

24 OCTOBER 2020, Saturday



DENR

NEWS ALERTS

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND INITIATIVES SERVICE



Perfect score

[Mary Ruth R. Malinao](#) (The Freeman) - October 23, 2020 - 12:00am

CEBU, Philippines — Secretary Roy Cimatu, the designated overseer of the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) in Cebu, has given Cebu City the highest rating of 10 for its response to COVID-19, stating it has been a “success.”

“Ten, because there is no substitute for success. Walang semi-success. It’s either failed ka or success ka. So, I’ll rate 10,” said Cimatu in a press conference yesterday.

Last August, the city unlocked a key milestone in its fight against the coronavirus after having “flattened the curve” of new infections following sustained low indicators.

The development marked a major achievement for the city that was dubbed as the “epicenter of COVID-19” in the country back in June.

“From epicenter of COVID four months ago, Cebu City now is the epicenter of good method or mode of bringing down the COVID,” said Cimatu.

Two months later, the city, even under relaxed modified general community quarantine (MGCQ), continues to implement restrictions such as the use of quarantine passes and the presence of checkpoints to limit the movement of people to sustain the flattening of the curve.

Cimatu attributed the success of the city to the leadership of Mayor Edgardo Labella with Councilor Joel Garganera of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), Philippine National Police, doctors, contact tracers, and all those who have exerted efforts to obtain the achievement.

“I am very proud of this team... I’m very proud because sila ang nagbigay talaga ng magandang resulta sa effort natin against COVID,” said Cimatu.

“I came here to Cebu City in compliance with the directive of the president last June. This is really our fourth month dito and I would say that in the first two months that I was here, I used to be here once a week, stay here for three days for continuous two months. Last month and this month, I come here once a month nalang because nakikita ko na talaga ang great improvement of what we have done here in Cebu City,” he said.

Last June, President Rodrigo Duterte sent Cimatu, the current environment secretary and a former armed forces chief, to Cebu to help in addressing the rising COVID-19 cases.

TARGET: Zero Cases

EOC data show that on Wednesday, October 21, 2020, there were seven new cases recorded in the city, which brought the total cases to 10,188 with the active cases down to 196.

The total recoveries were at 9,313 after 11 additional recoveries were recorded.

The total deaths stood at 677 as no new death was recorded.

Cimatu said the objective now is to bring down the active cases to zero.



Perfect score

“Hindi lang tayo mag-complacent. We will not lower our guards to achieve that elusive goal of having zero. I challenged and it was accepted actually by Councilor Garganera about a possible zero. Because I was looking at the recovery versus the new cases. If the recovery is more than the new cases, then it is decreasing already,” said Cimatu.

“It can be done. I don’t really foresee a problem in our task, especially the organization here... sanay na sila sa kanilang every day na ginagawa since day one, nung nag-umpisa tayo sa effort na ito,” he added.

Cimatu said along with the leadership and teamwork, a big factor for the city’s flattening of the curve is also the acceptance of the people that there is a problem which is the virus.

The barangay captains also did their job and accepted his challenge to be the one responsible for their respective barangays, he said.

“When I gave the challenge to the barangay captains, nag-react sila. Sabi ko sa kanila, this pandemic comes only once in our lifetime, so if you are elected as a barangay captain, then this is your chance to show your leadership because this will not come again in our lifetime. I challenged them, ‘can you do this job?’. Sabay-sabay naman sila ‘yes’,” said Cimatu.

Inspiration

Labella, for his part, thanked Cimatu for his guidance and inspiration.

“On behalf of the Cebu City government, I just would like to make a manifestation with the fact that without your guidance, without your inspiration, all of us here would not have achieved this success that we are now savoring,” said the mayor.

The mayor reminded the residents to remain vigilant and to never be complacent as the virus is still very much around.

Like Cimatu, Sec. Carlito Galvez, IATF chief implementer, also gave due credit to the PNP and the Armed Forces of the Philippines for a job “well done”.

During the 6th National Advisory Council Summit at the PNP Headquarters in Camp Crame in Quezon City, Galvez said that one of the problems that affected the rising cases of COVID-19 in the city was politics.

“Eighty (80) barangay ng Cebu (City), tatlong hati yan; 30 kay Mayor (Edgardo Labella), 25 kay Rama (Vice Mayor Rama) and 25 doon sa dating mayor Osmena (Tomas). Nung nakita nating hindi na unified ang mga barangays talagang nagbabanggaan,” said Galvez.

There was defiance, he added, in some barangays as to who they listened to.

“But when (PRO-7 chief) Gen. Ferro stepped in, and Centcom, and Gen. Cimatu went to the barangays, they were able to harness the unity in efforts, unity of command under Mayor Labella,” said Galvez.



Perfect score

“Community became vulnerable, but with effective law enforcement and communication, it is now reaping good results,” he added.

Galvez said President Duterte is happy with the development in Cebu.

“Kung maalala ninyo, ang Cebu laging pinagagalitan ng ating mahal na Presidente dahil sa napakatigas ang ulo. Sabi nga niya, ‘gahi ulo,’ pero nakita na natin ngayon, alam niyo tuwang-tuwa si Presidente dahil ang mga tao nakinig po sa paglalambing ng ating Presidente,” he said.

— **Decemay P. Padilla, Caecent No-ot Magsumbol JMD**



Cebu City to give P500-K incentive to zero-Covid village

[October 23, 2020](#) 3 min read

CEBU CITY – Aiming to have zero coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) case by yearend, Mayor Edgardo Labella on Friday announced that he is giving a PHP500,000 reward to every barangay (village) that would be Covid-free from Nov. 1 to Dec. 31.

During the turnover of the new Cebu City Quarantine Center (CCQC) by the Department of Public Works and Highways to the city government here, Labella said the city government conceptualized the reward system in order to operationalize the challenge given by Environment Secretary Roy Cimatu, the Cebu Covid-19 response overseer, to have a zero-Covid capital city.

In a press briefing on Thursday, Cimatu said this city that used to be tagged as a coronavirus epicenter has now flattened the curve and already known as the “epicenter of recoveries”.

This development prompted Cimatu to challenge the city to aim for zero Covid-19 cases.

“Mr. Mayor, I am confident that you can have zero Covid here in Cebu,” Labella quoted Cimatu as saying.

“We will try our best to achieve that ideal, because we are inspired” by how the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) has addressed the coronavirus crisis in the city, the mayor answered Cimatu.

Due to a spike of Covid-19 cases here last June, President Rodrigo Duterte instructed Cimatu to oversee the government response to the health crisis, mainly the open defiance of the residents of the minimum health standards such as mask wearing and physical distancing, among others.

But Cimatu said it is now possible to aim for zero Covid-19 cases in Cebu City.

“I don’t really foresee a problem in our tasks especially in your organization here because you are already exposed to the day to day works since the start of the crisis,” he told the Cebu media.



Cebu City to give P500-K incentive to zero-Covid village

Cimatu recalled that when they arrived last June, the number of patients and deaths here was alarming.

“If you look at the data, more than 600 deaths all from Cebu City since June and bigla na lang naging (suddenly becomes) zero. This is an indication of success, that effort of the (Emergency Operation Center) team paid off,” he said, adding that for seven days now, the city has zero fatalities due to Covid-19. *(PNA)*



Trash traps part of bay intervention



Published 1 min ago

On October 24, 2020 02:40 AM

By [Francis Wakefield](#)

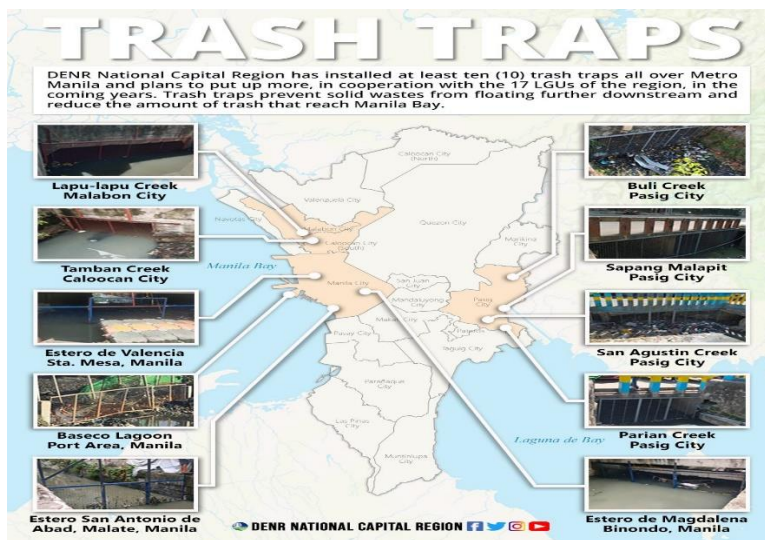


PHOTO COURTESY OF DENR

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said it has completed the installation of at least 10 trash traps in rivers and esteros to prevent solid wastes from reaching the waters of historic Manila Bay.

