AIIB and World Bank's International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) saw the AIIB issue up to US\$1 billion in guarantees against IBRD sovereign-backed loans. This increased the IBRD's ability to lend more money, while diversifying the AIIB's loan portfolio.

As of Feb. 6, 2025, the AIIB has 306 approved projects totaling US\$59 billion. Energy and transportation are its two largest sectors of lending. Recently approved projects include loans to support wind power plants in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and a solar plant in India. India, which has a bumpy relationship with China, is one of the bank's largest borrowers, along with Turkey and Indonesia.



## Cooperating and competing with China

From its birth until recently, the multilateral AIIB has repeatedly distinguished itself from China's bilateral initiatives. Chief among those is China's Belt and Road Initiative, an umbrella term for infrastructure lending by Chinese institutions that has been criticised for lacking transparency and accountability.

Indeed, some Belt and Road Initiative-linked projects have faced concerns about corruption, costs and the opacity of the loan agreements.

In the past several years, the AIIB has made more mention of synergy with Belt and Road lenders, and the bank now hosts the secretariat of a facility, the Multilateral Cooperation Center for Development Finance, that offers grants and support to developing countries seeking to finance infrastructure in countries where Belt and Road lending takes place. This may blur the line between the AIIB and lending under the Belt and Road umbrella, but it does not appear to weaken the bank's standards.

Concerns about the level of Chinese government influence at the AIIB are not new. Canada froze its ties with the bank in June 2023, pending a review of allegations by a Canadian staff member, who dramatically quit after accusing the bank of being dominated by members of China's Communist Party.

No other member nations expressed such concern, and Canada has not yet published any review. A group of AIIB executive directors oversaw an internal review that found no evidence to support the allegations.

As the new US administration formulates its policies toward China, it would do well to take into account the variation in China's strategies in global economic governance, as a recognition of areas of cooperation, competition and conflict requires more nuanced responses. In many areas, the US will both cooperate and compete with China.

Paradoxically, any moves by the Trump administration to pull back from multilateral organisations may leave the AIIB, whether or not it is an anomaly, in a position to offer a better model of cooperation than leading multilateral development banks with a powerful US role.

## **GMA NEWS**

### **Heat index in 3 areas to reach danger level on March 19, 2025**

By: Sherilyn Untalan

Three areas in the Philippines are expected to record a heat index danger level on Wednesday, March 19, 2025.

State weather bureau PAGASA on Tuesday said the heat index in the following areas may hit 42°C:

- Coron, Palawan
- Puerto Princesa City, Palawan
- Zamboanga City, Zamboanga Del Sur

A heat index between 42°C and 51°C is considered in the danger category, posing health risks such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke is probable with continued exposure.

Given this, PAGASA continues to remind the public to take precautions against extreme heat, especially during the summer season, and to stay hydrated and protected from direct sunlight.

## MANILA STANDARD

### [The Cost of Carbon: Can Taxes and ESG Save the Planet?](#)

Human activity has made normal climate change abnormal. In our quest to expand and modernize our living conditions, we ironically destroy the very thing that allows us to live: the environment.

Climate change harms all human beings because of the extreme weather changes it brings with it. Households, businesses, and governments have all struggled to put in place protective mechanisms that shield against the devastating economic, social, environmental, health, and political impacts of this. Poorer countries and historically marginalized communities and individuals are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change as they have less resources to cope with it and are often relegated to last priority. It is thus important that all sectors of society cooperate and make the necessary moves to a greener way of living that benefit all, and not just a few.

Global leaders and organizations have established programs that make climate change more tangible and the need to address it more urgent. The most important of these programs act as penalties to businesses and countries that are slow to adopt environmentally sustainable practices, and as incentives for those involved in research of and implementation of climate change solutions.

I believe that the Global Carbon Tax is one means to deter the use of fossil fuels and reduce carbon emissions. But the adoption of ESG standards is also a complementary approach to address climate change and a just transition.

(E)nvironmental, (S)ocial, and (G)overnance benchmarks incorporated into business and investment practices make the shift to green more tangible. It's a step towards deepening corporate social responsibility. While CSR was a foray into environmental consciousness, its benefits have been limited. Unlike the compliance with ESG standards, CSR programs do not have mechanisms that monitor whether or not a business has created long-term solutions that have positively impacted their internal and external processes, and better yet, the communities surrounding them.

