



# **CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION IN THE PHILIPPINES:**

**CASE AND POLICY ANALYSIS OF THE  
PEOPLE'S SURVIVAL FUND**

MARIA ANGELA G. ZAFRA

**Climate Change Adaptation in the Philippines: Case and Policy Analysis of the People's  
Survival Fund**

Maria Angela G. Zafra

Ateneo de Davao University and Strategia Development Research Institute, Inc.

angiezafra@gmail.com

**Abstract**

The Philippines has consistently been extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Due to its location in the Western Pacific, much of the country is exposed to more frequent and increasingly intense natural disasters. The Philippines experiences on average twenty tropical typhoons annually and usually is among the countries with the people placed at risk due to seasonal weather events. This makes climate change a concern for most Filipinos.

In response, the Philippine government has crafted several policies related to climate change adaptation. One of these is the People's Survival Fund (PSF), a one-billion-peso fund established in 2014 as a supplemental fund for local government units and community organizations. The PSF aims to finance the implementation of long-term projects that will build resiliency to the effects of climate change amongst municipalities. This paper will present and analyze a case involving the People's Survival Fund to identify enablers and challenges in the utilization of this fund. Furthermore, a policy analysis of the PSF itself will be conducted to evaluate the strengths and gaps of the policy. Finally, the paper seeks to make policy recommendations based on the analysis.

**Keywords:** climate change, adaptation, climate finance

**This paper is still developing. It has the beginnings of the policy analysis but I still have to write the case analysis part.**

## **Introduction**

An archipelagic nation composed of 7,107 islands, the Philippines has consistently been extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change (Alave, 2011; Fisher, 2013; Ranada, 2014). Due to its location in the Western Pacific, much of the country is exposed to more frequent and increasingly intense natural disasters (Climate Change Commission Philippines, n.d.; Hiwasaki, Luna, Syamsidik, & Marçal, 2015). The Philippines experiences on average twenty tropical typhoons annually and ranks third globally in terms of people placed at risk to seasonal weather events (Climate Change Commission Philippines, 2010; Peñalba, Elazegui, Pulhin, & Cruz, 2012). Moreover, sixteen of the Philippines' eighteen provinces are amongst the fifty most vulnerable provinces within East Asia (Saldivar-Sali, 2016). This makes climate change a concern for most Filipinos.

This paper aims to examine the socio-economic effects of climate change on the most vulnerable groups in the Philippine. It also endeavors to identify the different climate change adaptation policies that have been crafted by the Philippine government. A policy analysis on one of these policies, the People's Survival Fund, is done to evaluate the strengths and gaps of said policy. Finally, the paper seeks to make policy recommendations based on the analysis.

## **Socio-Economic Effects of Climate Change**

Since the Philippines is primarily an agricultural country, natural disasters often have devastating socio-economic impacts to rural municipalities. Saldivar-Sali (2016) estimates that 78.7% percent of Philippine gross domestic product (GDP) is placed at risk due to typhoons, earthquakes, and other natural hazards. Furthermore, a significant number of Filipinos are affected killed, displaced or affected by natural disasters each year. As an illustration, Typhoon Haiyan resulted in 6,300 lives lost, US\$ 25 million in agricultural destruction, and US\$ 2.7 billion in total damage (Rai, 2013; USAID 2014).

| Year         | Occurrences | Death Tolls   | Injured        | Total Affected     | Total Damages<br>(000 US\$) |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2007         | 16          | 129           | 24             | 2,023,092          | 16,815                      |
| 2008         | 20          | 959           | 1,015          | 8,459,896          | 481,202                     |
| 2009         | 25          | 1,307         | 900            | 13,352,484         | 962,107                     |
| 2010         | 15          | 1,113         | 124,096        | 5,581,507          | 335,087                     |
| 2011         | 36          | 1,989         | 6,703          | 11,729,947         | 730,025                     |
| 2012         | 22          | 2,415         | 2,879          | 12,531,446         | 1,005,611                   |
| 2013         | 14          | 7,750         | 29,893         | 25,667,133         | 12,422,810                  |
| 2014         | 13          | 331           | 2,269          | 13,274,658         | 1,062,899                   |
| 2015         | 16          | 201           | 131            | 4,019,201          | 1,965,966                   |
| 2016         | 10          | 68            | 204            | 4,234,608          | 180,074                     |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>187</b>  | <b>16,262</b> | <b>168,114</b> | <b>100,873,972</b> | <b>19,162,596</b>           |

