



**PROCEEDINGS 2026-12**

Urban Studies Program

# Engaging Stakeholders in River Basin Planning and Risk Management

Proceedings of the Consultation with the Iloilo Hotel and  
Restaurants and Resorts Association (IHRRRA), Inc.

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28 October 2025

Iloilo Business Center Bldg., Brgy. Arsenal-Aduana, Iloilo City

*Rhodella A. Ibabao, Brian C. Ventura, Alan Dino E. Moscoso, Jeestin Kent S. Gabinera,  
and Nicko Jay S. Miranda*



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Telephone: (02) 8981-8500 loc. 4266 to 4268 / (02) 8426-0955

Email: [cidspublications@up.edu.ph](mailto:cidspublications@up.edu.ph)

Website: [cids.up.edu.ph](http://cids.up.edu.ph)



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**Cover Image Credit**

"The UPV research team conducted a series of questions with participants to gain insights into their perceptions of the Iloilo River."

Photo courtesy of the Urban Studies Program Iloilo

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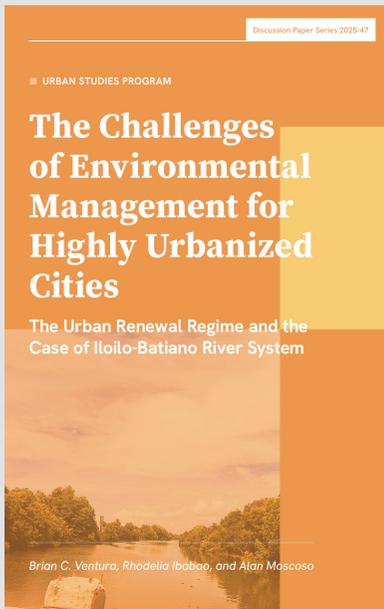
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The Challenges of Environmental Management for Highly Urbanized Cities\_ The Urban Renewal Regime and the Case of Iloilo-Batiano River System



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Urban Studies Program

**Advancing Iloilo River Management**

Key Outcomes from Stakeholder Consultation with the Iloilo-Batiano River Development Council (IBRDC)

09 October 2025

LEDIPO Meeting Room, Iloilo Business Center Bldg., Brgy. Arsenal-Aduana, Iloilo City

Rhodelia A. Ibabao, Brian C. Ventura, Alan Dino E. Moscoso, Jeestin Kent S. Gabinera, and Nicko Jay S. Miranda



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**PROCEEDINGS**

Advancing Iloilo River Management: Key Outcomes from Stakeholder Consultation with the Iloilo-Batiano River Development Council (IBRDC)



# About the Proceedings

This is a report of the stakeholders' consultation held with the representatives of the Iloilo Hotels, Restaurants, & Resorts Association, Inc. (IHRRA), held on October 28, 2025, at the LEDIPO Meeting Room, Iloilo Business Center Bldg., Brgy. Arsenal-Aduana, Iloilo City.

The University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV) Research Team's project, entitled "Revitalizing an Urban River: Stakeholders' Engagement to Improve the Water Quality of the Iloilo-Batiano River Basin," is under the Urban Studies Program (USP), funded by the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS).

## *Acknowledgement*

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# Executive Summary

The consultation with the Iloilo Hotels, Restaurants & Resorts Association, Inc. (IHRRA) formed part of the “Revitalizing an Urban River: Stakeholders’ Engagement to Improve the Water Quality of the Iloilo-Batiano River Basin” project, jointly implemented by the University of the Philippines Visayas (UPV) and the Iloilo City Government through the City Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO). It was held on October 28, 2025, at the LEDIPO Meeting Room, Iloilo Business Center.

## *Purpose and Objectives*

The session gathered the perspectives, experiences, and recommendations of the business sector—particularly establishment owners located along the Iloilo River—to improve river governance, environmental quality, and sustainable tourism.

It also sought to identify ways to strengthen collaboration between the local government, national agencies, and private sector stakeholders in maintaining river health and enhancing the Iloilo River’s value as a cultural and economic asset.

## *Key Points of Discussion*

- **Business Linkages to the River:** Establishments acknowledged the Iloilo River as integral to their business identity, branding, and ambience. Many use the riverfront view in their marketing materials and social media promotions.
- **Perceived River Conditions:** Participants observed major improvements in cleanliness and odor following the esplanade development. However, they raised issues on rusting railings, damaged lights, and lack of CCTV cameras along the Esplanade, posing safety concerns.
- **Environmental Practices:** The River Queen Hotel operates sewage treatment plants (STPs) for compliance with Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) standards. The others support environmental initiatives by providing logistics or sponsorships for river clean-up and community events.
- **Coordination and Communication:** Interaction with the City Government is mostly event-based and irregular. In contrast, the DENR maintains more consistent engagement for environmental monitoring and reporting.

