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By: LDF studying aid access

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By: Anita van Breda

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[Opinion] Droughts, Floods and Failures
By: Mon Ibrahim

We do not need a nice play of words to describe the devastating impact of the recent climate swings that we have experienced. From months of extreme dryness and excruciating heat to heavy rains and floods, both have brought the country to a standstill, with tragic loss of lives and extensive damage to crops, properties, and infrastructure. In the aftermath, we see the usual response to all these disasters: evacuations, relief operations, and then back again. These typical band-aid responses have been ingrained in everyone's operating manuals.

PH, Mongolia step up bilateral talks on education, disaster risk reduction
By: Raymund Antonio

The Philippines and Mongolia have agreed to intensify bilateral talks covering education, climate change, tourism, and sports cooperation, among others, the Philippines' and Mongolia's foreign affairs chief said on Monday, Aug. 5.

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THE PHILIPPINE STAR

PPP pushed to address impact of climate change

Environmental experts are pushing for stronger public-private partnerships (PPPs) to address the impact of climate change and mitigate other disaster risks, several days after the country suffered from the onslaught of Super Typhoon Carina.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

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The Philippines is looking at whether monsoons that cause heavy flooding in local communities could give the country access to aid from the United Nations Loss and Damage Fund (LDF), according to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

“The access modalities are still to be defined by the board when it is able to assume that legal personality,” Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga told a Senate foreign relations hearing on Monday. “However, extreme weather has already been made part of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) reports.”

She said the board would set parameters on what type of monsoons would merit access to the Loss and Damage Fund.

The Philippines was selected to host the Loss and Damage Fund board at a meeting in Incheon, South Korea in July.

Ms. Yulo-Loyzaga earlier said access to the fund would aid Manila’s disaster response efforts, especially in Philippine coastal communities affected by rising seas.

Last year, developed countries, mainly responsible for most of the world’s carbon emissions, pledged about $700 million to the LDF.

CNN

Opinion: Why there is no such thing as a ‘natural’ disaster

By: Anita van Breda

Thirty seconds. Less than 30 seconds was all it took for an earthquake to tear through Haiti in 2010, claiming more than 200,000 lives and leaving 1.5 million people homeless. In the years of rebuilding required after that half-minute of horror, environmental experts like me joined the effort to help.

On fields of rubble that were once bustling neighborhoods, I saw people starting anew. One woman remains seared in my memory: She’d found a dented coffee can, filled it with soil and planted seeds. Green shoots were already growing toward the sun.

Even in the bleakest, seemingly hopeless moments, people gravitate toward nature’s ability to renew and restore. But nature is our ally in more ways than one. By making nature a core part of our disaster recovery strategies — leveraging all the benefits that forests and other ecosystems provide — we can rebuild communities stronger and more resilient than before.

Charting a safer, more resilient course means first acknowledging that there is no such thing as a “natural disaster.” The word “natural” implies these events are entirely out of our control, thereby absolving us of the responsibility to prepare and reduce risk from natural hazards.

But when the ground starts to shake, or floodwaters rush in, it’s not nature’s wrath that’s ultimately responsible for the death toll and destruction. It’s vulnerable social, physical and ecological systems — communities living with inadequate water, sanitation, shelter and healthcare, poorly built and maintained infrastructure, and degraded forests, wetlands and coral reefs unable to provide protection from storms.

Because disasters reveal our vulnerabilities, they reflect the choices we make as a society. When we destroy and degrade much of the natural world, we make communities more vulnerable to disasters.

Take our dwindling forests. Cutting down trees removes root systems that anchor the soil and vegetation that soaks up rainfall and protects topsoil from erosion. Without the storage capacity these natural systems provide, the risk of devastating floods and landslides increases. When we channelize riverbeds and build on floodplains, we alter how and when water moves through the landscape. When we remove mangroves and sand dunes along the coast, we expose the shoreline to storm surge.

Nature is fundamental to supporting life on Earth, adapting to a changing climate and reducing disaster risk. Consider a few ways in which communities across the globe are showing what's possible when we work with nature instead of against it.

