



TURNING THE TIDE: Urgent Actions to Address Climate-related Issues in Navotas

A POLICY BRIEF ON THE SITUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN
BARANGAY SAN JOSE, NAVOTAS FOR THE YEAR 2026-2028



YOUTH ADVOCATES FOR CLIMATE ACTION PHILIPPINES
in partnership with IBON INTERNATIONAL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Navotas City, particularly Barangay San Jose, in the streets of Bagong Silang, faces severe climate-related challenges that threaten the safety, livelihoods, and well-being of its residents. Recurring flooding, environmental degradation, and displacement risks are compounded by coastal reclamation projects that block access to fishing grounds and weaken existing flood defenses. Despite national laws such as the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction & Management Act and local ordinances like the Navotas Environment Code (City Ordinance 2012-06), gaps in implementation leave communities exposed, particularly the urban poor and youth who are often excluded from planning and decision-making. Residents face multiple intersecting vulnerabilities, including livelihood loss due to the disruption of fishing and informal work, health risks from waterborne diseases, limited access to healthcare, and harassment that undermines their ability to organize and advocate for their rights.

To address the persistent gap between climate and disaster risk reduction policies and their on-ground implementation in Navotas, particularly in vulnerable coastal communities, the following priority recommendations are proposed:

- Strengthen policy implementation to ensure flood protection, early warning systems, safe housing, and social support reach vulnerable coastal communities.
- Address root causes of vulnerability by linking climate adaptation with secure livelihoods, land tenure, and

protection of coastal and marine resources.

- Adopt a climate and environmental justice approach that is human-rights-based and responsive to the needs of women, children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and informal workers.
- Improve legal enforcement and accountability, including accessible complaint mechanisms and protection of civic space for community leaders and environmental defenders.
- Enhance transparency and monitoring through public reporting on climate spending, relocation, and reclamation, with community participation in evaluation.
- Institutionalize meaningful community participation by including urban poor and fisherfolk leaders in decision-making and supporting youth and community capacity-building.
- Support community-led knowledge and research and ensure local evidence informs climate, housing, and development policies.

By centering communities and youth as partners in decision-making and resilience-building, Navotas can implement inclusive, people-centered solutions that reduce vulnerability, protect rights, and advance a climate-just and sustainable future.

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This Policy Brief was prepared by
Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines
(YACAP)

In partnership with
IBON International

In collaboration with
Bayan Muna Navotas
BM Youth

INTRODUCTION

Climate-related disasters are commonplace in the Philippines, resulting from the rising temperature, together with the intensification of carbon emissions from fossil fuels, methane, and various man-made activities. Both rural and urban communities regularly experience massive flooding, landslides, storm surges, and other destructive events that claim lives, property, and livelihoods. The impacts on these communities are exacerbated by development projects that only benefit a small percentage of the population.

While the country has established climate and environmental policies aimed at disaster risk reduction, climate adaptation, and environmental protection, their implementation often falls short at the community level. Significant gaps remain, particularly in coastal and urban poor communities that are most exposed to climate impacts yet least served by infrastructure, social protection, and effective climate adaptation measures. These vulnerabilities are further exacerbated by development projects that prioritize economic growth for a limited segment of the population, often overlooking equity, accountability, and the lived realities of frontline communities.

METHODOLOGY

The policy brief is built on the preliminary research carried out by Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines and was strengthened through a comprehensive desk review of existing literature, reports, and documented cases on climate impacts affecting the urban poor communities. This process allowed the organization to examine prevailing trends, identify common issues, and evaluate existing policies relevant to flood control and climate concerns in Bagong Silang, Navotas.

To ensure accuracy and relevance, the findings were further enriched through community-based validation activities, including consultations and participatory workshops with youth volunteers, community leaders, and local families. These engagements created space for stakeholders to verify data, share lived experiences, and contribute contextual insights, which will help refine and finalize the policy recommendations outlined in the brief.

CONTEXT AND SITUATION

THE CLIMATE CRISIS

In the Philippines, one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, the worsening environmental crisis continues to threaten communities. The climate crisis refers to the rapid and long-term changes in global weather patterns driven largely by human-induced greenhouse gas emissions. This leads to rising temperatures, more frequent and severe extreme weather, and other climate impacts, which are felt most severely by marginalized sectors that have the least capacity to recover. These changes are already worsening disaster impacts in the Philippines, undermining food and water security, threatening public health, degrading ecosystems, and inflicting heavy economic losses.

