PEOPLE COUNT

PLCPD POLICY BRIEF

The RH, Population and Climate Change Challenge

By Floreen Simon

I. INTRODUCTION

More than ever, the world is being challenged by the growing concern on climate change. With its impacts cutting across all sectors and stakeholders, linking the advocacy to combat climate change and its impacts to existing advocacies has become a necessary undertaking.

As a human development institution, PLCPD has long been advocating for the passage of the Reproductive Health (RH) Care Bill that is seen to significantly address the RH situation of the country. Particularly, the RH Bill intends to provide concrete measures to deal with the increasing maternal mortality, prevalence of HIV and AIDS incidents, and inaccessibility of family planning (FP) information, services, and commodities, among others.

The current RH situation, including the absence of a national and comprehensive RH policy in the country contributes significantly in the continued increase of the population inasmuch as the poorest section of the Philippine society who wish to avail of FP services and commodities are deprived of such. In turn, rising above poverty has become impossible as providing for the daily basic needs of their families alone is challenging enough. This vicious cycle of poverty has rendered the poor vulnerable not only to hunger and insecurity but also to the impacts of disasters. Now that the concern on climate change has been resounded worldwide, this brings the poor to the abyss of vulnerability.

The National Framework Strategy and Plan on Climate Change (NFSPCC) and the National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) formulated by the Climate Change Commission (CCC) both underscore population as a factor that should be considered in understanding and addressing the vulnerabilities of the country to climate change. The NFSPCC states, "Population growing exponentially and migrating into areas where they should not be contribute to the overall vulnerability of the country to additional external threats like climate change." Further it notes, "Age distribution and economic status

also influence level of vulnerability of people which, in turn, determine the overall level of vulnerability of the country. More young and older people in the population would be critical in disaster situations. Poverty limits the concerned population's capacity to bounce back immediately in the face of disasters or to shift rapidly to new adaptation modes that require financial resources to materialize." [i]

It is alarming that long before the concern on climate change was discussed globally, the Philippines' geographical position has always rendered the country vulnerable to a number of natural hazards such as typhoons, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and storm surges. Positioned along the typhoon belt, the country experiences an average of 20 typhoons a year – five of which are destructive. In the same manner, located at the Pacific Ring of Fire, the Philippines is home to a number of active volcanoes, five of which are most active and are constantly being monitored by the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHIVOLCS). Situated in the earthquake belt, the country is also prone to an average of 20 earthquakes a day – five of which are strong enough to be felt.

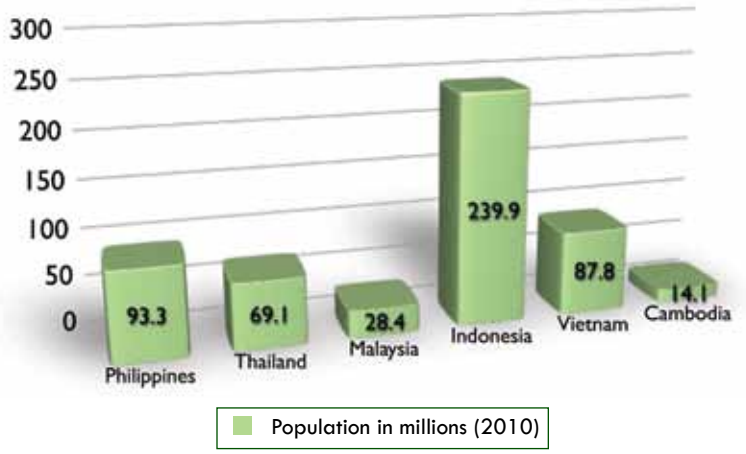
On these alone, the poor has already suffered so much in terms of life, properties and livelihood. With climate change in the horizon, the situation is expected to worsen.

Photo credit: http://edition.presstv.ir/detail/159174.html

II. POP/RH SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES

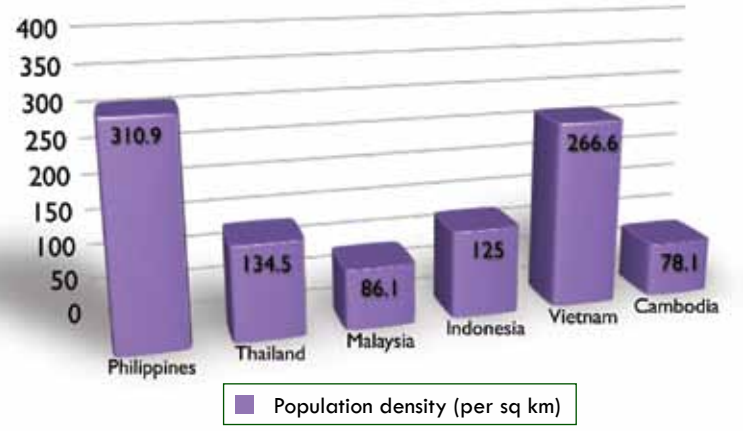
The Philippines currently stands as the 12th most populous country in the world with a population of 94.9 million.[ii] However, compared with other Southeast Asian countries, the Philippines did not register as having the highest population. In fact, 2010 data indicate that the Philippines, with a population of 93.3M, only came in second after Indonesia with 239.9M.[iii] Then again, in terms of population density, or the number of persons per square kilometer, the Philippines registered the highest with 310.9; Indonesia is at second with 266.6. Clearly, the reason for this is the difference in land area between the two countries.

Population in millions (2010)



Source: UP Population Institute, 2012

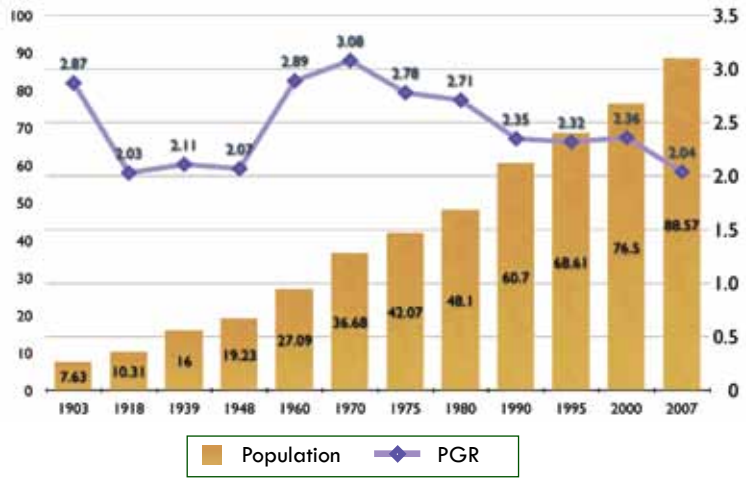
Population density (per sq km)