One of the core principles of disaster response is "first, do no harm," and that begins with a thorough post-disaster assessment. After a magnitude 7.3 earthquake in Nepal killed more than 8,000 people and destroyed more than a quarter million homes in 2015, the government conducted a rapid environmental assessment to learn how nature was affected by the disaster — and, just as importantly, how it might be affected by the rebuilding process.

Nepal's assessment served as a blueprint for "building forward" in a way that preserves rather than depletes the natural systems and resources that people need to survive and thrive. By following Nepal's example and exploring how best to work with the environment, other communities in similar straits can ensure they are better prepared for the future, whether that means using landscape planning to determine the safest locations to rebuild or identifying which crops are most resilient to climate change.

Continued reliance on fossil fuels adds fuel to the fire; by reducing harmful carbon emissions, communities like Greensburg and nations like Ukraine are helping to mitigate worse climate impacts. Moreover, their embrace of clean energy adds much-needed redundancy. The fact that many Texans were still without power nearly two weeks after Hurricane Beryl made landfall — amid record summer heat — underscores the perils of depending on a single energy source.

Natural and green infrastructure from wetlands to rain gardens and green roofs — in addition to supporting a diverse array of life — can help communities absorb rainwater, reduce water pollution and regulate temperature. In the wake of Hurricane Stan in 2005, Guatemala and Mexico diversified their farming systems to improve resilience and reduce future disaster risk. Likewise, after Hurricane Michael practically wiped out Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida in 2018, the military bolstered the base's natural defenses against storm surges by reinforcing dunes, restoring marshes, planting seagrass beds and engineering oyster reefs.

Even the selection of building materials makes an enormous difference. After the 2021 Marshall Fire, the costliest wildfire in Colorado's history, some rebuilding projects used sustainable materials such as compressed earth blocks. In doing so, they can reduce production and construction costs, provide enhanced protection from fire and flooding and reduce the extraction of more natural resources, which can cause further environmental damage that makes communities more vulnerable to disasters.

In many countries, the United Nations and others have utilized earthquake debris to build homes, infrastructure and riverbank reinforcements. The scale and number of disasters around the world means we are generating a massive amount of disaster debris. Rather than dumping that debris in wetlands or offshore where it can kill seagrass beds and reefs that protect us from storm surges, we can put it to use rebuilding roads and other infrastructure.

We have a choice. We can rebuild the same vulnerabilities by relying only on traditional technology, engineering and materials, or we can embrace innovation and rebuild communities to be safer and more robust in the face of future shocks and stresses.

This choice should not be reserved only for a few select people in positions of power. If communities decide to integrate the power of nature into disaster mitigation solutions to prevent, recover from and rebuild after catastrophes, it's all hands on deck. By working together across society, policymakers, humanitarians, engineers, community organizers, environmentalists, urban planners, lawyers, business owners, nonprofit groups and everyday citizens can help their communities withstand, recover and rebuild from crises.

This is exactly the kind of cross-disciplinary approach that made Greensburg, Kansas, a success story and a model for the rest of the US and the world. Mayor Bob Dixson followed the science, fostered public-private partnerships and leveraged the unique strengths of local schools, church groups, city councils and more to mobilize a community-wide response.

The collective efforts and vision to recover from the tornado in Greensburg proved that these solutions go beyond partisan politics. You don't need to believe in climate change to recognize the danger that fires, floods and other natural hazards pose to people, businesses and nature. You just need to recognize that we all have a vested interest in reducing disaster risk, and that environmental management is key to ensuring a safer and more secure future for your community.

Those who have learned from the impact of disasters know that resilient societies require resilient ecosystems — particularly in a world marked by a changing climate. From the small act of planting seeds in a coffee can, to restoring entire forests and wetlands, partnering with nature is essential to our survival.

ECO BUSINESS

[Opinion] How unplanned development, unusual rain ended in disaster

By: Sajan Thomas

The southern Indian state of Kerala is still recovering from the shock and ravages of its worst landslide in its history. The estimated death toll is 333 and around 281 people are missing.

