

## Learning from each other – a clustering approach to project delivery

Working in clusters with cities and their nearby municipalities enabled the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN) project to reach more local government units, created unique opportunities for sharing and learning within and across regions, and initiated the process of better cooperation and collaboration.

### Summary

ICLEI - South East Asia Secretariat (ICLEI-SEAS) launched the Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network (ACCCRN) project in the Philippines in 2013, calling for Expressions of Interest (EOI) from city governments to participate. Some of the cities that submitted an EOI requested the project be extended to their surrounding municipalities. Climate change does not respect local government boundaries, and working collectively with the surrounding capacitated municipalities provided greater opportunities for effective climate change adaptation: so the concept of “clustering” delivery of the project emerged.

Over the next 2.5 years, ICLEI-SEAS delivered a series of multi-day workshops which brought all participating municipalities together. This approach provided extraordinary opportunities for the 15 local government units (LGUs)<sup>1</sup> of different sizes to learn from each other, increase the capacity of smaller municipalities which would otherwise not have been involved, and test a new model of project delivery.

The model was not without its challenges – including the logistics of organizing a suitable time to bring LGUs together, selecting appropriate ‘host cities’ for the workshops and designing workshops relevant to both large cities and smaller municipalities. However, LGU participants enthusiastically agreed – the model was a “success” for them, and they are very happy to have participated.

### Introduction: The role of “clustering” in learning and capacity development for climate change adaptation

The Philippines experiences the impacts of climate change daily, and Philippine LGUs are at the forefront of efforts to adapt to these impacts. Several international climate adaptation programs target cities, but less work to build the capacity of smaller municipalities, desperately in need of tools and technical expertise to understand and address climate change impacts. By “clustering” municipalities with their neighbouring cities, ICLEI has enabled a greater number of LGUs to benefit from the ACCCRN project, provided opportunities for greater cross-border collaboration, increased individual peer-to-peer learning, and planted the seed for regional adaptation initiatives in the future. At a time when accelerated action on climate change adaptation is globally recognized, this local initiative provides a model for countries and regions elsewhere.



### Facts & Figures

#### Participating Authorities

Bacnotan  
City of Baguio  
Batangas City  
Bohol Province  
City of Borongan  
Catbalogan City  
La Trinidad  
City of Makati  
City of Marikina  
City of Naga  
Quezon City  
City of San Fernando  
Santa Rosa City  
Tublay  
Tuguegarao City

<sup>1</sup> there is a legislatively defined difference between municipalities and cities in the Philippines, so the term local government unit (LGU) is used throughout the case study when referring collectively to cities and municipalities.

