Capacity building component in WASH projects in Improving WaSH Governance: a case study

Executive Summary

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints has invested heavily in WaSH in the province of Catanduanes. Catanduanes is prone to annual typhoons, is reliant on one crop for much of its economic well-being and has high incidences of poverty and malnutrition. UNICEF led the advocacy for the Provincial Government to focus on WaSH capacity building as one way to alleviate poverty and improve nutrition numbers for their children. UNICEF and the Church co-funded A Single Drop for Safe Water inc. (ASDSW) to work with the LGU's to build capacities for the implementation of Department of Health's Philippine Approach To Sustainable Sanitation policy. From June 2022 to the end of 2024 The LGU's and ASDSW worked together building capacity, developing policy and plans to transform the WaSH capacity of the entire province.

This approach builds an empowering environment where government creates policies, governance mechanisms, strategic and investment plans to improve Water and Sanitation services. In addition to this the government engages the communities and households in behavior change so that they invest in access to safe water and sanitary toilets and use this along with positive hygiene practices to reduce or eliminate water borne diseases. This requires on site capacity building and coaching to ensure that policy becomes practice.

As a result of this program all 11 municipalities and the province have implemented this program and they are now aiming for a Zero Open Defecation Province. Investment in Sanitation has gone from less than 500,000PhP per year by the province to over 10,000,000PhP per year. At all levels of government there is a marked increase in investment in both water and sanitation in a strategic manner. This includes investment into a water testing laboratory so that they can monitor closely water quality and act on outbreaks.

There is also policy in place at the provincial and municipal level institutionalizing the WaSH governance systems and the use of the DOH policy as the implementation and measurement framework.

For Sanitation there has been an increase of 10% (77% to 87%) of households with access to sanitation. Over 42% of the barangays are certified free from Open Defecation with many more being processed.

Because the implementation methodology was teaching and coaching the capacity build stays in Catanduanes, they are now able to increase internal and external investment, working with communities that are positively engaged in changing their WaSH status. By the end of 2026 the province hopes to be one of the first provinces to be Zero Open Defecation Certified and this will be done using their capacities and their own resources. The Church along with UNICEF enabled this change with the same amount of money required to build a moderate sized water system, however the impact of this intervention will be felt by over 300,000 people not just now but for the foreseeable future. This capacity will not disappear as it is now part of the governments way of working and the new social norm at that community level.

Catanduanes



Catanduanes is situated on the easternmost edge of Luzon, bounded on the west by the Maqueda Channel, on the south by Lagonoy Gulf, and on the north and east by the Philippine Sea. Several small islands comprise the province. Its land area totals approximately 1,492.16 square kilometers (576.13 sq mi). The coastlines, that stretch to almost 400 km (249 mi), are jagged with many bays.

The topography of Catanduanes Island is rugged and mountainous, becoming more pronounced towards the central portion of the island. Less than 10 percent of the land area has a slope gradient under 8 percent, mostly fractured and narrow strips of plains located along the coastal areas where most of the inhabitants are settled.

Catanduanes' geographical position has it lying completely exposed to the Philippine Sea. Therefore, it is known as "Land of the Howling Winds" because it is frequently visited by tropical cyclones. Without a pronounced dry season, precipitation is distributed fairly evenly throughout the year becoming wetter in the last quarter into the early months of the first quarter, when tropical disturbances and monsoon winds especially the Northeast Monsoon (Amihan) bring in heavy rains. Other months are characterized by short periods of dryer days and fine weather, except in July and August when the dry and gusty southwest monsoon winds intensify.

Typhoons and its impact to population

Due to its geographical location, the province is hit by typhoons with devastating winds and large amounts of precipitation. Powerful typhoons wreck houses, such as typhoon Rolly (International name Goni) in November 1, 2020, causing towering tidal surges and forcing thousands of people to fleeing their houses to emergency shelters.

