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Headline: 4 of 5 Filipinos feel effects of climate change

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Clearly, climate change is not just a vague concept, especially for Filipinos.

A new World Bank-commissioned survey showed that four of five Filipinos have personally felt the effects of climate change, be it in the form of hotter summers or heavier rains.

Countries like the Philippines, where large portions of the population live in low-lying coastal areas, are the most vulnerable to climate-related extreme weather conditions, the World Bank said in a statement Wednesday.

"In the last several years, the country has suffered extreme weather events including long dry spells, heavy rains as well as strong typhoons and floods like those caused by Typhoons Ondoy and Pepeng," said Secretary Lucille Sering, vice chair of the World Bank's Climate Change Commission.

"These problems are aggravated by harmful practices that have led to the destruction of forests, mangroves and corals, and the deterioration of the environment in general," she said.

She added that even some areas in Mindanao that used to be considered as "typhoon-free" have recently been hit by very strong typhoons, floods and mudslides.

The World Bank survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations (SWS) showed that 85 percent or more than eight out of 10 Filipinos "personally experienced" the impact of climate change in the last three years.

Out of this number, 54 percent described their experience as either severe or moderate, while the remaining 31 percent said the effects they felt were "little."

World Bank Country Director Motoo Konishi said the SWS survey showed the importance of understanding climate change, not just as an environmental issue, but as a serious sustainable development and inclusive growth challenge.

"Many of the country's poor derive income from agriculture, fishery and natural resources that are vulnerable to climate change," Konishi said. "Many of them live in danger zones such as waterways, areas that are low lying and flood-prone, critical slopes as well as coastal zones, making them vulnerable to sea level rise and extreme weather events like strong typhoons and floods," he added.

Broken down by region, the survey showed that 91 percent or 9 in 10 Metro Manila residents said they were affected.

This was the highest percentage out of all regions surveyed.

Meanwhile, 84 percent of survey respondents from areas in Luzon outside Metro Manila said they felt the impact of climate change.

The proportion in Visayas was at a slightly lower 84 percent, while 78 percent of Mindanao respondents said they felt climate change.

The same survey said 90 percent of urban residents said they were affected by climate change, while the number of rural residents was slightly lower at 79 percent.

The survey was conducted on March 19 to 22 of this year. A total of 1,800 adults were asked nationwide.

The survey has a 2 percentage-point margin of error.

Despite most Filipinos being aware of climate change, the same survey showed that a large portion of Filipinos still had little understanding of what causes climate change.

Many survey respondents however admit that they have yet to fully understand climate change and its impacts. Thirty-eight percent (38 percent) have “only little” and 14 percent have “almost no understanding” as against 12 percent who have “extensive” and 35 percent “partial but sufficient” understanding.

As a result, the survey found that very few Filipinos have participated in community efforts to reduce carbon emissions that are the main cause of global warming.

About 63 percent, or nearly two in three Filipinos surveyed, said they had not done anything to combat climate change.

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The remaining 37 percent said they participated in at least one effort, including attending protest marches, contacting community leaders and non-government organizations, among others, to fight deforestation and call for the reduced reliance on fossil fuels that aim to cut carbon dioxide emissions.