

# Natural gas is key to a cleaner and sustainable future

By **[Stephanie Joy Ching](#)**

June 18, 2020

In a report made by GreenPeace, it was revealed that coal has the largest share in the Philippines' energy mix. In 2018 alone, about 51,932 gigawatt hours of energy produced in the Philippines came from coal. That is estimated to be about 52 percent of the Philippines' annual energy consumption of 99,764.718 gigawatt hours.

This is concerning because coal emits large amounts of carbon dioxide and other pollutants in the air, resulting in health problems, air pollution and global warming that leads to climate change. In recent years, the alarming dangers of continuous use of coal has in fact been documented in numerous reports by reputable international media outlets.

“If we keep burning coal and petroleum to power our society, we’re cooked — and a lot faster than we thought,” the New York Times noted in citing a 2018 report by the United Nations scientific panel on climate change. The said report warned that “continued emissions of greenhouse gases from power plants and vehicles will bring dire and irreversible changes by 2040, years earlier than previously forecast.”

Furthermore, the findings of the Global Peace Index show that the Philippines is the country most susceptible to climate related hazards such as intense drought, mass extinctions and flooded coastlines.

With this in mind, switching to clean and renewable sources of energy is needed now more than ever. Fortunately, the use of renewable sources of energy such as hydro, wind, geothermal and solar are gaining traction in the country. Data from the Department of Energy reveal that 23,326 GWh of energy in 2018 came from renewable sources. This is a significant jump from the 20,628 GWh 10 years ago.

Although the Philippines is already starting to take steps towards sustainability, the country cannot rely on renewable sources alone. As some of the sources are intermittent, they are not always available. Solar energy, for example, cannot power anything if the sun is not shining.

While the technologies that make renewable energy possible are constantly being improved and becoming more economical, natural gas has emerged as a “bridge fuel” that can provide power when solar and wind sources are not available.

Derived from the remains of microscopic plants and animals that were stuck under sedimentary rock, natural gas is considered as the cleanest greenhouse gas available, emitting about 60 percent less carbon than coal and unlike the latter, does not release any ash or sludge.

This is what First Gen is advocating. Out of the 3,492 megawatts of clean energy they produce, 58 percent of it comes from natural gas. Their natural gas power plants are situated in Batangas, which provided 18 percent of Luzon’s energy consumption last 2018. Furthermore, power from natural gas plants was consistently shown to be competitively priced with power from coal plants, and much more efficient in terms of converting fuel into electricity. Additionally, a natural gas power plant can provide electricity in as fast as 15 minutes, compared to the 11 hours it takes for a coal power plant. Combined, these facts show how gas can both utilize less resources in generating electricity, and provide power as needed more quickly than coal can.

Moreover, natural gas is a highly reliable source of energy that perfectly complements solar and wind energy when neither are available. Thanks to its fast startup time, natural gas has the flexibility to quickly adapt to the grid’s changing demands when there is no sun or when wind speeds are low.

More importantly, natural gas has the ability to effectively reduce emissions when used in combination with renewable energy—making it an ideal stepping stone towards a low-carbon future.

The use of natural gas power in 2018 alone was able to avoid the release of 13 million tons of carbon dioxide that would have been emitted by coal. That is equivalent to removing three (3) million passenger vehicles from the road.

Natural gas can also be turned into Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), which would allow users to source gas in abundance from all over the world. In this process, natural gas is extracted, then cooled significantly to its liquid form so that it can be transported. When it reaches its destination, the LNG can then be reverted to its gaseous form ready for use by power plants. Because it comes from a low-carbon source, LNG minimizes its environmental impact at sustainable levels. On top of that, being able to import LNG assures us that we can continue to reap the benefits of natural gas even after local natural gas fields we use expire.

Overall, the slow transition to a 100 percent renewable energy may take some adjusting, but with natural gas, we can do good all the way for the environment for a cleaner and greener world.

<https://businessmirror.com.ph/2020/06/18/natural-gas-is-key-to-a-cleaner-and-sustainable-future/>