Jacqueline Caancan, DENR-National Capital Region (NCR) regional executive director, said the regional office, in partnership with local government units (LGU) of Metro Manila and private companies, plans to install more trash traps to address the issue of accumulation of solid wastes — composed mostly of plastics — in Manila Bay.

“This (installation of the trash traps) was actually part of a series of activities. This is the target for 2020. It is already in the pipeline. In fact, we already have a MoA (memorandum of agreement) with Caloocan and Manila, so we have already installed all of that,” Caancan told Daily Tribune in a phone interview.

“Yes, all have been installed. We are just maintaining them and we coordinate with our LGU to clean them. These need to be cleaned because they get filled with garbage,” he added.

Meanwhile, Supreme Court (SC) Chief Justice Diosdado Peralta yesterday defended his recent visit to Manila Bay.

Peralta told media during an online press conference, “Supreme Court: Rising Above the Pandemic,” that his visit was part of the High Court’s continuing mandamus on Manila Bay.

He said his presence at the beach was part of the monitoring system if the government is following the continuing mandamus.

He said he is supposed to report every quarter as officer-in-charge on the case.



Trash traps part of bay intervention

He pointed out it is already October, “but I could not visit the place during the first two quarters because of the pandemic.”

Peralta is the only remaining SC justice among those who came up with the directive in 2008 for 13 government agencies to clean up, rehabilitate and preserve Manila Bay and restore and maintain its water to class SB level, which means that water is suitable for recreational activities such as swimming and skin diving.

The SC Manila Bay Advisory Committee is vice-chaired by SC Justice Rodil Zalameda, with Justice Edgardo de los Santos and Court Administrator Jose Midas P. Marquez as members.

On the other hand, Caancan explained the installation of trash traps complements other engineering and nature-based interventions that have been set in place to help clean, rehabilitate and preserve Manila Bay.

These are in addition to the regular cleanups being done around Manila Bay, including rivers and esteros to rid these areas of trash and other solid wastes.

With the onset of the rainy season, trash and other solid wastes, including water hyacinths, are expected to litter a large portion of Manila Bay. However, the interventions done by the DENR and other government agencies have resulted in a lot of improvements in cleaning up the bay.

Caancan said unlike in past years past, the setting-up of trash traps and having coastal and estero rangers greatly helped in improving the situation in Manila Bay and other rivers and esteros.

with ALVIN MURCIA

Peralta: No politics in Manila Bay visit

[Friday, October 23, 2020](#) [Hector Lawas](#)

CHIEF Justice Diosdado Peralta yesterday said his recent visit to Manila Bay was part of the Supreme Court's continuing mandamus to rehabilitate and protect the world-renowned tourist attraction.

Peralta issued the statement during his online press conference dubbed "*Supreme Court: Rising Above the Pandemic.*"

The Manila Bay recently hogged the headlines over the overlaying of sand with crushed dolomite boulders along a portion of the picturesque bay.

"Meron pa kasing nagtatanong diyan bakit daw ako nandun. You know, that's part of the continuing mandamus. I am now the designated officer-in-charge, member-in-charge.

Ako nag-inherit ng kaso. Ako lang naiwan doon sa original group. So that's part of the monitoring system if they are following yung continuing mandamus. And they are supposed to report every quarter And that was October. But I could not visit the place during the first two quarters because of the pandemic. Still, I have to go there because that is part of my job," Peralta said.

Peralta is the only remaining justice of the SC which came up with the directive in 2008 for the 13 government agencies to clean up, rehabilitate, and preserve the Manila Bay and restore and maintain its water to class SB level, which means that water is suitable for recreational activities such as swimming and skin diving.

"Those who decided the Manila Bay (MMDA vs. Concerned Residents of Manila Bay), most of them have retired. It is only yours truly who is still with the SC. Under Internal Rules of the SC, whoever is still with the Court, and who had participated in that decision will become the ponente or the person in-charge of the case. I am now in charge of the case," he said.

The SC Manila Bay Advisory Committee is vice-chaired by SC Justice Rodil V. Zalameda, with Justice Edgardo L. Delos Santos, and Court Administrator Jose Midas P. Marquez as members.

Last January 26, Peralta keynoted the first anniversary of the "*Battle for Manila Bay,*" and underscored that the right to a clean environment is one of the highest rights afforded to every Filipino and that every generation has the duty to protect the environment.

Peralta also committed that the Court will not relent in ensuring the cleanup of Manila Bay through the SC Manila Bay Advisory Committee.

Earlier this month, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) pushed through with its plan of covering a 500-meter stretch of Manila Bay's shoreline with dolomite sand—a move that drew both praise and criticism.

The P389-million project was part of the "*beach nourishment program*" being carried out by the DENR.

But environmentalists said the project passed over the public consultation phase and lacked the necessary environmental impact studies.

Lawmakers and public officials have called it a waste of resources that could have been diverted to supplement the country's pandemic health response and provide gadgets for public school students grappling with online learning.



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Protektahan ang likas-yaman sa bansa, protektahan ang kalikasan

ni [Nancy Binay](#) - @Be Nice Tayo | October 22, 2020

Kamakailan lang ay naghain tayo ng panukalang-batas sa Senado para magtayo ng Environmental Protection and Enforcement Bureau (EPEB) sa Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Inihain natin ang Senate Bill No. 1878 pagkatapos umapela si DENR Sec. Roy Cimatu sa Senado na gumawa ng batas tungkol dito.

Nilalayan nitong mabigyan ng sapat na kapasidad at kapabilidad ang DENR na gampanan ang isa sa pinakamahalagang responsibilidad nito, ang pagbantay sa ating mga likas-yaman at pagpapatupad ng mga environmental laws.

Matinding panganib ang hinaharap ng ating mga environment field officers sa kanilang trabaho. Kulang sila ng training at kagamitan para pigilan ang mga nais pagsamantalahan ang yaman ng kalikasan.

Si Forester Danilo Pascasio II ang pinakahuli sa mga field officer na nabiktima ng karahasan tungo sa mga environmental protectors natin.

Nag-agaw-buhay si Forester Pascasio, na forest management specialist sa Aurora, pagkatapos siyang atakihin ng illegal logger na tinulungan niyang madakip.

Ayon sa Global Witness na international environment watchdog, 46 environment defenders ang namatay sa bansa noong 2019. Nabansagan ding “most dangerous country” para sa mga environment defenders ang Pilipinas noong 2018.

Marami ang umaasang mapupunan ng pagkapasa ng EPEB bill ang mga pagkukulang na pumipigil sa ahensiya na mas epektibong gampanan ang mga tungkulin nito.

Iko-consolidate sa EPEB ang lahat ng enforcement functions na sa kasalukuyan ay responsibilidad ng iba’t ibang bureau at attached agencies ng DENR.

Magtatatag din ng Environmental and Natural Resources Law Academy para sa training ng mga ENR law enforcers.

Papayagan din ang mga ENR law enforcers na humawak ng baril sa kanilang field operations.

Magkakaroon din ng forensics laboratory para siguradong science-based ang pagkalap ng ebidensiya laban sa mga environmental law violators.

Mabibigyan din ng authority ang DENR na mag-issue ng Cease and Desist Orders, at iba pang utos para tanggalin, baklasin o sirain ang mga ilegal na istruktura sa mga prohibited area nang hindi nangangailangan ng Judicial Order mula sa mga korte.

Bibigyan din ng authority ang EPEB Director-General o representative nito na mag-issue ng Notice of Violation and Seizure Order.



Protektahan ang likas-yaman sa bansa, protektahan ang kalikasan

Umaasa tayong ipapasa ng buong Kongreso ang panukalang ito.

Protektahan natin ang kalikasan.

Paalala lamang sa lahat na manatili sa loob ng bahay, ugaliing maghugas ng kamay, bigyang pahalaga ang kalusugan, at huwag kalilimutang magdasal.

Malalagpasan din natin ito.

Be Safe. Be Well. Be Nice! 😊



Relocation of Lake Sebu families pushed due to tension cracks on the ground

Published October 23, 2020, 4:59 PM
by [Philippine News Agency](#)

GENERAL SANTOS CITY (PNA) – The provincial government of South Cotabato is pushing for the immediate relocation of at least 50 families from a remote sitio in Lake Sebu town, who evacuated early this month due to the emergence of ground tension cracks in the area.

Rolly Doane Aquino, head of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO), said Friday they were closely working with the Mines and Geosciences Bureau (MGB)-Region 12 for the identification of a relocation site for the affected residents of Sitio Tuburan, Barangay Ned.

