



NEWS ROUNDUP

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PHYS ORG

Study links climate change to rising arsenic levels in paddy rice, increasing health risks

Climate change may significantly impact arsenic levels in paddy rice, a staple food for millions across Asia, reveals a new study from Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. The research shows that increased temperatures above 2°C, coupled with rising carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels, lead to higher concentrations of inorganic arsenic (iAs) in rice, potentially raising lifetime health risks for populations in Asia by 2050.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

QC urges schools to adopt sustainable practices amid climate crisis

By: Marita Moaje

The Quezon City government is calling on schools to go beyond one-time efforts and fully integrate sustainable environmental practices into their everyday operations as climate change continues to pose urgent threats.

THE MANILA TIMES

Gestalt leadership empowers Filipinos on climate action

By: Ludwig Federigan

In celebrating Earth Day with the theme "Our Planet. Our Power," it's crucial to reflect on how leadership shapes our approach to our planet's pressing issues, particularly climate change. One powerful framework that can drive effective action and create supportive environments is Gestalt leadership. This holistic approach emphasizes self-awareness, emotional intelligence and the interconnectedness of individuals within organizations and communities — tools that are essential in mobilizing collective efforts toward climate resilience.

TIMES MAGAZINE

[How To Encourage More People to Talk About Climate Change](#)

By: Jeffrey Kluger

It's axiomatic that you can't solve a problem if you don't admit it exists—and the best way to admit it exists is to talk about it. That's particularly true when it comes to climate change.

UN NEWS

[Asia's megacities at a crossroads as climate and population challenges grow](#)

By: Vibhu Mishra

Seven of the ten most populous cities in the world are in Asia, with Tokyo, Delhi, Shanghai and Dhaka topping the list. These urban giants, long seen as symbols of opportunity and progress, are now in danger of dragging economies backwards.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

[Transformative power of faith-based climate action](#)

By: Secretary Robert EA Borje

The climate crisis is not merely a test of human ingenuity. It is our collective conscience. It calls us to confront not just political or economic realities but a deeper spiritual emergency.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

GMA NEWS ONLINE

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Religion is barely mentioned when talking about climate change, but at the 29th United Nations Conference of Parties in Baku, Azerbaijan last November, the faith sector had quite the presence.

In the pavilion space stood the faith corner where every day, leaders of various religions from across the world discussed their role and responsibility in solving the climate crisis. Among them was Bishop Gerry Alminaza of Negros Occidental's Diocese of San Carlos.

The vice president of Caritas Philippines was a delegate of the Philippine Church at COP29, who contributed to the global climate discussions and brought front and center the experiences and perspectives of vulnerable Filipino communities.

But Alminaza, also known as the bishop-champion for integral ecology of the Catholic Bishop Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), proved to be as well-versed on things like renewable energy, climate justice, and even climate finance. In fact, Alminaza sat in panels with technical experts and policy makers about such things.

It's pleasantly surprising to learn that the Philippine Catholic Church had a delegation to COP29, but it's actually not unheard of. This is Alminaza's second time at a COP, where no less than the Holy See represented the Vatican.

"People of faith have more motivation, more inspiration, more reason to really care for the environment," Alminaza told GMA News Online back in Baku last November. "Because if we believe that God is the creator and we are all created by God, we owe it to God as our expression of our love for him to really care for one another — not just among human beings but the rest of creation."

He adds, "this kind of interrelatedness, which is also shared by other religions, is an important starting point" in climate discussions.

The Catholic Church's role in climate action began as early as 1988, when the CBCP issued its first pastoral letter on ecology and the environment. According to Bishop Pablo Virgilio David, that particular statement is "globally recognized as the very first magisterial pastoral letter issued by a bishop's conference."

But it wasn't until 2015, when Pope Francis published the Laudato Si that really got the church moving.

The Laudato Si is an encyclical, an official church teaching on integral ecology, which makes it "a must," says Lou Arsenio, the coordinator of the Integral Ecology Ministry of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila (RCAM). "Things have to be done along the lines of this teaching, at different levels of the church," she explains.

But the Laudato Si isn't just any other teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. It is its first official teaching on integral ecology, relating the Catholic faith with caring for Planet Earth, or what Pope Francis calls, "our common home."

It was published a few months ahead of COP21 which was held in Paris, where nearly 200 countries signed the legally binding Paris agreement that aims to limit global warming between 1.5 and 2C above pre-industrial levels.

In fact, the Laudato Si "was conceptualized as a statement of the Vatican to COP21," says Arsenio. And when it was released, "naging booster talaga 'yon para sa mga simbahan."

Suddenly, ecology ministries sprouted off small ecology desks, or social desks where various issues like gender, poverty, children and environment are lumped together.

