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By: Ron F. Jabal

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By: Raja Aiman

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NIKKEI ASIA

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[\[Opinion\] Southeast Asia's climate fight can't be left to government alone](#)

By: Laurence Lien

Like many others, I returned home from the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Dubai this month filled with cautious optimism.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Fewer typhoons in 2023 boost Eastern Visayas preparedness](#)

By: Sarwell Meniano

The absence of strong typhoons in Eastern Visayas this year is seen as an opportunity to build more disaster-resilient communities in the region frequently hit by natural calamities.

Information and Knowledge Management Division

BUSINESS WORLD

Major PHL sustainability trends in 2024

By: Ron F. Jabal

Sustainability is no longer a mere buzzword but an indispensable guiding principle steering global practices toward a more ecologically conscious future.

From innovative technologies to community-driven initiatives, the world is witnessing a remarkable surge in sustainable trends that echo a collective commitment to addressing climate change and environmental degradation.

Globally, there is a growing acceptance of the so-called climate fintech that blends technology with the principles of sustainability — paving the way for a steadier stream of funds to help enterprises transition to a greener value chain. For instance, we are seeing these climate fintech firms introduce eco-friendly investment opportunities such as green bonds, responsible investment funds, and financial backing for projects that cut down carbon emissions.

Another major development in global sustainability practices is the acceleration of disclosure preparation regarding the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) in the EU and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in the US. The CSRD has expanded the range of companies that are required to disclose what sustainability measures they have adopted and implemented. It is said that thousands of additional companies in Europe are now being obliged to disclose detailed information on how their operations affect the environment, social matters, and how they manage related risks and opportunities, thus influencing them to rethink their sustainable strategies. On the other hand, the US SEC had advanced proposals on rules on climate-related disclosures that are expected to increase accountability and encourage more sustainable business practices. These regulations signal a paradigm shift where sustainability reporting moves from being a voluntary, often inconsistent effort, to a standardized and enforceable requirement.

Another global trend is the application of artificial intelligence (AI) for sustainability, which sustainability specialists project will be further amplified in 2024. Because of AI's potential to optimize resource use, and improve energy efficiency, the call for its use in sustainability practices has expanded with the belief that it can contribute to significant reductions in environmental impact. For one, AI's predictive capabilities are now being utilized in biodiversity conservation, where machine learning models help in predicting poaching threats and management of protected areas. It is also believed that AI can help analyze big data for environmental science, thereby enhancing our understanding of ecological systems and the impacts of climate change.

As it stands, AI will be most useful in significantly simplifying the processes involved in ESG data management, especially in the light of mandatory sustainability disclosures.

As business faces the daunting task of managing, collecting, and analyzing huge volumes of ESG data, AI-powered ESG data management software can support efforts to streamline the mapping process which can in turn ensure accuracy, efficiency, and compliance.

In the Philippines, there are also observable trends that we expect for 2024 and the years ahead. As a fitting year ender, I am focusing on select major sustainability trends that are expected to confront Philippine companies next year and in the future.

1. Circular Economy: Redefining Progress. At the forefront of sustainability trends in 2024 is the ascent of the circular economy, a departure from the linear “take-make-dispose” model. This revolutionary shift emphasizes resource efficiency and waste reduction, urging businesses and industries to adopt closed-loop systems. These systems are designed to facilitate easy disassembly, repair, and recycling, fostering not only environmental stewardship but also innovation in product design and manufacturing processes.

In the Philippines, a growing momentum toward circular economy principles is evident, especially in industries like textiles, electronics, and packaging. Collaborative initiatives involving government bodies, businesses, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are propelling the adoption of circular practices, aligning with the nation’s commitment to sustainable development and responsible resource management.

2. Renewable Energy: Powering Sustainable Progress. The global transition away from fossil fuels will be a defining theme in 2024, with the adoption of renewable energy sources taking center stage. Solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal energy are increasingly becoming mainstream, providing cleaner alternatives to conventional power generation methods. Endowed with abundant natural resources, the Philippines is strategically positioned to harness these energies for sustainable development.

Across the archipelagic expanse of the Philippines, solar farms, wind turbines, and geothermal power plants are becoming ubiquitous, contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and fostering energy independence. The government’s active promotion of clean energy aligns with the country’s commitment to mitigating climate change impacts.

3. Tech-Driven Sustainability Solutions: Nurturing Innovation. In 2024, technology will emerge as a linchpin in driving sustainability initiatives. AI, data analytics, and the Internet of Things (IoT) will be instrumental in optimizing resource use, enhancing

energy efficiency, and monitoring environmental impacts. Smart cities and sustainable urban planning are emerging as innovative solutions to address the challenges posed by rapid urbanization.

Cities like Makati, Taguig, Manila, Pasig, Cebu, and Davao are at the forefront of adopting smart technologies to improve public services, reduce energy consumption, and enhance overall quality of life. From intelligent transportation systems to waste management solutions, technology is playing a pivotal role in transforming Filipino communities into sustainable and resilient hubs.