Wayanad district, situated in the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats and renowned for its misty mountains and lush landscapes popular with tourists, is grappling with the severity of a disaster that, in the words of Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, has “wiped out an entire area“.

The Chooralmala-Mundakkai region in Meppadi Panchayat, which was the worst hit, falls under the Ecologically Sensitive Zone 1 (ESZ1) identified by the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel led by ecologist Madhav Gadgil in 2011.

The Gadgil report had warned against anti-environmental activities in the area due to its unique geography and thick forest cover.

Chooralmala and Mundakkai are among the remote forest-adjoining areas in Wayanad, inhabited by tea plantation workers and farmers who also run small businesses.

A few houses are still standing in Chooralmala, but the landslide didn’t spare any human construction in Mundakkai. A couple of people survived by sheer luck.

It’s not the first time disaster has struck the region. In 2019, a major landslide in Puthumala, just a few kilometres away, claimed 17 lives, damaged property and rendered the land largely uncultivable.

The destruction of land and property this time has devastated the local economy.

Unusually heavy rainfall, estimated to be around 1,830mm over the past 30 days, preceded the disaster.

Climate scientists have identified a connection between the Wayanad landslides and the heating up of the Arabian Sea, which leads to the formation of deep cloud systems.

This phenomenon is a consequence of global warming. The mountain ranges of the Western Ghats also block moisture-laden airflow, increasing the likelihood of localised extreme rainfall events in areas like Wayanad.

The cost of development

Development aspirations were high in the region due to its proximity to Kalladi, the entrance to the four-lane tunnel road project connecting Bengaluru with Kozhikode.

The tunnel, which is set to become the third-longest in India and is being built by the Konkan Rail Corporation Limited, has faced criticism from environmental groups for the risks it poses to both wildlife and the increased occurrence of floods and landslides.

Tourism was thriving in the Chooralmala-Mundakkai areas following the “discovery” of “exotic” new locations and the increasing popularity of old favourites such as Soochipara Waterfalls.

Baby, a local farmer, said there has been a huge increase in the number of resorts and homestays over the past few years, many of which are located in picturesque but landslide-prone hilly areas.

This trend is similar to that of many new concrete houses built over the last decade, primarily funded by remittances from the Gulf countries.

The compound effect of unplanned development, deforestation, land use changes and heavy rainfall driven by global warming over a short timespan is understood to be the major cause of the recurring landslides.

Following the latest landslide, more than 150 tourists were stranded in multiple resorts as debris blocked all the roads connecting them.

Thousands of landslide survivors have been accommodated in schools around the nearby town of Meppadi. One school teacher volunteering in a relief camp remarked that there was no shortage of food or clothes as aid from other districts and neighbouring states was generously pouring in.

However, there was constant screaming and utter confusion over identifying victims.

The people in the relief camps have to search for their loved r ones among the unidentified and distorted corpses or body parts recovered from deep inside the mud or from the Chaliyar river, kilometres away from Chooralmala-Mundakkai region.

Psychological impact of climate disaster

The people of Wayanad are predominantly religious, and performing death rituals according to their respective faiths is an integral part of social life.

The places of worship for the three major religions — Hinduism, Christianity and Islam — have been destroyed during landslides.

A massive loss of human life in a limited area and the inability to perform death rituals are not part of the personal experiences and social memory of Keralites.

Research shows that natural disasters have a significant psychological impact on survivors. It is promising that this realisation was immediate at the ministerial level in Kerala following the tragedy.

“Much more than the physical injuries, what affected the survivors the most was the mental trauma caused by the death of their loved ones overnight, said State Minister VN Vasavan, who was part of a high-level team that visited the hospitals with Wayanad residents who survived the tragedy with injuries.

“Many of them were in a state of absolute despair following the loss of those close to them, who were sleeping in the next room. Once the medical treatment is over, they need to be shifted for psychological counselling.”

However, the mental health infrastructure is inadequate for providing long-term psychological support, with even the major mental health centres in Kerala lacking the facilities required by the Mental Healthcare Act.

Even though there is a government-run scheme to appoint a trained psychologist in every school, a shortage of funds has affected its proper functioning.

