

# STORIES FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Food, Fish, Fire, and Fireflies

— A LEARNING TOOLKIT FOR YOUNG CHANGEMAKERS



# ABOUT THE CLIMATE STORY LAB

Climate change is one of the defining crises of our time, yet it is often communicated through data, policy, and statistics that leave little room for human experience.

**The Climate Story Lab was created to change that.**

Launched in the Philippines in 2023, the Climate Story Lab brought together emerging Filipino filmmakers, producers, and climate advocates to develop short films rooted in real communities and experiences. Through a programme of training, mentorship, and seed grants, four filmmaking teams, each comprising a director and producer, were selected to produce original works exploring how climate change shapes daily life, culture, identity, food systems, health, and survival across the archipelago.

The result is **four films spanning animation, fiction, and documentary** that give voice to communities on the frontlines of the climate crisis: a child searching for fireflies after a typhoon; a coastal village confronting an ancient prophecy about the depletion of fish resources; a waitress navigating extreme heat in the city; cooks whose recipes are disappearing as rivers change.

These are not abstract stories about a distant future. They are urgent, deeply human, and happening now.

**This toolkit aims to bring these films to classrooms, universities, and communities worldwide as tools for reflection, learning, dialogue, and action.**



# THE FILMS

## FOOD, FISH, FIRE, AND FIREFLIES

### THE RIVER IN THE NOODLES



**Format:**  
32mins | Documentary

**Director:** Jerome Ligan Dulin  
**Producer:** Joseph Serna Arcegono

### THE PROPHECY



**Format:**  
16mins | Narrative Fiction

**Director:** Milo Alto Paz  
**Producer:** Cynthia Cruz-Paz

### MANILA IS A GATE OF HELL



**Format:**  
18mins | Fiction

**Director:** Jerome David Zamora  
**Producers:** Ma-an Asuncion Dagñalan,  
Manny Angeles, Jon Galvez

### VANISHING FIREFLIES



**Format:**  
8mins | Animation

**Director:** JP Corton  
**Producer:** Jaime Morados

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**PART A**

**CLIMATE  
STORYTELLING  
& ADVOCACY**

# WHY STORYTELLING MATTERS IN CLIMATE EDUCATION

**Climate change is a global emergency**, but it is also a deeply personal one. For millions of people, **it is not a future threat but a present reality**: a typhoon that destroys a harvest, a river that no longer sustains a community, a city that becomes unliveable in the heat.

**Yet understanding a crisis and feeling compelled to act on it are very different things.**

Research consistently shows that **storytelling does what data alone cannot**: it builds empathy, makes complex issues accessible, and connects global challenges to human experience. When audiences see real people navigating real consequences, climate change stops being an abstraction and becomes something that demands a response.

Film is a particularly powerful medium for this. It combines image, voice, and emotion in ways that linger, creating what researchers call “emotional memories” that shape how we think and act long after the screen goes dark.

The Climate Story Lab films were made with this in mind. **They do not lecture. They bear witness.** And in doing so, they invite audiences everywhere to reflect, connect, and consider what action might look like in their own lives and communities to mitigate the effects of climate change.



*“One of the greatest challenges in climate communication is helping people emotionally connect with the realities behind the science. The Climate Story Lab demonstrates how storytelling and film can bridge this gap by amplifying the lived experiences of frontline communities already confronting extreme weather, food insecurity, displacement, and environmental change.”*

**Dr Rachael McDonnell**  
Deputy Director General  
International Water Management Institute



# A FRONTLINE PERSPECTIVE

The Philippines is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world, **ranking first globally on the World Risk Index** for the third consecutive year in 2024 (World Risk Report, 2024) and seventh among nations most affected by extreme weather events (Germanwatch Climate Risk Index, 2024). Between 1995 and 2024, the country experienced 371 extreme weather events, resulting in over 27,500 deaths and more than \$35 billion in economic losses.

Yet **the Philippines contributes less than 0.4% of global greenhouse gas emissions** (EDGAR/JRC, 2021) — a stark illustration of the injustice at the heart of the climate crisis: **it is communities in the Global South, which have contributed least to the problem, that bear its heaviest consequences.**

Stronger typhoons, rising seas, extreme heat, agricultural disruption, and biodiversity loss are not projections — they are lived realities for millions of Filipinos every day. **Yet alongside this vulnerability sits extraordinary resilience.** Communities across the archipelago are adapting, innovating, and finding ways to protect their livelihoods, cultures, and futures.

