

Headline: Gatchalian sees urgency in beefing up LGU capacity in climate adaptation

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Senator Sherwin Gatchalian hands over a document to Josephine Ambongan, chief of staff of Gov. Santiago Cane, Jr., that will serve as a claim for the 800 sacks of rice for the province's flood victims. Vice Gov. Samuel Tortor and Valenzuela City Councilor Niña Lopez look on. Photo courtesy of the Facebook page of Senator Gatchalian.

Senator Sherwin Gatchalian hands over a document to Josephine Ambongan, chief of staff of Gov. Santiago Cane, Jr., that will serve as a claim for the 800 sacks of rice for the province's flood victims. Vice Gov. Samuel Tortor and Valenzuela City Councilor Niña Lopez look on. Photo courtesy of the Facebook page of Senator Gatchalian.

PROSPERIDAD, AGUSAN DEL SUR — Senator Sherwin Gatchalian emphasized on Saturday the critical need to bolster the capacity of local governments in heeding the challenges of climate change adaptation amid persistent disasters such as floods and landslides.

"It is imperative that we empower local government units not only in providing relief assistance but also in enhancing their capabilities to respond to calamities and construct resilient infrastructures to mitigate the impact of climate change," said Gatchalian, who was at the provincial capitol in this town to distribute at least 3,800 sacks of rice to flood victims in 10 out of the 13 towns and one city of Agusan del Sur.

The well-milled rice, allocated for flood victims in the province, was provided by the senator's office in collaboration with the city government of Valenzuela, forming part of a total of 12,800 sacks of rice distributed to those affected by floods and landslides that included numerous towns of Davao de Oro and Davao Oriental.

The senator underscored that a crucial aspect of addressing climate change involves the relocation of communities situated in hazard-prone areas, citing the tragic landslide on Feb. 6 in the village of Masara in Maco, Davao de Oro.

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Gatchalian said this was the reason for his advocacy of identifying safe relocation sites, including those within forest lands, which would be converted into alienable and disposable lands.

Acknowledging the pressing need for action, Gatchalian learned from Vice Gov. Samuel Tortor that about 90,000 hectares of forest lands in the province were occupied by municipal halls, government buildings, and village communities.

"I will collaborate with the provincial government of Agusan del Sur to propose a legislative bill for the conversion of these forest lands into alienable and disposable lands," the senator said.

Responding to the relief support of the senator who was with Valenzuela city councilor Niña Lopez, San Francisco Mayor Grace Carmel Paredes-Bravo said their generosity and compassion has lightened the burden of the local government officials of Agusan del Sur.

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“ In our lives, there are people who are with us in good times and bad times. But we remember more of the people who are with us during bad times,” remarked Paredes-Bravo.

Agusan del Sur endured severe flooding due to continuous heavy rainfall, prompting Gov. Santiago Cane, Jr. to declare a state of calamity on Jan. 31.

In his briefing before President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. during the latter's visit in Agusan del Sur on Friday, Cane said 53 percent or 392,947 residents of the province population were affected by the floods.

He reported that the total estimated amount of damage to properties, infrastructure, and agriculture was P2,295,983,284.

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