RCAM's Integral Ecology Ministry is among the pioneers in the world, having been set up in January 2005, a full 10 years ahead of the Laudato Si and the Paris Agreement.

"Kaya when the Laudato Si came out, talagang na-solidify yung aming conviction that we are doing the right thing," Arsenio says. What they were doing was organizing capacity-building of the parishes and Catholic institutions of the Archdiocese of Manila towards becoming responsible stewards and co-existence with co-creatures of God in our common home."

Integral ecology, Arsenio says, touches on all aspects of human life. "From the time you wake up to the time you rest in the evening, kung titingnan mo 'yung iyong activities, you [rely and] get resources from the Earth. And [it also looks at] the impact on earth every time you extract from it."

That means realizing where your breakfast comes from and where your leftovers go to; understanding our mobile phones aren't just objects that allow us to engage in social media. "Saan ba nanggagaling 'yung materials para sa [mobile and laptop]? Sa mining

ba? Ano ang impact ng mining sa environment and to the people's lives and livelihoods," Arsenio asks.

It sounds like a real buzzkill, but taking care of planet Earth, which is exactly what the climate crisis demands of us, is "a practice of faith," Arsenio says, pointing to the first two lines of the Apostle's Creed: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth."

"Creator of heaven and Earth," she emphasizes. "How do we practice that belief? Shouldn't it be practiced in the way we take care of creation?"

She reflects on the impact of various Holy Week activities on the environment: "Ano 'yung ginagamit sa procession? Palaging kandila. Saan ba nanggaling 'yung kandila? Minsan sa haba ng prosesyon, nagdadala tayo ng mga bote, nagdadala kung ano-ano. Pagkatapos, basura na. Paano mo masasabi 'yung iyong observance, 'yung penitensya ng stations of the cross, ay kaaya-aya kung hindi mo naman inalagaan ang kalikasan?"

This Holy Week, she suggests using solar lamps instead of candles, becoming conscious of the waste we generate, decluttering and donating our excess, and "kung pwede namang lakarin [ang Visit Iglesia] especially kung bata-bata ka pa naman — exercise din 'yun."

It's minuscule, especially if you look at it at the individual level.

In fact, a recent study by the World Resources Institute (WRI) "reveals that efforts focused exclusively on changing behaviors, and not the overarching systems around them, only achieve about one-tenth of its emissions-reduction potential."

According to the WRI "attempting these changes without systemic support could only help reduce 10% of what's possible." The remaining 90% depends on governments, businesses and our own collective action to make sustainable choices more accessible for everyone, it said.

But JL Algo, deputy executive director for programs and campaigns of non-profit Living Laudato Si Philippines (LLSP) points out something important: "The Philippines is the third biggest Catholic country in the world in terms of population."

Imagine the environmental impact if each of the 85M Filipino Catholics take on small, individual pro-climate actions. It doesn't sound so minuscule now, does it?

It is exactly the reason why Algo and environmentalist and human rights advocate Rodne Galicha established LLSP in 2018.

“Climate change is a technical issue but perhaps there's a way to present it in a more moral, emotional, human, and human manner,” he says.

The NGO works closely with the CBCP, other faith-based organizations, and educational institutions for its three longstanding campaigns: Strengthening ecological education, strengthening environmental policies, and perhaps the biggest and most difficult of the three, getting the Catholic community in the Philippines to redirect their current investments and other financial assets from ecologically harmful activities.

Divesting from fossil fuels is among CBCP's 10 action points for its Laudato Si' Campaign first expressed in 2019.

In 2020, Archdiocese of Manila apostolic administrator Bishop Broderick Pabillo echoed the divestment plan and called on the country's banks to stop funding coal-fired thermal plants in the Philippines.

The CBCP reiterated its commitment in a 2022 pastoral letter, saying it will “examine all banks and institutions in whom we have entrusted financial resources...use our position as shareholders, clients, or stakeholders of financial institutions in and beyond the Philippines” and “without clear commitments and policies from these banks to divest from fossil fuels, we commit to withdraw all our resources that are with them not later than 2025.”

The pastoral letter also mentioned rejecting donations from mining and other destructive industries.

Arsenio said the CBCP upheld this commitment on divestment during the plenary council last January, which Alminaza said is slowly gaining traction. “Nag-a-ask na sila ng dialogue,” he said, adding he attended meetings with shareholders, who were all surprised with his presence.

“Hindi nila in-expect isang obispo duon magsalita sa open forum. But we spoke and appealed [for them] to consider how money is being spent, given the escalating climate crisis and what that entails to finances. We really foresee na magiging stranded asset 'yung investment in coal kasi eventually, mag-pha-phase out siya,” he said.