The four Climate Story Lab films were made in the Philippines, by filmmakers from the Philippines. They bring this dual reality of impact and resilience to global audiences, offering insights that resonate far beyond the Philippines and the Global South.

A photograph showing a man in a river, holding a blue water container. The water is murky and greenish-brown. The man is looking towards the camera. The background shows some wooden structures and a concrete wall on the right side.

## WHEN THE CRISIS ARRIVES ON SET

The climate crisis didn't wait for the cameras to roll for the team behind *The River in the Noodles*. In late 2024, the team was forced to suspend production for six months after successive typhoons and extreme heat devastated the farming communities they were filming. The emergency their film set out to document had arrived.

# CLIMATE STORYTELLING PRINCIPLES



The Climate Story Lab films are grounded in **four core storytelling principles**.

These principles guide how the films were made and how we invite you to use them.



1

## PEOPLE AND PERSONAL STORIES

Climate change is experienced by individuals, families, and communities. **Centering personal stories makes the issue relatable, immediate, and human.**

2

## LOCAL VALUES AND CONTEXT

Every community has its own relationship with the environment, shaped by culture, tradition, and place. Effective climate storytelling honours this. **It does not impose a single narrative.**

3

## SOLUTIONS AND AGENCY

Stories that only show devastation risk leaving audiences overwhelmed. These films also show communities adapting, responding, and leading because **agency matters as much as awareness.**

4

## HOPE AND FUTURE SCENARIOS

**Hope is not naivety. It is what makes action possible.** The films hold space for difficulty and loss while refusing to surrender to despair.



# STORIES WITH, NOT ABOUT



The Climate Story Lab films were made in close collaboration with the communities they portray. As you use them, we ask you to engage with the same spirit of respect.

## CENTRE COMMUNITY VOICES

These are real people and real places. Discussions should honour the complexity of their experiences, not reduce them to symbols of suffering or victimhood.

## AVOID STEREOTYPES OF VULNERABILITY

Frontline communities are not passive victims. The films show people who are resourceful, knowledgeable, and active in shaping their own futures.

## RECOGNISE RESILIENCE AND AGENCY

Alongside loss and hardship, these stories carry dignity and strength. Both deserve space in the classroom and in discussion.

## FOSTER EMPATHY AND SOLIDARITY

The goal is not pity but connection — an understanding that climate change is a shared challenge that demands collective responsibility and action.



# BRIDGES, NOT BOUNDARIES

## A Global Learning Approach

This toolkit follows a simple but powerful idea: **local stories open doors to global understanding.**

The films are set in the Philippines but the **questions they raise are universal.** How can individuals, communities, regions and countries prepare for these unexpected changes? How do communities adapt when their environment changes? What is lost when a way of life disappears? What does it mean to act in the face of an uncertain future? Does today's generation have a responsibility to protect the planet for tomorrow's generation?

**Educators and facilitators are encouraged to use these questions as bridges,** connecting what happens on screen with the experiences, challenges, and responsibilities of their own communities.

This approach transforms climate education from the transfer of information into something more lasting: **a conversation among places, generations, and traditional knowledge.**

# 1

## AWARENESS

Watch one of the films to understand a real-world climate experience.

# 2

## REFLECTION

Guided questions encourage critical thinking and emotional engagement.

# 3

## CONNECTION

Compare the film's themes with your own community and context.

# 4

## ACTION

Explore what climate resilience looks like where you are - interview a community member, map a local climate risk, or document an adaptation already underway.

# EVERY LEARNER IN THE ROOM

Adapting Your Approach by Age Group

Climate stories land differently depending on the age of the viewer. This section offers guidance on how to adapt your teaching approach based on the age and context of your learners, drawing on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to ensure sessions are inclusive, accessible, and meaningful for all.

**CURIOS MINDS — Primary School · Ages 5–11**

**CRITICAL VOICES — Secondary School · Ages 11–18**

**SYSTEMS THINKERS — University · Ages 18–23**

**FROM THE FIELD — NGOs, Civil Society & Community Facilitators**

## WHAT IS UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)?

**UDL** is an educational framework built on the principle that people learn in different ways. Its three core principles are:

1. Engagement - motivating learners by making content relevant and meaningful;
2. Representation - presenting information in multiple formats to reach diverse learners;
3. Action & Expression - allowing learners to demonstrate understanding in different ways.