**Figure 1.** Typhoon statistics 2007-2016 (Philippine Senate Planning Office, 2017)

Disasters in the Philippines contribute to a never ending cycle of poverty, inhibiting people and communities from exercising their rights and fulfilling their development potential (UNICEF, n.d.). The poorest of the poor Filipinos reside in coastal municipalities, and are in peril from the impacts of typhoons and other natural disasters. Farmers are one of the first to feel the effects of climate change on agriculture, threatening food security. (OECD, n.d.). During droughts or extremely wet seasons that put crops in peril, farmers in Mindanao, considered the food basket of the country, end up skipping meals, or borrowing from loans sharks (Chandra, 2017). All these result in further burdening a nation already tottering from a plethora of problems

Women are especially exposed to climate change risks. Women are less able to flee during natural disasters as they have to take care of children and elderly. They are also often excluded in many farming decisions and are expected to simply support the men in their family. When drought happens, the women walk further to find a water source. Moreover, there is often an income gap between men and women which gives them fewer opportunities for economic security. Finally, policies are often not gender sensitive and do not take the needs of these women into consideration (Oxfam, 2017).

### **Philippine Policies on Climate Change**

In agreement to Lo and Chow's (2015) assertion that impacts of climate change can be less devastating if countries are prepared, the Philippine national government has crafted three major policies as a means of prioritizing climate change related initiatives. *First, the*

Climate Change Act of 2009 designed the framework for integrating climate change adaptation in government plans and programs and established the Climate Change Commission as the governing body for climate change policies (London School of Economics, 2009).

A year later, the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act was ratified to provide a comprehensive and community-based approach to disaster preparedness. A vital component of this law is a mandate to mainstream disaster risk management down to the local government units (National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, 2010). Peñalba et al. (2012) explains that local government units (LGUs) are crucial to responding to climate change because the type and severity of impact is often location-specific. LGUs also know which socio-economics groups are most at risk to the dangers of climate change. The mandate now requires each LGU to establish its own Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office, and craft a Local Climate Change Action Plan (Department of the Interior and Local Government, 2014).

Finally, the People's Survival Fund was established in 2014 as a supplemental fund for local government units and community organizations. The one-billion-peso fund aims to finance the implementation of long-term projects that will build resiliency to the effects of climate change amongst municipalities (Fernandez, 2016). Examples of these include health programs, watershed management, and capacity-building for farmers. Priority for funding is given to LGUs with a high percentage of people living in poverty or those with vital biodiversity (People's Survival Fund, n.d.).

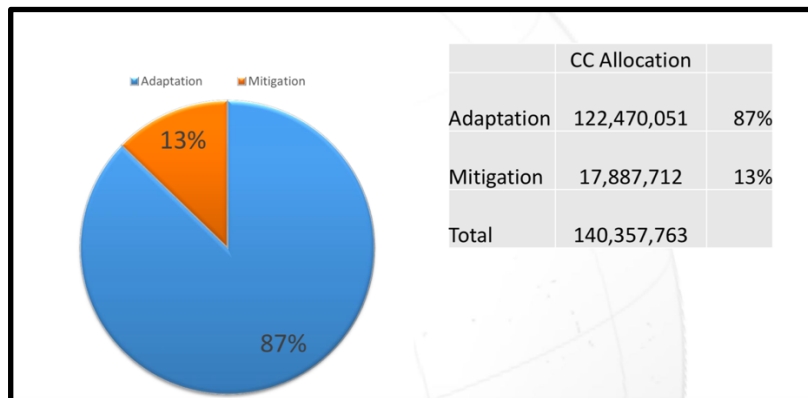
### **Overall Results of Policy Interventions**

The implementation of these policies is having some promising signs of climate change adaptation. Once ranked third among the list of countries most vulnerable to climate change in 2011, the Philippines has dropped down to thirteenth in 2016 (Ranada, 2015). The Oxford Business Group (2016) attributes the improvement in rankings to several factors: increasing access to clean water and sanitation, more responsive disaster risk management and less reliance on the agricultural sector. All of these have contributed in building more resilient communities and lowering typhoon related deaths.