Source: UP Population Institute, 2012

Data provided by the UP Population Institute (UPPI) indicate that even with the downward trend in population growth rate (PGR), the population of the country continues to rise mainly because of the population momentum – where because of having a young population, most of the people belong to the reproductive age. In addition, there is now a growing concern on the rising trend in teenage pregnancies. UPPI data reveal that the country ranks third in terms of teenage pregnancies compared with other ASEAN countries. LAO PDR tops the list with 88.4 followed by Timor Leste with 64.3 and the Philippines with 51.6. But what is more alarming is that it is only in the Philippines that teenage pregnancies are on an increasing trend. With this, experts underscore the need for sexuality education which should provide the young with age-appropriate RH information. This is contained in the proposed RH Bill but is, unfortunately, being opposed by some policymakers.

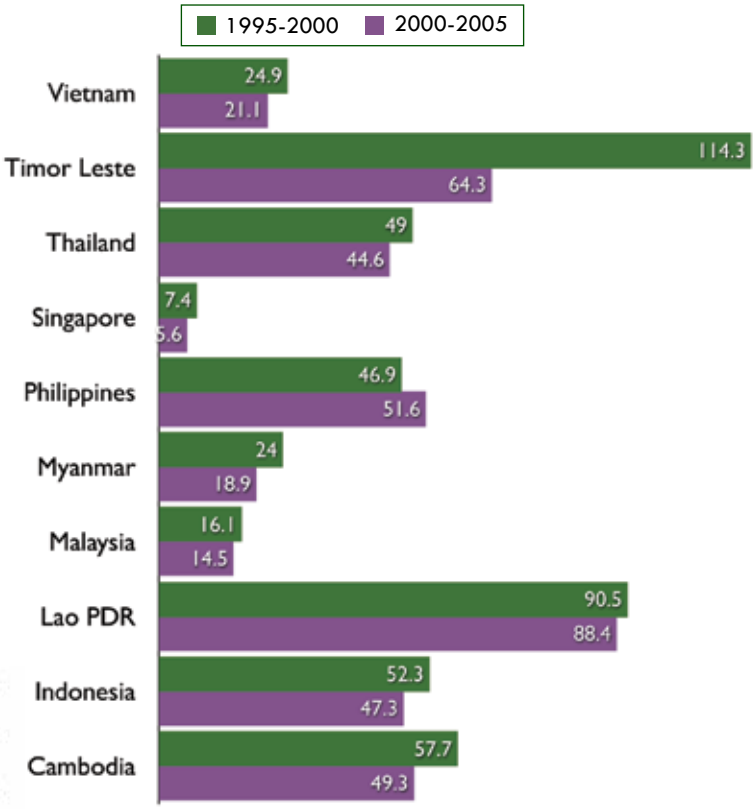
Total Population and Growth Rate, Philippines 1903-2007



Source: UP Population Institute, 2012

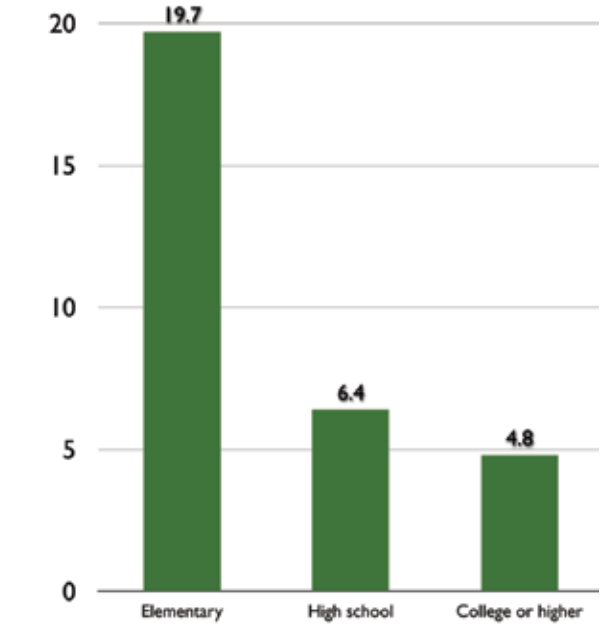
Another point of contention is when sexuality education should be given to the young. It is significant to note that among women aged 15-19, 30.9 percent have begun childbearing, 19.7 of whom finished only elementary education. Suffice it to say, sexuality education should be provided to the young as early as they are in elementary education simply because some of them do not make it to high school anymore. What is more disturbing is that parenting is doubly challenging for young people thereby having an effect on the kind of population that we are developing.

Teenage Pregnacies, ASEAN



Source: UP Population Institute, 2012

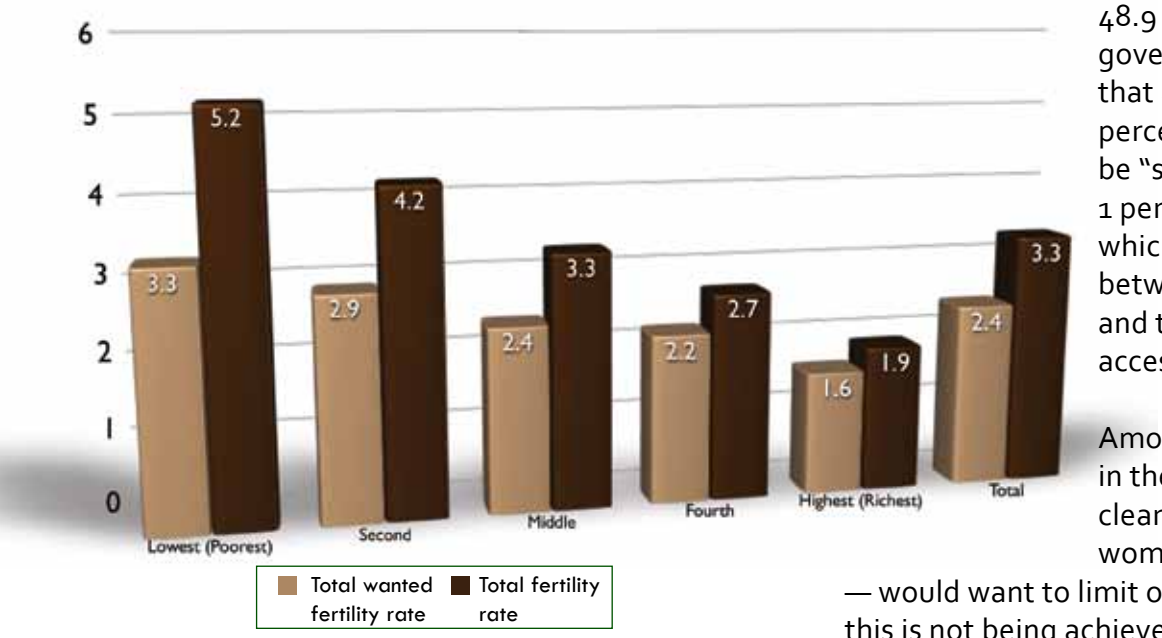
Percent who have begun childbearing among women aged 15-19 by education