- **Challenges and Needs:** Participants noted the high cost and logistical burden of water quality testing, which currently requires sending samples to Bacolod City, Negros Island. They also mentioned the need for improved solid waste management, flood control, and mangrove “windowing” to balance aesthetics and ecology. They reported about a noticeable, unusual smell originating from the Iloilo River during periods of low tide, likely caused by decaying organic matter.

Another concern is that there is no master plan that ties the river, its history, and cultural landmarks into a single, attractive development and marketing package.

### ***Agreements and Shared Views***

The participants recognized their responsibility in maintaining the river’s cleanliness and supported stricter implementation of waste management and water quality regulations.

Participants expressed openness to participate in regular dialogues, collaborative projects, and riverfront promotional activities linking environmental conservation with tourism and local economic growth.

### ***Next Steps***

- **Institutionalize LGU–Business Communication Channels:** Establish a structured mechanism for continuous feedback and coordination between riverfront establishments and the Iloilo City Government.
- **Develop a Riverfront Business Partnership Program:** Formalize private sector participation in regular clean-ups, environmental monitoring, and heritage branding activities.
- **Promote Capacity Building:** Train Pollution Control Officers (PCOs) and enhance awareness of compliance obligations under environmental laws.
- **Facilitate a Local Water Testing Laboratory:** Advocate for establishing an accessible testing facility in Iloilo City to reduce costs and encourage compliance.
- **Integrate River-Based Tourism Development:** Encourage organized river festivals, cultural activities, and eco-tourism promotions that feature participating businesses.

- **Develop a riverscape:** The development of establishments along the Iloilo River should highlight and integrate nearby landmarks, such as the bridges, the Iloilo Provincial Capitol, and other architecturally or historically significant structures, to enhance the river’s visual and cultural appeal.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

- **Strengthen Public–Private Collaboration:** Institutionalize IHRRA representation in the Iloilo-Batiano River Development Council (IBRDC) to ensure consistent private sector participation in river governance.
- **Enforce Environmental Compliance:** Require all riverside establishments to maintain functioning sewage treatment plans and pollution control officers in accordance with DENR-Environmental Management Bureau standards.
- **Establish Maintenance and Safety Protocols:** The LGU should adopt a comprehensive Esplanade maintenance policy covering railings, lighting, CCTV installation, and riverscaping.
- **Adopt Eco-Branding Incentives:** Create incentives or recognition schemes for establishments that integrate river conservation into their operations, marketing, or community outreach.
- **Mainstream “Windowing” Guidelines:** Formalize policies on mangrove trimming to balance ecological integrity and aesthetic visibility along the riverfront.

### ***Conclusion***

The consultation emphasized the essential role of the business sector as both beneficiary and steward of the Iloilo River. Strengthening partnerships through clear communication channels, shared responsibility, and policy coherence will ensure that environmental integrity and economic development go hand in hand. The Iloilo River stands as a living heritage and a unifying symbol of sustainable urban transformation—one that requires the continued collaboration of government, academe, and the private sector.



# Project Overview and Methods

## Background

The Iloilo River is significant to the city's economy, environment, and cultural identity. However, increasing pollution, encroachment, and climate impacts threaten its long-term sustainability. The stakeholder consultation on river management was conducted to gather views, priorities, and recommendations from key actors involved in or affected by the management of the Iloilo River.

The consultation aimed to promote inclusive participation and evidence-based decision-making, supporting sustainable management of the Iloilo River through integrated, participatory approaches aligned with Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) principles and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 6, 11, 13, and 15).

For the stakeholder consultations, a collaborative governance model was used to frame urban river management. The framework focuses on integrating diverse stakeholder perspectives and resources to achieve the sustainable health of the river—a goal that no single entity can accomplish alone. The primary goal is to improve river health, manage urban challenges such as flooding and pollution, and enhance both human and ecological well-being. This approach moves away from traditional top-down methods by emphasizing shared decision-making and mutual learning to address complex environmental and socioeconomic challenges.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) forged a significant collaboration between UP Visayas and the Iloilo City Government, signed on August 26, 2025. The project focuses on collaborative efforts among key actors that integrate knowledge, viewpoints, values, and practices that can enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of actions in Iloilo River management.

## Activity Objectives

- To understand stakeholder perceptions of current and envisioned river conditions;
- To identify key issues, challenges, and opportunities in river management; and

- To discuss policy recommendations to improve collaboration and holistic management of the Iloilo River.

## Methods for the Stakeholder Consultations

### *Pre-Activity Meetings*

Before the stakeholder consultations, several online preparatory meetings were held to align objectives, roles, and strategies. The team prepared a detailed agenda, identified participants, and distributed invitation letters to ensure everyone came informed and ready to contribute.

