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You may not know yet what IC3 means. But I trust you already know something about climate change. In fact, many ordinary Filipinos can already comment on it. Try asking a taxi driver what he thinks about the disastrous typhoons in recent years, most probably he will say: "Climate change kasi."

Indeed, climate change has become part of the local parlance, although most Filipinos have yet to understand it well. That is what the IC3 program aims to do—enhance public understanding of climate change and the issues, challenges and opportunities. Its priority target audience consists of policy and decision makers, as well as academicians and researchers who can help in information, education and communication (IEC) and in developing innovative technological solutions on climate change problems and opportunities.

IC3, or Information Caravan on Climate Change, is a program of the TOWNS (The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service) Foundation. The Management Association of the Philippines (MAP), through the MAP committee on climate change and sustainable development, helped launch it recently with a forum for the business community.

The TOWNS IC3 team is composed of TOWNS awardees and some guests who excel in their fields. For the inaugural forum with MAP, the following TOWNS awardees discussed the major climate change-related risks: Dr. Alyssa Peleo-Alampay (geologic risks), Dr. Laura David (oceanographic and water-related risks), and Dr. Raquel Fortun (medical and health risks).

Invited guest panelist was Time magazine's Hero of the Environment Dr. Jurgenne Primavera (aquaculture and coastal risks and the role of mangroves).

After the presentation on the risks, I talked about climate change risk management and cited some best practices in the country.

A second forum for the academic and research community, which the AIM-Zuellig Center hosted, followed the first forum. At that second forum, TOWNS president Dr. Cathy Vistro-Yu talked about how to teach climate change. Dr. Helen Yap, who coined the term IC3, facilitated the first forum and gave the closing remarks during the second one.

The foregoing IC3 format will be adapted to local conditions as the IC3 team brings the program to other major cities soon. Other TOWNS members may also join the IC3 team in the future to share their expertise on climate change-related risks and measures.

From those two fora, here are some points to consider for improving the Philippines' capability to cope with climate change:

Science-based understanding and consideration of climate change and its associated risks are crucial in the business continuity planning of all types of organizations, not only those in the business sector.

Climate change risk management must start with risk communication—to bring parties together to a common ground for effective risk assessment and risk management.

In the Philippines, risk assessment is the weakest in what should be an Integrated Risk Communication, Assessment, and Management (IRCAM) process. Location-specific risk assessments, with priority to the areas that are most vulnerable to climate change risks, must now be conducted. Local government units must include this work in their disaster preparedness plans and programs. The national government, business and nongovernment organizations and their local branches must help in risk assessment at the local level. An important reference for risk assessment is the 2012 Philippine Exposure Map on Climate Change, which shows the climate change-related risks (Ex: sea level rise) affecting each locality. Dr. Laura David and her project team from the UP Marine Science Institute and PAGASA produced the map.

On geologic risks, Dr. Alampay emphasized the importance of knowing one's area and its geohazards, such as volcanic, earthquake, landslide, subsidence, and flooding hazards. She pointed out that extreme weather events, such as frequent strong typhoons, increase geologic risks. The websites of Phivolcs, Mines and Geosciences Bureau, Pagasa and UP National Institute of Geological Science provide useful information for preparedness, which could include preparing an emergency kit, relocating to a site with lesser hazards or adapting to them, and being good to the environment.

On oceanographic and water-related risks, Dr. David identified sedimentation as one of the major threats to coastal habitats because it can bury corals and sea grasses and harm mangroves, which protect coastal communities from high-energy waves—better than how more expensive cement walls do so.

Mangroves, as both Dr. David and Dr. Primavera pointed out, are extremely important for they not only sequester carbon and provide coastal protection and erosion control, they also provide habitat for fish, medicinal and other traditional products, and ornamental materials for landscaping. They are also useful for biotechnology and many industrial applications. Both doctors strongly recommend improvement of mangrove green belts along shorelines of oceans and lakes, along riverbanks and creeks, and in other areas affected by storm surges and typhoons.

On medical and health risks, Dr. Fortun advised all to learn from past disasters and share information and experiences on warning and evacuation, available resources, search and rescue, patient transport and care, recovery and management of the dead, dealing with media, overall response coordination, and post-disaster health issues. The latter includes potable water supply, safe food, sanitation and personal hygiene, vector control, immunization programs, ventilation and space in shelters, temporary housing, and isolation of patients with communicable diseases.

On climate change risk management, measures are of two major types: mitigation (which aims to eliminate or reduce climate change risks to life and property, such as the use of green energy to reduce carbon emissions) and adaptation (which aims to adjust to or cope with climate change and its consequences and to take advantage of opportunities, such as the rehabilitation of mangroves that can prevent or reduce negative impacts of sea level rise while at the same time providing the benefits mentioned above).

Although the Philippines does not significantly contribute to global warming and climate change, any mitigation measure that we apply can contribute to global mitigation of climate change risks. But it is imperative for us to give priority now to adaptation measures.

Some organizations are now doing so and many of their best practices on climate change adaptation may be replicated in other areas. Notable practices in the public sector are, first, the design and implementation of the eco-town concept by the Climate Change Commission. It aims to

make a local community climate-change resilient while attaining sustainable development with improved livelihood for community members. Several LGUs have also started to implement adaptation and mitigation initiatives with livelihood, such as the establishment of Conservation Farming Villages by the Ligao City LGU.

Best practices on climate change adaptation in the business community start from simply using energy, water and other resources more efficiently. PriceWaterhouseCoopers established baseline data by conducting a survey of how business is responding to climate change. Other notable adaptation initiatives include Palafox Associates' design of stilts housing and various technological initiatives that include the rain collection system of the MFI Foundation and Webcast's solar-powered automatic weather monitoring system.

Teaching climate change effectively is a new challenge to teachers. Dr. Yu, who is also a 2012 Metrobank Outstanding Teacher Awardee, suggested presenting climate change either as an experience (Ex: sharing of personal stories about a significant climate change event), a theory (Ex: making it an object of research) or a global reality (Ex: making it the central theme of all lessons). It must aim, she said, at the following goals: preparedness, safety, increased understanding and active involvement.

The common message of the IC3 team for reducing Philippine vulnerability to climate change is to increase our country's adaptive capacity. Needed actions requiring top policy and decision makers' support include integration of climate change adaptation, as well as mitigation, in development and investment policies, plans, programs, systems and processes; application of the IRCAM processes; assessment and protection of mangroves and other critical ecosystems; relocation of communities in high-risk areas or alternative adaptation measures; resolution of land-use issues; funding of research and development on climate change adaptation; and making climate change adaptation, plus sustainable lifestyle and development, concerns of all.

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(The author, president of EARTH Institute Asia, co-chairs with Ms. Tammy Lipana the MAP committee on climate change and sustainable development. She also serves as TOWNS Foundation's IC3 team leader. Feedback at . For previous articles, visit map.org.ph.)