Source: UP Population Institute, 2012

The concern on population increase is undoubtedly linked with the country's concern on providing RH services to those who wish to avail of it. The country's unmet need in family planning and the difference in wanted and total fertility rates spell out the gaps in FP services and commodities as against the expressed needs of the people. The country's total fertility rate (TFR) stands at 3.1.[iv] Back in 2008, the country's TFR was at 3.3 while the wanted fertility rate stood at 2.4 or 27 percent lower than the TFR.[v] As to women coming from the poorest quintile, they preferred only 3.3 children but had 5.2 children – a difference of 2 children.

Total Fertility Rate and Total Wanted Fertility Rate by Wealth Quintile, NDHS 2008



Source: 2008 National Demographic and Health Survey

In the same manner, the country's contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) also spells out the lack in FP supplies that can be availed and accessed by the public. The CPR for married women in the Philippines has increased from 15 percent in 1968 to 51 percent in 2008, an almost fourfold increase over four decades. However, while use of any method increased by two percentage points between 2003 and 2008 (from 49 percent to 51 percent), use of any modern method increased by less than one percentage point.[vi] In its summary of findings, the 2008 NDHS has this to say about the trends in contraceptive use, "In the last 40 years, the use of family planning has increased. Remarkable increases occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. From 17 percent in 1973, the CPR increased to 40 percent in 1993. Since then, the CPR has increased gradually to 51 percent in 2008. In the last 15 years, the use of modern methods rose by only 9 percentage points, from 25 to 34 percent, despite women's expressed desire to space or limit childbearing. However, the majority of users use modern methods; currently, users of modern methods comprise two thirds of all family planning users." In the recently launched results of the Family Health Survey 2011, the National Statistics Office (NSO) reports that CPR decreased to 48.9 percent. While the government interprets that a decrease by only 1 percent renders the CPR to be "stagnant," a decrease by 1 percent is still a decrease which further widens the gap between the actual situation and the target of universal access to FP.[vii]

Among other RH concerns in the country, the foregoing clearly explains that while women — especially the poor — would want to limit or space their children, this is not being achieved. The country's youth also need to be educated on sexuality but this is not being provided. This is primarily because the country still lacks a comprehensive law that should guide the government in providing the whole range of RH and FP information to the people as well as in allocating budget for the acquisition of FP supplies and commodities. Without this law, and with climate change in the horizon, more and more Filipinos will have to set aside their reproductive health and rights as they come face to face with mounting vulnerabilities.

III. PHILIPPINE DISASTER PROFILE and RESPONSES

The Philippines has been confronted, for years now, with extreme weather disturbances that are responsible for the sudden flooding incidents in the country. These include the floods caused by Typhoon Frank in the Visayas, Typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng in Luzon, and most recently, Typhoon Sendong in Mindanao – all of which resulted in severe magnitudes of devastation to the lives and livelihood of the affected residents.

While not conclusive whether these disaster events are already impacts of climate change, the Philippines is ranked third in the countries that experienced disasters.[viii] Results released by the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) stated that the Philippines experienced 18 floods and landslides, 12 storms, two volcanic eruptions and one earthquake in 2011. CRED also identified Typhoon Sendong as the most lethal storm worldwide with 1,439 deaths.

2011 data from the Citizens' Disaster Response Center (CDRC), on the other hand, states that a total of 431 natural and human-induced disasters were experienced in the country, leaving in their trail at least 1,774 deaths, more than 3 million families or 15.3 million people affected, and damages amounting to over Php 26 billion. The CDRC report also stated that, in terms of number of disaster incidents, 2011 disasters were 50% higher compared to 202 disaster events recorded in 2010.

CDRC's 2011 Philippine Disaster Report states that over a 10-year period, 2011 disasters broke the downward trend in disaster events since 2005. In terms of the affected population, 2011 data of 15.3 million people also exceeded the highest number of disaster-affected population recorded in 2006 at 14.5 million and the second highest in 2009 at 13.6 million. The National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (NDRRMC), on the other hand, reported that the 2011 top 10 Philippine destructive tropical cyclones left in their wake a total of 1,541 casualties. More than 2 million families or 9.8 million individuals were affected while damage to properties was estimated at Php 26.5 billion. Among the ten, Tropical Storm Sendong left the most number of deaths (1,257) while Typhoon Pedring caused the highest amount of damages to properties (PhP15.5 B).

In terms of responses, the government has so far progressed from the previous practices of providing relief goods alone to disaster victims. More importantly, heightened coordination is now being ensured among government agencies, international aid agencies, international and local non-government organizations, and the private sector thereby ensuring that duplication of efforts is avoided. Guided by The Sphere Project: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, an internationally accepted instrument in humanitarian response, the government and its partners among the civil society are now providing assistance in forms of relief goods (food and non-food items); early recovery programs (cash- and food-for-work); camp coordination and management, emergency shelter and protection (temporary and permanent); health, WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene), nutrition, and psychosocial interventions; education interventions; logistics; and infrastructure.[ix]

