



Philippine Institute
for Development
Studies
*Surian sa mga Pag-aaral
Pangkaunlaran
ng Pilipinas*

Economic Issue of the Day

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Basics on Philippine climatology

In our daily lives, the weather plays a particular role. Whether we commute to our work stations or work in the farm or do our daily chores as homebodies, knowing what the weather outlook will be is useful for our respective purposes.

Beyond the knowledge of having the sun shining brightly or having rains for the day, however, the average citizen does not know much about the weather or climate.

And yet for a country like the Philippines where certain weather/climate conditions affect lives, properties and sources of livelihood on an almost regular basis, understanding more about the nature, causes and manifestations of these conditions may, in a way, help be better prepared for them when they come. This writeup is thus a starting point for learning a little more about them.

Weather is the specific condition of the atmosphere at a particular place and time. It can change from hour to hour and from one season to another. *Climate*, on the other hand, is the average weather of a particular area that prevails over a particular period of, for instance, over a month, one season, a year, or even several years.

Weather/climate is measured and characterized by a number of elements but the three most important are temperature, humidity and rainfall. *Temperature* refers to the degree of hotness and coldness of the atmosphere. *Humidity* is the moisture content of the atmosphere while *rainfall* is the amount of precipitation in liquid form falling over a specific area. Its distribution varies across regions in the country depending on the direction of moisture-bearing winds and the presence of mountain systems.

The climate of the Philippines is influenced by the complex interaction of various factors such as the country's geography and topography; principal air streams; ocean currents; linear systems such as the intertropical convergence zone; and tropical cyclones which are classified as tropical depression, tropical storm or typhoon, depending on their intensities (to be presented in a separate issue of the *Economic Issue of the Day*).

Among these factors, it is perhaps useful to understand the movements of air streams. Rainfall is generally a result of the movement and interaction of cold and warm air masses in a particular period. The Southwest Monsoon or locally known as *Habagat*, for instance, affects the country from May to September and occurs when warm moist air flows over the country from the southwest direction. This brings in rains to the western portion of the country. The Northeast Monsoon or *Amihan*, meanwhile, affects the eastern portions of the country from October to late March. Cold and dry air mass from Siberia gathers moisture as it travels over

What is weather and climate

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The *Economic Issue of the Day* is one of a series of PIDS efforts to help in enlightening the public and other interested parties on the concepts behind certain economic issues. This dissemination outlet aims to define and explain, in simple and easy-to-understand terms, basic concepts as they relate to current and everyday economics-related matters.

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The views expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of PIDS or the project's sponsors.

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the Pacific and brings widespread cloudiness with rains and showers upon reaching the eastern parts of the Philippines. In addition, a cold front affects the country from November to February and brings increased cloudiness and heavy rains. This occurs when a mass of moving cold air overtakes a mass of moving warm air resulting in towering cloud formations that bring heavy rains and thunderstorms.

On the whole, the climate of the Philippines (using temperature and rainfall as the gauge) can be divided into two major seasons: the *rainy season*, which sets in by June and ends around November, and the *dry season*, which sets in by December and ends in May. The dry season is also subdivided into the cool dry season from December to February and the hot dry season from March to May.

The entire country, however, may be characterized by four types or classifications (Figure 1) of climate based on the distribution of rainfall.

Type I—has two pronounced seasons: dry from November to April and wet throughout the rest of the year. The western parts of Luzon, Mindoro, Negros and Palawan experience this climate. These areas are shielded by mountain ranges but are open to rains brought in by *Habagat* and tropical cyclones.

Type II—characterized by the absence of a dry season but with a very pronounced maximum rain period from November to January. Regions with this climate are along or very near the eastern coast (Catanduanes, Sorsogon, eastern part of Albay, eastern and northern parts of Camarines Norte and Sur, eastern part of Samar and large portions of Eastern Mindanao).

Type III—seasons are not very pronounced but are relatively dry from November to April and wet during the rest of the year. Areas under this type include the western part of Cagayan, Isabela, parts of Northern Mindanao and most of Eastern Palawan. These areas are partly sheltered from tradewinds but are open to *Habagat* and are frequented by tropical cyclones.

Type IV—characterized by a more or less even distribution of rainfall throughout the year. Areas with this climate include Batanes, Northeastern Luzon, Southwest Camarines Norte, west of Camarines Sur, Albay, Northern Cebu, Bohol and most of Central, Eastern and Southern Mindanao. *

Figure 1. Climate map of the Philippines based on the modified Coronas classification