4. **Regenerative Agriculture Practices: Cultivating Sustainability.** Acknowledging agriculture's significant role in environmental degradation, regenerative agriculture practices will be gaining prominence in 2024. Farmers and agricultural businesses are embracing techniques like agroforestry, cover cropping, and rotational grazing to restore soil health, sequester carbon, and promote biodiversity.

In the Philippines, where agriculture is a cornerstone of the economy, a growing interest in regenerative practices is observable. Both small-scale farmers and large agribusinesses are exploring methods that prioritize soil health and environmental conservation. This shift ensures not only long-term food security but also contributes to the country's overall ecological equilibrium.

5. **Green Building and Sustainable Infrastructure: Constructing Tomorrow.** The construction industry will undergo a paradigm shift toward sustainability in 2024. Green building practices, incorporating eco-friendly materials, energy-efficient design, and waste reduction, are becoming the norm in new construction projects. Sustainable infrastructure development aims to minimize the environmental impact of buildings, roads, and other structures.

In the Philippines, sustainable building practices are gaining prominence, particularly in urban areas undergoing rapid development. Green architecture, adherence to energy-efficient building codes, and integration of renewable energy sources into construction projects are becoming increasingly prevalent. This trend not only addresses the immediate environmental impact of construction but also ensures the long-term resilience of infrastructure in the face of climate change.

6. **Plastic Alternatives and Zero-Waste Initiatives: Breaking Free from Plastic.** The global plastic pollution crisis has intensified the search for alternatives to single-use plastics and will spur the promotion of zero-waste initiatives in 2024. Individuals, businesses, and governments are actively seeking sustainable alternatives and innovative solutions to curtail plastic consumption and waste.

In the Philippines, a country grappling with the challenges of plastic pollution, a movement towards zero-waste living and the adoption of plastic alternatives is gaining momentum. Local businesses are exploring packaging options that are biodegradable or easily recyclable, and community-driven initiatives are raising awareness about the environmental impact of plastic. Government policies regulating single-use plastics and promoting responsible waste management practices further contribute to this sustainable shift.

7. Biodiversity Conservation and Ecotourism: Preserving Nature's Beauty. Preserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable tourism are crucial components of the sustainability agenda in 2024. Ecosystems globally face threats from climate change, deforestation, and pollution, prompting efforts to protect and restore natural habitats. Simultaneously, the tourism industry is evolving to prioritize responsible and eco-friendly practices.

In the Philippines, renowned for its rich biodiversity and stunning landscapes, there is a growing focus on biodiversity conservation and ecotourism. The establishment of protected areas, marine reserves, and wildlife sanctuaries aims to safeguard the country's unique flora and fauna. Sustainable tourism initiatives seek to strike a balance between economic development and environmental preservation, ensuring that future generations can revel in the beauty of the archipelago.

As the world grapples with the challenges of climate change and resource depletion, the adoption of sustainable practices emerges not only as an option but a necessity in 2024. The trends highlighted in this article demonstrate a collective global commitment to creating a more environmentally conscious and resilient future.

In the Philippines, these trends intersect with the nation's unique socio-economic and environmental context, weaving a narrative of progress that balances economic growth with environmental responsibility.

By embracing circular economy principles, transitioning to renewable energy sources, leveraging technology for environmental solutions, promoting regenerative agriculture, adopting green building practices, reducing plastic usage, and prioritizing biodiversity conservation, the global community, including the Philippines, is laying the foundation for a sustainable and harmonious future. This collective effort, rooted in innovation and responsibility, paints a hopeful picture of a world where sustainability is not just a trend but an integral part of our shared legacy.

DAILY MAIL

[Droughts, floods, fires and typhoons: The 20 costliest climate disasters of 2023, revealed - including one that cost over \\$4,000 per person](#)

By: Jonathan Chadwick

From droughts, floods, wildfires and tropical storms, no corner of the globe was spared by disastrous climate events in 2023.

A new report reveals the 20 most financially costly climate disasters of the year – and all six of the world's populated continents are on the list.

At the top is the shocking Hawaii wildfires in August, which killed at least 100 people and cost over \$4,000 per person in damages.

Also featured are the storms in Guam in May – which cost almost \$1,500 per head of population – floods in New Zealand, droughts in Spain and wildfires in Chile.

Experts describe 2023 as 'the year of climate breakdown' and blame the extreme events on a 'failure to rapidly phase out of fossil fuels'.

International charity Christian Aid published the analysis in the new report, entitled 'Counting the Cost 2023: A year of climate breakdown'.

It said many of the awful events received 'little international attention' despite all having a 'heavy cost', not just in the financial sense.

'With 2023 the hottest year on record, the effects of climate change are more obvious than ever before,' said the charity's chief executive Patrick Watt.

'The human cost of the climate crisis is seen increasingly in homes washed away and lives ended by floods and storms, and crops and livestock lost to drought.

'This year was once again devastating if you happened to live in a climate vulnerable country.'

Scientists are increasingly linking extreme weather events with the warming of the planet, which is being largely caused by carbon emissions from fossil fuels.

