NEWS ROUNDUP
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- Why is Shell facing lawsuits over climate disasters in Brazil and the Philippines?
- El Niño vs climate change: Which had more influence over the powerful Hurricane Polo?
- In Siargao, a new Climate Field School launches with a pioneering batch of 60 farmers and fisherfolk
- ADB flags low use of Philippine climate spending tracker as health risks mount
- Ilocos Norte promotes heat safety, preventive measures amid El Niño
- Iloilo province, city prepare long-term plans for looming El Niño
- Metro Cebu water district adds new sources as very strong El Niño nears
- CHED call for universities to reinvent themselves amid AI, climate and workforce changes
- DENR taps weather stations, satellite data to prepare for El Niño impact

CCC IN THE NEWS:

- Marcos orders formulation of national carbon market policy framework
- Angat Dam water level tops 209 meters as El Nino looms

ABS CBN

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EURONEWS

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MANILA BULLETIN

ADB flags low use of Philippine climate spending tracker as health risks mount

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PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

Ilocos Norte promotes heat safety, preventive measures amid El Niño
By: Mary Therese D. Ancheta

LAOAG CITY, Ilocos Norte (PIA) — The provincial government of Ilocos Norte is encouraging residents to adopt preventive health measures as communities experience the effects of El Niño and prepare for potentially prolonged hot and dry conditions.

Iloilo province, city prepare long-term plans for looming El Niño
By: John Noel E. Herrera

ILOILO CITY (PIA) — The Iloilo provincial and city governments are strengthening their preparedness measures against a projected strong El Niño, with plans focusing on protecting water and food supplies, ensuring stable energy, safeguarding public health, and minimizing economic losses.

Metro Cebu water district adds new sources as very strong El Niño nears
By: Robinson Cabardo Jr.

CEBU CITY, Cebu (PIA) — The Metropolitan Cebu Water District (MCWD) is sourcing an additional 40.4 million liters per day (MLD), mostly from groundwater and desalinated water, to offset expected supply losses from El Niño.

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CHED call for universities to reinvent themselves amid AI, climate and workforce changes

Artificial intelligence, climate change, and rapidly evolving workforce demands are challenging universities to rethink how they teach, conduct research, and prepare students for the future.

DENR taps weather stations, satellite data to prepare for El Niño impact
By: Marita Moaje

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is using weather stations and satellite mapping to track early signs of drought and water stress as it strengthens measures to help communities cope with El Niño's impacts.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

MANILA BULLETIN

Marcos orders formulation of national carbon market policy framework
By: Argyll Cyrus Geducos

President Marcos has issued Executive Order (EO) No. 127, ordering the formulation of a national carbon market policy framework and designating the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as the country's national authority for carbon markets.

MANILA STANDARD

Angat Dam water level tops 209 meters as El Nino looms

Water level at Angat Dam, Metro Manila's main water source, rose above 209 meters for the first time this year ahead of the feared El Nino, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

Information and Knowledge Management Division

ABS CBN

Why is Shell facing lawsuits over climate disasters in Brazil and the Philippines?

A typhoon in the Philippines and flooding in Brazil. Twice in less than a year, British energy giant Shell has been the target of a new type of lawsuit seeking to make polluters pay part of the cost of specific extreme weather events.

"We chose Shell because it's an emblematic company. It meets all the criteria," Thales Miola, a lawyer for the Brazilian NGO Instituto Preservar, told AFP.

On Friday, the organization and federal prosecutors jointly filed a lawsuit against Shell's subsidiary in South America's largest country.

They are seeking the equivalent of $108 million in compensation for catastrophic flooding in southern Brazil in 2024. The disaster killed nearly 200 people, displaced half a million and caused widespread destruction.

Until now, the only lawsuits filed over the disaster had targeted public authorities.

Shell is not Brazil's biggest oil company -- that distinction belongs to state-owned Petrobras -- but it has operated there for decades, and its contribution to global warming is well-documented and "a huge amount for a single company," Miola said.

According to estimates by the think tank Carbon Majors cited in the lawsuit, Shell holds responsibility for 2.02 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel and cement-making.

Much of those emissions come from burning the hydrocarbons the company produces and sells. Shell's share is more than three times that of Petrobras.

At the heart of the legal argument is an attribution study published in a journal belonging to the Nature group, which estimates that climate change intensified the extreme rainfall in 2024 by 12 percent.

The plaintiffs want Shell to pay for that additional intensity in proportion to its contribution to global emissions: two percent of the 12 percent increase.

"In Brazil, it is the first time that we use attribution science against a carbon major company," Miola said. "Choosing Shell does not exempt the other companies from being prosecuted in the near future."

- Super typhoon -

In the Philippines, too, the plaintiffs want Shell to pay for its history and its size.

In December 2021, Typhoon Rai, known locally as Odette, devastated several islands. More than 400 people died and hundreds of thousands lost their homes. It was one of the worst disasters in the country's history.

Four years later, in 2025, around 100 survivors, supported by NGOs, filed a lawsuit against Shell in the United Kingdom, where the company is based.

