



Climate Change Adaptation,
Disposition, and Displacement
(CiCADD) Project



Research Institute for
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Rethinking Resilience: What Communities in Cagayan de Oro Teach Us About Relocation and Adaptation

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These concerns surfaced during the Third Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting of the **Climate Change Adaptation, Disposition, and Displacement (CiCADD) Project** in Cagayan de Oro City. Community representatives, researchers, academics, and other stakeholders shared their experiences of climate risks, relocation, and flood-control infrastructure.

Their stories suggest communities should not be seen as mere recipients of adaptation programs. Their knowledge and lived experiences can help shape interventions that better reflect local realities.

Livelihoods are Reshaped with Relocation

One local government representative described a continuing concern in relocation sites: *"Kulang ilahang panginabuhid dito."* (There are not enough livelihood opportunities there.)

Relocation may move families away from areas exposed to flooding, but distance from the city center can also make earning a living more difficult. For many households, accepting and sustaining relocation depends not only on housing but also on access to work, schools, markets, transportation, and essential services.

Participants from riverside communities explained why staying near the city still matters. Their communities are closer to workplaces, markets, and schools, reducing both travel time and transportation expenses. One participant earns his living by driving a *sikad* or pedicab, with daily

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earnings just enough for household needs. Moving farther away would mean additional transportation costs that a daily wage earner may struggle to absorb.

Another participant described a relocation site around 10 kilometers from the household's source of livelihood, requiring three rides to reach the city center. Eventually, they left the relocated house to their child and the child's family, while other household members returned to their former community to continue working.

“Naanad napud mi diha nga mao [quarrying] ang among panginabuhi.” (We are already accustomed to quarrying as our livelihood.)

Experiences like these show that relocation is more than the physical transfer of households. Its sustainability also depends on whether families can continue earning, reach essential services, and maintain the social and economic relationships that support everyday life.

Regulating Livelihoods While Protecting Communities

Manual quarrying remains an important source of livelihood for some riverside residents. Participants recognized that Philippine law regulates quarrying, including the Philippine Mining Act of 1995 and the Local Government Code of 1991.

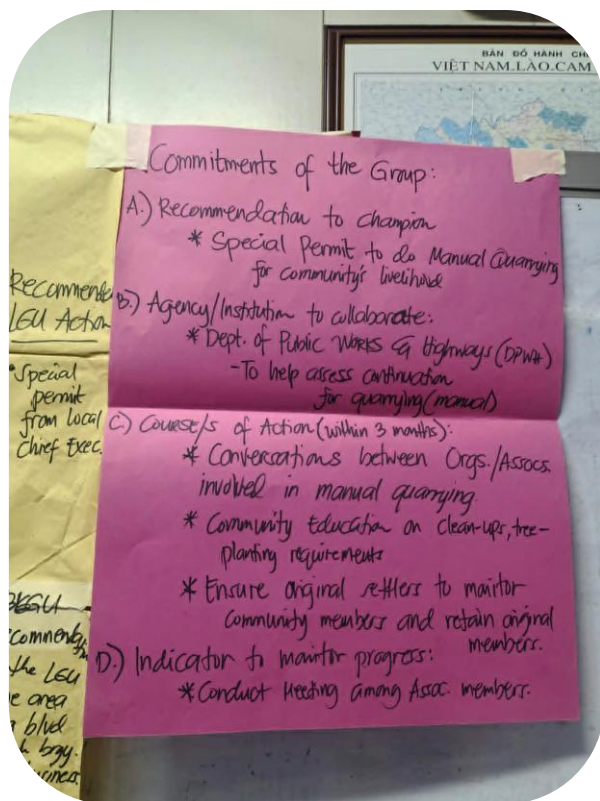
Their concern was not about removing regulation. Instead, they described difficulties navigating requirements for small-scale, community-based livelihood activities, including lengthy permit processes.

This raises an important question: **How can environmental regulation protect natural resources while also recognizing the livelihood realities of communities that depend on them?**

Participants emphasized the need to explore approaches that remain environmentally responsible while being more accessible and responsive to local circumstances. From this perspective, adaptation involves not only moving people away from hazards but also helping communities rebuild their lives in socially and economically sustainable ways.

When Flood Protection Changes the Risk Landscape

The discussion also turned to the Megadike and how flood-control infrastructure has influenced people's understanding of safety and vulnerability.



Some participants acknowledged improvements since its construction. One attendee observed, “*Ang baha dili na pareho sa Sendong sauna*”—flooding is no longer the same as during Sendong. For some households, the infrastructure has provided an important sense of protection.

At the same time, participants raised questions about how floodwater now moves and accumulates in different areas. These concerns were particularly important for communities situated between the river and sections of the Megadike.

One participant asked, “*Nganong gi pihig man mi?*” (Why are we being disadvantaged?)

The question captures a difficult issue in climate adaptation: reducing risk in one place may not necessarily reduce risk equally for everyone. Infrastructure can provide much-needed protection while also changing how communities experience risk.

This is why adaptation needs to be assessed not only through its technical effectiveness. It is equally important to ask: **Who benefits? Who carries the costs? And are new vulnerabilities being created along the way?**

Toward More People-Centered Adaptation

The conversations during the Third CAC were not arguments against relocation or flood-control infrastructure. Instead, they pointed to the need for interventions that consider what happens to people after they have been moved or protected.

A relocation site may provide safer housing, but families also need reasonable access to livelihoods, transportation, schools, health services, markets, and social networks. Without these, households may remain dependent on their former communities or eventually return to hazard-exposed areas.

This challenges the idea of relocation as primarily a housing solution. It is also a process of rebuilding livelihoods, relationships, routines, and a sense of community.

The experiences shared during the meeting suggest that physical relocation does not automatically address the conditions that make households vulnerable. A family may become safer from flooding while facing higher transportation costs, fewer livelihood opportunities, limited services, or housing that does not fully meet household needs.

For communities in Cagayan de Oro, resilience therefore means more than protection from floods. It also involves earning a living, accessing essential services, maintaining social connections, and participating in decisions that affect one's community.

The conversations from the Third CAC offer a broader way of thinking about climate adaptation—one in which **physical safety, livelihood security, social well-being, dignity, and community participation are interconnected**.

For CiCADD, this means looking beyond whether an adaptation intervention reduces exposure to climate hazards. It also means paying attention to how different people experience its benefits and burdens.

Perhaps this is where community voices matter most. They remind us that resilience is not only about where people are moved or what structures are built. It is also about whether people can keep building meaningful, sustainable lives in the places they are expected to call home.

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