The CENRO staff diligently delivered the letters, followed up through calls, texts, and emails, and coordinated venue bookings with the Iloilo City Government.

### *Consultation Approach*

A participatory approach was used with the members of the IHRRA. These are the owners and/or operators of commercial establishments in Iloilo. The CENRO of the Iloilo City prioritized those establishments who are landowners of properties along Iloilo River where their businesses are located.

The consultation with the business sector consisted of a set of guide questions that was sent to them before the consultation, and their responses were discussed during the activity.

## Data Collection and Analysis

Qualitative data were gathered from the focus group discussions. A thematic analysis, guided by the principles of Policy Coherence Analysis (PCA), was conducted to identify dominant themes and examine policy linkages. This analysis served as an initial assessment of relevant laws, department issuances, city ordinances, plans, and executive orders related to water management and the Iloilo River. References were mainly sourced from the Offices of the *Sangguniang Panlungsod* Secretary and the City Mayor, complemented by online materials. The PCA helped reveal areas of coherence, conflict, and opportunity across key policy domains.

# Consultation with the Iloilo Hotels, Restaurants & Resorts Association, Inc. (IHRRA)

## Rationale of the Stakeholders' Consultation with Selected Members of the IHRRA, Inc.

As the tourism and service sectors expand along the Iloilo River corridor, hotels and restaurants have become both stewards and beneficiaries of the river's health. However, integrating private sector participation into governance frameworks remains a challenge. Thus, the consultations are formal venues for views and practices to be discussed that can be strengthened to enhance business owners' contribution to the sustainable management of the Iloilo River.

The IHRRA is the primary association for the hotel and restaurant industry in Iloilo. It is active in local tourism and hospitality initiatives. The members have expressed support for various city government proposals and projects.

## Activity Rationale

***Ms. Ma. Christina Octavio***

*Office of the City Environment and Natural Resources (OCENR) Officer*

A total of ten (10) representatives from the IHRRA were invited to the consultation. A few of the invited participants were unable to attend due to prior commitments, and others have updated their availability. The consultation is part of the ongoing collaborative project between the local government unit of Iloilo City and the University of the Philippines Visayas, which involves a series of stakeholders' consultations. The first was conducted with City LGU offices and concerned national government agencies. At present, simultaneous consultations are being conducted—with barangay officials meeting on the first floor and hotel and restaurant owners participating in the session on this floor.

# Presentation of UPV Project Team and Discussion of Guide Questions

## *Presentation of UPV Research Team*

*Prof. Rhodella A. Ibabao*  
*Project Leader*

### *The UPV Research Project Team*

- Rhodella A. Ibabao – Project Leader
- Brian C. Ventura – Project Research Fellow
- Alan Dino E. Moscoso – Project Research Fellow
- Jeestin Kent S. Gabinera – Project Staff
- Nicko Jay S. Miranda – Project Staff
- Mary Jane J. Castromayor – Administrative Staff
- Hearty G. Adolfo-Sapanza – Administrative Staff

### *The Collaborator and Convenor of the Stakeholders' Consultations*

- The Iloilo City Government - Office of the City Environment and Natural Resources Officer

## *Discussion of Guide Questions*

*Prof. Brian Ventura*  
*UPV Project Fellow*

Prof. Ventura presented the set of guide questions that the participants were to answer individually. The discussion was conducted informally and conversationally, allowing participants to share their insights openly and comfortably while maintaining a respectful atmosphere.

- **What is your specific business/industry?**
- **How long have you been in the business?**

The Representative of Muelli Deli Restaurant noted that their establishment is located directly along the riverside. It was established before the Esplanade project began, during a time when the riverbank was lined with stones.

Meanwhile, the Representative of Waterfront Seafood & Cocktails noted their business as a fine dining restaurant that has been in the industry for two years and 3 months.

The representative of JD Bakery and Restaurant described their establishment as a family-owned business that celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2025.

Lastly, the Representative of River Queen Hotel and Restaurant stated that it has been in operations since 1964.

Prof. Ventura proceeded to the next set of questions. According to him, since everyone is situated along the river, they each have firsthand experiences of living and working near it—how it affects their daily lives and business. Moreover, they witnessed the river’s changes over time—its improvements, challenges, and the issues that continue to emerge. Given these experiences, participants were requested to share valuable insights and expectations for the river’s future.

- **Is the Iloilo River currently part of the conduct of your business? If not, what about in the future?**
- **What do you think about the current condition of the river as it relates to your business?**

The Representative of Mueller Deli Restaurant noted that their establishment is located directly along the riverside. It was established before the Esplanade project began, during a time when the riverbank was lined with stones. At that time, customers often used the river as one of their favorite access points, although the area had an unpleasant odor. With the development of the Esplanade, the river’s condition has improved significantly, particularly in terms of smell, although occasional trash can still be observed. Currently, the railings along the Esplanade are badly rusted and have become unsafe, posing a danger, especially to guests with children, so we constantly must watch over them. Some posts and lights in the area are also damaged, and there are no CCTV cameras installed along the Esplanade, which raises safety concerns for both visitors and establishments nearby.