The lawyers base their case on the company's "historic carbon emissions" and the link between those emissions and global warming, which climate scientists have shown intensifies cyclones.

- Aggravating factor -

The plaintiffs cite an additional aggravating factor: Shell's "history of misinformation regarding the causes and impacts of climate change," said Greg Lascelles, a lawyer at Hausfeld, the firm handling the lawsuit in London.

"There's a lot of evidence about Shell knowing as early as in the 1960s" that fossil fuels contributed to global warming, said Madeleine Lynch, a campaigner on the "Odette case."

The lawsuit argues that this establishes negligence under Philippine law.

The Brazilian lawsuit also cites Shell's past record, including an internal company report from 1986 that acknowledged fossil fuels' role in increasing greenhouse gas emissions and global warming.

Shell has not responded to the Brazilian lawsuit. However, in December, following the Philippine lawsuit, the company said "the suggestion that Shell had unique knowledge about climate change is simply not true."

- 'Test cases' -

Claims seeking compensation from major companies for specific climate-related damage -- sometimes in countries where those companies are not even based -- are only just beginning to emerge.

Swiss cement maker Holcim is being sued by residents of an Indonesian island being eroded by rising sea levels. Pakistani farmers are suing two companies in Germany, including a cement manufacturer.

"The cases we're seeing in the world are test cases, to see whether it is a viable legal strategy," said Noah Walker-Crawford, a researcher at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London School of Economics.

"If these cases are successful," he said, "We could expect to see a lot more of these cases against more companies as well."

EURONEWS

El Niño vs climate change: Which had more influence over the powerful Hurricane Polo?
By Angela Symons

El Niño turbocharged the Pacific hurricane – but climate change had an even greater impact, scientists find.

A new study finds that climate change and El Niño combined to rev up last month's explosively intensifying Hurricane Polo, which was the longest-lasting Category 5 storm ever to churn in the Pacific.

Global warming caused by the burning of coal, oil and gas was the bigger of the two culprits, adding nearly 10 kph to its already monstrous strength, according to a joint study published on 14 October by scientists from World Weather Attribution and Climate Central. El Niño contributed a bit less, about 8 kph, a study co-author said.

Climate change made the conditions that fuelled the hurricane 23 times more likely, while El Niño – the natural and temporary warming of parts of the Pacific – made it 14 times more likely, the study found. It all has to do with the 31.2°C waters that were as much as 2°C warmer than normal, the study said.

This year, with a super strong El Niño, has set records for strength and longevity of Pacific storms. Polo set the record for time spent at Category 5 in the Pacific at two-and-a-half days.

'El Niño comes and goes, but climate change only gets worse'
“El Niño and climate change both made this hurricane stronger than it would have otherwise been, but the effect of climate change is even bigger than the one of El Niño,” says climate scientist and study co-author Friederike Otto, who coordinates the international science team behind World Weather Attribution.

“El Niño comes and goes, but climate change only gets worse. That means that now every hurricane that will occur in the East Pacific has at least this climate change signal making it stronger. And as long as we keep burning fossil fuels, that will only get bigger,” Otto adds.

Researchers found that without climate change and El Niño, Polo would have been a monster storm anyway. But every bit of additional wind speed can dramatically increase the damage.

Decoding Polo's rapid strengthening

While Hurricane Polo ultimately weakened considerably before it hit a sparsely populated part of Mexico, scientists remain fascinated by how it turbocharged from a tropical storm to a top-of-the-chart Category 5 hurricane in about 24 hours.

The study puts the different atmospheric dangers in perspective, says Kristina Dahl, a climate scientist and vice president of science at Climate Central, a science and journalism nonprofit out of New Jersey.

“It’s a powerful reminder that even though El Niño right now is shifting hazards around the globe and changing where it’s flooding and getting dry, the really dominant signal behind all of this remains climate change,” she says.

The study looked at the warm water that fuels storms, using a measure of how strong they can get. But the study didn't focus on the upper level wind shear where El Niño has a huge footprint. El Niño usually increases those storm-decapitating high altitude winds in the Atlantic. However, in the Pacific because of changes in wind patterns, El Niño decreases the winds that weaken storms.

The two sets of researchers measured conditions slightly differently and used different techniques but came to the same general conclusion, making them more confident in the result. However, the rapid study has not had time to be peer-reviewed, which is the gold standard of science.

To calculate the impact of climate change on Polo, both teams used the scientifically accepted method of comparing what happened in our warmer real world to a hypothetical world that hasn't warmed by 1.4°C since pre-industrial times.

How El Niño and climate change interact

Study co-author Daniel Gilford, a Climate Central scientist, says the process they looked at was similar to cars on a road. Wind shear from El Niño can be a red light, as it is in the Atlantic, or a green light, as it is in the Pacific. In the Pacific that green light says go, and then the water warmed by both climate change and El Niño acts like a driver flooring the accelerator.

University at Albany atmospheric scientist Brian Tang, who wasn't part of the study, says he was initially surprised that the research found climate change to be the bigger influence on Polo, “given how extreme this El Niño is, but from a long-term standpoint, perhaps the result isn’t as surprising as it might seem.”

