

Climate Change, Disaster Risks and Environment: A Policy Coherence Study in the Philippines

Executive Summary

The Philippines is one of the top countries in the world that is at risk of climate-related disasters. Environmental degradation has hugely contributed to the country's increasing and intense disaster occurrences. Responding to this alarming situation entails an integrated risk management (IRM) approach that brings together in a holistic approach, disaster risk reduction (DRR), climate change adaptation (CCA) and ecosystem management and restoration (EMR). The mainstreaming of IRM requires legal and policy frameworks, national strategies and action plans, coordination mechanisms, adequate budget allocations, and technical capacities to improve implementation strategies at all level and with reference to the local context.

The Alliance of the Partners for Resilience (PfR) has carried out a study to determine the coherence of national laws and plans, as well as the status of the integration of disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and ecosystems restoration and management vis-à-vis the implementation of such laws at all levels of government.

The study aims to identify the gaps and inconsistencies in the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of these laws, which may open concrete opportunities to better integrate the three disciplines, determine good practices and commonalities to operationalize at the national and local levels, and to provide recommendations to the stakeholders to improve and strengthen the coherence of these laws.

Policy coherence and integration was assessed and reviewed on several levels:

1. Alignment of national laws and actions with international instruments;
2. Policy integration across the three disciplines of DRR, CCA and EMR. The level of integration between two or all disciplines will indicate the status of integration of IRM in national policies and development plans and;
3. Horizontal-vertical integration in the implementation of the laws at various planning levels. Policy coherence took into account several factors:
 - a) Coherence of national laws and plans with IRM principles;
 - b) Policy coherence according to the elements of the Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development framework;
 - c) Gaps and challenges in policy implementation.

The coverage of the study included the landmark national laws and executive issuances which are identified and enumerated by the alliance members. Other information that was included in the study are the best practices and challenges experienced by LGUs where the PFR alliance operates, in their compliance and enforcement of the laws as well as technical and financial challenges. The study also refers to the International Laws Frameworks and Instruments related to DRR, CCA and EMR.

Findings of the Study

- (1) The articulation of DRR, CCA and EMR in national laws and plans indicates the recognition of these issues as vital aspects of risks reduction and management towards sustainable development. The study shows that the level of opportunities for integration is huge. In several laws and national plans, clear linkages are only seen between two disciplines at a time, usually, DRR-CCA or CCA-EMR. These are clear indicators of opportunities for policy declarations to integrate the three. Of the three disciplines, EMR seems to be less integrated with the other two disciplines which are widely recognized to have strong linkages in programming, planning and implementation.
- (2) The principles of IRM are articulated in the identified laws on varied instances. Some are present in most of the laws such as strengthening institutional resilience, promoting community self-management, and forming partnerships, while the others are found in only few. This reinforces the need to establish a strong and comprehensive policy that cover all or majority of the principles.
- (3) The presence of DRR, CCA, and EMR in national laws and plans are uneven. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity on how to influence and realize the process of integration and the harmonization. The disproportion on the linkages between the three is a reflection that there is an urgent need to strengthen the coordination between national government agencies and make use of the best practices at the local level for the development and implementation of policies, plans, and programs at all levels.
- (4) Successful implementation of IRM related interventions at the local communities demonstrate the huge potential for

integrating the three disciplines and the operationalization of IRM in policy and practice. These local successes may be elevated to influence the national discourse towards IRM mainstreaming at all levels.

- (5) Stronger policy coherence may be achieved by; (1) addressing gaps in the linkages between the three disciplines through better coordination and sustained dialogue with national government agencies and the local government units for policy implementation, (2) Build more evidence-based practice of IRM at the community level and use it as reference in coordination and dialogue at the national and sub-national levels.

Recommendations

1. Regarding policy

- a) Strengthen RA 10121 or the National DRRM Act by creating an institution that is in a sufficiently high position to oversee the implementation of streamlined DRR, CCA and ERM policies and has the necessary authority, mandate and resources to lead and coordinate the efforts of different stakeholders towards a more resilient nation. Amend the implementing rules and regulation of the Environment Impact System Statement (EIS) to effectively respond to the demands of the emerging issues on environmental protection, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. It is recommended to revise the IRR towards the strengthening of the use of EIS as a planning and monitoring tool in order to optimize scarce resources and effectively implement the system particularly for an integrated risk management approach.
- b) Institutionalization of the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) Program by a thorough review and refining of the current draft of ICM law in accordance with the objectives, thrusts, roles and responsibilities identified

in the National ICM Program for 2011 to 2012, towards better coordination mechanisms among national and local stakeholders to build consensus for and the benefits of an ICM law, thereby promoting the submission of the ICM Law as a priority bill.