He said the barangay council had recommended several proposed relocation areas, but these were not approved by MGB-12 due to possible hazards.

“Our top priority right now is to permanently relocate the affected families and we already allotted some funds for that,” he said in a media forum.

Aquino said the local government needed a certification from MGB-12 before it could push through with the relocation.

He said the previous relocation sites identified by the barangay did not pass the agency’s evaluation due to the presence of sinkholes and coal deposits.

The presence of the coal deposits reportedly prevent the inner portion of the soil to absorb rainwater and can trigger landslides or emergence of tension cracks, he said.

Aquino, who inspected the site several times since the evacuation of residents last October 6, said it affected residential areas, a school, farmlands, and portions of the national road traversing the village.

The official said the evacuees were staying at a temporary relocation area in Sitio Tuburan, and were receiving relief assistance from the provincial government.

He said they were prepared to send some construction materials to facilitate the establishment of temporary shelters for them.

Aquino said the Integrated Provincial Health Office recently sent mosquito nets and related supplies to protect the evacuees from mosquito-borne diseases like dengue, malaria, and filariasis.

He said they have coordinated with the Department of Public Works and Highways-Region 12 for the repair of the damaged portions of the national road in the area due to the tension cracks and landslides.



Lake Sebu families' relocation pushed due to tension cracks

[October 23, 2020](#) 2 min read

GENERAL SANTOS CITY – The provincial government of South Cotabato is pushing for the immediate relocation of at least 50 families of a remote sitio in Lake Sebu town, who evacuated early this month due to the emergence of ground tension cracks in the area.

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Nickel miners boost greening programs



By [Eireene Jairee Gomez](#)

October 24, 2020

The Philippine Nickel Industry Association (PNIA) has planted an additional 809,656 trees in the first two quarters of 2020, bringing the total number of planted trees to over 6 million to date.

In a virtual press conference on Wednesday, PNIA President Dante Bravo said the association, through its eight member-companies, had planted a total of 6.3 million trees over 3,167 hectares in their respective mining areas.

He said plantings for the first half of the year covered 322 hectares of land, or equivalent of approximately 600 football fields, noting the increase in tree planting efforts from the association translated to a 13.9 percent growth in the total number of trees planted as of the second quarter of 2020. In 2019, PNIA planted about 5.3 million trees.

Despite the slowdown in operations during the community quarantine period, Bravo stressed PNIA members have consistently delivered beyond compliance to their mandate on environment protection and rehabilitation (EPEP).

According to him, PNIA members have invested over P203 million on continued EPEP activities and P59.7 million on progressive rehabilitation for the first six months of 2020.

For her part, PNIA Executive Director Charmaine Olea-Capili emphasized that PNIA members remain committed to the implementation of progressive rehabilitation programs, which is based on research and follows rigorous scientific methods.

“[The] PNIA members have full-time environment and technical experts who study the ecosystem and soil of each area that will be rehabilitated to identify which tree species will suit the environment and benefit the community. Member-companies have planted over 70 different tree species including bamboo in their respective mining sites,” she added.

As of August 2020, the group reported that over 23,100 bamboo seedlings have been planted across 43 hectares. Aside from rehabilitating the environment, bamboo planting can also provide livelihood opportunities for local communities by selling various bamboo-made products.

Moreover, Capili noted nickel industry companies have also conducted numerous environmental programs for the benefit of their host communities, including 17 coastal clean ups in Surigao del Norte, Surigao del Sur, Agusan del Norte and Palawan, and the planting of almost 95,000 mangrove seedlings as of August.

The ongoing reforestation is just part of the industry’s continuous efforts to help local communities during the pandemic. In July, the nickel group members allotted almost P30 million in pandemic relief assistance under their Social Development Management Programs in the form of personal protective equipment, food security packs, medicines and test kits, disinfection tents, organized transportation, among others.



Nickel miners boost greening programs

“We ensure that no one gets left behind especially in these trying times. In partnership with the local government, we continuously provide assistance through our various social development, crisis response and environment protection programs,” Capili said.

“Although production slowed down this year, PNIA members have ramped up their social development and environment programs to help the community throughout the pandemic and deliver our commitments to our stakeholders,” she added.



Plantitos, plantitas, binalaan ng PNPCSI



October 23, 2020 @ 8:45 AM 22 hours ago

Manila, Philippines – Binalaan ng Philippine Native Plants Conservation Society Inc. (PNPCSI) ang plantitos at plantitas sa pangunguha ng mga halamang endemic mula sa natural nitong pinagtubuan.

Ang mga halamang endemic ay mga halamang dito lamang matatagpuan sa bansa.

“Ang mangyayari kapag ito ay kumbaga nakuha nang nakuha irresponsibly, puwede mo siyang ma-push sa extinction or pagkawala niya sa isang natural area,” ani Anthony Arbias ng PNPCSI sa isang ulat nito sa Stand for Truth.

“Marami siyang ano, kumbaga, ecological uses. One is part siya ng isang ecosystem or ng isang habitat type. So parang isang, kumbaga isang system, kapag nawalan ng isang pyesa, ito ay posibleng meron siyang parang domino effect,” dagdag nito.

Iniulat din ng Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) sa Zamboanga Peninsula na may mga nahuli ang departamento na nangunguha ng mga nanganganib nang maubos na mga halaman mula sa mga kagubatan.

“[A]nd napansin namin there were also reports, local reports, na parang may pag-aamin na nakukuha nila from sellers who get their, the plants that are being sold from the forest itself. So medyo naalarma kami doon,” saad ni DENR executive director Crisanta Marlene Rodriguez.

Base sa datos ng DENR, 984 halaman ang nanganganib, higit 700 dito ay endemic plants.

“So meron nang isang member doon sa lugar who’s apparently been selling plants that they sold 20 pots of the Ground Orchids. Ang dami na. So we told them that shouldn’t be happening. Illegal ‘yan gawin. Hindi ‘yan dapat ginawa,” pahayag naman ni Ann Dumaliang, Masungi Georeserve managing trustee. RNT/ELM



Too little, too big

Government ramps up efforts to secure PHL's dwindling water supply amid climate change, growing population

By [Jonathan L. Mayuga](#)

October 24, 2020



ON October 14, senators passed and approved on final reading Senate Bill 1844, which authorizes President Duterte to expedite the processing and issuance of national and local government permits, licenses and certifications in times of national emergency. The House of Representatives, however, has yet to come up with a counterpart measure.

The bill, which covers all government agencies under the Executive branch, will give the President the power to remove bureaucratic red tape, accelerate and streamline regulatory processes for new or pending applications from businesses for government permits, licenses, clearances, certifications, or authorizations, or if the President deemed it necessary, suspend or waive the requirements for securing them.

Such measure, once enacted into law, will pave the way for the Duterte administration to accelerate the implementation of flagship projects, notably, those involving the water resource sector, a perennial problem that over the years has become grossly alarming.

As of August 19, 2020, a Revised List of Infrastructure Projects of the National Economic and Development Authority identified a total of 104 priority projects, including 12 infrastructure projects that will boost the country's water security—both for irrigation and domestic consumption.

These are the Angat Water Transmission Improvement Project, National Irrigation Sector Rehabilitation and Improvement Project, Malitbog-Maridagao Irrigation Project, Balog-Balog Multipurpose Project Phase II, Tarlac, Jalaur River Multipurpose Project Stage II, Iloilo, Lower Agno River Irrigation System Improvement Project, Pangasinan, ADB Water District Development Sector Projects, Wawa Bulk Water Supply Project, New Centennial Water Source Kaliwa Dam Project, and Bohol Northeast Basin Multipurpose Dam Project.

The P12-billion New Centennial Water Source Kaliwa Dam Project, a Marcos-era project revived by the Duterte administration, is currently being pushed by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) to boost water supply for the estimated 15 million water consumers in Metro Manila and nearby towns in Bulacan, Cavite, and Rizal provinces.



Too little, too big

Climate-change factor

THE Philippines's water security challenges are aggravated by its vulnerability to climate-change impacts to this very important economic resource, especially because of the threats of new and emerging infectious diseases such the Covid-19 pandemic.

Aside from water shortage and severe flooding, climate-change impact on water may eventually cause a decline in food production and an increase in water-related diseases in the Philippines, an official of the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said.

Reporting on the Status of Philippine Water during a webinar held October 19 as part of the 31st National Statistics Month, Josephine R. Billones, head of the Water Resource Assessment Section of the NWRB, said the country's water resource is under various threats.

She said the Philippines has been experiencing water scarcity since 2007.

While blessed with an abundant supply of freshwater that is replenished every time it rains, the Philippines may be facing severe water shortage due to increasing demand brought by population growth.

During his talk, Billones presented the current water resource situation in Philippines.