## The Philippines: The Pearl of the Orient Seas

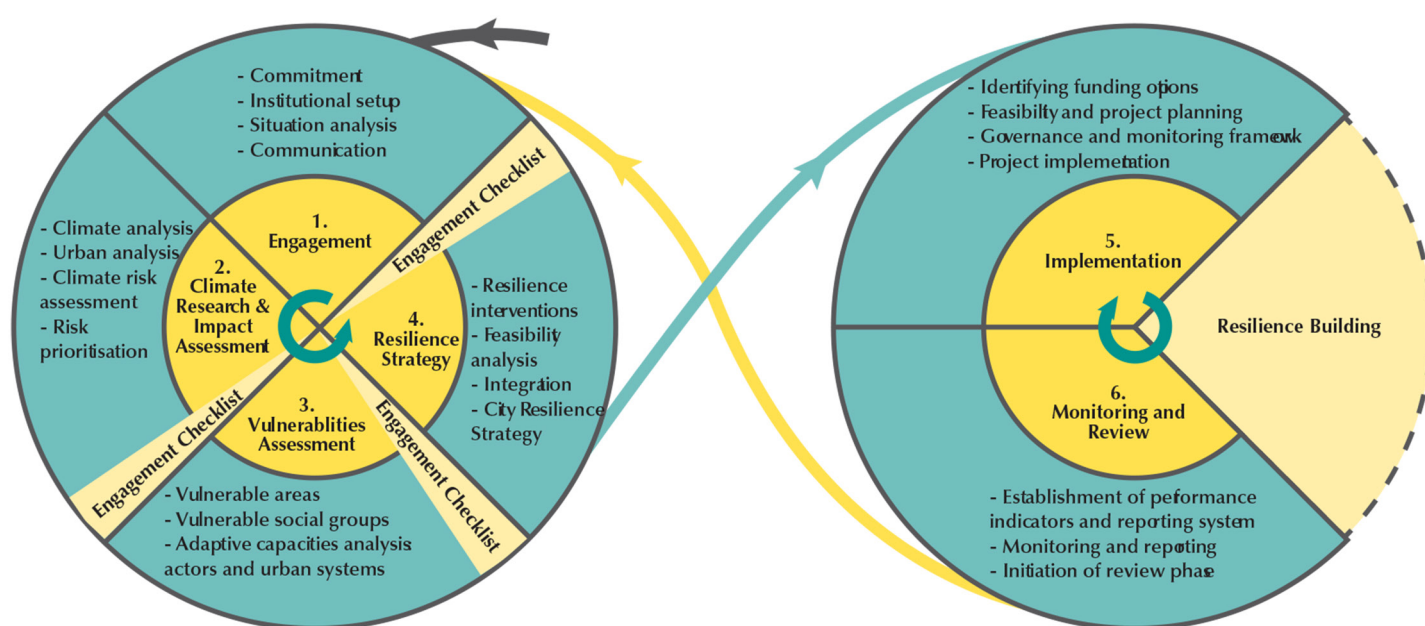
The Philippines is an archipelago that is already experiencing increased severity of extreme weather events, the impacts of sea-level rise, as well as more frequent occurrence of drought and prevalence of the urban heat island effect. The Philippine Climate Change Act of 2009 (Republic Act No. 9729) recognizes LGUs as *“the frontline agencies in the formulation, planning and implementation of climate change action plans”*. The same law mandates LGUs to develop their Local Climate Change Action Plan (LCCAP). Additionally, LGU climate change adaptation projects included in LCCAPs that “better equip vulnerable communities to deal with the impacts of climate change” may be eligible to apply for project funding through the People’s Survival Fund.

In 2013, ICLEI-SEAS began working with cities in the Philippines as part of the ACCCRN project, which facilitated LGUs to produce an LCCAP, meeting the requirements of Republic Act No. 9729. The original Expression of Interest (EOI) was directed towards cities, however, some cities recognized that working alone on a cross-border issue like climate change impacts was not effective: they wanted their surrounding municipalities to have the opportunity to participate. Responsive to member needs, ICLEI-SEAS broadened its call to surrounding municipalities of existing partner cities, and several joined the project.

## Explaining the Initiative: “Clustering” for effective climate change adaptation planning and action

The ACCCRN project was delivered through ICLEI to over 40 cities in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and the Philippines. The overall aim of the project was to catalyse action for climate change adaptation within cities, and to build capacity to understand, prepare and respond to the challenges and opportunities posed by climate change. For the Philippines, two sub-goals emerged: to influence cities’ thinking beyond geo-political boundaries, and also to meet the requirements of the nationally-mandated LCCAP.

Figure 1: The ICLEI-ACCCRN Process



<sup>2</sup> “About the People’s Survival Fund”, People’s Survival Fund <http://psf.climate.gov.ph/about/>

In the other participating countries, the phases of the ACCCRN project were delivered on a per-city basis; the Philippines was unique in regularly bringing cities together in multi-day workshops over the 2.5 – 3 year life of the project. Figure 1 represents the project phases of the ACCCRN project, while Box 1 presents the implementation of the IAP in the Philippines.

The project was implemented differently in each city, depending on their capacity and structure. “Focal points” (or lead contacts from the LGUs) came from a variety of departments, including Environment and Natural Resources, Planning and the Office of the Mayor. However, all had a Memorandum of Support from their Mayors to validate and support the work they were doing for ACCCRN. For the individual LGU workshops, most LGUs were able to bring the “Core Climate Team” (project working group) together to participate.

However, this was not possible when multi-LGU workshops were held, and this is where strategies to implement ACCCRN phases within the LGUs differed. Some LGUs convened a workshop/meeting with their individual Core Climate Teams to share the learnings from the clustered workshop, assign tasks and gather relevant information for the next phase of the project. Others provided sector-specific, or one-on-one updates and meetings to share and gather information. A selection of the LGUs (particularly the Metro Manila LGUs) requested a follow-up workshop to ensure deep engagement across the Core Climate Team. LGUs also benefitted from online and phone technical support, and occasional follow-up onsite meetings. All, however, noted they gained valuable cross-departmental buy-in for the project, which they had not necessarily achieved before. One Monitoring Workshop Participant noted: *“The environment office is now being placed in the centre stage, because climate change is connected to everything”*.