In these conditions, the Philippines continues to face injustice in terms of impacts. Compared to other nations, the Philippines has contributed less than 1% of global greenhouse gas emissions annually (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2023). Given this data, the Philippines continues to face the burden of the climate crisis by being one of the top ten countries most vulnerable to long-term climate impacts (Global Climate Risk Index, 2025). To compare, the Philippines produced ~144.26 mtCO₂ in 2019, multiplying it by 52 years will amount to ~7500 mtCO₂e only, a small fraction of Saudi Aramco's 59,262 mtCO₂e in 1965-2017.

The Philippines is also not on track to meet its "fair share" 1.5°C emissions reduction targets, as most of these targets are

conditional. It is still highly dependent on support from other resources. Additionally, some of the current National Determined Contributions (NDC) plans include problematic projects like jeepney modernizations and building more highways. Whereas the Global North countries, which are the main drivers of climate change, owe this support to countries struggling due to climate change.

This further reflects in most regions and countryside cities in the Philippines, which do not have the capacity to adapt to the rapid changes brought by the climate crisis. In 2024, the six consecutive typhoons that hit in November rendered regions like Bulacan, Cavite, Laguna, Rizal, Northern Samar, Camarines Norte/South, and even Metro Manila helpless from the flood (Fonbuena, 2024). Navotas, being a coastal community, is no different, as it suffered continuous flooding due to the consecutive heavy rains. Further fueled by the poor infrastructure in flood control and inadequate budget on disaster management, the risks of extreme flooding are still a threat to this day.

SITUATION OF COMMUNITIES IN NAVOTAS

Navotas is a coastal city in the National Capital Region, popularly dubbed as the "Fishing Capital of the Philippines. With a population of roughly 247,543 people (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020), it is home to the Navotas River, which separates it from Malabon and shapes its coastal identity. One of the coastal communities in Navotas is in Bagong Silang St., Barangay San Jose, an urban poor coastal barangay situated beside Manila Bay, that houses an estimated 550 families. Livelihoods are

primarily tied to fishing and other types of work related to the sea, augmented by other sources of income. Despite being a major fishing hub that supplies fresh seafood to Metro Manila and beyond, the community now faces the threats of the climate crisis, which is exacerbated by inadequate and non-inclusive governance.

Recent activities in the area, such as the reclamation of San Miguel Corporation and their ongoing construction of New Manila International Airport in Taliptip, Bulacan, have led to the demolition of the community's mussel farm and obstruction to fishing vessels, with the road being built within the coastal area. This caused people to disperse and seek new livelihood opportunities, including industrial factories, construction sites, and retail shops. A portion of their population was also forced to migrate to Bulacan due to the lack of opportunities in the area. The community of Bagong Silang has transformed from a fishing village to a slum that is threatened to be demolished at any time soon.

RISK AND CHALLENGES FACED

The community of Bagong Silang has faced various impacts due to climate change and environmental injustice in the area, particularly the reclamation.

Livelihood

The community of Bagong Silang primarily relies on its livelihood in fishing, mussel farming, and marine-related businesses. The mussel farm enabled them to earn between Php 700 and Php 1,000 per day, providing the community with financial stability. However, in 2023, the local government unit did not permit local businesses to renew their licenses due to

ongoing development projects in the area. There was no consultation regarding the development projects, and the affected merchants were given compensation while others were not.

As a result of the reclamation, the continuous display of ships, piling of sand, and dredging of the seabed have restricted boats from proceeding with their normal fishing routine. The fish port became inaccessible, and most boats, costing up to Php 75,000, remain on the docks to decay. While fishing is still technically possible, it would only yield Php 300 to Php 500 per day, as fishers were compelled to travel farther away from reclamation sites. Gasoline hikes added salt to the wound, requiring them to pay Php 2,700 for 3 days of travel, which exceeded their profits.

While relocation in Bulacan was provided, the communities continue to return to Metro Manila due to the lack of opportunities there. Men worked in construction sites and welding areas. Women, particularly mothers, were pressured to seek multiple unstable jobs, such as a laundromat, a vendor, and the trading of metal scraps to bridge their hunger. Livelihood is also halted during storms, while others have no choice but to proceed and find earnings despite the floods and harsh winds. An irregular position was available in a textile factory, yet it was inefficient, as they only received Php 5 for each shirt they stitched.