The Philippines's total water potential is estimated at 146 billion cubic meters and it receives an average rainfall of 2,400 mm per year, says Billones.

Not enough despite abundance

RICH in both surface and groundwater, the Philippines boasts of having 421 rivers and 221 lakes. It also has 18 principal rivers. Its aggregate surface water supply with 85 percent dependability is estimated at 125.8 billion cubic meters. It also has a groundwater supply of approximately 20.2 billion cubic meters.

However, Billones said around 58 percent of the country's total water resource is already allocated for consumptive use for various purposes based on the water permits issued by the NWRB.

"Irrigation accounts for more than 78 percent of allocated water both for surface and groundwater as of June 2020," she said.

Meanwhile, for non-consumptive use, around 60.43 percent goes to power and only 30.93 percent goes to irrigation.

By purpose, municipal is a major water user for groundwater accounting for more than 53 percent of the total allocated groundwater.

For surface water, irrigation is the major user of water, accounting for 81 percent of the total allocated surface water.

"Based on the water index threshold, the Philippines is already experiencing water scarcity since 2007. Water availability is 1,000 to 1,700 cubic meters per capita," she reported.



Too little, too big

“Although theoretically, the country is assured of supply because of high precipitation, seasonal variation is considerable and geographic distribution is biased. Together with increasing demand, this often results in supply shortages especially during the dry season,” she said.

Based on a study, she said, there are now 11 water-stressed rivers in the Philippines. These are Cagayan, Agno, Pampanga, Pasig, Laguna, Bicol, Jalaur, Cagayan de Oro, Tagoloan, Tagum, Ligubanon, Davao and Agus Rivers.

“Water in these rivers is nearly, if not fully, allocated already,” she said.

‘Constraints’

ON top of these, she said nine highly urbanized areas identified in the 1998 Japan International Cooperation masterplan are already groundwater constraint areas, where extraction or use is exceeding the water recharging capacity.

These are Metro Manila, Metro Cebu, Baguio, Bacolod, Zamboanga, Davao, Cagayan de Oro and Iloilo.

Moreover, she said the NWRB also identified three other areas as water constraint areas—Cavite, Laguna and Batangas.

“These water constraint areas are experiencing groundwater deficit,” she said.

According to Billones, as a water regulatory body, the NWRB has issued a moratorium on groundwater development. “No permit will be given in these areas,” she said. The policy is now in effect for Metro Manila and Metro Cebu, she said.

According to Billones, addressing water challenges becomes even more urgent under climate change.

“Study revealed that there are certain areas in the country experiencing a decline in groundwater. In 1991 and 2004 studies show that there has been lowering of groundwater in Metro Manila and surrounding areas.”

In 1991 the lowering of groundwater was observed only in Metro Manila. However, she said, in a 2004 study, many areas in the Philippines are now below the mean sea level, which means the groundwater level is significantly lowered.

She said this is detected in Bacolod, Bacoar and Tawi-Tawi. There is also some lowering of groundwater level in Dasmariñas, Cavite, she said.

“Lowering of groundwater level increases chances of saltwater intrusion,” she warned.

Saltwater intrusion, she said, affects groundwater supply. As more people use groundwater, the more an area becomes vulnerable to saltwater intrusion.



Too little, too big

“Population growth, increased economic demand and improved standards of living are placing tremendous pressures both on the resource supply and service delivery systems,” she said.

During her talk, Billones said water systems, especially in highly urbanized areas, are polluted. “Solid waste management is a major concern. Declining water quality affects water quantity. It limits the usability of water,” she said.

According to Billones, the Philippines is highly susceptible to typhoons, being situated in the typhoon belt.

Moreover, the projected increase in temperature means much intense typhoons. “Even monsoon rains are pouring more water and causing rivers to overflow,” she said.

Shared responsibility

ACCORDING to Billones, the weather is becoming wild and rainfall pattern is becoming variable because of climate change, which impacts water resources.

Either the Philippines will have a problem with “too much water or too little water.”

A higher temperature is also affecting water quality, she said. As it triggers sea level rise, there will be a saltwater intrusion to groundwater in coastal areas and estuaries.

In effect, she said, there will be a water shortage, a decrease in crop production, flooding, and increased water-related diseases.

Billones appealed to the public to wisely use water, saying conserving this very important economic resource is “a shared responsibility.”



Building blocks of progress from wastes

With our materials handling facility ready, we can now expand this program. We are calling on assemblers, local governments, and companies, to collect and sell your plastic wastes to us.



Published 1 min ago on October 24, 2020 12:50 AM

By [TDT @tribunephil](#)



Infrastructure plays a vital role in the country's nation building along with giving sustainable livelihood to millions of Filipinos. / Photograph courtesy of SMC

San Miguel Corporation (SMC) continues to look for innovative ways to help in its own little way as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) continues to rear its ugly head and almost brings to shambles the livelihood of Filipinos in the country.

Just recently, the multinational conglomerate announced that it is already ramping up its efforts to help manage the country's solid wastes and create more livelihood opportunities during the pandemic by buying up bigger volumes of plastic wastes to fuel its cement manufacturing facilities.

This latest initiative comes after a string of major sustainability efforts launched recently by the conglomerate that include discontinuing its plastic bottled water business, building the country's first recycled plastics road and spending a billion pesos to rid major river systems of garbage.

Northern Cement Corporation (NCC) — an affiliate of SMC — is capable of consuming up to 1.5 million tons of plastic waste per year. It is targeting to reduce use of traditional fuel by up to 50 percent and substitute with plastic wastes.

"Technology to safely convert plastic waste to energy has existed for a long time. In fact, Northern Cement has been using this on a smaller scale. Other major manufacturers, both locally and globally, have also been using this. It's a more environment-friendly and sustainable alternative to using traditional fuels," SMC president and COO Ramon S. Ang said.



Building blocks of progress from wastes

The company's plan to expand and ramp up its use of plastic wastes for energy for NCC can now be implemented with the completion of its materials handling facility in Pangasinan.

With this, the company can safely collect and store plastic waste at scale and safely convert waste into energy to reduce landfill waste, reduce dependence on fossil fuels and lower greenhouse gas emissions.

"With our materials handling facility ready, we can now expand this program. We are calling on assemblers, local governments, and companies to collect and sell your plastic wastes to us.

Together, we can help our environment in a substantial way, and at the same time, create more livelihood opportunities for so many Filipinos during this time of pandemic," Ang said.

The SMC chief also highlighted that collecting and assembling plastic wastes could provide many struggling Filipinos with an additional or alternative source of income — even as the country continues to cope with the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic — similar to how glass bottle collectors have become an integral part of SMC's supply chain and the recycling process for many, many decades now.

Apart from providing jobs, the cement produced will also go to the construction industry, which itself generates a significant amount of jobs, and also drives infrastructure development and economic growth.

"Instead of just hoping for a better tomorrow, we continue to look for actual solutions where we can get the best outcome for the greatest number of people," Ang said.

While NCC's technology can allow for all types of plastics to be processed and converted to energy, Ang said they are especially targeting plastic bottles, which make up a significant amount of total plastic waste in the world.

In 2017, SMC discontinued its Purewater plastic bottled water business to demonstrate its commitment to greater sustainability.

Apart from discontinuing its plastic bottled water business, SMC has, in recent years, made major strides in helping fight solid waste pollution.

In November last year, it built the country's first asphalt road made with recycled plastic wastes, at a company-owned logistics facility used by vehicles with heavy loads, as part of a pilot test to determine its long-term durability.

Also in November last year, it announced a partnership with a small, local firm, Philippine Bioresins Corporation, that has been developing and testing technology to create biodegradable plastics that meet government requirements for biodegradable materials.

The firm was given an Environmental Verification Certificate by the Dept. of Science and Technology's Industrial Technology Development Institute, which confirmed that the biodegradable polypropylene it developed would be 64.6 percent degraded within two years — compared to only 4.5 percent within the same period for non-biodegradable plastics.



Building blocks of progress from wastes

Earlier this year, SMC initiated a P1 billion corporate social responsibility project to clean up and dredge the entire 27-kilometer length of the Tullahan-Tinajeros river system over the next five years. It has been removing some 600 tons of garbage from the Tullahan river on a daily basis.

As of October, the company has dredged some of 48,000 metric tons of silt and garbage from the Tullahan river.

The initiative is part of a much larger plan to mitigate flooding in Navotas, Malabon, Caloocan, Quezon City, and parts of Bulacan. The company is also set to dredge major river systems in Bulacan to help address flooding there, before it begins construction of the new Manila International Airport project.

SMC is also planting some 190,000 mangroves all over Central Luzon and Bulacan to protect coastal areas from tidal flooding and develop marine ecosystems.