Photo credit: http://endtimesrevelations.files.wordpress.com/

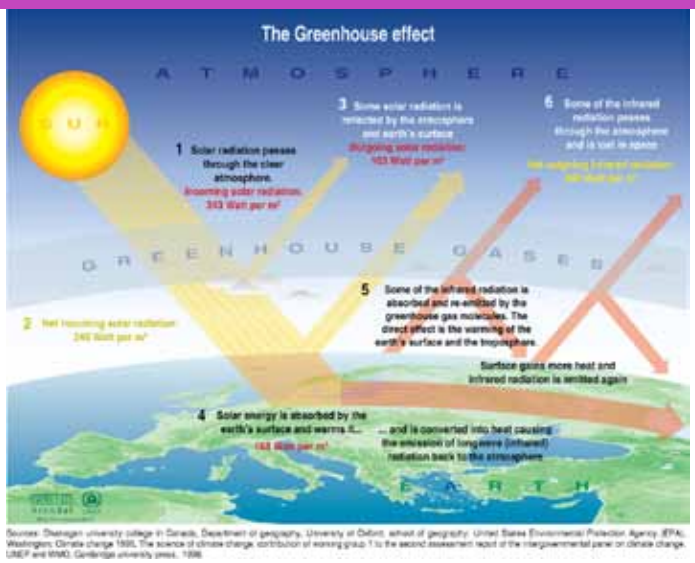
IV. CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE PHILIPPINES

In its Fourth Assessment Report in 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change discussed the following:

- Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now evident from observations of increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice and rising global average sea level;
- Observational evidence from all continents and most oceans shows that many natural systems are being affected by regional climate changes, particularly temperature increases;
- There is medium confidence that other effects of regional climate change on natural and human environments are emerging, although many are difficult to discern due to adaptation and non-climatic drivers.[x]

As such, even when others are still skeptic whether climate change is real or not, experts say that it is actually not a question of if but when. And that the impacts will be defined by the level of awareness and consciousness that nations will promote among their populace.

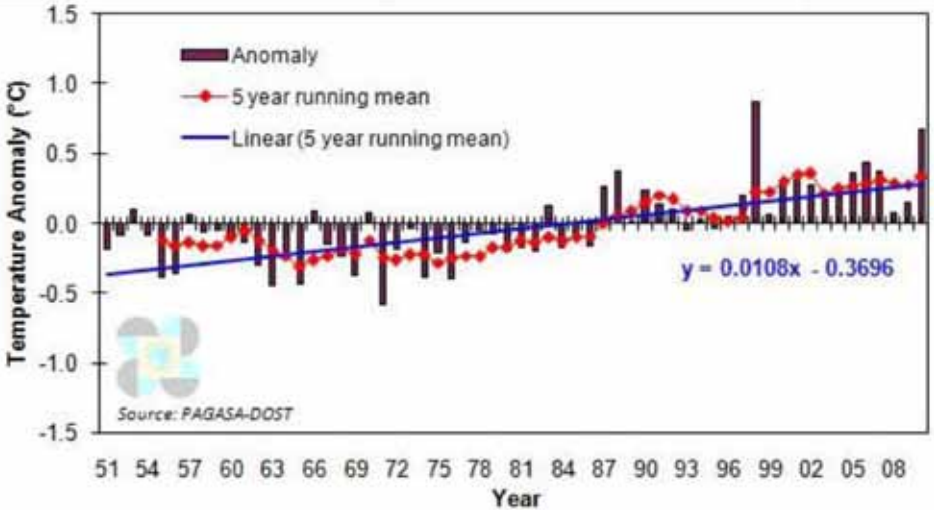
Climate change is primarily caused by the accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, trapping the sun's heat, which is now commonly known as the greenhouse effect. The "Greenhouse Effect" is the warming that happens when certain gases in Earth's atmosphere trap heat. These gases let in sunlight but keep heat from escaping, like the glass walls of a greenhouse. While there are natural greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, it is more important to note that an increasing amount of greenhouse gases are being produced by human activities. In fact, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) defines climate change as "a change of climate



which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods."[xi]

The following are excerpts from a document released by PAGASA which presents the current climate and observed trends in the country:[xii]

- The Philippines, like most parts of the globe, has also exhibited increasing temperatures. The graph of observed mean temperature anomalies (or departures from the 1971-2000 normal values) during the period 1951 to 2010 indicates an increase of 0.648 °C or an average of 0.0108 °C-per-year increase.

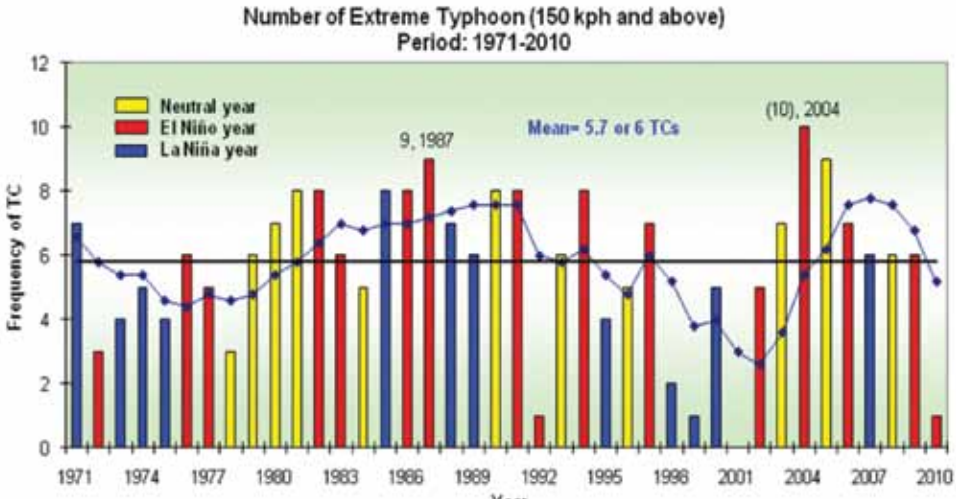


Observed annual mean temperature anomalies (1951-2010) in the Philippines based on 1971-2000 normal values.

Source: PAGASA, Climate Change in the Philippines, 2011

- During the last 60 years, maximum and minimum temperatures are seen to have increased by 0.36 °C and 1.0 °C, respectively.