In climate education, UDL ensures that no learner is left out of the conversation regardless of age, language, learning style, or lived experience.



## CURIOUS MINDS — Primary School · Ages 5–11

Young children make sense of the world through story, feeling, and imagination. These films offer a powerful entry point but the key is keeping the focus close to home, grounded in character, and free from urgency.

### HOW THEY LEARN

Young learners understand the world through concrete experience, image, and emotion. Abstract concepts like climate systems are less effective than stories about people, animals, and places they can picture and feel.

### HOW THEY CONNECT

At this age, children connect most strongly through characters and relationships. ‘Focus on the emotional journey of the protagonists - Russell in ‘Vanishing Fireflies’, for example - rather than the broader climate context.

### HOW THEY ENGAGE

Use creative activities alongside the film: drawing, interactive storytelling, role play, and guided discussion in small groups. Keep discussion questions simple and grounded in what they saw and felt. Avoid overwhelming them with scale or urgency.

### HOW THEY ACT

Meaningful action at this age is immediate and local such as caring for a plant, reducing waste at home, or sharing what they learned with their family. Celebrate small steps as genuine contributions.



*UDL tip: Use visual cues, subtitles, and pauses during screening. Allow children to respond through drawing, music or movement, not only words.*



## CRITICAL VOICES — Secondary School • Ages 11–18

Adolescents are ready to grapple with injustice, complexity, and real-world consequences. These films give them something genuine to think with and the space to find their own response.

### HOW THEY LEARN

Adolescents are developing critical thinking and a strong sense of justice. They respond well to challenge, debate, and being taken seriously. This is the age group that starts to feel the emotional weight of climate stories, and the older adolescents (16–18) are the most likely to channel their emotions into action.

### HOW THEY CONNECT

Young people at this stage connect through identity and values. Invite them to compare the experiences in the films with their own communities: what is similar, what is different, and what does that tell us about who bears the greatest burden of climate change?

### HOW THEY ENGAGE

Discussion, debate, role play, and creative projects work well. The films can anchor assignments across subjects — geography, science, literature, media studies. Encourage students to analyse not just what the films show, but how and why.

### HOW THEY ACT

This group is ready for more structured action: writing to elected officials, designing local climate initiatives, creating their own short films or campaigns, or engaging with community organisations.



*UDL tip: Offer multiple ways to respond: written, spoken, visual, or creative. Some students will need time to process before discussing. Build in reflection time before group work.*



## SYSTEMS THINKERS — University · Ages 18–23

University students bring the analytical tools to examine these films as both cultural texts and social documents. The goal is to position them as co-investigators, not passive viewers.

### HOW THEY LEARN

University students bring prior knowledge, diverse perspectives, and the capacity for systems thinking by viewing complex situations as an interconnected whole rather than isolated parts. They benefit from being positioned as co-investigators rather than passive recipients, exploring the films as both cultural texts and social documents.

### HOW THEY CONNECT

At this level, connection happens through intellectual and ethical engagement. Encourage students to examine the films through multiple lenses: climate justice, postcolonial theory, media representation, community resilience, hope and policy. The films reward close reading.

### HOW THEY ENGAGE

Seminar discussion, comparative analysis, research projects, and interdisciplinary work are all appropriate. The films can be paired with academic readings, policy documents, or other climate media for richer analysis.

### HOW THEY ACT

University students are well placed to translate learning into advocacy through research, community and university engagement, policy dialogue, or their own storytelling and media projects.



*UDL tip: Provide pre-reading or contextual materials before screening for students who prefer to prepare. Allow for both individual and collaborative responses to accommodate different learning styles.*



## FROM THE FIELD — NGOs, Civil Society & Community Facilitators

Adult facilitators bring lived experience and professional knowledge into the room. These films work best as a starting point for dialogue not a lesson to be delivered, but a conversation to be opened.

### HOW THEY LEARN

Adult learners bring lived experience, professional knowledge, and strong values. They learn best when content connects directly to their work, their communities, and the challenges they are already navigating.

