

COUNTRY FACTSHEET

PHILIPPINES

Small, but active and cherished

Contributions of civil society to climate policies in the Philippines

2019

Philippines – small, but active and cherished

Forced by their vulnerability the Philippines' climate policy focuses on climate change adaptation measures. The few NGOs specialized on climate policies advice government members in advance and during international climate negotiations and on the design of regional adaptation plans.

Climate policy of the Philippines

The Philippines have a rather low share in global greenhouse gas emissions but predictions on economic and population growth imply the need to decouple emissions. Further, the improvement of the country's adaptability is of high importance as it ranks fourth among the countries most affected by climate change.¹

Climate policy Philippines	
Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI 2019)	
• Overall value	No data
• National climate policy	No data
Civic space	
• CIVICUS monitor	obstructed
• Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2017	
Freedom of expression	6 of 10
Civil society traditions	4 of 10
Civil society participation	6 of 10
Association/ assembly rights	9 of 10

The NDCs aim at reducing climate relevant emissions to 70% of the emissions predicted by a BAU scenario by 2030.² However, the Philippines have not yet published a BAU scenario and the targeted reductions explicitly rely on international support.

On a national level the *Climate Change Act* of 2009 and the *National Framework Strategy on Climate Change (NFSCC)* frame the climate policy of the Philippines. Based on the first the *Climate Change Commission (CCC)* was founded which is to implement the *NFSCC* and the *National Climate Change Action Plan 2011-2028*³. It is also responsible for the management of the *People's Survival Fund (PFS)*, a financial instrument to enable local climate change adaptation projects.⁴

Local government units are supposed to design local climate actions plans and projects for local adaptation measures. However, as these lack technical-administrative expertise and sufficiently trained experts only a very low share of the

¹ Kreft et al. (2015)

² Climate Action Tracker (2017)

³ GIZ (2018)

⁴ *ibid.*

available budget has been used until now.

Although the Renewable Energy Act of 2008 designates 0.75% of the GDP for the promotion of renewable energy use⁵, the Coal Roadmap 2017-2040 implies that the energy supply of the Philippines can be expected to cause a strong increase in greenhouse gas emissions in the future.

Climate-driven civil society

The Philippines' civil society is very active, dynamic, critical and diverse. It is also well represented online as well as in public participation processes. In fact, the Philippines have the highest density of NGOs per person in Asia. This is mainly due to the constitutionally guaranteed freedoms and the *Local Government Code* of 1991, which aimed at strengthening local decision-making competencies.⁶

While civil society participation was promoted during the presidency of Benigno Aquino III,⁷ President Rodrigo Duterte's decisions so far impeded civil society participation, civil society monitoring of state action and personal freedoms against the state.^{8,9} Further, Duterte's War on Drugs increasingly affects civil society actors.¹⁰ Additionally, according to statistics the Philippines recorded the second highest number of murders on human rights activists worldwide in 2015.¹¹

Although government agencies are required to consult NGOs on programs and projects with climate and environmental impact¹², the degree of participation varies strongly between the different administrative units. Some NGOs claim that most participatory processes remain superficial¹³ and civil society recommendations are only rarely considered in government decisions.¹⁴

The climate-driven civil society in the Philippines is comparatively new and comprises rather few people. However, its members are highly motivated and well educated and have established a strong network and good connections to the government agencies in charge of climate issues. Climate-driven NGOs in the Philippines mainly deal with climate justice and climate change adaptation of rural and traditional communities. Especially many traditional NGOs do not directly deal with climate change but focus on land rights, human rights and indigenous people rights.

