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Cluster 4: Global Change and Sustainable Development

Barriers in scaled climate change adaptation policy in the Philippines

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ABSTRACT

The Philippines' domestic climate change policies represent a valid attempt at the insertion and coordination of the adaptation paradigm within existing institutional arrangements and legislative structures. However, as with any public policy, the challenge remains in the actualization of the adaptation paradigm in effective and implementable programmes and projects instigating climate-resilient development.

Though Philippine climate change policies and institutions have set in place various legal, financial, and social structures to enable adaptation options, key barriers still prevent the effective addressing of underlying vulnerability issues. It remains to be seen if the current policy system will be effective in reaching climate adaptation goals keeping in mind Philippine development priorities and political realities. The current policy system needs to be updated to reflect the needed changes concerning enhanced capacity development, flexible funding schemes, and other efforts to lessen the implementation gap.

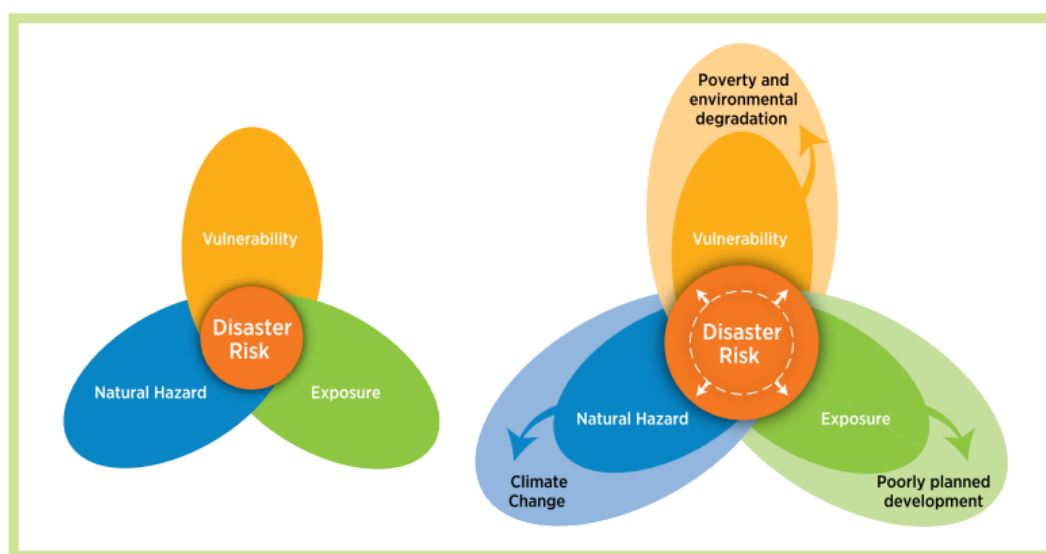
KEYWORDS: *climate change, Philippines, climate policy, adaptation, development, Southeast Asia*

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Introduction

Climate change is expected to heighten existing hydro-meteorological hazards by increasing the frequency and/or intensity of extreme events (IPCC 2007; IPCC 2012; IPCC 2013). These extreme events could lead to disasters which can significantly disrupt development objectives by risking lives, threatening livelihoods, and ultimately undermining poverty reduction efforts (IPCC 2012; Schipper & Pelling, 2006).

Developing countries are especially at risk because of several political, socio-economic, and cultural conditions contributing to their high vulnerability (Gitay et al., 2013). Focusing on the Philippines, the country is extremely vulnerable to climate impacts. Along with natural susceptibility to hazards, its rapidly increasing and urbanising population together with inadequately planned development have led to amplified disaster risk (Bankoff and Hillhorst, 2009). The need for adaptation is clear and should be a national priority (Gitay et al., 2013; Prabhakar, Srinivasan, & Shaw, 2009).



Source: Adapted from IPCC 2012.