Catanduanes is economically dependent on Abaca, being the highest producer of Abaca fiber in the world. This crop is vulnerable to typhoons with strong winds felling the plants. It takes 2 years to grow back and therefore breaks the cycle of livelihood for many families.

The province, is a 3rd income class province registering a poverty incidence of 30.6% or 306 in every 1000 in 2023. Moreover, Catanduanes also leads Bicol region in terms of malnourished children and this has resulted in its inclusion in the four-year Philippine Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Project (PMNP). With this high poverty and malnutrition incidence, the local governments are hard pressed to meet the gaps and needs in basic services, cope with aftermath of natural disasters, and reconstruction of affected essential infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water systems and educational facilities.

Assistance from A Single Drop for Safe Water



A Single Drop for Safe Water (ASDSW) started working in Catanduanes in 2017 as part of the Humanitarian Response Consortium for a response to Typhoon Nina that hit Catanduanes December 2016.

In 2018 Traditional Medicinals Foundation as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility program as a buyer of Abaca for their herbal tea products commissioned ASDSW to work in Viga and Gigmoto, the site of most of their growers. This included Barangay level planning and project development. This resulted in developing teams to build and install bio-sand filters for household water treatment and two (2) small water systems in Barangays of Burgos and Almojuela in the municipality of Viga. To ensure the water systems services, the operation and maintenance group of these two systems were trained using the framework of People Offering Deliverable Services (PODS). These water systems are still functional. The one in Bgy. Almojuela is operating on gravity flow while the one in Bgy. Burgos is pump operated and is used only during severe water shortage to manage the cost of electricity during its operation.

As part of the planning additional water system projects were identified and in 2019 a Level 3 water system was implemented in barangay San Pedro in the municipality of Gigmoto, that supplies 109 households and was funded by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints (CJCLDS). The water system is still functional to date but serving a much lower number of households than envisioned. This water system is now operated and maintained by the Barangay LGU as several members of the trained O&M team are now no longer living in the area. There is also now no collection of water service fees.

November 1, 2020, typhoon Rolly devasted the province. ASDSW with funding from UNICEF mounted a large-scale WaSH response. This humanitarian response was conducted from December 2020 to June, 2021, which centered on early recovery from typhoon Rolly aftermath, including rehabilitation and supplies for damaged water systems, water and hygiene kits as well as repairs to toilets.

The church also supported the municipality of Bato with repairs/construction of 6 barangay level water systems. The technical lead was the MLGU with ASDSW providing support and purchasing materials. Also, management groups were formed and capacitated but only one organization remains functional with the balance being managed by the barangay LGU's. These systems are functional, but operations are constrained in the rehabilitated systems due to initial design issues.

In June 2022, a support project for WaSH institutionalization was officially started in the province with the inclusion of 4 municipalities; Virac, Bato, Baras and San Andres. This program was initially designed for the 4 most affected municipalities and creating a pool of expertise to move Catanduanes towards Zero

Open Defecation and increase local investment. This was jointly funded by UNICEF and CJCLDS. With the project gaining traction and strong support from the provincial LGU, this was expanded with CJCLDS funding to cover all 11 municipalities. This expansion was implemented from March 2023-September 2024, thereby significantly improving plans, programs and activities in the WaSH sector for the entire province.

Capacity building intervention on WaSH Governance



The province of Catanduanes had a program for promoting Zero Open Defecation in the communities prior to the intervention by A Single Drop for Safe Water. This move is aided by the Department of Health through their environmental health program. However, the assistance to households is focused mainly in providing toilet bowls, as is true also of most LGUs outside of Catanduanes. This did not result in significant success, as the toilet bowl is only a small component for building toilets, but more importantly no behavior change programming existed to create family demand for prioritizing sanitary toilets.