Green groups advocate for comprehensive ban on waste



By [Faye Almazan](#)
October 24, 2020

ENVIRONMENTAL groups on Friday warned that waste shipment would persist in the country until the government enforces a comprehensive ban on all waste imports.

The statements of Greenpeace Philippines and EcoWaste Coalition come after the Bureau of Customs intercepted US waste materials at the Subic Bay International Terminal on Wednesday.

Inside the containers was mixed waste, including old cardboard, plastic packaging and used face masks, that was misdeclared as old corrugated cartons, the groups said in the statement.

“This latest waste importation incident... shows how richer countries, like the US, continue to prey on the Philippines’ loose regulations on waste importation,” they said.

The green groups cited data from The Last Beach Cleanup, which showed that the Philippines has imported over a million kilograms of plastic waste from the United States from January to August this year.

The figure has decreased since last year, but the green groups said it did not include unreported or misreported waste imports.

“Waste trade continues to happen because it is permitted. The fact that we continue to be a dumping ground of countries like the US shows that the government has not been doing enough to stop waste imports. The sad reality is that we don’t have strong policies in place to prevent it,” Greenpeace Philippines campaigner Marian Ledesma said in the statement.

Both Greenpeace and EcoWaste have been appealing for the ratification of the Basel Convention Ban Amendment, which would prohibit the exportation of wastes from developed to developing countries.

The groups are also calling to certify as urgent the pending bills for a comprehensive ban on waste importation.

“To put an end to foreign waste dumping, the government must see to it that these twin legal measures are acted upon without further delay. The ratification of the Basel Convention Ban Amendment and a total ban on waste importation will send a strong message that the Philippines is not a dumping ground, and that rich countries must take full responsibility for managing their waste instead of exporting them to other countries,” EcoWaste Coalition National Coordinator Aileen Lucero said.

The two groups stressed the importance of the two policies, especially now that the Covid-19 pandemic increased waste generation globally.



Dominguez: Climate crisis urgent like Covid-19



By [The Manila Times](#)
October 24, 2020

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez 3rd has called on his fellow fiscal policymakers from other countries to act on the climate emergency with the same sense of urgency as the world has been doing in handling the global health and economic crises spawned by the prolonged coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.



Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez 3rd. PHOTO BY JOAN ARELLANO

He said that while countries are now focused on fighting Covid-19, they should not neglect other major threats to human survival such as the now erratic global climate patterns that have led to an increasing incidence of natural disasters around the world.

“Unlike Covid-19, for which a vaccine will likely be produced soon, there is no quick solution for the climate crisis. We need to act now with the same sense of urgency that we have for the ongoing pandemic,” Dominguez said in a pre-recorded video statement for the virtual 4th Ministerial Meeting of the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action held last October 12.

“With our stronger collaboration, I am confident that we can build back better economies that future generations deserve,” he added.

Dominguez reiterated this call during a webinar organized by the European Union (EU) Delegation to the Philippines via Zoom last October 22 with environment and science journalists.

“There is no Planet B. We either save the earth or perish with it,” he said during the webinar titled “State of Play: Green Recovery and Sustainable Reporting.”

In the webinar, Dominguez affirmed the Philippines’ solidarity with EU in its goal of limiting human activities that exacerbate the climate emergency.



Dominguez: Climate crisis urgent like Covid-19

He also acknowledged EU's assistance in helping the Philippines expand its sustainable energy generation capacity to meet the economy's growing needs.

The Finance Secretary said the world can address the climate emergency "with a better and more informed approach. Unlike Covid-19 that caught the world off guard, we have a wealth of information and innovative solutions on how to best deal with the climate crisis. We should be more prepared to save lives and prevent the worst possible outcomes."

The Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action, which was formed on the sidelines of the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund held in 2018, has brought together fiscal and economic ministers from over 50 countries in leading the global climate response and in securing the transition of communities towards low-carbon resilient development.



Why the Nationally Determined Contribution is key to PH development



By [Ludwig O. Federigan](#)
October 24, 2020

The remaining days of 2020 are critical for the Philippines. Though this year's annual United Nations Climate Change Conference has been postponed to 2021 because of the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic, we, as a country, are expected to submit our Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) before this year ends.

The NDC is the roadmap that outlines each country's post-2020 climate actions. It embodies the efforts of each country to increase its ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change and, as a climate plan, reflects the country's ambition to foster climate resilience and low greenhouse gas emission development, taking into account its domestic circumstances and capabilities. It is at the heart of the Paris Agreement, the historic accord signed by 196 countries in 2015.

As each country contributes to the transformation of development pathways that would limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius and sets the trajectories toward sustainable development, the Paris Agreement requires each country to prepare, communicate and maintain successive NDCs that it intends to achieve. Each country is expected to pursue mitigation measures with the aim to achieve the objectives of such contributions. Collectively, these climate actions would determine whether we would achieve the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement.

The Philippines and the NDC

In October 2015, the Philippines communicated its intended NDC to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). As the Paris Agreement entered into force in the Philippines in April 2017 and, as embodied in our State of Declaration signed by the President, the Philippines will submit its first NDC before 2020.

Furthermore, in the State of Declaration, the "accession to and implementation of the Paris Agreement by the Republic of the Philippines is for the purpose of supporting the country's national development objectives and priorities," which include sustainable industrial development, eradication of poverty and provision of basic needs, securing social and climate justice, and energy security.

The Climate Change Commission (CCC), as lead policy-making body on climate change "has been facilitating the development of the Nationally Determined Contribution, implementing a whole-of-government approach to ensure an inclusive process and to foster ownership within and among relevant national government agencies and institutions." Our NDC envisions to present a paradigm shift to a climate-resilient and low-carbon development aligned with national policies and strategies, and premised within the country's sustainable development goals and international commitments.



Why the Nationally Determined Contribution is key to PH development

According to the CCC, our NDC will be based on the overarching national policy and planning frameworks which include, among others, the Philippine Development Plan, National Framework Strategy on Climate Change, National Climate Change Action Plan, Philippine Energy Plan, and AmBisyon Natin 2040. It will guide the country's long-term economic and investment planning. It will open up significant investment opportunities that would support the country's goal in achieving its optimum industrialization potential and sustainable development goals.

It is, therefore, imperative that the government situates itself strategically in the course of the transition of our economy as fast as technologically feasible and practicable into a low-carbon and sustainable development, protecting without compromise the interests of the Filipino people, especially of those most vulnerable.

CCC Secretary Emmanuel de Guzman, in a statement during the Climate Vulnerable Forum Leaders' Event hosted by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh earlier this month, said: "Now is not the time to cower behind excuses. Cowardice today will only let the youth remember who the pariahs were in the international community during the time of their greatest need. The Midnight Hour on the 31st of December is upon us. It will determine the future of generations to come. It will set the kind of future that leaders today choose for midnight's children." The event also launched the Midnight Survival Deadline for the Climate — calling on all nations to submit their updated NDCs under the Paris Agreement before midnight of Dec. 31, 2020.

Why the NDC is key to our development

The CCC said our NDC would support the long-standing narrative of climate justice, principles of equity, and advancing national interests. It added that while our country's right and that of other developing countries to development must be respected, the Philippine already has a long list of climate policies and mitigation measures since 1991, which embodies our continuous commitment to climate action and protecting our citizens against the impacts of the changing environment.

Our NDC will once again demonstrate our firm position and leadership towards achieving a sustainable future. Under the principle of equity and fair share, while our contributions to global emissions are small, we must continue to contribute our share of climate action that sends a strong message to developed nations that those with greater historical responsibility and capacities — technical, financial, and/or technological — should put forward more ambitious goals. In a business-as-usual scenario, our economic growth will generate even higher emissions and other environmental destruction.

Our NDC will exemplify what the country has been doing and our commitment to continually step-up our efforts in battling climate change, with the ultimate goal of transforming communities and industries into adaptive, resilient and sustainable pillars of society. It will be achieved by recognizing our "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances" — the core principle of the Paris Agreement.



Why the Nationally Determined Contribution is key to PH development

With no doubt, even before climate impacts are taken into consideration, the cost of inaction and taking the high-carbon development pathway will cost us more in the long-term. The use of technology for climate change mitigation is increasingly becoming more cost-efficient than high-carbon alternatives, making them economically competitive and attractive for both the public and private sectors. Hence, the NDC will be an instrument that would set an enabling environment for these transformational changes.

The key sectors in our NDC include agriculture, waste, industry, transport, forestry and energy. Even without the emissions reduction associated with our climate actions, our initiatives will stand as clear-cut choices moving forward as these entail opportunities such as energy independence, rehabilitated and preserved forests, sustained ecosystems, livable cities, clean air and water, a healthy environment, sustainable production and consumption, efficient, sustainable, and non-intrusive use of natural resources, among other things, while preventing further human-induced climate deviances.