For example, warmer air can hold more moisture – meaning more intense rainfall and flooding.

Storms are becoming more intense too, because warmer sea surface temperatures increase wind speeds.

And warmer conditions increases the risk and severity of wildfires, by creating a 'tinderbox' environment of dry and readily-combustible vegetation.

For the report, Christian Aid divided the total damages caused by each disaster by the total population of the affected area – providing an estimation of economic burden per person.

'This method offers a more individualised perspective of the disaster's impact, highlighting the financial strain on the average citizen rather than just the aggregate economic toll,' the report explains.

The charity found the highest per person cost of natural disasters was the wildfires which affected Hawaii in August.

The cost of these wildfires averages at \$4,161 per person – more than any other climate weather event of the year.

It's also nearly three times the total cost of the next event on the list – Guam's tropical storm in May (\$1,455 per person).

For around just 15 hours, a 'super typhoon' known as Mawar battered the little US territory, which is situated in the Pacific Ocean around 1,200 miles east of the Philippines.

The ferocity of the storm killed two people, devastated buildings, knocked out utilities and uprooted trees.

Christian Aid noted the high prevalence of storms in the list, which is 'likely to increase due to climate change'.

Also in the top five were the Vanuatu storm in March (\$947 cost per person) and the New Zealand storm of February (\$468 per person).

Meanwhile, at position 18 in the list is a cyclone that caused havoc as it moved across the southern Indian Ocean between February and March, known as Cyclone Freddy.

Although it affected several countries such as Mozambique and Madagascar, the hardest-hit was Malawi, where incessant rains caused catastrophic flash floods.

According to Christian Aid, people in wealthier countries such as the US are able to better prepare for possible future extreme weather events, as they're more able to invest in better homes or take out insurance.

But people in poorer countries like Malawi, resilient buildings are less common and fewer households have the financial buffers that let people recover.

Mofolo Chikaonda, a widow aged 69 from southern Malawi, is quoted in the report: 'The worst negative impact of Cyclone Freddy that I shall never forget in my entire life is the destruction of the only house that we struggled to construct.'

More people die in disasters in poorer countries due to climate events, according to the experts.

'It also means that recovery is slower, and more unequal, with many people pushed further into poverty as assets are destroyed or damaged,' Watt said.

All 20 events that make up the new list are linked to climate change in terms of cause and effect.

Therefore, the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria in February, as well as the Morocco earthquake in September, are not included.

'Climate science is not clear on whether climate change is affecting the frequency and intensity of earthquakes,' the report says.

'A particular event may "merely" be an example of a long-run historical pattern rather than caused somewhat by climate change.'

ECO BUSINESS

[Cut fossil fuel use to save millions of lives, health experts say](#)

Countries must put people's health at the centre of their plans to fight climate change and phase out fossil fuels as a way to tackle air pollution and diseases being aggravated by rising temperatures, health specialists told the UN climate summit.

At the COP28 conference in Dubai, more than 120 nations signed a declaration to boost health-related climate finance, but the document made no mention of fossil fuels - the main source of climate-warming emissions.

Climate campaigners, researchers and health policymakers said phasing out the use of fossil fuels was vital to saving millions of lives each year and called on governments to address the link between emissions and air quality, and include measurable goals or targets.

"We need to integrate climate change as a core component to enable us, as the first-line responders, to respond, detect, and treat climate-related health impacts," said Omnia El Omrani, a climate and health policy expert from Egypt.

Despite an increase globally in illnesses and deaths linked to fossil fuel burning such as asthma, lung infections and respiratory diseases, he said health authorities in many countries do not connect the trend to greenhouse gas emissions.

An estimated 5.13 million excess deaths per year globally are attributable to ambient air pollution from fossil fuel use and therefore could potentially be avoided by phasing out fossil fuel, according a new study published November by the British Medical Journal.

Despite that, the issue was missing from two-thirds of the national climate plans submitted to the United Nations, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs), according to an October report by the Global Climate and Health Alliance (GCHA).

"The threats to health resulting from climate change are immediate and present. However, for too long, health has been a footnote to climate discussion," the head of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said at the first ever Health Day at COP28 in Dubai, calling for countries to include health in their climate action plans.

Rising temperatures are also pushing mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue, chikungunya, Zika, yellow fever and malaria into regions that were not previously affected by them, Tedros said.

'Glaring omission'

Climate campaigners also criticised the failure of some high-emitting nations such as India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa to endorse the COP28 Health Declaration on Climate and Health.

"(That) carries huge consequences for the populations of those countries in addition to the emissions that need to be addressed globally," said Jess Beagley, policy lead for the GCHA, a coalition of health non-governmental organisations and health professionals.

The alliance called the declaration's failure to mention fossil fuels a "glaring omission".

It did include the announcement of US\$1 billion in pledges from governments, charities and development banks to mobilise finance for climate and health in developing countries, where climate-related health risks are especially high.

