



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



## PHILIPPINES: SEPTAGE MANAGEMENT CONTRIBUTES TO WATER SECURITY

### Water Security for Resilient Economic Growth and Stability (Be Secure)

Duration: 2012–20197

#### Challenge

Adequate and safe water resources are vital to water security. In rapidly growing cities in the Philippines—where less than 10 percent of the population is connected to sewage systems—water resources are under threat from huge volumes of untreated waste. Outside of Manila, the connection rate is even lower—only 3 percent. Untreated wastewater is alarmingly discharged into bodies of water, polluting streams, lakes, rivers and even aquifers. Clean water is becoming scarce and highly valued especially in times of drought.

#### Opportunity

To address these challenges and increase access to improved sanitation facilities, USAID launched the Water Security for Resilient Economic Growth and Stability (Be Secure) Project in 2013 to work with local governments and water utilities in six cities across the Philippines. The project bolstered the capacity of cities to treat household septic waste using a three-pronged approach to technical assistance: providing policy support and training; designing appropriate infrastructure; and mobilizing public support for sanitation programs. USAID also worked with cities to better appreciate how septage treatment can preserve the limited freshwater supplies so

*Be Secure trained local governments to write and implement health and safety plans. Among the recommendations: septage handlers need to wear personal protective equipment. Photo credit: USAID Be Secure*

they are available for drinking and future household use.

In Tacloban City, one of the areas in Leyte Province severely damaged by Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, USAID, in partnership with UNICEF, constructed a septage treatment plant that replaced the city's temporary emergency facility. Working with USAID, the cities of Ormoc and Zamboanga also invested significant funds to construct their own septage treatment facilities. As a result of USAID's assistance, approximately 450,000 people now have access to better sanitation services.

Complementing its work in sanitation, USAID also supported cities to effectively manage their water resources with one goal in mind: making water available to every family in every home. In Cagayan de Oro City in Mindanao, USAID partnered with the Coca-Cola Foundation and the local water district to implement a non-revenue water program. Water savings from this program helped expand service delivery and extend service hours. In the conflict-affected province of Basilan, USAID built two ground wells to supply water to 4,000 residents of Malamawi Island, who previously relied on fresh water delivered by boat. Support in these cities, combined with USAID's assistance to improve water systems in Leyte and Maguindanao provinces, enabled more than 900,000 people to access safe drinking water.