Further, our NDC will serve as a catalyst in seizing investment opportunities that would capture socially beneficial aspects of climate action, improving the overall welfare of society, avoiding burdensome trade offs, and advancing equitable socioeconomic development goals through systems already embedded and built-in within the core of our institutions.



Climate-resilient seed system pushed

posted October 23, 2020 at 07:05 pm by [Butch Gunio](#)

Los Baños, Laguna—Filipino experts are collaborating with their Asian counterparts to come out with a climate-resilient seed system in the country.

Filipino research scientists are collaborating with other South Asian and Southeast Region experts to produce not just quality seeds but climate-resilient as well, according to a report relayed to newsmen by Rose Anne M. Aya of PCAARRD Media Services.

Quality seeds are important in crop establishment, yield increase, and low incidence of pests and diseases.

As a collaborative effort to develop climate-resilient seeds, Filipino and other Asian experts recently held a webinar dubbed, “Regional Cooperation for Building a Resilient Seed System in the Philippines.”

The virtual seminar was organized by the International Potato Center (CIP) and the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS).

The DOST Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD) was co-organizer.

Challenges faced by the seed sector brought upon by climate change; expected impacts of the Philippines when it joins the regional cooperation in the seed sector; and the potential challenges for joining the regional cooperation were discussed in the webinar.

Panelists from Bangladesh, Vietnam, and the Philippines shared their experiences and insights on joining the regional cooperation in the seed sector.

The webinar was hosted and moderated by Dr. Sampriti Baruah, CIP Project Coordinator for Asia.

With the collaboration, the Philippines will benefit through acquiring field trial data of public sector varieties and information on varietal evaluation data from other Southeast and South Asian countries.

Filipino farmers can as well benefit from faster release of new climate-smart varieties, Aya reported.

Cooperation has already been done in other countries such as India and Bangladesh in 2013 and was extended to include Nepal in 2014.

The three countries shared data from their respective field trials generated during the evaluation of varieties released in the respective countries.

The agreement eventually included Cambodia and Sri Lanka and included other cereals, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables, sugarcane, and fiber crops. Myanmar and Bhutan eventually joined.



LGU disaster resilience in LCC, Globe webinar

posted October 23, 2020 at 07:00 pm by [Manila Standard](#)

The Liveable Cities Philippines and the League of Cities of the Philippines, in partnership with Globe Telecom, has presented the latest edition of the Liveable Cities Labs, a series of webinar sessions to gear up cities with knowledge and insights for designing better solutions for their communities.

For its 7th session, the Liveable Cities Lab will focus on building resilient cities and towns to enable LGUs to prepare and be resilient, with the Philippines being prone to natural disasters that include typhoons, earthquakes, flash floods, landslides, and volcanic eruptions.

The LCC Labs Webinar will give LGUs insights, knowledge and experiences from professionals who are regarded as experts in climate change adaptation, disaster risk management, urban and environmental planning, and Information and Communication Technology, as it aims to promote cooperation and unity to help LGUs to be more resilient.

The speakers and panelists include Emmanuel Estrada, Globe SVP for Technology Strategy & Service Integration; Geraldine Santos, VP of Alliance for Safe, Sustainable and Resilient Environments (ASSURE); Leonard Travis, Team Lead-Urban and Regional Planning, Empark Land Development Inc.; Dr. Cedric Daep, Department Head-Albay Public Safety & Emergency Management Office; and Veron Gabaldon, the Executive Director of the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation.

Discussions will also revolve around the current impact of disasters to cities and municipalities, LGUs, and to the people.

The LCC has put together a team of experts who will give their inputs on how LGUs can prepare against the challenges of natural disasters; and share solutions and knowledge on how towns and cities can strengthen their capabilities in becoming more disaster resilient.

According to the Rockefeller Foundation, resilience is defined as the ability to plan and prepare for, absorb, recover from, and more successfully adapt to adverse events. City resilience is the capacity of cities to function, so that the people living and working there, particularly the poor and the vulnerable, survive and thrive no matter what stresses or shocks they encounter.

For cities and towns to become disaster-resilient, the most critical considerations include: 1) the impact of disasters on people's livelihood, especially that of the poor; 2) the effects of climate change on people's food and water supply; and 3) the degradation of the natural environment that reduces nature's defense capacity against natural hazards.

At the forefront of building disaster-resilient cities and towns are the local government units themselves (LGUs) which are logically the first responders during times of calamities.



On a Philippine island, Indigenous women get their say on marine conservation

by [Jen Chan](#) on 22 October 2020

- The Philippines' fisheries space has traditionally been dominated by men, but an Indigenous community in the western province of Palawan is allowing women to manage critical marine habitats.
- Fifteen women from the Indigenous Tagbanwa group in the municipality of Calawit have been given ownership of more than 130 hectares (320 acres) of ancestral waters where they harvest cachipay, a type of oyster.
- They receive training in resource management and conservation enterprise to help them take an even more proactive role in greater fisheries management, not just on a municipal level, but on a national scale.

MANILA — In the Philippines, the fishing industry has long been considered male territory, with fathers, sons and brothers taking their boats out to sea each day in hopes of catching tuna, blue marlin, or sea bass. A closer look, however, reveals that women play an equally significant role.

In an analysis of women in select fishing communities in the country, most of the women surveyed say they are active participants in the entire value chain — from fishing, gleaning and picking, to selling and trading. [A recent study](#) published in PLOS ONE also shows that catches by women in Asia reach an estimated 1.7 million metric tons per year, which is worth [\\$3 billion](#). Despite this contribution, women are rarely involved or tapped in important conversations in the community.

This is now being challenged in Calawit, an island that's part of the Calamianes Islands located in the country's western Palawan province. There, 15 women from the Indigenous and traditionally male-led Tagbanwa group were given more than 130 hectares (320 acres) of ancestral waters where they can harvest *cachipay* (*Placuna spp.*), a type of clam known as windowpane oysters.

Oysters have long been an important source of livelihood for the community, especially during lean fishing seasons or when the weather doesn't allow fisherfolk to go out to sea. While harvesting them is a task traditionally shared by both men and women, ownership, and consequently, management of the ancestral waters had always been delegated to men. The fact that the women of the tribe have been granted tenurial rights over the domain by virtue of an official resolution signed by the Tagbanwa elders and members of the tribe's executive committee is a major milestone.



On a Philippine island, Indigenous women get their say on marine conservation



Women now have control over more than 130 hectares (320 acres) of ancestral waters off the island of Calawit in the Philippines. Image courtesy of C3 Philippines

“We are excited because, finally, women can proactively participate in natural resource management,” says Marilou Vergara, one of the women leaders in the community. “I can see that there will be a lot of opportunities for this project that can help us and our families in the long run.”

This initiative is also aligned with the tribe’s Ancestral Domains Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP). Created by each Indigenous group and facilitated by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), these cohesive plans act as a guide for the sustainable and culturally respectful management and development of ancestral domain territories.

“We want to care for our natural marine resources, not just to create a sustainable fishery, but also to preserve our rich culture, which includes the oysters,” says tribe member Rosita Eguia. “The elders believe that we’ll be of help in developing our ancestral waters, which is why they gave the responsibility of managing the cachipay to us women.”

This change didn’t happen overnight. In 2019, PATH Foundation Philippines Inc. (PFPI), a conservation nonprofit, and Community Centred Conservation Philippines (C3 Philippines), a local NGO, were already coordinating with the tribe as part of the five-year USAID Fish Right Program implemented by the Coastal Resources Center at the University of Rhode Island.

C3 Philippines is at the forefront of the project, directly assisting the women on the ground. It also provides them with training so that they can improve their technical fisheries management skills and decision-making prowess.

It’s a move that appears to be paying off. While the men still ferry the women to where the oysters are found, it’s the latter who are now calling the shots. “The area is now being managed and controlled by women in terms of harvesting schedule and area to be harvested,” says Reynante Ramilo, C3 Philippines program coordinator. “Proper documentation and monitoring of the area, including the rivers and mangroves, are also being done by women.”

The women have acclimatized to their new roles with ease. “The Tagbanwa women are already being seen actively participating in decision-making processes in the community,” Ramilo says.



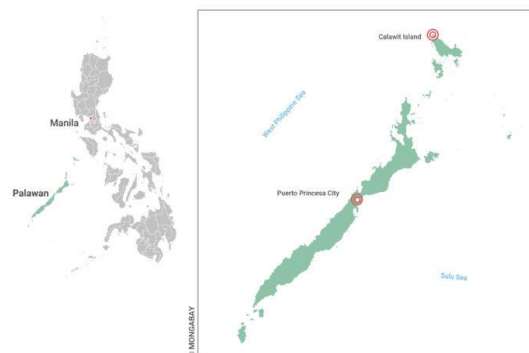
On a Philippine island, Indigenous women get their say on marine conservation

“They are now more confident in terms of voicing out their concerns in different issues in fisheries and health and welfare.”