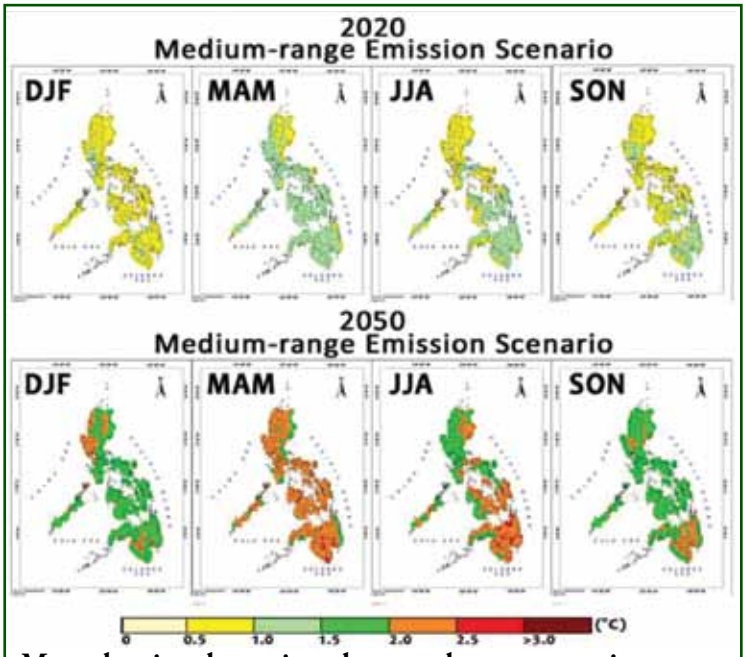
- Analysis of trends of tropical cyclone occurrence or passage within the so-called Philippine Area of Responsibility (PAR) shows that an average of 20 tropical cyclones form and/or cross the PAR per year. The trend shows a high variability over the decades but there is no indication of increase in the frequency. However, there is a very slight increase in the number of tropical cyclones with maximum sustained winds of greater than 150kph and above (typhoon category) being exhibited during El Niño event.



Trend analysis of tropical cyclones with maximum sustained winds of 150kph and above (typhoon category) during the 1971-2010 period).

Source: PAGASA, Climate Change in the Philippines, 2011

In the same document, PAGASA also expounds on the climate projections in the country which is characterized by extreme weather events. PAGASA made projections for 2020 and 2050 which also varies geographically. As PAGASA puts it, "While there are varied trends in the magnitude and direction of the rainfall changes, both in 2020 and 2050, what the projections clearly indicate are the likely increase in the performance of the southwest and the northeast monsoons in the provinces exposed to these climate controls when they prevail over the country. Moreover, the usually wet seasons become wetter with the usually dry seasons becoming also drier; and these could lead to more occurrences of floods and dry spells/droughts, respectively."[xiii]



Maps showing the projected seasonal temperature increase (in °C) in the Philippines in 2020 and 2050.

Source: PAGASA, Climate Change in the Philippines, 2011

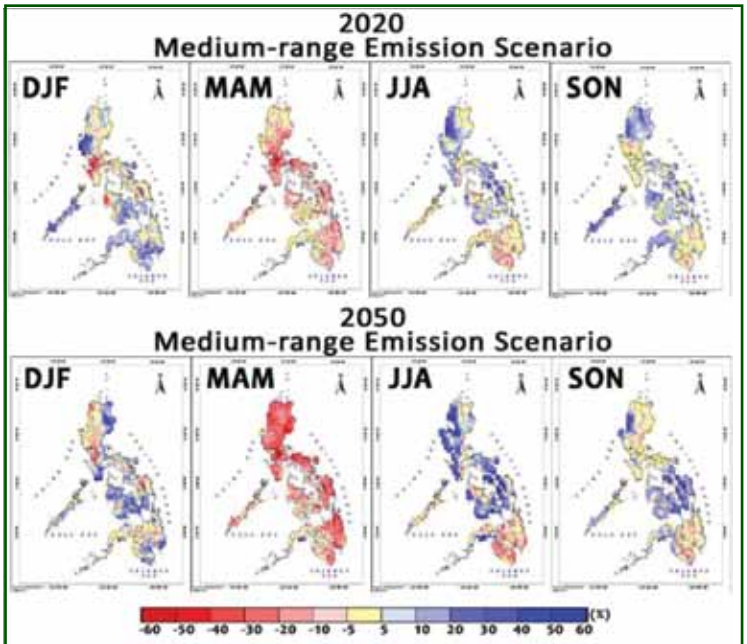
Below are PAGASA's projections of climate in the country for 2020 and 2050:

- **Seasonal Temperature Change:** all areas of the Philippines will get warmer, more so in the relatively warmer summer months. Mean temperatures in all areas in the Philippines are expected to rise by 0.9 °C to 1.1 °C in 2020 and by 1.8 °C to 2.2 °C in 2050. Likewise, all

seasonal mean temperatures will also have increases in these time slices; and these increases during the four seasons are quite consistent in all parts of the country. Largest temperature increase is projected during the summer (MAM) season.

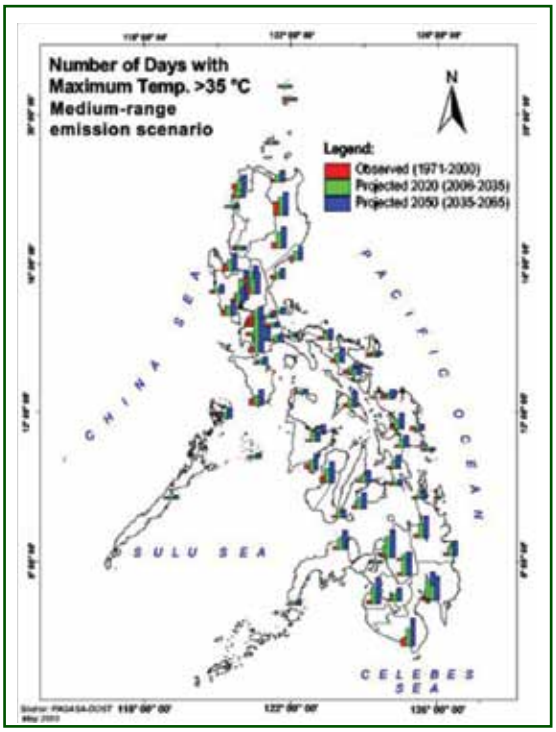
- **Seasonal Rainfall Change:** generally, there is reduction in rainfall in most parts of the country during the summer (MAM) season. However, rainfall increase is likely during the southwest monsoon (JJA) season until the transition (SON) season in most areas of Luzon and Visayas, and also, during the northeast monsoon (DJF) season, particularly, in provinces/areas characterized as Type II climate in 2020 and 2050. There is however, generally decreasing trend in rainfall in Mindanao, especially by 2050.