### HOW THEY CONNECT

Adults connect through relevance and recognition. The films offer an entry point for reflecting on climate impacts they may already be working with and for drawing comparisons between the Philippine communities on screen and the communities they serve.

### HOW THEY ENGAGE

Facilitated discussion, participatory activities, and peer exchange work best in adult settings. Structure sessions around the four-step model — Awareness, Reflection, Connection, Action — and leave generous time for discussion. Adults often have as much to teach each other as the film itself offers.

### HOW THEY ACT

The goal in adult settings is to move from awareness to concrete planning, identifying local climate actions, strengthening partnerships, enhancing environmental sustainability strategies or integrating the films into their own programmes and campaigns.



*UDL tip: Acknowledge and draw on the expertise in the room. Position the film as a starting point for dialogue, not a lesson to be delivered. Ensure the space is inclusive of different languages, literacy levels, and communication styles where relevant.*

# THE FILMS AT A GLANCE

FILM TITLE	LENGTH	FORMAT	THEMES	RECOMMENDED AUDIENCES
<b>VANISHING FIREFLIES</b> <i>Nagahanaw na mga Aninipot</i>	8mins	Animation	Typhoon destruction, biodiversity loss, childhood resilience, hope in the face of loss	Curious Minds (ages 5–11)
<b>THE PROPHECY</b> <i>Ang Propesiya</i>	16 mins	Narrative Fiction	Climate justice, intergenerational knowledge, sea level rise, coastal ecosystems, fisheries impacts, moral reckoning	Critical Voices (ages 11–18)
<b>MANILA IS A GATE OF HELL</b>	18 mins	Fiction	Urban heat stress, labour rights, climate justice, gender inequality, everyday survival in a warming city	Systems Thinkers (ages 18–23), General adult audience
<b>THE RIVER IN THE NOODLES</b> <i>I Bannag Ta Pansi Batil Potun</i>	32 mins	Documentary	Food culture and climate change, extreme weather, agricultural disruption, food security, local knowledge, cultural resilience	Critical Voices (ages 11–18), Systems Thinkers (ages 18–23), General adult audience

Full film information, synopsis, discussion guides, and lesson plans are available in the individual Film Screening Guides accessible via the links in Part B of this toolkit.

# CONNECTING TO THE GLOBAL GOALS

The Climate Story Lab films connect to **ten UN Sustainable Development Goals**. From food security threatened by extreme flooding to urban workers bearing the physical toll of rising heat, the stories at the heart of these films reflect challenges that the UN Sustainable Development Goals were designed to address.

*Vanishing Fireflies* speaks to biodiversity loss and climate action (SDGs 13 and 15); *The Prophecy* to the depletion of coastal ecosystems and food insecurity (SDGs 2 and 14); *Manila is a Gate of Hell* to labour rights, health, and inequality under climate stress (SDGs 3, 8 and 10); and *The River in the Noodles* to food culture, agricultural disruption, and sustainable consumption (SDGs 2 and 12).

Together, the four films make visible what the data behind the Global Goals often cannot — **the human cost of a crisis that is already here.**



# THEMES THAT TRAVEL

**These films were made in the Philippines but the questions they raise are universal.**

Each explores a different dimension of the climate crisis, illuminating themes that resonate with learners and communities worldwide.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND EVERYDAY LIFE

For many communities, climate change is not a future scenario, it is already reshaping daily life, livelihoods, food, health, cultural traditions and life expectancy. In *Manila is a Gate of Hell*, extreme heat becomes the backdrop for a story about work, survival, and the human cost of a warming city, and in *Vanishing Fireflies*, the destruction of Typhoon Yolanda in 2013 reshaped lives and landscape, encouraging resilience and community action.

## YOUTH VOICES AND INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Young people are among the most active and urgent voices in climate action. In both *Vanishing Fireflies* and *The Prophecy*, a young boy turns to an elder to make sense of a world being transformed by climate change, showing that the most powerful responses emerge from dialogue across generations.



## LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND CULTURAL RESILIENCE

Communities living with environmental change develop practical knowledge, preparedness strategies, and cultural practices that support resilience. *The River in the Noodles* makes this tangible by tracing how climate change is quietly erasing the ingredients, recipes, and food traditions of a region.