But three other outside scientists – Jeff Masters of Yale Climate Connections, University of Pennsylvania's Michael Mann and North Carolina State University's Carl Schreck – say they believe the study underestimates how much climate change has added to Polo's strength. Masters points to Gilford's own 2024 study that found climate change added 30 kph to hurricanes in the Atlantic from 2019 to 2023.

Gilford acknowledges that Thursday's report could be underestimating climate change's impact a bit, but says he was factoring in other conditions and being conservative.

GMA NEWS ONLNE

In Siargao, a new Climate Field School launches with a pioneering batch of 60 farmers and fisherfolk
By: Lou Albano

At the first Siargao Climate Week, a new climate field school for farmers and fisherfolk was launched in the Municipality of Del Carmen.

Alongside a new Water Testing Laboratory and a DOST iHub, the Climate Field School for Farmers and Fisherfolk is located at the Surigao del Norte State University (SNSU) Del Carmen Campus.

A flagship recipient of the People's Survival Fund (PSF), the Climate Field School underscores the shift from climate policy to action. It aims to introduce science-driven adaptations tailored for small island-based ecosystems, as well as to establish an integrated approach to local resilience with robust science services, technological innovations and capacity-building for the community.

It all sounds technical and hifalutin but its main effect is something simple and tangible: Food and food security for the small island community.

“The Climate Field School serves as a training ground for our farmers and fisherfolks to improve their sources of livelihood amidst the climate vulnerabilities that our locality faces," Del Carmen Municipal Mayor Alfredo M. Coro II, said in a statement.

"Our project serves as the benchmark for other local government units in accessing the People’s Survival Fund, especially for small island municipalities,” he added. “By prioritizing data-backed tools, we ensure that our frontline producers are no longer at the mercy of unpredictable skies, but are actively secure in their food production.”

Speaking on behalf of the Climate Change Commission and its Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje, Assistant Secretary Romell Antonio O. Cuenca addressed local stakeholders, acknowledging that "climate change is not an abstract concept or a distant concern for Siargao."

"It is visibly altering your landscape through unpredictable weather and escalating extreme events. This is a direct, immediate threat to the food on your tables, the yield of your local fisheries, the stability of your water resources, and the world-class ecosystems that drive your livelihoods," he continued.

Meanwhile, SNSH President Dr. Rowena A. Plando said, "By integrating the Climate Field School, the Water Testing Laboratory, and the DOST iHub into our Del Carmen campus, Surigao del Norte State University pledges to remain the engine of localized science. We will

translate high-level climate theories into practical, language-accessible technologies that our farmers and fisherfolks can apply daily to protect their yields and safe-keep our local water resources.”

The Climate Field School has a pioneering batch of 60 farmers and fisherfolk, who are "not just students but are co-creators of climate-resilient agriculture," Dr. Joey G. Escauso, Campus Director of the SNSU–Del Carmen Campus said.

"Hazards are inevitable, but disasters need not be. By providing reliable scientific data on water quality and giving our local communities direct access to science-related interventions, we are equipping Siargao with the digital and technical infrastructure needed to transform local producers from victims of climate shifts into victors of sustainable development," DOST Undersecretary for Regional Operations Sancho A. Mabborang said.

The municipality of Del Carmen has long been climate forward. It was able to grow its Mangrove Reserve from 4,200 hectares of mangroves in 2012 to more than 4,800 hectares in 2025 through education and ecotourism training and opportunities instead of policing; local government officials did house-to-house dialogues with fishers and community-based information campaigns about mangrove protection and to abandon illegal fishing.

In 2024, the Del Carmen Mangrove Reserve was designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.

According to a statement from the Climate Change Commission, Surigao del Norte has made significant progress, with 16 of its 22 LGUS having submitted their Local Climate Change Action Plan. Del Carmen is among the LGUs with such plan, which the CCC looks to as a practical investment tool in prioritizing critical interventions like the Field School.

"Climate finance should not only be used to build physical infrastructure like seawalls; it must also build knowledge and human capacity. The PSF is designed to provide resources for concrete, community-driven adaptation initiatives so that local governments can fund solutions that respond directly to their actual, localized climate risks," Borje said.

"Ultimately, the success of the Siargao Climate Field School will not be measured simply by the number of people trained inside these walls. It will be measured outside—in the practices adopted, the risks reduced, the livelihoods strengthened, and the communities made safer," the CCC said in the statement.

According to a Facebook post by the SNSU Office of the President, "under the existing agreement, the Municipal Government of Del Carmen will manage the Climate Field School for two years before its eventual turnover to SNSU."