⁵ IRENA & ACE (2016)

⁶ Bertelsmann Transformation Index (2018)

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE_NGO): Alternative Law Groups (ALG) (2016)

⁹ Bertelsmann Transformation Index (2018)

¹⁰ Jakob et al. (2018)

¹¹ Caucus of Development NGO Networks (CODE_NGO): Alternative Law Groups (ALG) (2016)

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Bertelsmann Transformation Index (2018)

Climate-driven civil society activities in the Philippines

In spite of its young history and low membership size, the climate-driven civil society in the Philippines seems to engage in different activities and to forward the development and implementation of an ambitious climate policy. A common declaration of civil society on the national climate goals and their implementation does not exist.

The large majority of NGOs dealing with climate issues raises awareness for climate protection and climate change adaptation in the population and provides information on these issues or political programs and discussions. *Dakila*, a relatively new student network, targets students and young people by developing artistic and cinematic formats to raise awareness and spread information on climate issues in spite of its small budget. PDI, a grassroots organization that is active since a long time already draws on its local roots to inform traditional groups among the population in rural areas about climate change risks and develops adaptation strategies with them.

Close connections and a close collaboration with the responsible government institutions characterize the groups of the Philippian environmental movement. Experts of the Philippian NGO climate network *Aksyon Klima* support the national government with the preparation for and implementation of climate negotiations. It also assists local agencies in the development of climate change adaptation plans. The climate-driven civil society thus attempts to raise the climate policy ambition level and to accelerate the implementation of climate protection and adaptation measures wherever governmental institutions lack expertise and infrastructure.

Confrontational approaches such as protests and rallies against government actions as well as the supervision of governmental climate-related work seem to play a minor role in the Philippines. An exception is the lawsuit against CO₂-intense businesses to comply with human rights, which was filed by *Client Earth*, *Greenpeace* and 11 other civil society organizations.¹⁵ However, international organizations chaired that suit while Philippian organizations played a supporting role only.

¹⁵Greenpeace (2016)