But Algo says, “there hasn't been a lot of progress in divestment.” He mentions the current rotational set up of bishops' assignments, which makes them “unaware of their diocese's involvement and [financial] portfolio.”

“Many of them were surprised that their parish has investments in so-and-so companies. Of course we cannot expect bishops to have financial literacy because that's not exactly what bishops do but that is also part of the problem. They need to be aware of where their diocese's money is,” he said.

As LLSP continues to work with local Catholic institutions for their divestment strategies, showing them that sustainable investments can also bring stable cash flow for church operations like disaster relief and rehabilitation, Algo acknowledges: “Divestment is a long-term thing. You can't just divest in just a month or a year's time because you also need money to fund church operations.”

For the CBCP, this is where the power of the lay people come in. In Baku, Alminaza said Catholics have not only the right but the duty to call out their parishes if they see something ecologically amiss.

“We are part of the church. The lay people should be given more role and participation in the decision-making and the decision taking. Dapat kasama kayo kasi tayo ang simbahan.”

He echoed Bishop David's statement at the press conference following their July 2024 Plenary Assembly: “If you know of any bishop or diocese that is probably accepting donations from specific businesses or industries that are involved in destructive, you can bring it to our attention so we can do our part.”

Meanwhile, other things being done. The CBCP has endorsed and supported the 10M Solar Rooftop Challenge, a multi-sectoral campaign with representatives from the church, the academe, governments, and civil society organizations.

Alminaza is also leading the charge toward renewable energy in Negros Occidental. “I am among the conveners for the REpower Negros. Eventually, the four dioceses made a collective statement promoting renewable energy and opposing fossil fuels. To walk the talk, we decided to engage in solar energy,” he proudly said.

“Using the network of the church, we are calling for people to be involved. It's empowering. It's making people participate and take responsibility for our future and for our climate,” Alminaza said, adding the diocese of Maasin, in Southern Leyte, has been

recognized by the Vatican as the first diocese in the entire Roman Catholic Church to completely switch to solar energy.

Arsenio and RCAM have not let up with their climate action efforts, involving and teaching communities how to care for, well, our common home. In 2012, together with scientists from the DENR and officials from the DILG, they planted 200 mangroves in Baseco.

Last year, they returned to the mangrove site to see if they can revive the program. A parish already is in place in the area, which she says it can take the role of the steward in keeping the project running and operational and in taking care of the community.

“Given the EPR law, we can teach [the community] livelihood programs, like teaching them how to make eco bricks from plastic waste and then selling those to recyclers,” she continues. “Para mabawasan din ang basura.”

“They can even construct plant boxes [from them] for their urban gardening for food security,” she continues, adding other ecological livelihood programs examples like plastic recycling through weaving of used plastic straws into basket or bags, crocheting of plastic sando bags into baskets, pouches, bags and others.

Saying Catholics should realize that taking care of the planet and faith go together, Arsenio looks at the small individual climate actions and says they are not the end goal. Instead, they should enable bigger ecological conversion which “should be part of our Lenten observance.”

“Tingnan natin ‘yong mga practices natin because the kind of lifestyle we have dictates the situation of our planet,” she continues. When full ecological conversion takes place, then perhaps our planet stands a better chance at solving climate change.

Meanwhile, Alminaza echoes what scientists and experts having been saying all along, “In solving the climate crisis, we are all in this together.”

INTERAKSYON

[Is Earth really getting too hot for people to survive? A scientist explains extreme heat and the role of climate change](#)

By: Scott Denning

Many countries have seen extremely hot weather lately, but in most of the inhabited world, it's never going to get "too hot for people to live here," especially in relatively dry climates.

When it's hot outside in dry places, most of the time our bodies can cool off by evaporating water and heat from our skin as sweat.

However, there are places where it occasionally gets dangerously hot and humid, especially where hot deserts are right next to the warm ocean. When the air is humid, sweat doesn't evaporate as quickly, so sweating doesn't cool us the way it does in drier environments.

In parts of the Middle East, Pakistan and India, summer heat waves can combine with humid air that blows in off the sea, and this combination can be truly deadly. Hundreds of millions of people live in those regions, most without access to indoor air conditioning.

Scientists like me use a "wet bulb thermometer" to get a better sense of this risk. A wet bulb thermometer allows water to evaporate by blowing ambient air over a damp cloth. If the wet bulb temperature is over 95 F (35 C), and even at lower levels, the human body won't be able to let enough heat out. Prolonged exposure to such combined heat and humidity can be fatal.

During a severe heat wave in 2023, wet bulb temperatures were very high over the lower Mississippi Valley, though they didn't reach fatal levels. In Delhi, India, where air temperatures were over 120 degree Fahrenheit (49 Celsius) for several days in May 2024, the wet bulb temperatures came close, and several people died from suspected heatstroke in the hot and humid weather. In conditions like that, everyone has to take precautions.