"The launch also highlighted the role of the Climate Field School in equipping farmers and fisherfolk with practical knowledge and skills to respond to climate-related challenges and adopt

sustainable livelihood practices. The initiative marks an important step toward building local capacity through science-based training, innovation, and community engagement," it said. — GMA News

MANILA BULLETIN

ADB flags low use of Philippine climate spending tracker as health risks mount

Only one in 10 government spending units in the Philippines consistently uses the country's system for tracking climate-related expenditures, highlighting gaps in aligning public finances with mounting climate and health risks, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

In a working paper, "Closing the Financing Gap for Climate-Resilient Health Systems: High-Level Health Care Climate Action Principle 4," published on Thursday, Oct. 15, the Manila-based multilateral lender said its host country's climate change expenditure tagging system demonstrates how national budget processes can systematically identify, track, and prioritize climate-related spending across the government.

However, only 10 percent of spending units have consistently used the system, which is also focused on expenditures that positively contribute to climate action, the ADB working paper noted.

The paper said accompanying reforms may be needed for such systems to more effectively align policy commitments with public finances, including their integration into mandatory budget management systems and expanded coverage to capture the negative impacts of climate change on all expenditures.

Beyond the Philippine example, the ADB paper laid out broader recommendations for countries in Asia-Pacific to strengthen the financing of climate-resilient health systems.

More flexible public financial management (PFM) systems, for instance, are needed to allow health ministries to incorporate climate information into planning and reallocate resources as conditions change.

These expenditures could include investments in disease surveillance, health workforce capacity, retrofitting and constructing health facilities, and expanded coverage for diseases affected by extreme weather, flooding, or drought.

The ADB paper said domestic public finance will serve as the foundation for financing sustainable and climate-resilient health systems in many countries, as international public financing is unlikely to be sufficient on its own, particularly in middle-income economies in Asia-Pacific.

It called on countries to protect and increase health budgets, connect health systems to domestic climate financing streams, and strengthen fiscal policies that influence how resources are allocated.

Climate considerations could also be incorporated throughout the health budget cycle, including capital investments, procurement, provider payments, insurance systems, and accreditation standards.

For instance, governments could prioritize renewable, decentralized, or hybrid energy systems when expanding electricity access to health facilities, while procurement policies could favor low-carbon and climate-resilient products and services.

The paper also cited the Philippines and Thailand as regional precedents for the use of health taxes on harmful products, which can both raise revenues and discourage consumption of goods that damage health.

More broadly, the ADB paper warned that health systems remain largely unprepared to cope with climate shocks and rising demand for health services despite their exposure to climate risks.

Less than five percent of international climate adaptation finance includes health as a component or co-benefit, while less than one percent is primarily targeted at the health sector, based on a study cited in the paper.

The ADB said the fragmented financing landscape makes it difficult for countries to access and use available resources, particularly when climate and health funding remains divided into separate financing streams.

The paper also cited estimates that climate-related health impacts could cost the global economy between $8.6 trillion and $15.4 trillion by 2050, including $1.1 trillion in additional health system costs arising from damaged infrastructure and increased demand for services.

For Asia-Pacific, the ADB estimates that climate-related economic losses could reach around 17 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2070.

At the household level, climate change could increase out-of-pocket health spending while reducing incomes, with health impacts identified as the largest contributor to climate-related increases in poverty.

The paper stressed that the economic benefits of early investment could substantially outweigh the costs, citing estimates that every $1 invested in climate adaptation could generate up to $10 in benefits by preventing illness and deaths and delivering broader economic, social, and environmental gains.

Health sector adaptation is also among the highest-returning areas for climate investment, with average annual economic returns reaching as high as around 79 percent in some cases.

Investments in disease prevention, nutrition, reducing heat-related illnesses, and strengthening health facilities, supply chains, and the health workforce were among the high-return interventions identified in the paper.

Building climate-resilient health systems could avoid as much as $290 billion in annual losses worldwide by 2050, according to an estimate cited by the ADB paper.

To address the financing shortfall, the paper outlined five strategies for countries: strengthening institutions to mobilize and coordinate financing; aligning domestic public finance with sustainable and resilient health systems; improving access to international public finance; engaging the private sector; and deploying innovative financing mechanisms tailored to health system needs.

As part of these broader strategies, the paper also called for stronger coordination among health, finance, environment, and other government agencies in planning, budgeting, and mobilizing resources for climate and health programs.

According to the paper, the involvement of finance ministries and central banks is essential because without their support, climate and health considerations risk remaining peripheral to national fiscal and economic planning.

PHILIPPINE INFORMATION AGENCY

Ilocos Norte promotes heat safety, preventive measures amid El Niño
By: Mary Therese D. Ancheta

LAOAG CITY, Ilocos Norte (PIA) — The provincial government of Ilocos Norte is encouraging residents to adopt preventive health measures as communities experience the effects of El Niño and prepare for potentially prolonged hot and dry conditions.

Governor Cecilia Araneta-Marcos said that prevention is important, particularly for senior citizens and others who may be more vulnerable to extreme heat.

“We do not react to problems; instead, we consistently implement preventive measures,” Araneta-Marcos said, emphasizing the importance of taking precautions before health risks worsen.

She advised older residents to limit unnecessary outdoor activities during hot periods and encouraged everyone to keep drinking water readily available to maintain hydration.

“I always keep a glass of water close by, or I make sure to have a tumbler with me at all times,” she said, sharing her personal habit of keeping water within reach.

