

Letter to the Editor: Climate Crisis and Public Health: Global or Local Inaction

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Dear Editor,

In recent years, the World Health Organization (WHO) has announced that the largest health threat facing humanity is climate change. According to the WHO, climate change threatens the basic ingredients of good health, including clean air, safe drinking water, safe shelter, and a nutritious food supply [1]. The climate crisis is expected to lead to a further widening of health inequalities between and within populations. Studies have shown that the climate crisis is a result of global inaction [2]. Developed countries have greatly benefited from the earth's resources, the usage of which has contributed to climate change. While it is true that the poorest countries suffer the worst effects of the climate crisis, the author argues that local communities should also do their best to manage their natural resources. The vulnerable population can do their share in responsibly caring for the environment to protect them from the harmful effects of climate change.

In the Philippines, cutting, destroying, or injuring trees and plants is prohibited under Republic Act No. 3571.3 [3]. However, according to the Global Forest Watch data reports, the Philippines lost 1.34 million hectares of natural forest from 2001 to 2021 [4]. In 2021, the country lost 37.7 thousand hectares

of natural forest, equivalent to 22.3 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions. During the last 20 years, 92% of the country's tree cover has been lost, resulting in deforestation. In order to build roads and widen roads, trees along highways have been cut down. Massive logging resulted in landslides and catastrophic flooding in lowland areas. Poor and vulnerable populations have been greatly affected by deforestation. Inaction by local government units and at the national level is evident. Despite the injustice perpetrated against the environment, little has been done to lessen the impact of the climate crisis, particularly on vulnerable populations.

Care for the common home is the focus of *Laudato Si*, an encyclical issued by Pope Francis in May 2015. This encyclical emphasized the interconnections between the divine, humans, and nature [5]. The cry of the earth has been echoed in many studies, conferences, and personal stories. There is an urgent need for action from the global community and especially from local communities. Several possible solutions have been suggested, including environmental education. From families to educational institutions, environmental awareness should be integrated. Appropriately implementing government policies is essential. Participation in environmental sustainability with a stronger self and organized efforts are required to support public health and ecological sustainability. Vulnerable countries will have a better chance of effectively confronting climate challenges if local units act proactively, while developed countries continue supporting them. Moreover, the author recommends further research on environmental conditions that affect public health in order to lower the impact of climate change on humanity.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author has no conflicts of interest associated with the material presented in this paper.

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