Is it climate change?

When people burn carbon – whether it's coal in a power plant or gasoline in a vehicle – it creates carbon dioxide (CO₂). This invisible gas builds up in the atmosphere and traps the Sun's warmth near the Earth's surface.

The result is what we mean by “climate change.”

Every bit of coal, oil or gas that ever gets burned adds a little bit more to the temperature. As temperatures rise, dangerously hot and humid weather has begun to spread to more places.

Areas of the U.S. Gulf Coast in Louisiana and Texas are increasingly at risk of dangerous hot and humid conditions in summer, as are heavily irrigated areas of the desert Southwest where water sprayed over farm fields adds moisture to the atmosphere.

Climate change and the role of the greenhouse effect.

Climate change causes a lot more problems than just hot, sweaty weather.

Hot air evaporates a lot more water, so crops, forests and landscapes in some areas dry out, which makes them more susceptible to wildfire. Each Celsius degree of warming can cause a sixfold increase in wildfire over parts of the western U.S.

Warming also makes ocean water expand, which can flood coastal regions. Rising sea levels threaten to displace as many as 2 billion people by 2100.

All of these impacts mean that climate change threatens the global economy. Continuing to burn coal, oil and gas could cut global incomes by about 25% by the end of the century, according to one estimate.

Good news and bad news

There’s both bad news and good news about climate change in the future.

The bad news is that as long as we keep burning carbon, it will continue to get hotter and hotter.

The good news is that we can substitute clean energy, like solar and wind power, instead of burning carbon, to power the products and services of modern life.

There’s been tremendous progress in the past 15 years in making clean energy reliable and affordable, and almost every country on Earth has now agreed to stop climate change before too much damage is done.

Just as our ancestors built better lives by switching from outhouses to indoor plumbing, we will avoid making our world unlivable by switching from coal, oil and gas to clean energy.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

Overheating

As we cruise into summer with record-breaking heat index, the global challenge of climate change inevitably comes to mind.

The world is getting warmer every year with 2024 as the hottest year on record, reaching an average of global temperature of 1.55 degrees Celsius.

Climate change as manifested by extreme weather, harsh climate, and water-related calamities has started to wreak havoc on global economies.

The World Economic Forum reported in 2023 that the economic toll of extreme weather has grown substantially with total losses reaching nearly \$1.5 trillion beginning 2019, up from \$184 billion in the 1970s.

In Asia, the economic losses are best exemplified by the \$42 billion that China lost in the first nine months of 2023 due to natural disasters. Africa lost \$43 billion from extreme weather events from 1970-2021 while Europe shed \$562 billion, according to the World Meteorological Organization.

South America's economic losses amounted to \$115.2 billion while North America, Central America, and the Caribbean suffered a combined loss of \$2 trillion.

'If climate change is a global conspiracy cooked up by the world's tree huggers, why is it that our summers are getting hotter...'

Nations in the former Soviet bloc were also hit with a drastic drop in income due to extreme weather, ranging from 10 to 50 percent.

America was not spared from weather-induced catastrophes, with about \$1 billion in losses every three weeks to a yearly average of \$150 billion in damage between 2018 and 2022.

Southeast Asia is the most vulnerable to natural disasters like typhoons, storms and floods affecting their agriculture, infrastructure, tourism and transport. It lost some \$32 billion from the barrage of typhoons that struck the region from 1987 to 2016.

In the Philippines, losses mainly from agriculture amounted to P10 billion in the first months of 2024.

As wealthy and poor countries grapple with climate change, a shadowy movement that rejects global warming as a crisis has emerged.

No less than US President Donald Trump acts as the de facto spokesman for the movement that threatens to wipe out the gains made by the rest of world to arrest climate change. He caused the US, the world's biggest polluter, to pull out twice from the Paris Climate Change treaty, calling it a "hoax" and a "green scam."

The Paris accord seeks to contain "the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels."

In the book "The Climate Change Hoax Argument," it was argued that the "current and continued use of fossil fuels will not lead to the destruction of the earth; neither is it causing increased global warming that will cause this destruction; neither is it causing a rise of sea level that will devastate mankind; neither is it causing an increased number and intensity of tornadoes, hurricanes, wildfires, floods or droughts."

"More and more scientists are abandoning the politically correct global warming/climate change movement as they are beginning to see the falsehoods, deceptions, and rigged predictions," it also said.

If climate change is a global conspiracy cooked up by the world's tree huggers, why is it that our summers are getting hotter, polar ice caps are melting, and typhoons with floods becoming are more frequent and disruptive every year?

Non-believers of global warming are akin to people who spewed the lie that the Holocaust did not happen.