When properly executed, ESG standards are not just end goals of companies, similar to what most CSR initiatives have been. ESG standards need to be empirically reflected in the very way businesses are run.

European countries have led the ESG standard rankings. Nordic nations Finland, Sweden, and Iceland and Western Europe neighbors France, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland outperform most of the world in all three ESG sub-indexes. Most of them have prioritized making changes that positively impact the environment, followed by addressing political and social issues that have implications for climate change solutions.

Other than ESG standards, the global community also abides by the Paris Agreement, a legally binding contract that requires its signatories to be active participants in climate change response. Global leaders acknowledge that the effects of climate change can be more strongly controlled with proper legislation that makes change mandatory.

In my upcoming book, “Reimagining the World Without Climate Change,” I delve deeper into discussions on the Global Carbon Tax and how it is implemented, other successful ESG policies we can adopt and replicate, and the industries with high potential for economic growth, ESG standard establishment, and sustainability.

Ultimately, the fight against climate change requires more than just policies—it demands a fundamental shift in how businesses, governments, and individuals operate. Carbon taxes and ESG standards are powerful tools, but their success hinges on collective action and accountability. While setting benchmarks is the first step, we must see the greater vision to embed sustainability into the fabric of our economies, industries, and daily lives. If we fail to act decisively, the cost of carbon will no longer be measured in dollars and taxes, but in the irreversible damage to our planet and future generations. The time for action is now.

On March 26, the Asian Consulting Group (ACG), in partnership with Asia CEO, will host the 3rd International Tax and Investment Conference at the Manila Marriott Hotel. This year’s theme, FAST Forward 2025: Promoting ESG Investing in the Philippines, highlights key industries driving sustainable growth. FAST represents (F)ashion, Film, and Arts; (A)rtificial Intelligence, Food, and Agriculture; (S)ustainable Cities and Communities; and (T)ravel and Tourism. At the event, we will also recognize outstanding sustainability and climate initiatives from both local and international organizations.

In addition, the conference will serve as the launch platform for my new book, the premiere of Season 3 of Thought Leaders and Game Changers podcast, and the kickoff of an International Tax and Investment Roadshow spanning Asia, the Middle East, Oceania, Europe, the US, and Canada.

Don't miss this exciting opportunity to engage with thought leaders and innovators shaping the future of ESG investments.

## PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

### [Environmental Health: Should it be a core subject in Cebu universities?](#)

By: Jessa Ngojo

I've been in the media industry for just two years—fresh out of college and internship. A month after graduating, I was fortunate to join CDN Digital as a social media specialist and writer.

In my work, I've encountered various stories, including those about the environment—the good and the bad—in Cebu City and the province.

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend an international workshop in Malaysia, where journalists and media professionals from around the world discussed the challenges of covering environmental and planetary health. With extreme heat becoming the norm—a clear warning sign for our planet—these discussions have never been more urgent.

One thought-provoking question stood out: Should universities make environmental health a required subject? If students learn about these issues early on, could they help drive real change?

If this idea gains traction, should the Philippines take steps to implement it nationwide?

On spearheading Planetary Action

During our two-day workshop in Subang Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia, my fellow journalists and I noticed small details that carried a bigger message about sustainability.

One thing that stood out was the strict eco-friendly practices at Sunway University, where our workshop was held.

Before leaving our respective countries, we were asked to bring our own water bottles—something that seemed like a simple request at first. But upon arrival, it made perfect sense: plastic bottles were strictly prohibited inside the university.

Even at the hotel where I stayed, water was provided in reusable glass bottles, and requesting an extra bottle came with an additional charge. This wasn't just a policy; it was a clear commitment to reducing plastic waste—one that set the tone for our discussions on planetary health.

When we talk about sustainability in Southeast Asia, Malaysia is making bold moves.

Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, executive director of the Sunway Center for Planetary Health, recently shared that Malaysia was the first country in the world to develop a “planetary road map”—officially known as the National Planetary Health Action Plan (NPHAP).

This plan ensures that sustainability isn’t just a buzzword but a guiding principle in policies on environmental health, food security, energy transition, governance, and even cultural shifts.

And the numbers speak for themselves. In 2023, Malaysia ranked fifth in Seasia Stats’ list of the cleanest countries in Southeast Asia, while the Philippines placed eighth. Unsurprisingly, Singapore topped the list.

