

**- Air pollution / Tuberculosis****Poor air quality increases TB risk**

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AIR POLLUTION has an unequal impact on health, with the most vulnerable people bearing the brunt of its ill effects, according to Greenpeace.

In a report released on Sept. 1, the independent global campaigning network said that socioeconomic deprivation increases an individual's vulnerability to air pollution and chronic health conditions. Among them is tuberculosis (TB), a continuing problem in the Philippines, which has the third highest TB prevalence rate in the world and where nearly 10 million people reside in urban slums.

"We have [made] significant strides in TB control and improving the health of Filipinos nationwide. However, Filipinos would continue to suffer and [be] more susceptible to TB if we allow the continued deterioration of the quality of the air that we breathe," said Michelle Lang-Alli, director of the Office of Health at USAID Philippines, at a webinar organized by non-profit human development organization FHI 360.

An estimated 66,000 Filipinos die every year due to poor air quality. The economic cost of ambient air pollution is P4.5 trillion, roughly equivalent to \$87 billion, said Climate Change Commissioner Rachel Anne S. Herrera at the same webinar.

This cost is 23% of the country's gross domestic product in 2019, she added, citing a November 2021 study by the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities and the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air. According to the Greenpeace report, Benguet, Rizal, and Metro Manila have the worst air quality in the Philippines.

**BREAKING DOWN SILOS**

There is a need to break down silos among agencies toward the development of green technologies needed for climate-resilient communities, said Ms. Herrera, adding that legislators are looking to update the Clean Air Act of 1999.

"We recognize that we should look at long-term solutions," she said in a Sept. 6 e-mail. "Our health sector must be resilient and must be strengthened — so it can protect the most vulnerable against climate change."

Integration between climate and health is possible through research and advocacy, said Dr. Rosalind G. Vianzon, head of the healthy settings and environment division of the Health Promotion Bureau of the Department of Health.

"We will review healthy settings like homes, schools, and workplaces, and adopt a life-cycle approach, so we can understand how climate change affects the health of babies, children and adults," she said.

The National Government has earmarked P296.3 billion for the health sector in 2023, a 10.4% increase from its 2022 budget.

The proposed National Expenditure Program for 2023 will include P453 billion for climate change adaptation and mitigation programs and projects, 56.4% higher than the P289.73 billion for 2022.