

Fishers Rise Up! (Ahon Mangingisda!)

Filipino fishers' Climate Strike

Context

The year 2050 is the year that climate experts warn of the 'great flood' that would submerge the lands housing 300 million people across the world, at conservative estimates.

As the climate scientist group Climate Central's recent study identified Asia as the most vulnerable in the event of the rising seas, the Philippines, as an archipelago, will always bear the brunt of the calamitous elevated levels of the world's oceans ramming on our coastlines.

This forecast spells disaster to the Philippines, which is composed of more than 7, 100 islands and with 60% of its total population directly and indirectly related to the coastal geography. The study also shows that residences of 8 million families in Metro Manila would likely be submerged by the projected sea rise of about 2-7 feet, and possibly more.

The coastal population, most especially the fisherfolk sector, who directly subsists in seas for living, bears the brunt of this looming ecological disaster.

While these studies pinned the changing climate, primarily the global warming, as the main culprit of the rising level of waters, it is important to address the underlying factors of climate change.

Projects for development aggression in the form of large-scale mining and logging activities, conversion of productive farm lands into agri-business and eco-tourism ventures, and dumping and filling of seas, also known as land reclamation, are among the biggest threats to the environment, both marine and land.

These projects, which are profit-driven, continue to cost the environmental and socio-economic rights of the most vulnerable sectors.

With over 40 reclamation projects covering more than 30, 000 hectares of its productive fishing waters, the Manila Bay is projected to inundate lands that house tens of millions of population from surrounding regions.

Thousands of hectares of mangroves in the once abundant bay were destroyed to pave way for commercial and industrial hubs. From decades ago until 1995, mangrove areas throughout Manila Bay used to cover 54, 000 hectares, but they have drastically shrunk to 2, 000 hectares and at present, only less than 500 hectares is left.

The ongoing and planned land reclamation activities will intensify the impact of flooding and storm surges, as it would further decrease the natural defense of coastal communities against such kind of natural phenomenon.

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As people's movements around the world are stepping up to save the populations from the devastating effects of climate change, the fisherfolk, as front-line casualties and most vulnerable, are at very right position to rise up.

This year, small fisherfolk and coastal population will join the global movements against climate change and global warming, in the name of saving their fishing communities and the entire sector from utmost extinction.

The “*Fishers Rise Up!*” shall be the Philippines’ fisherfolk and people’s counterpart effort to the global climate strikes, wherein series of mass protests and educational campaigns in and outside the coastal communities will be held. It seeks to:

- educate, organize, and mobilize fishing and coastal populations about the dangers of reclamation and the impacts that the changing climate would inflict on their socio-economic and political rights;
- garner international and broad supports from different organizations, advocacies, individuals and personalities for the fishers’ campaign vs climate change;
- engage, challenge and/or indict government agencies to decisively address and ultimately, along with the people, curb the devastating effects of climate change.

Nature of Program

The “*Fishers Rise Up!*” campaign is a consolidation activities composed of mass community educations, focused group discussions, mobilizations, network building, and stakeholders engagements.

It is led by the national fishers’ group National Federation of Small Fisherfolk Organizations in the Philippines (PAMALAKAYA) and its local chapters nationwide, supported by fisherfolk advocates, environmental defenders, and climate justice groups.

Program of Activities

- January 9 – Fisherfolks’ silent protest vs the 300-hectare Bacoor Reclamation Project at the Public Hearing held by the Bacoor City government
- January 15 – Fisherfolk protest in Bulakan town coinciding the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the 2,500-ha Bulacan Aerotropolis Project
- January 27 – Fishers protest at the DENR in time of the 1st anniversary of the Battle for Manila Bay
- February 12 – Public discussion and people’s assembly at Baseco Compound, Tondo, Manila
- February 17 – Submission of letter of complaint to the Environmental Ombudsman against Bacoor City local government for environmental violations
- February 19 – Public Forum on the Impacts of Reclamation at Bacoor City, Cavite
- February 21 – Black Friday Protest vs Manila Reclamation at Anda Circle, Intramuros, Manila
- February 24 – Fishers Rise Up!: a Climate Strike in Mendiola, Manila

Calls and Slogans:

- Filipino Fishers are on Climate Strike! Resist Plunder of our Seas!
- No to Reclamation! Save Manila Bay!
- Restore the Mangroves, our Natural Defense vs Rising Seas!
- Fishing Rights are Human Rights!
- Our Boats are Sinking, Let’s Group and Resist Climate Change!
- Fishers are Expert Swimmers, but we Refuse Submersion of our Communities!