The governor also encouraged using reusable drinking containers to reduce plastic waste while promoting regular hydration.

Schools are likewise encouraged to promote awareness of climate change and water conservation so students can apply these practices both in the classroom and at home.

Araneta-Marcos added that the provincial government is preparing educational initiatives to teach students practical ways to conserve water and address climate-related challenges.

“We are going to let them watch a video showing how the engineering team carried out the work, and then they will do it themselves. It will serve as on-the-job training, allowing them to develop the necessary skills and gain a better understanding of how to mitigate [climate change effects],” she said.

The provincial government is also pursuing water catchment initiatives and other measures to help communities manage limited water resources.

Residents are encouraged to follow official health advisories, drink water regularly, limit strenuous outdoor activities during the hottest hours, and seek medical attention when signs of heat-related illness occur. (CCMT/MTDA, PIA Ilocos Norte)

Iloilo province, city prepare long-term plans for looming El Niño

By: John Noel E. Herrera

ILOILO CITY (PIA) — The Iloilo provincial and city governments are strengthening their preparedness measures against a projected strong El Niño, with plans focusing on protecting water and food supplies, ensuring stable energy, safeguarding public health, and minimizing economic losses.

The provincial government is developing a comprehensive sectoral action plan, while the Iloilo City Government is preparing contingency measures for different possible scenarios as prolonged dry conditions threaten communities and key economic sectors in Western Visayas.

The Iloilo Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO) convened a meeting on Tuesday to organize the provincial task force established under Executive Order No. 67, series of 2026, issued by Gov. Arthur Defensor Jr.

PDRRMO chief Cornelio Salinas presented the task force's structure and responsibilities, with members divided into five sectors: food security, water security, energy security, health security, and public safety.

Guided by the Office of the Provincial Planning and Development Coordinator, each sector is preparing strategies for integration into the Provincial Action Plan for El Niño.

The food security sector is developing measures to maintain food supplies, reduce crop damage, and minimize income losses among farmers and fisherfolk. The water security sector is focusing on ensuring adequate supplies for households, health facilities, and agricultural areas, while the energy security sector is preparing measures to reduce power disruptions and protect utility infrastructure.

The health security sector will strengthen healthcare services, particularly in responding to heat-related illnesses and possible disease outbreaks. The public safety sector, meanwhile, will work to prevent El Niño-related incidents and maintain peace and order during drought conditions.

Provincial Administrator Raul Banias emphasized the need to establish long-term strategies that can be adapted to recurring climate-related challenges rather than relying solely on immediate responses.

"We should not only have a short-term action plan. We need a resilient long-term framework that we can adapt continuously," Banias said, noting that the effects of climate change will continue to pose challenges in the coming years.

In Iloilo City, Mayor Raisa Treñas convened an emergency meeting of the Crisis Management Council after reviewing data presented during a scientific forum the previous week, which indicated the potential severity of the coming El Niño.

Treñas directed concerned offices and response clusters to prepare contingency plans based on three scenarios presented by the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (CDRRMO).

Initial assessments indicate that the dry conditions could persist until December, while a worst-case scenario could see the effects extending until June next year. The projections remain subject to changes in actual conditions and official weather advisories.

The city is also monitoring the potential effects on the Maasin Watershed and Jalaur River, which are important water sources for Iloilo.

She noted that the threat extends beyond water shortages, as prolonged dry conditions could also affect electricity supply, public health, food availability, employment, and peace and order.

The city has directed its response clusters covering administrative support, logistics, food security, local price monitoring, public information and advocacy, critical infrastructure, law and order, health security, fleet management, and energy conservation to develop their respective contingency measures.

Priority actions include identifying high-risk barangays, monitoring water sources, coordinating with water providers and power utilities, preparing health facilities, and promoting water conservation.

The city is also assessing the possible effects of extreme heat and water shortages on schools, outdoor workers, and vulnerable sectors.

Treñas said the city must establish clear responsibilities and practical measures for each response cluster, drawing from its experience in preparing for the energy crisis.

Both local governments are continuing coordination with the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA), scientific experts, utility providers, and other concerned agencies to monitor developments and update their plans.

PAGASA has projected a strong El Niño event from October through the first quarter of 2027. Western Visayas is expected to experience below-normal rainfall in October and November, with rainfall potentially dropping to way below normal levels from December through March.

The anticipated prolonged dry spell poses risks to agricultural production, water availability, and the livelihoods of communities dependent on farming and fishing.

Through coordinated planning at the provincial and city levels, local governments aim to reduce the impact of drought, protect essential services, and strengthen communities' capacity to cope with recurring climate-related emergencies. (AAL/JNH/PIA Iloilo)

Metro Cebu water district adds new sources as very strong El Niño nears

By: Robinson Cabardo Jr.

CEBU CITY, Cebu (PIA) — The Metropolitan Cebu Water District (MCWD) is sourcing an additional 40.4 million liters per day (MLD), mostly from groundwater and desalinated water, to offset expected supply losses from El Niño.