Recognizing women

The importance of involving women in the marine conservation effort is especially crucial in communities where they manage habitats that are key to the entire ecosystem.

In Calawit, the women have majority control of the mangroves and seagrass beds, where they collect seaweed, salt and *tamilok* (woodworms), a local delicacy. These aren't just an additional source of livelihood for the women; they also help mitigate the strain caused by overfishing in the greater waters. Oysters, which have now been turned over to the care of the Tagbanwa women, are also seen as an alternative to fish.



PFPI field program coordinator Vivien Facunla says the mangroves and seagrass beds are “a defense for coastal communities against the effects of climate change such as storm surges and flooding.”

Handing the responsibility of harvesting the oysters over to the Tagbanwa women isn't just an effort to give them a share of the voice in the community. It's instrumental in helping increase fish stocks in key marine biodiversity areas in the country.

Destructive fishing habits, along with climate change and pollution, have inflicted serious damage to marine ecosystems all over the world. In Calamianes, the second-largest fishing ground in the Philippines, marine areas are reportedly in poor or degraded states. An analysis of gender roles in Philippine fishing communities, including in Calamianes, found that populations of marine species such as finfish, oysters and corals are declining.

These areas are important breeding grounds for juvenile fish and other marine species. Calawit is rich in biodiversity, and, according to Ramilo, its habitats exhibit interdependence with each other. “Additionally, many of the marine species, such as fish and crustaceans, exhibit lifecycle stages that span more than one ecosystem,” he says.

On a Philippine island, Indigenous women get their say on marine conservation

To strengthen resource governance and conservation in the island municipality, it's beneficial to establish a more balanced distribution of power among both men and women, says gender specialist Fredo Lazarte.

"It is fundamental to identify women's roles in biodiversity conservation," he says, adding that even the community's council of elders recognize the Tagbanwa women's innate resource management skills. Through managing the oysters, Lazarte says he believes the women can further enhance their "endogenous skills, knowledge, and attitude."

Proof that a more balanced workforce is crucial to resource management isn't limited to the fisheries space. The [Regional Agricultural Trade Environment \(RATE\) assessment](#) conducted among Southeast Asian countries in 2012 found that "giving women the same access as men to agricultural resources could increase production on women's farms in developing countries by 20 to 30 percent." The [World Resources Institute](#) also reports that projects in the water, sanitation and hygiene sector, another area with a lack of female representation, "can become more effective when women participate."



Oysters are an alternative source of livelihood for the Indigenous Tagbanwa community in Calawit, Palawan, Philippines. Image courtesy of C3 Philippines

Education and awareness campaigns have also been vital to the project, Ramilo says. But navigating projects involving gender equality and environmental conservation with local communities, especially among Indigenous groups with established sets of customs and traditions, requires a delicate balance.

Both the PFPI and C3 Philippines aim to do this by establishing open lines of communications and following prescribed national processes to ensure they don't unintentionally cross a line or cause offense.

In dealing with the Tagbanwas of Calawit, Lazarte says they have secured the necessary free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of the community with the help of a representative of the NCIP.

Within the Tagbanwas, traditional customs are also opening up to allow more active participation for women in the community. "It's in the Tagbanwa culture that men preside over our community," says female community leader Vergara, "but these changes are gradually making our elders recognize our rights to rule as women."

On a Philippine island, Indigenous women get their say on marine conservation

A positive change

While old-fashioned cultural norms about gender persist across the Philippines, changes are already underway. There are laws and resolutions in place to help address the disparity in power.

The Magna Carta for Women Act of 2009 promotes the empowerment of women, emphasizing that they should have the same rights, protections and opportunities available to every member of society. The Tagbanwa tribe's ADSDPP also stipulates the importance of involving women in economic opportunities and natural resource management.

The project itself may be a harbinger of positive change beyond the community. According to PFPI's Facunla, "Data gathered and local monitoring capacity contribute to science-based policies and actions that could bring about improved management of biologically significant areas." Results from the project also present "potential models for learning and expansion in a larger ecosystems scale," she says.

In other municipalities, similar projects are also being implemented. One of them is the Twin-Bakhaw project that promotes women as managers of mangroves. "It presents an opportunity for women to participate, lead and influence the decision-making process in managing the designated protected area and to have access to the marine resources," Facunla says.



Men and women need to work together for a sustainable marine future. Image courtesy of C3 Philippines

Getting women on the same equal ground as men at the community level is crucial to the survival of marine ecosystems, proponents of these initiatives say. And with support from their communities, laws, and environmental agencies, they can take the future of their community into their own hands.

By considering all these complex relationships, communities can implement what is known as an ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFM), which the U.N. describes as a strategy to "meet human requirements to use natural resources, whilst maintaining the biological richness and ecological processes necessary to sustain the composition, structure and function of the habitats or ecosystems concerned."

This is only possible with the cooperation of both the men and the women of the community.



Buhangin sa El Nido, naging itim



October 23, 2020 @ 8:38 AM 22 hours ago

Palawan, Philippines – Naging kulay itim ang ilang baybayin sa El Nido matapos mapakawala ng tubig ang isang kanal malapit sa baybayin.

Ayon sa ulat ng Saksi, sinabi ng isang opisyal ng barangay sa Masagana na puno ito ng siltation kaya't nasira ang kanal.

Siniguro naman ng Municipal Environment and Natural Resources na hindi burak ang tubig.

Dagdag nito na regular na nililinis ang mga kanal sa naturang barangay at palagiang binabantayan ang polusyon sa kanilang bayan. RNT/ELM

424 new Covid-19 recoveries, total at 312K: DOH

By Raymond Carl Dela Cruz October 23, 2020, 6:40 pm



MANILA – The Department of Health (DOH) on Friday reported that 424 more individuals have recovered from the coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), bringing the country’s total recoveries to 312,691.

According to the DOH’s daily Covid-19 bulletin, the country’s active Covid-19 cases is currently at 46,192, with 1,923 newly-reported cases.

Davao City reported the highest number of new infections with 99 cases, followed by the province of Cavite with 94, the City of Manila with 94, Quezon City with 92, and the province of Negros Occidental with 89.

Of the active cases, most or 83.6 percent are showing mild symptoms, followed by those without symptoms at 11.3 percent, those in critical condition at 3.2 percent, and those with severe symptoms at 1.8 percent.

The DOH also reported 132 new deaths associated with Covid-19, bringing the country’s total casualty against the pandemic at 6,915.

The country’s total Covid-19 cases are currently at 365,799.

The number of beds available for Covid-19 patients continues to remain at a safe level, with the country’s 1,900 beds at intensive care units (ICU) currently at 44 percent occupancy, 13,500 isolation beds at 43 percent occupancy, 5,900 ward beds at 37 percent occupancy, and only 22 percent of the country’s 2,000 ventilators are in use.

In the National Capital Region (NCR), the amount of Covid-19 beds is slightly less than the national average, with its 718 ICU beds at 49 percent occupancy, 3,800 isolation beds at 47 percent occupancy, 2,200 ward beds at 36 percent occupancy, and only 26 percent of its 833 ventilators are in use.

To date, a total of 4,249,160 tests for Covid-19 have been performed throughout the country by 114 licensed reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) laboratories and 36 GeneXpert laboratories. (PNA)



Mining areas account for most of 93 COVID-19 cases in Benguet

Published October 23, 2020, 12:38 PM
by [Zaldy Comanda](#)

LA TRINIDAD, Benguet – The highland province of Benguet recorded its highest single-day number of new cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) of 93 on Thursday, October 22, mostly coming from mining areas.

The Provincial Health Office (PHO) said, 74 were reported from the mining town of Itogon, 14 in La Trinidad, two each from Tuba and Buguias, and one from Sablan.

Small scale miners were among those affected in Itogon, with 48 coming from in Balatoc, Virac; 23 from Sangilo, Poblacion; and three from Eastern Saddle, Ampucao.

In a Facebook post, Itogon Mayor Victor Palangdan said these areas were mainly mining areas, which he has already placed on lockdown for disinfection contact tracing.

“We highly suspect that transmission happened inside bunkhouses of several mining companies since infected individuals were mostly workers, or miners with their family members living with them,” Palangdan noted.

Palangdan said the lockdown would concentrate on the infected bunkhouses, and will be implemented by their respective barangay officials and mining companies.

The Municipal Health Service Office (MHSO) is expediting contact tracing for isolation and swab testing in these areas.