- **Extreme temperature events:** hot temperatures will continue to become more frequent in the future.



Maps showing the projected rainfall change (increase/ decrease) in % in 2020 and 2050 in the Philippines.

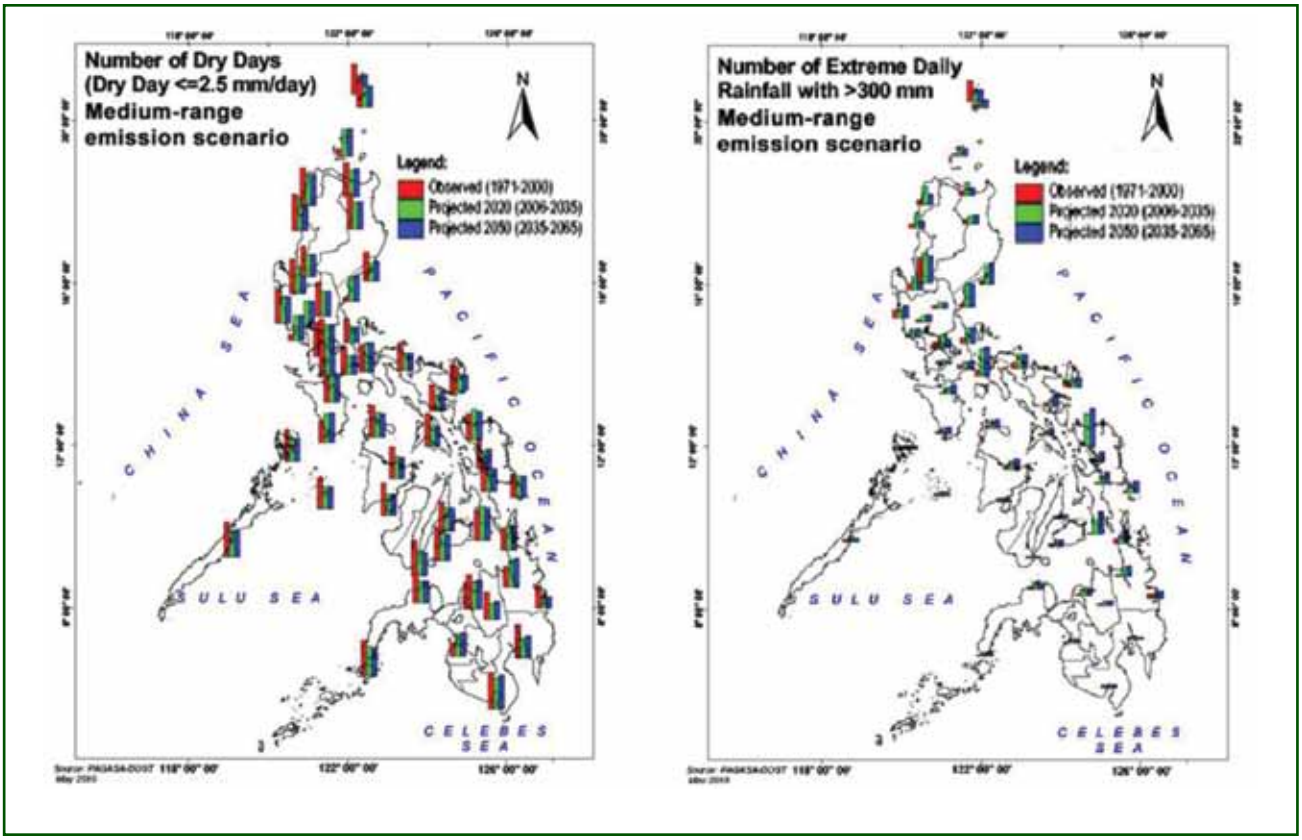
Source: PAGASA, Climate Change in the Philippines, 2011



Source: PAGASA, Climate Change in the Philippines, 2011

Photo credit: Jonjon Vicencio - The Philippine Star (Official Entry to the 6th PDMA)

- **Extreme Rainfall Events:** heavy daily rainfall will continue to become more frequent, extreme rainfall is projected to increase in Luzon and Visayas only, but number of dry days is expected to increase in all parts of the country in 2020 and 2050.



Source: PAGASA, Climate Change in the Philippines, 2011

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V. THE RH, POP, AND CLIMATE CHANGE CHALLENGE

The links between RH, population and climate change has been recognized by experts local and international. In the Philippines, the links are far more real given the adverse conditions that Filipinos have to put up with in terms of poverty, governance, and the absence of population and reproductive health policies.

With or without climate change, the country is already faced with the challenges in achieving reproductive health. As of September 2012, data from the National Statistics Coordination Board (NSCB) indicate that three out of six indicators of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5, which aims to improve maternal health, may never be achieved by the country. Unfortunately, these are maternal mortality, proportions of births attended by skilled health personnel and CPR.[xiv] In terms of PGR, the difference in total and wanted fertility rates still remains to be narrowed down. Where RH and population goals are not achieved in a rather state of normalcy, it is most likely that the conditions will be exacerbated in times of disasters – which is projected to be more frequent and catastrophic in the context of climate change.

In the absence of a comprehensive national policy on reproductive health, Filipinos are still at the mercy of time-bound interventions from the national and local governments and civil society organizations. Further, these interventions have to be defined whether supportive or not of rights-based reproductive health advocacy – that is, providing the people with the whole gamut of RH information and letting them decide which option is fitting for them and providing them these services and commodities. As such, their access to information, services, and commodities, remain to be time-bound and affect the choices they make for themselves.

This, in turn, impacts on achieving the people's wanted fertility rate which is also illustrated by the data on unmet need. While an increase was noted in the total demand for family planning from 69% in 2003 to 73% in 2008, only 69% of this demand is satisfied – a reduction from 1998's 75%.[xv] The 2008 NDHS concludes that, "If all unmet need were satisfied, a CPR of about 69 percent could theoretically be expected" – CPR stands at 48.9 percent as of 2011.[xvi] This inability to respond to one's wanted fertility rate translates to our women's inability to limit or space their children and hence our almost fixed PGR.

Withstanding continued population momentum coupled with the vicious cycle of poverty and weak governance, our country has witnessed waves of rural-to-urban migration. Apart from

the fact that migrating does not necessarily result in poverty alleviation, this has also resulted in the concentration of the population in urban areas, which in turn contributes in the proliferation of urban poor communities living under hostile conditions, receiving less or no health and reproductive health services, and residing in areas vulnerable to disasters. With poor living conditions, and unavailability of government services, these same communities contribute to environmental pressures - encroaching in waterways, poor solid waste management, unsanitary management of personal hygiene, to name a few.

