



The Philippines' poor environmental performance

By Rox Peña

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IN 2012, the Philippines ranked 42nd out of 132 countries in the Environmental Performance Index (EPI) and was categorized as global "strong performer". The EPI is a method of quantifying and numerically marking the environmental performance of a state's policies. It was developed by the Yale University and Colombia University, in collaboration with the World Economic Forum and the European Commission.

When I checked the EPI results for 2014, I was surprised to see the Philippines falling to 114th place out of 178 countries. I was even more surprised when I checked the previous rankings from 2002 and found that the Philippines consistently ranked below 100th place. How could this be when we already ranked 42nd and 50th in 2012 and 2010 respectively?

I found out later that the 2014 EPI incorporated new data and improved indicators. New climate and energy indicators that account for differing economic and development status across the world's countries were included. The Air Quality and Forests issue areas include new indicators for Air Pollution and Change in Forest Cover that make use of cutting-edge satellite data. For the first time also, Wastewater Treatment was used as an indicator.

Applying these new data and improved indicators, the Philippines ranked poorly with an over-all score of only 44.02 percent out of a perfect score of 100 percent. The new measurement methods were also applied to past performances which explain why there was a change in ranking. The EPI calls these rankings 'back-casted' scores.

The Philippines' worst performance was on Agriculture with a rank of 162nd. Rated under this category are agricultural subsidies (rank 141) and pesticide regulation (rank 112). Pulling down the Philippines' previous ranking is the new indicator on Wastewater Treatment where we ranked 130th. Admittedly, we are really weak in this area because only a few Local Government Units have sewerage and septage treatment facilities.

Our best score is on the Fisheries category. We ranked 33rd in terms of Fish Stocks and 69th on Coastal Shelf Fishing Pressure. On the new category Climate and Energy, our low rank of 103rd place was caused mainly by the sub-category Access to Electricity where we placed 108th.

The new EPI ranking is an eye opener to our policy makers in government.

As a consolation, did you know that the Philippines is "less miserable" than countries like Finland, France, Australia and the United Kingdom? A "Misery Index" done by the Cato Institute ranked the Philippines 67th out of 89 countries (with 1 being the most miserable and 89 as least miserable). The misery index is a simple sum of inflation, lending rates, and unemployment rates, minus year-on-year per capita GDP growth.

Finland ranked 55th, France 56th and Australia 59th. Worst performer is Venezuela mainly due to its high consumer prices while the best performer is Japan. Read full report on <http://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/measuring-misery-around-world>.