

Philippines

Sustaining Climate Resilience and Inclusive Green Growth in Palawan Province: A Community-Based Approach

In 2018, the Provincial Government of Palawan in the Philippines launched the New Banua Institute for Resilience and Green Growth (NBIRGG) as an innovative mechanism to institutionalize climate resilience and inclusive green growth. To achieve this, the institute plans to cultivate knowledge on the sustainable use of natural resources and climate adaptation among the marginalized and vulnerable people in the province, particularly its Indigenous People (IP).

The NBIRGG initiative was born out of the Climate Resilient and Green Growth (CRGG) Planning Project implemented by the Palawan provincial government in partnership with the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) and Climate Change Commission (CCC) of the Philippines.

With more than 7,600 islands, the Philippines is considered among the countries most vulnerable to climate change impacts. Such vulnerability is further heightened by the persistent concern of poverty among the remote and displaced communities in the rural areas, where poverty incidence significantly exceeds the national estimate of 21.6%.

This national context is mirrored in Palawan, the largest province in the Philippines and home to almost one million people, as it contends with pockets of extreme poverty, particularly among the IP communities that account for almost 50% of the provincial population. The provincial government estimates that the poverty incidence among the IP communities exceeds 50%, given their lack of access to stable sources of livelihood, which are largely derived from the use of natural resources.

The province recognizes the critical relationship between “poverty and human contributions to environmental degradation and climate change impacts” as the absence of a more sustainable means of income for the IP communities leaves them with very little recourse but to extract as much as they can from the environment. The goal, therefore, is to ensure that Palawan’s marginalized and vulnerable communities are not left behind in the economic growth of Palawan and that gains toward poverty reduction and climate resilience are achieved by the year 2022 through focused community-based interventions.

To help accomplish this, the NBIRGG aims to prioritize government and non-government assistance for marginalized communities, train communities on crafts and productive competencies that will allow them to pursue alternative livelihood activities while preserving the environment, and establish potential commercial linkages for community products and local skills to encourage income growth.



GGGI in Philippines: Community-Based Green Growth



GGGI in Philippines: Partnering with the Palawan Province to initiate the Climate Resilient and Green Growth

The initiative will champion climate resilience and inclusive, pro-poor Green Growth in the province by facilitating climate resilience: promoting green growth multi-stakeholder dialogues and studies in partnership with national and local institutions, preserving and nurturing traditional knowledge through intra and intertribal activities and knowledge exchange programs, and serving as a channel through which marginalized communities can more effectively participate in local governance.

According to Ninfa Rubio, Provincial Planning and Development coordinator of Palawan, *“The NBIRGG will facilitate the provision of financial support—such as grants from government and non-government partners and non-financial support that includes skills training and local product development for the target communities—to encourage the formation of grassroots entrepreneurs and community-based livelihood activities.”*

Among others, these support interventions include organizing IP communities into People’s Organizations so that they gain the legal personality to transact with external partners, skills training to promote traditional crafts and develop new products, the introduction of climate-smart agriculture practices, the provision of seed capital to encourage entrepreneurship, and bridging linkages with other development organizations.

For a broader reach, NBIRGG Learning Centers will be established in strategic locations in the province to ensure that the IP communities from the 23 municipalities can easily access the services of the institute. To institutionalize and support the preliminary activities of the NBIRGG, the

provincial government has appropriated the necessary budget in its 2019 Annual Investment Program to cover the conduct of initial training workshops for pilot IP communities.

Strategically, Governor Jose Ch. Alvarez of Palawan envisions that *“These NBIRGG Learning Centers will provide equal opportunities for impoverished communities to benefit from the economic growth and help them break away from the inter-generational cycle of pervasive of poverty.”*

In the longer run, the province hopes that the NBIRGG platform will serve as a model for inclusive, green economic growth and community-based programs that other local government units in the Philippines can replicate.

Jin Young Kim, representing GGGI, noted that *“Most of the IP communities in Palawan live ‘from hand to mouth’ and practice unsustainable use of natural resources that negatively impacts on the environment. With the NBIRGG providing the appropriate tools and training, the IP communities will have better chances of improving their lives while working with the government in safeguarding the environment.”*

The establishment of the NBIRGG is among the key outcomes of the CRGG Project, which serves as a sustainability platform to ensure that identified climate adaptation measures, project lessons, and recommendations are implemented and cascaded from the provincial level down to the municipal and community levels, with the provincial government now leading the process and exercising ownership.