## CLIMATE JUSTICE

The films raise uncomfortable but necessary questions: who contributes most to climate change, and who suffers most from its consequences? Both *Manila is a Gate of Hell* and *The Prophecy* place this question at their centre — inviting audiences to reflect on responsibility, accountability, inequality, and the urgency of collective action.



# THE INVITATION

Stories have always been how human beings make sense of the world and of each other.

The Climate Story Lab films were in the majority made by young Filipino filmmakers who chose to look directly at the crisis unfolding around them and tell the truth about what they have seen and experienced. Their stories are specific, rooted in places, communities, and lives. But the questions they raise belong to all of us.

**We invite you to bring these films into your classroom, your community, your organisation —** not as illustrations of a distant problem, but as windows into a shared human experience that demands imagination, solidarity, and action.

**The climate crisis will not be solved by data alone.** It will be solved by people who feel it, understand it, and choose to act. **These films are an invitation to begin.**



# HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT



This toolkit is designed to be flexible. There is no single right way to use it – choose the approach that works best for your context, your learners, and your time.

## YOU CAN:

- Screen a single film with a post-screening discussion
- Run a one-film workshop using the guided discussion questions and activities
- Integrate one or more films into an existing course or curriculum unit
- Organise a community screening or dialogue event
- Use the films as the basis for a role-play or creative storytelling activity
- Build a multi-week climate education programme around all four films

Each approach can be adapted for different age groups, cultural contexts, and learning environments. The Film Screening Guides, available via the links in Part B, provide everything you need to get started with any of these formats.





# **PART B**

# **FILM RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS**



# FILM SCREENING GUIDES AND LESSON PLANS

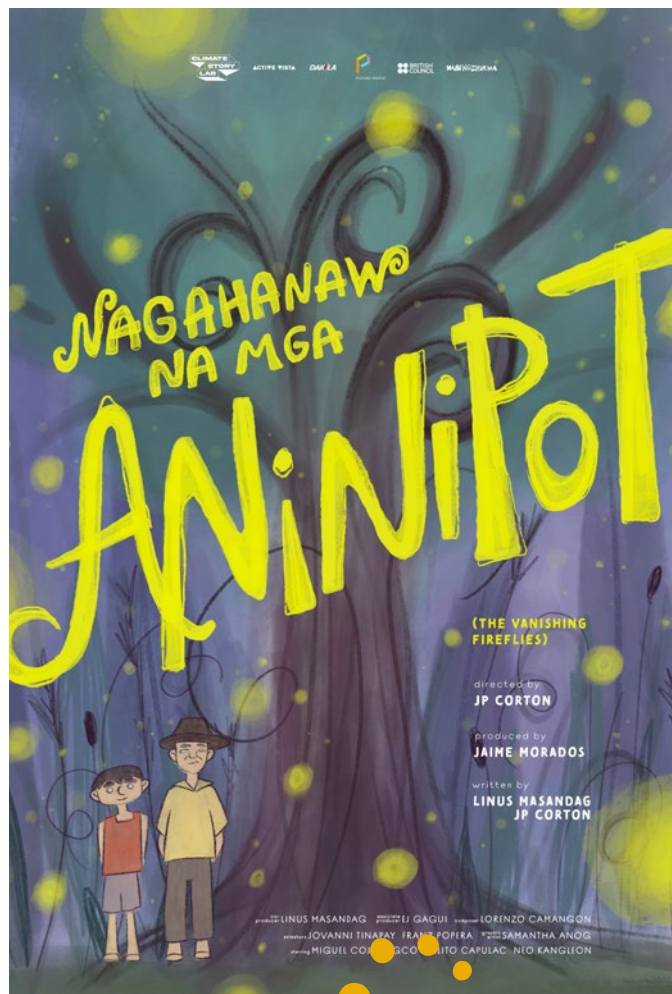
This section provides access to the four Film Screening Guides and their accompanying Lesson Plans and Activities. Each guide contains full film information, the director's statement, learning outcomes, and SDG alignment. Each Lesson Plans document contains facilitated discussion questions, classroom activities, and workshop guides tailored to the film's recommended audience.

Click the links below to access each film's resources.

## VANISHING FIREFLIES

*Nagahanaw na mga Aninipot*

8 mins | Animation



In the quiet town of Tabango, Leyte, young Russell's world is upended when a super typhoon forces him and his grandfather to seek shelter in an evacuation centre. Clinging to a single firefly for comfort, he discovers that even the smallest flicker can grow into a symbol of hope, memory, and quiet resilience.