We are at the 11th hour of our fight to reverse the overheating of Mother Earth. Fake news peddlers attempting to repudiate the climate change agenda should be doused with cold freezing water.

PHYS ORG

[Study links climate change to rising arsenic levels in paddy rice, increasing health risks](#)

Climate change may significantly impact arsenic levels in paddy rice, a staple food for millions across Asia, reveals a new study from Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. The research shows that increased temperatures above 2°C, coupled with rising carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels, lead to higher concentrations of inorganic arsenic (iAs) in rice, potentially raising lifetime health risks for populations in Asia by 2050.

Until now, the combined effects of rising CO₂ and temperatures on arsenic accumulation in rice have not been studied in detail. The research, done in conjunction with colleagues at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, is published in *The Lancet Planetary Health*.

"Our results suggest that this increase in arsenic levels could significantly elevate the incidence of heart disease, diabetes, and other non-cancer health effects," said Lewis Ziska, Ph.D., Columbia Mailman School associate professor of Environmental Health Sciences.

"As rice is a dietary staple in many parts of the world, these changes could lead to a substantial rise in the global burden of cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and other arsenic-related health issues."

Ziska explained that the higher arsenic levels are likely due to climate-related changes in soil chemistry that favor arsenic that can more easily be absorbed into rice grain.

"From a health perspective, the toxicological effects of chronic iAs exposure are well established, and include cancers of the lung, bladder, and skin, as well as ischemic heart disease. Emerging evidence also suggests that arsenic exposure may be linked to diabetes, adverse pregnancy outcomes, neurodevelopmental issues, and immune system effects."

In fact, "ingesting rice in regions like southern China and Southeast and South Asia is already a significant source of dietary arsenic and cancer risk," said Ziska.

By measuring the effects of rising temperatures and CO₂ on 28 rice strains over 10 years in the field using FACE (Free-Air CO₂ Enrichment) methodology, and combining advanced modeling techniques, the team estimated inorganic arsenic doses and health risks for seven Asian countries: Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

Health risks were calculated for cancer and non-cancer outcomes. Estimates of rice availability in 2021 by country, as reported in Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) food balance sheets, were used as the starting point for estimating rice ingestion. The standard deviation of rice ingestion per kg bodyweight from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency data was used to create a normal distribution for each country.

The study's projections for 2050 suggest a sharp rise in lifetime cancer cases, particularly lung and bladder cancers. China is projected to see the highest number of cases, with an estimated 13.4 million cancers linked to rice-based arsenic exposure.

"Based on our findings, we believe there are several actions that could help reduce arsenic exposure in the future," Ziska noted.

"These include efforts in plant breeding to minimize arsenic uptake, improved soil management in rice paddies, and better processing practices. Such measures, along with public health initiatives focused on consumer education and exposure monitoring, could play a critical role in mitigating the health impacts of climate change on rice consumption."

"Our study underscores the urgent need for action to reduce arsenic exposure in rice, especially as climate change continues to affect global food security," says Ziska.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[QC urges schools to adopt sustainable practices amid climate crisis](#)

By: Marita Moaje

The Quezon City government is calling on schools to go beyond one-time efforts and fully integrate sustainable environmental practices into their everyday operations as climate change continues to pose urgent threats.

In a news release on Wednesday, Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte commended the efforts of public schools in the city in promoting sustainability during graduation and moving-up events, where schools were encouraged to avoid plastic-bottled water and minimize single-use plastics.

“By promoting sustainability during graduation, our schools are sending a strong message that environmental responsibility is part of our everyday values,” she said.

The Schools Division Office of Quezon City recently issued Division Memorandum No. 391, s. 2025, directing schools to refrain from bringing, serving, or selling plastic-bottled water during graduation events.

The directive supports Executive Order No. 3, s. 2025, issued by Belmonte, which outlines guidelines for reducing plastic waste in all city-owned and operated facilities.

Many schools responded by encouraging the use of reusable tumblers and switching to reusable or natural stage decorations like flowers and plants.

Belmonte said that while not completely plastic-free, the ceremonies marked a meaningful shift toward eco-friendly practices.

This year, 38,098 elementary students and 14,746 senior high school students graduated from Quezon City public schools, while 17,010 children took part in moving-up ceremonies from the city’s Child Development Centers, held last month at the Smart Araneta Coliseum.

Also, among this year’s graduates are 16 children in conflict with the law who completed senior high school while under the care of the Molave Youth Home.

The city government continues to work with schools to embed climate-conscious policies into everyday learning environments, reinforcing its broader goal of becoming a climate-resilient city.