MCWD General Manager John Dx Lapid said during a recent Kapihan sa PIA that the water district is securing more sources and upgrading its pumping facilities to cushion an estimated 43 MLD drop in surface-water production at the peak of El Niño.

Lapid said some areas, particularly in southern Metro Cebu, may have reduced supply, but standby sources will cover the loss.

“We have already contacted our bulk suppliers of desalinated water. We have targeted that by November there will be additional volume coming from desalinated water that will not be affected by El Niño,” he said.

MCWD is also reviving groundwater sources, including deep wells, which are expected to be minimally affected and to provide a more reliable supply during prolonged dry conditions.

“We have water booster pump stations installed now, and at the same time we are reviving our groundwater sources,” Lapid said.

The water district aims to operate eight new pumping stations by year-end, with a combined output of about 5.8 MLD to help meet consumer demand in Metro Cebu.

PAGASA forecast

The preparations come as the state weather bureau PAGASA forecasts that El Niño will become very strong before the end of 2026 and persist through the first half of 2027.

In its Sept. 23 climate advisory, PAGASA said El Niño generally brings warmer temperatures and below-normal rainfall to most of the country.

This raises the risk of dry spells and drought, affecting agriculture, water resources, energy, and public health.

PAGASA Visayas weather specialist Jhomer Eclarino said the forecast should be taken seriously given its potential impact on water resources and other climate-sensitive sectors.

Eclarino said PAGASA Visayas holds a monthly climate outlook forum to help local government units, government agencies, and other stakeholders prepare.

National government response

MCWD's preparations are part of the national government's effort to ease El Niño's effects on water supply, agriculture, food security, and public health.

On Oct. 1, Malacañang said the government has activated Task Force El Niño to coordinate action on climate information, agriculture and food, irrigation, water supply, and social protection.

Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said funds have been set aside for preparations.

"Ang pondo po ay talagang pinaglaanan para po mas magkaroon tayo ng tamang paghahanda dahil nga binabanggit ito na super El Niño (Funds have been allocated so we can prepare properly, since this is being described as a super El Niño)," Castro said.

She also assured the public that the country will not run out of drinking water.

Concerned agencies are coordinating with the Climate Change Commission, which President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. chairs.

Task Force El Niño was reactivated under Executive Order 53, signed Jan. 19, 2024.

The order directs the task force to develop a disaster preparedness and rehabilitation plan for El Niño and La Niña.

In Metro Cebu, MCWD has convened its El Niño committee, which will meet weekly to monitor developments and align preparations, Lapid said. (RGC/PIA7 Cebu)

PTV NEWS

CHED call for universities to reinvent themselves amid AI, climate and workforce changes

Artificial intelligence, climate change, and rapidly evolving workforce demands are challenging universities to rethink how they teach, conduct research, and prepare students for the future.

At the Regional Policy Conference on Future-Ready Higher Education: Leadership, Innovation and Sustainability in Iloilo City, CHED Chairperson Shirley Agrupis emphasized that universities must evolve—not simply to keep pace with technological change, but to help shape the future of their communities and economies.

She identified three priorities for building future-ready higher education institutions: leadership that anticipates emerging challenges, innovation that translates research into practical solutions, and sustainability that strengthens institutions' capacity to adapt and serve future generations.

In the Philippines, CHED is advancing these priorities through reforms that make higher education more flexible and responsive.

These include expanding opportunities for distance and flexible learning, promoting micro-credentials for targeted skills development, and supporting research that addresses national challenges in climate resilience, food security, health, and clean energy.

These reforms recognize that universities must do more than deliver academic programs. They must continuously update what and how they teach, strengthen connections with industries and communities, and develop research capabilities that contribute to national development.

For students, this means more relevant training opportunities and competencies that remain valuable as technologies and industries evolve. For institutions, it means strengthening academic quality, research productivity, and the ability to respond to changing educational and societal needs.

The future of universities depends not only on their ability to adopt new technologies, but also on their capacity to develop critical thinkers, generate knowledge, and contribute solutions to society.

The conference formed part of the CHED-SEAMEO RIHED Higher Education Week 2026, hosted in support of the Philippines' ASEAN Chairship. (PR)

DENR taps weather stations, satellite data to prepare for El Niño impact

By: Marita Moaje

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) is using weather stations and satellite mapping to track early signs of drought and water stress as it strengthens measures to help communities cope with El Niño's impacts.

In a news release Tuesday, Environment Secretary Juan Miguel Cuna said the agency has deployed Automated Weather Stations (AWS), Satellite Heat Stress Mapping, and Geographic Information System (GIS)-based risk modeling to strengthen the early warning framework.

"In an era of accelerating climate extremes, timely information saves ecosystems and lives," Cuna said, noting the importance of leveraging modern technology to anticipate climate shocks.

"By deploying satellite-based heat stress tracking for coral reefs in Aurora, processing Automated Weather Station data to map fire hazards in the Agusan Marsh, and running Red Flag alert systems in Region 1, the DENR is replacing reactive measures with precision early warning," he added, stressing the importance of data-driven environmental governance.