The funding initiative includes US\$300 million from the Global Fund, US\$100 million from the Rockefeller Foundation to support climate and health solutions, and a 54-million-pound (US\$69 million) pledge from the British government.

At present, health-focused climate action only receives 2 per cent of adaptation funding and 0.5 per cent of climate funding.

Health and climate campaigners say that is nowhere near enough to tackle the growing burden of tropical diseases as the world warms, along with other climate-driven health threats including malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress.

But climate finance to ramp up cleaner energy access to people across the world must be stepped up, a push that would bring immediate health benefits with it, campaigners say.

About four out of every five families in Africa still cook with polluting stoves, said Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency.

Access to cleaner cooking alternatives could dramatically slash emissions - and improve air quality, said Birol, calling on richer nations to fund just transition initiatives in poorer nations.

Tedros urged the world's health sector, which accounts for about 5 per cent of global emissions, to lead by example on reducing its carbon footprint.

“The health workforce is one of the largest in the world, present in almost every community,” he told journalists.

“We have a role to speak up on behalf of the populations we serve to raise ambition for a cleaner, greener, and healthier future.”

'The hottest year': 10 extreme weather events in 2023

By: Raja Aiman

It is official: 2023 will be the hottest year in recorded history. The confirmation comes after an “extraordinary” November which smashed previous records, pushing the year’s global average temperature to 1.46 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, according to Europe’s climate monitor Copernicus Climate Change Service.

Prior to the COP28 summit held in Dubai early this month, the United Nations had already declared 2023 the warmest year on record. Just based on the first 10 months of the year, global temperatures were around 1.4°C above the pre-industrial average, according to data from the World Meteorological Organisation.

This year, the return of El Niño conditions after three years of the cooling La Niña weather pattern has also sparked a chain reaction of extreme weather events, including bringing supercharged heat to cities across the world.

According to The World Weather Attribution group, an international coalition of climate scientists, the heatwaves experienced in South and Southeast Asia in 2023 was made 30 times more likely due to human-caused climate change.

Eco-Business tracks the impact of the heat waves on Asia and beyond, and looks back at the biggest extreme weather events of the year:

1. Record breaking heat scorches Asia

Beginning in April this year, countries across Asia was hit by brutal heatwaves, setting records as temperatures soared.

Many parts of Bangladesh, India, Thailand and Laos saw record high temperatures in April. Temperatures were as high as 45.4°C in the city of Tak, Thailand, for example. Casualties and hospitalisations due to heat stroke were reported in Maharashtra, India.

On 6 May, Vietnam recorded its highest temperature ever at 44.1°C in Thanh Hoa province, south of Hanoi. The heat wave forced Vietnamese authorities to turn off street lights and ration electricity to avoid overwhelming the power grid, especially as cities saw a surge in the demand for airconditioning.

With the arrival of summer in the Northern hemisphere, large swathes of China saw blistering temperatures that triggered public health warnings. Temperatures at Sanbao, a remote township in Xinjiang’s Turpan Depression reached a national record high of 52.2°C at one point. China’s capital Beijing suffered through 27 consecutive days of temperatures above 35°C, leading to a temporary ban on outdoor work.

Globally, 2023 saw the warmest June, July, August, October and November on record since scientists began keeping track in the mid-19th century.

2. Floods destroy neighbourhoods in Libya

On 10 September, Storm Daniel swept across north-eastern Libya, bringing ferocious winds and massive rainfall that led to catastrophic floods that broke dams near the eastern city of Derna and wiped out entire neighbourhoods in the African country.

More than 4,300 people were killed by the storm. Significant damage was done to buildings, bridges, roads, electricity grids and other infrastructure, affecting thousands of families.

3. Heavy snow blankets Los Angeles

Los Angeles is synonymous with sunshine, but in February this year, areas around the city were covered in snow after a powerful winter storm descended upon southern California in the United States, bringing icy temperatures, fierce winds, heavy snowfall and causing rivers to swell dangerously. The Los Angeles Fire Department rescued four homeless people stranded in a major flood control basin of the Los Angeles River, and two of them were taken to hospital with hypothermia.

More than 120,000 California utility customers were without electricity due to the storm and multiday measurements saw an astounding 205 centimetres of snow recorded at the Mountain High resort in the northeast of Los Angeles. Snowfall was seen at elevations as low as 305 metres.

4. Cyclone Freddy devastates south-eastern Africa

After developing off the coast of Australia, Cyclone Freddy travelled more than 8,000 kilometres across the South Indian Ocean before making landfall in Madagascar in February. For over a month, the cyclone tore through Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, killing over 1000 people and leaving over half a million displaced. By damaging water and sanitation facilities, it also played a part in the worst outbreak of cholera in Malawi.

Cyclone Freddy holds both records for the most accumulated cyclone energy (ACE) – which is a measurement of a storm’s strength over its lifetime – and for the longest lasting tropical cyclone.

