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PH needs stronger climate change adaptation, urban planning

Published July 13, 2020, 12:26 AM

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By Tara Yap

An expert urged the Philippine government to strongly integrate programs on climate change adaptation and urban planning to curb damages when the next major disaster strikes.



(FILE) TOWN UNDER WATER — This is what has become of the town proper of Kapalong, Davao del Norte right beside the swollen Libuganon River yesterday, following incessant rains since last week. (Davao del Norte-Provincial Information Office | Manila Bulletin)

Allen Clark, a senior fellow at the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawaii, said policies must be reassessed and updated to address the annual typhoons hitting the Philippines.

In particular, policies in urban planning must be taken into higher consideration after super typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan).

“You have what I call the perfect storm in the Philippines. You’ve got the physical storm, climate change, urbanization, and explosive population growth,” emphasized Clark, a former chief at the U.S. Geological Survey’s Office of Resource Analysis.

Clark explained that urbanization from massive migration of people from the rural areas searching for a better life is the biggest challenge in disaster management.

“If you combine climate change and urbanization processes and this increasingly marginalization of large group of people, future disasters are going to be much larger and much more severe than we’ve seen before,” warned Clark.

“If you have \$100 and along comes a disaster, it costs you \$10, who cares. But if you have \$1 and along comes a disaster and it takes away your \$1, that’s a big deal. That is what kills development in developing countries. That is what keeps people from grinding poverty. That is what is beginning to happen in the Philippines,” Clark noted.

He added that the Philippine government must address the loss of livelihood and how the poor communities can cope with disasters.

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