The new climate refugees

It is becoming increasingly common for high-risk, landslide-prone regions in the Western Ghats to experience extreme rainfall in a short span of time. For instance, Mundakkai recorded an alarmingly high 572mm of rain in just 48 hours before the disaster.

The Wayanad disaster has significantly increased the number of people in Kerala who have been forced to leave their homes due to climate change, commonly referred to as climate refugees.

A new category of “temporary” climate refugees is emerging, as it has become common for people living in landslide-prone areas of the Western Ghats to shift to their relatives’ houses, often unwillingly, during periods of extreme rainfall.

The majority of people living in relief camps in Meppadi have no idea where to go or what to do in the future. They only know that they need to move out of the schools soon so their children can continue their studies.

Following the Puthumala and Kavalappara landslides in 2019, despite substantial delays, the Kerala government initiated special schemes to relocate and rehabilitate the survivors with support from private players.

However, if a mega disaster like the one in Wayanad was to unleash thousands of climate refugees, the Kerala government, which is already struggling economically, would not be able to accommodate them all.

Finding suitable land in nearby localities is another major challenge. In most cases, the survivors, who were dependent on the local economy and lived in close-knit neighbourhoods or kinship communities before the disaster, are resistant to relocating to distant places.

The Chooralmala-Mundakkai landslide is a defining moment for conserving the Western Ghats, which span six states in India, as it underscores the importance of preserving human lives in the region amid the challenges of climate change.

How Kerala, globally acclaimed for its development indicators and widely regarded as a ‘model state‘, addresses climate disasters in the coming years will be crucial for the entire country.

Sajan Thomas is a novelist and columnist who teaches Political Science at St. John’s College, Anchal, which is affiliated with the University of Kerala. He holds a doctoral degree from the University of Bergen, Norway, and his other accomplishments include a fellowship from Harvard University and being a visiting scholar at NIAS, Copenhagen.

GMA NEWS

Habagat to bring rain over parts of PH on Tuesday, Aug. 6

The Southwest Monsoon (Habagat) will bring cloudy conditions and rain over several areas in the country on Tuesday, said state weather bureau PAGASA.

Western Visayas, Zambales, Bataan, Cavite, Batangas, Occidental Mindoro, and Palawan could experience cloudy skies with scattered rains and thunderstorms due to the Habagat.

These moderate to heavy rains may cause flash floods or landslides.

The Habagat may also cause partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms over Metro Manila, Mindanao, Bicol Region, the rest of Visayas, the rest of Calabarzon, and the rest of Mimaropa.

Meanwhile, the rest of Luzon would see partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms due to localized thunderstorms.

These severe thunderstorms may trigger flash floods and landslides in the affected areas.

PAGASA also said the country would experience light to moderate winds and coastal conditions.

Sunrise in Metro Manila will be at 5:40 a.m. on Tuesday.

PAGASA weather specialist Aldczar Aurelio said there is a low chance the Low Pressure Area (LPA) 1,090 kilometers east northeast of extreme northern Luzon will develop into a tropical depression.

He added the Low Pressure Area will have no effect on the country’s weather conditions in the next 24 hours.

MANILA BULLETIN

DENR: Philippines can enlist help of climate change experts as UN loss and damage fund host

By: Dhel Nazario

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga said on Monday, August 5, that the Philippines can reach out to more experts on climate change to address challenges such as flooding now that it's a host to the United Nations' Loss and Damage Fund (LDF) Board.

During the hearing of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Senator Imee Marcos raised the question of how can tapping international experts help the country in dealing with climate change particularly when it comes to flood control management.

She mentioned that one of the possible advantages of hosting the board is the improved capacity-building and network avenues for the Philippines so that it can plug into international expertise in dealing with climate change.

She added that she's heard Rotterdam and Amsterdam volunteered to help the Philippines.

"Will this in any way make life easier for us? So that we can access their tremendous expertise in this regard," Marcos said.