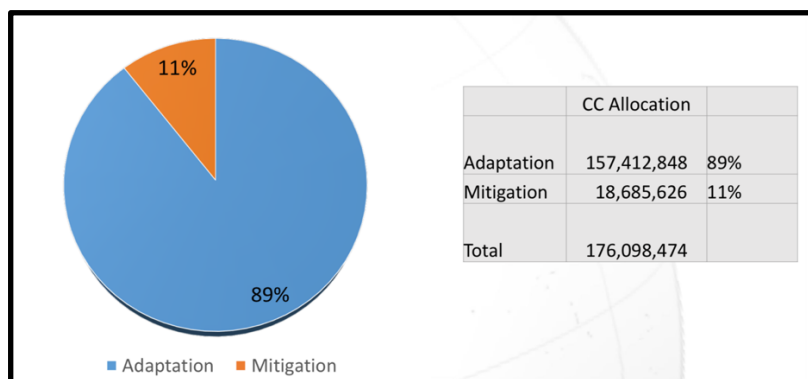
## General Assessment of Climate Change Policies in the Philippines

Climate change policies are focused on disaster risk reduction management (DRRM) and adaptation. While mitigation is also mentioned in the umbrella policy the Climate Change Act, only disaster risk reduction and management, and adaptation have their own separate strategies – the National DRRM Plan 2011-2028 and the 2010 Philippine Strategy on Climate Change Adaptation. There isn't any for climate change mitigation.

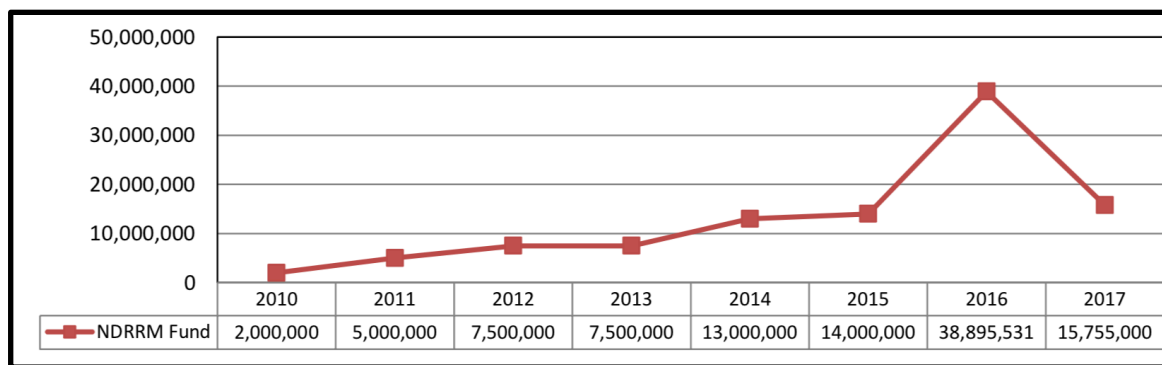
Mitigation will be crucial once the COP 21 Paris Agreement commitments are implemented. While not a major emitter, the Philippines promised to reduce carbon emissions by 70 percent by 2030. It was signed in Paris by President Aquino's administration. It was finally ratified in March 2017 after President Duterte called it an unfair agreement that could limit developing countries like the Philippines (Romero & Matteo, 2017). However, current mitigation programs will not be enough to reduce emissions by 70%. In fact, the percentage of the budget allotted for mitigation measures is declining as seen in the charts below. Meanwhile, the budget for adaptation and disaster management have been increasing.