**Suggested audience:**

Curious Minds — Ages 5–11



**Themes:** Typhoon destruction • Biodiversity loss • Childhood resilience • Hope in the face of loss



**Film Screening Guide:**

<https://tinyurl.com/4bhm5w5h>



**Lesson Plans & Activities:**

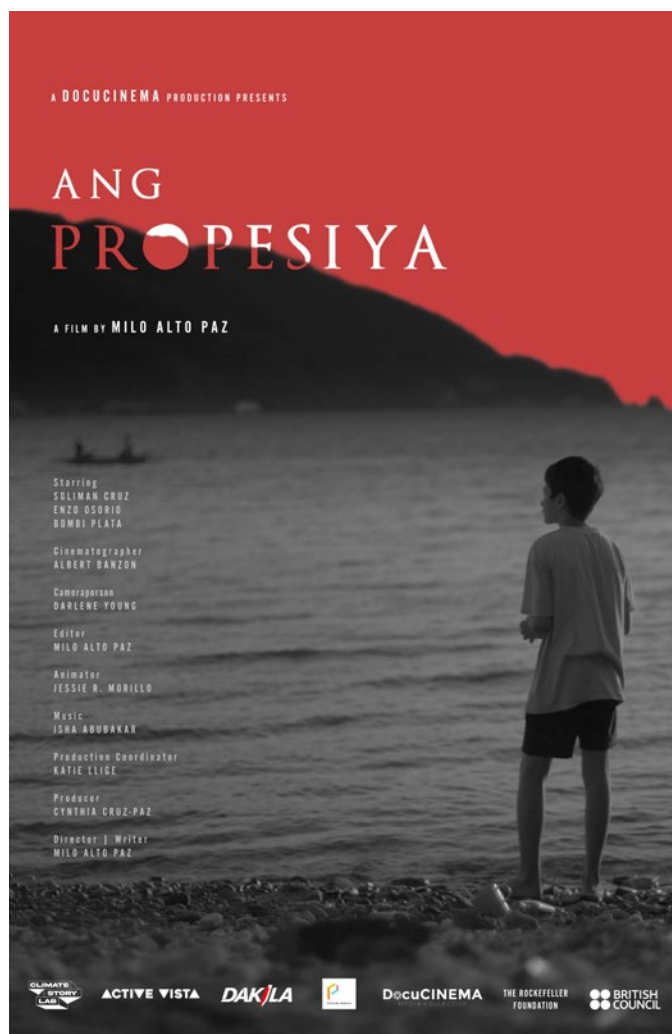
<https://tinyurl.com/354ze58p>

# FILM SCREENING GUIDES AND LESSON PLANS

## THE PROPHECY

*Ang Propesiya*

16 mins | Narrative Fiction



When the fish disappear from the sea, young Nonoy turns to his grandfather, Lolo Andres, for answers. The old man recalls an ancient prophecy of oceans rising in fire and reefs crumbling to dust. As nature unravels, Nonoy asks whether hope remains – and refuses to surrender his belief that change is possible.



### Suggested audience:

Critical Voices — Ages 11–18



**Themes:** Climate justice • Intergenerational knowledge • Sea level rise • Coastal ecosystems • Fisheries impacts • Moral reckoning



### Film Screening Guide:

<https://tinyurl.com/ew6suru6>



### Lesson Plans & Activities:

<https://tinyurl.com/3cwr2cy4>

# FILM SCREENING GUIDES AND LESSON PLANS

## TRIGGER WARNING — MANILA IS A GATE OF HELL


This film contains scenes of sexual harassment and implicit sexual assault. Facilitators should review the film in advance and prepare appropriate support. Recommended for university students and adult audiences only.


## MANILA IS A GATE OF HELL

18 mins | Fiction



During one of the hottest days on record in Manila, Violet — a young waitress — is denied a day off to visit her sick son. She slips away to the city’s last remaining green lung, searching for relief. When news of her son’s worsening condition reaches her, she faces an impossible choice.

