

MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

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INTRODUCTION

The Philippines, being an archipelagic and developing country, is highly vulnerable to current climate risks as well as future climate change. An average of 20 tropical cyclones enter the Philippine area of responsibility although around 8 or 9 will cross any part of the country per year. In addition, the country is periodically affected by the ENSO (El Niño-Southern Oscillation) phenomenon that induces prolonged wet and dry seasons. Current efforts to address the impacts of climate change exist but may not be sufficient. We tried to assess how far climate change has been mainstreamed into key national development plans and programs, and obtained the perception of various stakeholders.

METHODOLOGY

- 1.) Review of literature of the following relevant documents: the 2004-2010 Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP), the Philippines Millennium Development Goal (MDG), and the Philippine Agenda 21.
- 2.) Key informant interviews from November 2006 to January 2007 of the people who are most active in the climate change discussion in the Philippines. Figure 1 shows the profile of the respondents.

RESULTS

REVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

MTPDP

The primary document that guides national development programs in the Philippines under the current leadership is the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) for 2004-2010 prepared by the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA, 2004). While the MTPDP does not explicitly mention adaptation to climate change, there is a very strong commitment to address the impacts of climate-related hazards. This could form a viable entry point for mainstreaming climate change in the country.

MDG

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted in the 2000 Millennium Summit as part of the UN Millennium Declaration. The Philippine MDG does not contain any reference to adaptation to climate change, or even to climate variability and extremes.

PA 21

The Philippine Agenda 21 (PA 21) arose out of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and it was adopted as the national action agenda for sustainable development by presidential fiat in September 1996.

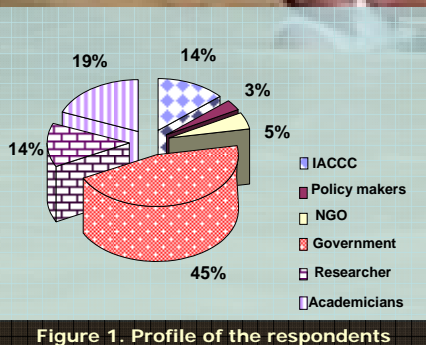
In the entire PA 21 document, climate change was mentioned only once and this was in the context of freshwater ecosystems. While the Philippines had identified 153 sustainable development indicators (SDI), none addresses climate change adaptation.

Our review of major development plans and policies showed that:

- 1.) Climate change adaptation has not been mainstreamed in the Philippines.
- 2.) Whenever climate change is recognized, the focus has been more of mitigation especially now with rising interest in the CDM.
- 3.) Because of the geographical location, there is more emphasis on adaptation to risks associated with current climate variability and extremes (e.g., tropical cyclones). Clearly, national decision makers do not yet see climate change (adaptation) as a high priority issue in the context of national development plans, and climate change (adaptation) has not been mainstreamed in the Philippines.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW

The goal of the interview was to determine the perceptions of key stakeholders in the climate change community in the Philippines to mainstreaming. An overwhelming majority of the respondents believe that mainstreaming climate change is important (Figure 2). However, most of the respondents also think that climate change has not been mainstreamed (Figure 3). This is consistent with our review of major development plans of the country.



Do you think mainstreaming climate change in Philippine policies is important?

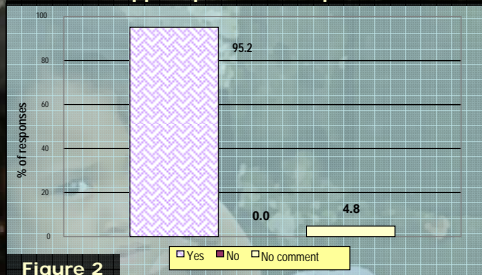


Figure 2

Has Climate change been mainstreamed in Philippine Policies?

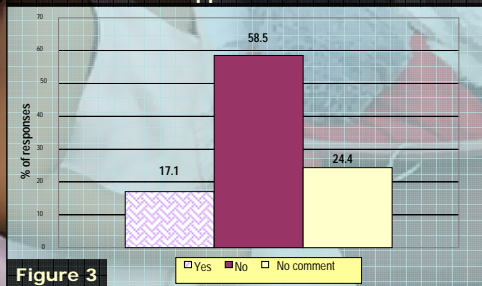


Figure 3

PERCEPTIONS

A minority of respondents (17%) believe that climate change has been mainstreamed in the Philippines. When asked to rank the possible factors that contributed to mainstreaming, "advocacy by NGOs" ranked the highest followed closely by "availability of funds". Political will and sufficiency in knowledge were rated moderately important.

Among those who responded that climate change has not been mainstreamed in the Philippines, the most commonly ranked reasons were:

- 1.) "lack of knowledge and political will". Many policy makers still view climate change as peripheral compared to poverty alleviation and economic growth. The "lack of political will" is consistent with the absence of climate change considerations in the country's developmental plans.
- 2.) "lack of funding". There seems to be a feeling that NGOs are doing better in advocating for climate change. The respondents also cited other obstacles to mainstreaming climate change in the Philippines.
 - (a) climate change is not a priority concern
 - (b) lack of knowledge and appreciation for climate change

CONCLUSION

As climate change impacts become more obvious, the need to mainstream adaptation in the national development agenda becomes pressing. Based on a review of the main development plans and interviews with key informants, climate change has not been mainstreamed in the Philippines. This is primarily because national priorities are biased towards more pressing concerns and the pervasive lack of awareness on the impacts of climate change to sustainable development. However, there are massive investments on infrastructure projects designed to adapt to climate-related hazards such as flood control. These projects could provide an entry point in integrating climate change adaptation.

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