He said the technology allows the agency to monitor rainfall deficits, changing water levels, and other environmental conditions to identify areas vulnerable to water shortages and guide local conservation efforts.

"At the same time, we are strengthening water conservation and resource management efforts to help communities and institutions cope with the growing risks of drought and water scarcity," Sec. Cuna said.

Water conservation efforts

The DENR has directed its regional offices to promote water-efficient practices, monitor water availability, and prioritize areas facing or at risk of shortages, dry spells, and drought.

In Catanduanes and Masbate, field personnel use daily weather station data to track drying creeks, dry forest patches, shallow reefs, and other signs of water stress.

The findings support localized drought advisories and water conservation measures in agricultural and coastal communities.

At the Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary in Caraga, automated weather stations monitor heat indices, rainfall deficits, and water levels.

The data help personnel map peatland fire risks and direct patrols to vulnerable areas.

The DENR is also monitoring coral bleaching risks using satellite-derived sea surface temperature data.

In Aurora province, elevated temperatures prompted coral bleaching alerts in May, June, and July 2026, with waters reaching Coral Bleaching Alert Level 1, while reef monitoring was ordered in Aurora, Bataan, and Zambales.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said coral bleaching happens when stressed corals expel the microscopic, colorful algae or zooxanthellae, living inside their tissues, causing them to turn completely white and vulnerable to starvation.

In Ilocos Region, 10 ranger stations equipped with lookout towers support a Red Flag Alert System linked to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) and local disaster risk reduction offices to detect early signs of wildland fires.

“We are equipping our field teams and local chief executives with real-time environmental intelligence to safeguard our forests, coral reefs, water resources, and coastal communities before severe damage occurs,” Sec. Cuna said.

The DENR has ordered regional offices to maintain continuous data transmission from automated weather stations and require marine monitoring teams to submit weekly reef assessment reports to the national portal.

The agency said the data would help guide drought preparedness, water conservation, and climate adaptation measures.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

MANILA BULLETIN

Marcos orders formulation of national carbon market policy framework
By: Argyll Cyrus Geducos

President Marcos has issued Executive Order (EO) No. 127, ordering the formulation of a national carbon market policy framework and designating the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) as the country's national authority for carbon markets.

Signed on Oct. 13, the order directs the DENR to draft the Philippine Carbon Market Policy Framework, subject to the approval of the newly created Inter-Agency Committee on Carbon Markets (IACCM), to govern the country's participation in international and voluntary carbon markets.

The framework will cover the Philippines' participation in cooperative approaches under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and in voluntary carbon markets, including requirements for carbon mitigation projects, safeguards, and benefit-sharing mechanisms.

The order establishes the IACCM to ensure a whole-of-government approach to carbon market governance, with the Climate Change Commission (CCC) serving as chairperson and the Department of Finance (DOF) as vice-chairperson.

The DENR will serve as a committee member, alongside other concerned government agencies, while additional departments, institutions, and stakeholders may be invited to participate as observers, resource speakers, or technical advisers.

Under the order, the committee will oversee policy coordination, issue guidelines, assess the framework's effectiveness, and recommend amendments to keep it aligned with national climate objectives and international developments.

The IACCM will also serve as the main forum for inter-agency consultation on carbon market rules and determine reasonable processing fees for applications and certifications related to carbon markets.
As the designated national authority, the DENR will authorize or approve the registration and implementation of carbon mitigation projects and manage the Philippine National Carbon Registry.

The registry will serve as a centralized digital database for tracking, recording, issuing, authorizing, transferring, canceling, and retiring carbon credits and internationally transferred mitigation outcomes (ITMOs).

The order also directs the DENR to establish rules governing the country's participation in voluntary carbon markets, including eligibility requirements, recognized carbon crediting standards, oversight, and reporting requirements.

Any policy involving fiscal and revenue-generating measures, carbon pricing, or a possible transition from voluntary to compliance carbon markets will require the DOF's concurrence.

Other agencies will provide sector-specific inputs: the DENR will cover nature-based solutions, forestry, and waste management; the Department of Energy will handle the energy sector; the Department of Agriculture and the Philippine Statistics Authority will cover agriculture; and the Department of Transportation will address transport-related carbon credit projects.

The DOF will oversee matters involving fiscal policy, investment promotion, climate finance, and the fiscal implications of carbon market transactions.

Framework due within 30 days

The DENR must draft and submit the policy framework to the IACCM for review within 30 days of the order's effectivity, after which the committee will review and act on it.

The executive order cites the Philippines' commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement, as well as the country's National Climate Change Action Plan 2011-2028, as bases for establishing a national carbon market framework.

It also identifies carbon markets as a potential financing mechanism for climate change mitigation and seeks to facilitate access to climate finance, technology, investments, and capacity-building support while advancing the country's nationally determined contributions.

The initial implementation costs will be charged against the existing appropriations of the DENR and other concerned agencies, while funding for continued implementation will be included in their respective budget proposals.

Executive Order No. 127 will take effect upon its publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation.