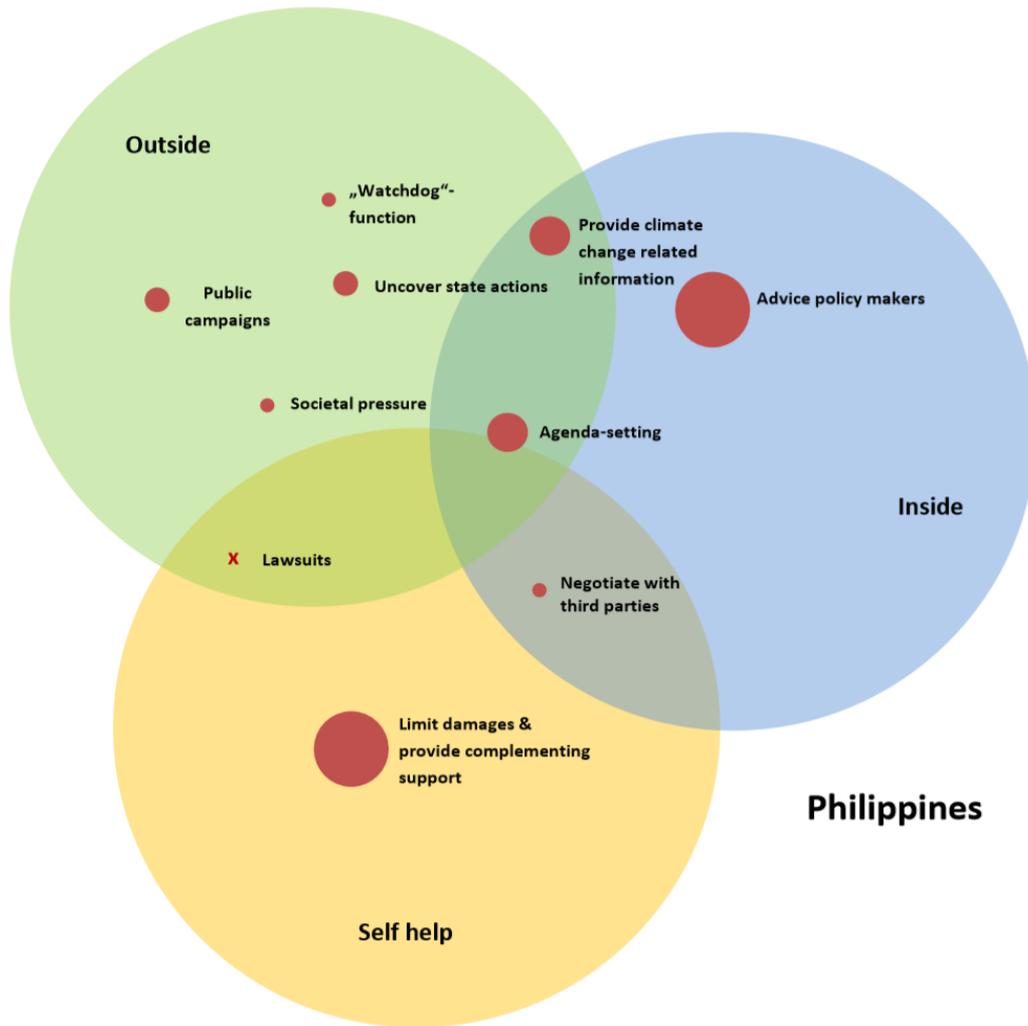


Figure 1: Activities of the climate-driven civil society in the Philippines. The larger the dots the more important the respective activity. (own source)

Methodologies and definitions

In order to clarify the scope of this research, this chapter gives a definition of the key terms and the indicators used to analyse climate-driven civil society groups in different countries. The indicators were chosen based on a literature research. Also, it shortly introduces the central activities and capacities of civil society groups to advocate their interest, and the way they have been analysed in the examined country contexts.

Definition of terms

In contrast to the United Nations which define NGOs as all non-governmental actors,¹⁶ this analysis mostly refers to NGOs as all (sub-)national organizations that are organizationally structured, refrain from violence, act in alignment with human rights, make moral claims and claim to represent universal societal interests. In doing so, these publicly acting non-profit-organizations aim to influence political decisions on climate change and climate change adaptation¹⁷ but have not been initiated by government initiatives. Consequently, trade associations, commercial associations and labour unions are excepted from this definition.^{18,19} The analysis thereby focuses on cross-organizational structures, whereby important groups and tendencies within the climate-driven societies – if existing – were considered as well.

The term **climate-driven civil society (groups)** comprises all environmental organizations that deal with climate change. This includes NGOs primarily dealing with climate change related issues as well as environmental organizations covering climate change as a cross-cutting issue or as one independent issue among others.

Civic space refers to the conditions enabling civil societies to act. To assess the civic space, the preservation of civil rights, such as freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, and the facilitation of their exercise are taken into account as well as the restriction of bureaucracy, excessive regulation and state control of foreign funding. Also, regarding civil society engagement on climate change related topics, the existence and promotion of, as well as access to (official) participatory processes dealing with climate policies is relevant for the assessment.²⁰ This includes climate policy committees as well as possibilities to participate in planning committees for climate relevant policies of other line ministries.

For the comparability of civil society activities in different countries, several indices have been used. The respective scores can be found in the country fact sheets at the end of this report.

The *Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)* was used for an assessment

¹⁶ See Brunnengräber, Achim (2011)

¹⁷ See Brunnengräber et al. (2005)

¹⁸ Roth, Roland (2005)

¹⁹ See Brunnengräber, Achim (2011)

²⁰ Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung et al. (2016)

of the current climate policies of each country. This index assesses the NDC's ambition levels in addition to climate policy developments on a national scale.²¹

The *CIVICUS Index*²² as well as the *Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI)*²³ categories "Freedom of expression", "Civil society traditions", "Civil society participation" and "Association/ assembly rights" were drawn on to assess the civic space of each country examined. Countries not included in any of these indices were marked accordingly. Significant discrepancies between the indices' ratings and the authors' evaluation based on interviews or personal experience were explained in more detail in the texts.