## Results

The results of the “clustered” approach to delivery of the ACCCRN project were very positive:

- **Extending the reach of the ACCCRN project.** Originally, only 10 LGUs were targeted to participate in the ACCCRN project. Clustering enabled an additional 5 LGUs to participate. Additionally, the inclusion of Bohol province provided another dimension to the project, as provincial governments are tasked with assisting municipalities in developing their LCCAPs.
- **Development of 15 Local Climate Change Action Plans.** On an operational level, the ACCCRN project facilitated LGUs to deliver on the mandated requirement to produce an LCCAP; however, they have done this in a deeper, more comprehensive way than what they would otherwise have been able to do, with more cross-departmental engagement and capacity building.
- **Accelerated learning through sharing with other LGUs.** Repeatedly, participating LGU representatives noted the value of being able to talk with colleagues from other LGUs with similar issues, to share approaches and learn from what was implemented elsewhere (Refer Figure 2). This included the “site visits” in the different host cities so they could see implemented initiatives first hand. *“[There is] value of hearing other people’s experience – it might be applicable to us”*. (Monitoring Workshop participant, August 2016)

### Box 1: Project delivery structure

The ACCCRN project was launched at an overview workshop in August 2013, where calls for Expressions of Interest to participate were invited. The project phases were then delivered as follows, along with attendance by some participants at the Resilient Cities Asia-Pacific conferences:

Workshop 1 – an orientation of the program, delivered individually to participating LGUs, inviting all members of their Core Climate Teams

Workshop 2 – IAP Phase 2 and 3: delivered individually to participating LGUs

Workshop 3 – IAP Phase 4: collective workshop hosted by City of Baguio – December 2014

Resilient Cities Asia-Pacific Conference 2015 - Bangkok, Thailand – February 2015

Workshop 4 – Writing workshop using a modified version of IAP Tool 4.4: collective workshop hosted by Bohol Province – September 2015

Resilient Cities Asia-Pacific Conference 2016 – Melaka Malaysia – March 2016

Workshop 5 – IAP Phase 6: Monitoring Framework and closing: collective workshop hosted by Tuguegarao City – August 2016





## Key Information

15 local government units (LGUs) of varying sizes and capacities participated in the ACCCRN project in the Philippines. The table below summarises some key points for each participating LGU.

LGU name	Province	Desc.	Pop. (2015)	Area Km <sup>2</sup>	Major Feature
Bacnotan	La Union	Municipality	42,078	76.6	Emerging agro-industrial capital in the province of La Union
City of Baguio	Benguet	City	345,366	57.51	Summer capital of the Philippines
Batangas City	Batangas	City	329,874	282.96	Industrial port city of CALABARZON
Bohol Province	Bohol	Province	1.314 million	4117	Prime eco-cultural tourism destination
City of Borongan	E. Samar	City	69,297	475.0	Capital of the province of Eastern Samar
Catbalogan City	Samar	City	103,879	274.22	Capital of the province of Samar
La Trinidad	Benguet	Municipality	129,133	70.04	Capital of the province of Benguet
City of Makati	National Capital Region	City	582,602	21.73	Financial capital of the Philippines
City of Marikina	National Capital Region	City	450,741	22.64	Shoe capital of the Philippines
City of Naga	Camarines Sur	City	196,003	84.48	Most competitive component city in the Philippines (as of 2016)
Quezon City	National Capital Region	City	2.9 million	165.33	Largest city in Metro Manila,
City of San Fernando	La Union	City	121,812	102.72	Capital of the province of La Union
Santa Rosa City	Laguna	City	353,767	58.84	Lion City of South Luzon, Philippines
Tublay	Benguet	Municipality	17,892	102.55	A countryside agri-eco-tourism haven
Tuguegarao City	Cagayan	City	153,502	144.8	Capital of the province of Cagayan

## Lessons Learned

The “clustering” idea emerged after the program had officially launched, requiring ICLEI-SEAS to re-think and re-design their approach. Lessons for future projects include:

- **Target specific city/municipality clusters.** Enable greater participation of local municipalities with their neighbouring cities by targeting specific city / municipality clusters. This could result in a regional climate action plan.
- **Timing is everything.** As with most projects delivered with local governments, timing is everything. For the Philippines, ensuring the project is delivered within one Mayoral electoral term is important, as political changes can derail implementation. Additionally, aligning the production of the LCCAP with the Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) and Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) review cycles facilitates implementation of the identified initiatives.
- **Combine individual LGU workshops with group workshops.** The process of initiating the project with individual LGU workshops enabled the whole Climate Core Team to be involved, and to lay the ground work for the rest of the project. It also enabled the ICLEI staff to meet the members of the Core Climate Team in each LGU face-to-face, and to understand better the particular LGU context. Group workshops can then be introduced later in the project. A challenge still exists in bringing that ‘group workshop’ knowledge back to the members of the Core Climate Team at each individual LGU. Different methods were employed by each LGU with varying success.