**Figure 2.** 2015 Philippine budget for climate change (Climate Change Commission, 2016)



**Figure 3.** 2016 Philippine budget for climate change (Climate Change Commission, 2016)



**Figure 4.** National disaster risk reduction and management budget 2010-2017 in '000 Philippine pesos (Commission on Audit, 2014)

Furthermore, policy content is only the starting point for its success. It's also about policy implementation and enforcement. The Philippines is known for having comprehensive legislation but falters in the implantation of these legislation (Yap, 2011). The lack of governance and weak enforcement of climate change related laws have led to to increased risks in communities

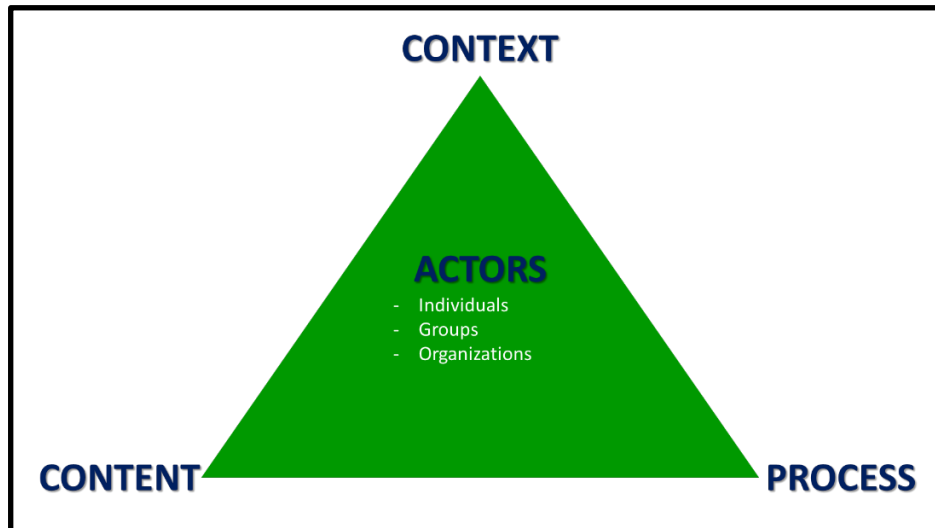
### Policy Analysis of the People's Survival Fund

This section is devoted to the analysis of one of the Philippine climate change policies: The People's Survival Fund (PSF). Republic Act 10174, otherwise known as the People's Survival Fund, is a special fund in the National Treasury for the financing of climate change adaptation<sup>1</sup> project. Annually, the fund is allocated PhP1 billion from the General Appropriations Act, with any unused amount being added to the following year's amount. Local government units (LGUs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations (CSOs) are eligible to submit community-led climate change adaptation proposals to the People's Survival Fund board, which will shortlist and approve the projects (de la Cruz, 2013; Ranada, 2015).

<sup>1</sup> Adaptation as defined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2007), is the adjustment in natural or human systems in response to expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.

## Analytical Framework

The framework illustrated in Figure 5 is used to analyze the strengths and gaps of the different policies and strategies. Adopted from Walt and Gilson (1994), it elaborates on the relationships among content, context, process and actors.