5. Severe sandstorms strike Beijing

On 22 March, the largest sandstorm of the year hit Beijing, China, engulfing the capital in sand and dust. Particles with density of PM10 – which are particles of pollution that

are smaller than 10 micrometers in diameter and can travel to the lungs – reached a peak concentration of 1,667 micrograms per cubic metre according to the Beijing Municipal Ecological and Environmental Monitoring Centre. This far exceeds the daily average guideline of 45 micrograms per cubic metre set by the World Health Organization.

The sandstorm caused the city's parks to suspend operations of cruise boats and cable cars, while people were urged to stay indoors. Beijing is often hit by sandstorms in the spring, and this has been worsened by industrial activity and rapid deforestation in northern China.

6. Cyclone Mocha ravages Myanmar

Cyclone Mocha wreaked havoc in Myanmar in May, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. The cyclone, characterised by 250-kilometre-per-hour winds, is the strongest cyclone in the Bay of Bengal in the last 10 years.

An estimated 5.4 million people were in the path of the cyclone across the state of Rakhine and north-western Myanmar, and the cyclone killed 145 people and inflicted severe damage to public infrastructure including hospitals, banks and religious buildings. Approximately 80 per cent of schools and educational infrastructure were damaged ahead of the new school term in Myanmar, affecting the education of many students.

7. Australia bakes in spring heatwave

In September, much of Australia's southeast region, was hit by a spring heatwave. Temperatures in Sydney reached 34.2°C a staggering 12 degrees higher than the September average.

The Bureau of Meteorology called the heat "very uncommon for September".

Soaring temperatures caused 26 participants at the Sydney marathon to be taken to hospital and another 40 runners treated for heat exhaustion.

8. Typhoon Mawar pummels the Philippines, Japan, Guam and Taiwan

In May, Typhoon Mawar hit Guam and the Philippines, then lashed Taiwan and southern Japan. The Category 5 Super Typhoon, with winds of up to 180 miles per hour (289 kilometres per hour) is the strongest storm in 2023.

Guam was flooded and most of the island's residents were left without power and electricity for weeks. The government of Guam estimated the commercial sector of the US territory suffered \$112 million of damage.

In the Philippines, thousands of people in the coastal areas were evacuated, while schools closed and flights were cancelled.

Greenpeace Philippines campaigner Jefferson Chua said: “The Philippines is in a constant state of emergency. Super Typhoons are the Philippines’ new normal, even as we are already experiencing longer-term, slow onset impacts such as drought, sea level rise, and diminishing resources.”

9. Europe and US swelter under extreme heat

Europe experienced some of its hottest temperatures in July, bringing with it heat advisories, raging wildfires and massive evacuations.

The Italian island of Sardinia saw temperatures push to 47°C and the Palermo airport in Sicily had to close after being encircled by wildfire.

Wildfires also caused more than 20,000 people to flee the Greek island of Rhodes. It was the largest wildfire evacuation in Greece.

The heat extended to the oceans, with sea temperatures rising to unsafe levels around Greece, Spain, Turkey and Italy.

In America, temperatures in California’s Death Valley reached 53.3°C, coming close to breaking the global record. The US National Weather Service issued a warning of a “widespread and oppressive” heatwave in the southern and western states. More than 80 million people were affected.

10. Record heat brings deadly wildfires to Chile

Record summer temperatures soared to more than 40°C in Chile in February, sparking wildfires in the South American country that killed 24 people and burnt 270,000 hectares of land. A state of emergency was declared in three regions in the country.

Chile’s interior minister Carolina Toha said: “The thermometer has reached points that we have never known until now. The evolution of climate change shows us again and again that this has a centrality and a capacity to cause an impact that we have to internalise much more.”

MANILA BULLETIN

[How you can give back to the environment from your home with GForest](#)

Tree planting has always been one of the most effective ways to fight climate change, but not everyone has the resources to support this. At a time when environmental concerns are at the forefront of many global conversations, GCash, the Philippines' leading finance super app, makes it easier for users to take a step towards helping fight climate change with GForest.

GForest makes it easier for you to plant trees

GForest gives users the chance to actively contribute to the rebuilding of forests all over the Philippines without leaving the comfort of their homes.

GCash users can plant virtual trees on the GForest dashboard using their accumulated green energy points. For every virtual tree planted within the app, GCash commits to planting actual trees in key locations across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao with its partners across the Philippines.

These partners and GCash work closely with local farming communities to ensure the success of the tree-planting initiatives, extending the program's impact nationwide. This not only helps isolate carbon from the environment but also fosters healthier ecosystems and supports those living within the local communities.

How to join the digital eco-movement with GForest

Joining GForest and contributing to a greener Philippines is as easy as following four simple steps.

1. First, use GCash for your daily transactions, such as sending money, paying bills, buying load, and cashing-in your wallet, to earn green energy points.
2. Next, collect your green energy points after 24 hours of your transaction on the GForest dashboard. Tap on your points to collect them—you can also collect points from your friends!
3. Once you have enough points to plant a tree, head to the GForest virtual nursery and choose a tree to plant.
4. Finally, use your energy points to plant a virtual tree, knowing that it will be translated into a real tree planted by GCash and its partners. You'll even receive a certificate for your valuable contribution to the country's biggest digital eco-movement!