Figure 3: ICLEI-SEAS staff provide technical support to LGU personnel during the clustered group workshop in Tuguegarao City. (Photo: Jon Vincent Marin)



- **Technical assistance and flexible approach.** Without doubt, the cities valued the high level of technical assistance provided by the ICLEI team, as well as their willingness to be flexible and to understand each LGUs particular circumstances. Providing both phone and online coaching to individual LGUs is still important, even in a clustered approach. Additionally, technical support visits to individual LGUs that needed supplementary support were also provided. As each of the clustered workshops was delivered over 2 or more days, the ICLEI technical staff were able to spend concentrated time with LGU representatives to work through particular issues and problems they had. (Refer Figure 3)
- **Simple but comprehensive tools.** The urban systems approach of ACCCRN resonated with participants and the tools were considered effective and comprehensive. Although the process introduced many new terms, which proved confusing for some LGUs, overall, they valued the detailed, stepped nature of the tools.

## Replication

This style of project implementation is best suited to governance and geographic arrangements where a large city is surrounded by smaller, less well-resourced municipalities, but where there is a high level of interdependence between the city and their municipalities.

Alternatively, the project would suit situations where two or three local governments are within a close geographic region and exhibit interdependence and willingness to work together. As one participant in the ACCCRN Monitoring Workshop noted: *"We strongly recommend a pool of local governments working together – we have benefitted from this [approach]"*.

For implementation to be effective, it needs to be supported by a Mayor that officially endorses and champions the importance of planning for climate change impacts.

- **Finance:** City governments need to make budget available to send 2 – 3 staff to workshops.
- **Staff/Capacity:** This approach is designed to build staff understanding and skills, however, the time to commit to workshops and the work in between is required. As well as support from other departments.
- **City Characteristics:** Clustering will work best where a large city is surrounded by smaller municipalities. Where the city strongly relies on its hinterland, or is impacted by events there, the imperative to work cooperatively is stronger.

### Insights from ACCCRN Monitoring Workshop participants (August 2016)

*"The environment office is now being placed in the centre stage, because climate change is connected to everything".*

*"Good to have [the Workshop] in different venues to see different initiatives".*

*"[We want to] look into bigger picture of cluster of governments and local regional scope for other plans, not just climate change adaptation"*

*"We strongly recommend a pool of local governments working together – we have benefitted from this [approach]"*

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- **Time for planning and implementation:** Ideally the process requires cross-organisational and external stakeholder engagement. This is time consuming, and can be challenging when there are multiple competing priorities.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** For clustering to have “holistic” impact, broad cross-departmental and external engagement is required.

## Costs and Funding

The ACCCRN project in the Philippines received 255,000 USD from the Rockefeller Foundation, as part of a larger grant to extend the reach of the ACCCRN project to 40 cities across India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and the Philippines.

The overall cost of delivering a “clustered” program was marginally less per LGU reached than the more standard LGU-specific delivery model. Additional time needed to be invested in tailoring the technical guidance to meet the different capacities of cities and smaller municipalities, however there was slightly less onsite time per LGU.

Travel costs for the ICLEI office staff were reduced, while slightly higher costs were incurred by each LGU to participate in a “clustered” program, due to the travel involved. The ICLEI ACCCRN project covered the accommodation costs of three participants from each LGU, however travel costs and additional participants were paid for by the LGU.

Host cities for the clustered workshops assisted with coordinating logistics for the workshops, organized a welcome dinner, generally provided catering and also organized a site visit.

## References & Further Reading

- Gawler S and Tiwari S. 2014 ICLEI ACCCRN Process: Building urban climate change resilience: A toolkit for local governments, <[http://southasia.iclei.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/documents/ICLEI\\_ACCCRN\\_Workbook\\_WORKBOOK.pdf](http://southasia.iclei.org/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/ICLEI_ACCCRN_Workbook_WORKBOOK.pdf)>
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