Apart from this, the Philippine archipelago has one of the longest coastlines in the world. Estimated at 36,289 kilometers, the country's coastline extends 2,000 kilometers from north to south with 25 major cities lying on the coast. [xvii] More importantly, it is estimated that more than 60 percent of the nation's total population of 87.8 (July 2005 estimate) lives in the coastal zone.[xviii] And in times of extreme weather events, these communities are most vulnerable to storm surges and flooding – not to mention that they are the same people that will be immediately affected by sea level rise.

With concentrations of populations exposed to impacts of disasters, recent calamities have affected more communities, especially among the poorest sections of the society rendering them helpless and more submerged in poverty making them even more vulnerable when the next disaster strikes. And with climate change in the offing and exacerbated, extreme weather events will likely put the lives of the poor in greater danger.

VI. GOVERNMENT LAWS/PROGRAMS

Currently, no national policy is in place addressing population and reproductive health. Pending in the HOR and the Senate are House Bill (HB) 4244 or The Responsible Parenthood, Reproductive Health and Population and Development Act of 2011 and Senate Bill (SB) 2865 or An Act Providing for a National Policy on Reproductive Health and Population and Development. Some bills related to this, including the promotion of breastfeeding as an essential component of family planning and amendments to the Philippine Midwifery Act, are also pending the approval of Congress.

In terms of addressing climate change, there are several laws that have been enacted by the Philippine Congress. These are Republic Act (RA) 9729 or the Climate Change Act of 2009, RA 10129 or the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction Management Act of 2010; and RA 10174 or the People's Survival Fund.

RA 9729 or the Climate Change Act of 2009 was enacted on 23 October 2009. The law aimed to mainstream climate change into government policy formulations and thus created the Climate Change Commission as the sole policy-making body of the government and tasked to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the programs and action plans of the government to ensure the mainstreaming of climate change into national, sectoral and local development plans and programs. The law was also aimed at establishing the National Framework Strategy and Program on Climate Change (NFSPCC) and mandates the Local Government Units (LGUs) to be the frontline agencies in the formulation, planning

Photo credit: http://politicaladobo.blogspot.com/

and implementation of climate change action plans in their respective areas consistent with the provisions of the Local Government Code, the NFSPCC, and the National Climate Change Action Plan.

On 27 May 2010, RA 10121 or the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act of 2010 was passed by the 15th Congress. The law primarily upholds the people's right to life and property and adherence to internationally accepted principles, norms and standards for capacity building in DRRM and humanitarian assistance. RA 10121 was a welcome initiative since the law that governs the countries program on disaster response goes way back to the Marcos Administration, is obsolete, and no longer conforms to the international standards in humanitarian response. RA 10121 is geared at developing, promoting and implementing a comprehensive National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plan and aims to mainstream DRR and Climate Change in national and local development plans and processes as well as into the peace process and conflict resolution.

Most recently, the 15th Congress enacted RA 10174 or the People's Survival Fund Act of 2011 which, among others, amended RA 9729 particularly on the mandate, composition, powers and functions, meetings, and commissioners of the Climate Change Commission. It also amended RA 9729 in terms of the manner of review of the NFSPCC, role of government agencies and receipt of donations. More importantly, it created the People's Survival Fund (PSF) - a special fund in the National Treasury for the financing of adaptation programs and projects based on the National Strategic Framework. It appropriated Php1 billion to serve as opening balance of the PSF under the General Appropriations Act and identified the following as the uses of the PSF: (a) Adaptation activities; (b) Improvement of the monitoring of vector-borne diseases triggered by climate change; (c) Forecasting and early warning systems; (d) Supporting institutional development; (e) Strengthening and establishing regional centers and information networks; (f) Serving as a guarantee for risk insurance; and (g) Community adaptation support programs.

RA 10174 also created the PSF Board lodged under CCC and mandated to: (1) Promulgate policies that will maintain the fiduciary character of the Board; (2) Provide overall strategic guidance in the management and use of the fund; (3) Develop social, financial and environmental safeguards to be used in project implementation; (4) Identify additional sources for the fund; (5) Issue final approval of projects for the use of the fund; (6) Adopt a conflict of interest policy; and (7) Ensure an independent third party evaluation and auditing of activities supported by the fund.

Further, the CCC already came up with the NFSPCC and the NCCAP - both of which underscore population as factors that should be considered in assessing and addressing the vulnerabilities of the country.

Photo credit: JR Llever

Photo credit: Alex Baluyot

VII. POLICY GAPS AND CHALLENGES

Underscoring RH, Population and Climate Change links in government policies

Several environmental policies that should contribute to addressing the impacts of climate change have already been legislated. These include the Solid Waste Management Law, and Clean Air Law, among others. Most recently, the law creating the Climate Change Commission, the Disaster Risk Reduction Management Law, and the People's Survival Fund Law were legislated to contribute to addressing environmental and climate change concerns.

While the recently enacted laws included mainstreaming gender in its provisions, they have not been able to underscore the links between reproductive health, population and climate change. Clearly, there is a serious concern in ensuring RH and population mainstreaming in government policies or programs on climate change. It should be noted however, that the CCC had several attempts to include gender-based responses in its programs as stated in the NCCAP. Albeit, this has yet to be translated in all government programs related to addressing climate change impacts.

Further, a clear-cut, comprehensive, and national policy on population and reproductive health becomes all the more compelling for the national legislature to pursue. This will not only provide impetus to managing our population – thereby giving due consideration to our country's carrying capacity and managing our vulnerabilities – but will also underscore that there is no reinventing the wheel in terms of the existing policies aimed at addressing climate change.

It should be noted that while experts say that addressing climate change is not about population in terms of numbers but about managing the population in terms of distribution and migration patterns, among others, the fact remains that a smaller population is less challenging to manage than a bigger one.

Considering RH needs of Disaster Victims

While disaster response is now more advanced than what the government provides in the past, there is a growing concern in terms of meeting the reproductive health needs of disaster victims. Currently, meeting the reproductive health needs of the population is already a challenge. This becomes more exigent in humanitarian settings – not to mention that RH services, information and commodities are often not included in the assistance provided to disaster-affected communities.