GForest plants trees meant to survive

Since its launch in 2019, GForest has achieved remarkable milestones with over 2.5 million actual trees having been planted in 14 key areas nationwide as of 2023. There are an estimated 346K trees planted in Luzon, 1.1 million in Visayas, and 1.1 million in Mindanao.

GForest's success in rebuilding the forests of the Philippines is not just a number; it's a testament to its science-based planting approach. With a remarkable 90% survival rate, GForest, together with its partners, ensures that the trees are carefully matched to their ideal planting locations and environments, and the seedlings undergo growth in nurseries before deployment.

All transported seedlings have a resting period before being planted during specific seasons, and training sessions conducted by GCash and its partners ensure the success of these initiatives.

In 2023, GForest boasts a breakthrough of 15 million users actively contributing to the planting of 2.5 million trees across 11,000 total hectares of land. GForest invites all users to be part of something bigger, something that transcends transactions and makes a impact on the environment. Join the biggest digital eco-movement in the Philippines today and contribute to rebuilding our forests—one digital tree at a time. Download the GCash app to start becoming a green hero today.

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By:Jacques Attali

Despite statements of triumph out of this month's U.N. Climate Change Conference in Dubai, it was ultimately useless. Yet for those of us who expected nothing, the event merely lived up to its promise.

At the same time, the climate situation is becoming dramatic. We now know for sure that climate disasters are linked to human action. We know that commitments made under the 2015 Paris Agreement will not be met, especially the commitment to contain the average rise in global temperature to less than 1.5 C. We should know that we are on a slope toward a cataclysmic increase in temperatures of at least 4 C.

Even if this dramatic situation is now obvious and recognized by most of the world's scientists, the Dubai summit -- officially, the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change -- has been useful in certain ways.

It produced a fund that will compensate developing countries for a small part of the damage caused by climate disasters. Conferees reiterated the importance of renewable energy, echoing a target set by the Group of 20 in September that, however, will still be insufficient. Delegates also agreed to move toward the end of the use of fossil fuels, and timidly categorized them as part of the problem, but made no concrete commitments. Finally, hints were given that nuclear energy could be part of the solution.

COP28, however, could have accomplished much more, namely: a definitive prohibition on the burning of coal, which China, Poland, India and many other countries are now using more than ever; a concrete beginning to the reduced use of gas and oil and an immediate ban on new drilling in countries where it affects biodiversity, as will be the case in Tanzania; moves to promote energy savings, which could be simple yet effective.

Nothing was said in Dubai about the greenhouse gas emissions caused by animals, especially cattle. The elimination of this output will be absolutely necessary to stop further releases of methane, one of the worst sources of pollution in our atmosphere. Too little was also said about the considerable sums needed to finance the energy transition in developing countries.

Finally, of course, there was no mention of the urgency of putting in place carbon recovery mechanisms, at a credible price of at least \$100 per ton, nor enough about carbon capture and biodiversity protection mechanisms.

It is necessary to talk not just about reducing future greenhouse gas emissions, but also about eliminating those that have accumulated in the atmosphere over the past two centuries.

In fact, what disrupts the climate is not only the flow of greenhouse gases emitted every day but also the accumulated stock, which damages the atmosphere and can be removed only by carbon capture via oceans and forests. Captured carbon could potentially be put to therapeutic use.

Without urgent action, humanity will have to prepare for even greater disasters than those of today.

Countries will disappear, and not only small Pacific island nations. Entire regions of the world will become permanently uninhabitable, perhaps beginning with coastal Bangladesh. Monstrous hurricanes will ravage megacities like Kuala Lumpur, Tokyo, Shanghai and Singapore. Glaciers will melt, triggering the release of yet more methane.

These events are no longer merely probable, they are certain. Insurance will not be able to cover the damage as coverage presupposes the pooling of the risk of uncertain occurrences. Everyone will have to bear the financial burden, personally or through taxes.

The outcome of COP28 underscores that we have not yet understood the magnitude of the problems before us, not only with the climate but also with all other dimensions of life.

Humanity is threatened with disappearance at its own hand, not only because of climate issues. Indeed, even if humanity were able to summon the necessary resources to solve the climate problem and succeeded by 2050 in beginning to reverse the damage and restore a harmonious climate, humanity would still be doomed to disappear for lack of sufficient means to care for itself, to house itself, to transmit its knowledge, to eat healthily and to organize the protection of the weakest and the respect of the law.

This is where environmentalists have things wrong. Their fight is necessary, but it cannot be the only one. And devoting all our resources to climate protection would kill us.

This is where an essential concept, which should have been at the center of COP28, should be involved -- the economy of life. It includes all sectors that must be promoted and developed: renewable energy, sustainable mobility, recycling, energy conservation, health, education, healthy food, sustainable finance and insurance, logistics, security, defense, civil liberties, justice, culture, innovation and research.