The Representative of Waterfront Seafood & Cocktails mentioned that their restaurant faces the Esplanade, and the Iloilo River provides the natural ambience that enhances the overall atmosphere. They have not received any major complaints from clients about the odor coming from the river

or from the public having limited access to the river because they own the property. However, an odor can be smelled during low tide. Fortunately, the establishment has enough space to not be bothered by the odor. Additionally, a function room is available where guests can transfer. Most customers enter the restaurant through General Luna, and some joggers occasionally stop by for snacks. The river view serves as a beautiful backdrop for the restaurant, although the tall mangroves sometimes obstruct the view.

The Representative of JD Bakery and Restaurant expressed support for the river cleanup activities organized by the DENR by providing snacks for participants, especially when there are no available personnel directly joining the activity. They continue to coordinate closely with the DENR for these efforts.

On the Roadhouse side, there is an exit through the Mestizo Restaurant, but the portion near JD Bakery remains closed and is not open to the public. Similarly, the parking area is also not accessible to the public, and clients have no exit through that section. From their office located on the second floor, they still enjoy a good view of the river. Joggers who pass by in the early or late morning do not cause any disturbance to their operations. When they need to access the area, they must go around, as there are no plans to open that section, and it will remain closed. There are instances when the height of the mangroves obstruct the view of the river. The establishment informs the CENRO about this concern via a letter.

Ms. Ma. Christina Octavio, the OCENR officer responded and stated that the Iloilo City CENRO conducts “windowing” activities, which are carried out with permission from the DENR. They get an official permit for this process. Previously, during discussions of the Iloilo-Batiano River Development Council, esplanade users and joggers raised concerns about the tall mangroves blocking the view from the other side. Former Senator Drilon clarified that windowing is allowed if the mangroves are maintained at a certain height and their ecological function is preserved.

Raising a concern, the Representative of River Queen Hotel and Restaurant mentioned that the esplanade has claimed a portion of their property, particularly their terrace. Currently, the remaining terrace is closed to the public when there are no scheduled functions or events in the hotel’s function room. During such occasions, clients can enjoy a scenic view of the river from the terrace and may also use the area for wedding photoshoots or other special moments. Guests can conveniently exit through the esplanade

after their events. There are also ongoing plans to integrate the esplanade into the hotel's overall design and renovation, enhancing its connection with the riverfront.

In the future, it is hoped that they will utilize the area once they have the resources to restore their building's Terrace facing the river that was affected by the Esplanade development. Their goal is to enhance the space responsibly while ensuring the river remains protected and well-preserved. However, the participant reported that the terrace is sometimes affected by "dapyra" or the strong wind and water spray from the river, especially during low tide. This prompts the management to close the windows for comfort.

In terms of development, the participant has seen the improvement of the river over the years. Their way of showing commitment is to protect it for future generations. In compliance with DENR-EMB regulations, they have installed a sewage treatment plant that ensures only clean, treated water is released into the river.

After these discussions, the following question was asked:

■ **What is your vision for the Iloilo River in relation to the business?**

In response to this, the Representative of Muelli Deli Restaurant mentioned that it was envisioned to have a boat attraction similar to Gaisano City, as it would appeal especially to foreign visitors and complement their high-end clientele. Introducing more recreational activities along the river would also enhance the overall experience for both locals and tourists. The bridges, while functional, could be improved aesthetically to make them more appealing and visually striking, particularly for those enjoying a boating ride. The river nearest to them needs major upkeep compared to other bridges that are on the river.

Access to the river area should likewise be enhanced to encourage more visitors. From their restaurant, the view of the Iloilo River, the bridge, and the Iloilo Provincial Capitol across the water creates a picturesque scene—especially during Christmas, when the lights make the entire area more vibrant and inviting. Many of our clients come specifically to enjoy this open, scenic view of the riverfront and surrounding landmarks.

The Representative of Waterfront Seafood & Cocktails stated that the esplanade offers a beautiful view that makes it an ideal spot for outdoor

activities. During certain events, organizers can set up tents and tables outside the restaurant's area to create a lively and inviting atmosphere. These activities not only enhance the riverside experience but also help attract more people to the area, making the Esplanade a recreational and social destination.

Additionally, the Representative of JD Bakery and Restaurant underscored the importance of maintaining the river's cleanliness, especially since they are beside the river. The esplanade serves as a key attraction for visitors. At present, there are many activities taking place in the area, and they hope that there will be more activities in the future. The riverboat experience adds to the appeal of the river, but most of the bridges are too low, which limits access for boats, particularly during high tide. Moreover, the CENRO has landscaping and gardening efforts enhancing the surroundings. Continuous maintenance and coordinated improvements are needed to ensure that the riverfront remains clean, safe, and enjoyable for both residents and tourists.