Figure 1. Relationship between natural hazard, vulnerability, and exposure

Source: Gitay et al., 2013

To combat this, the recently enacted Climate Change Act 2009 provides institutional and legislative arrangements focusing on climate change adaptation (CCA), however, significant challenges still remain despite these policies. This paper aims to discuss some of these barriers to assess the

fundamental institutional and policy changes required to address anticipated climate risks in the Philippines.

Climate Change Adaptation Policy Framework

Adaptation is broadly defined as the adjustment in human arrangements in response to climate stimuli and their impacts (Adger, Arnell, & Tompkins, 2006; ADB 2009; UNFCCC 1992). It is a complementary and parallel response to climate change mitigation as it supports social and economic development using the vulnerability approach (ADB 2009).

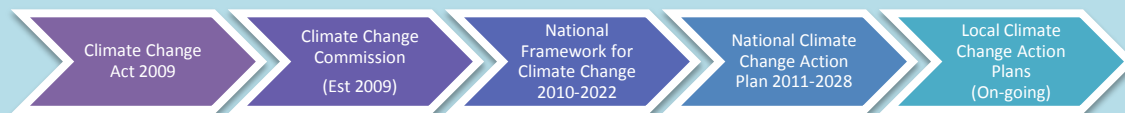
The Conference of Parties has consistently pushed for the adaptation agenda as early as 1992 with the United Nations Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC) and more recently with the Bali Action Plan 2007, Cancun Adaptation Framework 2010, and the Doha Decision on Losses and Damages 2012, and other important landmarks (Gitay et al., 2013). They have also established funds like the Adaptation Fund, the Global Environment Facility, and the Green Climate Fund, which developing countries can use to finance their adaptation efforts (Fankhauser & Burton, 2011).

The Philippines is signatory to the aforementioned international agreements. The country recognises adaptation action to be linked with poverty reduction and development goals (Lasco et al., 2009). There have been significant efforts in planned adaptation activities resulting in the formal responses stated below (Box 1) (Füssel, 2007).

BOX 1. CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION POLICY IN THE PHILIPPINES

The **Climate Change Act 2009** (GOP 2009) mandates three main formal responses:

- Creation of a climate change organization – the Climate Change Commission;
- Creation of a climate change framework – National Framework for Climate Change; and
- Creation of climate change national and local action plans – National and Local Action Plan/s for Climate Change.



All three responses have been operationalized. The **Climate Change Commission** is the main coordinating body for climate change-related policies and efforts (GOP 2009). They are supported by the **National Framework Strategy on Climate Change 2010-2022 (GOP 2010)**, which guides the development of national and regional (sub-national) planning processes.

In addition, the **National Climate Change Action Plan 2011-2028 (GOP 2011a)** outlines the detailed programs and strategies for adaptation and mitigation for different levels and sectors of government. The Plan created technical working groups to support the seven main priority areas (see Table B1).

In addition, in 2011, the Climate Change Act was amended to include the provision of long-term financing known as the **People's Survival Fund** to support climate change-related programme and project development for local government units and communities (GOP 2011b). As of November 2015, it is currently accepting proposals for 2015 to access its one Billion Philippine Peso fund. (Climate Change Commission 2015).

In October 2015, the Philippines communicated their **Intended Nationally Determined Contribution** to the UNFCCC. The country pledges to reduce its carbon equivalent emissions by 70% by 2030 relative to its BAU scenario of 2000-2030 conditional on international development assistance in terms of financing, technical development and transfer, and capacity building (GOP 2015).

