



NEWS ROUNDUP

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[Philippine Cities Are Sinking Faster Than We Realize. What Now?](#)

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MANILA STANDARD

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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It's no secret that countries like the Philippines are among the most especially vulnerable countries when it comes to climate change. With 60 percent of the Philippines' 110-plus million population found in the coastal zone, subsidence and rising sea levels have been quiet underlying fears among urban planners, environmentalists, and researchers alike.

The Philippine Climate Change Assessment report recently confirmed that the sea level in Manila has increased by roughly 2.6 centimeters annually, as compared to the average rate of 1.3 millimeters a year in the early 20th century. To make matters worse, other cities outside the urban center are experiencing the same vulnerability.

“Manila has experienced a rapid increase in sea level, primarily attributed to long-term land subsidence caused by excessive groundwater extraction. In contrast, Legazpi and Davao have witnessed gradual sea level rises, while no clear trend has been observed in Cebu and Jolo, Sulu,” the report also noted.

To put things into perspective, a sea level rise of just one meter could affect about 7,000 square kilometers and 1.8 million Filipinos across roughly 2,500 barangays. Three meters, on the other hand, certainly double those figures, leaving about 3.4 people vulnerable. In the past, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has warned that almost 17 percent of Philippine islands will be submerged by 2100, potentially displacing 14 million individuals.

Land Subsidence in the Philippines

Most of the time, we often blame the worsening floods in the Metro and perhaps even Bulacan on deforestation, urbanization, encroachment, and the like, which are all valid causes for concern. But we rarely consider land subsidence from excessive groundwater extraction for coastal aquaculture and mining as contributors to the dilemma.

While the issue of land subsidence itself has been a problem since the '90s, the rates for such are rising by the year. A recent study also confirmed the large-scale land subsidence in and around Metro Manila.

Areas around northern Manila Bay from 1991 to 2003 would have land subsidence rates of around 1.7 to 8.3 cm per year. Recently, however, data suggests that such rates from 1993 to 2010 show a 15 cm increase per year.

Unfortunately, It's Not Just Metro Manila

The thing is, areas like Metro Cebu, Metro Davao, and Metro Iloilo have each recorded their own land subsidence.

In the eastern coastal plain of mainland Cebu from Liloan in the northeast towards Naga City in the southwest, built-up developments are found. Dense vegetation and sparse distribution of agricultural domain, coupled with the less-inhabited mountain ranges have exacerbated the intrusion.

Meanwhile, densely populated areas in Metro Davao show movement. The highest rate of subsidence is -38 mm/yr at Panabo City, primarily because of mixed land-use development. Cumulative ground movement in Metro Davao from August 2019 to July 2020 shows a steady rise, as well.

The urbanized center of Iloilo City suffers from the same diminishing rates, particularly in the eastern coastal districts of La Paz to Villa Arevalo. Here, the highest rates of subsidence were found within Mandurriao and Molo Districts and La Paz District. Such subsidence has also caused worse flooding and tidal disruption in the city proper.

Development Issue?

Alternative water sources are integral to establishing more commercial opportunities. From factories and plantations to fishponds and more, these moves could threaten the distribution system overall.

“I think the problem is fundamentally a development issue, where we have unabated conversion of landscapes and seascapes. For example, the subsiding areas in Manila City are mostly reclaimed land. Same as some other places too, like in Dagat-Dagatan, which was reclaimed during the Marcos dictatorship. Before that, it was a communal fishing ground,” Rodrigo Narod Eco, a former researcher at the Marine Science Institute at the University of the Philippines, told SciDev.Net.

A country like Indonesia, for example, moved its capital from Jakarta to Nusantara partly due to how the capital subsides two centimeters a year on average. Of course, the last time the Philippines changed capitals was back in 1976, and the circumstances then

and now are drastically different. And the past five administrations haven't been too keen on changing the capital because of subsidence, as well.

President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. would, nevertheless, lead the adoption of a new National Adaptation Plan (NAP), which it acknowledged the increasing rates and how groundwater used has enhanced the risk of sea level rise in Manila. "The implications of rising sea levels are compounded by the occurrence of land subsidence in certain areas, exacerbating the impact of sea level rise and leading to increased vulnerability to flooding and extreme sea levels," the report revealed.

It further explained in the conclusion: "Human-induced factors, such as climate change and the subsequent warming of the oceans and melting of ice sheets, are primarily responsible for this phenomenon."

GMA NEWS

[\[Opinion\] Forever flooding in Metro Manila? An expert weighs in](#)

Prominent flood control engineer Dr. Guillermo Tabios shares a harsh reality — some densely populated areas of Manila may no longer be livable.

In a wide-ranging conversation with Howie Severino triggered by recent devastating flooding, the UP professor emeritus of civil engineering explains that the low-lying metropolis could be facing unstoppable flooding.