Recognizing the specific and distinct needs of those in the reproductive age in times of

Photo credit: Kriz John Rosales - Manila Bulletin (Official Entry to the 6th PDMA)

Photo credit: Dodie Lucas

disasters, the Inter-agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises produced the Inter-agency Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Emergencies which promotes MISP or the Minimum Initial Service Package. The MISP for Reproductive Health in Crises is a set of priority activities that should be implemented at the onset of an emergency. Comprehensive RH services must be implemented as soon as the situation permits.

The MISP defines which RH services are most important in preventing morbidity and mortality, particularly among women and girls, in humanitarian settings. Neglecting reproductive health in humanitarian settings has serious consequences: maternal and newborn deaths; sexual violence and subsequent complications such as trauma, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions; and the possible spread of HIV. All activities of the MISP need to be implemented simultaneously. The Sphere Project adheres to the MISP and discusses this at length in its chapter on Essential Health Services.

While the government and its partners in humanitarian response uphold the standards outlined in the Sphere Project, the MISP has yet to gain popularity in the country. As it is, most of the responses, from the government and private sector alike, are focused on the most basic needs of the affected population such as food, clothing, general health, sanitation, and shelter, among others. This is either because of lack in resources to provide assistance beyond those mentioned, or lack in awareness on reproductive health concerns during humanitarian situations.

For instance, age and gender disaggregation in data gathering during disasters is still not being done. The final report of the NDRRMC on the effects of and recovery programs for Typhoon Sendong only identified the affected population in terms of families (131,618), individuals (698,882), barangays (866), municipalities (60), cities (9), provinces (13), and regions (7). This is the same with the death toll (1,268 persons), injuries (6,071 persons), missing (181) and survivors (441). This failure to disaggregate data results in a less effective response as special needs of the affected population could not be projected. The inability to identify how many of the affected population are pregnant women aggravates the already inefficient services provided to them in terms of pre- and post-natal care services. In turn, this results in maternal mortality that continues to plague the Philippines. In the same way, the inability to disaggregate data based on age results in the inability to identify the reproductive age population among the affected. As such, responses are expected to fail the MISP standards.

Translating policies into actions

The NCCAP formulated by the Cabinet Cluster on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation was

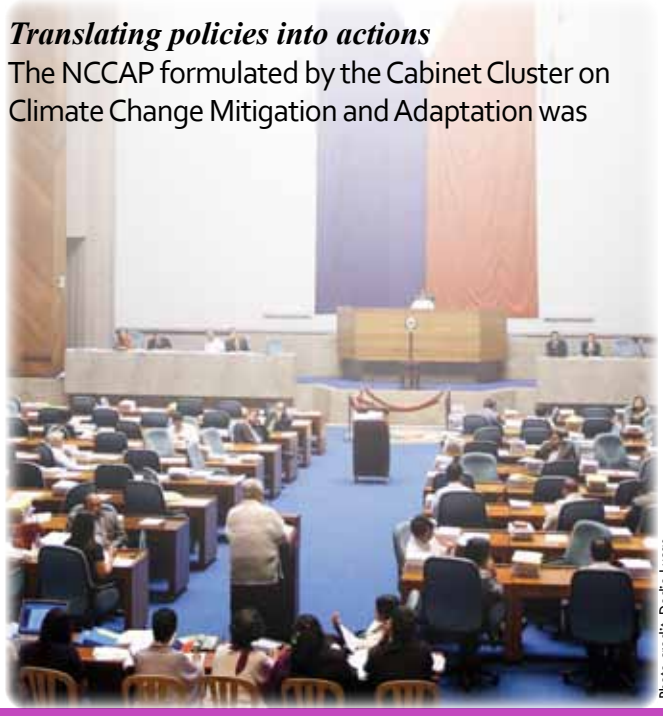

Photo credit: Dodie Lucas

approved by the President in November 2011. The plan aims to build the adaptive capacities of women and men in their communities, increase the resilience of vulnerable sectors and natural ecosystems to climate change, and optimize mitigation opportunities towards gender-responsive and rights-based sustainable development.

More particularly, the NCCAP has clearly defined its approach in terms of the links of population and climate change. In its section on human security, the document stated, "Security concerns associated with climate change include the potential for conflict over natural resources, population displacement and migration as the result of sea-level rise or other large-scale biophysical, ecological or social disruptions, and the prospect of increasingly frequent humanitarian disasters as the result of extreme climate events."[xix] Further, it notes that human security in the context of climate change risks considers that individuals and communities have the options necessary to end, mitigate or adapt to threats to their human, environmental and social rights; have the capacity and freedom to exercise these options, and actively participate in pursuing these options.

As part of its Strategic Actions for Human Security, the NCCAP also identifies the reduction of population congestion and exposure to climate change risks as an output. Clearly, climate change impacts are already seen by the country's leaders through a population and development lens.

However, two things should be noted here as major challenges. First, the activities aimed at achieving the output earlier stated only identified information, education and communication activities. More explicitly, the document states the activity as, "Extensive IEC program on CC risks and population management" and the priority area as, "Intensify gender-sensitive IEC using various media and outreach to increase awareness on climate and disaster risks reduction and population management to avoid conflicts in case of resettlement and climate refugees."

Second, all these have yet to be translated into the various responses that the government is undertaking towards this aspect – which may still be acceptable considering that these are very young policies and should be given ample time to achieve its defined targets.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

As human development advocates, it is but fitting and compelling to be able to respond comprehensively to issues that pose insecurity to our people. In the case of the challenge in addressing the links between population, reproductive health and climate change, we can never negate the importance of being able to concretely take actions inasmuch as all these will affect the lives of Filipinos in the short and long terms.

Considering that, efforts have to be exerted in concretizing the policies and programs that the government has laid out to contend with climate change so that we are soon able to identify and assess our vulnerabilities and address these head on.

However, no amount of climate change adaptation efforts will succeed if we will not address population challenges - PGR, migration and distribution – which is, essentially, managing the population. Simply put, a healthy and economically stable population will have more capabilities to face the threats and hazardous impacts of changing climate patterns, would have the capability to live in safer places, and will be in a better position to recover from the impacts of disasters.

As such, more hard work should be done to finally bring about a clear-cut and comprehensive national legislation on population and reproductive health not only to provide the RH services and needs of Filipinos but also to contribute in the holistic approach to confronting the climate change challenge.

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PEOPLE COUNT

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