 **Suggested audience:**  
Systems Thinkers — Ages 18–23  
General adult audience

 **Themes:** Urban heat stress • Labour rights • Climate justice • Gender inequality • Everyday survival in a warming city

 **Film Screening Guide:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/yffthx4n>

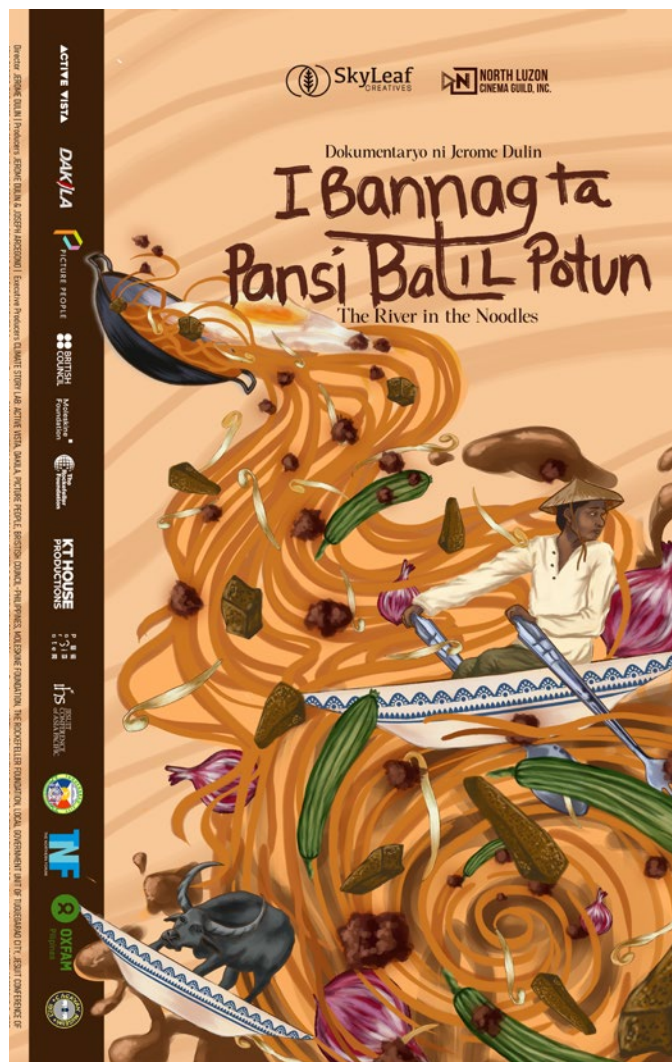
 **Lesson Plans & Activities:**  
<https://tinyurl.com/vfu2zbzb>

# FILM SCREENING GUIDES AND LESSON PLANS

## THE RIVER IN THE NOODLES

*I Bannag Ta Pansi Batil Potun*

32 mins | Documentary



A local farmer and elderly Pancit Batil Potun cook from Tuguegarao City reflects on how changes to the ingredients of the region's traditional noodle dish reveal a deeper story of climate change, cultural loss, and resilience. As rivers flood and fish populations dwindle, a way of life quietly disappears.



### **Suggested audience:**

Critical Voices (ages 11–18) •  
Systems Thinkers (ages 18–23) •  
General audience



**Themes:** Food culture and climate change • Extreme weather • Agricultural disruption • Food security • Local knowledge • Cultural resilience



### **Film Screening Guide:**

<https://tinyurl.com/bdcu6z9u>



### **Lesson Plans & Activities:**

<https://tinyurl.com/4jcxm3rm>

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# ABOUT PICTURE PEOPLE MSP

This toolkit was produced by Picture People MSP, a UK-based charitable organisation working at the intersection of film, education, and social change. Picture People MSP supports filmmakers and educators to use visual storytelling as a tool for advocacy, learning, and community engagement.



## CREDITS

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**Images:** cover page by Nick Danziger,  
still images by the four film teams

## THE FILMS

The four Climate Story Lab films are created by:

**Vanishing Fireflies** — Director JP Corton / Producer Jaime Morados

**The Prophecy** — Director Milo Alto Paz / Producer Cynthia Cruz-Paz

**Manila is a Gate of Hell** — Director Jerome David Zamora / Producer Ma-an Asuncion Dagñalan, Manny Angeles, Jon Galvez

**The River in the Noodles** — Director Jerome Lingan Dulin / Producer Joseph Serna Arcegono

## PARTNERS

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In partnership with



## LICENCE

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