Loyzaga said that the Philippines, within "limited success", has been able to access scientific expertise and the addition of being the host of the board would bring a new dimension to the country's personality that would strengthen its ability to reach out to work with other organizations as well as other bilateral countries so that it can access the scientific and technical capacity to deal with the local challenges in terms of climate change.

"We are now wanting to broaden as much as possible, the access to this 'best science' and the ability to access technology and innovation. Therefore, this additional recognition as part of the host for the board will actually assist," she added.

Marcos stated, however, that billions are being spent to improve the flooding situation in the country to no avail or very little purpose.

Marcos raised the issue that the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) is "entirely bereft" of a national master plan in terms of flood control management. She

then asked for the purpose of reaching out to experts if they will not be participating in creating plans.

"So will this LDF help us? Because the national greening program has been cut so severely," Marcos said.

Loyzaga said that in terms of building awareness and access to expertise, she expressed her belief that the added dimension of being host to the board will give the country some additional "gravitas" in reaching out to different countries as well as organizations in terms of expertise.

On July 8, 2024, the Philippines was selected as the host country of the Board. She said part of the Philippines' commitment is to confer juridical personality and legal capacity as well as grant privileges and immunities to the Board.

"The Philippines' extensive involvement in the creation of the Board is a testament to the country's advocacy for climate justice and equity," Marcos said.

[Opinion] Droughts, Floods and Failures

By: Mon Ibrahim

We do not need a nice play of words to describe the devastating impact of the recent climate swings that we have experienced. From months of extreme dryness and excruciating heat to heavy rains and floods, both have brought the country to a standstill, with tragic loss of lives and extensive damage to crops, properties, and infrastructure. In the aftermath, we see the usual response to all these disasters: evacuations, relief operations, and then back again. These typical band-aid responses have been ingrained in everyone's operating manuals.

Climate change is not a simple, one-dimensional issue. It's a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that we need to thoroughly understand in order to effectively address its impacts. This complexity underscores the crucial need for a deeper understanding of the issue. For now, let's focus on the impact of too much water.

Due to a combination of geographical, environmental, and socio-economic factors, the country is particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change. Floods are a persistent problem in the Philippines, which is located in the western Pacific Ocean, a region highly prone to tropical cyclones. On average, about 20 tropical cyclones enter Philippine waters each year, with about half making landfall. The country’s position in the Pacific typhoon belt makes it vulnerable to increasingly intense storms, a trend exacerbated by climate change.

As an archipelago consisting of over 7,000 islands, the Philippines has an extensive coastline that is exposed to rising sea levels and storm surges. The concentration of people and infrastructure in coastal metropolitan areas amplifies the potential impact of climate-related disasters. Losing some of those areas in Bulacan to rising sea levels, for example, would be a foregone conclusion. However, many experts believe that building seawalls around those areas would not effectively solve the situation. This underscores the urgent need for sustainable, long-term solutions, which can bring hope for a better, more resilient future.

We have seen the evil effects of deforestation and changes in land use. These have effectively reduced the environment's natural capacity to absorb rainfall and mitigate flooding. Forests, which act as natural barriers against floods and landslides, have been significantly depleted, increasing the risk of these hazards. Most natural waterways, like streams and creeks, are long gone, and houses and infrastructures have been built on top of them. Politicians just let such developments happen because the more people there are would result to more votes for them during elections.

Many areas in the Philippines still lack adequate infrastructure to cope with climate change's impacts. Poorly maintained drainage systems, insufficient flood control measures, and inadequate urban planning contribute to the severity of flooding and other climate-related issues. The irony is that the government spends tens of billions of pesos yearly to build infrastructures like bridges and roads, only to see some of them damaged during storms.

Despite adequate warnings from PAGASA, barges and boats were not adequately secured to prepare for the oncoming strong currents of some waterways, such as the Marikina River and the Manggahan floodway. I saw on TV those barges ramming into the foundations of the newly repaired F. Manalo Bridge in Pasig City. The structural soundness of the bridge is again being assessed, causing traffic to be rerouted, adding to the agonies of motorists in the area.