The economy of life stands in opposition to the economy of death, which includes all the sectors that threaten to make humanity disappear: fossil fuels and the products made from them like plastics, artificial sugars, unhealthy food and recreational drugs.

Today, the economy of life represents a minority of our individual activity and that of our countries. If we do not set ourselves a goal of expanding its share to at least 70%, humanity will disappear.

But if we succeed, we will manage to give birth to a growing global economy, in harmony with nature, socially just and politically harmonious and bring humanity to a better knowledge of itself and the stakes of life.

The heart of today's battle should be to answer three questions: How to make the economy of life at least as profitable as the economy of death? How to move companies from the economy of death to the production of goods for the economy of life? How to encourage every one of us, every organization, every bank, every company, every publication, every political party and every union to be interested and involved in this fight, on which the survival of humanity depends?

It is up to each of us to make this change happen. We must all consider that it is in our self-interest to take into account the needs of future generations.

[\[Opinion\] Southeast Asia's climate fight can't be left to government alone](#)

By: Laurence Lien

Like many others, I returned home from the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Dubai this month filled with cautious optimism.

Despite real flaws, the consensus reached at the conclusion of the meeting -- officially the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change -- finally brought long-overdue language on transitioning away from fossil fuels into the event's official communique.

While Southeast Asian governments were able to advance their interests during official negotiations at the conference, primarily through taking part in larger blocs such as the Group of 77 and the Alliance of Small Island States, the region was barely represented at important side events at COP 28 or in the Blue Zone area of country pavilions.

This was troubling. The negotiating table where governments shaped the road map and rules for future climate action was certainly important, but there was far more to COP28 than that.

The private sector, civil society and philanthropic groups have helped drive the momentum, resource mobilization and implementation of climate action. They also influence the negotiating agenda of governments, as seen with the Loss and Damage Fund to compensate developing nations for climate change impacts. Its creation stemmed from an idea seeded by the late Bangladeshi climate scientist Saleemul Huq.

It was telling that out of 212 speakers at the inaugural Business & Philanthropy Climate Forum on the sidelines of COP28, only eight of us were from Southeast Asia, including myself.

Just three of us from Asia represented private philanthropy. I was at the event with a group from the Asia Philanthropy Circle to learn, to be inspired by emerging innovations, to explore and renew partnerships, and to soak in the sense of possibility of working with other groups to be more effective.

The paucity of Southeast Asians in this important space risks perpetuating our exclusion from the larger climate discourse. That would not bode well, given Southeast Asia's vulnerability and the region's importance in humanity's collective fight for survival.

Southeast Asia has a vital part to play in controlling emissions and maintaining critical natural areas needed for the planet's survival. While the region accounts for only 6.5% of global carbon emissions, we are on a strong upward trajectory, driven by economic

progress reliant on fossil fuels, increasing energy demand, the slow adoption of renewables and deforestation.

We are in a uniquely precarious position. Five of the 20 countries most at risk from climate change are in Southeast Asia. Our coastal cities are sinking fast from rising sea levels. Adaptation is no longer an option, but an immediate necessity.

Despite the stakes for the region and Southeast Asia's outsized impact on the rest of the world, global discourse is very much centered elsewhere. We need a more unified voice and a better coordinated game plan.

As a region of largely developing nations, we have a remarkable opportunity to lead a greener model of development -- one that breaks free from carbon-based economies, embraces renewable energy and achieves a delicate balance between nature, the economy and livelihoods.

Southeast Asia is well-positioned to lead the way with nature-based solutions.

Compared to other regions, we offer the highest potential returns on investment from carbon mitigation. About 90 million hectares of our forests -- an area twice the size of France -- could be utilized for viable carbon projects. The protection of these forests could yield a return on investment of \$27.5 billion per year.

Nature-based innovations could also concurrently advance progress on U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in areas such as flood protection, biodiversity restoration and improved livelihoods.

The Nature Conservancy has found that restoring 303,000 hectares of mangroves in Southeast Asia could protect more than 4 million people living in coastal areas and significantly enhance commercial fisheries, for example.

Paths like these can put Asia onto a new trajectory toward greener development, simultaneously advancing prosperity for all while maintaining our planet's delicate balance.

Businesses could also benefit from a green transition, with up to \$10 trillion of global revenue up for grabs through climate-focused opportunities. Of that sum, 43% is potentially to be found in Asia through opportunities such as nature-positive renewables, energy-efficient buildings, organic food and beverages and waste management. These areas could replace sunset industries given time, thoughtful attention and adequate resources to ensure a just transition.

The process and progress of COP is slow and limited. We need to start taking the consequences of failure seriously. Southeast Asian nations have not yet faced up to this fact enough, with the exception of Singapore.

In all likelihood, the Paris Agreement's 2030 climate targets will not be met, making the need to improve our efforts toward building resilient communities and systems through both mitigation and adaptation all the more urgent.

Looking at intersections across SDGs and thinking about co-benefits with climate action can be a much more effective frame for galvanizing action in Southeast Asia. This is an area where philanthropy is well positioned to help.