ASDSW working with LGU health implementers used the Philippines Approach to Sustainable Sanitation (PhATSS) which is DOH AO 2019-0054, providing operational guidelines for achieving ZOD in the communities as the mandated framework for behavior change programming, certification of Zero Open Defecation barangays and building strategic and investment plans specific for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. The capacity building was further cascaded to the LGU health implementers in the barangays through orientations and onsite coaching. The PhATSS policy provides strategies in governance and infrastructure support to make the ZOD program a collective approach for LGUs, both provincial, municipal and barangay, as well as the communities.

Specific Capacity building activities conducted included:

1. Strategic Planning, Investment Planning and Resource Mobilization
    a. Orientation and coaching for the conduct of WaSH inventory (data gathering so plans are evidence based)
    b. Orientation and coaching support for strategic and investment WaSH planning
    c. Project design and proposal writing including development of feasibility studies
    d. Policy development and institutionalization within the municipalities and the province to support PhATSS implementation and allocate budget
2. Behavior Change and certification of Zero Open Defecation Barangays and Municipalities
    a. Training of trainers and coaching of barangay implementers for behavior change/demand creation at the community level and developing barangay level plans to achieve Sero Open Defecation.

b. Orientation, mentoring and onsite coaching for the verification and certification of Zero open defecation barangays.

3. Technical capacity building
   a. Training on Managing WaSH in emergency with emphasis on pre-positioning of essential WaSH emergency supplies.

   b. Water quality monitoring with the use of Portable microbiological laboratory (PML)





Improvement to enabling environment

An enabling environment is where WaSH becomes prioritized by the LGU and the community as a development thrust. This manifests as specific governance structures, policies, plans and allocated budget that then allows the plans to be implemented.

For Catanduanes all 11 municipalities have formed their WaSH governance systems as well as the province. All the municipalities and the province have created WaSH strategic and investment plans with 7 out of 12 being adopted by the LGU for implementation, one of them being the Provincial local government unit itself. Furthermore, 31 Barangays issued executive orders creating the Barangay monitoring team to ensure sustained sanitation improvement. As part of the WaSH Planning and databasing the province has started geotagging water sources that was initiated in Bgy. Codon, San Andres. This is to create database for the monitoring of water quality in identified water sources in this barangay. The province is looking to sustain this initiative and expand it to cover the whole province. This database would go a long way for disaster preparedness and resiliency when used in planning for appropriate measures towards water security.

A province level PhATSS-based ordinance is in place and at the municipal level, 4 municipalities (Bato, Virac, Baras and San Andres) have adopted this ordinance or created their own ordinance with PhATSS as their strategy for WaSH improvement. The seven (7) other remaining municipalities are on different levels of reviewing and finalizing their WaSH ordinances and plans with the aim for its institutionalization.

Increased Investment into WaSH by Duty Bearers

Prior to ASDSW's engagement with the province, WaSH investment was minimal. During the implementation of the program the Provincial Government invested in toilets for households with an initial annual investment of 5,000,000 PhP which has increased to 10,000,000PhP on an annual basis. This supports specific families in barangays moving towards ZOD. In addition to the Provincial investments in toilet subsidy listed above, 610,000 PhP was provided to barangays (10,000 each) certified ZOD as well as the first municipality (50,000 each). For the improvement of water facilities in the rural health facilities of Virac, Bagamanoc, Viga, Caramaoan and Gigmoto, the Provincial Government has allocated 18.5 million PhP in their 2025 Annual Operations Plan (AOP).

Among other investments for WaSH development from the provincial local government is the construction of provincial water laboratory, funded for 2025 implementation amounting to PHP 6.6M. This is to ensure timely monitoring and intervention as needed for the water sources in the province.

At the municipal level there was also an increase in investment into WaSH with LGU's providing increased funding for MOOE in their continuing PPAs for WaSH such as water quality monitoring, prepositioned essential WaSH supplies and incentives for barangays attaining ZOD, as in the case of Baras. Baras has allocated Php 170,000.00 for this in their 2025 AOP. The other municipalities are still in the process of finalizing their annual operation plans. Region 5 DOH is providing 3 municipalities (Viga, Gigmoto and Panganiban) 6 million pesos for sanitation improvement.