- c) Mandatory institutionalization of the Environment and Natural Resources Office at the Local Government Units to carry out the tasks for the provisions of the environmental and natural resource development principles and agenda in all LGUs.
- d) Institutionalization of a Policy Coherence Platform where NGAs can provide updates on related issues and initiatives related to DRR, CCA and EMR thereby identify and discuss areas of coherence and overlaps. PfR can provide the platform for an inter-agency collaboration and coordination and may consider to facilitate and document the conversation.

2. Regarding plans and practice

- a) Improve the access to local CCA, DRR and EMR information by bridging and ensuring the utilization of applicable and appropriate and technology interventions. Scientific data and know-how must be processed and translated into local actions and behavior. As the lead agency for science-based approaches, DOST must foster stronger coordination and collaboration with various stakeholders particularly with the LGUs, communities and civil society organizations. PfR may also want to take the lead role to build better partnerships with DOST and other NGAs and institutions who are working on science-based and information driven programs for LGUs.
- b) Sustain and strengthen the capacity-building efforts for LGUs to effectively assess, analyze and address the DRR, CCA and EMR emerging issues and realize their mandates to implement DRRM. Through PfR Trajectory 2, PfR can complement the

NGAs in supporting LGUs establish their contextualized local plans.

3. Regarding Financing

- a) Support LGUs in accessing the People's Survival Fund and other available funding mechanisms by enhancing their capacities to prepare and develop science-based technical investment-ready proposals, as well as effectively use their local DRRM funds. PfR projects have raised the awareness of the LGUs on how to wisely utilize funds using the IRM approach.
- b) Improving clarity and harmonization of guidelines for auditing disaster-funding is considered as a necessary window to address the concerns of the LGUs in the utilization of LDRRM funds to implement DRR related initiatives as well as to ease requirements in times of emergencies.

4. Regarding Partnerships

- a) Strengthen and sustain civil society and private sector in DRRM by creating opportunities and a supportive enabling environment for cooperation and collaboration from the national, subnational to community level.
- b) Explore and initiate partnerships with the academe particularly State University and Colleges (SUCCs) to conduct research and studies on disaster, climate and environment related approaches for science and risk-based planning.

5. Regarding the mainstreaming of IRM

- a) Strengthen advocacy strategies at the national level to highlight the benefits of integrating of DRR-CCA-EMR while citing the successes and best practices at the local level.
- b) Proactively engage in the coordination, collaboration, discussion, consultations with national stakeholders, and revisions of relevant national laws and plans to

influence the harmonization and integration of IRM.

- c) The sustainability of the successful PFR initiatives using the IRM approach at the LGUs and community level is ensured by translating them into local policies such as ordinances and resolutions that will legitimize, support and establish the necessary enabling environment for effective implementation.
- d) To operationalize the IRM approach, alliance members need to determine clearer indicators that the three areas of practice have indeed been integrated and at what particular level.

Conclusion

Generally, the government of the Philippines has been consistently compliant with the international instruments as manifested in the articulation of policies with reference to its international commitments as well as concrete actions such as the issuance of policies and regularly submission of reports to the mandated international bodies.

Partners for Resilience has opened opportunities for better and stronger policy coherence and policy integration to address the current and emerging issues in disaster risks reduction and management through the IRM approach. The study shows various challenges which are also opportunities for the PFR alliance to support and influence the national, subnational and local communities in the harmonization and integration of the three disciplines; DRR, CCA and EMR in the national laws and plans by collaborating with the local communities and create more successful evidence-based interventions and highlight best practices.

The findings and recommendations of this study shall inform the development of an advocacy strategy of the PFR alliance by identifying key messages and action points on how to work with the national and local stakeholders towards the application of IRM principles in the country.

The Partners for Resilience Philippines

