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/>>MANILA, JUNE 25, 2013 - A new study says deepening reforms to fully integrate the climate change agenda in the governments planning and budgeting will strengthen the Philippines resilience against the impacts of a warming world and make communities less vulnerable to sea level rise, degradation of marine ecosystems, and extreme weather events.
The report entitled Getting a Grip on Climate Change in the Philippines looks at the innovations as well as gaps in policy and financing of climate change programs since the country adopted the Climate Change Act four years ago.
The report - done at the request of, and in close collaboration with the Climate Change Commission (CCC) and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) - provides detailed analysis and recommendations on how the country could accelerate reforms for managing the growing climate change impacts and increasing greenhouse gas emissions while contributing to poverty reduction.
"Policy makers have put in place comprehensive sets of policies, programs and institutions for dealing with climate change. This important report helps put greater focus into our work as we try to make our communities safer from and the people less vulnerable to sea level rise and extreme weather events like strong typhoons, floods and storm surges, among other impacts, said Secretary Lucille L. Sering, Commissioner and Vice Chairperson of the CCC.
In 2009, Congress passed the Climate Change Act creating the CCC to develop policies and coordinate government programs on climate change. The CCC in turn developed the National Climate Change Action Plan that serves as a road map for all climate change programs in the Philippines. "Incorporating the climate change action plan into the national and local development process, supported by properly-targeted public investments, is important to ensure that climate change priorities are translated into concrete actions on the ground, said Secretary Sering.
According to Budget Secretary Florencio B. Abad, appropriations for climate change programs have been increasing at an average of 26 percent yearly since 2009, outpacing the growth of the national budget which has been growing at around 6 percent.
Climate change has a direct and immediate impact on development. As it stands, the Philippines is already in the path of major weather disturbances that damage property and critical infrastructure. More urgent however is the fact that these weather patterns frequently jeopardize the welfare of communities in high-risk areas. Recognizing this, the Aquino administration remains committed to providing sufficient budgetary support for programs and projects that mitigate the effects of climate change in the country, said Secretary Abad.
The report provides recommendations along three themes, namely:
 Strengthening the planning, execution, and financing framework for climate change; Enhancing leadership and accountability through monitoring, evaluation, and review of climate change policies and activities; and Building the countrys capacity and managing change.
Last week, the World Bank launched a global report titled Turn Down the Heat: Climate Extremes, Regional Impacts and the Case for Resilience. The study says that climate change-related impacts are projected to increase in the coming decades, threatening in particular:
 Coastal populations: Climate change is expected to lead to more intense typhoons, higher sea levels, and storm surges. Storm surges are projected to affect about 14 percent of the total population and 42 percent of coastal populations. Informal settlements, which account for 45 percent of the Philippines urban population, are particularly vulnerable to floods due to less secure infrastructure, reduced access to clean water, and lack of health insurance. Farming and fishing: Climate-related impacts are expected to reduce agricultural productivity in the Philippines. Also, warming oceans and ocean acidification affect coral reefs which serve as feeding and spawning grounds for many fish species that support the livelihoods of fisher folks. World Bank Country Director Motoo Konishi said that implementing the countrys climate change programs with increased financing, improved design, and greater focus and coordination contributes significantly to the countrys development goals.
He said that promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency, for instance, boosts energy security and can lower energy costs, thus improving the countrys competitiveness. In agriculture, adaptation activities like conserving water and improving water quality will enhance food security.
"Labor-intensive activities like developing climate-resilient farming and retrofitting infrastructure for flood control will build resilience while increasing job opportunities, especially for the poor. Climate change adaptation is very important in achieving inclusive growth, said Mr. Konishi.
The report also underscores that while the government builds resilience to climate change impacts, it should also ensure that the countrys emissions of greenhouse gases (e.g. methane and carbon dioxide) remain in check.
Though a minor contributor to climate change globally, the Philippines greenhouse gas emissions rank in the top 25 percent among low- and middle-income countries, with significant increases projected in the coming decades. Emissions from the energy sector are projected to quadruple by 2030, with the transport sector expected to double its emissions.

Caption: Communities living along waterways are among those at high risk to negative impacts of climate change - Photo courtesy of Erwin Husmalaga

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