**Figure 5.** Policy triangle framework (Walt and Gilson, 1994)

## Actors

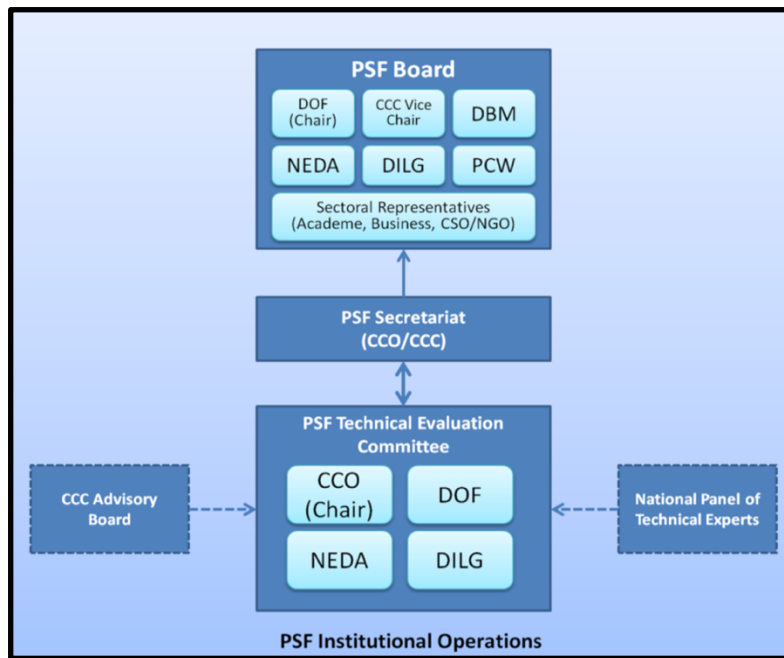
### *Strengths*

The stakeholders are well represented. The proposal approval board, as illustrated in Figure 6, is composed of six representatives from different government agencies<sup>2</sup>. This includes the Philippine Commission for Women to ensure gender is taken into account in the proposal, plus three members from civil society representing the academe, private sector and NGOs. Furthermore, the fund decentralizes climate change adaptation to the grassroots level and empowers local communities to propose their own solutions.

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<sup>2</sup> National Economic Development Authority, Climate Change Commission, Department of Interior and Local Government, Department of Finance, Department of Budget and Management, and the Philippine Commission on Women. (Climate Change Commission, n.d.)





**Figure 6.** Policy actors for the People’s Survival Fund (Climate Change Commision, n.d.)

### *Gaps*

It can also be challenging to decentralize climate change adaptation programs to LGUs because personnel rarely get assigned to work on these programs alone; it is usually added on to an existing role. Furthermore, climate programs, which take longer to yield results, get set aside for quick wins in more pressing concerns such as food security, health and basic education.

### **Context**

#### *Strengths*

The policy recognizes that the lived realities of communities are so diverse and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to climate change. Localizing adaptation programs means that these are attuned to the particular context and needs of a community. The fund also prioritizes areas with higher exposure to climate risks, have higher poverty incidences, or have key biodiversity corridors (Climate Change Commission, 2016; Lagsa, 2015), which means that access to the fund will be for the communities that really need it.

### *Gaps*

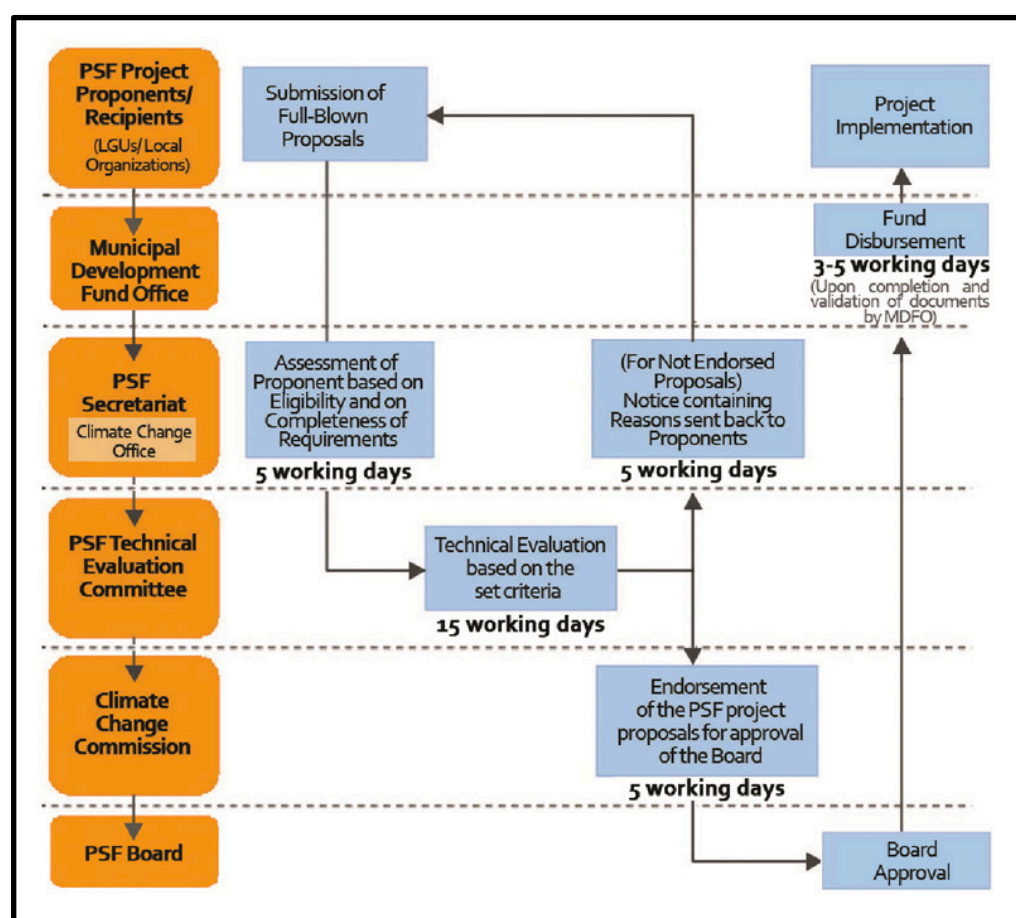
The proposal requires knowledge of and aligning it to the local and national climate change and disaster risk reduction and management frameworks, which not all LGUs have.

