

# AMBITIOUS CITY PROMISES

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based on a decision of the German Bundestag



## MAINSTREAMING CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION IN PHILIPPINE LOCAL PLANS

***PHILIPPINES POLICY BRIEF No. 02 // October 2019***

## KEY MESSAGES

The Philippines' Republic Act 9729 and National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) serve as policy framework and guide in mainstreaming low emission development strategies (LEDS) for local governments. However, only a handful, cities particularly, are able to include LEDS initiatives in their development plans. Several local governments, particularly cities, have existing initiatives on energy, transport, solid waste management, and urban planning that relate to LEDS. Strengthening national policies on climate change mitigation will catalyze the upscaling of LEDS at the local level because this can translate to better allocation of both human and financial resources.

While GHG emissions inventory is considered as basis for evidence-based local mitigation planning, the initiative remains an optional undertaking for local governments in the Philippines. Furthermore, there are huge capacity and

data gaps in terms of establishing city-level GHG inventories. Often, cities rely on technical assistance provided by the national government and development partners to complete their inventory.

When developing the city-level LEDS, the GHG emission reduction potential of the initiatives should not serve as the main driving force for Philippine local governments to implement such. These programs, projects, and activities should be designed and implemented with development co-benefits in mind. There are entry points for LEDS in local development planning that could spur local economic development. This approach is in line with the country's National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP) which states that "mitigation actions shall be pursued as a function of adaptation."



## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Being an archipelago, the Philippines is among the most vulnerable countries to adverse climate change impacts. Yet, the country remains an insignificant emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs). As a signatory to the 2015 Paris Agreement, the Philippines is committed to address and respond to climate change. The country prioritizes adaptation "to reduce vulnerability and risks of communities particularly the marginalized poor" (National Climate Change Action Plan [NCCAP] 2011-2028). Based on the country's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, "mitigation measures will be pursued in line with sustainable development and low emission development that promotes inclusive growth."

Under the country's Local Government Code of 1991, local governments<sup>i</sup> are responsible for the delivery of basic services and functions in agriculture and environment, health, social services, and maintenance of public works. Local governments prepare medium-term Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) for sectoral planning and long-term Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) for spatial

planning. Needless to say, they play an important role in achieving national targets including those related to climate change. This role is highlighted under the Climate Change Act of 2009 (Republic Act 9729) where local governments are tasked to formulate a Local Climate Change Action Plan (LCCAP). Anchored on the NCCAP, the LCCAP is not considered as a stand-alone plan; it should be integrated in the CDP and CLUP.

Two out of seven NCCAP strategic themes<sup>ii</sup> directly relate to mitigation: 1) sustainable energy and 2) climate-smart industries and services. Despite this, mainstreaming climate change mitigation can be difficult at the local level due to the 1) absence of baseline data upon which to formulate local action on mitigation and 2) capacity and financial gaps. Often, climate change is treated primarily as an environmental issue rather than as a systemic cross-cutting development issue as gleaned from interviews and consultations conducted with select local governments.

## PROBLEM DEFINITION

The Philippines' NCCAP emphasizes adaptation as the country's anchor strategy "while mitigation actions shall be pursued as a function of adaptation." There is no national policy requiring local governments to complete a GHG inventory and implement low emission development strategies (LEDS). As such, these are not treated as high priorities at the local level resulting in inadequate resource allocation, both financial and personnel as shared by key informants during consultation workshops organized by ICLEI. Some local governments, particularly highly-urbanized cities, have started implementing LEDS. However, these initiatives tend to be fragmented; hence, need to be harmonized. There is no specific office coordinating climate initiatives at the local level which can result to fragmented rather than complementary initiatives.

Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data shows that the Philippines has 145 cities and 1,489 municipalities as of December 2018. Of these, less than 10% have completed city-wide GHG inventories, which serve as basis for evidence-based mitigation planning. Cities which previously completed inventories were mostly assisted by the national government or development partners such as USAID and ICLEI. The lack of robust inventories can be attributed to capacity and data gaps at the national and local levels. At the local level, the conduct of GHG inventories has not been institutionalized yet but it is worth noting that some have started establishing their local climate change technical working group.



## KEY FINDINGS

Under the Ambitious City Promises project<sup>iii</sup>, ICLEI reviewed selected Philippine cities' plans to determine entry points and identify LEDS implemented by local governments. The review was complemented by in-person workshops and consultation meetings. Cities under study included Pasig, Parañaque, and Marikina – all are part of Metro Manila and have previously completed a community-level GHG inventory.

Pasig City considers transport as a highly relevant sector vis-à-vis reducing GHG emissions. The promotion of non-motorized transport and road sharing to encourage sustainable mobility are basic tenets of the city's overall strategy on low emission development. In Parañaque City, selected barangays (villages) utilize solar-powered streetlights while public schools use light-emitting diode (LED) lights. Marikina City is strong in its solid waste management initiatives and has been lauded for its strict compliance to national laws and regulations.

Some emerging and common low emission development priorities include: 1) formulating local green building code, 2) implementing waste-to-resource programs, 3) piloting sustainable transport strategies, 4) updating of GHG emissions inventory, 5) enhancing energy efficiency and conservation (EE&C) programs, and 6) strengthening multi-level climate governance.