The Representative of River Queen Hotel and Restaurant stressed that maintaining cleanliness along the river is essential, especially since garbage tends to accumulate when the weather is bad. During typhoons or periods of strong wind, floating debris and trash are often carried into the river and become visible during low tide. This has always been a recurring issue. However, the garbage does not stay for long, as its presence depends on the tidal movement. Continuous cleanup efforts and monitoring are therefore important to ensure that the river remains clean and visually appealing despite these natural challenges.

The participants were also asked if they are aware of having Pollution Control Officer in their establishments. With the exception of the River Queen Hotel, the participants had to verify the information in their offices. This indicates a gap in information awareness among some establishments along the river, highlighting the need for better coordination and dissemination of environmental management guidelines from the concerned agencies. Prof. Ventura proceeded to ask the following:

- **Are you familiar with any business group projects/ activities related to the Iloilo River?**

The Representative of Muelli Deli Restaurant mentioned their support for river-based activities such as fishing events and dragon boat races. There are groups that organize the activities and visit the restaurant during the events, where they provide snacks, including free-flowing coffee and bread, as

part of their sponsorship. These events are held once a year, with the most recent one taking place in August of last year. The RMN Fishing Festival for the Iloilo River served as the main organizer of that event, promoting community engagement and appreciation for the river.

The Representative of Waterfront Seafood & Cocktails stated that they informally extend support to joggers frequenting the area. Joggers often pass by the establishment, and the management accommodates them by allowing short stops. The joggers order light snacks and refreshments.

The Representative of JD Bakery and Restaurant mentioned that their Gen. Luna branch is regularly contacted by the DENR-Region VI on a quarterly basis as part of their Clean Water Act promotion activities. The DENR invites them to participate but having no personnel to do the clean up, they provide snacks as supporting to the activities. It has consistently been the DENR, not the LGU, that reaches out and coordinates with them for these river-related environmental activities and awareness efforts.

Meanwhile, for the Representative of River Queen Hotel and Restaurant, aside from the Iloilo River Esplanade and the private individuals or groups who use the area for activities such as jogging, zumba, and dance practice, they are not aware of any other business group projects or activities specifically related to the river. However, they are open to joining future initiatives that promote their preservation and sustainable development.

The participants were then asked the following question:

■ **Are river-related activities part of the company's regular annual budget?**

According to the Representative of JD Bakery and Restaurant, river-related activities are not included in the establishment's annual budget, but whenever organizers or groups approach them, they willingly extend support in whatever way they can.

The Representative of River Queen Hotel and Restaurant, on the other hand, stated that the company has allocated expenses for the STP since its establishment in 2011. The River Queen Hotel and Western Institute of Technology (WIT) are sister companies, and their partner company, Uniclean, facilitated the installation of the STP system, which was brought in from Manila. Following WIT's initiative, River Queen Hotel also

had its own STP installed to ensure proper wastewater management and compliance with environmental standards.

In summary, most of the activities the participants reported to have been supported by their companies are nationally initiated, primarily by the DENR. It has consistently been the DENR that reaches out to them for coordination and support.

The next part of the discussion revolved around improving river management.

■ **How can the management of the river be improved in terms of:**

**a. The role of LGU?:**

For the Representative of Mueller Deli Restaurant, not all bridges along the river have been given much attention, leaving some of them behind in terms of maintenance and development. The bridge that connects Iznart St. to Lapuz area should ideally be included as part of the overall development plan—not just the river itself, but also the surrounding landmarks such as the Iloilo Provincial Capitol and the bridges that frame the view. During major events like the Dinagyang Festival, access becomes limited since the bridge nearest to the restaurant is often closed to traffic, making it difficult for guests to reach their place. A possible solution could be to establish a ferry connection from Lapuz to their side of the river to transport clients and visitors more conveniently during festivals and similar occasions.

The Representative of JD Bakery mentioned that their promotional videos highlight the beauty of the Iloilo River, showcasing it as a central feature of their establishment. They regularly welcome clients from Manila, as well as guests brought in by national government agencies and tourism groups that partner and tie up with them.

Through these collaborations, they actively endorse and promote the Iloilo River as a key attraction of the city. In line with this, they also prioritize solid waste management, recognizing that maintaining a clean and sustainable river environment is important to preserving its appeal and supporting ongoing tourism and development efforts.

According to the Representative of Waterfront Seafood & Cocktails, there is a need to further improve the management of the river through constant monitoring and sustained clean-up activities. Proper waste

disposal practices should also be strictly implemented along the river to prevent pollution and maintain water quality. Since the LGU is the implementing body, their continuous coordination and enforcement are essential to ensure that river management efforts are successful.