There is a very limited database of local climate vulnerabilities, which is also necessary in the proposal stage.

## Process

### Strengths

Since this makes use of public funds, processes are outlined and requires proper documentation as a means of accountability. The clear scoring criteria<sup>3</sup> for ranking project proposals prevents politicization of the process.



**Figure 7.** People's Survival Fund proposal process (Climate Change Commission, 2016)

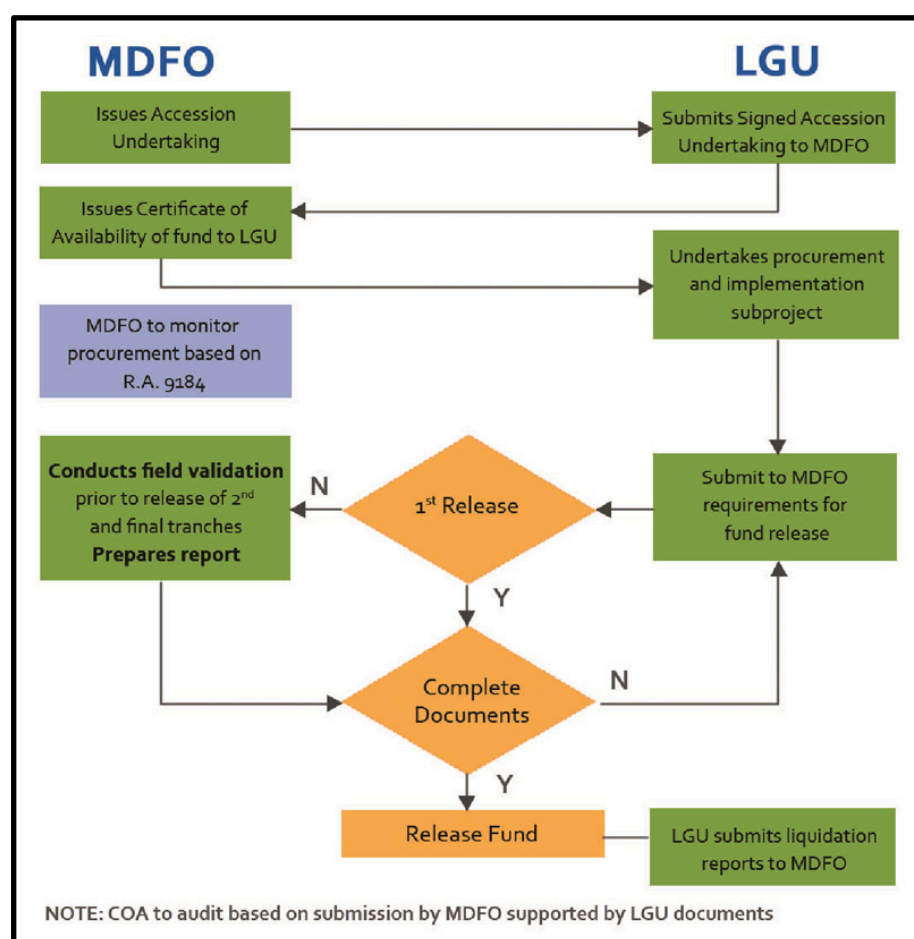
### Gaps

Many LGUs show a lack of awareness of the PSF, the scope of possible projects, and the proposal process. This indicates the inefficiency of cascading the policy from the national government to the city and municipal governments (Lagsa, 2016). Furthermore, the

<sup>3</sup> 40% for the level of poverty incidence, 30% for the exposure to climate risks, and 30% for the presence of identified key biodiversity areas (Climate Change Commission, n.d.).

complicated process can be too daunting for small organizations. Civil and non-governmental proponents also require government accreditation, which is formidable task on its own. Proposals have been disapproved due to incomplete documents<sup>4</sup>.