“The local government remains committed to ensuring that every learner, regardless of background or circumstance, has the opportunity to grow, learn, and reach their full potential here in Quezon City,” Belmonte said.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Gestalt leadership empowers Filipinos on climate action](#)

By: Ludwig Federigan

In celebrating Earth Day with the theme "Our Planet. Our Power," it's crucial to reflect on how leadership shapes our approach to our planet's pressing issues, particularly climate change. One powerful framework that can drive effective action and create supportive environments is Gestalt leadership. This holistic approach emphasizes self-awareness, emotional intelligence and the interconnectedness of individuals within organizations and communities — tools that are essential in mobilizing collective efforts toward climate resilience.

At a recent forum titled "Gestalt Leadership: Fostering Well-Being and Resilience," organized by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Gestalt leadership principles were explored as a means to enhance the well-being of individuals and communities. In a country like the Philippines, where climate change impacts are felt acutely, from intensified typhoons to rising sea levels, adopting such leadership principles is not only timely — it is critical.

In her opening message, DENR Undersecretary Analiza Rebueta-Teh shared: "Gestalt leadership emphasizes a holistic, 'whole person' approach, which encourages leaders to foster self-awareness, presence and emotional intelligence. These elements are essential for effective and innovative leadership, allowing us to better navigate the complexities of our roles as leaders in the organization and beyond."

"In a world where we face multifaceted challenges, from climate change to social inequalities, adopting Gestalt leadership principles is not only a way to enhance our effectiveness but also an opportunity to create a supportive work environment that nurtures the well-being of our colleagues and our communities," Teh continued.

Gestalt leadership is based on the concept of viewing a situation as a whole rather than breaking it down into isolated parts. In the context of climate action, this means leaders must not only be aware of environmental data and policies but also attentive to the emotions and well-being of their communities.

For example, organizations like the Young Environmental Forum have exemplified Gestalt leadership by integrating community voices into their climate action initiatives. By fostering a culture of open dialogue, these kinds of organizations ensure that the

concerns and ideas of youth, who will inherit the impact of today's climate policies, are actively heard and considered.

To mobilize the community for climate action, leaders must create an environment where individuals feel empowered to act. Gestalt leadership fosters this by promoting a collaborative atmosphere that values connections among team members; it encourages innovative ideas and solutions tailored to specific local challenges related to climate change.

Participatory approach

The DENR's ongoing initiatives, such as the recently launched "Forests For Life: 5M Trees by 2028," where it aims to grow 5 million trees across key provinces, contribute to the sequestration of 3.5 million tons of carbon by 2038. These reinforce their commitment to climate resilience and sustainable forest management. The DENR also showcases how organizations can implement Gestalt leadership principles. In involving citizens in these efforts, leaders create a sense of ownership and responsibility, amplifying the impact of climate action at the grassroots level.

Emotional intelligence, a cornerstone of Gestalt leadership, plays a vital role in addressing the climate change's psychological impact. The stress and anxiety surrounding environmental degradation and its consequences can hinder community action. Leaders who practice emotional intelligence can help their teams navigate these feelings, fostering resilience and reinforcing the commitment to climate initiatives.

Organizations focusing on climate resilience in vulnerable communities employ participatory approaches that allow locals to express their concerns and hopes for the future. By creating spaces for these discussions, leaders validate the experiences of community members and cultivate a collective vision for a sustainable and resilient future.

At a time when the stakes for our environment are incredibly high, adopting Gestalt leadership principles can influence how Filipinos approach climate action. Our leaders, whether in government, nongovernment organizations or businesses, must embrace a holistic perspective that considers our people and planet's well-being. By prioritizing self-awareness, emotional intelligence and community engagement, they can inspire a movement rooted in empathy and collective action.

As we continue to navigate the realities of climate change, it is our collective power — our ability to feel, connect and act together — that will drive meaningful progress. Let us

harness the lessons of Gestalt leadership to foster resilience not only in our communities but also in our commitment to protecting our environment for generations to come.

As stated by DENR Climate Change Service Director Elenida Basug in her closing remarks, "The world around us is continually evolving, and so, too, must our leadership styles. By integrating Gestalt principles into our everyday practices, we create an environment where adaptability is celebrated, and challenges are viewed as opportunities for growth and learning. This mindset empowers our teams to face adversity head-on and emerge stronger."

On Earth Day, let us remember that the power to create change lies within us all. By embracing Gestalt leadership, we can unite in the pursuit of a sustainable future and make a tangible impact on our planet.

TIMES MAGAZINE

[How To Encourage More People to Talk About Climate Change](#)

By: Jeffrey Kluger

It's axiomatic that you can't solve a problem if you don't admit it exists—and the best way to admit it exists is to talk about it. That's particularly true when it comes to climate change.