The Representative of River Queen Hotel and Restaurant opined that the LGU can help manage and reduce water overflow from the Esplanade, especially during typhoons and other severe weather, and would consider more active enforcement of regulations against dumping trash or litter in the river.

**b. The role of the business sector?:**

The Representative of Muelli Deli Restaurant stated that they primarily market to foreign and high-end clients through online platforms, particularly via Google pages where they highlight both the restaurant and the scenic Iloilo River.

Their marketing materials emphasize the riverfront ambience as part of the dining experience. The establishment's signage features the word "Muelle," with the river's name displayed beneath it, symbolizing their connection to the Iloilo River and reinforcing their identity as a riverside destination.

The Representative of Waterfront Seafood & Cocktails expressed their full support for initiatives to protect and improve the quality of the river because they directly benefit from a clean and well-maintained river environment. The river's good condition enhances the area's appeal, attracts more customers, and supports tourism and business growth. A poor river quality would negatively affect both their operations and the overall image of the area.

According to the Representative of River Queen Hotel and Restaurant, businesses can support the river by installing and properly maintaining sewage treatment plants (STPs) and following environmental guidelines.

**c. The role of the community as a whole?:**

For the Representative of Muelli Deli Restaurant, communities should be encouraged to stop throwing trash into the river to help keep it clean and healthy.

The Representative of Waterfront Seafood & Cocktails emphasized that the cleanliness of the river and its surroundings is maintained largely through the efforts of the community.

The Representative of JD Bakery and Restaurant also underscored that communities should take greater responsibility in keeping the river clean by regularly picking up trash and not relying solely on quarterly clean-up programs. Everyone living or working near the river is affected by its condition.

The Representative of River Queen Hotel and Restaurant affirmed that the community can help keep the river clean by avoiding dumping trash or waste into it and promoting responsible practices.

A few additional questions were discussed:

■ **What is the nature of relationship with the Iloilo City Government on River Management?**

In summary, the participants mentioned that the interaction with the city government is primarily through activity-based projects, such as clean-up drives or environmental events. However, there are no regular meetings with the city government.

Engagement usually happens only when specific activities are organized. This indicates the need for more structured and continuous collaboration between the business sector and the city government for better river management and community partnership.

In the case of the Waterfront Seafood and Cocktails, they occasionally hold company meetings where river-related concerns are discussed. The concerns are about the maintenance, cleanliness, and enhancement of the Iloilo River and Esplanade area. In addition, they reported to initiate their own projects, but they also coordinate with the government for collaboration. These allow them to align their efforts with ongoing government programs and ensure that their activities complement broader goals for river management.

■ **Are there ways to enhance communication with the city government?**

The participants' experience is that the DENR is the agency that regularly coordinates with them, mainly for the submission of monitoring reports and participation in quarterly clean-up drives.

For the Riverfront Hotel and Restaurant, water samples are currently sent to Bacolod City through Weesam for laboratory analysis, which involves additional effort and higher transport costs. They believe it would be more practical and efficient if a water testing laboratory could be established in Iloilo City. This would make the process faster and reduce expenses which can encourage river management efforts. Moreover, water testing costs around PHP 4,150.00 per store location, as the water quality differs from one site to another. Each branch is required to submit its own water analysis report, which adds to the overall compliance expenses.

Prof. Ventura mentioned that they have consulted with chemistry faculty members regarding water sampling, but the cost of having it done locally remains very expensive. This adds to the financial burden of complying with environmental monitoring requirements. Having a more affordable and accessible testing facility in Iloilo City would help businesses like theirs maintain compliance while reducing operational expenses.

When probed further about communication with the city LGU, the JD restaurant representative mentioned that the LGU sends communication through emails and phone calls. They make sure to reach out in advance regarding activities or requirements, and if there is no immediate response, they take the time to make follow-up calls.

The participants were further asked if they have any expectations of support from the city government. They have no specific expectations when it comes to receiving incentives from the LGU. For them, it is already enough that the quality of the river is properly maintained.

## ***Observations and Ways Forward***

*Prof. Rhodella A. Ibabao and Prof. Brian Ventura*

According to Prof. Ibabao, based on the views and information from the business sector, several best practices were observed. These include:

1. The appointment of a Pollution Control Officer (PCO).
2. The reported consistent support for city government initiatives and activities related to river management and environmental protection. Businesses have shown willingness to collaborate and contribute to maintaining river cleanliness and sustainability.

3. Communication among the establishments, the DENR, and the city government is done through emails and texts and follow-ups to ensure participation in activities.
4. Businesses integrate the Iloilo River into their promotional materials. This strengthens their marketing, branding, and overall appeal. Featuring the river as a selling point highlights the establishment's unique location and connection to one of Iloilo City's most iconic landmarks. By integrating the river into their advertisements, social media campaigns, and visual designs, businesses help promote environmental awareness while positioning themselves as active partners in river management and sustainable tourism development.