Table B1. Priority Areas of the National Climate Change Action Plan

PRIORITIES	OUTCOMES
1. Food security	The objective of the national strategic priority on food security is to ensure availability, stability, accessibility, and affordability of safe and healthy food amidst climate change.
2. Water sufficiency	In light of climate change, however, a comprehensive review and subsequent restructuring of the entire water sector governance is required. It is important as well to assess the resilience of major water resources and infrastructures, manage supply and demand, manage water quality, and promote conservation.
3. Environmental and ecological stability	Ecosystem resilience and environmental stability during the plan period is focused on achieving one immediate outcome: the protection and rehabilitation of critical ecosystems, and the restoration of ecological services.
4. Human security	The objective of the human security agenda is to reduce the risks of women and men to climate change and disasters.
5. Climate-friendly industries and services	NCCAP prioritizes the creation of green and eco-jobs and sustainable consumption and production. It also focuses on the development of sustainable cities and municipalities.
6. Sustainable energy	NCCAP prioritizes the promotion and expansion of energy efficiency and conservation; the development of sustainable and renewable energy; environmentally sustainable transport; and climate-proofing and rehabilitation of energy systems infrastructures.
7. Knowledge and capacity development	The priorities of the NCCAP on knowledge and capacity development are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced knowledge on the science of climate change; • Enhanced capacity for climate change adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk reduction at the local and community level; and • Established gendered climate change knowledge management accessible to all sectors at the national and local levels.

Source: GOP 2011

Key Barriers in Adaptation Policy in the Philippines

Adaptation policy in the Philippines faces several challenges. Working in a narrow framework of donor-driven and formal responses, there are limited mechanisms in place for local governments to source their own means of responsive capacity development and programme implementation. This severely hampers the realization of effective adaptation activities. This section will discuss the wide implementation gap between CCA policy and on-going activities in the Philippines, and it will also talk about the need for intensive capacity development efforts especially at the local level.

A. Strong efforts at localization but limited by the lack of capacity

The prioritization of the adaptation agenda is evident in the Philippines. The Climate Change Commission is headed by the President of the Philippines (GOP 2009), which gives much political clout for the adaptation agenda (IPCC 2012).

As the Philippines has a highly decentralized government, the relationship between the national and local government is crucial (Bankoff & Hillhorst, 2009). Current laws have designed and designated Local Government Units (LGUs) as the front liners and main actors in adaptation efforts (GOP 2009). Indeed, literature supports that localised management may be most effective because it is context-specific. LGUs can determine the cost they are willing to bear for an adaptation benefit. However, without the proper support and capacity development, most adaptation efforts may prove to be unsuccessful due to poor planning and faulty implementation (Dovers & Hezri, 2010; Füssel, 2007).

Government-led adaptation activities should rely on quality hazard, impact, and vulnerability assessments to inform the needed adaptation strategies for their jurisdictions (Hepburn, 2006). However, most LGUs lack the technical capacity to undertake such assessments, as they often do not have in-house expertise on climate change and/or disaster risk. Aside from this, they are also overworked. In addition to their usual government functions that require strict compliance, LGUs are also loaded with CCA-related local planning and activities. It is important to keep in mind that LGUs differ in political and socio-economic conditions and institutions. These can serve to enable or constrain effective adaptation actions (Prabhakar, Srinivasan, & Shaw, 2009).

To illustrate, access to funds and capacity are unequal, rural areas with small populations are disadvantaged. Most funding is centred on major cities due to fund prioritisation based on political, demographic, and economic considerations (Bankoff & Hillhorst, 2009). For example Metro Manila is especially targeted by the national government for development. It also receives large amounts of revenue via tax, and is further supported by foreign aid assistance. With “less important” areas left by the wayside, the Philippines may lose the opportunity to develop climate-resilient cities (Gitay et al., 2013; Hallegate, 2009; IPCC 2012). “Re-developing” climate-resilient cities are significantly more expensive since there is already sunk infrastructure such as transport and water facilities that may have to be relocated, removed, or retrofitted which is significantly more expensive (ADB 2009; Gitay et al., 2013, Hallegate, 2009).

B. Strong legislative arrangements but faulty implementation

Problems remain due to the dependence of the local government on the central government for guidance and finances to enable their desired activities. Most LGUs have very limited funding, time, and technical capacity for CCA-efforts as they compete with their other responsibilities (Bankoff & Hillhorst, 2009). To illustrate, due to limited local engagement, well-meaning national guidelines for local use are often conflicting with local concerns (IPCC 2012). This is exacerbated by short-term, inflexible, donor-driven, and unreliable funding schemes (ADB 2009; Fankhauser & Burton, 2011).

