

# Filipinos urged to take action vs climate change

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The scale of destruction caused by super-typhoon Yolanda in 2013 awakened Filipinos and the world to the consequence of inaction and divisiveness on climate change. Seven million individuals were affected by disaster, more than 5 million jobs were lost, and more than 4 million people were displaced. Billions of pesos were needed for medical aid and rebuilding efforts, and death counts unbearable even for a country visited annually by 20 storms. All these pointed to the stark truth that our planet is under threat.

That year, the Philippines topped the Global Climate Risk Index's list of countries most vulnerable to weather-related disasters. The storm's aftermath revealed more complex realities borne of disasters. Blocked roads and bridges limited the access to food rations from outside, supplies dipped, and hunger rose in affected communities. Children's groups shared fears for the wellbeing of those left orphan by the storm and living in relocation sites.

The country's economy was not spared. Yolanda ripped power lines from as far as Laguna and Zamboanga del Sur to the hardest-hit areas like Leyte, Samar, and Bohol. Disconnected from the national grid, agricultural and service-oriented industries were paralyzed for months. The National Economic and Development Authority registered inflation rates as high as 6% and a 1.6% rise in poverty incidence which set poverty levels at 47.3% in Leyte.

Geography has always put a known risk on the country. Its archipelagic nature leave parcels of land open to the battering of strong currents, but a more worrying phenomenon has risen since. The Philippine Exposure Map on Climate Change, drafted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, detailed the dwindling sources of water for the upper regions, while provinces in the Visayas and Mindanao face the combined threat of "extreme heat and rising sea levels."

To mitigate the risks that come with climate change and global warming, the Philippines pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 70% and encourage the shift from coal to more sustainable sources of energy. The accord achieved during the 2015 United Nation's Climate Change Conference in Paris, is scheduled to take effect this November.

A year after, discussions on the Paris agreement and its effectivity and scope are still on the table. The commitment to reduce the national emission is being contested, but vital areas like climate justice is making its way to the mainstream discourse. In May, 2016, typhoon victims filed a case against carbon-emitters, a landmark case for human rights related to climate.

People are taking action, refusing the dim future that looms on the horizon. They are becoming more conscientious in their use of energy and carbon footprint. Many are exploring transportation options like carpooling and demanding cities to reserve spaces for bike lanes. Even industrial designs are reflecting this predisposition to cleaner, more earth-friendly buildings, as well as energy-saving machines.

More forums are being hosted, among them Climate Reality Project's sponsorship of top climate change advocate Al Gore. Climate Reality Project, a global multi-sectoral alliance, enjoins more Filipinos in its cause for the environment.

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