On a global scale, the gap is even more evident. In the 2024 Environmental Performance Index (EPI)—a ranking of 180 countries based on climate change performance, environmental health, and ecosystem vitality—Malaysia placed 118th, while the Philippines lagged behind at 169th.

The EPI, developed by Yale University’s Center for Environmental Law & Policy in collaboration with Columbia University’s Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN) at the Earth Institute, uses 58 performance indicators across 11 issue categories to measure the state of sustainability worldwide.

These rankings highlight a crucial reality: While Malaysia continues to make strides, the Philippines has a long way to go.

But what are behind these numbers? One key factor is education. In Selangor, Malaysia alone, 11 universities offer environmental science programs, preparing a new generation of sustainability experts. Schools like Universiti Malaya, Sunway University, and Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS are actively shaping Malaysia’s green future.

As Malaysia invests in sustainability, the Philippines still faces gaps, particularly in education.

In the National Capital Region (NCR), only a handful of universities offer specialized environmental studies programs. According to a 2016 list from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), these include Miriam College, De La Salle University-Manila, the Technological Institute of the Philippines, Mapúa University, Philippine Women’s University, and the University of the Philippines-Diliman.

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021) saw the rise of new planetary health programs. St. Luke's College of Medicine and the Applied Microbiology for Health and Environment Research Group at the University of the Philippines Manila launched initiatives focused on planetary health. In 2020, the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) introduced the country's first-ever elective course on planetary health under its Institute of Biological Sciences.

Outside Metro Manila, the gap is even more evident. As of 2025, Central Visayas (Region 7) has only one university offering undergraduate programs in environmental studies and two with master's programs in the field.

This lack of widespread environmental education raises an urgent question: How can we expect a greener future if we're not equipping more students to lead the way? While Malaysia moves forward with a national sustainability roadmap, the Philippines remains far behind—not just in rankings, but in real, systemic change.

Sustainability isn't just about policies—it starts with awareness, education, and action. If Malaysia can make it happen, why can't we?

Is there a need for individuals specializing in the Environment and Science?

The short answer: Absolutely.

As climate challenges grow, so does the need for specialists who can understand, interpret, and address them. Yet, their work often goes unnoticed in public discourse.

At the same workshop, we spoke with Dr. Ju Neng Liew, an Associate Professor at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Department of Earth Science and Environment. His talk focused on climate attribution to heat events in Asia and their impact on ecosystems. He presented extensive data on extreme weather patterns across Southeast Asia.

By the end, many of us—including myself—felt overwhelmed. With so much data to process, we struggled to determine what to focus on.

To break the tension, one participant asked:

“What should we, as journalists, be focusing on? What kind of data do you need from us?”

Dr. Liew's response was striking:



“I don’t remember reading any media articles about the needs and requirements of more [environmental] scientists.”

His words exposed a critical gap, not just in climate reporting but also in the need for more people dedicated to environmental science. He also noted that scientists and environmentalists had their own language, making it difficult to translate complex findings for the public.

I asked if artificial intelligence (AI) could compensate for the decline in scientists—whether it could help organize and translate climate data for public understanding. His response was clear:

“AI definitely helps in some aspect, but you do need brains, so AI can’t just extrapolate something...You need brains to dabble in the understanding. AI could only translate what much you can understand.”

His insight underscores the need for specialists who can analyze, interpret, and communicate environmental data effectively. Science alone isn’t enough; bridging the gap between research, media, and public awareness requires skilled individuals who can make climate issues accessible, actionable, and urgent.

No other way but forward

The Philippines, especially Cebu, must move on and work towards improvement in global and environmental health. It can no longer be left behind, while its neighbors like Malaysia are investing in sustainability through policy, education, and systemic efforts.

Malaysia showed what would be possible with policy, investment, and education. We can be equally great here in the Philippines—but only if we prioritize environmental literacy. Universities can no longer make sustainability an elective; it must be part of the curriculum.

If the vision is for a greener, more sustainable future, the question is no longer whether we act but why we didn’t act sooner.

## CCC IN THE NEWS:

### GMA NEWS

#### [\[Opinion\] Let's talk about money and climate change](#)

By: John Leo Algo

2025 for the Philippines is not just defined by the elections. It is also defined by change against climate change.

This year would see the country update or introduce new plans and policies that would set the direction of how it would address the climate crisis. These would cover different aspects, including the long-term plan for reducing emissions, enabling a just transition towards national sustainable development, and localizing adaptation to extreme impacts.