Flooding

The community of Bagong Silang is a reclaimed area, and they have informally settled in because of the rich livelihood that the coastal area provides. With the further degradation and destruction of the marine environment, along with rising sea levels

and intensifying typhoons, the neighborhood has been experiencing increasingly severe flooding every year. High tides and the poor living conditions of the people, with their houses made from lightweight materials, have exacerbated their situation during flooding.

Aside from the constant pressure to mitigate the water that seeps into their home and the continuous rebuilding of their patched houses from the winds, they must ensure that they can eat for that day. Some have no choice but to endure their hunger, while others are forced to walk through waist-high floodwaters in search of a living.

The community was not easily accessible for any relief goods provided by the local government unit due to its distance from the inland areas. It was even harder for them because the mode of providing relief was done online through a QR code, which made it difficult for people who lacked technology literacy, internet access, or a device. Furthermore, evacuations were encouraged, but none of them were able to do so due to rampant theft. This led the people to stay within their houses and secure their remaining properties.

Waste and Environment

The reclamation drives environmental destruction in the area. With the extensive construction, marine life has ceased to exist and is polluted with heavy metals and sand used to build the highway. Fishermen had it harder to fish because fish migrated away from the destructive site. Moreover, the salt water killed the trees that once stood within the communities of Bagong Silang, which eliminated the remaining organic life in the area.

The nearby dyke has also been damaged, resulting in increased flooding. As the flood rises within the communities, the trash accumulates on the shoreline and remains there as the flood drains. This accumulation of waste creates a poor and dirty atmosphere within the community, breeding more diseases and illnesses among people. Despite the weekly Saturday cleanups, the trash continues to accumulate, and people are also accustomed to disposing of their garbage in these areas. The lack of solid waste management reflects broader systemic issues stemming from reclamation and the failure of the local government unit.

Health

The health crisis is among the most pressing challenges facing the community, closely aligned with the climate issue. As flooding intensifies, hospitals are also flooded with patients suffering from leptospirosis, dengue, and respiratory illnesses. Along with this is the high cost of healthcare that inflicts financial instability on families and affected communities. Bagong Silang was vulnerable to these diseases due to its waste management issues and frequent flooding. The nearby cemetery also posed a threat to their health. Additionally, poverty and malnutrition have restricted them from gaining the proper nutrients to resist diseases and stay healthy on a daily basis. Heat stroke is also a major concern as trees disappear in the vicinity.

During long-term storms and flooding, residents with special needs were confined to their houses and were unable to receive their proper medication. Elders reported missing their maintenance due to the typhoon. A cancer patient in Bagong Silang

also had a hard time going to the hospital during these times.

Education

During the typhoon, classes are opting for a synchronous setup, making it harder for the community, which has no access to the internet and devices, to continue learning. Suspension also hindered the education of children, and some were forced to leave school due to the worsening financial situation. Students were urged to work alongside their parents to make a living in Bagong Silang. While some teenagers aspired to a stable life and career as they grew up, they were often forced to abandon college. Some parents also complain about various school requirements and outcome-based learning, as limited by their financial condition and environment. Moreover, the need for unlimited access to electricity at night was a hindrance to their children's studies.

Land and Displacement

In the streets of Bagong Silang, many families live on land that remains government property and is not legally owned by residents, creating a constant threat of displacement whenever new infrastructure or reclamation projects are proposed. Relocation has been offered to some households in Bulacan, but the distance from the sea and urban markets made it difficult to sustain fishing, vending, and other livelihoods. As a result, many families chose to return to Navotas despite unsafe housing and repeated flooding. This cycle – exposure to climate hazards, insecure land tenure, and development that prioritized profit over people– illustrates how climate risk is not only environmental but structural, reinforcing poverty and precarity.

Human Rights

As a result of their collective advocacy, the community of Bagong Silang has faced serious human rights violations. As residents organize to defend their rights to land, safety, and a healthy environment, they have been met with government harassment and intimidation. Reports from the community described intelligence operatives asking around about local leaders, creating fear and suspicion, while residents live under constant threats of forced displacement and suspicious fires that endanger lives and homes. These actions not only undermine the community's right to organize and speak out, but also criminalize their efforts to protect their environment and secure a just and sustainable future

POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Despite the existence of national-level climate and disaster risk reduction policies such as the Philippine Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act or the Environment Code of Navotas City (City Ordinance 2012-06), there remains a clear gap in their on-ground implementation, both on a national and local level, resulting in disproportionate impacts among different stakeholders. While these policies meant well on paper, many residents of Barangay San Jose in Navotas continue to be excluded from climate security measures mandated by law, such as adequate flood protection, early warning system, community aid, and proper housing. As a highly flood-prone and coastal community, the community faces recurring climate-related risks that are exacerbated by sea level rise and extreme weather events. This implementation failure reflects broader structural inequalities, where marginalized communities bear the brunt of the climate crisis despite existing legal protections intended to safeguard people's rights.