One significant contributor to this issue is improper garbage disposal. A day after the strong rains stopped, I drove around to check on the situation outside our place. Passing through the road under the Macapagal Bridge on Marcos Highway, I saw tons of garbage strewn all around. When will we ever learn the simple truth that garbage disposed of improperly often ends up in drainage systems, causing blockages?

Our government has implemented critical strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change. PAGASA has been doing its part to ensure that we are properly warned early of weather situations. But are they adequately tooled for them to do their job well in the future?

Our local government units play a vital role in mitigating the effects of climate change. Cleaning up all those waterways of obstructions would be critical. This would include demolishing structures illegally built on top of them. Ensuring proper disposal of trash, up to the smallest candy wrapper, should be a priority of barangay leaders. Teaching our kids the value of cleanliness and the discipline of proper disposal is upon our teachers to implement.

Flooding will alwaysremain a significant challenge in the Philippines, but by understanding its causes, implementing innovative mitigation strategies, the adequatedosage of political will on the part of our leaders, and ensuring the cooperation of everyone, the country can build more climate-resilient communities.

PH, Mongolia step up bilateral talks on education, disaster risk reduction

By: Raymund Antonio

The Philippines and Mongolia have agreed to intensify bilateral talks covering education, climate change, tourism, and sports cooperation, among others, the Philippines' and Mongolia's foreign affairs chief said on Monday, Aug. 5.

In separate statements during their bilateral meeting, the officials declared the Philippines has donated $50,000 to Mongolia for disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation.

"The Philippines and Mongolia are both vulnerable to natural calamities, and must work together to mitigate and reduce disaster risks," Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Secretary Enrique Manalo said.

"As an expression of solidarity, the Philippines has donated a modest amount to assist the Government of Mongolian addressing the impact of natural disasters," he added.

While he did not mention the amount, Mongolian Foreign Minister Batmunkh Battsetseg announced that the aid was worth $50,000.

"As a Member of the Cabinet and President of the Mongolian Red Cross Society, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to our Filipino friends for their goodwill and wonderful gesture of friendship," he said.

"As both Mongolia and the Philippines are vulnerable to climate change risks, we will work even closer together to combat climate change, mitigate and overcome disaster risks, and build resilient communities," the foreign official added.

Citing that both the Philippines and Mongolia are "vulnerable to natural calamities," Manalo stressed the need to "work together to mitigate and reduce disaster risks."

Manalo said there were also talks to promote trade between the two countries, and congratulated Mongolia for attaining an upper middle-income economy status this year.

Additionally, the officials discussed the establishment of ties between their business communities and the potential for cooperation in tourism, agriculture, and education.

“With Mongolia designating English as its official foreign language, there is a growing demand for skilled English teachers. We have agreed to collaborate with the Philippines on training our rural and regional English teachers both systematically and regionally by improving capacity-building, organizing trainings and workshops as well as implementing teacher exchange programs,” Battsetseg said.

The Mongolian foreign minister disclosed as well plans to strengthen people-to-people exchanges and expanding cooperation in the tourism sector.

“We have agreed to cooperate on further improving the favorable conditions of visa-free travel for our citizens,” he shared.

He added that there were also discussions in intensifying cooperation in the health sector as “both sides expressed their readiness to collaborate in the training and capacity-building of Mongolian doctors and specialists through short and medium-term programs and workshops in the Philippines.”

Furthermore, Manalo announced that they signed the Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between our Foreign Ministries.

”This agreement commits both sides to cooperate and coordinate on bilateral and international issues of common concern,” he said.

MANILA STANDARD

Mangroves greatly help in storing carbon and guarding coastal areas

Mangroves provide a wide variety of services, not just to the environment, but also to people. Their submerged roots serve as a haven for a plethora of marine animals.

Likewise, their trunks, leaves and branches provide a home for tree-dwelling mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds. Furthermore, the closely knit roots of mangroves prevent coastal soil erosion just as their branches and leaves form a natural wind-barrier that protects coastal communities from strong gusts of winds, especially during storms.