Meanwhile, things to improve include:

1. "Windowing" activities, or selective trimming of mangroves to maintain visibility while preserving ecological balance, to be included in the official guidelines to ensure that such practices are properly regulated and environmentally compliant.

Prof. Ventura highlighted a few policy recommendations:

1. There is currently no established channel for communication between the LGU and the riverfront constituents. Participants expressed that if an establishment does not have a good view of the river or wishes to raise concerns, they need to attend meetings or activities to be heard. They emphasized the need for a clear and consistent communication channel to ensure that their inputs and feedback as constituents of the river are regularly considered.

Establishing a structured LGU–constituency communication mechanism would promote inclusivity, enhance coordination, and strengthen collective efforts in managing and improving the Iloilo River and its surrounding areas.

2. The increase in foot traffic along the esplanade allows more people to access the restaurant, which in turn helps attract more clients and boosts business activity. To maximize this potential, organizing designated festivals or regular riverfront events with clearly defined roles for participating establishments would further enhance engagement.

## Conclusion

Participants expressed strong awareness of the river's significance not only as an environmental resource but also as a central element of the city's identity and tourism economy. Discussions emphasized the importance of maintaining water quality, cleanliness, and scenic value of the river to enhance the attractiveness of their establishments and the overall visitor experience.

The business community recognized that active participation in river management—through proper waste disposal, adoption of green practices, and integration of the Iloilo River in marketing and branding—contributes to both environmental stewardship and economic competitiveness.

The consultation with hotel and restaurant owners highlighted the private sector's vital role as partners in sustaining the gains of the Iloilo River rehabilitation and development program. There is a need for continuous collaboration among the local government, national government agencies, and the private sector to institutionalize sustainable practices and uphold the shared responsibility of protecting the Iloilo River as a living heritage asset of the city.

# Annex

## Annex A. Flow of Activities

Time	Activity	In-Charge
8:30 AM – 9:00 AM	Registration	UPV and OCENRO
9:00 AM – 9:15 AM	Prayer Acknowledgment of Participants Activity Rationale	OCENRO
9:15 AM – 10:10 AM	Presentation of UPV Project Team and Discussion of Guide Questions	UPV as Facilitator All
10:10 AM – 10:30 PM	Synthesis and Ways Forward Photo Op	UPV Research Team OCENRO

## Annex B. Participants' Profile

Participants were selected based on the recommendations of the CENRO. Ten establishment owners, including the President of the IHRRA, were invited by CENRO based on the location of their businesses along the Iloilo River. Property owners of the business establishments were prioritized over renters or those who lease spaces for their businesses due to higher stake on river management.

Of the ten establishment owners invited, four owners sent their representatives. Others had prior engagements.

Establishments, Number, and Position			
Establishments' Name	Number of Participants		Representation
	Male	Female	
Muelle Deli Bar and Restaurant	1		General Manager
Waterfront Seafoods and Cocktail		2	Supervisor, Staff
JD Bakery		1	Administrative Officer
River Queen Hotel	1		Pollution Control Officer
Total	5		

Annex C. Policy, Plan, and Project Alignment of the UP CIDS Funded Project

<b>PDP 2023-2028</b>	ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION FOR PROSPEROUS AND RESILIENT SOCIETIES						
<b>PDP STRATEGIES</b>	LIVABLE CITIES	SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT, INTEGRATED, MODERNIZED INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES			CLIMATE ACTION AND DISASTER RESILIENCE		
<b>DENR 7-POINT PLAN AND NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLAN PRIORITIES</b>	IMPROVE WATER AND AIR QUALITY	INCREASE FOREST COVER	CONSERVE FA/BIODIVERSITY	ENSURE WATER SECURITY	CLIMATE LENS IN POLICIES	RESPONSIBLE MINING	EFFECTIVE LAND MANAGEMENT/GOVERNANCE
<b>ILOILO VISION (PROVINCIAL)</b>	A ROBUST, PROGRESSIVE, GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE AND RESILIENT ILOILO						
<b>ILOILO VISION (CITY)</b>	BY 2028, ILOILO SHALL BE A MODEL OF A LIVABLE, WELL-GOVERNED CITY OF EMPOWERED AND INNOVATIVE ILOINGGOS THAT SAFEGUARD THE ENVIRONMENT AND PRESERVE THE CULTURE WHILE SUSTAINING A ROBUST, INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT ECONOMY						
<b>RESILIENCE PILLARS</b>	LEADERSHIP and GOVERNANCE	LOCAL ECONOMY	HUMAN DEVELOPMENT and HUMAN SECURITY	INFRASTRUCTURE	ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE		
<b>PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES</b>	PROVIDED EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT AND TRANSPARENT GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION	INCREASED INVESTMENT AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES	MAINTAINED ORDER AND PROMOTED PUBLIC SAFETY, ACCESSIBLE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES	PROTECTED AND MANAGED THE RESOURCES AND ASSETS OF THE PROVINCE	ATTAINED FOOD SECURITY		
<b>CITY PRIORITIES</b>	INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE	ECONOMIC BOOM and REAL ESTATE SURGE FUTURE GROWTH HORIZON	QUALITY OF LIFE	INFRASTRUCTURE and CONNECTIVITY UPGRADES	SUSTAINABILITY and GREEN CITYSCAPE		
<b>A.C.T.I.O.N. PRIORITIES of Mayor Raissa Treñas</b>	NATURE BASED RESILIENCE	INNOVATION and ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT TOURISM	ACCESS TO EDUCATION COMMUNITY PROTECTION	CULTURAL PRESERVATION	Sources: PROJECT TRANSFORM and ICCHC WORKSHOPS, 2025		