There is huge potential to crowd in private capital. Family offices have boomed in Asia in the last decade, with Singapore alone now managing approximately \$67 billion worth of such assets. Unlocking even a fraction of this sum to incubate and scale existing mitigation and adaptation solutions could pay massive dividends for the future.

To tackle this complex task, philanthropy needs to coordinate better and dream bigger together. The Asia Philanthropy Circle is building a community that is enabling us to collaborate, become more strategic and increase the collective impact of our finite resources.

Philanthropy has a unique opportunity and the resources to champion and nurture the solutions crucial to our survival. The fueling of grassroots initiatives can become a catalyst for community-based action and can direct attention toward the most vulnerable communities and neglected gaps. Philanthropy can also serve as the pivotal capital that unlocks the entire continuum of support.

It is my hope we can leverage philanthropy's most distinctive features -- patience, flexibility, a focus on impact and a tolerance of risk -- to forge collective action across sectors. From philanthropy and business to government and civil society, it is time for each sector to take ownership to drive the necessary change using our respective strengths and for Southeast Asia to take its seat at the table.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

Fewer typhoons in 2023 boost Eastern Visayas preparedness

By: Sarwell Meniano

The absence of strong typhoons in Eastern Visayas this year is seen as an opportunity to build more disaster-resilient communities in the region frequently hit by natural calamities.

The Regional Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (RDRRMC) said fewer severe typhoons this year allowed local authorities to save their resources to mitigate the impacts of climate change in the future.

“We are happy to see our DRRM officers in preparatory mode and not in response mode this year. Our region has been spared by strong typhoons, and this allows us to train, capacitate, and organize our response team,” said RDRRMC chair and Office of Civil Defense (OCD) regional director Lord Byron Torrecarion.

Eastern Visayas is among the areas worst hit by typhoons that form over the Western Pacific Ocean. To date, the most destructive typhoon that made landfall in the region and tested its resiliency and post-disaster recovery was Super Typhoon Yolanda in 2013.

In 2023, only Typhoon Betty and Egay, as well as the shear line, caused flooding in some areas of Leyte and Samar provinces.

The latest destructive weather disturbance in the region was experienced in April 2022 when Tropical Storm Agaton struck Leyte Island with 126 flooding and 23 landslide incidents. The storm killed at least 122 people and injured hundreds.

The RDRRMC reported that the storm caused damage to the agriculture sector amounting to PHP942.9 million and the housing sector with 1,008 damaged houses, among others.

In December 2021, Super Typhoon Odette battered the southern part of Leyte Island, killing at least 75 people and injuring 1,174 others. It also incurred an estimated PHP61.74 billion in damages and PHP10.26 billion in losses.

“Recent experiences have raised the awareness of our local DRRMs to be more prepared through the conduct of capacity-building activities and information drives in communities, among others,” Torrecarion added.

From just eight “Gawad Kalasag” awardees in 2022, the number of areas recognized rose to 30 this year.

Kalasag is the Filipino term for "shield," used by early Filipinos to protect themselves from enemies' attacks or harmful animals. Relatedly, Gawad Kalasag was conceived to protect high-risk communities against hazards by encouraging the participation of various stakeholders in designing and implementing DRRM programs.

To qualify for the award, entries must have demonstrated effectiveness and innovation in disaster risk reduction and management, community participation, sustainability, and replicability.

Two provinces, two cities and 26 municipalities were awarded the “kalasag”.

Recognized as beyond compliant are Northern Samar and Southern Leyte provinces; Can-avid, Eastern Samar; and Catarman, Northern Samar.

Fully compliant local governments are the towns of Arteche, Balangiga, General Macarthur, Guiuan, and Maydolong in Eastern Samar; Tabango, Ormoc City, and San Miguel in Leyte; Gamay, Laoang, Lope De Vega, Palapag, San Antonio, and San Roque in Northern Samar.

Also awarded are Marabut and Tarangnan in Samar; Bontoc, Liloan, Limasawa, Maasin City, Macrohon, Padre Burgos, Pintuyan, Silago, Sogod, and Hinundayan in Southern Leyte.

Meanwhile, at the regional level, among the DRRM-related strategies are strengthening the capacities of local governments and communities in disaster prevention and preparedness across sectors, scaling up public spending for climate and disaster risk management, and strengthening existing inter-agency bodies that serve as venues for improving policymaking and implementation of DRRM.

Other strategies are strengthening the collaboration and accountability of the private sector, civil society organizations, volunteer groups, and academe in local and community-based risk resiliency measures; ensuring access to climate and disaster resiliency financing and insurance; popularizing public service continuity planning among government agencies; and improving the early warning system to include a community-based alert system.

In line with the vulnerability reduction sub-strategy, Eastern Visayas strives to enhance climate change adaptation and strengthen DRRM by 2028.

Being geographically located in the eastern portion of the archipelago and within the Pacific Ring of Fire, Eastern Visayas is highly vulnerable to natural hazards aggravated by climate change. The resulting economic loss from disrupted supply chains and biodiversity loss further depicts the region's exposure to climate risks.

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