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Sanitation Collaboration with the Tagbanua Indigenous People of Malawig on the Construction of Biogas Digester Septic Tanks and Other Green Technologies with Livelihood Potential

The beneficiaries of this project being implemented by PCWS with support from the International Labor Organization (ILO) are the Tagbanua indigenous people of Barangay Malawig, a shoreline community in Coron, Palawan, Philippines. Barangay Malawig lies in the north eastern part of Coron. It is about 35 kilometers from the Municipal center and connected by dirt road which is not accessible during rainy season. Traveling by boat is more appropriate to reach the community particularly during rainy days. Malawig is among the poorest communities in the town of Coron.

The Tagbanua people inhabiting Malawig are mostly fishermen and seaweeds farmers. Super typhoon Yolanda (Haiyan), which hit the country on November 8, 2013 inflicted severe damage to many coastal communities along its path, including Barangay Malawig. The houses, livestock, boats, fishing gears and seaweed farms of the Tagbanua community were washed away by huge waves and strong winds. Most of the household heads in Malawig are fishermen who lost their livelihood to the super typhoon.

Super typhoon Yolanda also devastated the sanitation systems in Malawig. This project is teaching Malawig fishermen new skills and knowhow in the construction of sanitation systems and other low-cost technologies with livelihood potential. Sixty fishermen and 30 support workers are acquiring new skills through hands-on onsite training on the construction of biogas digester septic tanks connected to household toilets, rainwater harvesting tanks with group hand washing facilities, and biosand filters for household scale water treatment. Aside from acquiring new skills, the construction training results to actual sanitation systems and water supply facilities built in Malawig. With additional skills, the fishermen can hopefully generate income in their community and can also be hired in nearby communities and towns for the construction of low-cost water supply and sanitation systems.

At the end of the project, the community will own the knowledge on how to build, operate, repair and maintain low-cost water supply and sanitation systems that could contribute to human dignity, environmental protection, livelihood opportunities and poverty reduction.

The other community assets are the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities built as a result of the series of on-site hands-on construction trainings. These include: 4 biogas digester septic tanks, 14 toilets, 60 biosand filters, 3 rainwater harvesting tanks each connected to a hand washing facility. In addition, the community will own 3 reusable moulds for building rainwater harvesting tanks and 3 reusable moulds for building biogas digester septic tanks. With these moulds and the knowledge acquired by the trainees, additional rainwater harvesting tanks and biogas digester septic tanks can continuously be built in the community. The moulds will also enable the trained artisans to offer their services for a fee in building rainwater harvesting tanks and biogas digester septic tanks for households, thus also helping improve the water supply and sanitation situation in the Malawig community and elsewhere.

Learning the skills in building, repairing and maintaining low-cost water supply and sanitation systems can contribute to the generation of green jobs. The construction technique being taught to the Tagbanuas utilizes locally available handy tools and less construction materials as compared to conventional concrete construction. The series of trainings also touch on watershed protection, wetlands conservation, community managed water supply and sanitation systems, environmental sanitation, integrated water resources management, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.