Processing time takes much longer than is indicated in the process flow. Thus, funds take too much time to be disbursed. The law was enacted in 2012 but only became operational in 2015 (Galicha, 2015). The first projects were approved in November 2016, for implementation in 2017 (Sunstar, 2016). Finally, there is no database of these approved projects, which could have served as a guide for other communities hoping to propose their own projects.



**Figure 8.** People's Survival Fund project implementation flowchart (Climate Change Commission, 2016)

<sup>4</sup> Proposals require the following documents: (1) letter of intent, (2) certificate of accreditation if proponent is an NGO or CSO, (3) work plan, (4) financial plan, (5) local climate change action plan, (6) comprehensive development plans, (7) risk and vulnerability assessment, (8) climate and disaster risk assessment, and (9) climate change studies (Climate Change Commission, 2016).

## **Content**

### *Strengths*

There are some overlaps with disaster risk reduction programs but most of the fund's scope addresses new adaptation measures. Thus, the proposed projects can integrate well with other government-led programs.

### *Gaps*

Right now, the fund is limited to proposals that fall under the following six themes: (1) sectoral vulnerability assessments, (2) monitoring of vector-borne diseases, (3) forecasting and early warning systems, (4) institutional development for LGUs and communities, (5) risk financing, and (6) community adaptation support programs (Climate Change Commission, 2016). So any innovative proposal that does fit within these themes run the risk of being rejected. Furthermore, PHP 1 billion<sup>5</sup> for an annual fund might be a relatively small amount considering that these are community-wide projects and the Philippines has 144 cities and 1,490 municipalities. Finally, the policy does not contain overall monitoring and evaluation protocols. These are left to the individual project proponents.

## **Current Status of the People's Survival Fund**

Since the fund started accepting proposals in late 2015, there have been 38 proposals submitted, 22 (58%) of which are deemed compliant with the requirements. These proposals come from 24 different proponents, mostly from local government units. Only 9 out of the 22 proposals have been shortlisted as potential candidates, with the total cost of PHP 452.4 million or 45% of the annual fund allocation (Fernandez, 2016). Only 2 proposals have been fully approved so far. The rest were either approved pending the submission of more technical details, or returned for revisions and reconsideration (Sunstar, 2016).

## **Policy Recommendations**

Based on the analysis of the People's Survival Fund, the following recommendations can be made. There is a need to develop proper information dissemination campaigns to address the lack of awareness and knowledge of the People's Survival Fund and its mechanisms. A review of the submission process and the requirements can make the fund

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<sup>5</sup> Equivalent to NZD 27 million

even more responsive to the realities of smaller project proponents. Capacity building of local government units, NGOs and communities can be done to help them in preparing project proposals. Knowledge management protocols such as a central database may be adopted to open the access to climate change data. The PhP 1 billion annual allocation for the fund could be reviewed in light of the costing of the initial project proposals. Identification of other potential sources for funding such as international aid would be helpful in augmenting the fund so that many more communities will be helped. There is also a need to develop monitoring and evaluation methodologies and tools to help quantify impacts including the cost benefit analysis of adaptation measures. Finally, an incentive mechanism would encourage cities and municipalities to prioritize climate adaptation projects. This could be in the form of having a climate ready city / municipality award.

## **Conclusion**

Being one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, the Philippines is one of the climate pioneers in South East Asia. The country has implemented policy frameworks for climate change adaptation, which continues to evolve to this day. One of the policies, the People's Survival Fund, contextualizes adaptation to the local realities of a community. This policy has a number of strength but also contains areas for improvements. Several recommendations have been made in this paper to strengthen the policy. While there has been a decline in the vulnerability of the different sectors of Philippine society, climate change still continues to be a pressing issue. Policies need to continuously evolve to be responsive to the needs of the Filipinos.

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