Benguet Governor Melchor Diclas has called for an emergency meeting on Friday with officials of the Provincial Health Office (PHO) and Department of Health (DOH) in Cordillera to determine how this sudden surge in COVID-19 cases could be contained.

The PHO also reported one fatality of COVID-19 in Buguias town, a 67 year old male, who had electrolyte imbalance and diabetes.

Benguet province now has a total of 714 confirmed cases, with 327 active cases, 378 recoveries, and nine deaths.



Keep up precautions as restrictions are lifted

Published October 23, 2020, 4:14 PM
by [Manila Bulletin](#)



Natural disasters of various kinds continue around the world in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a major 7.5-magnitude earthquake off the coast of Alaska last Monday, sending off tsunami waves, only three months after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck the same region.

Across the ocean, the Philippines was hit by its 16th storm this year, causing landslides, heavy rains, and flooding in Northern Luzon, particularly in Aurora, Isabela, Benguet, and Ifugao provinces. The Philippines, being in the same Pacific Ring of Fire as Alaska, is also frequently hit by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

At this time of the year, we frequently have major storms sweeping in from the Pacific toward the Asian mainland, and the Philippine archipelago happens to be right in their paths. The storms come all throughout the year, and many powerful ones come about this time of the year, like Yolanda which killed over 6,000 in November, 2013. No wonder, the Philippines is No. 3 in the World Risk Index of Natural Disasters, after Vanuatu and Tonga.

This year, our usual concern over natural disasters in these closing months of the year has been replaced by a greater fear – that of the COVID-19 pandemic which, seven months after our first quarantine lockdown in March, continues unabated. We have managed to hold back the number of infections and deaths in our country, but the fear remains.

A second wave of COVID-19 cases is beginning to rise in Europe and the Americas, with the United States, the world's No. 1 economy, suffering the most in the number of cases and deaths, with India on course to overtake the US.

The world is holding on to hopes that a vaccine will soon be developed, but two or three in their final testing stages reported setbacks. Hopes for a vaccine by December are dim. Even if one makes it by then, it will take months before the earth's billions of people can get it.

This is why all other problems we normally face and fear at this time of the year – typhoons and floods, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions – do not seem to matter to us as much they used to do. Our economy is slowly opening up, but the fear remains and many people continue to stay home. And those who do venture out wear face masks and face shields and keep their distance from other people.



Keep up precautions as restrictions are lifted

In the face of what is happening in the rest of the world, it is indeed best to act as if COVID-19 is as dangerous as ever. We will have our usual storms and earthquakes at this time of the year, with fires toward year's end. But the greatest threat and danger to our lives is still COVID-19 and we must continue to keep our guard up against it, maintaining all possible precautions. For the virus is still with us and may remain so for many more months to come.



Solidum urges LGUs to be prepared for tsunamis

By Ma. Cristina Arayata October 23, 2020, 7:17 pm



DOST Undersecretary Renato Solidum, Jr.

MANILA – Ahead of the World Tsunami Day on November 5, Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Undersecretary Renato Solidum, Jr. is urging local government units (LGUs) to plan and prepare for it.

In a taped DOST report aired on Friday afternoon, Solidum said the Philippines is prone to tsunamis since it is an archipelago, and because it has earthquake generators.

"Based on studies, there are about 10-14 million people living near the shores that may be hit if a tsunami happens," he said.

Solidum said that in the last 400 years, all the tsunamis that happened in the country were locally-generated, wherein the public has no time to prepare as this kind of tsunami reaches the shore right away.

The strongest, he said, happened on August 17, 1976 during the magnitude 8.1 Moro Gulf earthquake that killed around 8,000 people.

The other type of tsunami or the distant tsunami that originates from a distant source would enable people to prepare at least one to 26 hours before it reaches the shore.

LGUs and the public need to prepare, Solidum emphasized.

One must remember the three signs that a tsunami is approaching: "Shake, Drop, and Roar".

This means that shaking or a strong earthquake would happen; a sudden drop of water would be noticeable, and an unusual sound or noise would be heard.

"These observations are very useful as these would provide a warning at the local level," he said.

He urges the LGUs to download the HazardHunter app, as this would guide them about locations at risk for volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and other hazards.

"They need to find areas that are safe to put the evacuation centers. The app would also guide them on which roads to take heading to the evacuation centers. The roads they should take must be roads that are safe and not prone to landslides," he said.

Solidum added that the public must also prepare their Go-bags for such events. *(PNA)*



PAGASA officially declares end of Habagat season

Published October 23, 2020 1:50pm

By JAMIL SANTOS, GMA News

PAGASA has officially declared the end of the Southwest Monsoon or "Habagat" season, as the country transitions into the Northeast Monsoon or Amihan season.

In a statement, PAGASA reported that a significant weakening of the Southwest Monsoon have occurred over the last few days, based on their recent analyses.

Further, the state weather bureau also observed the strengthening of the high-pressure area over the Asian continent, leading to the gradual changing of the season.

"With these developments, the Southwest Monsoon season or known locally as 'Habagat' is now officially over. The season in the Philippines is on the process of transition and will be expecting the gradual start of the Northeast Monsoon season in the coming days with a shift in the direction of the winds," PAGASA said.

PAGASA added that with La Niña on-going, the Northeast Monsoon may be enhanced that could trigger floods, flashfloods and rain-induced landslides over susceptible areas. -MDM, GMA News



Landslide-hit QC families moved

posted October 23, 2020 at 07:20 pm by [Rio N. Araja](#)

The Quezon City government has relocated several families displaced by the landslide in Barangay Payatas a week ago due to heavy rains.

Mayor Joy Belmonte said a two-story residential building at 103 Sampaguita Extension was partially damaged by the landslide that happened around 11 a.m. on Thursday.

Six of the 25 families that needed immediate relocation were transferred to the city's Housing Project No. 17 located in the same barangay.

“Agad na inilipat ang anim na pamilya na lubhang naapektuhan ng landslide dahil nawasak ang kanilang tahanan,” Belmonte said.

The city government shall provide financial assistance to the affected families for the installation of needed utilities in the relocation site, she added.

Lawyer Jojo Conejero, acting assistant head of the Housing, Community Development and Resettlement Department, said the city government is coordinating with the National Housing Authority for the relocation of the 19 remaining families that are living near the area of the landslide.

The Department of Building Official, HCDRD, and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office inspected the area where the landslide occurred.

DBO head Dale Perral said based on the findings of the Annual Building Inspection Division, the subject structures/vicinity were declared dangerous and ruinous pursuant to Section 214 in relation to Section 215 of Presidential Decree 1096 or the National Building Code of the Philippines

“We also discovered that several structures adjacent to the building are also in danger from potential soil erosion and degradation,” Perral said.

Myke Marasigan, DRRMO head, said his office has already cordoned off the area to prevent residents from returning to their homes.

“The area has been declared as prone to erosion and no longer safe for residents, especially during heavy and continuous downpours,” he said.



Air pollution killed 500,000 newborns in 2019 — global study

[Agence France-Presse](#) / 06:12 PM October 23, 2020



Image: IStock.com/letty17 via AFP Relaxnews

Air pollution killed 476,000 newborns in 2019, with the biggest hotspots in India and Sub-Saharan Africa, according to a new global study which said that nearly two-thirds of the deaths came from noxious fumes from cooking fuels.

More than 116,000 Indian infants died from air pollution in the first month of life, and the corresponding figure was 236,000 in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the State of Global Air 2020.

The estimates were produced by the United States-based Health Effects Institute and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation's Global Burden of Disease project.

The authors wrote they relied on a growing body of evidence linking mothers' exposures during pregnancy to air pollution with the increased risk of their infants being born too small (low birth weight) or too early (preterm birth).

These conditions are associated with serious complications and already account for the vast majority of neonatal deaths in both regions.

The new analysis estimated what percentage of those deaths came from ambient and household air pollution.

"An infant's health is critical to the future of every society, and this newest evidence suggests an especially high risk for infants born in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa," said Dan Greenbaum, president of HEI.

"Although there has been slow and steady reduction in household reliance on poor-quality fuels, the air pollution from these fuels continues to be a key factor in the deaths of these youngest infants," he added.

Overall, the report found that air pollution led to 6.7 million deaths worldwide in 2019, making it the fourth leading cause of death behind high blood pressure, tobacco use and dietary risks.

The authors added that while the COVID-19 pandemic had led to significant societal and personal costs, "many countries around the world have experienced blue skies and starry nights, often for the first time in many years" — but these gains were short-lived.

"Nonetheless, the blue skies have offered a reminder of what pollution takes away," it said. **RGA**

Read more: <https://technology.inquirer.net/104994/air-pollution-killed-500000-newborns-in-2019-global-study#ixzz6bjtXUxEs>

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