Yet all of these would require a lot of finance to be fully executed. After a year that saw Filipinos go from enduring heatwaves to bracing themselves for six storms in a span of one month, never before has it been more important to enable and empower local governments and communities to initiate solutions.

To achieve this, however, there are many issues that need to be addressed, starting with our laws.

#### Fund locally

As important as the passage of the Climate Change Act was in 2009, one of its glaring flaws is that it did not provide a dedicated funding for climate solutions, similar to the Local Disaster Risk Reduction Management Fund (LDRRMF). This resulted in the amendment to the law a few years later that created the People's Survival Fund (PSF) to support local adaptation projects.

Yet it took more than a decade before its initial budget was even fully utilized due to bureaucratic inefficiencies that prevent access by local government units (LGUs). Even if efficiently disbursed, a P1-billion sum is nowhere near enough to reduce vulnerabilities and increase climate resilience of more than 1,500 cities and municipalities across the country.

In an effort to address this, an inter-agency policy was enacted in 2013 to enable the LDRRMF to be used for adaptation measures, such as conducting risk assessments to be integrated into several LGU plans and implementing community-based monitoring systems.

Despite these efforts, the LDRRMFs have not been fully or properly used across many LGUs. Many local officials still lack the capacity for conducting such risk assessments and mapping or maintain a database that could inform both disaster management and adaptation.

The national-level financing is also not as effective as it appears. The 2025 climate budget is actually double the amount from the previous year, with 87% allotted for adaptation.

However, much of this funding is allotted to flood control projects and the construction, repair, or retrofitting of roads (including farm-to-market roads), bridges, and other infrastructure. While important interventions, their respective allocations face several issues.

One of these is that many of these projects have been ineffective, as seen in 2024 alone where several communities reported some of the worst flooding they have ever experienced. Prolonged periods for their completion and perceived corruption have also plagued many of them.

Another issue is that the current lack of a comprehensive climate finance strategy. While currently being developed with government partners, its absence has contributed to the lack of alignment in climate-related budget allocations with intended adaptation priorities, incoherence of climate-related policies among government agencies, and an uneven allocation of public funds among said agencies.

Under the 2025 national climate budget, the Department of Public Works and Highways account for by far the highest share and increase in allotment from 2024. On the other hand, the Department of the Interior and Local Government received one of the biggest decreases.

What all of these evidences show is that for a country that urgently needs to further empower its local governments and communities for climate action, the national government so far has kept falling short of giving them enough resources and capacity-building to do so. The lack of multi-scenario and probabilistic analysis of numerous local projects is another indicator of this unfortunate reality.

Think nationally

With all the proposed bills in Congress to fill in existing gaps related to climate action, a track that has not been as explored in recent years is amending existing laws.

An amendment to either the Climate Change Act or the National DRRM Act to directly include adaptation as part of the scope of activities under the LDRRMF would hold more legal weight than the current policy.

It would also give a stronger and clearer signal to LGUs that the 70% portion of the LDRRMF that is for disaster mitigation, prevention, and preparedness can also be used to fund adaptation solutions, as part of their respective Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCCAPs).

Another policy reform is clearly defining who handles the climate agenda at the LGU level. Under the Climate Change Act, the local chief executive assigns who leads the formulation and implementation of LCCAPs, which makes it prone to instability from potential short-term political turnover.

An amendment to the Climate Change Act to address this issue, such as creating new plantilla positions at the LGU level or designating an existing LGU department as the responsible entity, would go a long way in further empowering locally-led climate actions.

Further empowering the Climate Change Commission (CCC), the country's lead advisory policymaking body on the climate crisis, is also a necessity.

For example, several of the proposed bills have provisions that provide added responsibilities to the agency, whose growing mandate has not been matched by its received support in terms of sufficient personnel, resources, and capacities. This is a problem that has persisted almost since its inception more than a decade ago, which needs to be remedied.

All of these recommendations have to be complemented by policy and decision-making aligned with good governance. As the Philippines updates many of its climate policies and plans for 2025, the government has the responsibility to ensure coherence among all of them, especially with the annual national climate budget, to implement them properly, and to do so with a genuine "whole-of-society" approach.

Just as importantly, decision-makers need to fully embrace a proactive approach to climate governance over the reactionary one that has dominated for the past few decades. Sooner or later, Filipinos will learn. It might as well be sooner.

**=END=**