For example, the funds for Typhoon Haiyan have been mismanaged. Funneled through the Department of Social Welfare and Development, a national agency, the 782 million pesos (\$18.2 million USD) earmarked for rehabilitation activities have not yet been disbursed. These cannot be released without the proposals of the affected local governments. This guideline was set in place to prevent corruption and to ensure fund availability (Herrera, 2014). These proposals are understandably delayed because the same local governments are overwhelmed, since they are also expected to handle the relief efforts and preventive adaptation efforts aside from tedious project proposal work which can be beyond their expertise.

The current funding structure is clearly inflexible as it commits funds towards a particular project for particular measure to be used for a certain period of time (Birkmann & von Teichman, 2010; Mertz et al., 2009). In addition, aid and other assistance are usually coursed through the national government, the focus on top-down mechanisms is emphasized. This is coupled with the lack of consideration for local political cycles, which can prevent meaningful adaptation action. Because of this, popular tokenistic relief efforts are prioritized instead of more obscure prevention activities. This can limit effective adaptation action due to the mismatch of the actual needs of the locality rather than the perceived generalities as are usually stated in national guidelines (Ford, Berrang-Ford, & Paterson, 2011).

Aside from this, the lack of predictable and sustained funding (10 years or more) has led to stand-alone projects and programmes (ADB 2009; Fankhauser & Burton, 2011; Lasco et al., 2009). The problem with singular endeavours is that it often fails to deliver its main objective – risk reduction (Lasco et al., 2009; Schipper & Pelling, 2006). For instance, in relation to CCA knowledge products, problems remain in making information available, reliable, timely, and appropriate for policy makers, adaptation practitioners, affected local communities, and other stakeholders (Birkmann & von Teichman, 2010). The context-specific implications of these knowledge products are hardly communicated to other relevant departments, government levels, communities, and industries. An example of this would be the downscaling of the A2 emission scenario for the sub-national level.

Funded by the United Nations, changing levels of precipitation and temperature for 2020 and 2050 were modelled on a provincial scale (PAGASA 2011). However, the information remained quantitative and could have been more effectively communicated and linked to policy goals. Subsequent efforts to leverage the results of the data were not in place. For example, the data in relation with farming strategies or water availability were neither evaluated in terms of food and water security nor were they communicated with the relevant departments and livelihood-based communities needing such research (Lasco et al., 2009; Pulhin, Tapia, & Perez, 2010).

In brief, unfortunately, despite relatively progressive policies, the Philippines is still largely limited by political interests and socio-economic realities. The Philippines may have decentralised CCA responsibility across scale, but they have failed to devolve important powers and developed capacities. Large CCA-related funding is still largely allocated by the national government and dependent on international sources (GOP 2009), which can be a slow, cumbersome, and political process. Local sources are often too small or already stretched due to competing priorities. Clearly, fast-tracked resources are needed to respond to the climate problem. The People's Survival Fund hopes to address this problem by simplified project proposals for local governments and communities (CCC 2015).

Way Forward: Need to Change Current Decision-making Processes

As previously illustrated, institutions largely determine policy implementation. In the Philippines like with other developing countries, institutions and policies tend to be largely reactive, fragmented, and rigid, which affects their corresponding CCA efforts. The climate challenge requires more responsive and reflective institutions and more flexible and robust policy structures (Birkmann & von Teichman, 2010; Mertz et al., 2009). This section illustrates some key changes needed to address the barriers discussed regarding CCA policy.