Some sources used in this paper refer to the final report of the project *Strengthening civil society in the implementation of national climate policy* as well as to interviews conducted as part of it with experts in the field of climate policy and civil society and with representatives of the climate-driven civil society.

Activities of climate-driven civil society groups

Civil society organizations engage in different ways to make their voices heard by decision makers. Their climate policy related work includes the following

- Observation and definition of climate change related problems
- Provide civic education on climate polities
- Provide public information on and transparency in climate change related topics
- Control state compliance with its commitment on climate action

²¹ The Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI) assesses and compares the climate protection performance of 56 countries as well as member states of the EU. Based on the analysis of 14 indices evaluating greenhouse gas emissions, renewable energies, energy use and climate policies the climate protection performance is categorized as very high, high, medium, low and very low and ranked accordingly. Here it is important to note that no country's climate protection performance was ranked very high and the top three ranks were left vacant in order to raise awareness for the generally low performance. The subcategory national climate policy comprises the latest political climate protection activities and was scored between 0 (no climate protection activities) to 100 (maximum performance) by experts of local NGOs. For further information see: <https://www.climate-change-performance-index.org/>

²² The CIVICUS Index evaluates the scope of action for civil societies in different countries and categorizes these in descending order as open, narrow, obstructed, repressed or closed. Thereby, CIVICUS mainly analyses to what extent the government and government institutions attend to their duty to guarantee assembly rights, association rights and freedom of expression. The index is mainly based on expert evaluations and the latest data from the respective countries. For further information see: <https://monitor.civicus.org/methodology/>

²³ The Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) assesses the status of the political transformation towards democracy and the transformation management of different states according to 10 categories and 38 subcategories. A score from 1 to 10 differentiates between total Autocracies (1) and Democracies in consolidation (10) in the category Democracy Status, and between failed, weak, moderate, good and very good in the Governance Index. The subcategories used in this study are those connected to civil society work. These are also scored from 1 to 10. 1 indicating a lack of tradition of civil society organizations, no assembly or association rights and no possibilities for civil society participation. Whereas 10 indicates diverse, longstanding civil society traditions as well as extensive possibilities for civil society participation and guaranteed assembly and association rights. For further information see: <https://www.bti-project.org/>

- Campaign work
- Exert societal pressure by demonstrations and the unification of individuals and groups with the same interests
- Limit harm in case of state failure
- Lawsuits
- Provide expertise and advocacy by directly cooperating with decision makers

Roth et al. (2005) differentiate these activities between (1) partly institutionalized, legal ways of participation in cooperation with decision makers or legal forms of criticism such as demonstrations (“**Inside**” according to Roth et al. (2015), also Inside-Strategies) and (2) spaces for political discourse and critical reflection on climate policies or civic education on climate policies (“**Outside**”, also Outside-Strategies). Another compilation of political activities “**Self help**” (3) was introduced by Müller et al. (2014). Self help comprises measures to improve the situation of those affected by climate change or reduce negative effects on them. In

For the analysis of the activities of climate-driven civil society, we have focused on the activities listed above, while we categorized them in consideration of the work of the authors listed above. The figure resulting from this categorization was used to summarize and to display the climate policy related activities in the surveyed countries. In the country factsheets, the activities related to each category are represented by a red dot. The size of the red dots indicates the amount of work taking place in that specific field. The results are based on scientific publications as well as interviews with experts and representatives of the climate-driven civil society of the respective countries. Thus, the score is to a certain degree subjective and can only serve as orientation.

Some sources used in this paper refer to the final report of the project *Strengthen Civil Society for the implementation of national climate policy* as well as to interviews conducted as part of it with experts in the field of climate policy and civil society or with representatives of the climate-driven civil society.