Non-Government actors also invested, with Manila Water Foundation building hand washing stations in 2 schools and Sato donating 1000 household handwashing facilities. Additionally, ARDCI which is a local microfinance corporation in conjunction with water.org is providing finance packages for its members to invest in water connection and toilet construction.



Impact of Behavior Change on the Residents.

Prior to the program there were no certified Zero Open Defecation Barangays which indicates that most of the population lived in areas where there was potential open defecation. This impacts all of the residents, not just those without toilets.

Two municipalities, Bagamanoc and Panganiban have been declared Zero Open Defecation. As of late 2024, 132 out of 315 barangays (42%) have been certified ZOD this accounts for over 85,000 individuals. These are mostly rural barangays and contain the most vulnerable and poorest populations. However, because of the behavior change they invested into building their own toilets, or the barangays came up with strategies and funding to assist the most in need in the true spirit of bayanihan. Note that a significant portion of the population live in urban barangays in Virac and these are potentially already ZOD and just need to go through the certification process.

The provincial government has committed in conjunction with the municipal LGU's to work towards province wide ZOD certification.

Catanduanes have gone a long way in improving their water and sanitation situation. At the end of the project, basic water services coverage is at 93% from 37.8% in 2020 (FHSIS report 2020). This notable improvement may be attributed to the LGUs' effort in reducing the gap and improving communities' access to safe water, considering that the province is recovering from the aftermath of typhoon Rolly. Basic sanitation coverage in 2024 is at 87.78%, also a big leap from 77.91% in 2020. This improvement can be reflective of the work done in the implementation of the PhATSS in the whole of Catanduanes province. Government planning and investments are also progressing towards progressive, pro-active and priority-based approach.

Capacity Development Recipients

The change in the WaSH situation for the population of Catanduanes is due to the efforts of the recipients of the capacity building. These duty bearers then mobilized communities to become agents of change, and these agents of change actually empowered their communities to actively participate in improving their situation. The "changemakers" include:

- **147** Decision-makers oriented on Governance and PHATSS concepts
- **429** M/BLGU and BHWs trained on how to conduct the WaSH Inventory and analysis
- **179 P/M**LGU Staff including SBs trained on WaSH Strategic Planning
- **535** Provincial and Municipal Staff with 319 BHWs trained on PHATSS
- **31** PHATSS Barangay Monitoring Teams created and trained
- **43** (27M:16F) DRRM staff trained on Managing WaSH in Emergencies
- **20** (3M:17F) participants **trained on** Water Quality Monitoring
- **56** participants attended Project and Proposal Making
- **98** pax attended 2 Project Reviews

Note that ASDSW also implemented the Barangay Resiliency and Innovation Through Empowerment (BRITE) program with the Disaster Risk Reduction Management offices of 6 of the municipalities. This program also builds capacity at the LGU and barangay level so that barangays can not only build effective and implementable plans but also clarify roles and responsibilities of all those local duty bearers in times

of crisis. This has been institutionalized in the municipality of Baras. During the multiple typhoons that impacted Catanduanes at the end of 2024 there was a noticeable improvement in how the barangays prepared before land fall, their immediate responses and the speed which assessment data was submitted to the Municipal and Provincial LGU's.



Building the capacity of duty bearers, institutionalization of systems and engaging the communities to proactively improve their situation is key to building resilience and reducing suffering. Local Government Units and public servants on the most part want to do a good job. They are often wrongly maligned by the civil sector and non-government agencies. However, if they have the tools, skills and are coached, they become positive agents of change. In WaSH, the enabling of Sanitary Inspectors to become these agents of change rather than their traditional role of enforcers is one of the major contributors to the success of the PhATSS program. These skills and attitudes are transferable and replicable resulting in long term self-resourced change.