For more than four decades, the state of the climate has been part of the national conversation—especially when severe weather events linked to a warming world such as droughts, floods, heat waves, and hurricanes occur. Between those emergencies, climate often retreats to a secondary issue—or less. A pair of studies—one from 2015, one from 2021—found that only 35% of Americans discuss climate change even occasionally. Since 2009, respondents to surveys have been more likely to say they discuss climate “rarely” or “never” than “occasionally” or “often.” Now, a new study in PLOS Climate explores what the authors term the “climate silence” and offers insights into how to break it.

Any public discussion of a political or social issue can be subject to what's known as a “spiral of silence.” The less people hear a topic talked about, the less likely they are to bring it up themselves, which just leads to even fewer people discussing it and fewer still to raise the issue. The opposite is also true: the more that people discuss and debate a topic, the likelier it is that other people will join the conversation. In the case of climate change, the latter leads to what the researchers call a “proclimate social feedback loop.” It's that loop—or lack of it—that the authors of the PLOS One paper were looking for.

To conduct their research, they analyzed three existing studies by different research teams conducted in 2020 and 2021 in which a total of more than 3,000 people were asked for their beliefs and feelings about climate change. Across the surveys, the subjects responded to questions about whether they believe there is a scientific consensus that global warming is happening; how certain they themselves are that global warming is real; assuming they accept that it is indeed real, whether they believe humans are responsible for it; how much they worry about global warming; how much of a risk global warming poses to themselves, their families, and their communities; whether they think global warming is a bad or good thing; how much of an effort their families and friends make to combat the problem; how important it is for their family, friends, and, significantly, themselves to take such action; and how often they hear

about global warming in the media. Finally, they were asked how often they discuss global warming with family and friends.

What the surveys didn't address was whether it was all of the initial variables that led to the discussions—an important measure of causation—or if they just existed side by side. The new study conducted statistical analyses of the surveys to make that determination.

“Those surveys did not analyze how much the independent variables influence climate discussion,” says Margaret Orr, a PhD student in George Mason University's department of communications and the lead author of the paper. “They just report survey results without looking at any interactions between variables.”

Across the entire sample group, the researchers found that all but three of the variables led to increased discussions about climate change. Those three that sparked little or no conversation were: how convinced the respondents themselves were that climate change is happening; belief in a scientific consensus that it is; and belief that humans are causing the problem. Those are three pretty powerful factors—ones that ought to spark concern and conversation. The researchers have some idea about why they don't.

“One potential reason for these [variables] not being significant predictors of climate discussion is the potential for indirect effects,” says Orr. Each of the three factors that don't directly lead to climate conversations, she says, may nonetheless lead to worry, which in turn may spark conversations.

The more of those conversations that happen, the better. “Previous research has shown that people are more likely to take actions if asked to do so by someone they like and respect,” says Orr. “Climate conversations will help reverse the spiral of silence: the more people realize that others are concerned about climate change and support climate action, the more people will talk about it.”

UN NEWS

[Asia's megacities at a crossroads as climate and population challenges grow](#)

By: Vibhu Mishra

Seven of the ten most populous cities in the world are in Asia, with Tokyo, Delhi, Shanghai and Dhaka topping the list. These urban giants, long seen as symbols of opportunity and progress, are now in danger of dragging economies backwards.

In a new report, the UN's regional development arm, ESCAP, warns that without urgent and inclusive action, these stresses could widen inequality, overstretch public services, and deepen social and environmental tensions.

In response, Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, ESCAP's Executive Secretary, is calling for a new urban model that prioritises equity and resilience.

"The road to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development runs through cities and across the entirety of human settlements," she wrote in a foreword to the report, stressing the need for decisive and inclusive action.

Skyrocketing temperatures

The climate crisis is pushing many of Asia's cities to their limits.

In 2024, record temperatures swept through South and Southeast Asia – from Dhaka and Delhi to Phnom Penh and Manila – straining infrastructure and healthcare systems.

The "urban heat island effect", which causes cities to be hotter than surrounding rural areas, is worsening these conditions, especially for the elderly and the lowest earners in crowded informal settlements.

Between 2000 and 2019, nearly half of all global heat-related deaths occurred in Asia and the Pacific. With rising temperatures and shrinking green spaces, risks are growing.

Some cities are already investing in innovative solutions to adapt to climate extremes.

In Shanghai's flood-prone Pudong New District, authorities have responded with a real-time flood forecasting and early warning system covering over 1,200 square kilometres.

By integrating weather forecasts and hydrological data, the system enables rapid simulation of flood events, giving local agencies critical lead time to act.

Rapidly ageing populations

Meanwhile, the region is experiencing a profound demographic shift. By 2050, the number of older persons in Asia and the Pacific is projected to reach 1.3 billion – nearly double the figure in 2024.

As birth rates fall and rural migration slows, cities are aging and – in some cases – beginning to shrink. East Asia is already witnessing this with “shrinking cities” emerging after decades of expansion.