While local governments in the Philippines are autonomous, there are LEDS issues which are transboundary such as transport and solid waste management. These will require inter-local government cooperation or intervention of a higher level of governance (e.g., province, national). In terms of energy, the local government's mandate mainly revolves on EE&C; they have limited roles on deploying renewable energy systems, forecasting supply and demand, and other concerns.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### For national government:

Continue the roll-out of capacity building activities for both national and local governments on conducting a GHG emissions inventory through the CCC's Communities for Resilience (CORE) modules. It is important to mentor local governments in terms of data collection, calculation, and analyzing inventory results. This process should be integrated in the capacity building design.

Enact a policy that will require local governments to formulate GHG emissions inventory. This can be done by revisiting Section

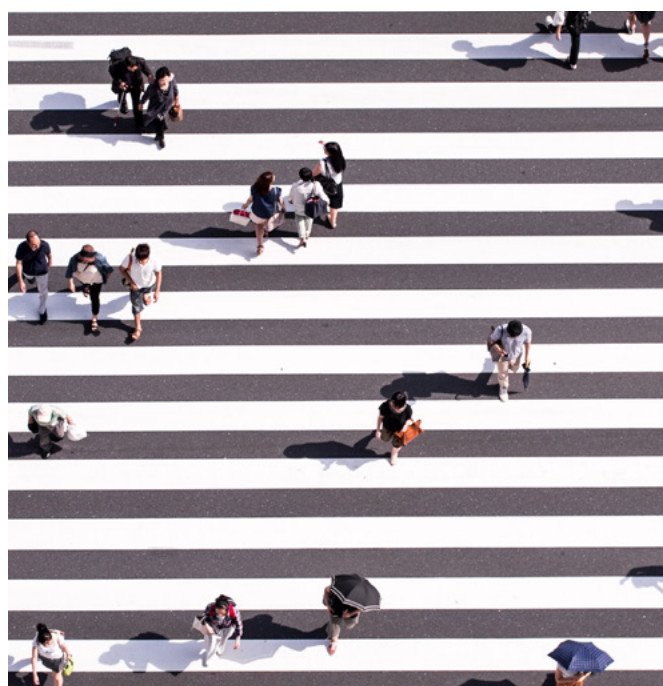
3.3.5 of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Memorandum Circular No. 2014-135 on the guidelines for the formulation of the LCCAP and amending it to require local governments to 1) conduct GHG emissions inventory within their jurisdictions and 2) identify their respective mitigation options based on this, thereby enhancing vertical integration. Enforcement can be done in phases with due consideration to existing capacities and resources.

### For local governments:

Review the organizational structure of the local government's environment or planning offices and make climate change adaptation and mitigation an overarching framework. While climate change is a multi-sectoral concern, a dedicated section or unit within one department can help maximize synergies and avoid overlaps.

Utilize data from the Climate Change Budget Tagging prepared annually to track mitigation-related initiatives and identify means to scale up these programs, where possible. The budget tagging is a process conducted during the preparation of a local government's annual investment programs. It prioritizes and assigns codes to climate change programs, projects and activities.

Strengthen awareness-raising programs for citizens that highlight co-benefits of pursuing a low-carbon lifestyle and continuously implement programs that support climate change mitigation. Citizens may not readily understand the need to reduce GHG emissions but initiatives which promote social cohesion, cleaner and safer surroundings, and higher quality of life will appeal to them.



## CONCLUSIONS

Several Philippine local governments implement climate change mitigation initiatives spanning across different sectors such as energy, transport, and urban planning. However, these initiatives are implemented not because of its high GHG emission reduction potential but because of development co-benefits and strong links to economic growth. For example, pursuing EE&C initiatives results to lower electricity consumption which translates to economic savings. Designing pedestrian-friendly streets reduces air pollution and encourages people to walk more

thereby improving overall well-being. This approach is in line with the NCCAP's goal of pursuing mitigation actions as a function of adaptation. Strengthening the translation of national policies on climate mitigation at the local level will catalyze the upscaling of LEDSI initiatives because this translates to better allocation of resources. Where local climate mitigations actions are properly reported, this can significantly contribute to the actualization of national targets and multi-level climate governance.

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## Endnotes

- i Under the Local Government Code of 1991 or Philippine Republic Act 7160, the term “local government” shall apply to all provinces, cities, municipalities, barangays, and other political subdivisions as may be created by law. However, for the purposes of this policy brief, the term is used to collectively refer to cities and municipalities unless otherwise stated.
- ii The seven NCCAP strategic themes include 1) food security, 2) water sufficiency, 3) human security, 4) ecological and environmental stability, 5) sustainable energy, 6) climate-smart industries and services, and 7) knowledge and capacity development.
- iii The Ambitious City Promises is a 3.5-year international project supporting cities in Indonesia, Philippines, and Vietnam to formulate local climate action plans directed by concrete targets, enhanced multi-stakeholder engagement, and integrated strategies. It is funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) through the International Climate Initiative (IKI) program.



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*The purpose of the policy brief series under the IKI Ambitious City Promises project is to support more informed evidence-based decision-making on the priority areas within the project cities or their respective national governments. It is targeted at the policy-makers and the government officials who are involved in developing and/or executing the climate action plan.*

*The Ambitious City Promises project supports nine city local governments in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam in developing and implementing low emission development strategies. Through the project, local governments in Southeast Asia adapt this model of inclusive, ambitious climate action, mainstreaming low emission development strategies and creating new climate leaders. The project is implemented by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and funded by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) through the International Climate Initiative (IKI).*