Climate change, clogged waterways, and the lack of major infrastructure spell regular disasters for millions of residents. Unless large floodways are built to carry water to the sea, Tabios says certain residential areas need to be abandoned to avoid the certainty of worsening floods and regular evacuations and fatalities. Current flood control projects are a patchwork that hasn't solved the problem. He calls for a new cabinet-level Department of Water Resources that will coordinate government efforts and focus on comprehensive solutions.

Tabios cites Iloilo City as an urban center that has built effective flood control systems by diverting water away from the city center.

In Metro Manila, such an approach may require tunneling from Laguna Lake to the Pacific Ocean. According to Tabios, the reclamation projects in Manila Bay only exacerbate the situation by blocking the flow of water to the sea.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[A Filipino youth's perspective on food, health, and sustainability](#)

By: Hailey Yap

The steady beep of hospital monitors replaced the familiar rhythm of my father's footsteps. At 47, he lay pale, awaiting heart surgery.

I was only 12, grappling with the reality I never imagined: my dad, the biker who would ride six hours from Makati to Rizal, was now tethered to machines. Just yesterday, we were laughing about late-night talk shows.

Today, I'm learning words like "angioplasty" and "coronary heart disease."

The cold hospital glow cast a harsh spotlight on how quickly life changes. This wasn't just my story. It's a wake-up call to the pain echoing across countless Filipino families, exemplifying a silent crisis unfolding across the nation.

Mortality rates from non-communicable diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes are soaring, claiming 41 million lives globally each year, with a disproportionate impact on low- and middle-income countries. Even more alarming, 95 Filipino children succumb to malnutrition every day. These disparate tragedies share a common culprit: unhealthy diets.

The Filipino diet has failed on two critical fronts: individual well-being and environmental sustainability. A study by Angeles-Agdeppa and Custodio reveals that working adults in the Philippines consume barely enough calories for rest, let alone regular daily activity.

Filipino diet lacks the diversity recommended by the EAT-Lancet Commission, a group of 37 world-leading scientists that outlined scientifically-backed targets for healthy and sustainable diets (Willett). The top protein sources in the Filipino diet are rice, pork, fish, and eggs, while the EAT-Lancet Commission advocates for a more diverse diet, including nuts, legumes, poultry, and fish. Rice alone constitutes 36% of an average Filipino's energy intake, and Filipinos consume more than twice the recommended amount of saturated fats daily. This imbalance leads to widespread nutrient deficiencies, with high animal protein consumption associated with a 23% higher risk of early death among males

The environmental consequences of our diet are equally dire. Traditional rice cultivation methods contribute significantly to methane release, accounting for approximately 10%

of global methane emissions. The overreliance on rice monocultures increases vulnerability to pests, diseases, and climate change, threatening food security. Alarming, 57.3% of Filipino agricultural households are moderately to severely food insecure.

The root of this problem lies in the Philippine agricultural landscape: 79% of arable land is used for just three crops—rice, coconut, and corn. Our poor diets, caused partly by nutritional inadequacies and limited crop diversity, are exacerbated by the aggressive marketing of processed foods.

UNICEF reports that social media in the Philippines is saturated with marketing for unhealthy foods and beverages, often using celebrity endorsements to target children and families. While legislative efforts like the High-Value Development Act of 1995 and House Bill No. 62 attempt to address these issues, diet-related diseases continue to plague the Philippines. The crux of the problem lies in the lack of coordinated effort between key stakeholders. Without enough government or private sector support, small farmers, lacking resources and knowledge, will struggle to diversify crops effectively.

Addressing this crisis demands a fundamental shift towards more diverse, nutritionally balanced, and environmentally sustainable dietary practices. However, this transformation cannot occur without effective, decisive collaboration between the private sector, government, and farmers.

The private sector must prioritize the production and marketing of healthier foods. The government needs to implement and enforce stricter regulations on food marketing while providing support and incentives for crop diversification.

Farmers require financial resources, equipment, and knowledge to transition to more diverse and sustainable farming practices. Most of all, we must change our attitude towards our food. Your diet is not just personal to you. It can affect the environment around us.

The current state of the Filipino diet poses a dual threat to public health and environmental sustainability. We can only hope to reverse this trend through collective efforts from all sectors of society.

The health of our loved ones, the nation, and the planet relies on our ability to work together toward a more sustainable and nutritious food system.

MANILA STANDARD

[Iloilo province boosts flood monitoring with new inventory of rain gauges](#)

By: Caloy Lozada

The Iloilo Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO) conducted an inventory of Manual Rain Gauges (MRGs) as part of the province's ongoing flood monitoring initiatives.

The move aims to enhance the province's disaster preparedness and response capabilities.