Therefore, from research and consultations, these policy recommendations reflect their collective demands for secure livelihoods, safe housing, meaningful participation, and climate justice. These recommendations elevated lived realities and locally generated knowledge, which call for policies that recognize communities and youth as active agents of change, not passive recipients of aid. Therefore, we, along with the community of Bagong Silang, recommend the following:

Priority Actions for the City Government of Navotas (2025-2028)

Address the Structural Socio-Economic Drivers of Vulnerability and Displacement

- Integrate climate adaptation and environmental protection programs with livelihood security, particularly for small fisherfolk, vendors, and informal workers affected by pollution, reclamation, and disasters.
- Guarantee secure land tenure and protection from forced evictions, prioritizing in-city or near-site upgrading over distant relocation that disrupts livelihoods and social networks.
- Protect community access to coastal and marine resources, including fishing grounds, waterways, and commons essential for survival
- Expand state-supported care and social protection systems, such as accessible healthcare, childcare, disaster insurance, and income support, to reduce the disproportionate burden on women and low-income households.

Strengthen Legal Protection, Accountability, and Civic Space

- Improve the enforcement and reform of environmental, housing, and labor laws, particularly against illegal dumping, destructive coastal projects, and unsafe living conditions in informal settlements.
 - Including the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Philippine

Disaster Risk Reduction & Management Act, and Climate Change Act, among others.

- Establish accessible complaint and redress mechanisms so communities can safely report environmental harm, harassment, or rights violations.
- Review and repeal laws and policies, including the Anti-Terrorism Act, that are used to intimidate, silence, or criminalize urban poor leaders, environmental defenders, and community organizers.

Mainstream an Inclusive Environmental and Climate Justice Framework

- Ensure that all climate, disaster, and urban development programs adopt a human-rights-based approach, centered on dignity, participation, and non-discrimination.
- Integrate a rights-based, climate-responsive, and sector-sensitive measures, recognizing the specific risks faced by women, children, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and informal workers in coastal Navotas.

Strengthen Monitoring, Transparency, and Public Accountability

- Develop and improve national and local indicators that measure community-level climate resilience, tenure security, health outcomes, and social protection coverage in coastal urban poor areas.
- Require regular public transparency reports on climate adaptation spending, relocation programs, reclamation projects, and environmental compliance, with

data disaggregated by location and sector.

- Enable community participation in monitoring and evaluation, ensuring policies are adjusted based on lived realities and not only technical targets.

Ensure Meaningful Participation of Urban Poor Coastal Communities in Governance

- Institutionalize the representation of urban poor and fisherfolk leaders from Navotas in local and national bodies that decide on climate adaptation, coastal development, reclamation, and disaster risk reduction.
- Allocate sustained public funding for capacity-building programs that strengthen community leaders' and youth's skills in policy advocacy, negotiation, budgeting, and environmental governance.
- Recognize and support people's organizations and informal leaders as legitimate partners in planning, not merely beneficiaries of consultation.

Support Community-Led Knowledge, Research, and Advocacy

- Invest in community-based documentation of flooding patterns, tidal changes, eviction threats, health impacts, and livelihood losses, ensuring residents are producers and not just subjects of data.
- Promote knowledge co-production by building long-term partnerships between Navotas communities, universities, scientists, and technical agencies on climate risks, fisheries, and urban resilience.

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- Ensure that locally generated evidence is formally used in policy reviews, project approvals, and environmental impact assessments