MANILA STANDARD

Angat Dam water level tops 209 meters as El Nino looms

Water level at Angat Dam, Metro Manila's main water source, rose above 209 meters for the first time this year ahead of the feared El Nino, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

PAGASA said the dam's water level stood at 209.24 meters as of 8 a.m. Thursday, up 0.41 meter from Wednesday's 208.83 meters and 0.76 meter below the normal high water level of 210 meters.

The dam's spilling level is managed between 210 and 212 meters, depending on weather and water inflow. Angat supplies 90 percent of Metro Manila's tap water and irrigates 25,000 hectares of farmland in Pampanga and Bulacan.

The dam's water sank to a record low of 150.6 meters on July 25, nearly 10 meters below its critical level, and has since risen more than 58 meters. The level climbed from 156 meters on Aug. 4 to 170 meters on Aug. 10, when a heavy downpour added 8.66 meters in 24 hours. It reached 180 meters on Aug. 14 and 204 meters on Sept. 4.

The government is urging the public to conserve water ahead of a strong drought expected in the fourth quarter of 2026 that may last until February 2027.

Climate Change Commission (CCC) vice-chairperson and executive-director Robert Borje warned that the current El Nino will intensify to very strong levels and will highly likely persist through February 2027, citing a World Meteorological Organization forecast.

As the water sector prepares for a strong El Nino that may extend into the first half of 2027, east zone concessionaire Manila Water Co. said it continues to add raw water sources through major infrastructure investments to improve supply reliability and reduce dependence on traditional sources.

Maynilad Water Services Inc. said it reduced daily water losses by more than 150 million liters as of June 2026 from a year ago. This helped the west zone concessionaire maintain uninterrupted supply even as Angat fell below its 2019 water-crisis level in July.

Maynilad said it has also diversified its supply through Laguna Lake, deep wells, modular treatment plants and NEW WATER facilities. Based on treatment capacity, Angat now accounts for about 83 percent of Maynilad's supply capacity, compared with 100 percent historically.

Manila Water said it has also expanded its supply portfolio beyond the Angat-Ipo-La Mesa water system by developing new sources from Laguna Lake and the Wawa-Antipolo water system.

The company said the approach gives it more operational flexibility and helps it manage risks from prolonged dry periods, declining reservoir levels and growing customer demand.

The 200-million-liter-per-day (MLD) East Bay Phase 2 Water Supply System Project, which draws raw water from the eastern flank of Laguna Lake, is nearing completion. The project recently reached a milestone with the completion of its 31.5-kilometer submarine transmission pipelines, bringing Manila Water closer to delivering an additional 200 MLD to the East Zone. Together with the existing 50-MLD East Bay Phase 1 Water Treatment Plant, the system will provide a combined 250 MLD from Laguna Lake.

The 220-MLD Kaysakat Water Treatment Plant in Antipolo City, part of the Wawa-Calawis (Kaysakat) Water Supply System Phase 2, is also nearly complete. The facility will treat raw water from the Wawa Dam system and expand Manila Water's capacity to deliver potable water when traditional sources come under pressure.

The projects build on existing facilities, including the 100-MLD Cardona Water Treatment Plant, the 50-MLD East Bay Phase 1 plant and the 80-MLD Calawis Water Treatment Plant.

"Preparing for a possible strong El Nino requires more than short-term measures. It requires continuous investments in more sustainable raw water sources that can help ensure a reliable water supply despite changing climate conditions. Through the near completion of the East Bay Phase 2 and Kaysakat projects, we are significantly expanding our supply portfolio and strengthening the East Zone's resilience against future dry periods," said Manila Water corporate communications group head Dittie Galang.

Manila Water said its investments in raw water facilities strengthen supply resilience and better prepare its system for an extended El Nino. The company said it remains committed to providing safe, reliable and adequate 24/7 water service across the East Zone.

Meanwhile, Maynilad said lower water losses, alternative sources and better treatment capacity allowed it to manage the drop in Angat's level to 150.42 meters without rotational water interruptions. The dam stood at 157.96 meters in 2019, when rotational service was implemented.

Angat has since recovered to above 207 meters following wet-season rains, but Maynilad said it will keep strengthening its supply system as El Nino threatens to bring below-normal rainfall and limit raw water availability.

"The experience earlier this year showed why we have been investing in a more resilient water supply system. When Angat dropped below its 2019 level, we had more tools available to manage the situation – from lower water losses and alternative sources to stronger treatment capability and greater network flexibility," said Maynilad Chief Operating Officer Christopher Jaime Lichauco.

Maynilad identified its non-revenue water (NRW) reduction program as the biggest factor in reducing its reliance on Angat. NRW refers to water lost through leaks, illegal connections and other system inefficiencies before it reaches customers. By cutting losses, Maynilad can deliver more water without requiring additional raw water.

Maynilad has also improved treatment processes at its South system facilities that draw from Laguna Lake, making alternative sources more reliable despite changes in raw water quality.

“We are continuing these measures as El Nino conditions persist and we prepare for potentially drier months ahead,” Lichauco said, adding that improved dam levels give more buffer.

The company urged customers to use water responsibly and report visible leaks and illegal connections.

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