The PDRRMO assessed the current state of MRGs in several municipalities, including Calinog, Lambunao, Janiuay, and Maasin.

The findings revealed that some rain gauges, particularly those in Calinog, were not functioning properly. This highlighted the need for additional rain gauges in strategic areas of various towns to ensure accurate and comprehensive flood monitoring.

In Lambunao, the local government unit (LGU) transitioned to more advanced, automated solutions. The LGU installed an automated water-level sensor at the Agsirab Bridge, which provides real-time data for better flood management and early warning systems.

The results of this inventory will guide the PDRRMO in its next steps, which include procuring and installing additional MRGs and expanding the local communication system to ensure a quicker response during disasters.

By strengthening these monitoring systems, the province aims to safeguard its communities and minimize the impact of flooding and other weather-related hazards.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Breastfeeding in climate change era](#)

By: Renzo R. Guinto

Early this August, I was privileged to speak at the 2024 Breastfeeding Congress organized by the Philippine Pediatric Society and the Chinese General Hospital. Each year, to mark World Breastfeeding Week, health professionals and advocates gather to discuss the latest science, policy, and updates on this practice.

Breastfeeding is perhaps one of the cheapest yet most effective public health interventions. It is considered “the first vaccine” because of its clear benefits to improve the immunity of infants against infectious diseases. Breastmilk alone already meets babies’ full nutritional requirements in the first few months—hence exclusive breastfeeding is prescribed up to six months of age.

Interestingly, even during the pandemic, evidence revealed that more infants were at risk of dying from lack of breastfeeding than from the virus itself. A 2016 global study of 153 countries concluded that exclusive breastfeeding reduces infant mortality by 88 percent.

Beyond infancy, breastfeeding promotes children’s cognitive development, which is vital to fully enjoy life’s opportunities. Research also showed that it reduces the risk of chronic noncommunicable diseases such as obesity and diabetes in childhood and adulthood. Breastfeeding is good for mothers, too, reducing their risk of breast and ovarian cancer, type 2 diabetes, and hypertension.

Last year, a landmark report in the international medical journal *The Lancet* declared breastfeeding as “crucially important, but increasingly challenged in a market-driven world.” What the paper failed to ask was, “What is the future of breastfeeding in a warmer world?” The climate crisis can no longer be ignored, even by health and nutrition advocates. The World Health Organization (WHO) even declared it as one of the biggest global health threats in the 21st century.

Climate change impacts human health in different ways—from driving infectious disease outbreaks to causing surges in heat stroke incidence. It also affects all people throughout the entire lifespan—including babies. Infants are particularly susceptible to climate change, which can increase their risk of dehydration, diarrhea, and infectious disease. Hence, now more than ever, public health interventions for the care of infants

must be further intensified, including the practice of breastfeeding which, without a doubt, is a protective measure against climate change.

But climate change can reverse progress achieved as a result of widespread breastfeeding. One study in Kenya found that increased exposure to heat among babies can injure their skin and mouth, which makes breastfeeding an uncomfortable experience. Under extreme heat conditions, mothers who just gave birth endure a longer healing period, which can make them practice breastfeeding less and which also affect the quality of the breastfeeding experience overall.

Worse, mothers may resort to commercial milk formula that, in disaster settings, can make the preparation of milk formula risky because of unhygienic conditions and lack of clean water.

Some Quezon City areas flooded due to heavy rains

By: Luisa Cabato

Some areas in Quezon City were submerged in knee-deep floods on Wednesday morning caused by the continuous rains brought by the southwest monsoon, locally termed as “habagat.”

As of 6:30 a.m., the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said the following areas were flooded:

Commonwealth Avenue after Philcoa eastbound – gutter deep (passable to all types of vehicles)

E. Rodriguez, Araneta Avenue – knee-deep (not passable to light vehicles)

Meanwhile, the following parts of the city were flood-free and were passable to all types of vehicles as of 8:10 a.m.:

Maria Clara G. / Araneta

E. Road / Araneta

Sto. Domingo / Biak na Bato

Andrew Tramo

In an early morning advisory, the weather bureau said that habagat will continue to bring rain in Central Luzon, Southern Luzon, and the Visayas.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[The surging seas are coming for all of us](#)

By: Atty. Gilberto Lauengco, J.D.

“Life on earth first emerged from the sea. As sea level rises, we find ourselves facing the prospect that once again we may quite literally become ocean”. - John Luther Adams

During the Pacific Islands Forum held on Tuesday in Tonga, United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres raised the alarm anew on rising sea levels that threaten to engulf several island nations in the Pacific. A recent report released by the World Meteorological Organization stated that the rise of sea levels and sea temperatures are worsening especially in the Pacific Ocean (WMO). The report revealed that the rise of sea levels in the said region is outstripping global averages. Global warming and climate change are seen as the primary cause of this dangerous trend.