Apart from their capacity as natural barriers and biodiversity hubs, the most impeccable feature of mangroves is their ability to capture and store carbon. Like most plants, mangroves capture carbon from the atmosphere. What makes them special, however, is the fact that the sediments where they are usually located also have the capacity to act as carbon sinks. This makes mangroves effective in carbon sequestration, making them highly valuable assets in climate change mitigation.

In the Philippines, mangroves are recognized as highly protected nature-based solutions to climate change. This prompted the development of several mechanisms aimed at the protection, preservation, and rehabilitation of Philippine mangrove systems, which includes legislations and key documents. Initial statistics estimate that the Philippines had 450,000 hectares of mangrove forests in 1920. By 1990, this decreased to 317,500 hectares and in most recent statistics, it decreased further to 311,400 hectares.

Despite the significant reduction of mangrove forest coverage over the past century, the Philippines remains home to numerous mangroves sites. Various areas across the country have become focal points for ongoing efforts to protect, preserve and rehabilitate these vital ecosystems.

The rich mangrove ecosystems found throughout the Philippines contribute uniquely to the nation’s ecological and socio-economic well-being.

They all play a crucial role in coastal protection, biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration.

Their contribution to the ecosystem underscores the need for more robust initiatives and efforts from various stakeholders, including the government, local communities, non-

governmental organizations, and the private sector, to ensure the sustainable management and rehabilitation of the country's mangrove ecosystems.

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

PPP pushed to address impact of climate change

Environmental experts are pushing for stronger public-private partnerships (PPPs) to address the impact of climate change and mitigate other disaster risks, several days after the country suffered from the onslaught of Super Typhoon Carina.

In a climate change forum organized by the Philippine Business for Environmental Stewardship (PBEST), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Undersecretary Annaliza Teh urged the government to strengthen its cooperation and partnership with the private sector and civil society organizations.

“Forging strong collaboration is crucial for advancing climate action and enhancing disaster resilience. The Philippines remains committed to adopting a whole-of-nation approach. This collective effort underscores our dedication to safeguarding vulnerable communities, promoting sustainable development, and securing a resilient future for all Filipinos amidst escalating climate challenges,” said Teh.

“Central to this approach is transparent governance, which ensures accountability and effective implementation of initiatives to mitigate climate impacts and build resilience across the nation.”

Teh highlighted the dangerous impacts of climate change, citing that around 2.5 million Filipinos were displaced in 2023 primarily due to disasters.

She further said climate change is projected to impact 7.6 percent of the country’s gross domestic product by 2030, submerge 16.9 percent of national islands by 2100, and exacerbate water shortage by 2040.

Spearheading a more collaborative approach to climate resilience, PBEST Lead Convenor and Stratbase ADR Institute president Dindo Manhit emphasized how civil society groups such as PBEST can engage both the public and private sectors by aligning its advocacies with national objectives.

“We use PBEST as an effective, impactful driver and environmental arm, echoing not only the government’s initiatives but also bridging the gap between public and private services geared towards the green transition (and) movement in our country,” said Manhit.

Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation president Rene “Butch” Meily echoed Manhit’s sentiments, calling for further collaboration among sectors, especially in disaster risk response.

“Much of the Philippine economy is privatized. Whether it’s water, energy, (telecommunications), logistics – these are all private companies. Therefore, we need to work with the government. We try to use the core expertise of our companies in all these different phases: preparedness, response, and recovery,” said Meily.

To ensure their effective implementation, La Salle Institute of Governance senior fellow Francisco Magno highlighted collaborative governance in the local government sector as a strategy toward more effective disaster mitigation.

“You need input from local community because of the diversity of the challenges in the different local ecosystems. Because the challenges are different than the hazards. Because we are a diverse country,” said Magno.

Young Environmental Forum founder and chief strategic advisor Ludwig Federigan also echoed the need for coordinated efforts across governments, communities, and stakeholders to make resilient cities capable of enduring the threats of climate change.

“While resilience is about the capacity to withstand and recover from extreme weather events, accountability ensures that the actions taken to achieve resilience are transparent, just, and effective. Both resilience and accountability are crucial in protecting our communities, efficiently using resources, learning from past experiences, and ensuringsustainable and reputable recovery,” he said.

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