

Country Water Action: Philippines

Institutionalized Community-Managed Approach for Water Supply and Sanitation in Agusan del Sur

(May 2006)

Residents of Barangay Doña Flavia in San Luis, Agusan del Sur used to dream of safe water supply and improved sanitation. Today, they wake up to 24/7* water supply and manage their own water supply and sanitation facilities, thanks to the Philippine Center for Water and Sanitation (PCWS).

PCWS'S COMMUNITY-MANAGED APPROACH IN DOÑA FLAVIA

The Philippine Center for Water and Sanitation (PCWS) brought safe drinking water supply to the southern province of Agusan del Sur by helping create institutions that provide technical and financial support for the effective management of water supply and sanitation systems. PCWS is a nongovernment organization doing public information, research, community organizing, advocacy, and training for the awareness, appreciation, protection, and conservation of Philippine water resources.



With assistance from the local and provincial governments and funding from the Philippine-Canada Local Government Support Program (LGSP), PCWS organized the Provincial Water and Sanitation Center (PWSC) in Agusan del Sur. The PWSC took on the task of building the capacity of municipal-level project implementers in providing sustained support for community water and sanitation associations.

Barangay Doña Flavia in San Luis is one such beneficiary of the PCWS project. People from this community, with the help of the PCWS, organized the Doña Flavia Water Supply and Sanitation Association, which took on the task of deciding what technology best suited the water and sanitation project, where to locate water points in the community, and what rules to implement regarding water connections. They also set the tariff levels to provide for a full time caretaker and the cost of operation and maintenance.

Today, the Doña Flavia Water Supply and Sanitation Association manages the water system. Their efforts have expanded water coverage and the system now serves 2,687 people or 429 households – 100% of Barangay Doña Flavia's population – 24 hours a day.

ONCE AN UNSERVED AND UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY

The province of Agusan del Sur in Mindanao is one of the poorest in the Philippines, and is one of the top 19 priority provinces for national government assistance. Barangay Doña Flavia used to get water from 24 wells that dotted the community. But of these, only eight wells supplied potable drinking water. Ensuring adequate

supply of safe water for Doña Flavia's growing population became a major concern of various water sector stakeholders, as the community is fast becoming the commercial center of San Luis.

In 1998, the water supply and sanitation system was put in place through the concerted efforts of the local community, municipal and provincial government units, and the Philippine-Canadian LGSP.

The project's hardware – communal standpipes, individual house connections, and water wells – was provided by the local government. But the need for an institution to manage the water supply and sanitation system arose. It was then that PCWS entered the picture and took care of the software.

BUILDING CAPACITIES FOR COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT



PCWS initiated and conducted a series of capacity building activities to help facilitate the water supply and sanitation project in Doña Flavia.

An orientation seminar for community organizers and facilitators was conducted during the initial stages of the project to identify the community's immediate needs, draft a framework for all project activities, and come up with a community action plan.

A trainers' training for members of the municipal and provincial water and sanitation team was also conducted to prepare them for facilitating the training program for community implementers. The training introduced concepts and aspects of sound and sustainable water and sanitation management systems, and developed strategies for transferring knowledge to the community.

Doña Flavia community members who were to become the caretakers and members of the Doña Flavia Water and Supply and Sanitation Association were also trained on the technical aspects of managing water facilities, computing tariffs to cover operations and maintenance costs, and sanitation and hygiene promotion.

PCWS continues to provide technical advices to, maintain communications with, and periodically visit Doña Flavia even after the project was completed.

TRYING OUT PCWS'S MODEL APPROACH

The PCWS's project in Doña Flavia shows that community-managed water and sanitation systems can work as long as it is built on

- an effectively sustained and functioning system or service with effective financing mechanisms
- adequate support and investments for capacity building of community members and local governments to effectively manage water supply and sanitation facilities

The municipal government of San Luis has now utilized the concept of community

management in Doña Flavia in pursuing other development projects, while thirty-three other municipalities in Mindanao have adapted the community-managed approach in pursuing their own water supply and sanitation services.

PCWS's community-managed approach – a consolidation of local government support, community participation and partnership, and civil society organization initiatives – now serves as a model for future rural water and sanitation projects in the Philippines.

CONTACT

Lyn Capistrano
Executive Director
Philippine Center for Water and Sanitation
P3, Minnesota Mansion, 267 Ermin Garcia St.
Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines
Email: capistranolyn@gmail.com

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