The report emphasized that the impact of rising water levels is disproportionately high on the island nations in the Pacific. The average elevation of these island nations is just a meter or two above sea level. As such, the increase in the rate of the rise of sea levels, even if measured in centimeters over recent years, is quite serious. Island nations such as Tonga and Tuvalu are now feeling the seriousness of the threat. Despite the fact that the danger of sinking is still years away, many of these nations are considering measures to meet the danger.

Given that the WMO report covered mainly the Pacific islands, it would be understandable for us here in the Philippines to think that the problem is far away. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Last month, the Philippine Climate Change Assessment report was released along with the National Adaptation Plan (NAP). One of the findings stated in the report was that Manila “has experienced a rapid increase in the sea level”. Among the causes cited by the report were long-term land subsidence caused by excessive groundwater extraction, warming of the ocean, and climate change in general.

The report projected that “almost 17 percent of the Philippines’ islands” will be submerged by 2100, putting at risk 64 provinces and an estimated 13.6 million Filipinos would need relocation. According the Greenpeace East Asia, several low-lying coastal areas in the Philippines will feel the effects of rising sea levels and storm surges as early as 2030 to 2050.

What can or should we do about the situation? Scientists have long pointed to greenhouse gas emissions as the primary cause of climate change. Although the Philippine share of global greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions is at 0.48 percent, our GHG emissions are steadily increasing due to energy generation and transportation emissions. Joint efforts by private and government entities to ramp down coal and fuel power plants and replace them with alternate energy sources should be encouraged and supported more. A shift to electric-powered or other alternate energy vehicles should also be supported.

There are several foreign groups interested in co-developing solar and wind-powered energy farms. There are also several groups interested in investing in marketing then possibly producing e-powered vehicles. Unfortunately, there are several criticisms against alternate energy with cost as a primary deterrent. There are several innovators doing deep dive research on alternate energy. Hopefully, new technology will come in to answer these drawbacks.

Individually, we must all do our part to cut down GHG. Whatever the cost and difficulty we must find a way to avert the looming disaster.

Preparation is also important. Mapping out areas most vulnerable to rising sea levels will help the government plan and respond faster to the effects of the threat. Do we as a country and a race have what it takes to contribute to the lessening of GHG or even do what is needed to prepare for the looming disaster? The seas are coming for us all and we need the answer to that question soon.

This is my oblique observation.

THE MANILA TIMES

Recto: Boost climate resilience

By: Niña Myka Pauline Arceo

Boosting climate resilience will be a key to achieving overall economic prosperity for Filipinos, a Cabinet official said.

"We cannot achieve overall economic prosperity for Filipinos without boosting climate resilience ... because climate change is deeply unfair," Finance Secretary Ralph Recto said in his speech on Wednesday at the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action (CFMCA) Regional Meeting.

"It strikes the hardest at the poorest. It makes poverty worse. And as climate impacts grow, so too will the difficulty and cost of eradicating poverty in the country. It is the ultimate injustice," he added.

The CFMCA is a global alliance of finance ministers from 92 countries aimed at sharing knowledge and supporting climate action initiatives.

Filipinos classified as poor dropped to 15.5 percent last year from 18.1 percent in 2021, translating to about 17.54 million poor Filipinos last year. This is an improvement from the 16.0 to 16.4 percent target of the government in 2023.

The finance chief urged his fellow finance ministers to integrate climate action with poverty reduction, highlighting the need to balance economic development with climate resilience.

He shared that the Philippines prioritizes fiscal stability to support long-term climate action, with its Medium-Term Fiscal Program ensuring sustainable economic growth and strict fiscal discipline.

"This enables us to prudently finance green infrastructure, support local adaptation projects, educate our people on climate consciousness, create green jobs, and reduce poverty along the way," Recto said.

In addition to the fiscal consolidation plan, Recto noted that the Philippines uses the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and the NDC Implementation Plan (NDC IP) to achieve climate and economic goals.

He also highlighted the People's Survival Fund (PSF) as a key climate solution, providing resources for community-led climate adaptation projects.

"Recognizing that the whole nation must be mobilized, we enacted our Public-Private Partnership Code to expedite sustainable and climate-resilient investments across the Philippine archipelago," Recto said, adding that the Philippines is also utilizing fiscal policy to promote a regime to attract green investments into the country.

Recto, however, emphasized that their commitment extends beyond national borders, stressing that it is crucial to support regional neighbors as well.

Hence, the government took action to secure the Philippines' hosting of the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF) Board, bringing it to the region.

"By doing so, we will not only spotlight our achievements but amplify our voices and galvanize our efforts to secure more financial resources for climate action," Recto said.

"With your help, it is our hope that our LDF hosting will serve as the gold standard for climate finance and action, not just in Asia and the Pacific but all over the world," he added.

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