This trend places growing pressure on city planners to adapt infrastructure, healthcare and public services to meet the needs of older residents, many of whom live alone. Yet most cities remain underprepared.

Expanding informal settlements

A third trend is the rapid growth of informal settlements and shanty towns.

With housing prices soaring and wages stagnating, millions are being pushed into slums and unregulated neighbourhoods. These areas are often the first to face climate shocks – and the last to receive services like sanitation or emergency relief.

“When housing becomes a commodity, rather than a place to live, it creates systemic risks for urban economies and by extension national and even global economies,” the report notes.

Turn risks into opportunities

Despite the challenges, ESCAP stresses that cities remain central to Asia’s sustainable future.

To turn risks into opportunities, the report calls for integrated urban planning, stronger local data systems and diversified financing – so cities can build resilience, foster equity and promote sustainable growth.

It also urges countries to strengthen regional cooperation and city networks to share solutions.

Ministers and top government officials are expected to discuss these recommendations, along with other key sustainable development issues at the 81st session of the Commission in Bangkok this week.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

[Transformative power of faith-based climate action](#)

By: Secretary Robert EA Borje

The climate crisis is not merely a test of human ingenuity. It is our collective conscience. It calls us to confront not just political or economic realities but a deeper spiritual emergency.

As we observe Holy Week, a sacred time of reflection and renewal for Christians worldwide, we are reminded that now is the moment for a profound moral awakening. We must take responsibility for healing our broken relationship with the Earth, not just as citizens but as stewards of creation.

Faith, representing billions of adherents across cultures and continents, has long served as beacons of ethical guidance with a universal mandate: the call to protect life and care for creation.

In Christianity, this is reflected in the biblical mandate to “work and keep” the Earth (Genesis 2:15) and in “Laudato Si,” Pope Francis’ second encyclical, which calls for collective action to address the ecological crisis facing our planet today.

In Islam, the Quran emphasizes the principle of khalifa (stewardship) and the importance of mizan (balance) in nature. In Hinduism, the concept of dharma (duty) highlights our responsibility toward the Earth, as life depends on ecological harmony. Buddhist teachings emphasize interdependence of all beings in preserving life. For interfaith unity, Indigenous wisdom embodies the “Seven Generations” principle, which reminds us to act not just for today but for those who come after us.

Together, these shared values reframe climate action both as a policy agenda and a sacred obligation.

Faith-based organizations bring unparalleled reach and influence. Mosques, churches, temples and synagogues are not only places of worship but also serve as hubs of education, community mobilization and grassroots action.

The climate crisis intersects with every tenet of justice that faiths hold sacred. Rising temperatures disproportionately harm the marginalized, the poor, Indigenous communities and the next generation. Faith leaders are uniquely positioned to frame

climate action as a moral duty, bridging divides and inspiring hope where despair might otherwise take root.

However, a gap between belief and action exists among faith leaders all over the world, including the Philippines. Leaders from various faiths have recognized this and are actively working to align faith with climate action through interfaith initiatives.

One such initiative is the interfaith dialogue co-organized by the Climate Change Commission (CCC), Living Laudato Si' Philippines and the Aksyon Klima Pilipinas network in November 2023. Representatives from the Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists, Islam, Iglesia Filipinas Independiente, and Indigenous peoples signed a manifesto calling for a paradigm shift and immediate action during the 28th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

We likewise had the chance to meet the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Charles John Brown, who underscored the importance of climate action as an “integral component of stewardship role.” Urgent climate action is part of stewardship roles that “uphold human dignity,” and such a move would benefit those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. We commend the efforts of the Apostolic Nuncio to move and respond to key issues on climate change and disaster reduction and respond with emphasis on key stewardship roles for the faithful.

The CCC continues to recognize the crucial role of faith and faith-based organizations in transformative climate actions, as well as in sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and humanitarian assistance.

Just as Holy Week calls Christians to confront brokenness and seek resurrection, so too must we confront Earth's degradation and labor for its restoration. Climate action is not merely about policies and programs, it is an act of faith.

Let this sacred season stir our collective resolve. The climate crisis is a moral emergency that transcends borders and beliefs. It demands unified action rooted in reverence, justice and hope.

To faith communities: Preach climate action as love in motion. Your voice is indispensable. Use your pulpits, educational programs and resources to advocate for climate justice.

To policymakers: Engage faith leaders as vital partners. Empower congregations as agents of change. Support interfaith climate programs, integrate ethical frameworks into policy, and amplify faith-driven advocacy in global forums like the COP.

To all people: Let your faith, whatever its name, be a compass toward justice.

This Holy Week, we implore people of all faiths and goodwill to stand together. Let our shared beliefs compel us to heal the Earth.

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