First, CCA efforts will benefit from more flexible means of finance. Climate change related funding should be broadened to include addressing the primary causes of vulnerability. Efforts aimed at development, poverty reduction, disaster, and many others can easily lend themselves towards CCA activities. As mentioned, the People's Survival Fund is an encouraging attempt as it seeks to support local projects with vulnerability considerations focusing on transformative change and no longer stop-gap solutions (CCC 2015). In truth, there is little difference in good development practices and CCA efforts because at both of their cores lies risk reduction and better preparedness to deal with impacts (ADB 2009; Gitay et al., 2013).

Second, it is important to uphold self-reflective measures like review systems. The current CCA policy in the Philippines only mandates the Framework to be reviewed every three years. National and Local Action Plans are not required to undergo review (GOP 2009; GOP 2010; GOP 2011a). Due to the uncertainty of climate change, it is imperative to move away from traditional methods of planned decision-making (Dovers & Hezri, 2010). Reliance on formal responses should be carefully measured as it may be maladaptive. The effectiveness of climate action is differentiated and context-specific because it is particular to each actor, agenda, activity, and timelines (Adger, Neville, & Tompkins, 2006; Hallegate, 2009).

For example, in Metro Manila, the emphasis on formal adaptation infrastructural measures can be problematic (IPCC 2012). In 2012, P352 billion pesos (\$8.2 billion USD)-worth flood embankment plan was proposed (Esplanada, 2012). Without corresponding measures in soft adaptation strategies, this can be a maladaptation. The false sense of security can increase exposure for Metro Manila with more people moving into natural flood zones. Though the possibility of failure may be argued as minimal, in case it occurs, the result will be catastrophic (Hallegate, 2009; Moench, 2007).

It is important to remember that organic responses can be just as useful. They can also ensure coupled climate co-benefits. Practical solutions, for example no-regret, reversible, and soft strategies are not limited towards formal responses (Hallegate, 2009). In fact, the motivation for CCA may not even be significant or even present. However, adaptation efforts can rather be a positive externality in an attempt to address economic productivity and development objectives (ADB 2009; Gitay et al., 2013).

Third, there needs to be a more meaningful inclusion of more non-traditional partners such as civil society, universities, and the private sector (Dovers & Hezri, 2010). The effects of climate impacts are dissimilar and regressive as they are differentiated depending on an individual's or group's vulnerability (Gitay et al., 2013). Incorporating different stakeholders is essential in having a well-rounded approach to the climate problem. They diversify coping strategies, which increase the overall resilience of the system (ADB 2009; Dovers & Hezri, 2010).

For example, rural farming communities are, by nature, resilient as they are accustomed to dealing with the climate-dependent industry of agriculture. However, they may be unable to manage sizable and systemic shocks especially since climate change can bring hazards out of the realm of human experience (Dovers & Hezri, 2010; Gitay et al., 2013). LGUs can respond in various ways. Most notably, they can assist farmers with their farming strategies by also involving non-conventional partners such as civil society organisations and state universities who can aid farmers with more modern agricultural research for example in developing drought-resilient crops (Gitay et al., 2013). They can also involve the private sector, which can help by incentivising adaptation efforts through

economic instruments for example microfinance, which can be augmented by international funding as facilitated by the national government (ADB 2009).

Conclusion

Decisions affecting resource allocation are influenced by institutional values, limited by social norms, and constrained by political and economic realities (Dovers & Hezri, 2010). Immature institutions can constrain the availability and effectiveness of adaptation action (Adger, Arnell, & Tompkins, 2006).

The Philippines has clear and progressive institutional and legislative CCA-related arrangements. Further efforts are needed to leverage the strong interest and support of government for CCA activities. Aside from this, the effectiveness of adaptation actions should not only be based on cost-effectiveness but rather also on inclusive equity - how these costs and benefits will be distributed to those most in need (Prabhakar, Srinivasan, & Shaw, 2009) and legitimacy – how the distribution of these costs and benefits will be accepted (Adger, Neville & Tompkins, 2006). It is important to remember that all policy efforts are dependent on political, socio-economic, and cultural realities. The different motivations of value-rich institutions colours their decision-making processes with respect to resource allocation and access to these resources.

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