

Ecotowns: Building Climate Change Resilient Communities

The Philippines

August 2014

Philip Nalangan
 Communications for Development Officer
 United Nations Population Fund, Ghana
 Email: philip_nalangan@yahoo.com



The Philippines



Background Information

The geographic location and archipelagic characteristics of the Philippines make it one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to the effects of climate change. The manifestation of climate change – in the form of rising temperature, variability of precipitation, an increase and intensity of typhoons and rise of sea level – have impacts on the economy, environment and lives of people.

In recognition of this serious threat to people's lives and the economy, the Climate Change Commission (CCC) in the Philippines had partnered in 2011 with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) to implement a climate change adoption project – Demonstration of Eco-town Framework in the Philippines. Finalized in late 2013, the project was designed to build ecologically stable and economically resilient towns or eco-towns. In doing so, the project aims to contribute in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), specifically goals 1, 5 and 7.

Quick facts

Zone	National Territory
Programme started	2011-2013
Topic	Ecotowns - Climate Change Policy
Implementing Agencies	Climate Change Commission and Global Green Growth Institute

Ecotowns: Building Climate Change Resilient Communities

The Philippines

August 2014

With the objective of increasing the adaptive capacities of communities, the eco-town project addresses MDG 1, which aims to end poverty and hunger by providing work and livelihood opportunities to the local population. In building the adaptive capacity of families, the reproductive health is also improved, thus contributing to the attainment of MDG 5. The project also helps to achieve MDG 7 or environmental sustainability with the initiation of adaptation measures and implementation of financing schemes.

The eco-town project in the Philippines is being piloted in 18 towns located within and around the boundaries of critical key biodiversity areas, which are at risk to the effects of climate change. The majority of the project's work has taken place in San Vicente, a town of about 30,000 inhabitants in Palawan. The town is highly vulnerable to sea level rise, coastal inundation, flooding, and drought.

Project Definition

A rising tourist destination in what locals claim to be a 14-kilometer stretch of white sand beaches, the town of San Vicente in Palawan is a paradise for beach enthusiasts. The town is also proud of its 22 islands and islets with azure-blue waters, abundant rainforest and exotic biodiversity. Its population depends mostly on fishing and farming for livelihood.

It is not spared, however, from the ravages of climate change – such as unusual amounts of rainfall and irregular weather patterns. In San Vicente, the total annual rainfall increased by 13.39% from 2011 to 2012, leading to flooding in low-lying areas and landslides. Moreover, the town is frequented by increasingly stronger typhoons. In a town where fishing and farming make up nearly 60% of all economic activity, the increasing threat of climate change has drastic implications to its economy and food security.

In anticipation of the possible adverse effects of the changing weather patterns, the local government has decided to acquire technical assistance from the CCC-GGGI team to conduct an assessment and create a climate change adaptation and mitigation plan for San Vicente. The plan aims to build on the adaptive capacities of communities, increase the resilience of the environment to climate change and optimize mitigation opportunities towards sustainable development.

Analyses and Environmental Resource Accounting

The CCC and GGGI conducted assessments and environmental resource accounting in multiple sectors – including agriculture, coastal and forestry. The analyses found, among other things, that climate change will likely cause decreased crop harvests, deaths of about 4,000 livestock animals, higher levels of coastal erosion that will threaten the livelihood of 8,000 people engaged in fishing and increased vector-borne diseases. Moreover, San Vicente needs to strengthen its response to climate change by introducing more resilient crops in farming and modernizing the facilities in the fishery sector.

Based on the analyses, the CCC-GGGI team suggested an array of adaptation measures for the town based on effectiveness, cost, technical, social and cultural feasibility, required time, sustainability, and overall impact. Some of the recommendations include: modernizing farming practices to include weather stations and small-scale irrigation facilities, introduction of more climate-resilient crops, establishing sea walls and dikes, setting up an early warning system, involving the private sector in coastal planning and management, conducting training on disaster risk reduction and management, and providing a clean and adequate water supply system.

Ecotowns: Building Climate Change Resilient Communities

The Philippines

August 2014

Outcome/Impact

Through rigorous analyses and assessments, CCC and GGGI helped develop the basis for a climate proof-development plan for San Vicente.

On January 22, 2014, the eco-town project received the support of the Philippine President Benigno Aquino III at a meeting. Meanwhile, the local assembly of San Vicente passed Resolution No. 2014-16, adopting the results of the analyses and the suggested adaptation measures.

San Vicente has also launched information and educational campaigns for the townspeople, and conducted programs which would limit the adverse effect of human consumption, economic activities and climate change on the environment. Aside from training and awareness campaigns, the local government has conducted trials on new rice varieties which can withstand harsh weather conditions. A wave breaker was also constructed in anticipation of violent waves coming in from the West Philippine Sea.

The CCC and GGGI are now taking the lessons learned from the eco-town project and applying them at the provincial level.

References

The following documents informed the development of this paper:

GGGI Philippines Fact Sheet

<http://www.climate.gov.ph/project/ecotown>, retrieved 5 September 2014

<http://gggi.org/philippines-eco-town-project-gains-presidential-and-local-support>, retrieved 5 September 2014

<http://gggi.org/philippines-eco-town-project-shows-way-forward-in-building-climate-change-resilience>, retrieved 5 September 2014

<http://www.rappler.com/science-nature/44533-san-vicente-palawan-ecotown>, retrieved 5 September 2014

<http://www.up.edu.ph/a-tale-of-two-towns>, retrieved 5 September 2014