Annex D. List of Participants from the Consultation with Iloilo Hotels, Restaurants & Resorts Association, Inc. (IHRA) on October 28, 2025



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
 CITY OF ILOILO  
 OFFICE OF THE CITY ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES OFFICER  
 3F, Iloilo City Business Center, Bldg. Asean/Alabara, Iloilo City 5000 Philippines  
 Telephone Numbers: (033) 931-0096  
 Email: iloilsce@env@gmail.com

Hotel & Restaurant Assoc. CHRA

**ATTENDANCE SHEET**  
 Title : Simultaneous Consultations with Stakeholders' and River Barangays' Considerations on Iloilo River Management  
 Date & Time : 28 October 2025, 8:30 AM - 11:45 AM  
 Venue : OCENRO Conference Room, Iloilo Business Center Bldg.

No.	Name	Male	Female	Senior Citizen	PWD	Agency/Office	Designation	Contact number	Email Address	Signature
1	Ronald Bryan Cavite	33				Muelle Deli & Restaurant	Manager	0914990773	winseygen@gmail.com	[Signature]
2	Sheena Mae Bolas		31			Waterfront Seafood and cocktails	Supervisor	09169583652	dumdumtaulesjard@gmail.com	[Signature]
3	JUDEN JALORAS					RIVER QUEEN HOTEL	POO	0967476657	riverqueenhotel@yaho.com	[Signature]
4	RICHARD CUMM					JO BAKER CAFE	MANAGER	0914704524	richard.jalabas@gmail.com	[Signature]
5	Christine Manquez		35			Waterfront Seafood and cocktails	Team	0904680324	christine.manquez12@gmail.com	[Signature]
6	MA CRISTINA VERANO					Iloilo				[Signature]
7	MA SANDRA MORA					Iloilo				[Signature]
8	ANDREA DWAGNE JANTE					OCENRO				[Signature]
9	RICHARD A. II					UPV				[Signature]
10	Bryan C. San Juan					UPV				[Signature]
11										
12										
13										
14										



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### Annex E. Photo Documentation for the Hotel and Restaurant Owners Association Consultation on October 28, 2025



Participants from the Iloilo City Environment and Natural Resources Office and the Hotel and Restaurant Owners Association participated in the opening prayer to formally start the workshop.



The UPV research team conducted a series of questions with participants to gain insights into their perceptions of the Iloilo River.



**Hotel and restaurant representatives engaged in an active discussion with the research team and CENRO staff about the Iloilo River's impact on their businesses and suggested ways to improve it.**



**IHRRA members, City Government Assistant Department Head Maria Cristina Octavio, and the UPV Research Team pose for a photo after the workshop.**

# **Center for Integrative and Development Studies**

Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

The UP CIDS currently has twelve research programs that are clustered under the areas of education and capacity building, development, and social, political, and cultural studies. It publishes policy briefs, monographs, webinar/conference/forum proceedings, and the Philippine Journal for Public Policy, all of which can be downloaded free from the UP CIDS website.

## **The Program**

The thrust of the Urban Studies Program is to bring to the fore the critical issues around urbanization and urban humanity in the policy discourses for the country. It brings together studies on cities especially with acute vulnerabilities such as coastal cities across the Philippines that directly respond to emerging concerns on urbanism with a specific lens on inclusive and just resilience framework.

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**UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES  
CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

Lower Ground Floor, Ang Bahay ng Alumni, Magsaysay Avenue  
University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City 1101

**Telephone** (02) 8981-8500 loc. 4266 to 4268  
(02) 8426-0955

**Email** [cids@up.edu.ph](mailto:cids@up.edu.ph)  
[cidspublications@up.edu.ph](mailto:cidspublications@up.edu.ph)

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