CONCLUSION

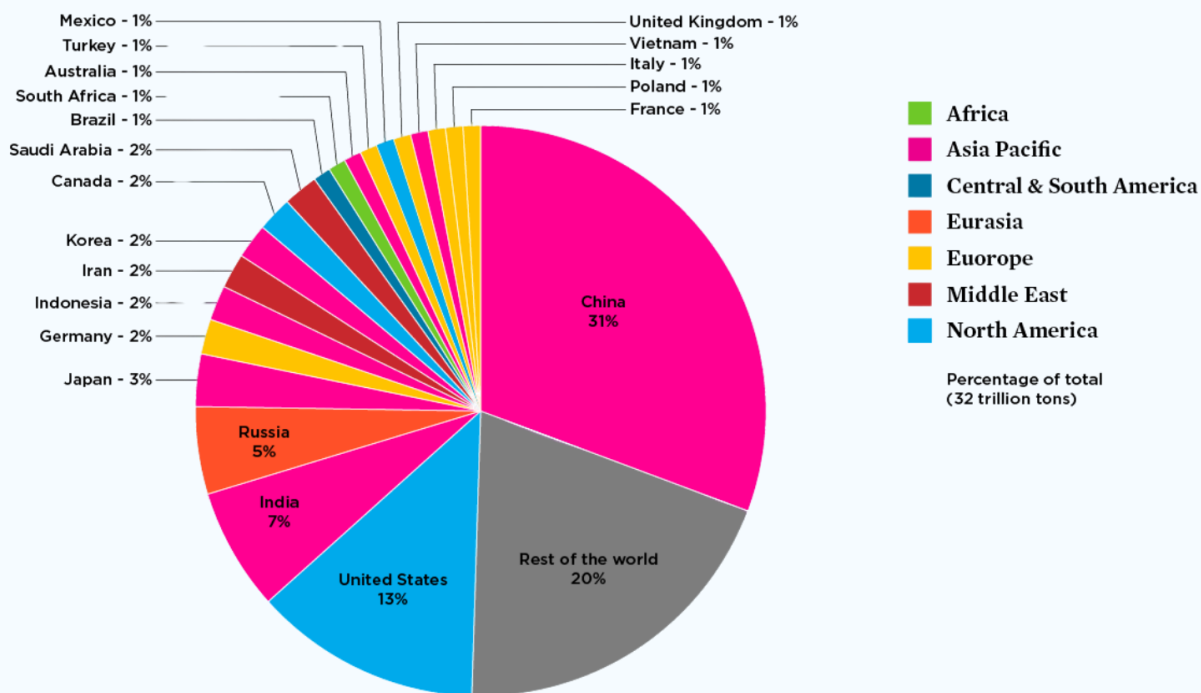
The situation in the street of Bagong Silang in Barangay San Jose of Navotas underscores the urgent and interconnected nature of the climate crisis, environmental injustice, and human rights violations faced by urban poor coastal communities. Despite existing national laws and local ordinances, the lived realities documented in this policy brief reveal persistent gaps in implementation that leave communities exposed to flooding, livelihood loss, health risks, displacement, and intimidation. These challenges are not isolated incidents but systemic failures rooted in exclusionary development, weak accountability, and the marginalization of those least responsible for the climate crisis. Without decisive intervention, these conditions will continue to deepen poverty, erode social cohesion, and undermine the resilience of communities that are vital to the city's cultural and economic life.

Urgent action from the local government of Navotas is therefore critical. This includes strengthening and adequately funding community-based social services such as accessible healthcare, disaster response, education support, and livelihood assistance that directly address the compound impacts of climate change. Equally important is the institutionalization of meaningful community participation in planning, implementation, and monitoring processes, ensuring that residents are treated as partners in governance rather than passive recipients of aid. The local government must also invest in empowering youth leadership by supporting youth-led organizations, capacity-building initiatives, and platforms for civic engagement. Youth in Bagong Silang are already eager to push forward climate

education initiatives, documentation, and community support efforts, presenting an opportunity for the LGU to partner with and scale locally driven solutions. Centering communities and youth in local climate action is not only a moral imperative but an essential for building a resilient, inclusive, and climate-just future for Navotas.

ANNEX

Annex 1. Top Annual CO2 Emitting Countries, 2020 (Union of Concerned Scientists, 2023)



Annex 2. Total Carbon Emission by Top 20 companies from 1965-2017 (Climate Accountability Institute, 2019)

Rank	Company	Emissions (Mt CO ₂ e)
1	Saudi Aramco	59,262
2	Chevron	43,345
3	Gazprom	43,230
4	Exxon Mobil	41,904
5	National Iranian Oil Company	35,658
6	BP	34,015
7	Royal Dutch Shell	31,948
8	Coal India	23,124
9	Pemex	22,645

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10	Petroleus de Venezuela	15,745
11	PetroChina	15,632
12	Peabody Energy	15,385
13	ConocoPhillips	15,229
14	Abu Dhabi National Oil Company	13,840
15	Kuwait Petroleum Oil Corporation	13,479
16	Iraq National Oil Company	12,596
17	Total SA	12,352
18	Sonatrach	12,302
19	BHP Billiton	9,802
20	Petrobras	8,676
	TOTAL	480,169

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