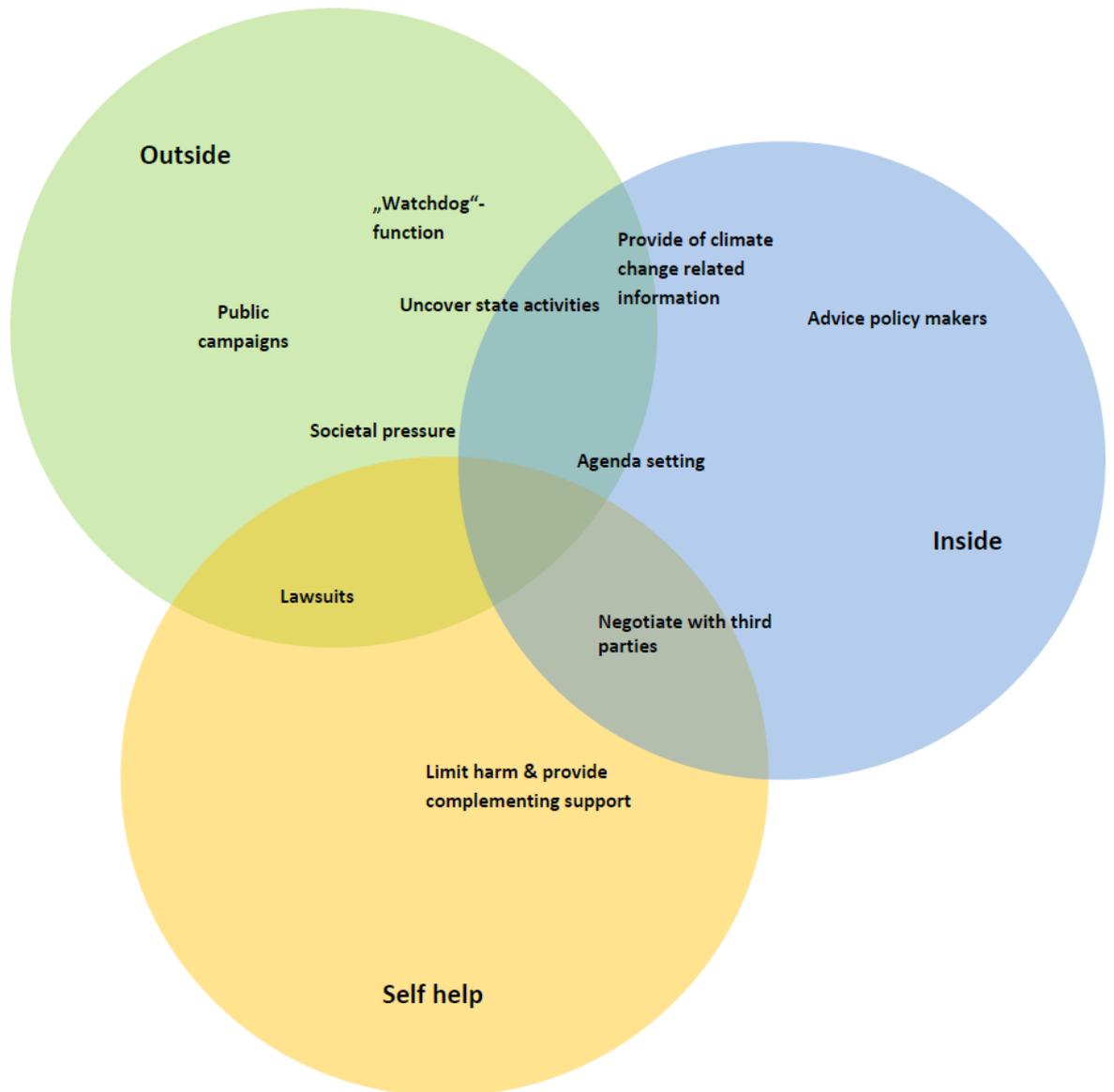


Figure 2: Climate policy related activities of the climate-driven civil society categorized according to the sections Inside, Outside and Self help (own figure).

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