



Promoting Innovations in Wastewater Management

## Making Sanitation a Sustainable Business

# Case Study Making Viable Septage Management Programs



“As of end of 2011, around 2.5 billion people are said to have no access to an improved sanitation facility.”

– World Health Organization (Who) and Unicef. 2013



Dumaguete Septage Treatment Plant  
Source: Dumaguete City Government



Southern Klang Valley Sludge Treatment Plant,  
Klang Valley District, Selangor State  
Source: Japan Sanitation Consortium (2011)

### Challenge

The provision of sanitation services is one of the developmental challenges besetting emerging economies in Asia and the Pacific. Although it is a major component to the larger developmental agenda, sanitation remains to be one of the region's principal challenges. Out of the 75% target of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) for sanitation, the global coverage is estimated to be only around 64%. If such trend continues to persist, missing the target would translate to more than half a billion people without access to sanitation.

Despite the immensity of economic losses brought about by poor sanitation, investments in sewerage and sanitation have lagged behind other infrastructure subsectors. Several factors contributed to this condition:

- Low priority accorded to sewerage and sanitation
- Lack of technical capacity to plan, implement, operate and maintain wastewater management facilities, both at the national and local levels
- Low level of awareness and buy-in from the public
- Lack of enforcement of regulations

A paradigm shift, thus, is required. New approaches and innovative-yet-doable solutions are vital to improve sanitation.

### Case Study

This case study demonstrates options to help make sanitation happen.

Details of septage management programs particularly in the Philippines and Malaysia provide good practices being implemented by service providers in both countries. These programs have proven to not only be effective in scaling-up investments in the sanitation sector, but also attested to its sustainability from a business/economic point of view.

## Initiative

A sustainable septage management program relies on understanding the social and financial aspects, as well as the institutional elements and its relationship to key stakeholders.

The framework for a successful program entails an understanding of the dynamics among the stakeholders during the evaluation and decision-making processes. It relies on factors, such as:

- Presence of demand for septage management from the populace,
- Financial viability of septage systems/facilities, and
- Governance framework.

These factors should then be incorporated in the decision that would cover the technology options adopted, prevailing institutional/regulatory set up, financing and cost recovery mechanisms implemented, and social aspects. These have been instrumental in making septage management programs in the Philippines and Malaysia successful.

## Lessons Learned

- **No “one-size-fits-all” solution.** On choosing the appropriate sanitation solution, a workable and most responsive solution depends on a host of factors that vary from one local setting to another.
- **A stepwise strategy in scaling-up investments** is the most prudent approach to address the challenge of phased development of sanitation options in wastewater management. It enables the government/service providers to deliver implementable measures adaptive to a specific timeline and to the prevailing social and economic conditions of the area.
- **Enactment of pertinent laws and other legal instruments** can contribute to an enabling and robust regulatory environment. It can provide the needed push for government to move forward with its agenda for sanitation development.
- **Enhanced awareness will help facilitate change in behavior of the community with the conduct of aggressive social marketing and public awareness campaigns.** Willingness-to-pay and active participation in any sanitation program by the community will be determined on how well they understand and appreciate the impacts of the sanitation program.
- **Available subsidies and financing mechanisms that will facilitate pro-poor policies that will provide access to sanitation** should be explored to encourage the marginalized sector of the community to avail of sanitation services considering that they’re the most vulnerable to the risks of poor sanitation practices.
- **A pool of professionals who are more responsive to the growing sanitation needs of society** would address institutional strengthening and capacity building issues. Continuous updating of curriculum, training programs and capacity development activities should be done and be extended even to the lowest levels of governance to ensure competent performance from all levels.

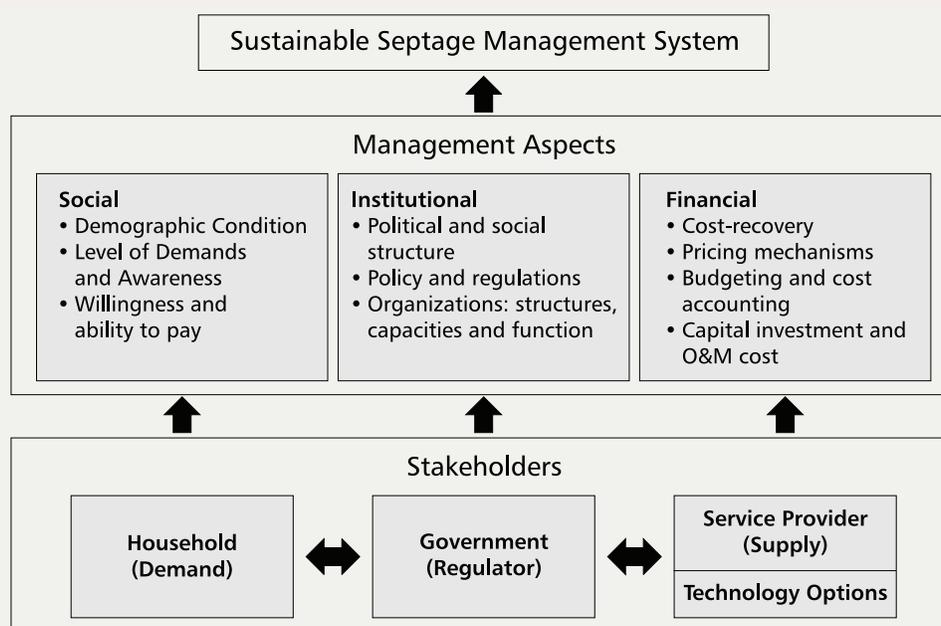


Diagram by Robert Domingo, ADB Consultant

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